

Gerard Manley Hopkins and Victorian Catholicism

A Heart in Hiding

 Jill Muller

**Also available as a printed book
see title verso for ISBN details**

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS AND VICTORIAN
CATHOLICISM

MAJOR LITERARY AUTHORS
VOLUME 27

STUDIES IN
MAJOR LITERARY AUTHORS
OUTSTANDING DISSERTATIONS

edited by

William E. Cain
Wellesley College

A ROUTLEDGE SERIES

OTHER BOOKS IN THIS SERIES:

THE PUSHER AND THE SUFFERER

An Unsentimental Reading of Moby Dick

Suzanne Stein

HENRY JAMES AS A BIOGRAPHER

A Self among Others

Willie Tolliver

JOYCEAN FRAMES

Film and the Fiction of James Joyce

Thomas Burkdall

JOSEPH CONRAD AND THE ART OF SACRIFICE

Andrew Mozina

TECHNIQUE AND SENSIBILITY IN THE FICTION AND POETRY OF RAYMOND CARVER

Arthur F. Bethea

SHELLY'S TEXTUAL SEDUCTIONS

Plotting Utopia in the Erotic and Political Works

Samuel Lyndon Gladden

"ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE"

Dramatic Sensibility in Mary Shelley's Novels

Charlene E. Bunnell

"THOUGHTS PAINFULLY INTENSE"

Hawthorne and the Invalid Author

James N. Mancall

SEX THEORIES AND THE SHAPING OF TWO MODERNS

Hemingway and H.D.

Deidre Anne (McVicker) Pettipiece

WORD SIGHTINGS

Visual Apparatus and Verbal Reality in Stevens, Bishop and O'Hara

Sarah Riggs

DELICATE PURSUIT

Discretion in Henry James and Edith Wharton

Jessica Levine

GERTRUDE STEIN AND WALLACE STEVENS

The Performance of Modern Consciousness

Sara J. Ford

LOST CITY

Fitzgerald's New York

Lauraleigh O'Meara

SOCIAL DREAMING

Dickens and the Fairy Tale

Elaine Ostry

PATRIARCHY AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Sexual Politics in Selected Novels and Stories of Thomas Hardy

Joanna Devereux

A NEW MATRIX FOR MODERNISM

A Study of the Lives and Poetry of Charlotte Mew and Anna Wickham

Nelljean McConeghey Rice

THE MACHINE THAT SINGS

Modernism, Hart Crane, and the Culture of the Body

Gordon Tapper

T.S.ELIOT'S CIVILIZED SAVAGE

Religious Eroticism and Poetics

Laurie J.MacDiarmid

THE CARVER CHRONOTOPE

Inside the Life-World of Raymond Carver's Fiction

G.P.Lainsbury

THIS COMPOSITE VOICE

The Role of W.B.Yeats in James Merrill's Poetry

Mark Bauer

PROGRESS AND IDENTITY IN THE PLAYS OF W.B.YEATS

Barbara A.Seuss

CONRAD'S NARRATIVES OF DIFFERENCE

Not Exactly Tales for Boys

Elizabeth Schneider

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS AND VICTORIAN CATHOLICISM

A Heart in Hiding

Jill Muller

ROUTLEDGE
New York and London

Published in 2003 by
Routledge
29 West 35th Street
New York, NY 10001
www.routledge-ny.com

Published in Great Britain by
Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane
London EC4P 4EE
www.routledge.co.uk

Copyright © 2003 by Taylor & Francis Books, Inc.

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group.

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk.”

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without written permission from the publishers.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data (TK)

Muller, Jill.

Gerard Manley Hopkins and Victorian Catholicism: a heart in hiding/by Jill Muller.

p. cm.—(Studies in major literary authors; v. 27)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-415-96707-4 (Print Edition) (Hardcover: alk. paper)

1. Hopkins, Gerard Manley, 1844–1889—Religion. 2. Christianity and literature—Great Britain—History—19th century. 3. Catholic Church—England—Doctrines—History—19th century. 4. Christian poetry, English—History and criticism. 5. Catholics—England—History—19th century. 6. Anglo—Catholicism—History—19th century. 7. Anglo—Catholicism in literature. I. Title. II. Series.

PR4803.H44Z7218 2003

821'.8—dc21

2003006146

ISBN 0-203-48942-X Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-57875-9 (Adobe eReader Format)

In Memoriam
Jonathan Tee 1950–2000

Contents

	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ix
	ENDNOTE ABBREVIATIONS	x
	INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE	NEWMAN, HOPKINS, AND “HEAVEN-HAVEN” A Literary Conversion	8
CHAPTER TWO	ONE “FETCH” IN HIM Hopkins’s Ultramontane Vision in <i>The Wreck of the Deutschland</i>	27
CHAPTER THREE	“THESE THINGS WERE HERE AND BUT THE BEHOLDER WANTING” Hopkins’s Nature Sonnets and the Victorian Catholic Response to Evolution	50
CHAPTER FOUR	“THE LOST ARE LIKE THIS” Victorian Catholic Eschatology and Hopkins’s Dublin Poems	73
	NOTES	100
	SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	120
	INDEX	128

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful for the advice and encouragement of all who read and commented on my manuscript, and for the support and affection of friends and family who sustained me through the writing of it. Many of the ideas and questions that framed my Hopkins dissertation first took shape in an undergraduate tutorial with Professor Dorothy Oberhaus at Mercy College. I am grateful to Professor Oberhaus for sponsoring my application for the Mellon Fellowship that allowed me to pursue graduate studies at Columbia, and for her continuing interest in my work. Among the many debts of gratitude I have accumulated at Columbia, I owe particular thanks to Professor Wayne Proudfoot for introducing me to the academic study of religion, and for directing my reading in nineteenth-century religious thought. I thank Professor Carole Slade for providing me with an opportunity to develop my ideas on Hopkins and St. Gertrude in an MLA paper in 1996. I also thank Professor George Stade for his advice on matters of scholarship and style, and for his unfailing generosity of spirit. My deepest gratitude goes to Professor John Rosenberg, wisest and most patient of mentors, for inspiring me with the scope of his scholarship, the lucidity of his prose, and the kindness of his friendship.

Professor Tom Werge, at Notre Dame, gave valuable advice and support at all stages of this project, and published an early version of [chapter two](#) in *Religion and Literature*. My thanks go also to Paul Johnson, my editor at Routledge.

Among those whose friendship has kept me afloat through this endeavor and other ups and downs of life, I offer especial thanks to Sherlin Hendrick, Luisa Ospina, Patricia Owens, Taylor Pape, Elisabeth Rust, and Rachel Wetzsteon. I also thank Mike McCoy for helpful books and great conversation. To my daughters, Vanessa and Sophie, I offer heartfelt thanks for believing in me, laughing with me, and keeping me (almost) sane. I owe daughters, book, and all my truest happiness to my husband, Claud. We dedicate this book to the memory of Jonathan Tee, alpha librarian and best of friends.

Endnote Abbreviations

L1	<i>The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges</i>
L2	<i>The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and R.W.Dixon</i>
L3	<i>Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins</i>
J	<i>The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins</i>
<i>Poems</i>	<i>The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins (4th Edition)</i>
S	<i>The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins</i>

Introduction

Gerard Manley Hopkins was born in 1844, seven years after the coronation of Queen Victoria. When he died, in 1889, the British queen still had eleven years left to reign. Hopkins's letters and journals contain numerous references to Victorian cultural and political events. He studied at Oxford under Jowett and Pater. He was an acquaintance of Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti, an admirer of Ruskin, and an astute critic of Tennyson and Browning. He visited the Royal Academy and the Crystal Palace. He grieved over the death of General Gordon at Khartoum and raged against Gladstone for "weakening the bonds of a worldwide empire."¹ As a Catholic convert, he joined the only major Christian denomination to expand in population and influence during Victoria's reign.

Yet, perhaps because publication of the *Poems* was delayed until 1918, critical studies of Hopkins long failed to acknowledge the fastness of his moorings in Victorian culture. In the 1920s and 1930s, William Empson, I.A. Richards, and F.R. Leavis championed Hopkins as a modernist ahead of his time. Describing the Victorian Jesuit as "one of the most remarkable technical innovators who ever wrote," Leavis's *New Bearings in English Poetry* declared that Hopkins "is now felt to be a contemporary and his influence is likely to be great."² According to Leavis, Hopkins bore "no relation...to any nineteenth-century poet."³ Apparently the only critics to notice the poet's Victorian affinities were those who found him less impressive. In *After Strange Gods*, T.S. Eliot dismissed Hopkins as a minor, though "agile," nature poet, comparing his "technical tricks" to those of Meredith.⁴ Yeats, in his controversial introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, likened him to the "Rhymers" of the 1890s, viewing his poetic style as a sterile over-elaboration in which subject is sacrificed to technique:

His meaning is like some faint sound that strains the ear, comes out of words, passes to and fro between them, goes back into words, his manner is a last development of poetic diction. My generation began that search for hard positive subject-matter, still a predominant purpose.⁵

For Eliot and Yeats, as staunch modernists, relegation of Hopkins to the nineteenth century was an expression of distaste for his prosody rather than an appreciation of his Victorian roots.

For almost half a century, admirers and critics alike were too dazzled, or irritated, by Hopkins's linguistic and metrical experiments to pay much attention to the literary and religious context of his work. In 1953, John Pick, an early biographer, reiterated the, by now, stale point that Hopkins was "more modern than the moderns."⁶ As late as 1961, W.H. Gardner claimed that

Hopkins was not pre-eminently a "period" writer. Not more than two or three of his poems were directly inspired by events or circumstances which were peculiar to the nineteenth-century; his poetry has, in fact, a timeless quality.⁷

The prevailing mid-century view of Hopkins as a dislocated modernist was challenged for the first time in a 1945 essay by Arthur Mizener in *Gerard Manley Hopkins by the Kenyon Critics*. In “Victorian Hopkins,” Mizener compared Hopkins to Tennyson, reading both as heirs of Keats and concluding that the “basic sensibility” of Hopkins’s poetry is Victorian.⁸ However, the myth of a “timeless” Hopkins did not come under sustained attack until the publication of Wendell Stacy Johnson’s *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Poet as Victorian* in 1968 and Alison Sulloway’s *Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Victorian Temper* in 1972. These pioneering works have since been built upon by other studies of Hopkins’s Victorian context, notably Jude Nixon’s 1994 *Gerard Manley Hopkins and His Contemporaries: Liddon, Newman, Darwin and Pater*. Yet, in spite of Hopkins’s much quoted remark to A.W.M. Baillie that religion “enters very deep; in reality it is the deepest impression I have in speaking to people, that they are or that they are not of my religion,” studies of Victorian Hopkins have focused almost exclusively on the influences of his pre-conversion Oxford years, largely overlooking his complex responses to his Catholic contemporaries.⁹ Only Hopkins’s interest in Newman, whose influence was most intense *before* his conversion, has received serious critical attention.

By choosing to become a Catholic, and, worse, a Jesuit, Hopkins, it is implied, disqualified himself as a *bona fide* Victorian. After the poet’s conversion, Franco Marucci argues, “a decided prevalence of anti-Victorian, medieval codes” began to “assert itself” in his writings.¹⁰ According to Bergonzi, when Hopkins became a Jesuit he “moved out of the mainstream of English society” and into a “subculture” that seemed “exotic and even sinister to most Englishmen.”¹¹

Surprisingly, the poet’s Catholic readers have been no more willing to explore his Victorian Catholic identity than their secular counterparts. While Hopkins’s modernist critics, influenced, perhaps, by Bridges’s disapproval of his friend’s “efforts to force emotion into narrow and sectarian channels,” regarded his Catholicism as irrelevant, if not positively harmful, to his poetic gifts; Jesuit scholars such as David Anthony Downes, in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Study of His Ignatian Spirit* (1959), and Walter J. Ong, in *Hopkins, the Self, and God* (1986), have focused their investigations of Hopkins’s spirituality on the poet’s responses to the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius and to the writing of the thirteenth-century Franciscan, Duns Scotus.¹² Neither Downes nor Ong addresses the possibility that Hopkins’s reading of medieval and Counter-Reformation theologians may have been mediated by the experience of being Catholic in a particular time and place, Victorian England. Among Catholics, too, the myth of a “timeless” Hopkins has prevailed.

Yet, as Newman points out in his contrast of “real” and “notional” assents in his 1873 *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, the exercise of Catholic faith in a predominantly Protestant, and historically anti-Catholic, society, such as Victorian England, requires a very different quality of religious commitment than the “credence” of a medieval Catholic or a nineteenth-century citizen of Portugal or Spain.¹³ For Newman and his fellow English converts, including Manning, Ward, Faber, and Gerard Manley Hopkins, the decision to join the Church of Rome was an act of self-definition through dissent. It was a Romantic and individualistic rejection of religious tradition, national identity, and paternal authority in favor of an idealized submission to the far stricter, though more distant, authority of an international Church and an infallible Holy Father. Once inside the Catholic fold, many English converts discovered that the independent and self-assertive qualities of mind that had facilitated their religious change were a real impediment to obedience in their new faith. Many would grapple all their lives with efforts to reconcile their religious and national identities. Hopkins’s unique poetic voice gave form to a far from unique Victorian Catholic dilemma.

Hopkins was both a Catholic and a Victorian. The religious sensibility that suffuses every one of his poems is mediated at all times by his cultural moment. By converting to Catholicism in 1866, only sixteen

years after the restoration of the English Catholic hierarchy, the poet joined a rapidly expanding religious minority many of whose members looked forward to the conversion of England before the century was over.¹⁴ In choosing to join an active rather than a contemplative religious order, the highly disciplined Society of Jesus, Hopkins expected to take his place in the vanguard of Catholic efforts to win back his native land to her ancient faith. Like many of his Oxford contemporaries, he associated the restoration of Catholicism with a return to the idealized paternalistic and agrarian society extolled by Carlyle and Ruskin. His poems, particularly during the great Welsh period, describe a sacramental landscape, Catholic at its source, like St. Winefred's Well, though "seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil" ("God's Grandeur" 6).

As a Catholic poet who abandoned poetry for seven years after his conversion and began again only at the request of a Jesuit superior, Hopkins was determined to use his gifts in the service of his religion. Those twentieth-century critics who have exalted his formal experimentation at the expense of his Catholic message ignore the earnest Victorian question asked, and answered, by the poet in a letter to Bridges: "What are works of art for? To educate. To be standards."¹⁵ To R.W. Dixon, he explained, "Our society values, as you say, and has contributed to literature, to culture; but only as a means to an end."¹⁶ When he broke his poetic silence to describe, in *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, the sinking of a German ship, the visionary experience of a Franciscan nun, and, by implication, the fate of godless countries, Hopkins was endeavoring to answer the call, put out by both Newman and Manning, for Victorian Catholics to create a literature of their own.

Cardinal Manning's influential 1863 article, "The Work and Wants of the Catholic Church in England," acknowledges the vital role of Catholic writers in bringing about conversions. Newman's 1852 sermon, "The Second Spring," celebrates the end of the Church's long English winter by urging Catholic "voices, grave and musical" to renew "the old chant, with which Augustine greeted Ethelbert in the free air upon the Kentish strand."¹⁷ In *The Idea of A University*, Newman identifies "the formation of Catholic literature in the English language" as one of the "special objects" of Catholic higher education.¹⁸ Since the seventeenth century, Newman laments, all great English literature has been infused with the voice of Milton, "breathing hatred to the Catholic Church."¹⁹ Although he believes that it is too late to rival the acknowledged classics, English Catholics, Newman suggests, should create an alternative literature for their own consumption. Hopkins, I shall argue, took Newman's suggestion very much to heart. His poetry, even after he had given up all hope of publication, consistently addressed an imagined audience of his Catholic contemporaries. Even his metrical experiments, as Walter J. Ong first noted in 1949, made use of

a rhythm inherited from Old English as one of the bases of verse until the 'reform' and 'smoothing' of English numbers, principally under the influence of Edmund Spenser and his followers.²⁰

Hopkins's celebrated "sprung rhythm" is an attempt to dismiss the Elizabethan statutes in poetry as well as religion. Like many other great Victorians, he was a deeply conservative revolutionary.

Although there was still no significant Victorian Catholic poetry in 1875, when the *Deutschland* ran aground on the Kentish sands, the preceding twenty-five years had seen a renaissance of Catholic writings of other kinds. During the 1850s and 1860s, Catholic novels, saints' lives, and translations of devotional classics proliferated; Faber's *All for Jesus* (1863) and Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864) became bestsellers, and a growing choir of Catholic voices found their way into print in periodicals such as *The Month*, *The Dublin Review*, *The Tablet*, and *The Rambler*. As both student and scholar, Hopkins had access to libraries at the Jesuit teaching institutions of Manresa House, St. Beuno's, and Stonyhurst through most of the 1870s and early 1880s. The holdings of these libraries (the former two are now housed at Heythrop College, London) and the lists of refectory readings collected by Alfred Thomas, in *Hopkins the Jesuit: The*

Years of Training, testify that Hopkins was exposed to a mass of contemporary Catholic theology, fiction, devotional tracts, scientific treatises, and periodical articles. The poet's letters and journals attest to his familiarity with writings by Manning, Newman, Faber, and St. George Jackson Mivart, along with a host of lesser-known Catholic intellectuals such as Henry Coleridge, Richard J. Clarke, and the Rickaby brothers.

Although his Jesuit career was outwardly unsuccessful and often deeply lonely, and despite the fact that his poems did not find the Victorian Catholic audience he hoped for, Hopkins was not a dislocated modernist writing in a cultural vacuum. Nor is it entirely true, as Sulloway and others have argued, that he had absorbed all of his significant influences by the time of his conversion. My purpose in this study of Hopkins and Victorian Catholicism is to restore the poet to his full intellectual and literary context by exploring his responses, in the poems and other writings, to the largely forgotten, but once noisy and contentious, culture of his Catholic contemporaries. Drawing on historical studies of Victorian Catholicism, such as Edward Norman's *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century*, J. Derek Holmes's *More Roman than Rome: English Catholicism in the Nineteenth Century*, and Mary Heimann's invaluable *Catholic Devotion in Victorian England*, along with Hopkins's own writings and those of other nineteenth-century Catholics, I shall show how the preoccupations, dramas, and disappointments of the poet's life often reflect the experience of his co-religionists and how, indeed, the trajectory of his career mimics the deflation of Catholic hopes during the second half of Victoria's reign and the turn within the Roman Church in England from a triumphalist rhetoric of conversion to a more introverted and insular spirituality.

Although Hopkins undoubtedly possessed psychological traits that contributed to his personal and poetic frustrations, many of the difficulties of his Catholic career were caused or at least exacerbated by the deep social and intellectual divisions within Victorian Catholicism. Any attempt to read Hopkins in a Catholic context must begin by recognizing that the chorus of English Catholics dreamed of by Newman in "The Second Spring" was in fact a cacophony of warring voices. There were at least two Victorian Catholicisms, with many local complexities and variations even within the dominant factions. While Newman and his followers attempted to establish an English Catholicism in keeping with native "habits of mind...manner of reasoning, ...tastes, and...virtues," an Ultramontane faction, represented by Manning, Faber, and Ward, sought to standardize devotional practice and centralize authority within the Roman See.²¹ Where Newman and his supporters endeavored to establish dialogue with the Protestant mainstream, many Ultramontanists preferred an aggressively separatist position. The struggle between the Ultramontanists and the more liberal Newmanites was further complicated by hostility between converts and "old Catholics" or recusants, and by suspicion and misunderstanding between an intellectual priestly class (many of whom were Oxford converts) and a lay population increasingly made up of working-class Irish immigrants.

Hopkins's generation of Oxford converts, drawn to the Anglo-Catholic reaches of the Church of England by the Tractarians, Liddon, and Pusey, and then beckoned to Rome by Newman's urbane and reasonable *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, were prepared neither for the factionalism within the English Catholic Church nor for the virulently anti-intellectual and reactionary papacy of Pius IX. As Christopher Hollis observes, in *The Jesuits: A History*, highly educated Victorian converts

were compelled to live a hobbled life. Their sense of loyalty and their rules compelled them to pay an attention to the discipline imposed upon them from Rome, which Rome, as it was then, did not really deserve, and their minds were inhibited constantly by the need to express a respect...which they could not truly feel.²²

Throughout the nineteenth century, Rome rejected efforts by Catholic intellectuals to accommodate social change or scientific advances. While Newman maintained a precarious orthodoxy, his more liberal

followers were frequently at odds with the Roman authorities. *The Rambler*, a liberal review founded by Oxonian converts, including Richard Simpson and Sir John Acton, and briefly edited by Newman, was forced to cease publication in 1864. The Catholic biologist, St. George Jackson Mivart, a former colleague of Darwin, was excommunicated by Leo XIII. Meanwhile, Ultramontanists like Manning steadfastly ignored conflicts between science and doctrine, while Faber and his followers embraced folk spirituality and pious ritual with a defiant suspension of disbelief. Leo XVIII's late-century revival of Scholasticism, intended to reassert the rational basis of Catholic doctrine, did little to heal the breach with secular intellectual culture.

Like his mentor, John Henry Newman, Hopkins had little acquaintance with Catholics when he entered the Roman Church. The personal and spiritual drama of his religious change was patterned on the experience of Newman as it is described in the *Apologia* and in an earlier conversion novel, *Loss and Gain*. Hopkins's adolescent rebellion, sexual guilt, aesthetic medievalism, and hunger for an antidote to secular philosophies of "flux" and "arbitrariness" made him a responsive reader of Newman's paean to the saving powers of dogma.²³ Letters and journal entries written by Hopkins at the time of his conversion reveal Newman's influence on every page. Justifying his religious change to family and friends, the younger convert makes careful use of Newman's representation of conversion as a gradual evolution of religious opinion, deliberately submerging the personal crises that may have prompted his attraction to Catholicism.

While other studies of Newman and Hopkins have suggested that Newman's influence persisted unchanged throughout Hopkins's Catholic life, I shall argue that the poet's early Catholic years were marked by a strong rejection of Newman and an embrace of Ultramontanist social, political, and devotional concerns. My reading of *The Wreck of the Deutschland* pays particular attention to the influence of Frederick Faber on this most ambitious and confident of Hopkins's poems. Gertrude of Helfta, a medieval German mystic invoked by Hopkins to signify the spousal and visionary spirituality of the tall nun, was familiar to Victorian Catholics through Faber's devotional writings. The influence of Faber, a former Oratorian who attacked Newman's moderation and restraint and promoted a more sentimental and theatrical devotional style, is also evident in *The Wreck's* retelling of Hopkins's conversion experience.

Hopkins had a disastrous tendency to support the losing side in an argument, as is shown by Alfred Thomas's record of his voting in the debates at St. Beuno's. He was also, despite his interest in rhetoric, a poor judge of an audience. Henry Coleridge, the editor of *The Month*, an Oxford convert and a friend of Newman, a man who was known for his distaste for flamboyant spirituality, was an unpromising reader for *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. It is uncertain whether Coleridge was more repelled by Hopkins's highly emotional account of his own conversion, by his claim that the dying Franciscan nun was visited by Jesus, or by the complexities of sprung rhythm. Coleridge's refusal to publish the poem, followed by an equally terse rejection of "The Loss of the Eurydice," caused Hopkins to abandon his hopes for a Victorian Catholic readership.

While Hopkins made no further attempts to publish his poems after the failure of *The Wreck*, he continued to write in concert with other Catholic voices. Poems such as "Pied Beauty" and "Hurrahing in Harvest," inspired by the landscapes surrounding the Jesuit theologate at St. Beuno's, Wales, were written against a backdrop of Scholastic debate about man's relationship with the rest of creation. Contrasting Hopkins's response to Darwin, Mivart, and Tyndall with that of Jesuit colleagues such as Herbert Lucas and John and Joseph Rickaby, I shall show that the poet's enthusiasm for the sacramentalist theology of Duns Scotus pointed him towards a reconciliation of Christianity and evolutionism that was unavailable to his more orthodox contemporaries. Unfortunately Hopkins's adoption of Scotism also coincided with a period of rigid Thomism in Jesuit theological studies and cost him his career as a theologian.

Exiled to a dreary teaching job in Dublin for the last five years of his life, Hopkins found himself the butt of Irish Catholic prejudice against effete Oxford converts. His precarious synthesis of religion and patriotism was shattered by his discovery that the Catholic Church in Ireland was actively involved in the struggle for Home Rule. Depressed and isolated, Hopkins became increasingly preoccupied with Catholic teachings about death and the afterlife. In his Dublin poems, particularly the six sonnets of desolation, the poet compares himself to “the lost,” using eschatological imagery to describe feelings of claustrophobic solipsism and rejection by God. Ironically, it was during this late period of estrangement that Hopkins’s theological interests were most compatible with those of his Jesuit colleagues. His rejection of the liberal eschatology of Newman’s *Dream of Gerontius* and his embrace of Liguorianism coincided with conservative Jesuit efforts to shore up belief in the eternal torments of hell. My reading of the late poems will explore verbal echoes and allusions to Newman’s *Dream*, Richard J. Clarke’s eschatological articles in *The Month*, Hopkins’s own spiritual writings, and the lurid teachings on hell and damnation ascribed to his Jesuit colleagues by their turn-of-the-century student, James Joyce, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Even the disillusionment and solipsism of Hopkins’s final years mirror a parallel movement in Victorian Catholicism. By the end of the nineteenth century, English Catholics no longer expected to see a wholesale conversion of their native land. Although there was a continuing steady flow of converts, much of the Church’s energy was directed toward combating an ever more secular mainstream culture and preventing “leakage” from the faith. Catholicism became increasingly insular, more concerned with inculcating correct doctrine in the children of the faithful than with rewriting English literature. Hopkins’s inability to locate a public voice and his turn inwards were mirrored in the Catholic writing of the 1890s. Yeats, in his *Autobiography*, describes the Catholic poets Lionel Johnson and Ernest Dowson as members of a “tragic generation” who “more and more must make all out of the privacy of their thought”²⁴

In “The Windhover,” written in 1877, at the height of his Scotist enthusiasm, Hopkins uncannily prophesies not only the failure and “sheer plod” (12) of his Jesuit career, but also the collapse of the triumphalist aspirations of Victorian Catholicism. The poem’s rapturous octet describes a sudden encounter with a soaring bird of prey:

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

Hopkins, who dedicates the sonnet “To Christ Our Lord,” likens the magnificent falcon to Jesus in its physical beauty, power, and “mastery” (8). His Scotist belief in a univocity of being, according to which all creatures possess a unique identity (*haeccitas*) but all also partake in the identity of the incarnate Christ, enables him to “meet” and “greet” the Son of God in the regal bird. Seeing, in this sonnet, is an act of communion. The poet’s heart is “stirred for a bird” (8) and poet and bird, or poet and God, are suspended for a moment, “High there” (4) in “ecstasy” (5), before the bird swoops, the image shatters, and creaturely perfections breaks down into elemental earth and fire:

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
 Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
 Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!
 No wonder of it: sheer plod makes plough down sillion
 Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
 Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

While the masterful bird of the octet reflects Hopkins's early view of Christ as a "hero," a "warrior," and a "conqueror," the "blue-bleak embers" (13) of the sestet look forward to a later and more melancholy vision of the Son of God as one whose "brute beauty" (9) must "Buckle!" (9) and "fall" (14), one who is "doomed to succeed by failure."²⁵ Creaturely "pride" (9), the poem warns, must give way to sacrifice; worldly aspirations must be dashed before souls can shine "gold-vermilion" (14).

The windhover's soaring flight and precipitous descent are "caught" (1) and interpreted by a solitary watcher, the poet as "heart in hiding" (7). In the pages that follow, I shall read Gerard Manley Hopkins, a disappointed Jesuit and, as he laments in "To seem a stranger," a poet "unheard" (13) in his own lifetime, as the "heart in hiding" of Victorian Catholicism.

CHAPTER ONE

Newman, Hopkins, and “Heaven-Haven”

A Literary Conversion

In the autumn of 1866, when his twenty-two-year-old son, Gerard, a brilliant Oxford undergraduate known as the “star of Balliol,” was on the verge of converting to Roman Catholicism, Manley Hopkins wrote an anguished letter to Henry Parry Liddon—an Anglican of ultra-High Church sympathies and Gerard’s confessor—begging him to use his influence to save the young man from entering the “cold limbo” of Catholic life in mid-Victorian England.¹ Manley Hopkins employs theological language to express the very secular fear that by deserting the established Church his gifted son will exile himself to the margins of English society.

The writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins in the months leading up to his conversion suggest that he shared his father’s view of Catholicism as an afterlife. For Gerard, however, the rewards of a secular career held little attraction and Rome was not limbo but heaven. In a letter to his father written on the eve of his conversion, Gerard resoundingly rejected Manley Hopkins’s worldly hopes: “The positions you wd. like to see me in wd. have no attraction for me, and surely the happiness of my prospects depends on the happiness to me and not on intrinsic advantages.” To his friend, E.H.Coleridge, he insisted that only the compensations of eternity could “correct and avenge the triviality of this life.”²

Gerard Manley Hopkins was eager to throw the world away. The writings of his Oxford years chart an increasing preoccupation with vocation and asceticism. Poems such as “Easter Communion” and “The Habit of Perfection” explore extreme states of renunciation and mortification. The nun in “Heaven-Haven” has already embraced eternity:

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.

The nun has desired an end to desire, a world without weather. Instead of drawing on the traditional Christian trope of conversion as a new or second birth, Hopkins consigns his convert to silence and stasis. The existence she has chosen conforms closely to mid-Victorian representations of the afterlife in hymns and devotional manuals in which heaven is conceived in static rather than dynamic terms as an eternal sabbath in a temperate realm.³ The nun’s tone of calm finality, of self-assertion at the moment of self-surrender, is

heard again in Hopkins's letter to his father announcing his conversion to Rome: "I am most anxious that you should not think of my future."⁴

Father and son are alike in their representation of conversion to Catholicism as the end of personal history. Both were undoubtedly influenced by John Henry Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, first published in seven pamphlets from April 21 to June 2, 1864.⁵ That summer Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote the first drafts of "Heaven-Haven" in which the nun's desire to pitch her faith "out of the swing of the sea" echoes Newman's description, in his spiritual autobiography, of conversion as "like coming into port after a rough sea"⁶

Since the *Apologia* is not explicitly mentioned in Gerard's letters or diaries, it is impossible to say precisely when he first encountered it. However, Newman's "history of his religious opinions" caused such a stir among Oxford Tractarians that it seems probable that Hopkins had read it by the autumn of 1864. In September of that year he assures his friend, A.W.M. Baillie, that in religious argumentation, Newman, usually considered "the extremest of the extreme," is in fact "a moderate man."⁷ By the time of his conversion, Hopkins's poems and letters contain unmistakable verbal echoes of the *Apologia*. Meanwhile, Manley Hopkins's letters to Liddon and to Gerard indicate that, whether or not he had read Newman's autobiography, by 1866 he was certainly familiar with the public debate that surrounded it. Indeed, the painful drama enacted between Manley Hopkins and his son sometimes appears to have been scripted by John Henry Newman.

Newman's *Apologia* is the central text in the mythology of Victorian Catholic conversion. It is the narrative by which many later converts, including Gerard Manley Hopkins, interpreted and patterned their experience. The *Apologia* was responsible for winning gifted and zealous converts to Rome. Some of these converts had disappointing and frustrating lives, an out come for which the *Apologia* should also be held partly responsible. Although he became a Victorian celebrity, Newman himself was always a Catholic outsider. As a Catholic controversialist, he can take credit for much of the erosion of anti-Catholic prejudice in English society in the latter half of the nineteenth century. But the very characteristics that gained him the respect of the Protestant mainstream—his urbanity, subtlety, and intellectual independence—engendered suspicion in his own communion. His theology was long considered suspect and his piety insufficient. His recognition by Rome was grudging and late. Nor were his opponents, particularly Henry Edward Manning, altogether wrong in their mistrust of him: Newman's brand of Catholicism, although deeply attractive to Anglicans of a certain temper, was not well-attuned to the pastoral needs of England's growing Catholic population. Furthermore, Newman's Catholic critics were rightly uneasy about his efforts to make converts among the younger generation of Tractarians at Oxford. The Catholicism he preached to them was to some extent a faith of his own defining, dangerously enmeshed in the cult of personality. As Wilfrid Ward acknowledges, in his *Life of John Henry Newman*, "For hundreds of young men, Credo in Newmanum was the genuine symbol of faith."⁸

The *Apologia* is more convincing as a painstaking dismemberment of the Anglican compromise than as a defense of Catholicism. It leads converts to Rome without telling them what they will find there. The Catholic position that Newman outlines in his final chapter includes a view of doctrinal evolution that was not shared by Roman authorities, as well as an ill-timed attack on the authoritarian and anti-intellectual Ultramontanes, the most powerful political force in nineteenth-century Catholicism. The English Catholic Church in which Newman's "habits of mind...manner of reasoning...tastes, and virtues" find "a place and thereby a sanctification" is a mythological institution.⁹ The Catholic Church in Victorian England never did find good use for Newman's abilities, still less for those of his most brilliant convert, Gerard Manley Hopkins.¹⁰