HOPKINSIAN INFLUENCES ON THE POETRY OF DYLAN THOMAS

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ABSTRACT

While often assumed, Gerard Manley Hopkins' influence on Dylan Thomas has needed substantiation. By placing the issue of Hopkins' influence on Thomas within critical, historical, and literary contexts, this study explores the issue and demonstrates Hopkins' influence. Summary and assessment of previous critical work on the issue of Hopkins' influence establish the ways in which this study continues, diverges from, or completes work done in the past. Evidence from biographical work on Thomas, as well as his letters and prose, outlines his contact with Hopkins' poems. A discussion of Thomas' Welsh background relates his experience of Wales and Welsh prosody to Hopkins' corresponding experiences. The literary context of the issue of Hopkins' influence on Thomas is established by means of a two-part foundation. First, the possible influence of W. B. Yeats, Wilfred Owen, Hart Crane, and James Joyce on Thomas is distinguished from Hopkins' influence. Second, specifically Hopkinsian areas of influence on Thomas are discussed. These areas of influence serve as a critical framework within which six Thomas poems dating from 1934 to 1951 are analyzed.

PREFACE

Bien que souvent prise pour acquis, l'influence de Gerard Manley Hopkins sur Dylan Thomas aurait besoin de justifications. Cette étude illustre et explore l'impact de ce dernier sur Thomas, en situant son influence dans un contexte litteraire et un cadre critique et historique.

Cette thése, complète dans certains cas et diverge dans d'autres, des résultats et conclusions, ayant déja été établi par les études préliminaires et critiques précedentes.

Du travail bibliographique de Thomas, de ses lettres et de sa prose, on a pu établer et bien mettre en evidence le lien que cet auteur avait avec les poémes et les ouvres de Hopkins. En outre une correspondance et des liaisons directes eutre l'origine galloise de Thomas et son experience du pays de Galle et celle de Hopkins est discutée dans ce papier.

Ainsi, par le biais de deux sources differentes, on a pu établir dans quel contente litteraire s'est exercé l'influence et la portée de l'impact de Hopkins sur Thomas. En premier lieu, on met en relief la possible influence de W. B. Yeats, Wilfred Owen, Hart Crane, et de James Joyce sur Thomas en sus de celle perpetrée par Hopkins. En second lieu, on s'est concentré sur la portée et l'étendue de l'influence Hopkinsienne en elle même. Ce sont ces centres d'interêt qui ont servi comme cadre critique dans lequel six poémes de Thomas, datant de 1934 à 1951 ont été analysés.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In the beginning there was, for me, an as-yet academically unproven conviction that the sound and poetic energy of Dylan Thomas' poems contain echoes of Gerard Manley Hopkins' work. Specifically, I sensed through reading Thomas' poems that they shared a density of words and a verbal inventiveness with Hopkins' poems. This impression was completely emotive rather than academic; I was not yet aware that the issue of Hopkins' influence on Thomas existed. All I had was the poems. Now, of course, that initial subjective impression is surrounded by the opinions of critics and the statements of Thomas himself. While my research has revealed that Hopkins' influence on Thomas has usually been considered an accepted and acceptable issue since at least 1938, often, it has been taken for granted without substantiation. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that Dylan Thomas was greatly influenced by the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Using primary and secondary material, I will explore the issue of Hopkins/Thomas influence and discuss the Hopkinsian elements in Thomas' work.

Included in secondary sources are Thomas biographies and scholarly work or literary criticism on both Thomas and Hopkins, as well as my own October 1989 conversations with Professor Walford Davies at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. I have found both Constantine Fitzgibbon's and Paul Ferris' biographies helpful, and will quote from both works. Since this study centers on the intersection of Thomas' and Hopkins' poems, most secondary sources have been chosen to address this specific subject. Later in the introduction I will summarize and assess the five previous studies devoted to both Hopkins and Thomas, and the articles, reviews,

or book chapters which briefly mention the issue of Hopkins/Thomas influence.

Primary sources include Thomas' and Hopkins' prose, letters, notebooks, and above all, the poems. The edition of Thomas' poems used in this study is the definitive 1988 <u>Collected Poems 1934-1953</u>, edited by Ralph Maud and Walford Davies. With Hopkins' work, I have not been as interested in a definitive, scholarly edition as in the edition or editions which Thomas would have read, namely the first, second, and possibly the third. For this reason, I have studied the work added to the first edition and published in Charles Williams' second edition of Hopkins (1930). Quotations from Hopkins' poems are from the fourth edition (1970), which is based on the first.

Although secondary sources as well as each poet's prose work are essential and will be thoroughly addressed where pertinent, in the end, only Thomas' poems can determine Hopkins' influence on him. Therefore, the fourth chapter of this thesis will contain analyses of the intertextuality between Thomas' and Hopkins' work. Within a Hopkinsian framework, I will discuss six Thomas poems which I believe depend on Hopkinsian techniques and/or themes for much of their sense.

It is important to emphasize at the outset that a systematic and honest proof of Hopkins' influence on Thomas must acknowledge the fact that Thomas diverged significantly from Hopkins both in use of similar poetic techniques and in interpretation of themes. A Thomas poem could not be mistaken for a Hopkins poem; the stylistic parallels are not so direct. This fact is much to Thomas' credit, for it demonstrates that his poetry is rooted in himself, not in another poet. It is also to his credit that, unlike many poets of the 1930's who came under the compelling influence of Charles Williams' second edition of Hopkins' poems, Thomas did not write ineffective Hopkinsian pastiches.

Before specifically addressing Thomas' relation to Hopkins' work, it is helpful to establish a literary/historical context for the impact Hopkins had on the generation of poets and critics who discovered him in the 1930's. Hopkins may have been first published in 1918, but his work was not given much notice until the second edition came out in 1930. In <u>Gerard Manley Hopkins: Background and Critical</u>

<u>Reception of His Work</u>, Todd K. Bender writes that the 1918 edition of 750 copies sold slowly, and was not exhausted until 1928, but that a remarkable change in critical opinion greeted the second edition.[1] Whereas Hopkins' style had been considered obscure in 1918, that very obscurity was embraced as verbally inventive in 1930. Bender makes some useful remarks about the differences between critical and artistic reactions to Hopkins:

> Paradoxically enough, while critics were praising Hopkins for his freedomfrom sterile tradition, for the organic nature of his forms, poets were eagerly assimilating and copying Hopkins' forms in their own poems.[2]

Bender cites poems by Auden, Day Lewis, and T. H. White which model themselves on Hopkins' innovations.[3] Significantly, Thomas is not cited by Bender as a poet who wrote pastiches of Hopkins' style. In this study, it will be shown that Thomas consciously or unconsciously incorporated some of the identifying characteristics of a Hopkins poem into some of his poems, which nevertheless remain completely his own.

As an initial method of demonstrating similarity, if not influence, between Hopkins' and Thomas' work, it is worthwhile to draw stylistic and thematic parallels between specific poems. Examples of similarity are plentiful. Frequently, I have read Thomas poems containing words, phrases, or poetic and syntactic structures which I am convinced must be found verbatim in Hopkins' poems. However, extensive hunting through Hopkins' poems rarely yields direct parallels. Still, the similarities between each poet's work are too clear to be merely coincidental.

Perhaps most noticeable on a first reading is the Hopkins-like rush of inventive words and phrases which fills Thomas' poems. Given even a cursory glance, the poems of both poets are similar in their density of words, their attention paid to sound through such techniques as alliteration, assonance, and consonance, and their employment of compound words. Closer reading yields parallels in word choice. For example, both Hopkins and Thomas use the word "jack" as a generic, slightly humorous, and affectionate term for mankind. Thomas' "If I were tickled by the rub of love," "Altarwise by owl-light" VIII, "Prologue," "Why east wind chills," "Grief thief

of time," and "Jack of Christ" (published in Glyn Jones' <u>The Dragon Has Two Tongues</u>) and Hopkins' "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire," "My own heart let me more have pity on," "The shepherd's brow," and "The Candle Indoors" all contain the word "jack."

Thomas uses phrases and syntactic constructions highly reminiscent of Hopkins. In Thomas' "To Others than You," the first line, "Friend by enemy I call you out" echoes the sense and word choice of Hopkins' line five of "Thou art indeed just": "Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend." Thomas' "If my head hurt a hair's foot" contains the line "There is none, none, none" (1.19), which mirrors Hopkins' "No there's none, there's none, O no there's none" ("The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo":5) in its rhythm, vocabulary, and repetition. There are also similar hyphenated word-groupings such as "the death-stagged scatter-breath" ("When I woke the town spoke":19), which, like Hopkins' "daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon" ("The Windhover":2), set up a reverberation of assonance, alliteration, and rhyme.

Beyond numerous examples of Hopkinsian elements in Thomas' work there are also thematic similarities. Since many poets use the same general themes, attempting to prove influence on the basis of shared themes would be pointless. But the fact that Hopkins and Thomas share some themes is indicative of similar agendas of concern, although each poet does approach his themes from different perspectives. Hopkins' sonnet "To R.B." and Thomas' "On no work of words" begin with the same scenario: a writer complains about not being able to write and in doing so, ends up with a piece of good writing. In Thomas' "After the funeral" and Hopkins' "Felix Randal," each poet deals with the death of someone important to him and fills an authorative role, whether as priest or as Thomas' "bard on a raised hearth" (1.21). In Hopkins' "Spring" and Thomas' "Fern Hill," the shared theme is the exhilaration of new, young life in the face of knowledge of sin and the beginning of destructive time. These poems also have a common use of the word "lovely."

Because Thomas and Hopkins approached their themes from different points of view, similarity between the two poets is best established by demonstrating the stylistic, not thematic, parallels between both poets' work. In any case, demonstrating

similarity, whether stylistic or thematic, is ultimately unsatisfactory, for it does not necessarily prove influence. This thesis differs from much of the work done on Thomas and Hopkins together because it aims to establish influence, not mere similarity.

Hopkins' influence on Thomas has been a literary "given" for over fifty years, but has not been dealt with exhaustively, perhaps because the influence has been taken for granted, but more likely because it appears impossible to prove. Critics are faced with the apparent dead-end of Thomas' 1938 letters to Henry Treece, in which he questions Treece's discovery of Hopkinsian elements, and therefore influence, in his poems. At one point, Thomas writes: "I've never been conscious of Hopkins' influence."[4]

Still, critics persist and, for the most part, maintain that Hopkins did influence Thomas. Addressing Thomas' reply to Treece in his 1965 Dylan Thomas biography, Constantine Fitzgibbon says that when Thomas writes: " 'I have read Hopkins only in the most lackadaisical way; I certainly haven't studied him, or, I regret, any other poet,' he is simply telling a lie, unless he construed the word 'study' as part of a university education."[5] Fitzgibbon's opinion may be unpalatable, but both its existence and its content point to the fact that since Thomas was not easily pinned down, neither will the issue of Hopkins' influence be simple to delineate. Thomas himself would probably have taken great scornful pleasure in observing the intellectual scrambling for an answer to the "Was he, or wasn't he" question.

This scrambling begins in 1938, when Henry Treece took on the ambitious task of writing a critical work about the twenty-three-year-old Thomas, who had only published his first book of poems, 18 Poems, in 1934, and his second, Twenty-Five Poems, in 1936. Treece was convinced that Thomas was under the strong influence of Hopkins, and he set out to prove it in a thirteen-page chapter called "The Debt to Hopkins" in what eventually became Dylan Thomas: Dog Among the Fairies (1949). In his introduction to that book, Treece explains his position:

> It has been fashionable during the last generation to cite Hopkins as a dominant influence whenever the work of a new poet has been under

discussion; often, with little justification and no profit to the reader, writer, or critic. But the case of Dylan Thomas is one where the derivation from the earlier poet is so organic and pronounced as to deserve close attention...[6]

In his chapter, Treece compares Thomas' drawing upon personal conflicts and tensions in order to write poetry to Hopkins' methods. Treece also maintains that both poets' work is technically similar, pointing to a shared "emotional rush of words"[7] comprised of alliteration, assonance, and compounds. Section ii of Treece's chapter employs a critical method which, while helpful in a limited way, seems contrived. Quoting major critical comments on Hopkins, he demonstrates how smoothly Thomas' work fits into these comments.

For example, from Charles Williams' introduction to the 1930 second edition of Hopkins, Treece takes this statement:

> The very race of the words and the lines hurries on our emotion; our minds are left behind, not, as in Swinburne, because they have to suspend their labour until it is wanted, but because they cannot work at a quick enough rate.[8]

Treece then brings Thomas into Williams' text:

> Nowhere may we find, in so few words, a criticism so explanatory, if only superficially so, of the work of Dylan Thomas. The aptness of this comment is obvious in almost all of his work...[9]

Treece ends his study by emphasizing that "conclusive proof of Thomas' derivation from Hopkins lies in the similarity, and very frequently the coincidence of their compound words."[10] The chapter's last page contains comparative lists of the compound words of Hopkins and Thomas.

This first major study devoted specifically to the issue of Hopkins/Thomas influence is handicapped by its occurrence very early in Thomas' career. Treece was only able to address Thomas' early work, and even then, his methods established similarity between Hopkins' and Thomas' work, not necessarily influence. When he sent his work-in-progress to Thomas in 1938, he received the following reply, dated 16 May:

> I was much impressed by the Hopkins chapter, which means I enjoyed it and thought much of it was true. What a lot of work you've put in. I never realised the influence he must have had on me. As I told you before, I have read him

only slightly....I've never been conscious of Hopkins' influence. As a boy of fifteen or sixteen, writing in all sorts of ways false to myself, composing all sorts of academic imitations, borrowing shamelessly and sometimes with the well-suppressed knowledge of a pretense to originality, I find--from looking over many hundreds of those early poems--that there was, and still is, to me, not a sign of Hopkins anywhere. (And I had read him then, as I had read a great deal of poetry, good and bad; or, rather, I had read through his book).[11]

Thomas' ambiguous reply does not clarify or settle the influence question. He may have been lying, as Fitzgibbon suggests, or he may have been more unconsciously than consciously influenced by Hopkins, or, as a young, new, and original poet, he may not have been at all pleased with Treece's eagerness to point out his poetic influences. Whatever the case, judging from his letter, Thomas seems to have accepted Treece's argument, but only with a noticeable measure of skepticism. Treece's chapter is an interesting, if limited, exercise, one which Thomas appears not to have been very enthusiastic about, particularly in later years. But it is the only study of its kind which Thomas was alive to criticize, a fact which increases its value. According to Daniel Jones, Thomas' copy of Dog Among the Fairies was "full of his angry notations."[12]

The second piece of writing dealing with Hopkins' influence on Thomas is a one-and-one-half-page article in the 20 October 1957 New York Times Book Review by J. H. B. Peel. Peel is most interested in demonstrating that "Hopkins was the inventor, Thomas the imitator."[13] Hopkins becomes the standard against which Thomas' work is measured:

...it is to Hopkins, the Victorian, the Christian scholar and gentleman, that we must look in order to assess the Welshman's total achievement.[14]

Like Treece, Peel stresses Thomas' and Hopkins' shared use of alliteration, assonance, and compound words. He contrasts Hopkins' love of God, Wales, and nature with Thomas' work, where "God is usually no more than an interjection, a mere part-of-speech, not always pious," where Wales is "a theme for caricature," and where "a countryman finds no tang of the earth."[15]

Peel makes a point of mentioning that although Thomas "often used a

borrowed style, he used it more adroitly than any other of his contemporaries."[16] Still, he leaves the reader with the impression that Thomas failed at his poetic craft because he fell far short of Hopkins' highly original standard. Peel allows no room for evaluation of Thomas in his own right. Judging from the ten letters to the editor printed 10 November 1957, in response to Peel's article, many readers shared my criticism of Peel's article.

The next pertinent critical work is a much longer one, William A. McBrien's 1958 doctoral dissertation from St. John's University, "Likeness in the Themes and Prosody of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Dylan Thomas." In his introduction, McBrien states that "this study aims to assess the affinities in the poetry"[17] of Hopkins and Thomas. McBrien's five chapters address themes, diction, images, versification, and Thomas and Hopkins as metaphysical poets.

The author proves the similarity of Hopkins and Thomas with examples drawn from the poems, letters, and criticism of both poets. He shows that the two poets used the general themes of external nature, human nature, and the supernatural. In Chapter II, "Diction," McBrien emphasizes both poets' invention of words, use of compounds, synaesthesia, tmesis, synecdoche, and similar phrases and word groupings. Chapter IV on versification lists the usual similarities--alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia--and introduces the Welsh elements of incantation and cynghanedd (a system of "cross-alliteration, internal rhyming, and stress"[18]). In his last chapter, McBrien puts Hopkins and Thomas into a metaphysical framework, using as proof the poets' "colorful, complex diction," their beliefs that "the miniature reflects the mighty," and their employment of the emotion-charged soliloquy.[19] McBrien concludes that Thomas is the lesser poet:

> His strengths and limitations can often be measured by the degree to which he approaches the art of Hopkins and other great poets who wrote in the metaphysical manner.[20]

An appendix at the end lists some cynghaneddion in Thomas' poems.

My thesis must be seen as a continuation of McBrien's work. However, there are some major differences in approach. McBrien's central task is clearly to

demonstrate likeness; I will also deal with the ways in which Thomas diverges from Hopkins. McBrien uses parts of poems to prove his argument; I will analyze five complete poems and one unfinished poem. McBrien does not distinguish Hopkinsian elements from those of W. B. Yeats, Wilfred Owen, Hart Crane, or James Joyce, for example, but I will attempt to delineate specifically Hopkinsian influence and distinguish it from the possible influence of the other writers on Thomas. Because there is an important Welsh factor in both poets' lives and work, I will address the effect of Wales and Welsh prosody on Thomas and Hopkins.

Writing in 1989-1990, I have the advantages of Thomas biographies, published letters, and criticism which McBrien did not have in 1958. In his introduction, McBrien explains his limitations:

> As yet, a small selection of letters and comments by Thomas comprises the only available autobiographical articulation of the poet's preoccupations and even these statements are seldom literary in outlook. In these writings Thomas mentions Hopkins twice.[21]

Since 1958, Constantine Fitzgibbon's 1965 Thomas biography and 1966 Selected Letters, and Paul Ferris' 1977 biography and his edition of The Collected Letters (1985), in addition to other critical work, have added to our knowledge of Thomas.

Like Peel, McBrien limits Thomas, determining his greatness by how closely it approaches Hopkins' excellence. In this way, Thomas appears to depend on Hopkins as the main source of his talent. It is not McBrien's interest to show the ways in which Thomas may have been independent and innovative.

Patricia Gail Chandler's 1970 doctoral dissertation entitled "Gerard Manley Hopkins and Dylan Thomas: A Study in Computational Stylistics" is an exercise in linguistics, not literary criticism. For the Louisiana State University Linguistics Department, Chandler used a computer to compare:

> "the incidence of certain linguistic features in ten sonnets by Gerard Manley Hopkins with the incidence of the same features in ten sonnets by Dylan Thomas. A third source of data is fifteen sonnets by different authors from the late nineteenth century."[22]

The ten sonnets by Thomas are the early "Altarwise by owl-light" poems. Chandler's

linguistic features are thirty variables which include alliteration, obsolete or dialect words, the number of participles or gerunds, the number of hyphenated words, and the number of nouns shared by Thomas and Hopkins.

Chandler concludes that "the Thomas poems are more like the poems from the nineteenth century by different authors than the Hopkins poems are like them."[23] She writes: "It may also be stated that findings of striking similarities in style between Hopkins and Thomas could only result from comparison of Thomas' later poems with those of Hopkins."[24] With their emphasis on the linguistic components of similarity, Chandler's charts are interesting but prove little except a one-dimensional correlation. Chandler demonstrates similarity, but does not discuss possible explanations for that similarity, because more subjective and traditional topics such as theme, imagery, influence, and biography have no place in a computed linguistic study.

To my knowledge, the most recent critical piece devoted solely to Hopkins and Thomas is Jacob Korg's chapter in Hopkins Among the Poets (1985). In the three-page "Hopkins and Dylan Thomas," Korg gives a whirlwind tour of the essential elements of the influence question: the reader's "initial impressions" of "a dense, word-obsessed fabric of interlacing and echoing language,"[25] Thomas' 1938 correspondence with Henry Treece, Thomas' important 1929 essay on "Modern Poetry," the poets' phonetic and rhythmic effects, and their different approaches to religion.

Korg's first paragraph summarizes the important similarities between Thomas and Hopkins, mentioning "distortions of syntax, word-order and usage," obscure subject matter, employment of colloquialisms, images with sacramental values, and controlled "metric and formal elements."[26] The result in both cases is a poem which is a "carefully crafted, integrated work of art."[27]

Korg concludes with a discussion of Thomas' and Hopkins' uses of religious imagery and themes, pointing out the deep difference between Hopkins' use of religious elements as "the foundations of a world vision," and Thomas' religion as the "imaginative legacy of childhood, like his early thoughts about birth, sex, and

death."[28] Korg's essay holds a great deal for three pages, but its length naturally limits its usefulness.

Interspersed between the appearances of the five studies of both Hopkins and Thomas have been articles, reviews, or parts of books which mention Hopkins in connection with Thomas. Usually, the reference is no more than several sentences long. The work done here sometimes places the influence issue within a larger context, most often that of Welsh poetics. Occasionally, writers assume Hopkins' influence on or similarity to Thomas without proof. These brief references to the question of Hopkins/Thomas influence will be placed chronologically in two categories: first, those which deal generally with the issue and second, those which place it in the context of Wales and Welsh poetics.

General references to Thomas' debt to Hopkins can be fleeting and seemingly obligatory. Perhaps the critical assumption in the 1930's was that every young poet within a certain age-bracket must have been influenced by the Hopkins revolution. The first documented mention of Thomas' debt is Philip Blair Rice's 1939 review of New Directions 1938, in which Thomas was represented. Rice's positive review makes a quick reference to Hopkins, and then moves on to discuss Thomas' work:

> Of the poets the young Welshman Dylan Thomas is the most gifted and original, despite his frequent reliance upon Hopkins and the early Auden.[29]

Rice's reference is slightly accusatory; the next article, Francis Scarfe's "The Poetry of Dylan Thomas" (1940), makes similarity to Hopkins seem a great achievement:

> At his best, Thomas reminds us of the Old Testament, James Joyce and Hopkins all at once. It matters little whether he reads them: his language partakes of all three.[30]

In the 1947 Sewanee Review, Robert Lowell reacts positively to Thomas' Hopkinsian qualities:

> [Thomas'] ear is infallible, and the splendor of his devices reminds one of Hopkins.[31]

While he does not attempt to demonstrate influence or even likeness, C. Day Lewis does make a comparison of the images in Thomas' "After the funeral" and Hopkins' "Harry Ploughman" in The Poetic Image (1947). Lewis mentions one point of

similarity:

> ...a constant breaking down of distinction between the senses, so that aural, visual, tactual qualities are perpetually interfused within the image sequences and even within separate images, as they are in the poetry of Hopkins and Edith Sitwell.[32]

Lewis concludes that Thomas' poem is stronger and more complete than Hopkins' "froth and flurry of images."[33]

Like Philip Blair Rice, Kenneth Rexroth tries to trace Thomas' poetic ancestry in his introduction to The New British Poets (1950). Rexroth begins, somewhat more positively than Rice, with Hopkins:

> Many elements went to form [Thomas'] idiom, all bound together by the reeling excitement of a poetry-intoxicated schoolboy. First, I would say, Hopkins' metric and his peculiar, neurasthenic irritability of perception.[34]

Thomas' friend Daniel Jones lists Thomas' active influences as including Yeats, Richard Aldington, Sacheverell Sitwell, D. H. Lawrence, and Hopkins in Dylan Thomas: The Legend and the Poet (1960).[35]

Statements in William York Tindall's 1962 A Reader's Guide to Dylan Thomas are typically supportive of Hopkinsian influence:

> The poems of Thomas suggest his acquaintance with Hopkins. .Embarrassed by this heavy debt and uneasy with a Jesuit, Thomas spoke of him reluctantly, and, when he did, claimed independence.[36]

Ralph Maud is one of the few critics skeptical about any Hopkinsian influence on Thomas. In his 1963 Entrances to Dylan Thomas' Poetry he writes the following:

> How convenient it would be if what we learned in reading Hopkins, the favorite candidate for the general influence on the poet, could be readily applied to Thomas. But the similarity between Hopkins and Thomas is only superficial.[37]

In his introduction to Poet in the Making: The Notebooks of Dylan Thomas (1968), Maud also expresses his doubt as to any Hopkinsian influence on Thomas. Quoting part of Thomas' 16 May 1938, letter to Henry Treece in which Thomas ends with "But out of all that muddle, I see no Hopkins," Maud concludes that "the poet's disclaimer puts great onus on those who would illustrate his debt to Hopkins."[38]

Three years earlier than Poet in the Making, Constantine Fitzgibbon's 1965

Life of Dylan Thomas makes the previously-quoted claim that Thomas lied in responding to Treece about Hopkins' influence. In 1966, William Moynihan echoed earlier arguments about Thomas' poetic ancestry, writing in The Craft and Art of Dylan Thomas that Thomas most resembles Hopkins stylistically,[39] but that "Thomas cannot lay claim to having been an innovator. Hopkins anticipated nearly all of Thomas' auditory practices."[40]

One recent example of the way in which Hopkins' influence on Thomas is assumed is a sentence in Joseph J. Feeney, S. J.'s 1989 "Earth is the Fairer":

> With Tennyson, Browning and Arnold, [Hopkins] is considered a major
> Victorian poet, and he is also hailed as a tradition-breaking modernist who
> influenced such notable 20th-century poets as W. H. Auden, Robert Lowell,
> Sylvia Plath, David Jones, and Dylan Thomas.[41]

Clearly, the question of Hopkins' influence on Thomas is not a dead issue; nor has it necessarily been answered completely.

Critics placing the influence issue within the context of Welsh poetics address the general argument that Hopkins' influence is demonstrated in Thomas' use of Welsh poetic techniques which he most likely learned from Hopkins' work. Thomas was Welsh, but spoke no Welsh and apparently made no formal study of Welsh writing. Hopkins studied Welsh language and prosody during his stay at St. Beuno's from 1874-1877. If one important area of similarity in their work is the intricate rhyming, alliteration, assonance, and consonance central to Welsh prosody, then Thomas could have learned the techniques from Hopkins, whom he had read. The argument manifests itself in different levels of enthusiastic reception and uninterested dismissal.[42]

Some critics are absolutely convinced that typically Welsh prosodic patterns in Thomas could only have come from Hopkins. Raymond Garlick writes in 1954 that "the Welshness of Dylan Thomas cannot be too much stressed."[43] He continues by describing two Welsh poetic devices he has discovered in Thomas' work--cynghanedd and dyfalu ("the heaping up of images to qualify one substantive").[44] Garlick claims that "Dylan Thomas' master in these matters without doubt was Fr. Gerard Manley Hopkins."[45] Garlick states that "again and again echoes of these devices appear in

the poetry of Dylan Thomas in testimony to his diligent study of Hopkins."[46] If only the issue were that simple. Unfortunately, Thomas seems not to have studied anything diligently.

Similarly, in 1961 Aneirin Talfan Davies writes that, for him, the only possible source for Thomas' poetic Welshness is Hopkins:

> ...whatever vestiges of the Welsh cynghanedd are to be found in [Thomas'] verse, they are undoubtedly echoes of the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins.[47]

A. T. Davies does caution readers against taking it for granted that Thomas knew Welsh and "the intricacies of traditional Welsh metrics."[48]

Most critics are more moderate than A. T. Davies and Raymond Garlick. Instead of making claims of Hopkinsian influence, Babette Deutsch simply mentions Hopkins' and Thomas' Welsh experiences, highlighting an important difference between the two: "The windy music, the richness of verbal texture that Hopkins rejoiced to discover were Thomas' birthright."[49] Acknowledging Thomas' use of Welsh techniques but also quick to point out the differences in Hopkins' and Thomas' approaches to those techniques, Geoffrey Moore writes that:

> It has been suggested that [Thomas] learnt from Hopkins, who made a thorough, scholarly study of Welsh metres and developed in particular the idea of "consonantal chime" which he got from "cynghanedd." But Thomas is more tricky than Hopkins....Where Hopkins uses effects of rhyme and alliteration for the sake of more music, Thomas will, when he feels like it, amuse himself with patterns which add nothing to the music of the verse at all and, in fact, have only a curiosity-value.[50]

In The Dragon Has Two Tongues (1968) Glyn Jones introduces several possible answers to the question of Thomas' Welsh prosodic influence via Hopkins--including Thomas' employment of cynghanedd:

> Several English critics have from time to time credited Dylan with a knowledge of Welsh metrics, but I feel sure that the few traces of cynghanedd in his work appear there by accident, or as a result of the influence of Hopkins, whose knowledge of this involved study was considerable.[51]

Later on, Jones speculates on Thomas' reading habits:

> Dylan's 'influences,' whatever they were, did not reveal themselves at all in his first book. It was not until many years later that he began to show that at

some time or another he had been reading Hopkins and Yeats.[52]

Jones also raises the possibility that Thomas learned about the typically Welsh technique of syllable-counting from his 1939 article on "Hopkins and Welsh Prosody" in Life and Letters Today, a magazine which Thomas read and contributed to at that time.[53]

Walford Davies goes back to the assertion that "Hopkins's own poetry could itself have mediated the influence"[54] of Welsh poetry:

> Many poets imitated Hopkins in the 1930's, yet they did so in obvious ways that the young Dylan Thomas did not follow. (It is Thomas's late poetry that most obviously shows signs of Hopkins).[55]

Davies is careful to point out that Thomas' Welshness did not carry with it linguistic and academic familiarity with Welsh itself and with poetry produced in Welsh.

For other critics, the suggestion of Thomas' connection with Welsh prosody through Hopkins is largely dismissed. In Entrances to Dylan Thomas' Poetry, Ralph Maud's suggestion of Thomas' accidentally falling into Welsh patterns agrees with Glyn Jones', but Maud does not offer Jones' escape clause of Hopkinsian influence:

> Again, how convenient if the key to Thomas were in Welsh poetry. But Welsh poetry is more difficult to write than read, and Thomas had no incentive to do either. Those who would like Thomas to be a "bard" and yet acknowledge that he did not know or study Welsh see Hopkins as the germ-carrier. But the poet cannot be smickled with Welsh by casual contact. The restrictive Welsh forms by their very nature require labored, self-conscious application. Hopkins wrote a couple of poems in Welsh and comes as close as anyone to utilizing cynghanedd in English; but if there are one or two lines in Thomas that fit the Welsh patterns it is purely accidental.[56]

Like Maud, Paul Ferris seems to dismiss the possibility of Hopkinsian influence. In his 1977 biography of Thomas, he takes Thomas at his word:

> One theory is that Thomas was influenced via Gerard Manley Hopkins who taught himself Welsh and imported some features of Welsh prosody into his verse. When Treece wrote to Thomas to point out Hopkins's influence, Thomas wrote back to deny it. [57]

Ferris does mention that Thomas "wrote a number of poems within strict syllabic patterns of rhyme and metre," a practice which "is characteristic of classic Welsh verse," but which Thomas may have used for "technical virtuosity for its own sake"[58]

NOTES

1. Todd K. Bender, <u>Gerard Manley Hopkins: Background and Critical Reception of His Work</u> (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), p. 10.

2. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 30.

3. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 31.

4. Dylan Thomas, <u>Dylan Thomas: The Collected Letters</u>, ed. by Paul Ferris, (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1985), pp. 296-297.

5. Constantine Fitzgibbon, <u>The Life of Dylan Thomas</u> (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1965), p. 242).

6. Henry Treece, <u>Dylan Thomas: Dog Among the Fairies</u> (2nd ed.; London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1956), p. 41.

7. <u>Ibid.</u>, 58.

8. Charles Williams, "Introduction," <u>Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins</u>. ed. by Charles Williams (2nd ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. xi.

9. Treece, <u>Dog Among the Fairies</u>, p. 52.

10. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 59.

11. Dylan Thomas, <u>Collected Letters</u>, p. 296.

12. Daniel Jones, ed., "Notes," <u>Dylan Thomas: The Poems</u>, Everyman's Library (revised ed.; London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1985), p. 267.

13. J. H. B. Peel, "The Echoes in the Booming Voice," <u>The New York Times Book Review</u>, 20 October 1957, p. 40.

14. <u>Ibid</u>.

15. <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 40-41.

16. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 41.

17. William A. McBrien, "Likeness in the Themes and Prosody of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Dylan Thomas" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, St. John's University, 1958), p. iii.

18. Anthony Conran, <u>The Cost of Stangeness: essays on the English poets of Wales</u>. (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1982), p. 75.

19. McBrien, "Likeness in Themes and Prosody," p. 143.

20. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 145.

21. <u>Ibid</u>., p. vii.

22. Patricia Gail Chandler, "Gerard Manley Hopkins and Dylan Thomas: A Study in Computational Stylistics" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1970), p. vi.

23. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 97.

24. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 99.

25. Jacob Korg, "Hopkins and Dylan Thomas," in <u>Hopkins Among the Poets: Studies in Modern Responses to Gerard Manley Hopkins</u>, ed. by Richard F. Giles (The International Hopkins Association Monograph Series: Monograph #3, 1985), p. 91.

26. <u>Ibid</u>.

27. <u>Ibid</u>.

28. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 92.

29. Philip Blair Rice, "Twenty-Five Directions," review of <u>New Directions 1938</u>, ed. by James Laughlin, in <u>The Kenyon Review</u> 1, Winter, 1939, p. 109.

30. Francis Scarfe, "The Poetry of Dylan Thomas," <u>Horizon</u> II (November, 1940), p. 228.

31. Robert Lowell, "Thomas, Bishop, and Williams," <u>Sewanee Review</u> 55, (Summer, 1947), p. 493.

32. C. Day Lewis, <u>The Poetic Image</u> (London: Jonathan Cape, 1947), p. 125.

33. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 126.

34. Kenneth Rexroth, ed., <u>The New British Poets</u> (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1950), p. xviii.

35. Daniel Jones, in <u>Dylan Thomas. The Legend and the Poet</u>, ed. by E. W. Tedlock (London: Heinemann Publishers, 1960), p. 17.

36. William York Tindall, <u>A Reader's Guide to Dylan Thomas</u> (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Cudahy, 1962), p. 13.

37. Ralph Maud, <u>Entrances to Dylan Thomas' Poetry</u> (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), p. 4.

38. Dylan Thomas, <u>Poet in the Making: The Notebooks of Dylan Thomas</u>, ed. by Ralph Maud (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1968), p. 16.

39. William T. Moynihan, <u>The Craft and Art of Dylan Thomas</u> (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 87.

40. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 90.

41. Joseph J. Feeney, S. J., "Earth is the Fairer: The Centennial of Gerard Manley Hopkins," <u>America</u> 161 (August 26-September 2, 1989), p. 103.

42. I am aware of, but was unable to obtain, Alan Walker's 1966 master's thesis for the University of Toronto: "The Influence of Welsh Poetry on that of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Dylan Thomas." Ordered 16 November 1989, the thesis had unfortunately not arrived by 19 March 1990.

43. Raymond Garlick, "The Endless Breviary," <u>The Month</u> 11 (March, 1954), p. 143.

44. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 144.

45. <u>Ibid</u>.

46. <u>Ibid</u>.

47. Aneirin Talfan Davies, "William Barnes, Gerard M. Hopkins, Dylan Thomas: The Influence of Welsh Prosody on Modern English Poetry," in <u>Proceedings of the IIIrd Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association</u> (The Hague: Mouton, 1961), p. 117.

48. <u>Ibid</u>.

49. Babette Deutsch, "The Orient Wheat," <u>The Virginia Quarterly Review</u> 27 (Spring, 1961), p. 222.

50. Geoffrey Moore, "Dylan Thomas," <u>The Kenyon Review</u> 17 (Spring, 1955), p. 265.

51. Glyn Jones, <u>The Dragon Has Two Tongues: Essays on Anglo-Welsh writers and writing</u> (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1968), p. 179.

52. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 182.

53. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 180.

54. Walford Davies, <u>Dylan Thomas</u> (Philadelphia: Milton Keynes, 1986), p. 96.

55. <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 96-97.

56. Ralph Maud, <u>Entrances</u>, p. 5.

57. Paul Ferris, <u>Dylan Thomas</u> (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 115.

58. <u>Ibid</u>.

CHAPTER TWO: BIOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE

Aside from the mass of literary speculation on the issue of Hopkins' influence on Thomas, there are the few biographical facts and memories of friends which help to further define the issue. Thomas' prose, letters, biographies, and the writing of those who had contact with him all help confirm the literary speculation that Thomas had given Hopkins more than a cursory glance.

First, however, it is imperative to dispel the notion that Thomas approached Hopkins in the way that the methodical, scholarly Hopkins approached Welsh prosody, for example. Any reader of Paul Ferris' and Constantine Fitzgibbon's biographies will quickly realize that Thomas was not a scholar; in fact, he seems to have made a concerted effort to shun the academic throughout his life, whether it was a Swansea Grammar School class or a question-and-answer period at an American university. Fitzgibbon writes that Thomas "found the academic approach, particularly to poems, distasteful in the extreme."[1]

Of his school days, Thomas himself said that:

> ...neither particularly subtle nor honest, I must say I was awful. Whether this was because of stupidity, or arrogance I am still not asking myself. But my proper education consisted of the liberty to read whatever I cared to. I read indiscriminately and all the time, with my eyes hanging out on stalks.[2]

Thomas may not have studied Hopkins carefully (he told Treece in 1938 that he had read Hopkins "lackadaisically" and certainly had not studied him) but, as Walford Davies points out, "the young Thomas was fully aware of Hopkins."[3]

In December 1929, not long after his fifteenth birthday, Thomas published his essay "Modern Poetry" in the Swansea Grammar School Magazine. The essay is perceptive and gives a necessarily limited survey of modern poetry, beginning with Hopkins. It is important for its implications and for its content. The magazine's date of publication indicates that Thomas had access to the 1918 edition of Hopkins'

poems. The second edition of Hopkins did not come out until November, 1930.[4] Thomas' likely source for the 1918 edition would be the library of Thomas' father. D. J. Thomas had a good library and, according to Fitzgibbon, prided himself on "being modern"[5] when it came to poetry. Walford Davies believes that D. J. would have possessed the first edition of Hopkins, noting that D. J. is known to have bought D. H. Lawrence's work, another "modern" writer.[6]

Perhaps Thomas himself owned a copy of Hopkins in 1929. On 25 December 1933, he described his library in a letter to Pamela Hansford Johnson:

> Our books are divided into two sections, Dad's and mine. Dad has a room full of the accepted stuff, from Chaucer to Henry James....His library contains nearly everything that a respectable highbrow library should contain. My books, on the other hand, are nearly all poetry, and mostly modern at that. I have the collected poems of Manley Hopkins, Stephen Crane, Yeats, de la Mare, Osbert Sitwell, Wilfred Owen, W. H. Auden, & T. S. Eliot, volumes of poetry by Aldous Huxley, Sacheverell Sitwell, Sassoon, and Harold Monro...[7]

Another probable point of contact with Hopkins is Thomas' twenty-eight-year friendship with Daniel Jones, whom Thomas met in the lower playground of Swansea Grammar School. In his biography, Fitzgibbon describes the atmosphere and literary contents of the Jones home:

> In Dan Jones's home, Warmley, Dylan found the most modern literature of the day, Joyce, Stein, Eliot, Pound, the Sitwells, as well as those rediscovered writers of the past who were then exerting a strong influence on young poets, Blake, Gerard Manley Hopkins, the minor Elizabethans.[8]

In any event, in 1929 Thomas had sufficient familiarity with contemporary poets and poetic movements to write an articulate essay. Thomas gives prime importance to Hopkins, for he takes as his theme in the essay the new poetic freedom which was based in Hopkins' work:

> The most important element that characterises our poetical modernity is freedom--essential and unlimited--freedom of form, of structure, of imagery and of idea. It had its roots in the obscurity of Gerard Manley Hopkins' lyrics, where, though more often than not common metres were recognised, the language was violated and estranged by the efforts of compressing the already unfamiliar imagery.[9]

In one paragraph, the teenaged Thomas pins down some of the essentials of

Hopkins: the obscurity, the unorthodox manipulation of language, and the unfamiliar (or at least out of place) imagery. Ralph Maud suggests that Thomas disapproved of Hopkins in the essay and that:

> In spite of surface appearances, Thomas certainly did not intend to model himself on Hopkins; and prolonged acquaintance with the works of the two poets seems to confirm that their obscurities are essentially dissimilar.[10]

Interpretation of Thomas' brief analysis of Hopkins need not be limited to the negative. While the words "violated," "estranged," and "unfamiliar" are certainly negative at face value, within the context of Thomas' paragraph they are perhaps extreme, but completely in keeping with Hopkins' own style. For Thomas to have written the paragraph, he would have had to read Hopkins and think about him. Hopkins made at least an intellectual impression on Thomas--"Modern Poetry" is positive proof.

Beyond "Modern Poetry" and the references which Thomas made to Hopkins in his letters, particularly those to Henry Treece in 1938, there are very few more documented instances of his contact with Hopkins' work. What remains are the memories or opinions of his friends.

Dr. Daniel Jones makes some very interesting comments about Thomas, Hopkins, and Treece in My Friend Dylan Thomas:

> Any suggestion that he was influenced by Hopkins flew Dylan into a rage: a significant reaction. It was this suggestion, even more than the chapter entitled 'Is Dylan a Fake?', that infuriated Dylan when he read Henry Treece's Dylan Thomas (1949). Alluding to the popular song of the time, he said to me bitterly, 'Only God could make a Treece.' The offending chapter, 'The Debt to Hopkins', ends with a parallel list of compound words used by Hopkins and Dylan, for example 'manshape', 'Jackself', 'Jackchrist', that clinches the argument, if indeed there really is an argument.[11]

Jones does not try to explain exactly why Thomas was angered by the suggestion of Hopkins' influence. Thomas may have been offended by any suggestion that he had been influenced by anyone at all, or offended by Treece himself, or angered by the specific suggestion of Hopkinsian influence. Thomas may not have liked the idea of being influenced by Hopkins, but he does appear to have liked Hopkins' work, judging from comments by two other friends of Thomas.

In <u>The Dragon Has Two Tongues</u>, Thomas' friend Glyn Jones describes their first meeting:

> I had enjoyed my first meeting with Dylan immensely, feeling we had a bond in such things as our Welsh backgrounds, our approval in general of the work appearing in <u>The Adelphi</u> and <u>The Criterion</u>, and in our admiration for Lawrence, Hopkins, Joyce, Yeats, and Wyndham Lewis.[12]

A similar comment comes from Aneirin Talfan Davies, of the B.B.C.'s Welsh service, who writes that "Thomas was a great admirer of Hopkins."[13]

Another documented point of contact with Hopkins is Thomas' public readings, which sometimes included Hopkins poems. In fact, the poet Roy Campbell, Thomas' friend, writes that Thomas "was best at the 'wild and wooly' poets....It was with Blake and Manley Hopkins that Dylan became almost superman."[14] Paul Ferris records one instance of Thomas reading Hopkins--"The Golden Echo and the Leaden Echo"-- at New York City's YM-YWHA Poetry Center in 1952.[15] Hopkins was part of Thomas' repertoire, just as Yeats, or Auden, or Hardy were.

Assessing the evidence gathered from Thomas biographies, his essay "Modern Poetry," his letters, and the writings of his friends, I conclude that Hopkins' work was a part of Thomas' life since at least 1929 until his death in 1953. Thomas was aware of Hopkins to the extent that he began an essay on modern poetry with Hopkins, he read Hopkins at public readings, and he strongly disliked the suggestion that he had been influenced by Hopkins. Surely a force as great as Hopkins' verbal and rhythmical innovations, present to Thomas throughout his life, would have had an effect on Thomas' work.

Because critics have often been eager to view the Hopkins/Thomas influence question within the context of both poets' experiences in Wales, it is necessary to clarify the implications of Thomas' Welshness. Thomas knew no Welsh beyond what Glyn Jones calls "the greeting stage."[16] Growing up in the industrial town of Swansea, he was part of a middle-class society interested in making economic progress. Speaking Welsh at home was not one of D. J. Thomas' criteria for success.

In fact, Welsh was sometimes viewed as an obstacle to upward mobility. Andrew Sinclair writes that Thomas' father, "who did speak Welsh, refused to teach his son the language and even felt a certain contempt for those who did speak and write it."[17] Ironically, D. J. taught Welsh at the Swansea Grammar School; however, there is no evidence of Dylan Thomas' ever receiving formal instruction in Welsh.

Still, there is the fact that Thomas grew up within an interesting linguistic context defined by the use or abandonment of the Welsh language. If Welsh was not a part of Thomas' life at home on Cwmdonkin Drive, it was part of the Wales he experienced beyond his house. One important early and regular close contact with Welsh is the school holidays spent at Fernhill, the farm of Thomas' maternal aunt, where the daily language was Welsh.[18] Thomas may not have acquired enough Welsh to converse, but he would have been immersed in a society whose un-English linguistic rhythms and sounds may have deeply affected him. As Geoffrey Moore writes:

> The spirit of place and of country is an inescapable influence. To this degree, and to the degree that Dylan Thomas opened himself to the scenes and people and manners of the place in which he was born, it is meaningful to talk about the Welsh quality of his work.[19]

Beyond Thomas' contact with spoken Welsh, there is the question of his acquaintance with Welsh poetry and poetic techniques.

This literary issue is, of course, particularly important in the light of some critics' insistence that Hopkins' influence on Thomas lies in both poets' use of Welsh poetic forms. Judging from a letter to Henry Treece on 1 June 1938, it is clear that Thomas was aware of the question of the Welsh character of his poetry:

> I wonder whether you've considered writing anything--perhaps only a few paragraphs--about the Welshness of my poetry: this is often being mentioned in reviews and criticism, and I've never understood it. I mean I've never understood this racial talk, 'his Irish talent', 'undoubtedly Scotch inspiration', apart from whiskey.[20]

Evidence from Aneirin Talfan Davies shows that Thomas had received some casual instruction in Welsh poetic techniques: "I can testify to having discussed with him, on many occasions and in fair detail, the intricacies of cynghanedd."[21]

Thomas himself demonstrates at least a general familiarity with Welsh prosody in his 5 January 1946 B.B.C. broadcast on "Welsh Poets." Describing the poems of his friend Glyn Jones, Thomas says:

> Glyn Jones...is one of the few young Welshmen writing English poetry to-day who has a deep knowledge of Welsh poetry itself, and he has tried, in several poems, to use the very difficult ancient bardic forms. These forms rely on a great deal of assonance and alliteration and most complicated internal rhyming.[22]

Because Glyn Jones was Thomas' friend, it makes sense to assume that Thomas would have discussed Welsh poetic forms with him. Walford Davies points out that Thomas had Welsh-speaking friends[23] who could have told him the basics of cynghanedd, for instance. Davies believes that Welsh prosody was an "important influence on Thomas: one example of the kind of poetic tradition he was working in and wanted to be a part of."[24]

Thomas' public readings are another way in which his Welsh background may have directed his expression. A listener of Thomas' recordings of his poems remembers most clearly the drama and definite rhythm (possibly sprung rhythm) of his reading style. Many critical comments on Thomas' readings tie them in to the long tradition of Welsh public speaking. Descriptive words like "incantatory" and "bardic" link Thomas to Welsh poets by connotation.

In My Friend Dylan Thomas, Daniel Jones compares Thomas' style of reading to the Welsh Nonconformist preaching hwyl, described by Jones as "a very slow, prolonged crescendo of emotion through all the degrees from quiet detachment and flatness to passionate involvement and fervour."[25] Jones writes that Thomas' "great-uncle, the Rev. William Thomas, was famous in Wales for his sermons, as well as for his poetry, and it is not too far-fetched to assume that this style of oratory was in Thomas' blood."[26] Genetic speculations aside, it is appropriate to note here that both Thomas and Hopkins urged that their poems should be read aloud.[27]

Relating Thomas to Hopkins via Wales is by no means an exercise in direct correlation. Hopkins seems to have exploited his three years at St. Beuno's enthusiastically; Thomas left Wales eagerly in 1934, when he was twenty,[28] but

returned throughout his life to the country which appears to have given him his voice and his particular style of expression. Thomas told William York Tindall that he was "content to hint the Welsh techniques he lacked" and he disclaimed any "deep Celtic significance" in image and theme.[29] Consciously, Thomas may have spoken accurately, but in 1934 he did write that at least one poem, "I dreamed my genesis," "was more or less based on Welsh rhythms."[30] And in 1949 at the inauguration of the Czechoslovak Writers' Union, Thomas began his speech with: "As the only Englishman present at this meeting I must say, by way of introduction, that I am Welsh."[31] Clearly, Thomas' Welsh background, if not the Welshness of his work, is an important element of his identity.

That both Thomas and Hopkins were placed in a Welsh context for parts of their lives is important. Personality and ideological differences led each poet to address this context in almost opposite ways, and few poets diverge so greatly in their views on the relationship between poetry as activity and as abstract theory. Hopkins approached Welsh and Welsh poetry as a scholar; Thomas approached Wales with a measure of ambivalence--Wales, it seems, was far more important to Thomas than he was sometimes willing to admit. As a geographical and emotional context for both poets, Wales is one definite point of similarity between Thomas' and Hopkins' lives. Whether or not that context affected both poets' work is less easily proven. But the similarities between the general poetic agendas of Welsh poets and of Thomas and Hopkins bring us beyond biography and into the possibility that Thomas and Hopkins shared some of the Welsh poetic techniques and ideas. Thomas brought to his work his personal experiences, which included life in Wales; he also seems to have brought a knowledge, however elementary, of Welsh prosody. Hopkins' work remains the best candidate for the medium of this knowledge put into practice. Thomas may not have paid much attention to disembodied theories of poetic technique, but he did notice technique manifested in a good poet.

NOTES

1. Constantine Fitzgibbon, <u>The Life of Dylan Thomas</u>, p. 46.

2. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 44.

3. Walford Davies, <u>Dylan Thomas</u>, p. 107.

4. <u>The English Catalogue of Books</u> XII (London: The Publishers' Circular, Ltd., 1931), p. 761.

5. Constantine Fitzgibbon, <u>The Life of Dylan Thomas</u>, p. 26.

6. Conversation with Walford Davies, Aberystwyth: 23 October 1989.

7. Dylan Thomas, <u>Dylan Thomas: The Collected Letters</u>, ed. by Paul Ferris (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1985), p. 76.

8. Constantine Fitzgibbon, <u>The Life of Dylan Thomas</u>, p. 59.

9. Dylan Thomas, <u>The Early Prose Writings</u>, ed. by Walford Davies (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1971), p. 83.

10. Dylan Thomas, <u>Poet in the Making</u>, p. 16.

11. Daniel Jones, <u>My Friend Dylan Thomas</u> (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1977), p. 70.

12. Glyn Jones, <u>The Dragon Has Two Tongues</u>, p. 177.

13. Aneirin Talfan Davies, "William Barnes, Gerard M. Hopkins, Dylan Thomas," p. 118.

14. Roy Campbell in <u>Dylan Thomas: The Legend and the Poet</u>, p. 43.

15. Paul Ferris, Dylan Thomas, p. 303.

16. Glyn Jones, The Dragon Has Two Tongues, p. 179.

17. Andrew Sinclair, Dylan Thomas: Poet of His People (London: Michael Joseph, 1975), p. 17.

18. Walford Davies, Dylan Thomas, p. 75.

19. Geoffrey Moore, "Dylan Thomas," p. 265.

20. Dylan Thomas, Collected Letters, p. 301.

21. Aneirin Talfan Davies, "William Barnes, Gerard M. Hopkins, Dylan Thomas," p. 118.

22. Dylan Thomas, Quite Early One Morning (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1954), p. 149.

23. Walford Davies, Dylan Thomas, p. 97.

24. Conversation with Walford Davies, Aberystwyth: 24 October 1989.

25. Daniel Jones, My Friend Dylan Thomas, p. 75.

26. Ibid., p. 76.

27. Walford Davies, Dylan Thomas, p. 74.

28. Paul Ferris, Dylan Thomas, p. 119.

29. William York Tindall, Reader's Guide, p. 11.

30. Dylan Thomas, Collected Letters, p. 117.

31. Constantine Fitzgibbon, The Life of Dylan Thomas, p. 346.

CHAPTER THREE: CRITERIA
Criteria I: Thomas' Other Influences

Proving Hopkins' influence is both a positive and a negative task; that is, it means highlighting what can only be Hopkinsian and dispensing with what is possibly similar to Hopkins' work but which is more likely the influence of another poet. Critics have suggested from the beginning of Thomas' publishing career a fairly consistent list of other possible influences which could be confused with Hopkins. The main names are W. B. Yeats, Wilfred Owen, Hart Crane, and James Joyce. Thomas was, of course, aware of this list and gave some comments on it (none of which holds the apparent fury he displayed to Daniel Jones at suggestions of Hopkins' influence). Since I am acknowledging Thomas' possible debt to this list of influences but am centering on Hopkins, I must establish criteria for differentiating between Hopkins and the other writers. In order to do this, I will determine what is specifically Hopkinsian first by showing what specifically belongs to the styles of the other influences. Where pertinent, Thomas' comments on these writers will be used.

Dylan Thomas and W. B. Yeats

In his grammar school essay "Modern Poetry," Dylan Thomas follows his description of Hopkins' poetic freedom with one of Yeats' style:

> At the head of the twilight poets, W. B. Yeats introduces a fragile, unsubstantial world, covered with mysticism and mythological shadows. His entire poetic creation is brittle, and his cry,

> I have spread my dreams under your feet,
> Tread softly because you tread on my dreams,

is justified.[1]

Clearly, Thomas was aware of Yeats and Hopkins at the same time in his adolescence. At least for a period in his life Thomas owned a copy of Yeats' poems, as proven in the library list in his December 1933 letter to Pamela Hansford Johnson.

Like Hopkins, Yeats was a literary force present to Thomas throughout his life. William York Tindall writes that Thomas said Yeats was his favorite poet, "yet he did not own a copy of his favorite, and, when called upon by the B.B.C. to read some poems of Yeats, Thomas had to ask Vernon Watkins what to read."[2] During Thomas' visits to America at the end of his life, he read Yeats' poems to most of his audiences.[3]

Critics delineating Yeats' influence on Thomas emphasize specific Yeatsian techniques or approaches to subjects. For instance, Russell Astley's "Stations of the Breath: End Rhyme in the Verse of Dylan Thomas" addresses Thomas' experimentation with different types of rhymes, including assonance and consonance. Astley states that Thomas proceeded from innovations of Yeats and Owen, and that his "earlier rhyming was very much influenced by the consonantal end rhymes of William Butler Yeats."[4] While he claims that Yeats' "prosody remains relevant to Thomas' work long after other influences became more obvious,"[5] he also mentions Thomas' own innovations in giving precedence to consonance above true rhyme.[6]

Other possible points of influence between Yeats and Thomas are Thomas' use of refrain lines in such poems as "I have longed to move away" and "And death shall have no dominion"[7] and the "religious or visionary"[8] aspect of poetry which Jacob Korg writes Thomas shared with "Vaughan, Hopkins, and Yeats as well as with Blake."[9]

Perhaps the clearest proof of Yeats' influence is a comment Thomas made to Donald Hall. In his Remembering Poets, Hall writes:

> I told him that "Do Not Go Gentle," his villanelle, was a favorite of mine. He

shook his head again. "Why don't you like it?" I said.

"Because I didn't write it," he said.

I understood him, when he said it. "You mean Yeats," I said.

He nodded his head. The language came from Yeats, he said.[10]
Thomas' reaction here is very telling, for it furthers the belief that he felt uncomfortable with the idea of being influenced by another poet. Unlike his reactions to suggestions of Hopkins' influence, Thomas reaction to Hall is accepting and matter-of-fact. But he would not claim his poem as his own because of the strong influence of someone else. Clearly, he could not afford to lose many more poems to other poets. If admission of influence meant relinquishment of a poem, then it is not surprising that Thomas usually became particularly hedgy in these situations.

That Thomas was influenced by Yeats is not in question: Thomas' comment to Donald Hall suffices as primary evidence. The main issue here is whether or not Yeats' influence on Thomas could be confused with Hopkins'. One possible way of addressing this question is to suggest and prove that Yeats was the medium not only for his own influence but also for any apparent Hopkinsian elements in Thomas' work. That is, could Yeats have been influenced by Hopkins and have passed on that influence to Thomas? This mode of reasoning is resolved by some pertinent information about Yeats. In his essay "Yeats and Hopkins," Norman H. MacKenzie writes that Yeats was ambivalent towards Hopkins,[11] that Yeats confessed "he could not focus on [Hopkins'] poetry for more than a few minutes at a time,"[12] and that he once admitted to hating Hopkins.[13] Yeats experimented with sprung rhythm after he had read Hopkins to select poems for The Oxford Book of Modern Verse, but he did not make it an important aspect of his work.[14]

From Yeats, Thomas may certainly have taken techniques of rhyming and composing refrains or even ideas about the mystical, visionary, or religious role of poetry and the poet. But he did not take such Hopkinsian elements as compound words, Welsh prosody, or general verbal inventiveness from Yeats. Yeats' brand of influence is a different sort from Hopkins', and the two cannot be confused by

careful readers.

Dylan Thomas and Wilfred Owen

In his previously-mentioned article, Russell Astley continues his description of Thomas' use of rhyme by discussing the importance of Wilfred Owen's experiments in consonantal rhyming which "affected to a greater or lesser extent the verse of nearly all British poets of the 1930's."[15] Astley goes on to address what is most often considered the most definite point of influence from Owen to Thomas: the combination of alliteration and consonance usually called half rhyme, but also termed "frame rhyme" by Katherine Taylor Loesch in "Prosodic Patterns in the Poetry of Dylan Thomas."[16] Astley writes that "frame rhyme emerges as a serious like-ending device in the work of Wilfred Owen."[17] But, most important to this study, Astley includes a footnote to the above sentence, stating that "internal frame rhyme is frequent in the verse of Gerard Manley Hopkins, but never takes the place of terminal true rhyme."[18] Thomas' use of frame rhymes could have come from Hopkins as easily as from Owen.

William York Tindall writes that Thomas liked Owen as much "as he liked Thomas Hardy, Walter de la Mare, and Wm. Empson."[19] Thomas mentions Owen in his 1929 "Modern Poetry," where Owen is one of "the other heroes who built towers of beauty upon the ashes of their lives."[20] Owen, like Hopkins and Yeats, was a part of Thomas' reading life since Thomas was a teenager. Perhaps because Owen died young, in battle at age twenty-five, he appealed to Thomas as a tragic poetic hero. Certainly, Thomas' sentence in "Modern Poetry" conveys this romantic tone.

Wilfred Owen is the only documented influence about whom Thomas wrote or spoke formally at any length. Thomas' lecture on Owen, broadcast on 27 July 1946 on the B.B.C. eastern service, is published in <u>Quite Early One Morning</u>. It contains descriptions of Owen's work which demonstrate what Thomas found most important,

and perhaps most influential, in Owen. Thomas describes Owen's "little, huge book, working...from a lush ornamentation of language, brilliantly, borrowed melody, and ingenuous sentiment, to dark, grave, assonant rhythms, vocabulary purged and sinewed, wrathful pity and prophetic utterance."[21] Later on in the lecture, Thomas states that Owen is one of the four most profound influences upon the poets who came after him, the other three being Hopkins, the later Yeats, and Eliot.[22] Thomas, one of those poets who came after Owen, nevertheless makes no comment as to the relevance of this list of influences to his own work.

As with Yeats, the possibility of Owen's having conveyed Hopkins to Thomas is not likely. Owen died on 4 November 1918, when most of Hopkins was as yet unpublished. In fact, the 1918 edition of Hopkins officially came out officially in January of 1919.[23] Also unlikely are suggestions that Owen wrote under the influence of Welsh poetry, a possible source for his half-rhyme. While there was Welsh blood on both sides of Owen's family, he was English by birth, language, and upbringing; he neither spoke nor read Welsh, and knew no Welsh literature.[24] Gertrude M. White believes instead that the source for Owen's half-rhymes is French verse.[25]

Aside from half-rhyme, another potential area of influence is a general experimentation with diction and syntax. In Wilfred Owen Gertrude M. White writes:

> [Owen's] diction played a part in revitalizing and refreshing the vocabulary of poetry and his experiments, together with those of Gerard Manley Hopkins, doubtless encouraged the free and uninhibited playing with language and syntax that has been a prominent feature of modern verse.[26]

Significantly, White pairs Owen's influence with Hopkins', just as Russell Astley mentions that both Hopkins and Owen used frame rhyme. When the two main techniques in which Owen possibly influenced Thomas are also techniques which Hopkins is known for, it cannot be assumed that Thomas derived his poetic style from only Owen or only Hopkins. Since Thomas had read both poets, it is reasonable to assume that he was influenced by both. Owen's influence may include half-rhyme and experimentation with diction and syntax, but it does not include such techniques as counting syllables in verse lines, or the strong Hopkinsian sacramentalism in

Thomas' nature poems. There is still room for Hopkins' influence on Thomas.

Dylan Thomas and Hart Crane

Hart Crane is the only American in the list of possible influences on Thomas, and also the writer made mention of most frequently and universally in discussions of these influences. Crane is not one of the poets whom Thomas grew up with; his work is not listed as part of Thomas' library in the 1933 letter to Pamela Hansford Johnson, and another Thomas letter to Henry Treece in 1938 demonstrates that he had not read Crane until 1934 or 1935 at the earliest:

> Another remark I came across in a review--by Julian Symons of Hart Crane in 20th Century Verse--is: 'No modern poet except Thomas is, for me, more affecting, more able to twist words to the shape of the reader's tears.' Are you going to mention Hart Crane? Three or four years ago, when I first knew Norman Cameron, he told me that the most obvious influence in my poetry was Crane, a friend of his. And he was astonished, and at first unbelieving, that I had never heard of Crane before. He showed me some of his poems then, and I could certainly see what he meant: there were, indeed, two or three identical b.'s of phrasing, and much of the actual sound seemed similar. Since then I've read all Crane's poems, and though now I see the resemblance between his poetry and mine to be very slight, I can understand that some people might still think I had come under his influence.[27]

By 1939, Thomas was writing to Vernon Watkins about a public reading at the English Club at Cambridge which included "one Hart Crane."[28] According to Tindall, "of American poets, Thomas singled Stevens out for dispraise and Hart Crane...for praise."[29]

In Dylan Thomas: Dog Among the Fairies, Treece suggests that:

> The influence of Hart Crane, unlike that of Hopkins, is more difficult to estimate, since it may be the case that a likeness of perception and reaction in both poets has resulted in the almost independent use of similar technical approaches with which to solve almost identical problems. At any rate, if there is a direct influence, it is limited, and seldom operates outside the bounds of vocabulary and phraseology. But within these limits, the similarities are at least striking.[30]

Other critics who note the similarities between Hart Crane and Thomas include those critics already mentioned in the critical summary section of this study, Chapter One. Most often, parallels are drawn between the poets' work, but influence is not an issue. Robert Lowell writes:

> "...like Thomas, Crane is subjective, mystical, obscure, and Elizabethan in his rhetoric. Both long for their childhoods and use symbols....As [Thomas] was not influenced by Crane, comes from another world and has a very different personality, the similarity is remarkable.[31]

In Directions in Modern Poetry, Elizabeth Drew lists poets "such as Hart Crane, Dylan Thomas, and Richard Eberhart" as "intuitive poets."[32] And Babette Deutsch characterizes Thomas and Crane as poets with "the revivalist's fervor"--an "energy extravagant to the point of contortion."[33]

Thus far, it appears that the case for Thomas' being influenced by Crane is weaker than initially assumed. Thomas' 1938 letter to Treece sets the tone for later critical opinions, with his allowance for similarity but denial of any influence at least up until the mid 1930's, on the practical grounds that he had not even heard of Crane. Thomas could, of course, have been practicing evasive tactics with Treece. Still, he seems eager to share the fact that he has since read Crane and that he did understand why some people might think he had come under Crane's influence. Crane was part of Thomas' public and private reading life after 1934 at the earliest, but he could not have been an important force in Thomas' poetically active teenage years.

As with the discussions of Yeats and Owen, Hopkins must be brought in as a possible influence on Crane and, via Crane, on Thomas. But just as Thomas had not read Crane during his prolific notebook years of the late 1920's-early 1930's, Crane had not read Hopkins until 1927, when he was twenty-eight years old and just five years from his death. In his essay "Hopkins and Crane," Thomas Parkinson quotes a letter Crane wrote to Samuel Loveman in February 1928, shortly after he had been introduced to Hopkins' work by Yvor Winters:

> Winters loaned me his copy recently (I had never read any of Hopkins before) and I have discovered that I am not as original in some of my stylisms as I

had thought I was.[34]

Crane was excited by Hopkins, whose work was full of "unrealized possibilities"[35] for his own poems. However, Parkinson writes that "Crane had gone past the point where Hopkins could have driven him to realize possibilities in his work."[36] Parkinson concludes that "there was really no important impact of Hopkins on Crane,"[37] and that the similarities between Hopkins and Crane are "accidental rather than essential."[38]

Crane's discovery of Hopkins resembles Thomas' discovery of Crane; after their important formative years as poets, they find that there is another poet, whom they had not read, whose work bears resemblance to theirs. Influence is difficult or impossible to prove, but similarity is so clear as to make it appear uncanny to some critics.

Out of this confusion of similarity versus influence, a few aspects of the Crane/Thomas influence question can be clarified. Thomas may in fact have been under Crane's influence after about 1934, but by that time, his poetic direction had already been established. Crane's work shares with Hopkins' an inventiveness with language and a verbal density, but there are not, for example, any Welsh technical or thematic elements in Crane's work. In any event, the biographical facts surrounding the question of Crane's influence on Thomas render it a surprisingly difficult proposition to prove in any definite way.

Dylan Thomas and James Joyce

The work of James Joyce, the only prose writer on the influence list, necessarily has a limited area of potential influence on Thomas' poems. In most cases, Joyce's influence on Thomas has been restricted to Thomas' prose work and his use of word-play in both prose and poetry. Like Hopkins, Yeats, and Owen, Joyce is mentioned in Thomas' "Modern Poetry," where he is a "neo-Romanticist."[39] Joyce is also listed in the contents of Thomas' library: Thomas writes that he has "most of

Joyce, with the exception of Ulysses [sic]."[40] Tindall records that Thomas proclaimed

Finnegans Wake "the greatest book of our times and his favorite above all others";

yet when Tindall "spent an hour or so with him over a copy of Finnegan, everything

we came across seemed news to him"[41]:

> It is likely that Thomas had read a few pages of Work in Progress as it
> appeared in transition, a magazine he was familiar with. A few pages--and why
> turn more?--were all he needed to establish love. Nobody has found better
> use for fewer pages of Finnegan than he.[42]

This record of Thomas' reading habits is consisent with what is known about Thomas'

approach to literature. Thomas did not study Joyce any more than he studied Yeats,

Owen, Crane, or even Hopkins.

When asked if Joyce, Thomas' "most admired"[43] prose writer, indeed

influenced his work, Thomas replied:

> I cannot say that I have been 'influenced' by Joyce, whom I enormously
> admire and whose Ulysses, and earlier stories I have read a great deal....I do
> not think that Joyce has had any hand at all in my writing; certainly his
> Ulysses has not. On the other hand, I cannot deny that the shaping of some
> of my Portrait stories might owe something to Joyce's stories in the volume,
> Dubliners. But then Dubliners was a pioneering work in the world of the
> short story, and no good storywriter since can have failed, in some way,
> however little, to have benefited by it.[44]

Thomas' prose is not of primary interest to this study, but it does hold some

importance when considered as another facet of Thomas' literary creativity. While

varied in their narrative skill, Thomas' stories all have the strength of image and

verbal expression which his poetry has. His stories, most particularly the early ones,

are built around surreal situations and characters which may derive somewhat from

Joyce. Writing about Thomas' work in general, George Every claims that:

> Thomas also owes much to Joyce for his method of presenting a dream world
> that has the same kind of sources, in the exploration of the subconscious with
> the assistance of psychoanalysis, in Christian religious literature, and the
> mythology and ballad poetry of the Celtic peoples.[45]

For most critics, however, Thomas most clearly shows Joyce's influence in his word-

play--what Babette Deutsch calls the "Joycean effort at making his words do double

duty."[46] In his article claiming that Thomas' three "dominant points of contact"[47]

are James Joyce, the Bible, and Freud, Francis Scarfe draws parallels between the "linguistic habits"[48] of Thomas and Joyce, concluding that Thomas' "basic device (which Joyce later systematized) is the invention of words."[49] Scarfe's term, "invention of words," might more realistically be called "inventiveness with words," since it is rare that Thomas actually coined new words. Instead, in his poems he stacks words, juggles parts of speech, and releases new connotations. Some of that verbal inventiveness seems to derive more from Hopkins than from Joyce. Like Thomas' poems, his stories contain a noticeable number of compound words. "The Orchards," written in 1934, uses language akin to Thomas' poetry: "Circular going down of the day" (Collected Stories, p.43), "weathercock-frozen woman" (p.44), and "A man-in-a-picture Marlais" (p.47). "Prologue to An Adventure," from 1937, contains "split-like-cabbage enemy" (p.106), and "no-bigger-than-a-thimble friend" (p.106). As for a more Joycean influence on Thomas' verbal inventiveness, one example cited is the word "Llareggub," of which Constantine Fitzgibbon writes: "Dylan alone could have devised so Welsh an invention, but wit was also an example of the word-play he had learnt from Joyce."[50] It should be noted here that, according to Thomas at least, Dubliners influenced him more than any other of Joyce's works; that book contains the least amount of word-play of Joyce's works. Similarly, Thomas' Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog, possibly influenced by Dubliners, more nearly approaches "straight" prose than much of Thomas' prose work, particularly his earliest work. Perhaps Joyce's word-play did not influence Thomas' prose as much as originally assumed.

Distinguishing Joycean from Hopkinsian word-play is difficult, since generalization must be avoided. Jacob Korg makes a helpful, although not final, distinction in his Dylan Thomas:

> [Thomas] followed Hopkins' example in discovering new reserves of expression in the sound of language, and in coining neologisms to convey the truths of private anguish and joy in nature. And, like Joyce, he practiced the art of doubling or trebling thicknesses of meaning, so that language becomes startlingly germane to its subject.[51]

Addressing Joyce's experience and opinion of Hopkins may make it easier to

categorize his and Hopkins' impact on Thomas. Robert Boyle, S. J., begins his essay "Joyce and Hopkins" by uncovering an echo of Hopkins' "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire" in Joyce. Boyle concludes, however, that "other than this obvious echo, there is little evidence that Joyce spent much time on Hopkins's poems--I suppose no direct evidence at all."[52] Still, he mentions that "numerous touches, some listed by Tindall," (in James Joyce, His Way of Interpreting the Modern World) "suggest that Joyce knew Hopkins's poems quite well."[53] Significantly, Tindall maintains in the introduction to the above book that "the word formations and rhythms of Joyce also had their effect upon recent poets, upon Dylan Thomas, for example...."[54] Boyle mentions the possibility that both Hopkins and Joyce had read Richard C. Trench's On the Study of Words and may have derived or fed their interest in words from this book.[55]

With no direct evidence that Joyce had familiarized himself with Hopkins, influence can only be conjectured. To Joyce himself, Hopkins may have been a Jesuit with a knack for exploiting the fluidity of words and their meanings. As such, Hopkins would be considered part of what Jacob Korg calls "a line of verbal experimenters."[56] Thomas, too, is one of that line. In this sense, the three artists are on the same side. Thomas may have found inspiration in Joyce's word-play; he also found it in Hopkins'. Drawing the battle lines of influence becomes futile when the general and initial influence is similar, but is manifested in ways which make each artist an original.

Criteria II: The Hopkinsian Framework

Demonstrating the ways in which Thomas may or may not have been influenced by Yeats, Owen, Crane, and Joyce has now made it possible to approach Hopkins' influence on Thomas in a more complete manner. In the next chapter of

this study, six of Thomas' poems, dating from 1934 to 1951, will be discussed within a Hopkinsian framework. Rather than providing a straight explication of each poem, I will highlight those aspects of the poem which most clearly demonstrate Hopkins' influence.

The method of choosing the poems was as follows: after first reading every poem in The Poems (1974 revised edition) with an informal idea of the Hopkinsian elements to be aware of, I found twenty-one poems whose subjects, and/or word choice, and/or poetic techniques are ones which Hopkins uses or could have used.[57] Since then, The Poems has been superseded by Collected Poems (1989 paperback edition). Of those twenty-one poems, I will discuss six which center specifically on Hopkinsian themes and techniques, therefore making them dependent on some of the identifying characteristics of a Hopkins poem for much of their sense. These poems are as follows: "Altarwise by owl-light" VIII (written 1934-1935, published 1936)[58], "Poem in October" (1944), "In Country Sleep" (1947), "Over Sir John's Hill" (1949), "In the White Giant's Thigh" (written 1949, published 1950). and the unfinished "In Country Heaven" (worked on 1947-1951). The last four poems are part of Thomas' projected long poem, "In Country Heaven," and will be emphasized in this study. Because "Over Sir John's Hill" is arguably the most Hopkinsian of Thomas' poems, it will be given particular attention.

The characteristics which identify the Hopkinsian framework are divided into the broad categories of "Ideas," "Techniques," and "Themes." Naturally, not all six poems will contain Hopkinsian elements from all three categories. The first category contains the views on or approaches to poetry and the poet, shared by Hopkins and Thomas, which demonstrably direct the writing or reading of their poems. This category includes both poets' un-English modes of expression, the central position each gives to words and verbal density, and the importance of the sounds those words make.

As an essential theoretical context informing Hopkins' and Thomas' verbal creativity, there is what Walford Davies calls an "outsider quality"[59] to both poets. Davies argues that both Thomas and Hopkins found their creative voices in "that

border country of the mind somewhere between two languages and two cultures."[60] Rather than a void, that area is "active and living."[61] Hopkins' years at St. Beuno's were perhaps his most invigorating and productive from a creative standpoint. Outside of his customary English linguistic context, he spent three years in which he not only took Welsh lessons ("but not with very pure intentions, perhaps,"[62] he writes in 1874), but also studied Welsh poetry and tried using Welsh prosodic techniques in his own work. Thomas' childhood and adolescence in Wales, his years in England, and his frequent stays in Wales thereafter, gave him a distance from both Welsh and English as well as an artistic challenge. Fitzgibbon writes that "what he was trying to express in his poems was a view of the world for which the English language failed to provide the words, let alone the syntax."[63] Walford Davies maintains that Thomas had an "outsider's advantage of the English language."[64] In many ways, Hopkins acquired or was susceptible to this advantage. In Thomas' and Hopkins' poems, the un-English "outsider quality" manifests itself in verbal density and inventiveness, and freedom with syntax. Language is not taken for granted by either poet.

Another poetic approach Thomas and Hopkins share is their attention paid to the components of language--words. Words are not treated merely as tools with which to build a compact poem with discernible ideas, but as substantial entities important in themselves and for their image- and sound-bearing capabilities. In a sense, of course, it appears inane to suggest that two poets can use words more than most poets. After all, every writer depends on words. But it is not hyperbolic to claim that Thomas and Hopkins depend more on words, exploit words' meanings and sounds more, and revel in words more, than many other poets. It is this essential focus which is one of the strongest ties between Hopkins and Thomas. Numerous critics have stressed this word-centeredness of Thomas' poems as indispensible to his art. To Glyn Jones, "Dylan was not just interested in words, he was obsessed by them."[65] Howard Moss calls Thomas a "language maker,"[66] and John Sweeney calls him a "shaper,"[67] as the old Welsh poets called themselves. In The Romantic Survival, John Bayley writes that "words, single words, are far more important in

Thomas's poetry than in that of Yeats or Auden."[68] Thomas himself said that "I should say I wanted to write poetry in the beginning because I had fallen in love with words."[69] Hopkins appeared to have had a similar love. In an early review (16 April 1930) of Charles Williams' edition of Hopkins, Isidor Schneider describes Hopkins' poems: "The elements of Hopkins' originality are bewildering. He is astonishingly bold with words and forms of speech...."[70] In his own letters, diaries, and papers, Hopkins the amateur etymologist demonstrates a fascination with words and their origins which, while certainly academic, is far from sterile.

Stemming from the importance both poets give to words is their interest in the sounds that words make. Thomas believed that poems were meant to be read aloud.[71] Describing his first contact with the words of nursery rhymes, he wrote that "what mattered was the sound of them as I heard them for the first time."[72] Hopkins shared this view. In an 1877 letter to Robert Bridges, he writes: "My verse is less to be read than heard, as I have told you before; it is oratorical, that is [,] the rhythm is so."[73] This emphasis on sound is evidenced in Hopkins' and Thomas' use of alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, and onomatopoeia. For both poets, poetry is meant to be heard. Significantly, the poets' practice mirrors the prescription for Welsh poetry found in Thomas Parry's History of Welsh Literature:

> ...sound is as important as sense;...metre and cynghanedd, the whole framework of verse, are as much a part of the aesthetic effect as what is said.[74]

Initial recognition of the strength of Hopkins' and Thomas' work can legitimately rest in the sound of their poems; the sense can follow.

Some of the poetic techniques employed by Hopkins and echoed by Thomas have been mentioned previously. In addition to verbal inventiveness and density, compound words, alliteration, assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, and rhyme, the work of both poets contains Anglo-Saxon-like kennings created by the compound words, puns, interpretations of Welsh prosodic techniques, and dialect words or colloquialisms. Two techniques which need some explanation are inversion and interjection.

Thomas and Hopkins make similar uses of inverted syntax of a poetic phrase to open up new areas of meaning, to draw attention to the phrase, and to fit the overall rhythmical pattern of the poem. In "The hunchback in the park," Thomas' "wild boys innocent as strawberries" (7:4) jolts the reader into revising expectations and grouping "wild" and "boys" and "innocent" with "strawberries." But not only is Thomas' printed syntax in the reader's mind; the reader stores the initial assumption that "boys" ought to be with "innocent," and "wild" with "strawberries." Another example of syntactical inversion is Thomas' "man in the wind and the west moon" (1:3) from "And death shall have no dominion." Hopkins uses inversion in his poem "Peace," with "I'll not play hypocrite/ To own my heart" (ll.3-4). Here, inversion provides an opportunity for "own" to serve as a verb or as an adjective modifying "heart." In a letter to Bridges, Hopkins explains that " 'own my heart' is merely 'my own heart', transposed for rhythm's sake."[75] Hopkins' statement confirms the rhythmical office of inversion and does not negate the double meaning of "own."

Interjection, the breaking up the syntax of a phrase to introduce a new train of thought or to make the poem appear more immediate to the reader, is perhaps related to the Welsh technique of sangiad. Aneirin Talfan Davies writes that Hopkins "learned this trick from the Welsh poets."[76] Thomas may have derived it from Hopkins. Hopkins' interjections "ah my dear" ("The Windhover":13) or "(my God!)/ My God" ("Carrion Comfort":14ff) and Thomas' "(O hand in hand)" in the unfinished "In Country Heaven" (1.12) create the illusion of the poem's event still being present (and therefore relevant) to the reader.

Overlapping some of the techniques already listed are Welsh poetic practices found in Hopkins and found, in a more informal sense, in Thomas. Alliteration, assonance ("pealing of vowels"[77]), and consonance ("chimes"[78]), are all integral parts of Welsh prosody, particularly of cynghanedd. John Ackerman explains that cynghanedd is "a means of giving patterns to a line by the echoing of sounds, consonantal and vowel."[79] Some of the Thomas poems addressed in this study will be shown to contain relaxed versions of cynghanedd sain, the easiest form of cynghanedd to mimic in English.[80] Another previously-mentioned Welsh prosodic

technique found, whether by design or not, in Hopkins and Thomas is dyfalu, "the practice of multiplying fanciful comparisons by using tropes such as metaphors, personification, and autonomasia."[81]

Some of Thomas' poems are counted syllabically line-by-line, a "factor in classic Welsh metres."[82] In addition, there is the possibility that Thomas relied on Hopkins' innovations in sprung rhythm, evidence for which rests more in Thomas' recordings of his poems than in his printed work.[83] However, in the so-called "Poetic Manifesto," Thomas includes sprung rhythm in his list of technical devices he has used.[84]

Walter Ong defines sprung rhythm as "verse which builds with stresses only, disregarding how many other syllables there may be."[85] Like Hopkins, Thomas builds lines by counting syllables, not metrical feet. But he does not always take syllabic verse a step further and scan only the accents or stresses, as in sprung rhythm. Aneirin Talfan Davies helps outline the relationship between syllabic count, sprung rhythm, and cynghanedd:

> The Welsh metres are based on strict syllabic count, but the stresses within the line are determined by the strict rules of consonantal chiming, or alliteration, which is known as cynghanedd. The whole system is a method of harmonising, not only the consonantal chiming, but also the vowel sounds as well. It is a means of counterpointing stress against counted syllables, or what Gerard Manley Hopkins describes as 'sprung rhythm.'[86]

For Hopkins, the advantages of sprung rhythm lay in its naturalness:

> Why do I employ sprung rhythm at all? Because it is the nearest to the rhythm of prose, that is the native and natural rhythm of speech, the least forced, the most rhetorical and emphatic of all possible rhythms.[87]

"Stress," Hopkins writes regarding "The Loss of the Eurydice," "is the life of it."[88]

Because Welsh techniques and poetic approaches became essential aspects of Hopkins' work, poets influenced by him might even have unconsciously acquired some Welsh techniques for their own work. Thomas' use of Welsh prosodic techniques is not a main proof of Hopkins' influence, but it does serve as yet another possible tie between the two poets. At the very least, Thomas' poetry "is in keeping with an attitude to poetry which involved complicated patterns" and "may be called

'Welsh in feeling.' "[89]

Although left to the last, "Theme" is by no means the least important category forming the Hopkinsian framework. In fact, without Hopkinsian themes, subjects, and images, Thomas' poems could contain any amount of Hopkinsian techniques and still be empty shells. Earlier, it was stated that, unlike other poets influenced by Hopkins, Thomas did not write pastiches of that poet's work. Using Hopkins' style without some of his substance is pastiche-writing. Thomas' poems use Hopkins' style and some of his themes. Ironically, however, Thomas' adoption of Hopkinsian themes helps prove both influence and Thomas' originality. Something of a poet's character may be reflected in technique, but the handling of themes most clearly reveals the individual poet. That Hopkins and Thomas worked with similar themes, subjects, and images shows likeness in their agendas of concern; that they addressed them differently indicates essentially different perspectives.

Like Hopkins, Thomas possessed a "sacramental apprehension of the world."[90] The world is more than the world, for its components have spiritually significant characteristics. In this way, the glorious, buckling falcon in "The Windhover" is, for Hopkins, a visible reminder of Christ. And the fiery hawk of "Over Sir John's Hill" becomes, not merely a predator, but an instrument of nature. When the world is viewed sacramentally, symbolism is not enough. Instead, the poet steps beyond the earthbound significance of an image and places it in a spiritual context where it becomes an icon or a sacred object. This sacramental view is approached in markedly different ways by each poet: Hopkins the Christian sees nature as pointing to God, whereas Thomas sees it in more primitive, perhaps pantheistic terms and does not always recognize, as Hopkins does, a gap between nature and God. In carrying out his sacramentalism, Thomas, like Hopkins, finds redemption in nature. Thomas' redemption, however, is not specifically Christian, but is instead rooted in nature itself or in the human individual.

Related to Hopkins' "sacramental apprehension of the world" are his theories of inscape and instress. It is tempting, and, I believe, legitimate, to insist that since Thomas never mentions inscape and instress and evidently made no attempt to

understand or adopt them, they cannot occupy a place of importance in this study. John Ackerman makes a helpful general observation that places Hopkins and Thomas within the Hebraic and Welsh traditions of thinking which, contrary to the Platonic notions of the Idea behind the external objects, "sought the reality of each external object; for things exist and are important as they are, not as images of an ideal form."[91] These traditions maintain that each object is part of a sacramental whole. Hopkins' carefully-formulated ideas of inscape, what Alan Heuser calls "stem form," and instress, "shaping force,"[92] are expressed informally, and most likely independently, in Thomas' wonder in creation and his attention paid to creation's individual parts. Hopkins' "As kingfishers catch fire" best illustrates his theories in Thomas-like flesh: "What I do is me: for that I came" (1.8).

The sacramentalist view of the world runs through the images and subjects in Thomas and Hopkins. Most often, imagery is from the natural world, deriving from the four elements. Images may also come from the Bible. Thomas and Hopkins share the subjects of birth, life, and death as part of a spiritual journey; violence, death, and redemption in nature; and the high, priest-like function of the poet. Both poets describe in the language of religious orthodoxy the natural cycle which begins in grief but which resolves itself in a return to order and praise. This presence of praise may, in fact, be another part of the Welsh influence on Hopkins and Thomas. In a sermon, Hopkins himself says:

> This world...is word, expression, news of God. Therefore its end, its purpose, its purport, its meaning, is God and its life or work to name and praise him. Therefore praise put before reverence and service...[93]

Hopkins and Thomas deal differently with the natural cycle of grief and praise: Thomas "sees life as a continuous process, sees the workings of biology as a magical transformation producing unity out of identity, identity out of unity."[94]

Hopkins and Thomas also record personal struggles, in some cases still using natural imagery. They discover their poetic worlds by looking into themselves through their different perspectives on their places in the world. Henry Treece notes a resemblance in the origin of each poet's poetic energy:

> ...both look within, to find tension and disorder....Hopkins calls out to God...Thomas again looks inward, and as a God unto himself, analyses and diagnoses his own disorder...[95]

Ultimate differences in perspective are nevertheless balanced by the noticeable similarities of sacramental themes, religious language, and natural images. In 1934, Thomas was asked to define poetry. He answered: "My poetry is, or should be, useful to me for one reason. It is the record of my personal struggle from darkness toward some measure of light...."[96] Hopkins could have written Thomas' statement, too. The only difference would be the sort of light each poet was struggling toward.

NOTES

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2. William York Tindall, Reader's Guide, p. 12.

3. Ibid.

4. Russell Astley, "Stations of the Breath: End Rhyme in the Verse of Dylan Thomas," PMLA 84 (October, 1969), p. 1595.

5. Ibid., p. 1596.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Jacob Korg, Dylan Thomas (New York: Twayne Publisherrs, Inc., 1965), p. 180.

9. Ibid.

10. Donald Hall, Remembering Poets (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 18.

11. Norman H. MacKenzie, "Yeats and Hopkins," in Hopkins Among the Poets, p. 7.

12. Ibid., p. 8.

13. Ibid., p. 10.

14. Ibid., p. 8.

15. Russell Astley, "Stations of the Breath," p. 1597.

16. Ibid., p. 1599.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. William York Tindall, Reader's Guide, pp. 13-14.

20. Dylan Thomas, Early Prose Writings, p. 85.

21. Dylan Thomas, Quite Early One Morning, p. 93.

22. Ibid., p. 99.

23. The English Catalogue of Books X, p. 553.

24. Gertrude M. White, Wilfred Owen (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1969), p. 16.

25. Ibid., p. 84.

26. Ibid., p. 141.

27. Dylan Thomas, Collected Letters, p. 298.

28. Dylan Thomas, Dylan Thomas: Letters to Vernon Watkins (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., and Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1957), p. 75.

29. William York Tindall, Reader's Guide, p. 14.

30. Henry Treece, Dog Among the Fairies, pp. 41-42.

31. Robert Lowell, "Thomas, Bishop, and Williams," p. 493.

32. Elizabeth Drew in collaboration with John L. Sweeney, Directions in Modern Poetry (New York: W. W. Norton, 1940), p. 258.

33. Babette Deutsch, "The Orient Wheat," p. 235.

34. Quoted in Thomas Parkinson, "Hopkins and Crane," in Hopkins Among the Poets, p. 58.

35. Ibid.

36. Thomas Parkinson, "Hopkins and Crane," p. 58.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., p. 59.

39. Dylan Thomas, Early Prose Writings, p. 83.

40. Dylan Thomas, Collected Letters, p. 76.

41. William York Tindall, Reader's Guide, p. 13.

42. Ibid.

43. Constantine Fitzgibbon, The Life of Dylan Thomas, p. 185.

44. Dylan Thomas, Early Prose Writing, p. 157.

45. George Every, "The Impact of Joyce," in Poetry and Personal Responsibility Viewpoints, 14 (London: SCM Press, 1949), p. 38.

46. Babette Deutsch, "The Orient Wheat," p. 235.

47. Francis Scarfe, "The Poetry of Dylan Thomas," p. 226.

48. Ibid., p. 227.

49. Ibid.

50. Constantine Fitzgibbon, The Life of Dylan Thomas, p. 185.

51. Jacob Korg, Dylan Thomas, p. 182.

52. Robert Boyle, S. J., "Joyce and Hopkins," in Hopkins Among the Poets, p. 12.

53. Ibid.

54. William York Tindall, James Joyce, His Way of Interpreting the Modern World (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1950), p. 3.

55. Robert Boyle, S. J., "Joyce and Hopkins," p. 12.

56. Jacob Korg, Dylan Thomas, p. 182.

57. See Appendix A for a list of the twenty-one poems.

58. Walford Davies and Ralph Maud, "Notes," in Dylan Thomas: Collected Poems 1934-1953 Everyman's Library (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1989), p. 210.

59. Conversation with Walford Davies: Aberystwyth, 23 October 1989.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Gerard Manley Hopkins, Journals and Papers, ed. by Humphry House and Graham Storey (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 258.

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CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSES OF SIX POEMS

The framework outlined in the previous chapter will serve as a guideline for discussion of the six Thomas poems unless, as is often the case with themes, Thomas diverges significantly from a Hopkinsian perspective. Where pertinent and helpful, critical work on these poems may be used but not depended upon; exposing Hopkinsian elements in the poems is this author's task, not others'.

"Altarwise by owl-light" VIII

In their notes to Collected Poems 1934-1953, Ralph Maud and Walford Davies conjecture that Thomas wrote the ten "Altarwise by owl-light" sonnets from Christmas 1934 to Christmas 1935.[1] The poems were published in 1936, and were meant to be part of "a very long poem indeed," according to Thomas.[2]

By way of general introduction to the sonnets, we might do well to move beyond their astrological (in Elder Olson's The Poetry of Dylan Thomas) or biographical (in Tindall's Reader's Guide) interpretations and consider them in the context of Thomas' prescription for poetry, written, appropriately, around 1935: "I think [poetry] should work from words, from the substance of words and the rhythm of substantial words set together, not towards words."[3] Later on in his life, as mentioned earlier, Thomas wrote about his love for words which began with nursery rhymes: "What the words stood for, symbolised, or meant, was of very secondary importance; what mattered was the sound of them...."[4] Hopkins' definition of poetry is an interesting parallel to Thomas': "Poetry is speech framed for contemplation of

the mind by way of hearing or speech framed to be heard for its own sake, even over and above its interest of meaning."[5]

The sonnets, arguably some of the most critically problematic of Thomas' poems, may be viewed initially as evidence for Thomas' love affair with words, sounds, and images. Verbal, aural, and visual patterns emerge across sonnet boundaries and aid interpretation. With this interpretive starting-point, each poem becomes part of the greater structure of Thomas' own poetic agenda. Some of that agenda--the love affair with words and their sounds--has already been established as part of the Hopkinsian framework.

The theme of sonnet VIII can only be seen as part of the overall theme of the sonnet sequence. Critics have explicated "Altarwise" with views to establishing its astrological theme, for example, or its autobiographical content, which is more likely. Moving away from other interpretations, but not attempting to replace them, I wish to give my own overall view of "Altarwise by owl-light" and then to discuss the place of VIII within my thematic scheme. Hopkins' resolution of similar themes will be called upon as contrast or as aids to interpretation.

Thomas denied any formal association with the surreal movement in literature and art, but "Altarwise" is, superficially at least, surreal in that it contains "fantastic imagery and incongruous juxtapositions of subject matter."[6] Throughout the sequence, definite verbal and imagistic patterns are sometimes all the reader has to hold on to. Most clearly, the reader gets the impression that the sonnets, strung together, tell of a voyage and are themselves a voyage of words. These words, too, form patterns. Thomas brings words (and therefore images) of the Bible, astrology, birth, mythology, Christian tradition, literature, sailing, card-playing, music, reading, speaking, light, death, time, and history together, distributing them among the ten poems. The sonnets may be seen as unified by Thomas' words and images about writing, speaking, making music, and reading--all forms of communication dependent on words, or signs. In this way, the narrator of "Altarwise" relays a surreal intertextual voyage through words and literary traditions, himself using words. As such, the sequence necessarily contains fragments of Thomas' own experiences with words,

some of which involve Hopkins' work. Thomas the poet travels among words as observer, compiler, and actor in the narrative.

Contained in the sonnet sequence is evidence of Hopkins' influence. The sonnets use Hopkinsian words or phrases which suggest that at the time of writing "Altarwise," Thomas had contact with Hopkins' work. Of interest here is the fact that the entire April 1935 issue of <u>New Verse</u>, to which Thomas contributed, was devoted to critical work on Hopkins. Sonnet I has "half-way house" (l.1), the exact title of a Hopkins poem; as well as "halfway winds" (l.9), and "Christward shelter" (l.12), two other Hopkins-like compounds. Sonnet IV contains "boneyards" (l.8), which bears resemblance to Hopkins' "bone-house" ("The Caged Skylark":2) and "bower of bone" ("The Wreck of the Deutschland":18:1). In Sonnet V, "Cross-stroked salt" (l.11) is a Welsh-like combination of alliteration, assonance, consonance, and near-rhyme. VI has the compound "manwax" (l.14), an echo of Hopkins' "mansex" ("The Bugler's First Communion":12) and other of Hopkins' man-compounds. Sonnet X has "ship-racked" (l.3), mirrored in Hopkins' "is the shipwreck then a harvest," ("The Wreck of the Deutschland":31:8). Sonnet X also contains a word, "rude" (l.14), which Hopkins uses in "Andromeda" and "Carrion Comfort." In the cases of X and "Carrion Comfort," "rude" can also connote the Cross (rood or rod: see line 10 of "Carrion Comfort"). Other possible evidence of Hopkinsian, or at least Welsh, influence is the syllabic count of each sonnet, whose lines range from ten to twelve syllables in length.

Of all the sonnets, VIII and X contain the strongest combination of Hopkinsian techniques and themes. Only Sonnet VIII will be addressed in this study. These two poems stand somewhat apart from the rest of the sequence; X is the conclusion, and VIII is the climax. While every other sonnet uses images of writing, speaking, reading, or making music, Thomas appears to have left these images out of Sonnet VIII. Throughout the whole sequence, we read words and images like "jaw for news," "walking word," "death is all metaphors," "Rip Van Winkle," "metre of the dictionary," "Virgil," "book of water," "oyster vowels," "wick of words," "salt was singing," "Bible-leaved," "Rocking alphabet," "book of trees," "oracular archives," "letter," "tale's sailor," and "ship-wracked gospel." All VIII has are three vaguely verbal images: "I wept,"

"minstrel," and "unsex" (as an intertextual reference to <u>Macbeth</u>).

Despite its lack of images like those above, Sonnet VIII contains a significant number of Hopkinsian words and phrases which help make it a part of the narrator's intertextual voyage and which direct us to an apprehension of at least one of the sonnet's themes. In this poem, some of the Hopkinsian elements appear almost directly lifted from particular Hopkins poems. "The world's my wound" (l.4) is a straightforward example of Hopkins-like alliteration. But "God's Mary in her grief" (l.4) seems to echo "Miracle-in-Mary-of-flame" ("The Wreck of the Deutschland":34:4), and "Jack Christ" (l.7) echoes both "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire" and "Jackself" of "My own heart let me more have pity on." The compound "heaven-driven" (l.8) echoes Hopkins' poem "Heaven-Haven."

With little action compared to the other sonnets, VIII makes us stop and observe the crucifixion on the mountain as if it were a religious tableau. Using the language and images of Christian orthodoxy, Thomas has diverged from Hopkins' explicitly Christian themes by creating a climactic crucifixion scene in which the poet/narrator, and not the Christian Christ, is both the one crucified and the one observing the crucifixion. He is the central figure of this sonnet. Throughout the sonnet sequence, beginning with his Christ-like birth, moving to experiences between the texts of literature and cultural tradition, to his crucifixion, the "tale's sailor" makes a journey which, while not always narrated in the first-person, establishes the narrator as the main figure.

Thomas' crucifixion scene has all the proper biblical ingredients: vinegar, "gallow grave," blood, thorns, wound, Mary, three trees, teardrops, "Jack Christ," heaven, nails, thieves, glory, and even "Suffer the heaven's children." But those words and images do not add up to a discernible Christian theme. The "heaven's children," and indeed all of the poem, live and breathe through the narrator's heartbeat.

As much as it re-interprets Hopkinsian themes, Sonnet VIII does owe a great deal to Hopkins' aural techniques. Thomas uses alliteration frequently, as in "gallow grave" (l.2) and "world's my wound." Particularly in this poem, Thomas uses assonance to help set the rhythm. Long vowel sounds, repeated line-by-line, create

a slow, plodding beat which both mirrors and makes the sense of the poem: the sorrow of the crucifixion. The vowels Thomas chooses are long "a" and "o" and combinations like "ai," "ou," and "ow" in words such as "gallow," "grave," "tarred, "wound," and "rainbow." Hopkins also uses long vowels to a similar effect in "Spring and Fall," with its "grieving," "unleaving," "older," "wanwood leafmeal," and "Now no." Patterns of alliteration, rhyme, assonance, and consonance in this poem may point to Welsh influence via Hopkins: "snail-waked world," with its internal rhymes and assonance (underlining mine), and "Drove in the heaven-driven of the nails, whose consonantal repetition of dr-n-ven/dr-ven-f-n bears resemblance to cynghanedd draws, where a line is divided in two, with consonants repeating in almost exact sequence.[7]

Some of Thomas' words are puns, and play on our expectations. We expect "shallow grave," but get "gallow grave" instead. "Minstrel angle" appears at first to be an error for "ministering" or "minstrel angel." Just as Hopkins uses our preconceptions plus the reality of what we read, in compounds like "quickgold" ("The Starlight Night":5), Thomas builds verbal structures with multiple meanings. These reverberating meanings both obscure and elucidate the sense of VIII. And in the case of puns, sound, as well as sense, help increase the poem's verbal power.

One point of similarity between Hopkins and Thomas is their innovations with the traditional sonnet form. W. H. Gardner even devotes a whole chapter of his Gerard Manley Hopkins, volume I, to "Sonnet Morphology." Thomas departs from the traditional sonnet pattern by letting his sestet precede his octave. Both sections begin "This was," thus setting the physical scene for the tableau, yet already relegating it to the past. Abandoning end-rhyme, he does use some internal half-rhyme: "crucifixion"/"mountain" (l.1), "world's"/"wound" (l.4), "heaven"/"driven" (l.8), "skeleton"/"mountain" (l.12) and "heaven's"/"children" (l.14). Meter, another classical characteristic of the sonnet, is created syllabically, not exclusively by the number of stressed/unstressed syllables. The lines are generally alternated, with ten or eleven syllables each.

In Sonnet VIII, we are led to a crucifixion scene by a narrator who, we suspect,

is a Hopkinsian Jack Christ upside-down. In Hopkins, Jack Christ is God first, become man and therefore Everyman. Thomas' Jack Christ is Everyman first, set apart for a special use. On the narrator's intertextual voyage, his adventures have included a crucifixion. The end is not, however, completely tragic. A rainbow, the biblical symbol of God's promise to Noah, leaps from the crucifixion scene and begins the journey again, from "pole to pole." Out of stasis comes movement, and the narrator goes forward, to the "resurrection in the desert" of Sonnet IX and to the conclusion of the journey in X.

As the conclusion of "Altarwise," Sonnet X ends the narrative's physical and spiritual journey. With Hopkins, the real voyage begins after a physical journey has been abruptly ended. Hopkins' shipwreck poems, "The Wreck of the Deutschland" and "The Loss of the Eurydice," begin with a stop in motion: a wreck. Movement comes afterwards, in the form of a spiritual journey which attempts to bring the poet, the wreck's victims, and the readers, home to Christ. The voyage in VIII ends in a "nest of mercies," but there is a sense in which Thomas' journey does continue outside of the poem, although not in the way that Hopkins' does. "Altarwise" is a web of "warring images"[8] whose battle does not end when the narrative does. Thomas' intertextual voyage continues in the minds of readers and critics who attempt to make some sort of "momentary peace"[9] out of the images.

"Poem in October"

During the approximately ten years between "Altarwise by owl-light" and "Poem in October," Dylan Thomas matured poetically. In "Poem in October," Thomas writes with authority, building a unified poem. In a letter to Vernon Watkins, Thomas says of this poem: "[I would] like very much to read it aloud to you. Will you read it aloud too? It's got, I think, a lovely slow lyrical movement."[10] It is this movement which helps mark Thomas' mature poems and which explains why his work has been described as "bardic" or "incantatory." With "Poem in October," a

reader could imagine Thomas standing confidently on a hill and shouting the poem, backed up by the maturity and authority acquired during thirty years of life. Thomas' own recording of the poem takes a different, but no less powerful approach. He reads "Poem in October" in a contemplative, melancholy tone. But the rhythm created by the sweep of words Thomas has chosen is still there. In fact, Thomas' reading style here is marked by strong patterns of stress. The poem is highly syllabic, but Thomas' recording indicates that it may also have sprung rhythm. Thomas' stress patterns are not based on uniform intervals of stressed/unstressed syllables; instead, they let the number of stresses dictate the pattern, taking liberty with the unstressed syllables.

"Poem in October " is a departure from the distorted syntax and juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated images of "Altarwise." Here, words, syntax, images, and rhythm move smoothly towards apprehension of theme. The poem involves itself with simultaneously remembering the past and fully existing in the present. The power of a place is present to the speaker throughout his life, and becomes a text of "tall tales," "parables," "twice told fields," and "legends" which the speaker reads and uses to convey him back to childhood even as he enters his thirty-first year. None of Hopkins' poems has this "Tintern Abbey" theme. His poems are largely spiritually, not autobiographically, personal. Heaven is the place most strongly imprinted on Hopkins' memory and hope, the poetic exception being "To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life," in which Hopkins longs for England, his creative and earthly home. There is no substantial point of comparison between Hopkins' poem and "Poem in October," however.

Thomas' poem most resembles Hopkins' work in its stylistic techniques and imagery. Even a superficial reading yields some Hopkins-like phrases and words: "mussel pooled" (1:3), "springful of larks" (3:1), "lark full cloud" (4:7), and "singingbirds" (6:10). The word "fond" (3:6) is definitely Hopkinsian, appearing in "The Valley of the Elwy" (1.14) and, as "fonder," in "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo" (ll.26-28). The last stanza contains a typical Hopkins-like interjection, "O may my heart's truth" (1.8).

In this poem, Thomas depends heavily on the combination of two or more words to create a verbal unit which is more than the sum of its parts. The above is, of course, a more abstract way of writing that Thomas uses compound words. Usually, however, compound words are joined by hyphens or are run into each other. Such is Hopkins' practice. Thomas creates compound words that may not be compounds by definition but which serve the same purpose and have much the same effect. Thomas' practice goes against the English custom, which Hopkins describes in a letter to Robert Bridges:

> I agree with you that English compounds do not seem real single words or properly unified till by some change in form or spelling or slur in pronunciation their construction is disguised. This seems in English a point craved for and insisted on, that words shall be single and specific marks for things, whether self-significant or not...[11]

Thomas, it seems, has released himself from the verbal bondage which Hopkins suggests limits compounds' possibilities of meaning.

Adjective/noun combinations like "mussel pooled" or "heron/Priested shore" (1:3-4) are reminders of English's Anglo-Saxon roots. Modern German still forms words by stringing them together, as in "Lebensversicherungsgebäude" (life insurance building), but English is more likely to create words which indicate meaning and not the component images. Often, those words are Latinate. Both Hopkins and Thomas, however, use a noticeable number of Teutonic words. W. H. Gardner maintains that Hopkins' poems contain five per cent. more Teutonic words than the works of Milton, Shelley, Arnold, and Meredith.[12] Like the Anglo-Saxon kenning, Hopkins' and Thomas' compounds have the effect of both circumventing and pinpointing the essential meaning and significance of a thing or idea. Before we comprehend the meaning, we must acknowledge the significance of each word which comprises that meaning. In Thomas' case, the lack of hyphens between each component forces us to give equal weight to each word before allowing ourselves to take in the complete construction. Thomas' "heron/Priested shore" is like "whale-road" in Beowulf in that its last word, a place, is modified by a word, or words, which open up new areas of meaning. In the case of "whale-road," the reader realizes that if the road is for

whales, then it cannot be an ordinary dry road, but is the sea itself. The heron/Priested shore" is, at face value, a shore with a bird. But the bird is a heron, associated with holiness in Thomas, hence the modifier "priested." Thomas' compound suddenly becomes full of the significance of his sacramental view of nature.

The source of Hopkins' compounds is usually thought to be Anglo-Saxon literature or critical work in that field. Hopkins' "Hailropes," "Heavengravel" and "wolfsnow" in "The Loss of the Eurydice" (ll.27-28) are most likely modelled on what Hopkins knew of Anglo-Saxon prosody, knowledge he gleaned from William Barnes' English Speechcraft[13], from his own studies of Anglo-Saxon,[14] and from G. P. Marsh's Lectures in the English Language.[15]

Another possible source for the prolific use of compounds in both poets' work is the Welsh dyfalu, the "accumulation of images to illuminate one central idea."[16] The more images there are, the greater the reader's ability to grasp the meaning fully; e.g., Hopkins' "champ-white-water-in-a-wallow" ("The Loss of the Eurydice":48).

Thomas goes beyond the use of compounds to increase the verbal inventiveness of "Poem in October." He uses gerunds as adjectives, taking advantage of their aural as well as semantic strength: "rolling cloud" (3:1), "dwindling harbour" (4:1), and "listening/Summertime" (6:5-6). In the cases of "whistling/Blackbirds" (3:2-3) and "singingbirds" (6:10), the gerunds have the added dimension of being onomatopoetic.

Two puns open up new areas of implication for sense in the poem. The "sun of October" is "Summery" (3:4), an adjective which initially underlines the upside-down seasons in this poem, where autumn can be both springlike and summerlike. The sun of October could also be "summary" in that, under this sun, the narrator experiences a condensation of childhood. This reading of "Summery" as "summary" connects it to the images of reading, including the second pun, "twice told fields of infancy" (6:1). We expect, of course, "twice told tales," but get our expectation as well as Thomas' own inventive variation. The pastoral setting of the whole poem is emphasized in this pun, where place becomes a powerful vehicle for knowledge and wisdom.

There are several examples of the way Thomas used his general knowledge of Welsh patterns of alliteration, rhyme, assonance, and consonance in "Poem in October." In cynghanedd draws, "the line divides into two parts, each bearing one main accent with the consonants of the first part repeating in the second, in the same order. One consonant or more remains unmatched."[17] Thomas has modified this idea in the line: "Woke to my hearing from harbour and neighbour wood" (1:2), where the following consonantal pattern is formed: W m h / h n w. In the phrase "marvel/ my birthday/ Away..." (4:8-10) Thomas has used some elements of cynghanedd sain, where the line divides into three parts, with the first two rhyming and the second and third carrying the scheme of consonantal repetition.[18] Here, the pattern is: m / m ay / ay, where "ay" is an end rhyme. A similar pattern is formed by "Beyond the border and under" (4:7): b / b er / er.

One of the strongest ties which "Poem in October," as well as other Thomas poems, has with Hopkins is the central position of bird imagery. Thomas has filled this poem with birds of all sorts and all characters: heron, seagull, rook, waterbirds, "birds of the winged trees," larks, blackbirds, owls, and singingbirds. Hopkins, too, depends on birds, some of the most obvious occurring in "The Sea and the Skylark," "The Windhover," "The Caged Skylark," "Duns Scotus's Oxford," and "As kingfishers catch fire." Throughout Hopkins' poems, there are also uses of bird imagery directed at nonornithological subjects, as in "the Holy Ghost over the bent/ World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings" ("God's Grandeur":13-14).

In "Poem in October," the birds serve initially as part of the local color; they help create the sense of individual place. Next, the ubiquitous birds accompany the speaker on his journey through time and space. They make this journey fairy-tale-like, with their presence and song. We can view the speaker here as a Pied Piper leading birds and memories of his childhood, not rats and children, out of the town. It is the birds which point to Thomas' and Hopkins' sacramental views of nature. The holy heron and the singing larks, placed outside in the "green chapels," give significance to the scene and the action, turning them into occasions for praise and, at the end, for prayer: "O may my heart's truth/ Still be sung/ On this high hill in a

year's turning" (7:8-10). At their deepest levels of importance, the birds in "Poem in October" are visible parallels to the speaker himself, most particularly to his soul. Throughout the poem, the birds mirror the speaker's own state of mind, especially the freedom and joy he remembers experiencing as a child. Hopkins employs bird imagery for the opposite purpose in "The Caged Skylark," where the bird is analogous to "Man's mounting spirit in his bone-house, mean house" (l.2). Either way, Thomas and Hopkins both describe birds in their natural surroundings and then remove them, ⸱·ing them to greater significance as reflections of human life.

The "In Country Heaven Poems"

The three poems and one fragment that comprise Thomas' projected "In Country Heaven" are the strongest evidence for Hopkins' influence on Thomas. While Thomas first read Hopkins early in his life, it is apparent that Hopkins' impact shows up most decidedly in Thomas' later poems. Walford Davies agrees: "It is Thomas's late poetry that most obviously shows signs of Hopkins,"[19] as does Glyn Jones: "Dylan's 'influences,' whatever they were, did not reveal themselves at all in his first book. It was not until many years later that he began to show at some time or other he had been reading Hopkins and Yeats."[20] Each section of "In Country Heaven" contains technical and thematic elements which reflect Hopkins' influence; however, Thomas' vision for the long poem was completely his own. In a 1950 B.B.C. broadcast, he described his plans for his "poem in preparation"[21] and outlined its narrative background:

> The Earth has killed itself. It is black, petrified, wizened, poisoned, burst; insanity has blown it rotten; and no creatures at all, joyful, despairing, cruel, kind, dumb, afire, loving, dull, shortly and brutishly hunt their days down like enemies on that corrupted face. And one by one, those heavenly hedgerow-men who once were of the Earth call to one another, through the long night, Light and His tears falling, what they remember....They remember places, fears, loves, exultation, misery, animal joy, ignorance, and mysteries, all we know and do not

know.
> The poem is made of these tellings. And the poem becomes, at last, an affirmation of the beautiful and terrible worth of the Earth. It grows into a praise of what is and what could be on this lump in the skies. It is a poem about happiness.[22]

The three poems we read, although complete in themselves, are not in their proper places as part of "In Country Heaven." That long poem was never completed.

In July 1951, Thomas told John Malcolm Brinnin that the "In Country Heaven" poems are "poems in praise of God's world by a man who doesn't believe in God."[23] Walford Davies makes a similar comment: "I think that the late poems are about the absence of belief."[24] Thomas is filling a void, using the language of belief. Thomas' statement to Brinnin points to an important area of discussion whenever he and Hopkins are compared. While Christian terminology, tradition, theology, and imagery are prevalent throughout Thomas' poems, they reach a high level of importance in the "In Country Heaven" poems. Here, Thomas as a priest-like poet illuminates his simple system of belief with the language of his religious/cultural background. He holds to a belief in the dichotomy of Good and Evil, the sacredness of creation, and the central position of the Self as physical, spiritual, and historical entity. Informing "In Country Heaven" in particular is Thomas' "optimistic and regenerative view of human existence."[25] Religion both divides and unifies Hopkins and Thomas. In Thomas, as in Hopkins, there is pain, violence, doubt, and death; but there is also redemption, joy, and praise. "In Country Heaven" is a paradox. Thematically, nothing is farther from Hopkins than these poems; thematically, nothing is closer.

"In Country Sleep"

The first part of the "heavenly hedgerow-men's" rememberings, "In Country Sleep," takes the language of fairy-tale and Christianity and serves as a blessing, a warning, and a promise of victory. It is like a bed-time story and a lullaby. The remembering is not at all passive, but is almost as participatory as Hopkins is in "The

Wreck of the Deutschland." Sharing its occasion with Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight" and Yeats' "A Prayer for My Daughter," the poem's setting is at night as a child sleeps. That external setting is only a starting-point, for the real action occurs in a dream-like world consisting of fragments from childhood stories and Christian tradition and theology. As in the "Altarwise" sonnets and "Poem in October," some of these fragments owe much to Hopkins.

Thematically, "In Country Sleep" cannot be said to bear strict resemblance to Hopkins' work. Taken as a whole, the poem's general thrust is more towards humanism than orthodox Christianity. That is, the speaker's blessing, warning, and affirmation of victory are in the face of a Thief who will not steal specifically religious faith, but instead any faith at all, whether it is faith in the imagination, or in one's self, or even in the ability to create with words. Thomas himself said that "the Thief is anything that robs you of your faith, your reason for being."[26] But Thomas' poem is about faith, and about holding on to faith. As such, "In Country Sleep" does share Hopkins' essential theme. We can remove the secular body of much of Thomas' poem and discover the skeletal structure of Hopkins' themes. A poem is not, of course, an abstract skeleton but is instead a fleshed-out entity made from the poet's own images and words. We must be careful not to read a Christian message into this Thomas poem when many of its images point in another direction. As a poem about faith, "In Country Sleep" shares a basic theme with Hopkins' work, but the faith in question is not the same.

In his "Poetic Manifesto," Thomas writes of the importance nursery rhymes had as the catalysts for his love affair with words. With its host of comforting (and not so comforting) childhood characters, "In Country Sleep" seems a natural product of Thomas' first encounters with words. Perhaps, too, the second category of images here, Christian ones, might represent the comfort of useful ghosts from Thomas' experiences and knowledge of Christianity, whether Nonconformist or Catholic. The third sort of imagery in this poem, natural, is yet another comfort, that of the external world which runs cyclically and joyfully. The word "comfort" is fitting here, since it provides a context in which to compare and contrast Thomas' and Hopkins'

employment of similar images for different purposes. In Hopkins' poem "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection," he performs his task of beginning in nature and ending in God. Darkened by death, lovely and exciting nature always points to God. Even the lowest and simplest of pleasures, in this case appreciating nature, necessarily come home to God, who can transform his human creation into an "immortal diamond" (l.24). Thomas' poem has many soothing comforts, but none that approaches the comfort of the Christian resurrection. Instead, it has an earthly type of resurrection which occurs daily: "And you shall wake, from country sleep/ This dawn and each first dawn,/ Your faith as deathless as the outcry of the ruled sun" (II:8:5).

Of the three types of imagery in "In Country Sleep," the Christian and natural images are related most closely to Hopkins' work. While central to Thomas, imagery from fairy-tales is not found in Hopkins' poems. In our discussion, that imagery may be seen as one of Thomas' languages which, like Christian and natural language, Thomas speaks in his poems. By the fourth stanza of the poem, the language of Christian orthodoxy, particularly that of Catholicism, has intruded upon the language of fairy-tale and even conquers it to some extent. Catholic terms and imagery abound: "saint's cell" (I:4:6), "lauds" (I:4:7), "three Marys in the rays" (I:5:1), "sanctum sanctorum" (I:5:2), "beads" (I:5:3), "lord's table" (I:5:7), and "vows" (I:7:5). The prevalence of Catholic imagery here suggests Hopkins' influence; Thomas' own Nonconformist background is clearly not a possible source for these images. More generally Christian images are "bethels" (II:1:5), "holy books" (II:1:5), "pastoral beat of blood" (II:2:2), and "gospel rooks" (II:3:5).

Natural imagery provides physical setting and a cast of animals and, most importantly, is inextricably tied to the Christian images. Hopkins' natural images are also connected to his religious ones; that is, he may begin with nature but always relates that nature to its creator, the source of nature's holiness. In the end, the religious language abandons nature on the ground and rises toward what Hopkins calls "God's better beauty, grace" ("To What Serves Mortal Beauty?":14). With Thomas, Christian images define his view of nature, but they stay on the ground.

Thomas says that nature is holy, but he does not take the final step and declare nature inferior to God--that added dimension is not an issue with most of Thomas' natural images. By being called a "sanctum sanctorum," the "animal eye of the wood" (I:5:2) is raised to the significance of a sanctuary, but that sanctuary is not eventually related to a human sanctuary where people worship God.

Despite ultimate differences in approach, the union of religious and natural imagery is a possible point of influence from Hopkins to Thomas. This imagistic union which "In Country Sleep" (and all of "In Country Heaven") and Hopkins' work share is the sacramentalist view of the natural world. Thomas makes this plain with "The country is holy" (I:6:4). This sacredness is powerful enough to protect the little girl, whom the speaker commands to: "Be shielded by chant and flower and gay may you// Lie in grace" (I:6:7ff). Holy nature is on the girl's side, fighting against the Thief.

Thomas' sacramentalism reveals itself not only in the promise for protection, but in the potential for praise in nature. Particularly in Part II, the night-time bucolic setting is alive with song, most clearly stated in the line: "Music of elements, that a miracle makes!/ Earth, air, water, fire singing into the white act" (II:4:5). Thomas has his holy four elements, illuminated by music, praise just as Hopkins praises with his windhover or "dare-gale skylark" ("The Caged Skylark".1). The difference is the object of praise. Thomas' object is unclear, and in the case of this line it is rooted more in a joy and confidence in creation than in the creator. The "holy books of birds" and "surpliced// Hill of cypresses" (II:2:6ff) praise because that is what they are made to do, even if they do not praise the source of their existence. The function of poetry as praise is, as stated earlier, part of the Welsh poetic agenda. In The Cost of Strangeness, Anthony Conran writes that:

> Only in the poetry of Hopkins can an aspiring Anglo-Welsh poet find reinforced the inborn Welsh feeling...that praise is what poetry should be about....I suppose that the poetry of Dylan Thomas is universally felt to be "bardic" in some sense or other; and at least in his later work, it is certainly very much concerned with praise.[27]

Conran's juxtaposition of Hopkins and Thomas, as well as his statement of their

common concern with praise, do suggest that this Welsh equation of poetry equals praise is another germ passed from Hopkins to Thomas.

There are also some significant Hopkinsian germs of diction and phraseology which appear to be direct references to Hopkins in "In Country Sleep." In Part I, the affectionate interjection "My dear, my dear" (1:5) brings to mind Hopkins' "ah, my dear" ("The Windhover":13) or "(my God) My God", line fourteen in "Carrion Comfort." (This interjection may also be related to George Herbert's lines in "Love III": "Ah my deare" (1.9) and "My deare" (1.16)) Thomas' interjection works both as an endearment and as one more opportunity for him to break up the syntax of the stanza, whose bald narrative line runs throughout: Never fear or believe that the wolf shall leap out of a lair to eat your heart.

In Part II, in the same context as in Hopkins' "The Windhover" (1.4), Thomas has placed "high, there" (1:3), referring to the rooks on the "hare-/ Heeled winds" (1:3ff). Another Hopkins-like phrase is "three Marys in the rays" (I:5:1), which echoes "Miracle-in-Mary-of-flame" ("The Wreck of the Deutschland":34:4). Both Thomas and Hopkins use the word "sloe" (II:2:1) found in "The Wreck of the Deutschland" (8:3). And the word "rareness" (II:5:2) is a word which Hopkins might have used ("rare" and its variations are found in seventeen Hopkins poems).[28] Finally, Thomas' "winds' wakes" (II:4:4) resembles Hopkins' "wind-walks" ("Hurrahing in Harvest":2).

Aside from what must be direct references to Hopkins, there are the frequent and typical compounds and aural techniques which make Thomas a descendent of Hopkins. The "bird loud vein" (II:3:3) may owe everything to Yeats via "bee loud glade" in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," but "mountain ravened eaves" (I:4:3), "hare-/ Heeled winds" (II:1:3ff), and "wind-/ Milled dust" (I:9:3) are pure Hopkins. The pun "snow the blood" (I:4:2) could be Joycean or Hopkinsian: "snow" plays on our expectations of "harrow and sow the blood," but it also may carry the connotation of "snow job," an expression for trickery which is appropriate in connection with the Thief. The line "sly as snow, meek as dew" (I:8:1) could be a play on the Bible verse "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16, K. J. V.).

Like Thomas' earlier poems, this one contains a great deal of alliteration,

assonance, and consonance. Two cynghanedd-like lines are I:8:3, "In the tower and tolls to sleep over the stalls" and II:6:4-5, "truly he/ Flows to the strand of flowers like the dew's ruly sea." In the "Altarwise" sonnets and "Poem in October," end rhyme was near-rhyme at the most. Here, however, Thomas has developed a system of fairly exact true rhyme. The seven-line stanzas of Part I rhyme a b c b a a c , and the six-line stanzas of Part II rhyme a b b c c a.

The abruptness and lack of rhythmical pattern of each line suggest that the rhythm is sprung. William York Tindall also maintains that the rhythm, "abounding in anapests, is sprung: five or six stresses--and sometimes more--in the long lines, two in the short."[29] The stanzas are uniformly syllabic, with long lines eleven to thirteen syllables and short lines four syllables in length. Hopkins had his own opinion about anapests which aids interpretation of "In Country Sleep." In his lecture notes on "Rhythm and Other Structural Parts of Rhetoric--Verse," he writes:

> ...it is commonly felt and said that feet and rhythms have their particular character. In general the short or light syllables go before the long or strong, as in the iamb, the anapest....the rhythm is forward and expresses present action."[30]

This poem is in the present, judging from the speaker's repetition of phrases like "this night and each vast night" (I:8:2) or "this dawn and each first dawn" (II:8:5), although its present action bears significance for the future. Thomas' recording of this poem sets a definite, driving rhythm marked, as in sprung rhythm, by its emphasis on stressed syllables and its abrupt falling back from the unstressed ones.

At the end of the poem, Thomas presents a summary of his narrative, with the threat of the Thief who comes "night without end" (II:8:3). The threat exists, yet it is tempered by hope. The "lawless sun" of the previous stanza (7:5) has become the "ruled sun" (8:5) and the child's faith is evidently deathless. Thomas has more confidence in the faith under siege in this poem than Hopkins does about his own faith in his so-called terrible sonnets.

"Over Sir John's Hill"

In his sonnet "To R.B.," Hopkins writes that a poem should be a creation composed of the roll and rise of sound and rhythm. It should also be a carol, a song which rolls and rises like a bird or a wave. "Over Sir John's Hill" manifests Hopkins' prescription for poetry, since it is a seamless union of technique and content. It also happens to be possibly the most Hopkinsian poem Thomas wrote, and will be given particular attention here.

As in most of Thomas' poems, the density of words in "Over Sir John's Hill" is one of the first characteristics noticed. Thomas' poem is rich with long streams of words which, even before we sort them out into slots of grammar and meaning, convey the energy and tension of this scene of death above a Welsh hill. Why does Thomas give us these detailed word-catalogues when a few more general words might suffice? Like Hopkins, he wants to create what Seamus Heaney calls "a dense, word-obsessed fabric of interlacing and echoing language."[31] For this reason, Thomas piles adjective upon adjective in stanza one, line eleven, with "the fishing holy stalking heron." Or he strings phrases together to set up a scene: "To the hawk on fire, the halter height, over Towy's fins,/ In a whack of wind" (2:4-5). It might seem that Thomas' narrowing-down descriptions to the particular would only limit the scope of his poem, but his technique has the opposite effect. The three adjectives in "fishing holy stalking heron" hold our attention because the religious references in "fishing" and "holy," combined with the predatory adjective "stalking," and the fact that Thomas often associated holiness with the heron,[32] give this heron a paradoxical God-like role of lifegiver and destroyer.

Thomas did not set out systematic reasons for the density of his poems, but Hopkins makes several pertinent comments on the subject. In his 1868 notebook he writes:

> To every word meaning a thing and not a relation belongs a passion of prepossession or enthusiasm which it has the power of suggesting or producing but not always or in everyone.[33]

Thomas and Hopkins both apprehend the passion of words, giving that passion a central position in their poems.

Hopkins also believed that poetry must have what Walter Ong calls "contact with a living language."[34] In 1879 Hopkins remarked to Robert Bridges that "the poetical language of an age should be the current language heightened, to any degree heightened and unlike itself, but not...an obsolete one."[35] The language of "Over Sir John's Hill" fits Hopkins' description. Word-by-word, there is little obscurity in denotative meaning. After all, we can always find the definitions of "tyburn" (1:9), or "dingle" (3:11) in the dictionary.

In this poem. Welsh poetic effects tie Thomas' style to Hopkins'. The poem's five twelve-line stanzas keep to a fairly strict syllabic count. Corresponding lines of each stanza are approximately the same length, although within each stanza line length may vary from one to fifteen syllables. Perhaps some of the variants could be considered outrides, Hopkins' term for the extra unstressed (and therefore uncounted) syllables at the end of a line. The varied syllabic counts of the lines contribute to the rhythm of the poem because Thomas has used a pattern of rising and subsiding line lengths. Each stanza begins with a medium-length group of two lines, rises to longer lines, subsides quickly to a monosyllabic line, and continues the pattern.

Counting syllables to guide the rhythm of a poetic line would merely be an interesting technique were it not for the effect that rhythm has on the sense of "Over Sir John's Hill." As Hopkins wrote, "it is commonly felt and said that feet and rhythm have their particular character."[36] This "character" makes certain rhythms appropriate for particular types of verse. Thomas' techniques create an incantatory rhythm in "Over Sir John's Hill." Describing the Welsh bardic tradition, John Ackerman stresses the unconscious, instinctive, and natural impulses in which the carefully-learned patterns of sound and meaning were rooted.[37] Like the Welsh bards', Thomas' feel for rhythm seems to have been both instinctive and consciously created. The first-person narrator of the poem, a "young Aesop" (3:11), pulls us into his fable with a swooping rhythm which imitates the movements of all the birds in

the poem. The syllabically shorter lines either maintain a situation or emphasize sudden movement. For instance, the first two lines of stanza one, with five and six syllables, set the stage, showing us the hawk hovering motionless above the hill. But line five, of only one syllable, shocks us out of motionlessness into the war between the hawk and the sparrows. In a reverse effect, stanza two begins with its shorter lines introducing startling action, as the hawk completes its crash. The monosyllabic line six of stanza two stops us short with "There," freezing the picture and the rhythm for a second.

Rhythm in "Over Sir John's Hill" is not created only through varied syllabic counts. Rhyme, alliteration, assonance, consonance, and onomatopoeia also build a musical continuity which pulls the lines along. As Hopkins writes in his lecture notes on rhetoric: "We must remember that in modern verse part of the office of rhythm is thrown on rhyme and other things."[38] Thomas has used some modifications of cynghanedd sain in this poem: "Daws Sir John's just hill dons" (1.15) and "We grieve as the blithe birds" (1.34).

Thomas is more eager to take license with sound in general, rather than bind himself to specifically Welsh techniques. His rhyme scheme in "Over Sir John's Hill" is, as Daniel Jones represents it, a a b c c b x d a d x x, where a, b, c, and d are full- or half-rhymes, and x indicates alliteration and assonance.[39] Of particular interest is stanza two, line two, which breaks at "jack" and continues the word "jackdaws" in line three. Surely this freedom with words imitates Hopkins' own freedom, demonstrated in line one of "The Windhover," which ends with "king," completing the word "kingdom" in line two. Another possible reference to Hopkins is the proximity of "flash" to "crash" in "The flash the noosed hawk/ Crashes" (1:10-11), echoing "In a flash, at a trumpet crash," line twenty-one of "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire."

Alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia make a dense, reverberating, and musical web of sound. Thomas seems to be drunk on words here, for he uses these poetic devices lavishly. An example of consonance, or chiming, is found in the extended "l" consonance of lines three to five:

In a hoisted cloud, at drop of dusk, he pulls to his claws

> And gallows, up the rays of his eyes the small birds of the bay
> And the shrill child's play...

Assonance, or the pealing of vowels, occurs in the "a" repetition of line twenty-four: "Of psalms and shadows among the pincered sandcrabs prancing."

Perhaps most readily-apparent and frequent, alliteration takes much of the responsibility for the rhythm of "Over Sir John's Hill." One of the most memorable examples of alliteration ends the poem: "Stone for the sake of the souls of the slain birds sailing" (5:12). This "s" alliteration begins each stressed syllable in the line except for "birds," which at least ends in "s." With its soft sibilant alliteration, this line carries all the force of Hopkins' strong "d" alliteration in line two of "The Windhover": [king-] "dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon. .."

Finally, onomatopoeia, while easily taken for granted among the other aural techniques of the poem, does add to its musical qualities. It also points to the fact that Thomas and Hopkins wanted their poems read aloud. In this poem, "squawk" (1:8), "crack" (2:1), "dilly dilly" (2:9), "cluck" (3:7), "whispering" (4:12), and "hoot" (5:3) all contribute to the elaborate network of sound, making this poem a "living language" in the way that Hopkins' "Duns Scotus's Oxford" lives with its "Cuckoo-echoing" (1.2).

Beyond Thomas' Hopkinsian fascination with rhythm and sound, there is further evidence for his "unorthodox way with language"[40] in his freedom with words. Thomas plays with words in "Over Sir John's Hill," re-interpreting meaning, context, and part of speech. In this way, he strongly resembles Hopkins. Thomas invents a verb--"swansing" (1:7)--from the noun "swansong." Likewise, in "The Loss of the Eurydice" Hopkins invents the verb to "gully" (l.61), possibly from the noun "gully."[41] Thomas also places ordinary words in unusual contexts: "wharves of water" becomes a more metaphorical noun in line forty, and "whack of wind" (1.17), usually a verb, becomes a noun (underlining mine).

Thomas seems to view vocabulary as a vast store from which he can pick any word he likes. He does not hesitate to use dialect words, a practice which Hopkins also followed. In "Over Sir John's Hill," "dingle," "tyburn," and "dilly dilly" have the

effect which "brinded" (l.2) has in Hopkins' "Pied Beauty." Initially obscure, the words, when researched, make the poems more memorable. "Dilly dilly," both the hawk's and the green chickens' calls, is the refrain of a nursery rhyme. Its singsong sound contrasts with its sinister sense.

As part of his inventiveness with words, Thomas has used several puns in "Over Sir John's Hill." One pun is "hail" (4:9), which carries the double meaning of "hale," the sparrows' greeting the scene with their song, and "hail," the sparrows' falling like a spattering of hailstones. Another pun is "tear" (5:3), which Thomas pronounces as "tier" in his recording of the poem but which he evidently wanted pronounced "tare" in an argument with his wife documented by Vernon Watkins.[42] Thomas' own ambiguity as to pronunciation only supports the double meaning of "tear"--like any river, the Towy is a rip in the landscape. It is also filled with the cries of the dead sparrows, of the "young Aesop" and the heron, and even of the hawk.

One of the most obvious points of contact between Hopkins and Thomas is the latter's use of Hopkinsian compound words. Thomas' "tell-tale" (1.42) corresponds to Hopkins' "telltales," line twenty-three in the second- and third-edition versions of "Brothers," since changed to "Told tales." Thomas also uses "fisherbird" (2:7), "loft hawk" (2:9), "shell-hung" (3:12), "sea cobbles" (4:2), "led-astray" (4:7), and "time-shaken" (5:11). Sometimes, compounds are merely ordinary adjective/noun groupings whose connection is heightened by juxtaposition, hyphens, or by melding the two words into one, as in "fisherbird". At other times, however, the compound words are similar to the Anglo-Saxon kenning. In this poem, "Wear-willow" (5:10) comes closest to the paradoxical role of the kenning; the compound brings up enough associations to give the reader a picture of a mournful river shrouded in weeping willows. Perhaps Thomas' compounds are good examples of what Ralph Maud calls his "imagification of what explanatory seams"[43] were left before he revised his poems. Walford Davies makes a similar point, describing Thomas' compound-making as periphrasis or circumlocution of an image's connection with an idea.[44]

Built from Thomas' carefully-chosen words, his images join the sound of poetic technique to the sense of theme. In "Over Sir John's Hill," Thomas uses conventional

imagery. Loosely stated, Thomas takes the paradox of life and death in the natural cycle and makes peace with it, closing the poem with a memorial for the dead and an acceptance of the pattern of nature. Were the images of the poem pulled from their contexts, they could just as easily fit into a Hopkins poem. In both poets' work, nature can be "barbarous in beauty" ("Hurrahing in Harvest":1). Thomas uses the natural imagery of Hopkins with important differences in interpretation and theme, which will be discussed later. The poem has a number of images which reflect Hopkins. The fiery hawk who destroys other birds echoes the windhover, which destroys its high position by buckling under the roll of wind, only to become "a billion/ Times more lovelier, more dangerous" (l.11). The image of the sun-catching fiery bird is also found in Hopkins' "As kingfishers catch fire." As mentioned in the discussion of "Poem in October," birds figure prominently in both poets' work. "Over Sir John's Hill" has a hawk, sparrows, a heron, jackdaws, "green chickens," an owl, and white cranes. Similar to Thomas' poem, Hopkins' "Duns Scotus's Oxford" has cuckoos, rooks, and larks. The images of the birds make both Thomas' and Hopkins' settings authentic; beyond that, they also make connections between winged nature and the aspiring human soul or spirit.

Like Hopkins, Thomas uses natural settings as the scenes of events whose importance goes beyond the natural or physical. The real Sir John's Hill becomes Calvary-like, reminding the young Aesop of death, and reminding us of the crucifixion on the mountain in "Altarwise" VIII. Similarly, the "goldengrove" of Hopkins' "Spring and Fall" manifests the death and change which Margaret must experience. Always present in "Over Sir John's Hill," images of water are also used, with greater intensity, in Hopkins' "The Loss of the Eurydice" and "The Wreck of the Deutschland." Important changes occur in or near water in both poets' work, possibly because of water's cyclical nature and importance for life. And for Thomas, whose first name means "sea,"[45] water may have held an even more personal significance.

Human beings, in the form of the "young Aesop" and the readers are part of the natural scene on Sir John's Hill. The human element also infuses Hopkins' poems, although he rarely gives us background information on the "I." In "Over Sir

John's Hill," Thomas feels it is essential for us to know that the first-person narrator is a young Aesop. This narrator displays the spiritual awareness of tension which Hopkins' speakers show. The speakers in Hopkins' poems, most likely the poet himself, observe or contemplate a physical or spiritual "event" and then move inward to their own souls. Thomas' young Aesop performs this same combination of outward observation and inner contemplation. This act is not new with Hopkins or Thomas--in fact, it unifies poets of different traditions.

Reminding us to go beyond the natural and physical scene, Thomas uses religious imagery throughout the poem. Thomas never lets us forget that the destruction in the air above the hill holds deep ritualistic importance. The words or images of the hill, gallows, headstone, "elegiac fisherbird" (2:7), passage, psalms, "All praise" (3:3), "blest" (3:5), "saint heron hymning" (3:12), "God...have mercy on" (4:7-8), "whirlwind silence" (4:9), "marks the sparrows hail" (4:9), and souls, all create a pattern of spiritual significance.

Thomas' "All praise of the hawk on fire" (3:3) echoes Hopkins' "Glory be to God for dappled things" (1.1) in "Pied Beauty." While the "dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon" is a Christ-image in "The Windhover," Thomas' fiery hawk is a vaguer spiritual destroyer within the natural process. In a letter to Henry Treece, Thomas describes this paradoxical quality in his images: "Any sequence of my images must be a sequence of creations, re-creations, destructions, contradictions."[46] Thomas' "saint heron" is Hopkinsian, but his position is subordinate to the young Aesop. Thomas' religious images cater to his more secular framework; John Wain goes so far as to accuse Thomas of thumbing a lift from religion as a pattern within which to work.[47]

The literal subject of Thomas' poem is the death of sparrows, perpetrated by a hawk, in a Welsh setting, observed by a young Aesop and a saintlike heron. Literal subjects may not be of much use to some literary critics, but they certainly tell us what a poet notices and thinks important enough to write about. Hopkins also notices the death of weak ones: in "Binsey Poplars," he mourns the fallen trees, whose death unselves "The sweet especial scene"(1.22). On a grander scale, he also chooses to

write about five drowned Franciscan nuns in "The Wreck of the Deutschland."

In a more figurative sense, Thomas' subject is the death and eventual praise and acceptance which constitute the cycle of nature and, correspondingly, the cycle of grief. In this way, the poem is involved with redemption in the form of a return to order. Redemption is the central informing subject in Hopkins' poems; with Thomas, it is more a natural conclusion at which to arrive. Poems like "The Windhover," "The Wreck of the Deutschland," and "Felix Randal" end with a redemptive bang. "Over Sir John's Hill" concludes with the "s" alliteration and the equally quiet memorial to the slain birds.

Taken as a whole, "Over Sir John's Hill" could never be mistaken for a Hopkins poem. The sense of this poem steps away from Hopkins and establishes Dylan Thomas' own view of the world. Thomas diverges from Hopkins at the point where he begins to interpret the images of his sacramental world. As Thomas said in a conversation with Harvey Breit, "the slant, the tilt of the mind informs the poetry."[48] If we see "Over Sir John's Hill" only as a twentieth-century imitation of a Hopkinsian theme, we are being either dishonest or shortsighted. Thomas speaks as a twentieth-century man whose senses, while spiritually attuned, are bound to the spiritual on earth.

The sacramental world of Sir John's Hill contains all the elements for Christian redemption except the most essential: Christ and an active God. Instead, the team of the heron and the Aesop replaces God, who is relegated to a background position as an invoked mercy-giver in stanza four. The poem contains a destroyer, the unnecessary death of weak victims, and eventual praise and return to order. Out of this bare skeleton, Thomas creates a fable which re-interprets conventional themes.

The destroyer is a glorious hawk who is as much a part of the natural cycle of life as his victims. Although the hawk is the most active figure in the poem, Thomas underlies his actions with a hint of the fore-ordained nature of his life. As if he is part of a stage set by nature, the hawk hangs in a hoisted cloud. Throughout stanza one, Thomas gives us foreshadowing of the hawk's eventual slaughter and the sparrows' equally inevitable deaths in words like "swansing," "fiery tyburn," and

"headstone" (1:12). The hawk is merely being a hawk, just as the sparrows are fully themselves. The hawk destroys because destruction is part of his role; in this way, this particular hawk will later be worthy of praise because he has performed the task meant for him. The hawk's cry is that of "each mortal thing" (1.5) in Hopkins' "As kingfishers catch fire": "What I do is me: for that I came" (1.8). Here, Thomas has put Hopkins' idea of inscape into action.

As observer, interpreter, and reconciler in the poem, the young Aesop also performs the job specifically designed for him. John Ackerman relates this narrator's bardic and prophetic stance to the idea of the dyn hysbys, or wise man, found in Anglo-Welsh fiction [49] Here, the dyn hysbys is a projection of Thomas the artist into his role as mediator between the physical and the spiritual. Thomas shows the Aesop reading "the leaves of water at a passage/ Of psalms and shadows" (2:11-12). Clearly, this event on the hill has been written down before. The young Aesop knows of the deaths before they occur because death is written into the book. Death is not all that is written, however. The passage contains both the praise of psalms and the shadow of death. Even when Aesop knows the hawk will destroy, he can say "All praise."

The narrator becomes a priest or Christ-figure who observes suffering, grieves, intercedes, and closes with ritual. When he observes the deaths of the naive sparrows, he simultaneously begins to judge the event. First, he puts the murders within the framework of the natural cycle by describing, in stanza one, the two roles of the hawk and the sparrows. Next, he shows us the characters of the hawk and his victims. The "loft hawk" (2:9) calls, and the sparrows passively answer, "Come let us die" (3:8) as if they are fully aware of their imminent deaths.

While the heron and the young Aesop continue to judge, they also begin to intercede by stanza four. They decide that the "led-astray" (4:7) birds are guilty and the hawk is worthy of praise because he has continued nature's cycle. Still, because the sparrows are valuable, the two mediators ask for God's mercy. God's biblical care for sparrows is given credence by this modern Aesop. God must have mercy on these birds because he has always done so--his mercy is part of the natural pattern.

Thomas shifts his attention at the end of stanza four to the heron, one of the

paradoxical figures in the poem. As a holy observer of the death scene, the heron nevertheless stabs at his own prey in the Towy. Thomas' natural world holds all the real paradoxes of any cycle. In stanza four, the heron continues to kill his own prey, but he also becomes a bird of praise. After the violence and death, the scene is quiet. The elms are now "looted" (5:4). After his grieving, the saint heron finally sings: he "Makes all music" (5:9), first because there is no one left to sing, but secondly because he makes all the music that is really needed. The song he sings may be an elegy, but it could also be a psalm of praise. Thomas' heron is the Welsh poet-priest of the natural world.

The conclusion of the poem encapsulates Thomas' theme of earth-bound redemption. Like a priest, the young Aesop adopts ritual to remember symbolically the slain sparrows and to seal the event of their deaths within the boundaries of a specific time. With death still in view, the young Aesop introduces another "book" into the scene--the gravestone. This time, he does the writing. The memorial, like a sacrament, points to a specific moment in time and moves beyond time to become a symbol for spiritual truth. This truth is the inevitable pattern of nature which, in its predictability, contains reasons for praise.

The nature of this "time-shaken/ Stone" (5:11) is not easily apprehended. Thomas' use of "this" rather than "the" or "a" makes us feel that perhaps we ought to recognize the stone from an earlier line in the poem. Since it is "time-shaken," the stone could be the river, whose tune the young Aesop listens to as he graves the notes. Or, perhaps the stone is the heron. In stanza one, his head is referred to as "his tilted headstone" (1.12). As part of the process of nature, the heron may be a Christ-like sacrifice to atone for the deaths of the sparrows. If literal sacrifice is outside the sense of the poem, perhaps emblem is more appropriate. As a fellow witness to praiseworthy destruction, the heron becomes, for the young Aesop, a memorial of the event. The heron is emblematic of the tension and ultimate resolution within the natural cycle. When the narrator sees this bird, he will again participate actively in the event on Sir John's Hill, even as it recedes into the past.

Thomas' poem is an earth-centered gospel of the redemption that occurs when

the natural cycle returns to order. Unlike his earlier self-directed poems, "Over Sir John's Hill" brings the young Aesop into an event of more universal proportions. Thomas does not find resolutions to the paradoxes of life in a Hopkinsian divine source. Instead, Thomas resolves the whirling tension, passion, violence, and searching of life by throwing all of that necessary confusion into the orderly slots of a natural process which always goes around and around.

"In the White Giant's Thigh"

In "In the White Giant's Thigh," the speaker tells us that "All birds and beasts of the linked night uproar and chime" (l.35). This line helps lead to the sense of the poem. The adjective "linked" refers, primarily, to procreation, an act shared by all characters in the poem and a central theme of the poem. But "linked" also refers to the interconnectedness of life in this dark, primitive setting. One aspect of sacramentalism is this belief in the delicate but strong ties between all parts of nature, and "linked night" certainly suggests Thomas' own sacramentalist views Another characteristic of sacramentalism is the praise expressed by the observer and found in the observed, here, too, Thomas' line is appropriate, for the birds and beasts "uproar and chime." Paradoxically but closely connected to this praise is elegy, a poetic way of remembering which reminds us that Thomas' plans for "In Country Heaven" emphasize memory and telling.

This elegy of Thomas' may not be as obvious as his "After the funeral," or Hopkins' "Felix Randal"; after all, the speaker here remembers and praises a group of nameless women who exist more mythically than historically. Still, the poet does elegize and praise, actions which are part of the Welsh poetic equation that poetry equals praise.

In Gwyn Jones' introduction to <u>The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse in English</u>,

he lists as the early bards' literary responsibilities eulogies, elegies, sagas, and wisdom.[50] Whether consciously or unconsciously, Thomas has taken a bardic role as elegist in this and other of his poems such as "Over Sir John's Hill" and "After the funeral." Another helpful comment by Jones describes the Welsh conception of the bard's place in the world:

> "...the poet is accountable to society, and is its spokesman. He is recorder, instructor, and celebrant....The bard, we might say, is the poet as public figure."[51]

The parallels between Jones' description and Thomas' self-ordained position as a spokesman for the barren mythical women of "In the White Giant's Thigh" are noticeable and important. Thomas has the power here, and in other poems as well, to give his own words to a situation; that is, he has seized the authority to speak for something or somebody in the way that Hopkins has become a mediator for those killed in the wreck of the Eurydice: "The Eurydice--it concerned thee, O Lord:/ Three hundred souls, O alas! on board" (ll.1-2). Both Hopkins and Thomas are priests and therefore mediators; Hopkins literally, and Thomas figuratively.

Thomas remembers and praises barren women who "lie longing still" (l.4) and, it seems, will always lie so. His elegy does not change situations, but it heightens their importance. By giving words to this remembering, the poet brings about the only creation the women will ever have a part in: the poem itself. Discussions of "In the White Giant's Thigh" cannot ignore the centrality of procreation in the poem. That subject is not explored by Hopkins except for the sonnet "To R.B.," where Hopkins' strong sexual imagery describes the conception and birth of a poem. However, Hopkins' imagery is primarily figurative; it draws a parallel to poetic creation, and never does it suggest otherwise. Thomas does not hide the fact that his poem is about sexual procreation. His own poetic creation feeds off sex for its subject. This clear language of procreation should not surprise us, since Thomas saw his world from a physical, not a spiritual, standpoint: "Through my small, bonebound island I have learnt all I know, experienced all, and sensed all. All I write is inseparable from the island."[52] Hopkins' "island" differed from Thomas', and this

difference accounts for the way these two poets diverge in addressing themes. Both elegize and praise, but their objects are significantly different. Even Felix Randal, a much-praised "bone-bound island," is elegized withir the context of Hopkins' spiritual duty.

Images in Thomas' poem are ones we have seen before, both in Thomas and Hopkins. Here, each of the four natural elements is well-represented: the hill, women, and animals of the earth; the moon and "pitching clouds" (l.15) of the air; rivers, bay, white lake, and rain; and "firefly hairpins" (l.41), sun, and "Fawkes fires" (l.60). There are images whose significance we remember from other Thomas poems: the birds (curlews this time) who identify themselves with the women of the past and the poet of the present; the swineherd from the fairy-tale world of "In Country Sleep"; the foxes of "After the funeral"; the "minstrel sap" (l 49) that reminds us of "minstrel angle" in "Altarwise" VIII. There are also Christian images, just as we would expect in a Thomas poem. This time, Thomas makes it clear that his holy world is a physical one. All the religious imagery is directed at the natural setting, and most of it is related to anthropomorphized animals. There are "furred small friars" (l.31), "thistie aisles" (l.32), "vaulting" (l.33), and "pilgrimage of domes" (l.36). Nature, for Thomas, is a sanctuary

"In the White Giant's Thigh" contains a few specifically Hopkinsian phrases, and many more which point to the verbal and aural inventiveness they share. The "pitching clouds," whether chaff or real clouds, bring to mind Hopkins' equally active descriptions of clouds in "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire" (e.g., ll.1-3) or "Hurrahing in Harvest" (ll.3-4), and share a grammatical construction with "whirling wind" (l.80) of "The Loss of the Eurydice." Line forty-four of Thomas' poem has "Jacks," which may be rooted equally in Hopkins and Mother Goose. In line thirty-three, the does "roister," a word which Hopkins spells differently in "Heaven-roysterers" ("That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire":2).

There are numerous Hopkins-like, but unhyphenated, compounds or modifier/noun constructions: "waded bay" (l.7), "cudgelling, hacked/ Hill" (ll.11-12), and "ox roasting sun" (l.13). There is even an Anglo-Saxon type of epithet, "veined

hives" (l.42), for the "breasts full of honey" (l.38) of the goosegirls.

Thomas uses dialect and obscure words and colloquialisms here, just as Hopkins does in "all road ever he offended" ("Felix Randal":8) or "degged" ("Inversnaid":9). Thomas' diction fits the bucolic scene; "hawed" (l.29), "dowse" (l.31), and "gambo" (l 37) are not out of place.

The aural techniques of "In the White Giant's Thigh" tie it closely to Hopkins' work. Thomas begins the poem with the curlews' cry, and in a sense, his poetic creation is a song made from alliteration, assonance, and consonance. As in other poems, there is evidence of Thomas' knowledge of cynghanedd in "though they lay" (l.5) and in "ducked and draked white lake" (l.28). Rhyme is systematized in this poem, whose erratically-spaced quatrains rhyme a b a b, with generally close rhymes.

Thomas reads his poem in the same tone as "Poem in October": contemplative, melancholy, and mature. Like most of his recorded poems, "In the White Giant's Thigh" is given a strong beat, however, this rhythm does not monopolize the poem to the extent that some of his other recorded rhythms do. Thomas' elegy is sprung, according to William York Tindall, but Tindall also makes the important point that "regularity and its violation seem to be the principles again."[53] There is a fairly uniform syllabic count to the lines, each averaging twelve syllables in length.

Reading "In the White Giant's Thigh," or any of the "In Country Heaven Poems," we cannot help but recall Thomas' description for his projected long poem, printed in Quite Early One Morning: "It is a poem about happiness." The previous two poems do seem to involve themselves with different types of happiness: "In Country Sleep" resolves itself in a reassurance of a deathless faith, and "Over Sir John's Hill" ends in a return to praise in nature. But "In the White Giant's Thigh" impresses images of barrenness and longing on our minds. Perhaps because the poem is set in the distant past, its barrenness appears particularly unresolvable. It is at this point that it helps to remember that the poem is an elegy. Part of Thomas' job as elegist for these longing women is to praise. With praise, comes a necessary happiness. Praising the women for their persistence, their "love that is evergreen" (l.53). the elegist concludes that they are no longer grieved except by the very

"desirers" (l.56) who reminded them of their barrenness in the past. In a sense, Thomas has released the women from that past, or at least has allowed them to move into the present. With the last line of the poem, Thomas the elegist creates an image of the women which shines into the present: "And the daughters of darkness flame like Fawkes fires still" (l.60). The women may be burning effigies or sacrifices, but they also serve as visible and ever-present memorials to themselves. Thomas has brought the women the happiness of recognition.

"In Country Heaven"

Thomas' unfinished "In Country Heaven" must necessarily receive different treatment from the completed "In Country Sleep," "Over Sir John's Hill," and "In the White Giant's Thigh." There is disagreement as to which portion of Thomas' notes for "In Country Heaven" to print, as evidenced in its divergent renderings in Daniel Jones' edition of The Poems (1974) and Walford Davies' and Ralph Maud's Collected Poems (1988). In their notes to their edition, Davies and Maud explain that:

> Of "In Country Heaven" we have an early draft of forty-three lines, and a rewritten sixteen lines, the latter of such accomplishment as to make us happy to present it in the present volume as a valued part of the corpus of Thomas's poems."[54]

Instead of the rewritten sixteen lines, Daniel Jones printed a conglomerate created from manuscripts. He writes that "many other versions, of course, could be put together from the same material, and would be equally 'authentic'."[55]

The controversy raises some interesting issues, particularly for this study, since the conglomerate printed in The Poems is longer and proportionally contains more Hopkinsian elements than the version in the up-to-date Collected Poems. It is a temptation to accept the longer version and to disregard what, in our admittedly limited perspective, appears to have been the only lines Thomas thought important

enough to rewrite and set aside. The version in The Poems is as helpful as Thomas'
work in his notebooks; it shows thought processes, patterns of diction and imagery,
and probable direction. For this reason, outstanding examples of Hopkins-like words
and phrases from the version in The Poems will be mentioned. However, I believe
that we must respect Thomas the craftsman and the reviser and depend most heavily
on the only part of "In Country Heaven" which might have been in the completed
poem, had Thomas been able to write it.

Judging from the sixteen lines, the completed poem would have been the first
part of the long poem also called "In Country Heaven," which Thomas describes in
the broadcast printed in Quite Early One Morning. In fact, Thomas' description of
his projected poem has been poeticized in the sixteen lines. We read of a weeping
being observing what we may assume is his creation. In his broadcast, Thomas
presents a prose version of the scene which, in being poeticized, gains even more
images, metaphors, and general verbal creativity. Significantly, comparison of the
pertinent part of the prose broadcast with the sixteen lines demonstrates that
Thomas' additions are markedly Hopkinsian.

Thomas writes that "He, on top of a hill in heaven, weeps....And when he
weeps, Light and His tears glide down together, hand in hand. So, at the beginning
of the projected poem, he weeps, and Country Heaven is suddenly dark."[56] In the
unfinished poem, Thomas uses interjection and a compound to fill out his narrative.
Following line one, Thomas has inserted the parenthetical phrase "(Whom my heart
hears)" (l.2). Another interjection is placed at line twelve, with the Hopkinsian "(O
hand in hand)." In Thomas' plan, he has "tears glide down together." In the fragment,
he uses a more inventive compound as a verb, "dewfall" (l.11).

Evidence for Hopkins' stylistic influence lies in line three, "Crosses the breast
of the praising east," a possible echo of Hopkins' "Oh, morning, at the brown brink
eastward springs--/ Because the Holy Ghost over the bent/ World broods with warm
breast..." ("God's Grandeur":12-14). Thomas' "naves of leaves" (l.10) reminds us of
"leaf-light housel" ("The Bugler's First Communion":3:4). A syntactical inversion,
"pierced eyes and the cataract sky" (l.13), where we would more likely expect a

"pierced sky and cataract eyes," is an example of the verbal inventiveness shared by Thomas and Hopkins.

There are several Hopkinsian phrases worth mentioning in the version printed in The Poems, the most definite of which is: "Fade with their rose-// White, God's bright flocks, the belled lambs leaping,/ (His gentle kind);/ The shooting star hawk statued blind in a cloud" (ll. 20-23), in its imagery, its interjection, and its aural techniques of rhymes, alliteration, and assonance.

Like the previous poems in this study, "In Country Heaven" contains the religious imagery and language which suggests both Hopkins' influence and Thomas' perceived role as a priest-like poet: "heaven" (l.1), "praising" and "kneels" (l.3), "abasing" (l.5), "canonized" (l.7), "angels" (l.9), "naves" (l.10), and "pierced" (l.13). Thomas' purpose here, as in other of his poems, is to create an alternate religious world with its own godhead, sorrows, and occasions for praise using the religious language of his own world. The Christian tradition often has capitalized pronouns referring to God, and so does Thomas in lines one, eleven, and fourteen, although he does not capitalize "he" and "his" consistently throughout.

Thomas' "godhead, author, the milky-way farmer, the first cause, the architect, lamp-lighter, quintessence,"[57] and so on, is not, in this fragment, very far from the personal God of Christianity. Thomas has given us a picture of a large, lumbering god who comes to a small part of his creation and weeps his own blood over it. This god has been given the beginnings of a character and has an integral role to play in the aftermath of the earth's death. What we can learn from these sixteen lines is substantial, for they point to Thomas' belief in a holy, interconnected world whose destruction affects some sort of god who cries until all of heaven is "blind and black" (l.16).

We can easily speculate on the unfinished "In Country Heaven," which would have set the stage for the rest of the tellings of the "heavenly hedge-row men." Beyond the probable first position of "In Country Heaven," the order of the other "In Country Heaven" poems is not known. Thomas himself appeared indifferent as to their placement.[58] The three completed poems and one fragment of "In Country

Heaven" show that that sectioned poem may have proven to be the most Hopkins-like work, both stylistically and thematically, that Thomas ever wrote. But where there are differences, most clearly established in the handling of themes, they have revealed Thomas' own voice which, while influenced by Hopkins, remains independently ensconced in Thomas' particular worldview.

NOTES

1. Walford Davies and Ralph Maud, "Notes," Collected Poems, p. 201.

2. J. Alexander Rolph, Dylan Thomas: A Bibliography (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1956), p. 11.

3. Dylan Thomas, Collected Letters, p. 182.

4. Dylan Thomas, Early Prose Writings p. 154,

5. Gerard Manley Hopkins, Journals and Papers, p. 289.

6. "Surreal," in The American Heritage Dictionary, ed. by William Morris (2nd college ed.: Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982), p. 1224.

7. Anerin Talfan Davies, Druid of the Broken Body, p. 92ff.

8. Dylan Thomas, Collected Letters, p. 282.

9. Ibid.

10. Dylan Thomas, Letters to Vernon Watkins, pp. 115-116.

11. Gerard Manley Hopkins, Letters to Bridges, p. 165.

12. W. H. Gardner, Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition I (London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1944), p. 113.

13. Ibid., p. 114.

14. Gerard Manley Hopkins, Letters to Bridges, p. 163.

15. Gerard Manley Hopkins, Journals and Papers, p. 284.

16. W. H. Gardner, Gerard Manley Hopkins I, p 110.

17. "Cynghanedd draws," The Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales, pp.114-115.

18. Ibid., p. 115.

19. Walford Davies, Dylan Thomas, pp. 96-97.

20. Glyn Jones, The Dragon Has Two Tongues, p. 182.

21. Dylan Thomas, Quite Early One Morning, p. 156.

22. Ibid., pp. 156-157.

23. John Malcolm Brinnin, "from Dylan Thomas in America," in A Casebook on Dylan Thomas John Malcolm Brinnin, ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1969), p. 208.

24. Conversation with Walford Davies: Aberystwyth, 23 October 1989.

25. William T. Moynihan, The Craft and Art of Dylan Thomas (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 271.

26. Quoted in Paul Ferris, Dylan Thomas, p. 227.

27. Anthony Conran, The Cost of Strangenessm p. 180.

28. Alfred Borrello, ed., A Concordance to the Poetry in English of Gerard Manley Hopkins (Metuchen NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1969), p. 461.

29. William York Tindall, Reader's Guide, p. 274.

30. Gerard Manley Hopkins, Journals and Papers, p. 274.

31. Quoted by Robert Buttel in "Hopkins and Heaney," in Hopkins Among the Poets, p. 112.

32. John Ackerman, Dylan Thomas: His Life and Work, p. 141.

33. Gerard Manley Hopkins, Journals and Papers, p. 125.

34. Walter J. Ong S. J., "Hopkins' Sprung Rhythm," in Immortal Diamond, p. 104.

35. Gerard Manley Hopkins, Letters to Bridges, p. 89.

36. Gerard Manley Hopkins, Journals and Papers, p. 274.

37. John Ackerman, <u>Dylan Thomas: His Life and Work</u>, p. 8.

38. Gerard Manley Hopkins, <u>Journals and Papers</u>, p. 275.

39. Daniel Jones, "Notes," in <u>The Poems</u>, p. 248.

40. Walford Davies, <u>Dylan Thomas</u>, p. 96.

41. Raymond V. Schoder S. J., "An Interpretive Glossary of Difficult Words in the Poems," in <u>Immortal Diamond</u>, p. 204.

42. Quoted by Walford Davies and Ralph Maud, "Notes," in <u>Collected Poems</u>, p. 253.

43. Ralph Maud, "Introduction," <u>Poet in the Making</u>, p. 15.

44. Walford Davies, <u>Dylan Thomas</u>, p. 20.

45. John Ackerman, <u>Dylan Thomas: His Life and Work</u>, p. 23.

46. Dylan Thomas, <u>Collected Letters</u>, p. 281.

47. Quoted by Walford Davies, <u>Dylan Thomas</u>, p. 60.

48. Harvey Breit, "Talks with Dylan Thomas," in <u>Casebook</u>, p. 196.

49. John Ackerman, <u>Dylan Thomas: His Life and Work</u>, p. 143.

50. Gwyn Jones, "Introduction," <u>The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse in English</u>, chosen by Gwyn Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. xviii.

51. <u>Ibid</u>.

52. Dylan Thomas, <u>Collected Letters</u>, p. 39.

53. William York Tindall, <u>Reader's Guide</u>, p. 293.

54. Walford Davies and Ralph Maud, "Notes," <u>Collected Poems</u>, p. 259.

55. Daniel Jones, "Notes," <u>The Poems</u>, p. 278.

56. Dylan Thomas, <u>Quite Early One Morning</u>, p. 156.

57. <u>Ibid</u>.

58. Daniel Jones, "Notes," <u>The Poems</u>, p. 277.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Exploring the issue of Gerard Manley Hopkins' influence on Dylan Thomas has proven to be more complicated, and therefore more interesting, than has been casually assumed by those who would take Hopkins' influence as a settled fact. The issue is not merely one-dimensional, as I have shown by addressing Thomas' life, personality, attitudes, poetic approaches, and important influences, all of which have been revealed in biographical and critical work, letters, notebooks prose, and poems.

During the course of this study, I have found that there can be little doubt that Thomas was influenced by Hopkins. Thomas' 1929 essay "Modern Poetry" indicates that he was familiar with Hopkins' work even before the second edition of Hopkins' poems came out in 1930. Evidence from letters proves that Thomas owned Hopkins' poems, and that he had considered and was skeptical of Henry Treece's suggestions of Hopkins' influence. Still, Daniel Jones' description of Thomas' indignant reaction to such an idea suggests that Thomas was threatened by its truth. Thomas' reaction is in strong contrast to his acceptance or calm denial of the influence of Yeats, Owen, Crane, and Joyce, which I have distinguished from Hopkins' influence. Beyond biographical evidence, I have found ties between Thomas and Hopkins in the areas of Welsh experience, Welsh prosody, interest in words and sounds, poetic techniques, themes, subjects, and imagery. Thomas' and Hopkins' poetic orientations resemble each other and are manifested in the six Thomas poems analyzed in Chapter Four.

This study began as an explanation of my initial interest in the influence issue based on a particularly unacademic (but not uncritical) impression that Thomas' poetry resembles Hopkins' in many ways. I believe it is significant that my hunch was completely my own, and was not suggested to me by other critics. At the time, I had just begun formal study of Dylan Thomas and had not read any criticism on him. This hunch may point to the presence of intertextuality between the works of

Hopkins and Thomas. By acknowledging intertextual activity, we can temporarily block out other proof of Hopkins' influence in the biographical or critical realms, and pay close attention to the texts of the poems themselves. It is there that evidence of conscious and/or unconscious influence may be exposed. When we see identical words and phrases, or similar poetic concerns with words and their sounds, images, and patterns, general assumptions about Hopkins' influence on Thomas become specific, as I have demonstrated in Chapter Four.

Most likely, the intertextuality of Hopkins' and Thomas' work helped cause critics to form assumptions about Hopkins' influence in the first place. Thomas' inability to see Hopkins' influence when Henry Treece pointed it out to him in 1938, does not appear to be much of an obstacle to the belief that Thomas was indeed under Hopkins' influence. By discussing all aspects of the influence issue, even such potential obstacles as Thomas' statements to Treece, I have attempted to present a complete view of the issue. In a manner similar, I suppose, to the Anglo-Saxon kenning, I have tried to pinpoint the essential elements of the question of Hopkins' influence by discussing the surrounding issues of literary criticism, biography, Welsh prosody, Thomas' other influences, specifically Hopkinsian areas of influence, and Thomas' divergences from that influence. That Thomas clearly was influenced by Hopkins is proven by my essential circumventions and by my discussions of the poems themselves.

APPENDIX A

Twenty-one Thomas Poems with Hopkinsian Elements
(ordered as in Collected Poems, excepting item 1)

1. "Out of the Pit" from The Poems.
2. "When once the twilight locks."
3. "Before I knocked."
4. "If I were tickled by the rub of love."
5. "Altarwise by owl-light" VIII.
6. "Altarwise by owl-light" X.
7. "After the funeral."
8. "How shall my animal."
9. "On no work of words."
10. "If my head hurt a hair's foot."
11. "The Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London."
12. "Poem in October."
13. "A Winter's Tale."
14. "Vision and Prayer."
15. "Ballad of the Long-legged Bait."
16. "Fern Hill."
17. "In Country Sleep."
18. "Over Sir John's Hill."
19. "Poem on his Birthday."
20. "In the White Giant's Thigh."
21. "In Country Heaven."

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