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On Reconsidering Poets in Relation to Poetic Movements: Gerard Manley Hopkins as an Example

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the problems arising from categorising poets into poetic movements. The paper discusses ten problems resulting from such a deficient method of evaluating poets. These are generalisations, preconceptions and misconceptions, prejudices, scepticism as for the existence of a movement, the difficulty of drawing delineating lines between movements, the difficulty of giving dates for the beginning and end of a movement, using different terms to refer to the same group, the difficulty of defining a movement, ignoring the multifacetedness of poets and different categorising of poets by different critics. Gerard Manley Hopkins is studied as an example of how greatly critics' views can differ as for the categorising and the evaluation of poets. The paper recommends reconsidering relating poets to poetic movements. One of the most important conclusions drawn from the research is that each poet should be studied individually and independently from the movement he or she is claimed to belong to to discover the poet's individual talent and, hence, value.

Key Words: poetry, poetic movements, categorising poets, Hopkins, critics

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On Reconsidering Poets in Relation to Poetic Movements: Gerard Manley Hopkins as an Example

I

One of the mistakes critics commonly make is that of attaching a label or a term to a group, a generation or an age of poets, with heterogeneous poetic identities and ideologies, to distinguish such poets from others in the canon. Romanticism, Victorianism, Modernism, the Thirties, the Group and the Movement are but few of the plethora of poetic movements that loom large in English literature. It is true that some poetic groupings are formed by the poets themselves, mostly for the sake of getting public attention. Imagism and Georgian Poets are two good examples in this respect. In his book *Reading Modern Poetry*, Michael Schmidt points out that one of the reasons why English poetry has been surging with –isms, i. e. poetic movements, is that “young writers in their apprenticeships [try] to draw attention to their work by inventing a movement and to signal radical departures” (81). This is quite applicable to Georgian Poets who grouped themselves around a defined set of aims. A. C. Ward points out that the aim of such promising poets was, “to stir the public to buy – and to read – poetry” (20th 173). The five anthologies of Georgian poetry included forty poets (Ward 20th 174); quite few of these names are ever mentioned today.

One of the negative effects of grouping poets in movements is that the qualities that distinguish an individual poet are mostly ignored. Readers of English poetry have, thus, to be careful when reading or using such terms as Romanticism, Modernism and the like. The critic Jem Poster warns readers repeatedly of being misled by critics who easily coin terms and apply them to groups of poets and recommends readers instead to study and investigate the poems of every individual poet rather than passively or uncritically receiving critics’ views, impressions and ready-made clichés about groups or movements of poets. This has, indeed, to be taken seriously even when critics as great as T. S. Eliot (1888-1965), Ezra Pound (1885-1972) and W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) are concerned; critics’ views, it is true, may not be disinterested as many readers may believe. As will be pointed out, W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot and E. Pound did not do Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89) justice as critics. In his book *The Thirties Poets*, Poster provides an illuminating discussion of how critics’ views must be cautiously approached but not blindly received or employed (92-3).

The aim of this paper is, therefore, to explore the problems arising from grouping of poets, by critics, in certain movements. The paper will point out how misleading the groupings of poets under certain terms can be and assert that each poet should be studied independently from the movement he or she is claimed to belong to to discover the poet’s individual talent and, hence, value. The paper will highlight some of the important problems resulting from assembling poets into poetic movements. These

include generalisations, preconceptions and misconceptions, prejudices, scepticism as for the existence of a movement, the difficulty of drawing delineating lines between movements, the difficulty of giving dates for the beginning and end of a movement, using different terms to refer to the same group, the difficulty of defining a movement, ignoring the multifacetedness of poets, and different categorising of poets by different critics.

To start with, almost all of the poetic movements need to be reconsidered with the purpose of examining the poetic outputs of individual poets in a group. The individuality of a poet is a right that the poet should not be denied. It is true that poets of a certain period of time undergo certain social, economic and political influences which, undoubtedly, play formative roles in their poetic responses. In his notable autobiography entitled *World Within World*, Stephen Spender (1909-1995) wrote, "the qualities which distinguished us from the writers of the previous decade lay ... in the events to which we reacted. These were unemployment, economic crisis, nascent fascism, approaching war..." (Thwaite, *Twentieth* 62). Still, a poet's *oeuvre*, it is believed, is as unique as a fingerprint.

To take one example of how poets can be negatively affected by being put into groups, the so-called The Thirties Poets are not in fact a group or a movement even though a number of critics still insist on seeing and dealing with them as such. In so doing, such critics insist on homogenising what is importantly heterogeneous. Many critics have, thus, insisted on putting such poets, i. e. W. H. Auden (1907-73), Stephen Spender, Louis MacNiece (1907-1963), C. Day Lewis (1904-72) and others, who are importantly different, within the same group. One of many critics, Bonamy Dobree, wrote of a "school" of poetry spearheaded by Auden (Poster 1). The suggestion that these poets have a group identity was further cemented by the publication of a number of books and anthologies that marketed these as an assemblage. These included Michael Roberts' anthologies *New Signatures* (1932) and *New Country* (1933), Robert Skelton's *Poetry of the Thirties* (2000), A. T. Tolley's *The Poetry of the Thirties* (1975), Michael O'Neill and Gareth Reeve's *Auden, MacNiece and Spender: The Thirties Poetry* (1992). 'Auden and Co.' is the title suggested by R. P. Draper to discuss this generation of poets (98). Still, dwarfing poets of the 1930s and ignoring the individuality characterising each of them, some critics simply, as well as disparagingly, refer to them as the Auden generation giving the impression that such poets are no more than echoing voices, i. e. apprentices, of their master poet Auden.

Generalisations are one of the main problems arising from categorising poets into movements. The seriousness of the problem consists in that the variety of poetic voices in a movement like Romanticism, which "encourages heterodoxy, diversity [and] individuality" (Thwaite, *Twentieth* 7) is blurred and obliterated by critics who simply seem to be accepting certain poets as representing certain poetic movements. Critics ignore the

distinguishing, idiosyncratic individualities of the poets in the group by producing general judgements which may well skew readers' notions about and judgments of the individual poets within a group. In so doing, critics, more often than not, single out one or two of the group's or the movement's poets, champion him/them and generalise the characteristics of his or their poetry to the rest of the members assembled. William Wordsworth (1770-1850) has, thus, been accepted as epitomising British Romanticism (1800-25) in the same way Matthew Arnold (1822-88) and A. Tennyson (1809-92) have been accepted as typifying Victorian poetry (1837-1901). Likewise, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound have been looked at as representing British poetic Modernism. In his turn, W. H. Auden has been singled out as prototyping a whole, richly varied generation of poets, i. e. the so-called the Thirties Poets; and Rupert Brooke (1887-1915) is considered an exemplary typifying of Georgian Poetry (1912-1922). Certain poets are, thus, iconic representations of certain poetic movements.

To put it the other way round, what should British Romanticism be like without W. Wordsworth? What is British poetic Modernism without T. S. Eliot? What is poetic Modernism without few poems, i. e. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' (1922) and 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1915), Pound's 'In a Station of the Metro' (1917) (bartleby), and Yeats's 'The Second Coming' (1920), poems that have been circulated in anthologies and poetry books ever since the movement was in vogue. What is British Modernism without Ezra Pound who acted like a generator in the production of this movement? Pound, it must be mentioned, is believed to have been the catalyst that brought about the essential changes that have featured poetic Modernism. It is noteworthy that Pound was a literary agent for "the unknown Eliot" (Spurr 269), and later Eliot's editor. Eliot's poetic masterpiece, 'The Waste Land', is dedicated to Pound, *il miglior fabbro* (the better craftsman). In addition, Longenbach asserts that it was Pound who, "modernized" Yeats and rerouted Yeats's style, by "toughening his attitude and roughening his diction" (Levenson 105); it is to be noted that Pound was Yeats's secretary (Spurr 269). In addition, he shaped the works of such contemporaries as James Joyce (1882-1941) and Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961). It is clear, thus, that Pound was central to Modernism. Eliot, Pound and Yeats have, thus, come to be synonymous of British poetic Modernism. On the contrary many other Modernist poets, including Mina Loy (1882-1996) and Marianne Moore (1887-1972), are hardly taken notice of anymore. Generalisations, thus, result in that less known poets in such assemblages, groups or movements, are mostly kept out of the limelight and many of them hardly find their way to any of the anthologies due to having been, so to speak, represented by the master poets of these movements. Rex Warner (1905-86) and Michael Roberts (1902-1948), two poets of the 1930s, have almost sunk into oblivion.

Indeed, many of the poets categorised in different movements have been submerged as a result of the sweeping generalisations made by critics who champion and idealise one figure while all the others in the movement act like a pedestal underneath the feet of that colossal figure. The pioneering, representative poet in this case can be compared to the top of an iceberg that is seen as a landmark; the giant mass that submerges underneath stands for the other poets grouped that remain unnoticed; still it is that huge, unseen mass that supports the emergence of that top.

It is worth noting that twentieth century English poetry is marked, more than anything else, by an asserted and irresistible sense of individuality. As Anthony Thwaite, observes, "one has a sense of individuals looking for individual forms of expression, and this is reflected in criticism, in the recurring words of evaluation and comment- 'original', 'disturbing', 'a new voice', 'finding his own voice', 'developing', 'individual'" (*Twentieth* 7). Critics, thus, simply overlook important, even essential, differences that can exist between members of the same group. Speaking of the generalisations that have baffled the individual achievements of poets of the 1930s, Jem Poster notes that, "the period is one which has been bedeviled by generalizations, generalizations which seem too often to have been a substitute for, rather than the product of, analysis of specific texts" (7).

A few critics, it should be mentioned, were careful enough not to be taken in by such traps of generalisations. Such critics refused to group these poets, and the like, together or to think of them as poetic movements. In his book *English Poetry Since 1940*, Neil Corcoran asserts that the members of the group of the Thirties Poets were "almost always with Auden, and suffered in the association" (*Cambridge* 15). The yoking of such a generation of poets under the term The Thirties Poets, as if they had a clear poetic and ideological identity, incurred some criticism from Geoffrey Grigson (1905-1985) and Francis Scarfe (1911-1986), both of whom are poet-critics, who were clear-sighted enough to assert dissociation, rather than the association, of such poets. G. Grigson, one of the period's most eminent and most influential critics, objected to the clustering of those poets in such a way in a poem entitled, 'Poets in Generation'. In his book *Auden and After: the Liberation of Poetry 1930-1941* (1941), F. Scarfe, in his turn, was, "clearly not inclined to isolate the [Thirties] decade" (Poster 87). Agreeing with Grigson and Scarfe, Poster opines that if we uncritically lump together the poems written by an entire generation over a ten-year period we shall lose sight of their authors' individuality, as well as fail to register the extent to which particular poets developed between the beginning of the decade and its conclusion (2).

The preconceptions, as well as the resulting misconceptions, these movements create in the minds of readers are, in their turn, worth considering. Readers and researchers, in their turn, approach such groups of

poets with certain preconceptions that may be greatly misleading and skewing. When a researcher who already studied that Auden is the voice of his generation comes to grips with individual poets in a group, he or she will most probably be disillusioned by how different the poets in one group can be. In addition, it will be discovered that less known poets have been almost silenced as their poet, Auden in this case, speaks for them. With these preconceptions, as well as misconceptions, some critics claimed that poets of the 1930s "developed a style and viewpoint similar to W. H. Auden" (Carter 346). In short, such poets belonged to a time that has come to be referred to as the Age of Auden. This has, unduly enough, resulted in critics either being discouraged to explore the other members in the group or that some critics, for instance, and readers approach a poet like Stephen Spender through the background they have already formed through their reading of or about Auden's poetry. It is interesting here to observe that Auden and Spender were such two essentially different poets, yet they are both grouped, or rather yoked, under the term The Thirties Poets.

Spender's reputation as a poet, as it is the case with that of many of his contemporary fellow poets of the time, was eclipsed by that of W. H. Auden. A note about how Auden and Spender differed from each other as poets can be illuminating in this respect. To begin with, one of the most distinguishing features between the two poets is that whereas Auden's poetry can be safely described as public, Spender's, on the other hand, was remarkably individualistic and personal. Auden believed firmly that part of his responsibility as a poet was to deal with the ongoing problems of the day, foremost among which was, undoubtedly, that of war, the nightmare of the Great War and the shadows of a pending other. Auden's poetry was, thus, greatly involved in its times: tense pre-war, war years and the aftermaths of war. The gamut Spender's poetry represents is greatly different. The First World War disillusioned Spender about the brutality of man, and, as a result, he suffered greatly from a sense of being confined in this world; he, therefore, decided on a spiritual liberation by letting his soul join the heavenly world. Spender's poetry essentially represents these three phases of development.

Prejudices arising from using terms referring to poetic movements arouse another problem since such terms mostly orient and kindle readers' judgments who tend to side with or against one movement or another. T. S. Eliot is no exception; he admits that, "I wish myself to avoid employing the terms Romanticism and Classicism, terms which ... tend to prejudice our conclusions" (*Use* 129). It is important here to mention that Eliot himself was starkly anti-Romantic. Contradicting himself yet, Eliot described himself as a Classicist; one of the reasons why W. H. Auden criticised him (Thwaite, *Twentieth* 43).

Scepticism about the very existence of a number of poetic movements is another problem aroused by some critics. In two of his critiques, Eliot speaks disparagingly of the Romantic poets. In *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* and *The Sacred Wood*, he exposes the incoherence and unconformity underlying the poets of the so-called Romanticism. In the first of these two books of criticism, T. S. Eliot describes Romanticism simply as a "literary disease" (*Use* 128) and expresses scepticism about the very existence of this movement. Indeed, all through his critical treatise entitled 'The Modern Mind', Eliot remarkably avoids using the term Romanticism to refer to such a "cluster of poets" (Evans 46) including W. Wordsworth, S. T. Coleridge (1772-1834), P. B. Shelley (1792-1822), J. Keats (1795-1821) in addition to others. Even when he does, Eliot uses the term refutingly; he deals with the Romantics as individual poets, but never as a group. In addition, he speaks mostly unfavourably of such a generation of poets. He sees "Byron [as] so empty of matter, Shelley so incoherent, Wordsworth...so wanting in completeness and variety" (*Sacred* xii). Only Keats, "seems to me a great poet" (*Use* 100). The essential differences between the poets of such a generation, as highlighted by Eliot, make it impossible to think of such heterogeneous poets as a movement. He explains that the poetic, the critical as well as the personal differences between British poets grouped by critics in text-books under the title Romantics make them poles apart. Even though, these poets have responded to the same, or similar, social and economic drives, i. e. they were all struck by the advent of the nightmare of industrialisation, with its machinery, tall chimneys and clouds of smoke, that gulped large plots of agrarian land, they should be dealt with as individual poets, as suggested by Eliot himself.

Drawing delineating lines between different poetic movements is not really easy to do. As a matter of fact, most of the poetic movements seem to overlap at one point or another. Even poetic movements as diametrically opposed as Romanticism and Modernism, have been found out to share some fair common ground. The American poet Randall Jarrell (1914-65), the first to use the term postmodernism, in 1947, explains that "any qualities associated with modern poetry – violence, disorganization, obscurity – are themselves romantic phenomena (Levenson 101). This, indeed, exposes the fragility of the boundaries supposed to separate one movement from another.

To take the idea a step beyond, what is it that makes a movement essentially different from other movements? What makes Modernism, for instance, different from Victorianism and Romanticism? Now that a complete century separates us from the beginning of English poetic Modernism, and after its dazzling glamour has faded and waned, can delineating lines be really drawn to separate Modernism, for instance, from other movements? Strikingly, it can now be claimed that Modernists availed

themselves greatly of the Victorians and the Romantics, against whom they revolted and from whom they claimed departures. Such claims are not groundless. Many critics would assert that the Modernists' adventuring with the conventional poetic mores, impatience with regularity and strict rhyme schemes, are among the most distinguishing aspects of poetic Modernism. But even here, the answer may be astonishing. As Daniel Albright says:

If modernist implies experimentation with the limits of art, shocks and thrills beyond all previous bounds, then, in the matter of poetic form, the Victorians were more modernist than the Modernists themselves. As inventors of new stanza forms, transgressors of prosodic boundaries and explorers of new sonorities of verse, the Victorians were unsurpassable – the Modernist poets began their careers in a world in which the Victorians had already broken the rules and developed strange and idiosyncratic new rules. (Corcoran, *Cambridge* 24)

D. Albright, very importantly, provides a thorough account of how the Victorians, not the Modernists, were more adventurous when it comes to innovative experimenting with verse. He scrutinises the Victorian poets' audacious experimenting with the different features of poetry, which have been accepted mainly as characterising the Modernist movement, foremost among which are rhyme, metre, stanza forms and free verse. Even broken structures, allusions, and the use of Old English in addition to an inherent sense of instability can be traced throughout the prism of poetry the Victorian Age proffers. Thomas Hardy's (1840-1928) poem 'The Voice', for instance, provides a good example of experimenting with broken structure:

Thus I; faltering forward,
Leaves around me falling,
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward,
And the woman calling. (Hayward 395)

That the whole stanza does not have a verb exposes the speaker's passivity amid a horrid world; one that previously welcomed the poet and his beloved warmly. Remorse-stricken, the speaker experiences feebleness, pain and inability to face the elements of a merciless nature around him, elements that fill him with increasing awe and forthcoming death, together with the ghostly voice of the "woman much missed" calling. The lines are, thus, revealing the poet's suffering.

Indeed, it is really striking to discover the indebtedness of the Modernists Eliot and Pound to the two movements they revolted against and attacked greatly, namely Romanticism and Victorianism. The modernists' indebtedness to the Victorian Robert Browning's (1812-1889) use as well as development of dramatic monologue is doubtless. Further, James Longenbach asserts that as a Modernist, Eliot was influenced by Tennyson

and, more significantly even, that Eliot's Modernism can best be understood when in line of poetic pursuit of development initiated by Wordsworth himself, "we understand [Modernism]", asserts Longenbach "as a continuum beginning with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*" (Levenson 100). Indeed, Longenbach asserts that Romanticism has been "encroached on by Modernism" (100). Thus, drawing separating lines between one movement and another can well prove a failure.

Still, certain characteristics can be said to distinguish Modernist poetry. These include difficulty of communication, the triviality of the *persona* in the poem, alienation, fragmentariness of images and rapid shifting of images in a cinematic-like manner. Furthermore, the multiculturalism of such poems is a distinguishing feature. In addition, modernist poetry is difficult to access and digest; Eliot believed that poetry has to be difficult. It also addresses the sophisticated elite and the learned. Modernist poetry is urban, i. e. it mostly deals with the city, depicting it and disclosing the problems overwhelming its people, including the psychological ones.

Giving specific dates to the beginning and the end of a poetic movement is yet another problem. The Romantic movement is a good example in this respect. Sir Ifor Evans identified twenty five years, 1800-25, as marking the prominence of British Romanticism. These twenty five years were multiplied by ten by T. S. Eliot who says, "'Romanticism' comes to include nearly everything that distinguishes the last two hundred and fifty years or so from their predecessors, and includes so much that it ceases to bring with it any praise or blame" (*Use* 128-9). Eliot must be referring here to John Dryden (1631-1700) who is considered by some critics to be the father of Romanticism.

In its turn, poetic Modernism is no exception. The dates of the beginning and end of poetic Modernism have, indeed, been a question of lots of controversy. The problem of giving dates for the beginning and end of this movement has not yet been resolved. While many critics define the "first half of the twentieth century" as the high point of Modernism (Padley 68), others argue that it started around twenty years before the twentieth century. Still, while some critics accept Thomas Hardy's poem 'In Time of the Breaking of Nations', published in 1916, as marking the beginning of the movement (Spurr 270) others see Modernism to have started with the Irish Rising in 1916. Still, other critics agree that the Russian Revolution in 1917 marks the debut of the literary phenomenon called Modernism (Spurr 270). The end of the movement is yet another issue of controversy. As early as 1930, Randal Jarrell announced poetic Modernism to be "a thing of the past" (Levenson 100) and wondered who could believe that Modernism would collapse so fast. Sixty years later, in 1999, Levenson, in the introduction to his book *Modernism*, admits that "We are still learning how not to be Modernist" (1), which indicates that poetic Modernism has

continued to impact poets for several decades after Randall's announcement. Basil Bunting's poem 'Under Briggflatts', published in 1989, has been seen as a continuation of Modernist tradition (Padley 69).

Using different terms to refer to the same age or group of poets is yet another problem. To give one example, many terms have been used by critics to refer to eighteenth-century poetry. The age has, thus, been referred to as the Age of Reason, the Neoclassical Period, the Augustan Age and the Age of Enlightenment, even though none of these terms truly reflects the *zeitgeist*, i. e. the spirit of the age, as Tillotson explains (1). The different terms used by critics to refer to the same age, group or movement gets readers confused since not all readers are really familiar with all of these terms. Similarly, many labels have been attached to the "Thirties Poets" (Wildhardt 306) including "The Oxford poets", "the Pylon Poets" (Poster 25), the "New Country" poets (Williams 41), "the Macspaunday" Group (Thwaite, *Poetry* 15) and "Daylewisauden", Auden's own coining (Draper 98). These different terms refer to the same generation of poets. The question remains, however, as for whether the poets docketed under these different namings are all the same or one may be in or out by one group-assembler or another as it is the case in a number of other movements; Pound, central to modernism, was excluded from Modernism by certain critics (Levenson 100).

Defining a poetic movement is a problematic issue. The critic Anthony Thwaite, observes that such terms as Romanticism and Classicism, "suggest something without defining it" (*Twentieth* 1) which implies that the terms are not themselves evident enough. Indeed, defining a poetic movement is by no means an easy task. The variety and idiosyncrasy as well as the creative disposition and individual achievements of any movement must resist defining. Defining is confining, after all. T. S. Eliot finds Romanticism difficult to define, "'Romanticism' ... is a term which is constantly changing in different contexts" (*Use* 128-9); it is a term, adds Eliot, "which is now limited to what appears to be ... purely local" (129). It is worth mentioning that the group of poets tagged Romantics did not themselves realise that they were called so. Sir Ifor Evans, thus, duly argues that the Romantics themselves "might not have understood what [Romanticism] meant" (46). What is more important is that they did not even think of themselves as a group. Even Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* (1800) that has been accepted as a manifesto of the Romantic Movement was basically written, by Wordsworth himself, to defend Wordsworth's own views on poetry and to account for his own writing of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). All through the *Preface*, thus, there is no mentioning of a group of poets or a movement. As Wordsworth explains, he wrote the *Preface* in response to the many requests of his friends to provide "a systematic defense" of his poems that were "so materially *different* from

those, upon which general approbation is at present bestowed” (my italicising) (Bartleby). This evidently speaks of Wordsworth’s realising of his poetry as being importantly different from his contemporary poets’ achievements.

Modernism provides another example of how difficult it is to define a poetic movement. Michael Levenson, in the introduction to his book *Modernism*, speaks of “many Modernisms” (7), which means that there are different versions or varieties of Modernism. This simply means that the same term can mean different things to different readers and this makes the term really difficult to define. “‘Modernism’ is a notoriously slippery term”, announces J. Poster and adds that critics who define poetic Modernism tend to “locate the movement in Britain” primarily within the first three decades of the twentieth century (6). In his turn, R. P. Draper explains that there are two clearly distinct “camps of Modernism”, the British one pioneered by Eliot and Pound and the American one led by W. C. Williams (1883-1963) and W. Stevens (1879-1955) (7) and asserts that though these represent two essentially “divergent trends” (20) they are both called Modernism. Such Modernisms “fall into two different categories” since the British trend is “iconoclastic” (31) while the American one is “optimistic” (Draper 32). As Draper proceeds, the discrepancy between the two brands of poetic Modernism expose the divergent ways these two Modernisms have gone. It becomes clear, then, that the writer is discussing two different poetic movements under the same term, i. e. Modernism.

The multifacetedness of a poet is mostly ignored by critics who insist on imposing certain labels or frames on certain groups of poets. Critics in general insist on looking at a poet through one particular angle. Thus, a poet such as Rupert Brooke has been studied, anthologised and recognised as a war poet, despite the fact that he never joined war and that all his war poems are seven sonnets in all written in 1914, few months (or even weeks) before his death. All through his poetry, however, the weighty idea of searching for God loom large. Critics and anthologists have, however, been satisfied with considering R. Brooke a war poet ignoring the majority (not less than nine tenths) of his poetic achievement outright. Likewise, Pound has hardly been explored as, “the most exaggeratedly romantic poet of his generation”, as Longenbach asserts (Levenson 118) since most critics have insisted on seeing him on purely Modernist terms. This limitedness of approaching a poet by insisting on looking at him through a monocular results in distortions as well as misrepresentations of such a poet and how he or she is received by the reading public.

Some poets are categorised differently by different critics. This is another problem that baffles and confuses readers greatly. Gerard Manley Hopkins has caused critics “difficulty in categorizing him” (Carter 308). Hopkins, it is to be remembered, was so innovative that he devised his own theories of poetry, theories which still stand out uniquely in the canon. As

Martin Stephen asserts, Hopkins is generally regarded as “a difficult poet to study at Advanced level... more [difficult] than any other author studied in this work” (252). Though it is a whole century now since Hopkins’s collected poems were first published, i. e. in 1918, the controversy is still there as for the age, generation or movement that Hopkins’s work should fit in or belong to. In other words, is Hopkins a Victorian, a modern or a Modernist poet? is a question repeatedly posed by critics. Hopkins’s theories and his poetic practice have left critics arguing in their attempts to construe his contribution. Thus, while some critics and anthologists saw Hopkins’s innovativeness and experimentations to be modernist (Corcoran, *Cambridge* 31), even if he, to quote Lawrence Durrell, he was born “at the wrong time” (164), others insist on locating him within the period of time in which he lived, namely the Victorian age. A third group of critics see him as “forerunner” (Ward *Line* 95) to Modernism; and some critics, yet, assert that he is a “metaphysical poet” (Stephen 252). As if trying to strike some kind of balance, some critics described Hopkins as a “modern” poet (Carter 309, Burgess 194) or a “precursor” (Ellmann 3) and a “harbinger” (Stephen 253) to modern poetry. Other critics, however, found Hopkins too difficult to deal with or categorise; these kept “dumb” (Stephen 253). This, anyhow, takes us back to the main point this paper is after, i. e. that of dealing with each poet individually rather than sorting poets out into poetic movements.

II

G. M. Hopkins is a poet of a special caliber. Almost all critics agree that Hopkins as a poet was ahead of his time, one who “bridges centuries and carries Victorian doubt ... into Modernism.” (Wildhardt 308). The coincidence that his poetry appeared, like a ghost, thirty years after his death still stands uniquely in English poetry. This, so to speak, resurrection had a tremendously profound impact on the poets of the time. G. Phelps is one of many critics who assert that Hopkins is the Victorian poet who had “the greatest impact upon the poets of the 1920s” (231). No coincidence could have ever been greater for a poet than having his work introduced at a time in which the work fits best. Indeed, Hopkins’s influence on modern poetry “has been out of all proportion” to the relatively small number of poems he had published (Stephen 252). The meager poetic production of Hopkins can simply be attributed to three reasons. He had a great sense of pride that prevented him from asking someone to publish him a volume of verse (Durrell 168), and this resulted in the loss of a number of his poems. In addition, he believed that it is “the holier lot to be unknown” (Durrell 169). A third reason is that Hopkins burnt many of his own poems when becoming a Jesuit since he was told that poetry would go against the grain of his newly adopted vocation, “I destroyed the verse I had written when I entered the Society” (Durrell 168), Hopkins acknowledged. Only few poems survived from that period, foremost among which are ‘The Windhover’, ‘God’s Grandeur’, ‘Spring’ and ‘The Starlight Night’. Later on, however, Hopkins decided to use poetry as a means of worshipping God by showing the greatness of God as revealed in His creations and, more specifically, in nature. With Hopkins, more than any poet else, the poems can be looked at as supplications, invocations, hymns, psalms, prayers and implorations, even though some of them are complaints. In his book *God and Two Poets: Arthur Clough & Gerard Manley Hopkins* (1988), A. Kenny provides an in-depth study of Hopkins’s religiosity.

It is worth noting that in 1870, Hopkins embarked on a course of philosophical studies in the Society of Jesus which lasted for three whole years. During such a period, Hopkins dwelt on studying Duns Scotus (1266-1308), through whom the poet came to achieve a sense of the importance of individuality and difference, i. e. of “selving” himself (Durrell 167), which he has longed for since childhood, “I used to ask myself: What must it be to be someone else?” (Durrell 167). From D. Scotus, Hopkins adopted the notion of *haecceitas* (Latin for thisness) i. e. the idea that every single creature is individually unique.

Pioneering poetic figures of the time were threatened by the appearance of Hopkins’s poems, published by his close friend and literary executor Robert Bridges (1844-1930), in 1918. They realised that Hopkins was an “important and exciting discovery” (Ward *English* 95) that would, most probably, rock the poetic stilts that supported them. Auden’s comment

that Hopkins is a “strong but dangerous influence” is of great importance here (Corcoran, *Cambridge* 11). The work of Hopkins, it is true, triggered the fears of such, so to speak, poetic legislators of the time as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and W. B. Yeats who, of one accord, seem to have agreed to bury the work with its author. It should be mentioned here that Eliot believed that once a poet’s reputation is established, it is hardly changed (*Sacred* xii). Thus, there seems to have been a certain tendency and consent among the Modernist poets Eliot, Pound and Yeats to underestimate G. M. Hopkins and his posthumous work, which appeared in the heyday of the Modernist era. Yeats was not prepared to admit “the linguistic courage and the experimental audacity of [Hopkins]”, as Corcoran points out (*Cambridge* 14). Indeed, Yeats, who would aggressively “attack” Hopkins (Corcoran, *Cambridge* 13-14), considered Hopkins a “detested aesthete” (Corcoran, 9), “typical of his generation [that is] most opposed to mine” and added that “His poetry strains the ear” (Corcoran, *Cambridge* 14). Yeats’s prejudices against Hopkins have been spotted by critics who assert that Yeats did not do justice to Hopkins (Corcoran, *Cambridge* 13-15). The three poet-critics belittled Hopkins’s achievement as a poet. Pound “largely dismissed” him (Corcoran, *Cambridge* 10) and Eliot, who saw him as no more than a “nature poet” (Phelps 232), “has done him ... injustice” (Durrell 164). Eliot, thus, obfuscated and blurred Hopkins’s religiosity as a poet, not to speak of Hopkins’s dexterity and adroitness at using language. Martin Stephen admits that, “all Hopkins’s poetry is religious” (254) and J. P. Ward asserts that Hopkins’s motive is “genuinely theological” (94). In his turn, G. Phelps puts Hopkins’s poems in line with John Donne’s (1572-1631) Holy Sonnets (232). The titles of many of Hopkins’s poems are revealing of the poet’s profound interest in religion. ‘Thou Art Indeed Just, Lord’, ‘God’s Grandeur’, ‘Prayers Must Meet a Brazen Heaven’, ‘Ad Mariam’ and ‘Heaven-Haven’ are some of Hopkins’s deeply religious poems.

Unlike the three poet-critics mentioned above, F. R. Leavis, in his book *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932), which dealt mainly with Modernism, gave a full chapter to Hopkins putting him, thus, on equal footing with Eliot and Pound. Even more, Leavis asserts that Hopkins is comparable only to W. Shakespeare (1564-1616) and John Milton (1608-1674) (Ward *English* 70). In addition, in his book *The Faber Book of Modern Verse* (1936), Michael Roberts considered Hopkins to be the “founding father” of modern verse and was, therefore, represented by thirteen poems while Yeats, a paramount poetic figure of the time, was represented only by eight ones (Corcoran, *Cambridge* 11). In *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, Hopkins is represented by eighteen poems while Eliot is represented by only seven ones.

With its observing of nature as a book in which God expresses and illustrates his creativity and power best, the rejuvenating power of nature, fears of environmental damage, hailing of the advent of the technological age, doubts encompassing religion, doubts about restoring all that has been lost and fears lurking in the forthcoming future, Hopkins's poetry can be said represent the spirit of the poet's Victorian age. As observed by J. P. Ward, Hopkins's poetry, thus, represents worlds he is already familiar with (73). Further, the poet's inspirational employing of allusions and unique experimenting with language transcend their times. Hopkins's 'Spelt from the Leaves of Sibyl', for instance, must prove invaluable to Modernists. In Greek mythology, Sibyl of Cumae is a divinely inspired propheticess living at Delphi and Pessinos, a woman who, being granted eternal life but not eternal youth by Apollo, ages but never dies. The name Sibyl is derived from the Greek *theobule*, meaning divine counsel. Significantly, Sibyl gave her counsel prophetically in the form of individual words written on numerous leaves that she scattered in the air for her counsel seekers to gather and each recipient would put one leaf beside another in an attempt to make sense of the fragmentations that will turn out to be his or her lot and that would importantly be guiding to the recipient of these leaves.

'Spelt from the Leaves of Sibyl' exposes the poet's increasing fears of death that overwhelms life as night overwhelms day:

Only the beak-leaved boughs dragonish ' damask the tool-smooth
bleak light; black,
Ever so black on it. Óur tale, O óur oracle! ' Lét life, wáned, ah lét life
wind
Off hér once skéined stained véined variety ' upon áll on twó spools;
párt, pen, páck
Now hér áll in twó flocks, twó folds – black, white. (blackmask 51)

Death defeats life as night covers day. Like day, life is helplessly vulnerable to death. It is inferred that the poet sees darkness and bleakness to be the lot he got from Sibyl's spelt leaves and his life is now "bleak-leaved". 'Spelt from the Leaves of Sibyl' is one of Hopkins's six sonnets often referred to as 'Dark Sonnets' (Stephen 254), 'Desperate Sonnets' or 'Terrible Sonnets' written during Hopkins's years in Dublin, from 1884 till his death in 1889, as a professor of Greek and Latin at the Royal University College.

Hopkins cared greatly about the way his poetry should be read. The accentuation marks placed on words and syllables in the above-quoted lines indicate how the lines should be read. As G. Leech notes, Hopkins is "the only major poet to mark special stresses in his text" (107). Furthermore, Hopkins was against the idea of, to quote Longenbatch, putting English feet into shoes that did not fit (Corcoran, *Cambridge* 34). Importantly, thus, it was Hopkins who broke the pentameter and made it new decades before such revolutionary maxims of Pound's were announced. Hopkins renewed

English poetry by rendering it back sprung rhythm. Indeed, it is more true of Hopkins than any other poet that he devised his own language, terms and theory of poetry.

Hopkins's scrupulous knowledge of the Bible as well as of Greek and Roman mythologies added a great weight to his poetry. Allusions to religious and mythical figures, such as Christ, the Lamb, Mariam, the Lady, Blessed Virgin, the Father, Lord, Providence, Simon Peter, Cain, Eurydice, Hercules, Andromeda, Gorgon and Sibyl, in addition to many others, twinkle all through his poetry. It is worth noting that, like Hopkins himself, Modernist poets drank deep from the fountains of Greek and Roman mythologies. The allusion to Sibyl must prove invaluable to Modernist poetry with its fragmentations and with the poet's sometimes enigmatic words that represent the poet as a prophet giving his own prophetic insights in some disguise to his people. This can prove more meaningful if it is mentioned that a reference is made by T. S. Eliot to Sibyl at the top, i. e. in the poem's epigraph, of 'The Waste Land', his most important poem, suggestive of the poem's subject-matter (Ellmann 459). In this very context, can it be claimed that Hopkins's 'Sibyl' practiced a prophetic influence on Eliot? Such a nicety has been subtly referred to by J. P. Ward (97). It has to be acknowledged that the very idea of delivering the message to a recipient who will supposedly put fragmented words, images as well as sentences side by side to extract the message for himself or herself is crucial to Modernism. In the case of Modernist poetry, the gaps that seem to proliferate all through the poem are supposed to be filled in with the reader's / listener's own intuition and background. What is more important is that different recipients can extract and elicit different messages from the words of the poem. The recipient of the poem (oracle) is by no means a passive one. It is the reader who has to find out a pattern and get the gist of the poem (the prophecy), which can imply a completely different thing to another reader.

In this same pursuit, it should be asked to what extent can the idea of associating spring with death the subject of Hopkins's poem 'Spring and Death' find its counterpart in the opening lines of Eliot's 'The Waste Land':

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain? (Ellmann 459)

Here, again, the claim is not groundless, indeed, as the speaker in Hopkins's poem observes the "ribs" of death to be enclosing and stretching in the blooming flowers and their fragrance. Life incubates death and death terminates life. That the poet sees death in blossoming and sprouting flowers, i. e. in life as it has reached its prime and strength shows that life is never free from the grasping claws of death:

I had a dream. A wondrous thing:
 It seem'd an evening in the Spring;
 A little sickness in the air
 From too much fragrance everywhere:
 As I walk'd a stilly wood,
 Sudden, Death before me stood:
 In a hollow lush and damp,
 He seem'd a dismal mirky stamp
 On the flowers that were seen
 His charnelhouse-grate ribs between,
 And with coffin-black he barr'd the reen.
 'Death,' said I, 'what do you here
 At this Spring season of the year?' (Lahey 9).

Death stretches all through the structures and the textures of life. It, thus, permeates life. Spring epitomises renewal of life together with life's surrendering to death. Before it vanishes in the glade, Death tells the poet that it is in the wood to mark, with its black web, the flowers and trees that will die. Death in life reeks all through the poem. Even the fragrance of the flowers is itself blighted with the sickening "air of death". Fragrance, thus, spreads death as it travels in the air and as it is smelt and enjoyed. Personified, Death and Spring (life) co-exist with death having the overpowering and domineering hand, "It seem'd so hard and dismal thing, / Death, to mark them in the Spring." The poem is replete with binary oppositions of day/night, spring/death, walk/still, saw/vanished, that expose the instabilities that underlie life.

'The Windhover' is one of Hopkins's best poems. In 1877, Hopkins wrote to G. Herbert that he thought this to be his best poem. Significantly, the poem is dedicated, "**To Christ our Lord**". The windhover in this poem is one of the birds that have proved to be a permanent preoccupation of Hopkins's. A look at the titles of some other poems can reveal an ornithologist-like poet. These include 'The Woodlark', 'The Caged Skylark', 'the Sea and the Skylark', 'The Nightingale' and 'The Windhover'. Direct observation, it should be noted, marks these poems. The last of these, 'The Windhover', is the poet's most anthologised poem. The poem captures in words the bird's hovering and its motion. Some critics tend to compare this poem with Walt Whitman's (1819-1892) eagles of 'The Dalliance of Eagles' (Corcoran, *Cambridge* 36). In 1882, Hopkins wrote to G. Herbert, "I always knew in my heart Walt Whitman's mind to be more like my own heart than any other man's living" (Ellmann 3).

In this poem, the poet describes how he saw, "caught", the bird while hovering in the air. He sees the bird to be the "minion" of the morning and the "dauphin" of daylight. The bird, the poet says, is drawn by the dappled colours of dawn. The ease and flexibility with which it rides the air can be compared to that of a knight on horseback who is in complete control

of his motion. That Hopkins used the old name Windhover to refer to the kestrel reveals the poet's tendency to revive archaic words. In addition, the older name is suggestive of the subject-matter of the poem, i. e. the idea that the bird has the miraculous ability of "banking against the wind" (MacKenzie 78).

To what extent, it may be enquired, could have this poem with its "falcon", together with 'Binsey Poplars' with its chaotic disturbance and destruction, been inspiring to Yeats in writing his poem 'The Second Coming'? N. MacKenzie comments on the difference between the two birds (78). The thematic importance of the poem emanates largely from the fact that the image of the hovering bird turns out gradually to be that of Jesus Christ. As Mackenzie explains, this is "a poem to Christ. The windhover in his *mastery* of the element of air ... seems a representative of Christ, Whose mastery of the tides and the storms and of men themselves Hopkins had celebrated in 'The Wreck of Deutschland'" (79). Mackenzie further adds that in this sonnet, "the kestrel is primarily a knight riding on horseback, corresponding to Christ the *chevalier*" (80). The words "gall" and "gash", in the last line, are closely associated with the Crucifixion; this makes it clear that the bird in the poem stands for Christ. It should be noted that birds appearing in Hopkins's poems, directly or indirectly, often stand for God. In 'God's Grandeur', for instance, the bird, has wings big enough to "brood" over the world to provide protection, turns out to be the Holy Ghost, "the Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings" (Bridges 46).

Conclusion

The creative bent and disposition of a poet should not be framed within moulds alloyed by critics; creativity resists framing, it must be acknowledged. One of the conclusions drawn is that poetic movements need to be reconsidered with the purpose of reading each poet, especially twentieth-century poets, as an individual voice. Critics' views and opinions, it is concluded, should not be uncritically received or accepted. One needs to develop one's own critical disposition through reading a poet keeping in mind that each poet has his/her individual bent. Critics, it should be remembered, are not always as disinterested as they ought to be and literary criticism, as Poster says, is "too important a matter to be left to specialists" (93).

In a number of poetic movements, critics docket poets who can be poles apart. It is true that literature books adopt this way of categorising poets, even though this method is remarkably deficient. On the one hand, poets in the same group can be essentially different and heterogeneous. On the other, in categorising poets in such a way, critics focus on one or two, i. e. "solitary figures" (Levenson 6), of the movement's or the group's members as representative prototypes of the group or the movement, generalise the features of such a poet or poets to the rest of the poets assorted in the group even though such aspects do not apply to these other poets. Movements, thus, highlight certain poets but keep others out of the limelight. Sometimes, there are different varieties of the same movement. The Pound/Eliot Modernism is essentially different from the Williams/Stevens one, to give an example. As has been shown above, despite the great differences between the two varieties, both of them are called Modernism. In addition, the individuality of a poet is blurred and obliterated in a movement as critics list the features mostly of only one or two poets in the group. Many poets have been driven into oblivion due to having been docketed in movements. It is, thus, recommended that each poet will be represented in his/her own right as an individual voice, rather than being considered an echoing voice of another poet. The fact that different books may attach different labels to poets of the same generation, as it is the case with poets of the 1930s, is yet another problem that arises from such groupings. Furthermore, critics sometimes categorise the same poet, G. M. Hopkins for example, differently, and this confuses readers.

G. M. Hopkins has been discussed as an example of how critics' views and judgments should not be uncritically received. His stature and influence as a poet are unquestionable even though important poetic figures, like Yeats, Eliot and Pound, insisted on underestimating him. Hopkins is so innovative a poet that critics have differed greatly in their categorising of him. He devised his own poetic techniques, experimented adventurously with rhythm and structure; and this shows the greatness of the poet as well as the deficiency of the critical method of insisting on categorising poets even

though the method does not really fit.

Jem Poster recommends that our understanding of the poetry of a certain period should be acquired through “analytical readings of individual texts” (92). The twentieth century is the century of innovatively individual poetic voices. Basically, individuality is the feature that excels and distinguishes the poetry of the century. Yet, most poetry books insist on obscuring the individualities of such poetic voices under the guise of poetic movements even though this can drive most, if not all, minor poetic voices into oblivion. Despite the social, political and ideological circumstances that most likely contribute to the crystallising of the poet’s notions as well as his or her responses, the fact remains that “there’s no substitute for careful examination of the poems themselves” (Poster 7).

One of the biggest mistakes of grouping poets in movements, as has been pointed out, is that almost each movement singles out a monolith, i. e. a poetic figure, idealises and idolises it. The features of one poetic movement or another is by no means a catalogue of the qualities representing the poets in the movement; rather the qualities or the features listed are elicited from certain poems by one or two poets in the group and generalised to cover the poetic productions of the other poets in the movement. The other poets in the group are, thus, dwarfed, underestimated and denied the right to speak for themselves as individual poets. The poetry of any group is too varied and complex to be contained under any of these tags or terms. Care has to be taken when using, employing or applying terms referring to poetic movements. The poets thronged in any movement, it must be noticed, are prism-like, and, hence, the individuality of each poet must be focused on.

المستخلص**إعادة النظر في الربط بين الشعراء والحركات الشعرية: ج. م. هوبكينز مثالا
محمد أحمد مصطفى الليثي**

دأب نقاد الأدب على تصنيف الشعراء بوضعهم في مجموعات تعرف بالحركات الشعرية مثل الكلاسيكية و الرومانتيكية و الحداثة و غيرها الكثير. غير أن هذه الطريقة يشوبها الكثير من أوجه القصور. من ذلك أن النقاد يعممون سمات شعر شاعر من شعراء الحركة على أنها سمات لجميع شعراء الحركة و منها صعوبة تحديد ظهور و انتهاء الحركة زمنيا و منها ان النقاد قد يسمون نفس الحركة بأسماء مختلفة و أن النقاد قد يختلفون كثيرا في تصنيف شاعر من الشعراء و نسبته الى حركة شعرية أو أخرى الى غير ذلك من المشكلات التي تشوب هذه الطريقة. يركز البحث على أهمية دراسة كل شاعر في الحركات الأدبية باستقلال عن باقي الشعراء في نفس الحركة.

يدرس هذا البحث أهم المشكلات التي تنتج عن هذه الطريقة في التعامل مع الشعر و الشعراء. يتناول البحث جيرارد مانلي هوبكينز كنموذج لتضارب آراء النقاد في تقييم الشاعر و نسبته لحركات شعرية مختلفة. كذلك يوضح البحث أنه من الخطأ قبول آراء النقاد أو أخذ تقييماتهم كمسلمات حيث ان آراء النقاد قد لا تسلم من الأهواء. يخلص البحث الى ضرورة دراسة كل شاعر على حدة لتقييم كل شاعر بشكل مستقل و من ثم بشكل أفضل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشعر، الحركات الشعرية، تصنيف الشعراء، هوبكينز، النقاد

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