

Gerard Manley Hopkins Revisiting Binsey

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Binsey Poplars
felled 1879

My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled,
Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun,
All felled, felled, are all felled;
Of a fresh and following folded rank
Not spared, not one
That dandled a sandalled
Shadow that swam or sank
On meadow and river and wind-wandering
weed-winding bank.

O if we but knew what we do
When we delve or hew—
Hack and rack the growing green!
Since country is so tender
To touch, her being só slender,
That, like this sleek and seeing ball
But a prick will make no eye at all,
Where we, even where we mean
To mend her we end her,
When we hew or delve:
After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
Strokes of havoc únselve
The sweet especial scene,
Rural scene, a rural scene,
Sweet especial rural scene.¹

When Hopkins in December 1878 started his duties as curate at St Aloysius' Church in Oxford, he returned to a place he had been treasuring since his undergraduate years. Oxford with its countryside had always been very

dear to him; he even nourished a deep personal affection for the city expressed in three early “love” sonnets addressed to Oxford (one of them begins: “New dated from the terms that re-appear / More sweet familiar grows my love to thee”). His journals relate that he especially liked the way by the upper river from Medley Weir northwards to Godstow or Binsey Village.² This particular way he took either by boat or on foot on various occasions.³ After sixteen years, on the thirteenth of March 1879 he retraced this path on a walk to Godstow and found that all the poplars lining the river near Binsey had been cut down. Hopkins, to whom the cutting down of trees was always very distressing—as shown in a couple of notebook-entries—,⁴ mentions this sad experience in a postscript of the same day to a long letter to Richard Watson Dixon, begun in February: “I have been up to Godstow this afternoon. I am sorry to say that the aspens that lined the river are everyone felled”,⁵ and although he otherwise could find little time to write because of his parish work (as is stated in the same letter), he was so stirred by the mutilated landscape that he began the composition of “Binsey Poplars” that very evening.⁶

Man’s cutting down of a couple of trees, with which he sometimes even tries to “mend,” can, of course, be necessary and useful. But to Hopkins man’s interference with nature, though to all appearances only partial, is a cause of deep sorrow and lament.⁷ He experiences the destruction almost as a personal bereavement, all the more so as his feeling for the beauty of the landscape amounts to personal love.⁸ This is shown by the very first line of the poem, which seems addressed to friends: “My aspens dear . . .” Moreover, the place he revisits is said to have been “unserved” by “strokes of havoc,” that is, its unique and distinct and, so to speak, personal nature, which can by no means be repeated, has been destroyed. And, in addition to that, this destruction, to Hopkins, is not limited to a well defined and isolated area but endangers nature as a whole, just as “a prick will make no eye at all.”⁹

Seen against the background of Hopkins’ incarnational or sacramental vision of nature, in which the world appears as “word, expression, news of God,”¹⁰ it becomes quite clear why the proportions of the catastrophe caused by this seemingly negligible intervention are so horrendous. For, when the whole world is realized as “charged with the grandeur of God”¹¹

(though in "Binsey Poplars" not in a markedly Christian but rather a pantheistic way) man's ill-treatment of God's work is felt to be sacrilegious. For this reason the poet fundamentally questions the goodness of mankind's doing by using words reminiscent of the words of the dying Christ on the cross (Lk. 23:34: "Father forgive them, they know not what they do"): ¹² "O if we but knew what we do / When we delve or hew—." Then he goes on to make audible the brutality with which man acts: "Hack and rack the growing green!"

To Hopkins each separate species or, rather, each individual creature (and therefore also each tree) manifests through its inscape a particular, necessary and unrepeatable aspect of the indivisible perfection of its maker. This is in keeping with Duns Scotus' doctrine of the *haecceitas* or individualizing form, which says that an object is not merely a member of a species, as for instance a poplar, but this individual and particular poplar. ¹³ Hence every creature not only contributes to the beauty of the whole but is essential for its existence. ¹⁴ And only in being entirely itself each thing is able to "deal out" ¹⁵ that inner energy which makes it an integral part of the whole. Therefore by taking away only one single "self," the whole is in danger of being destroyed, God's work of art, the great chain, is broken. ¹⁶ In this interrelation lies the "tender[ness]" and "slender[ness]" of "country," mentioned in lines 13 and 14, which is as delicate and vulnerable as an eye and therefore should be taken care of as if it were, indeed, "this sleek and seeing ball"; for once it is destroyed it cannot be mended, it is no more.

The image of the eye in line 16 varies the metaphor "seeing ball" of line 15; the "seeing," moreover, is evoked and echoed at the end of the poem four times homophonously in "scene." This suggests that especially the visual quality of the once beautiful scene is gone. Its inscape can no longer be taken in through the eye. But in destroying the scene, which here clearly is meant to be something seen, man inevitably blinds himself, as there is an essential relation between seeing and being seen. This also means that man's ill-treatment of nature will, in the end, fall back upon himself. The implied interrelation of observer and observed or of seeing and being seen is further corroborated by Hopkins' notion of *instress* ¹⁷ as an energy emanating from the perceived object with which it makes itself known.

This energy is neither a product of the observer nor imposed on the observed by the mind but it is an intrinsic quality of the observed object itself. Perception, therefore, is a reciprocal, dialectical, almost dialogical process in which observer and observed interact. A journal entry pinpoints this idea: "What you look hard at seems to look hard at you."¹⁸

Although this particular scene as something seen is forever lost so that "after-comers cannot guess the beauty been," the poet revisiting Binsey recalls what he saw and felt when the trees were still lining the river. There are, in fact, two revisitings taking place simultaneously, one real in an autobiographical sense, facing the mutilated landscape, and another one, imaginary, returning to the scene in memory.¹⁹ The sight may be lost to the physical eye; it is, however, still present to the eyes of the imagination. The first line of the poem suggests this simultaneity of vision, bringing into view the present and the past state at the same time, as the implicit ambivalence of the verb "quelled" demonstrates. Although it is, in this context, used in the active with the "leaping sun" as object, it also rhymes with and semantically already implies "felled" of line 3.²⁰ Thus "quelled" carries also the implication of passivity, with the aspens, or rather their "airy cages," as subject. This gives the impression that the aspens not only "quell" the sun but that they themselves are "quelled," that is put to death, as they are indeed "felled." From the first line onwards, therefore, the vision oscillates between present and past. It is as if the poet could still see the trees lining the river, for his earlier and happier vision somehow prevails over the vision in which the revisited place appears: facing the spectacle of devastation Hopkins nevertheless begins his poem with a lively description of the poplars: "My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled, / Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun"; and only then starts he to lament: "All felled, felled, are all felled." But he immediately reminds himself of the scene treasured in his memory "Of a fresh and following folded rank," only to interrupt it once more ("Not spared, not one") before he comes to the end of his recollection: "That dandled a sandalled / Shadow that swam or sank / On meadow and river and wind-wandering / weed-winding bank."

Moreover, Hopkins in "Binsey Poplars" not only laments the beauty lost but preserves it both visually and audibly in transforming it into poetic

instress. This is done by means of the images and the stories, memories and feelings evoked by them, as well as by the poem's musical appeal.²¹ In creating the *altera natura* of the poem the poet fulfils his task as a maker, translating the art of the divine artificer into poetry. With his loving recollection of the aspens near Binsey, Hopkins makes the "Sweet especial rural scene" transparent for the divine archetype by which it is sustained and in doing so he somehow saves²² what after-comers can no longer perceive. The poet as maker and translator, therefore, is able to fill the gap man has deliberately made by laying hands on the trees. In the *altera natura* of his poem the "aspens dear" and the beauty of the scene live on transformed into a reality less liable to destruction.²³

That the reality of something as uniquely beautiful and vulnerable as the scene presented by the trees lining the river indeed subsists though seemingly gone for ever, is a notion arising from the belief in the realism of ideas advocated by Duns Scotus²⁴ ("Of realty the rarest-veined unraveller")²⁵ which is completely in keeping with Hopkins' idea of inscape and instress. This can be shown more clearly in "The Leaden and the Golden Echo," a poem Hopkins (in a letter to Bridges) declared to be similar to "Binsey Poplars" in "kind and vein."²⁶ There the questions whether, how, and where a destroyed reality can be saved ("How to kéepe—is there ány any . . . to keep / Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty, . . . from vanishing away?" 1-2) are eventually answered in the affirmative. The "Despair" over its destruction repeated over and over again at the end of the first part of this poem is echoed by, and transformed into, "Spare!", the very first word of the second part. There is, indeed, a place where beauty is kept, as the speaker firmly believes that "not a hair is, not an eyelash, not the least lash lost; every hair / Is, hair of the head, numbered" (36-37),²⁷ and that "the thing we freely fórfeit is kept with fonder a care, / Fonder a care kept than we could have kept it, . . . Yonder, / Yonder" (43-48).

Even after being destroyed and having become invisible to our physical eyes beauty is kept, transformed into something invisible but nevertheless existing. It is given "back to God, / beauty's self and beauty's giver" (35).

Besides this religious preservation of beauty, there is, however, the "running instress" mentioned in an entry in Hopkins' *Journal* of 14

September 1871, which also lays open Hopkins' idea of revisiting a place. The passage focuses on the idea that, in spite of a new instress felt while seeing a particular scene for a second time, the very first instress and impression this scene made on the observer will continue to make itself felt:

By boat down the river to Hamble, near where it enters Southampton Water, and a walk home. On this walk I came to a cross road I had been at in the morning carrying it in another 'running instress.' I was surprised to recognise it and the moment I did / it lost its present instress, breaking off from what had immediately gone before, and fell into the morning's. It is so true what Ruskin says talking of Turner's Pass of Faido that what he could not forget was that 'he had come by the road.' And what is this running instress, so independent of at least the immediate scape of the thing, which unmistakably distinguishes and individualizes things? Not imposed outwards from the mind as for instance by melancholy or strong feelings: I easily distinguish that instress. I think it is this same running instress by which we identify or, better, test and refuse to identify with our various suggestions / a thought which has just slipped from the mind at an interruption."²⁸

The very instress that is said to "distinguish and individualize" a thing, exists as a reality independent of both the "immediate scape of the thing" and of the observer who revisits the same place, under different conditions, at another time of the day. The "running instress" makes itself felt in exactly the same way as in the first instance and this is possible only because it is real in the Scotist sense,²⁹ that is because it exists as an individual entity for the equally individual mind of the observer.

This notion greatly helps to elucidate the theme of revisiting. A certain location or scene may always evoke what is here called "running instress" independent of the changes that took place in the meantime. This is exactly what happens when Hopkins revisits Binsey and it is only because of the subsisting reality of this archetypal instress that he knows what visible beauty has been destroyed and, what is more, how to keep it. He revisits Binsey, recalls its former beauty made manifest in the "running instress," and then restores this beauty in his poem.

The source shaping this idea, and mentioned by Hopkins in the passage just quoted, will make this clearer, namely John Ruskin's "Of Turnerian Topography" in his *Modern Painters*.³⁰ In this chapter on landscape painting

Ruskin indicates that an artist with inventive power, either painter or poet, does not give "the actual facts"³¹ but the "impression on the mind" (32), this being, to him, the only and true reality he has set to work. What Ruskin calls "impression on the mind" is very likely the model of Hopkins' "running instress," as Ruskin goes on to explain that the artist

. . . receives a true impression from that place itself, and takes care to keep hold of that as his chief good; indeed, he needs no care in the matter, for the distinction of his mind from that of others consists in his instantly receiving such sensations strongly, and being unable to lose them; and then he sets himself as far as possible to reproduce that impression on the mind . . ." (33).

It is not a rational process but wholly intuitive, in which the vision also called "imperative dream" (38) "takes possession of him [i.e. the artist]; he can see and do, no otherwise than as the dream directs" (38). The example that follows in Ruskin's text is Turner's "Pass of Faido," the drawing Hopkins mentions in his *Journal*. It is always the very first impression on the mind that is preserved. Ruskin stresses that Turner used to paint and repaint places "as first seen, . . . , never shaking the central pillar of the old image" (42). He then compares two drawings of Turner on the same subject, the castle of Nottingham (one is of 1795 the other of 1833), to prove that it is always this first impression which carries the truth and essential character of a scene and that even after such a long time as thirty-five years "every incident is preserved" as the artist has "returned affectionately to his boyish impression" (44).

Ruskin's "On Turnerian Topography" is not only a very likely source for Hopkins' concept of "running instress" but also makes clear that "running instress" is an "impression on the mind" of such a kind that its substantial quality cannot be lost and that it is exactly this very first impression or dream or vision which shapes the work of the artist, both painter and poet.³² This is why Hopkins in revisiting Binsey and seeing the mutilated landscape returns to the first substantial instress, the impression on the mind. What is more, in turning the instress of the scene into poetic instress, or nature into art, he averts the destiny of the "Sweet especial rural scene."

The vision and instress itself, though lost to after-comers, is preserved in the poem in a way that it is (again in Ruskin's words) "capable of producing on the far-away beholder's mind precisely the impression which reality would have produced, and putting his heart into the same state in which it would have been, . . ." (35-36). And as the impression on the mind of the artist with inventive power ". . . never results from the mere piece of scenery" (33) but from a vision far deeper "he finds other ideas insensibly gathering to it, and, whether he will or not, modifying it into something which is not so much the image of the place itself, as the spirit of the place . . ." (36).

Hopkins' loving recollection of his "aspens dear" and of the beautiful scene they composed before they were destroyed on the one hand makes the loss even more grievous: "All felled, felled, are all felled . . . Not spared, not one." It is especially their unnatural death, not due to the course of nature but deliberately caused by man, that is felt to be almost sacrilegious. On the other hand his revisiting of Binsey also motivates the urgent wish to save the beauty lost in recalling the first impression. As poet and Christian, however, Hopkins perfectly knows that this salvation or restoration is only possible in and through a metamorphosis, hoping that the destroyed landscape may be restored in being changed "Into something rich and strange."³³ And this is exactly what happens: there is indeed a metamorphosis, as the aspens live on, transformed into the language of poetry; moreover, it is done in a way reminiscent of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. And as Hopkins' mind is like Ovid's "bent to tell of bodies changed into new forms"³⁴ it is, therefore, not at all surprising that in revisiting Binsey and recalling the poplars lining the river he also goes back to the literary models that shaped his vision.

There are a number of indicators for his literary return to Ovid; the very first is, of course, the personification of the aspens. This is augmented by the water imagery implied in the two verbs "quell" and "quench"³⁵ with the aspens as subject and the "leaping sun" as object, which clearly points to the metamorphosis of the daughters of Helios, the so-called Heliades, who so much grieved over the death of their brother Phaethon that they were changed into poplars. As Ovid tells this story,³⁶ Phaethon, not able to hold the bolting horses (that is probably why the sun is said to "leap"³⁷)

and finally struck with Jupiter's thunderbolt, was buried by Nymphs and bewailed by his mother and sisters. As Phaethon's sisters weep, they begin to sprout twigs and leaves from their upraised arms and their mother, trying to pull their bodies out of the growing trees, only breaks the tender twigs, making her daughters cry even more, each one imploring her: "O spare me, mother, spare; I beg you. 'Tis my body that you are tearing in the tree."³⁸

Moreover, the aspens being called "dear" fits well into this mythological context, because "dear" meaning "precious" may well refer to the tears of the Heliades or poplars that were, according to Ovid, changed into beads of amber.³⁹

Once Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are recognized as a literary source revisited, it is much easier to get hold of the instress of the poem and to understand the poet's warning lament: ". . . if we but knew what we do / When we delve or hew— / Hack and rack the growing green!" Another classical story evoked by "Binsey Poplars" is that of Erysichthon,⁴⁰ "a man who scorned the gods and burnt no sacrifice on their altars,"⁴¹ and his unlawful and impious cutting down of a tree dedicated to Ceres. In this story the felling of a tree is condemned as a sacrilege because Erysichthon not only kills the tree but also the tree-nymph living in it who cries out: "I, a nymph most dear to Ceres dwell within this wood, and I prophesy with my dying breath, and find my death's solace in it, that punishment is at hand for what you do"⁴²—Ceres then punishes with unappeasable hunger the transgressor who, at last, eats up himself.

The prospect opened up by this story shows what in Hopkins' poem is felt throughout, namely that over and above the destruction of the trees' bodies the hidden and invisible though nevertheless real life, the spiritual energy of nature, imagined and experienced in mythological and folk-lore as nymphs, dryads, fairies or elves, is destroyed too.⁴³ And trying to save the vision of this hidden life Hopkins revivifies it in his poem. This is, again, done by means of personification in describing the "shadow" as being "sandalled" and "dandled" by the trees, thereby suggesting that this shadow is less a "comparative darkness,"⁴⁴ or an "image cast by a body intercepting light,"⁴⁵ or a "shelter from light and heat"⁴⁶ but a personal incarnation of some nature-spirit, either fairy or elf.⁴⁷ This recalls

A *Midsummer Night's Dream*, where the fairies and elves are called "shadows," Oberon being called "king of shadows" and, of course, Puck's epilogue: "If we shadows have offended . . ." ⁴⁸ Moreover, when Hopkins represents this shadow as being "sandalled" another literary model that possibly shaped his vision comes into view and corroborates the fact that "shadow" here really means something like a nature spirit. As he was well read in the Romantics he could also have thought of an early poem by Coleridge, "The Songs of the Pixies." There the almost invisibly small fairies are said to "tremble" on "leaves of the aspen trees" (50-51) or "silent-sandel'd, pay . . . [their] defter court, / Circling the Spirit of the Western Gale, . . ." (63-64). ⁴⁹

The mythological background makes clear that, according to Hopkins, what was really destroyed by man when the trees were cut down, was the spirit of the place, its charm and hidden, real life. However, Hopkins preserves this form of spiritual reality not only by an imagery laden with mythological associations but also in the sound and letters of the words, making imagery and sound both carry the same vision. In quite a number of resonances the personified spirits of nature, the elves, are still present: "When we *delve* or hew," "When we hew or *delve*"; "Ten or *twelve*, only ten or *twelve* / Strokes of havoc *unselve*." "Delve" is as much suggestive of "elf" in Hopkins as is, in a more playful way, "twelve." In "The Starlight Night" "delve" and "elve" form an internal rhyme, "elve" echoing "delve": "Down in dim woods the diamond *delves!* the *elve's* eyes!"; and the numbers "ten" and "twelve," leaving out "eleven," the German "Elf," at the same time omit but in sound and idea bring to mind the "elf." ⁵⁰ In addition to that the elves are present in the repeated "elled" of the first stanza (twice in "quelled," three times in "felled"—which can also be seen as an near anagram of "elf"—and, at least acoustically, in "sandalled") which, in this context, evokes a related name for an elf, namely "elle-maid" meaning elf-girl. ⁵¹

Thus transformed into poetic instress the spirit of the scene lives on, when in the echo-like murmuring of the concluding lines "Rural scene, a rural scene, / Sweet especial rural scene" the imagery of the first stanza is, at last, turned into a song. The poet, in the end, takes on his role as Orpheus, whose task it is to preserve and to mediate by way of trans-

formation into the music of his poetry what had been destroyed, realizing in the imagery and language of the poem the rich impression the scene made on his mind. Though "after-comers cannot guess the beauty been," the aspens may be clearly seen with the eyes of the imagination. In a way Hopkins makes the aspens return to Binsey, and in doing so he again seems to trace and follow Orpheus, who, as Ovid has it, by his powerful song made the trees, and among them the Heliades or poplars, return to a place that, like Binsey after the felling of the trees, was lacking shadow:

A hill there was, and on the hill a wide-extending plain, green with luxuriant grass; but the place was devoid of shade. When here the heaven-descended bard sat down and smote his sounding lyre, shade came to the place. There came the Chaonian oak, the grove of the Heliades, the oak with its deep foliage, the soft linden, the beech, the virgin laurel-tree, the brittle hazel, the ash,⁵²

The poet as maker and "Earth's . . . tongue"⁵³ fulfils his task to save and "keep back beauty"; a beauty which cannot be kept "by marble nor the guilded monuments / Of princes" but only by "this powerful rhyme."⁵⁴

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NOTES

¹Hopkins' poems are cited according to *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, eds. W. H. Gardner and N. H. MacKenzie, 4th ed. (Oxford: OUP, 1967, rpt. 1970).

²See *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, eds. H. House and G. Storey (London: OUP, 1959) 135-39.

³For the biographical background see Norman White's most valuable study, *Hopkins: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 309-11; for the frequency with which Hopkins visited Binsey see Jude V. Nixon, "'Sweet especial rural scene': Revisiting Binsey," *Hopkins Quarterly* 16.1-2 (1989): 39-60.

⁴See *Journals* 189: "... a grievous gap has come in that place with falling and felling"; 230: "The ashtree growing in the garden was felled . . . I wished to die and not see the inscapes of the world destroyed any more."

⁵*The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon*, ed. C. C. Abbott, 2nd rev. ed. (London: OUP, 1955) 26.

⁶The autograph (MSS. A) gives the exact date: 13 March 1879; see note on "Binsey Poplars" by the editors, *Poems* 272.

⁷Peter Milward in his *Landscape and Inscape: Vision and Inspiration in Hopkins's Poetry* (London: Paul Elek, 1975) 67 rightly points to a parallel in Shakespeare's *King Lear* 1.4.370: "Striving to better, oft we mar what's well."

⁸For a discussion of the "extended personification" in "Binsey Poplars" see Ricks Carson, "Hopkins's 'Binsey Poplars,'" *Explicator* 54.3 (1996): 162-63. The implied identification of the trees with human beings is, of course, topical and well known through the Bible, mythology, emblem literature and proverbial sayings. Cf. *OED*, "tree," 1.c; *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, eds. A. Henkel and A. Schöne (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1967) 145-258; Kurt Erdmann et al. "Baum," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, eds. T. Klauser, U. Dassmann et al. vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1954) 1-35, esp. 12-14, 19; see also the comparison of the young sailors with oaks in "The Loss of the Eurydice" 5-6 to which Norman H. MacKenzie points in *A Reader's Guide to Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981) 108.—Hopkins may well have seen in the very name "poplar" another corroboration of the personal, almost human, existence of the trees, as "poplar" is derived from the Latin *populus* whose primary meaning is "people," see *ODEE*, "poplar." Paul Celan, for instance, made use of this etymological fact in his poetry, as in "Landschaft" 1: "Ihr hohen Pappeln—Menschen dieser Erde!" For the poplar image in Celan's poetry cf. Mary Flick, "Paul Celan's Use of the Poplar Image: A New Approach," *Neue Germanistik* 1.1 (1980): 25-34. In the discussion at the 1997 Halberstadt symposium on "A Place Revisited," where this paper was first presented, Professor John Russell Brown drew attention to the erotic imagery implied in words like "country," "ball" and "prick" which, again, underlines the personal character of the trees.

⁹Myrl Guy Jones' discussion of "unselve" corroborates this interpretation, see "Hopkins's 'Binsey Poplars,'" *Explicator* 50.2 (1992): 83-84.

¹⁰Unpublished retreat notes of 1882, quoted in J. Hillis Miller, "The Creation of the Self in Gerard Manley Hopkins," *ELH* 22 (1955), rpt. in *Victorian Subjects* (New York: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1990) 1-23, esp. 8. Cf. also Paul Turner's chapter on Hopkins in *English Literature 1832-1890 Excluding the Novel, The Oxford History of English Literature*, gen. eds. J. Buxton and N. Davis, vol. 11.2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989) 140-58, esp. 145.

¹¹"Gods Grandeur" 1; see also *Journals* 199-200

¹²This has been mentioned by MacKenzie 109 and Milward 66.

¹³The discussion of the theme of *haeccitas* and self and Duns Scotus as a main source of Hopkins' philosophical and theological background is since C. Devlin's "Hopkins and Duns Scotus" (*New Verse* 14 [1935], rpt. in M. Bottrall, ed., *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poems: A Casebook* [London: 1975] 113-16) and W. H. Gardner's introduction to his edition of Hopkins' poetry of 1948 so frequent in Hopkins criticism that it defies documentation.

¹⁴Cf. Miller 5-9.

¹⁵"As kingfishers catch fire," 3-7: ". . . each tucked string tells, each hung bell's / Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name; / Each mortal thing does one thing and the same: / Deals out that being indoors each one dwells; / Selves—goes

itself; myself it speaks and spells, . . ."

¹⁶Cf. *On the Origin of Beauty*, in *Journals* 97: "But if from one single work of art, one whole, we take anything appreciable away, a scene from a play, a stanza from a short piece, or whatever it is, there is a change, it must be better or worse without it; in a great man's work it will be—there are of course exceptions—worse." Cf. Miller 12. For the actuality of this notion in Hopkins' time see also John Ruskin, for example, *Modern Painters*, III.4.10 §19, *The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols., eds. E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, vol. 5 (London: George Allen, 1904) 187, where Ruskin says of "the noblest pictures" that ". . . every atom of the detail is called to help, and would be missed if removed."

¹⁷The most comprehensive study on this subject is still Leonard Cochran's "Instress and its Place in the Poetics of Gerard Manley Hopkins," *Hopkins Quarterly* 6.4 (1980): 143-81.

¹⁸*Journals* 204. For a further corroboration of this dialectical or rather dialogical quality of sense perception see also, for instance, "The Candle Indoors" 4: ". . . to-tender trambeams truckle at the eye"; *Journals* 199: "all things hitting the sense with double but direct instress"; *Journals* 200: "My eye was caught by beams of light and dark . . ."; cf. also John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, III.17. § 43: ". . . things . . . produce such and such an effect upon the eye and heart . . . as that they are made up of certain atoms or vibrations of matter."

¹⁹Jude V. Nixon reads "Binsey Poplars" in the light of the theme of nostalgic return as it is found in the Romantic tradition especially in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and compares Hopkins' use of the theme with that of Richard Watson Dixon; see her "'O Ubi? Nusquam' and 'Binsey Poplars': Influence or Approximation," *Hopkins Quarterly* 17 (1991): 139-47.

²⁰OED, "quell," v.1, 1. and 2.; and "fell," v. 1. esp. 1. +c.

²¹The musical quality of "Binsey Poplars" is stressed by Jerome D. Cartwright, "Hopkins' 'Binsey Poplars,'" *Explicator* 33 (1975): item 72, with reference to Jim Hunter, *Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Evans Bros., 1966) 79, and Paul L. Mariani, *A Commentary on the Complete Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1970) 128-29.

²²Or perhaps better: "salves" what has been "unsolved."

²³Professor Bernd Engler pointed to the immortalize-by-poetry-topos in the discussion following this talk. But Hopkins in "Binsey Poplars" so to say exaggerates and transforms this topos in a characteristic way. Title and subtitle "felled 1879" are suggestive of an inscription on a tombstone and so the poem is to keep the memory of the trees; but what is more, the poem itself becomes a reality able not only to commemorate and represent but also to manifest the former being of the trees by means of its instress.

²⁴Cf. Étienne Gilson, *Johannes Duns Scotus: Einführung in die Grundgedanken seiner Lehre* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1959) *passim*.

²⁵"Duns Scotus's Oxford" 12.

²⁶*The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, ed. Claude Colleer Abbott, 2nd rev. ed. (London: OUP, 1955) 157.

²⁷Mt. 10:30: "... the very hairs of your head are all numbered"; Lk. 21:18: "... there shall not an hair of your head perish."

²⁸*Journals* 215.

²⁹Cf. Gilson 315-16 and 475-84.

³⁰Turner (141-42) also sees Ruskin's "impression on the mind" as a source for Hopkins' "instress." For the trinitarian and incarnational meaning of Hopkins' "instress" and "inscape" see Inge Leimberg, "Die Andromeda der Zeit: Inkarnation und dichterische Verwirklichung bei Gerard Manley Hopkins," *Anglia* 107 (1989): 344-79, esp. 355.

³¹John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, V.2; 5: 27.

³²Cf. Ruskin, "Of Turnerian Topography," *Modern Painters* V.2. §7 and §8. The artist with inventive power should not give "the actual facts." He may, while revisiting a place, actually realize that the former beauty has been destroyed but this should not impede his work of art. The actual destruction "ought . . . to be ignored . . ." (32).

³³Shakespeare, *The Tempest* 1.2.404.

³⁴Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.1-2: "In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas / corpora . . ."; Ovid is cited following the Loeb Classical Library edition, transl. by F. J. Miller, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1960).

³⁵"Quell" is an ambiguous verb, meaning both to kill, slay etc. and to well out, flow (reminding of the German word *Quelle*); see *OED*, "quell", v.¹ and "quell", v.². As to "quench": Hopkins uses "quench" in connection with "tears" in "Felix Randal" 10.

³⁶*Metamorphoses* II.1-366.

³⁷Especially as one meaning of "leap"—though obsolete now—is: "to break out in an illegal or disorderly way," see *OED*, v.1.b. Cf. *Metamorphoses* II.203-04 where it is said of the horses: "... quaque impetus egit, / hac sine lege ruunt . . ."

³⁸*Metamorphoses* II.357-63, esp. 362: "... nostrum laceratur in arbore corpus!" There is also the famous warning of the poplar in *The Greek Anthology* not to injure it because of its sacredness, being dedicated to the sun-god: "I am a holy tree. Beware of injuring me . . . for I suffer pain if I am mutilated . . . If thou dost bark me, as I stand here by the road, thou shalt weep for it. Though I am but wood the Sun cares for me." This warning is attributed to Antipater of Thessalonica (and not to Antipater of Sidon, as MacKenzie 110 has it); see *Greek Anthology*, 5 vols., transl. by W. R. Paton (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1917, rpt. 1983), Book IX, The Declamatory Epigrams, No. 706, 3: 389-90.

³⁹*Metamorphoses* II.364-66.

⁴⁰*Metamorphoses* VIII.738-95.

⁴¹*Metamorphoses* VIII.739-40: "... qui numina divum / sperneret et nullos aris adoleret odores."

⁴²*Metamorphoses* VIII.771-73: "nympha sub hoc ego sum Cereri gratissima ligno, / quae tibi factorum poenas instare tuorum / vaticinor moriens, nostri solacia leti."

⁴³For Hopkins' use of "fairies" in his poetry cf., for instance, "The Vision of the Mermaids"; but his *Notebooks* and *Journals* also relate of Fairies, see *Journals* 156: 197-98.

⁴⁴*OED*, "shadow," I.

⁴⁵OED, "shadow," II.

⁴⁶OED, "shadow," III.

⁴⁷Milward sees the aspens as children (66).

⁴⁸Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 3.2.347, 5.1.409, ed. H. F. Brooks (London: Routledge, 1979, rpt. 1991).

⁴⁹Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Complete Poetical Works*, 2 vols., ed. E. H. Coleridge (Oxford: Clarendon, 1912, rpt. 1962) 1: 40-44.

⁵⁰See Christian Morgenstern's poem "Der Zwölf-Elf" in which he plays with this twofold meaning of "elf." In another poem of the *Galgenlieder*, "Das Problem," this ambivalence becomes thematic: "Der Zwölf-Elf kam auf sein Problem / und sprach: 'Ich heiÙe unbequem. / Als hieß ich etwa Drei-Vier / statt Sieben – Gott verzeih mir!' // Und siehe da, der Zwölf-Elf nennt sich / von jenem Tag ab Dreiundzwanzig"; *Alle Galgenlieder* (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1947).

⁵¹OED, "elle-maid." I would like to thank Matthias Bauer for this hint.

⁵²*Metamorphoses* X.85-91, 2: 70-71: "Collis erat collemque super planissima campi / area, quam viridem faciebant graminis herbae: / umbra loco deerat; qua postquam parte resedit / dis genitus vates et fila sonantia movit, / umbra loco venit: non Chaonis afuit arbor, / non nemus Heliadum . . ."

⁵³"Ribbesdale" 9-10: ". . . what is Earth's eye, tongue or heart else, where / Else, but in dear and dogged man?" Cf. also Rainer Maria Rilke's expression "Mund der Natur" when speaking of man as poet and follower of Orpheus, *Die Sonette an Orpheus*, Erster Teil, XXVI.14, *Die Gedichte*, ed. Ernst Zinn (Frankfurt: Insel, 1957) 692.

⁵⁴Shakespeare, Sonnet 55.1-2, *The Sonnets*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).