



February 2008

Volume VIII Number 2

- COVER
- GREETINGS
- EDITORIALS
- LETTERS
- COLUMNS
- ARTS
- LINKS
- CLASSIFIEDS
- ARCHIVES

NEXT Issue coming out on the 1st

Word Worth's Site of the Month
Catalogue Choice

In This Issue:

Alastair Reid Classic Readings

Rediscovering Hopkins

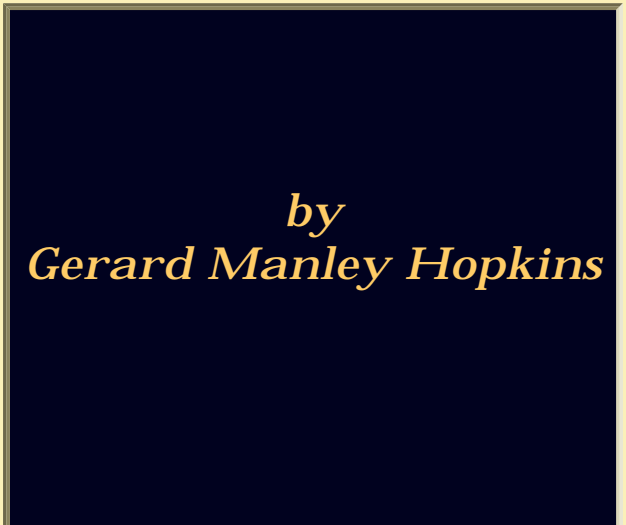
Reclining Woman

Poetry

Drew, who looked like a successful businessman and stood out among the less mature students, was polite, but he was particularly persistent in letting me and the class know that he had things to do and places to go, and felt that nothing could waste his time more than reading fiction and poetry. When I began the section on Gerard Manley Hopkins, he raised his hand, and I braced for the onslaught of polite but tiresome questions on why we bother with this. To my surprise, he loved Hopkins, especially Sonnet 42. Hopkins is tough—that sonnet in particular, so I was intrigued.

Okay, I'll admit right from the start that I'm really dumb when it comes to the arts. My brain is more attuned to precise and concrete ideas—math and science and that sort of thing. When it comes to abstract concepts, I struggle; when it comes to abstract art, I pretend.

My first visit to an art show was on the lawn of the town hall in a nearby village. I gave token attention to the abstract stuff while surreptitiously working my way to the kind I could understand. Once there, I was enchanted by pastoral scenes that invited me to step in and ...



by M H Perry *in* Editorials

by Charles Miess *in* Columns

in Arts

Rediscovering Gerard Manley Hopkins

by M H Perry

A student in one of my Introduction to Literature classes was a businessman who had established his own company and decided, despite his success, that he wanted a college degree. He constantly asked why he should waste his time with literature. I gave him the usual answers the first time around about the essential part of being educated as having knowledge of one's own culture and the fact that businesses want our graduates to have more, not less, of this sort of course. I generally respond to that type of question early in a class and then refuse to waste class time endlessly repeating the answer. Students ask that question in every course for every subject, and many enjoy delaying learning the "what" by constantly asking "why." If you spend hours answering, you never get to the crucial subject matter.

Drew, who looked like a successful businessman and stood out among the less mature students, was polite, but he was particularly persistent in letting me and the class know that he had things to do and places to go, and felt that nothing could waste his time more than reading fiction and poetry. When I began the section on Gerard Manley Hopkins, he raised his hand, and I braced for the onslaught of polite but tiresome questions on why we bother with this. To my surprise, he loved Hopkins, especially Sonnet 42. Hopkins is tough—that sonnet in particular, so I was intrigued.

Drew understood the sonnet perfectly prior to my explaining it, and he did so because, he related, he had once been a drug addict. The cliffs on the mountains of the mind are places he had hung from, and he didn't hold them cheap. Drew knew the dangers that lurk in the mountains of one's own brain:

*O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there.*

Sonnet 42 is one of a group of Hopkins' sonnets which are referred to as "The Terrible Sonnets." They describe a mental anguish so severe that death becomes as welcome as a lifeboat to someone drowning in a black ocean.

Gerard Manley Hopkins was an Englishman who lived from 1844 to 1889 and belonged to the Anglican Church. He suffered from excruciating depression and attempted to relieve it through a

more and more structured religion. He converted to Catholicism. When that didn't alleviate his torment, he retreated to the priesthood. He destroyed early poems which he'd written and began writing only those which were dedicated to his religion.

It is not because of Hopkins' religious expression that we remember him, however, nor because of his illness—not even because of his valiant struggle against anguish. While Hopkins suffered to an extreme (which in our age would be abated by medication), it is his ability to capture the challenges of mortality and his extraordinary poetic voice that have rendered him immortal.

Like Dickinson and Whitman, Hopkins was born and died in the 1800's, but is an exemplar of 20th century poetry. He created a style which influenced and changed poetry from his time on. Assonance and alliteration were not invented by Hopkins, but he used those techniques in ways that no one before him had. For him, those techniques were as central as rhyme was to Alexander Pope's work.

Hopkins developed a strategy that he termed "sprung rhythm." In that system, one pays no attention to the traditional demarcation of scansion by counting feet and syllables, but rather pays attention to the stressed syllables in the line. The diacritical marks in:

Márgarét, are you gríeving

tell the reader how the line is to be pronounced and how it is to sound.

He also had a way of joining words to immediately convey a concept and add to the musicality of a line. The word *leafmeal* in "[Spring and Fall](#)" is a combination of *leaf* and *piecemeal*. The use gives us an immediate image of a brown, dried leaf crumpled into minutest fragments.

In addition to Hopkins' technical innovations, his Weltanschauung was alluring. He described what he termed *inscape* and *instress*. Simply put, inscape is an entity's interior landscape, and instress is the force that holds the landscape together. The easiest way to understand the concept might be to relate it to what biochemists have discovered about food: some foods have such a tight molecular binding that we get little benefit from them unless they are cooked; they are held together too tightly for our systems to break them down without cooking—presumably, this is why nutritionists urge the consumption of *cooked* broccoli. Think of this binding as instress.

Far more significant, however, is the way in which this concept relates to a person's psychic interior and to interpersonal relationships. To again use an oversimplified example, we can think of one's inscape as being our interior being. Within our inscape, we have areas that are very public: we easily share them with others. Then we have areas that are intensely private that we share only with our very closest friends, or perhaps not even with them. If people we barely know ask questions that relate to what we feel is intensely private, we feel that they are invading our inscape—and they unsettle our instress.

Poems like the "[Windhover](#)" express the amazing beauty in the landscape that becomes part of our inscape.

[The Terrible Sonnets](#) relate to Hopkins' inscape and reveal the disturbance in the instress. If this were something totally unique to Hopkins, however, it would be irrelevant to the rest of us. As it is, while most of us don't feel the constant and torturous agony that Hopkins did, we all have

times of deep struggle in our relationship with the Cosmos. Soldiers in war zones have combat landscapes that become inextricably part of their inscape. Parents who have lost a child have their instress deeply unsettled. We all have times when we come perilously close to hanging from the *cliffs of fall/ Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed.*

[Cover] [Greetings] [Editorials] [Letters] [Columns] [Arts] [Links] [Classifieds] [Archives]

Word Worth Publisher: [M H Perry](#) Editors: [M Helz](#) [C Miess](#) [A Carter](#) [S Perry](#)

Contributors: Susan Johnson Banwell Goddard David Clark Tiffany M. Stuck Wayne Johnson Alastair Reid Pei-Hua Chiang Ilina Sen
[Rita Banerji] Ruth Hitchings Darin Boville Ron Colgrove Carl Dennis Renee Oubre Carolyn Scott Panzica K Srinivasan Cam
Adams Michelle M Mayer Gary Earl Ross Cheryl Rofer Charles Bartolotta Joy Walsh Kevin H. Siepel John T. Baker Tambourine
Gray Harvey Kaye Nettie Veling Graceann Maciolek Anna Seymour Kateri van Huystee Kevin Roe Beverly Roe Dave Trageser
Susanne Woyciechowicz Nancy Palmer Miess

Distinguished Selections: Hale Chatfield Armin W. Helz Rabindranath Tagore Herman Melville
William Shakespeare E. A. Robinson Mark L Kaufman Gerard Manley Hopkins

©2008 Word Worth®—World magazine of Ideas & the Arts™



Reclining Woman

by Charles Miess

Okay, I'll admit right from the start that I'm really dumb when it comes to the arts. My brain is more attuned to precise and concrete ideas—math and science and that sort of thing. When it comes to abstract concepts, I struggle; when it comes to abstract art, I pretend.

My first visit to an art show was on the lawn of the town hall in a nearby village. I gave token attention to the abstract stuff while surreptitiously working my way to the kind I could understand. Once there, I was enchanted by pastoral scenes that invited me to step in and take a stroll in paradise. I marveled at sculptures perfectly crafted to the finest detail. I saw portraits so real I was certain I would feel warm flesh if I dared touch them. In my distraction, I nearly tripped over a rusty chunk of scrap iron lying in the grass. While musing over why the art society would leave a dangerous piece of junk among the exhibits, I spotted a show tag on this hideous thing. It said *Reclining Woman*.

Undoubtedly, this monstrosity was someone's way of poking fun at modern art. I chuckled knowingly, while trying to decide which end was the head, and what rusty appendages were arms and which were legs. She was naked for sure, but I didn't get much pleasure from that because I couldn't figure out what body part was what. It was cut into shape with an acetylene torch and still had beads of slag clinging between sharp edges that threatened to slash an unwary ankle. Yes, sir, some local welder—a guy just like me who had the courage to show how silly modern art had become—must have entered this thing. But I was to learn how incredibly naive and out-of-touch I was with the rest of the world. *Reclining Woman* was awarded a blue ribbon for *best of show*.

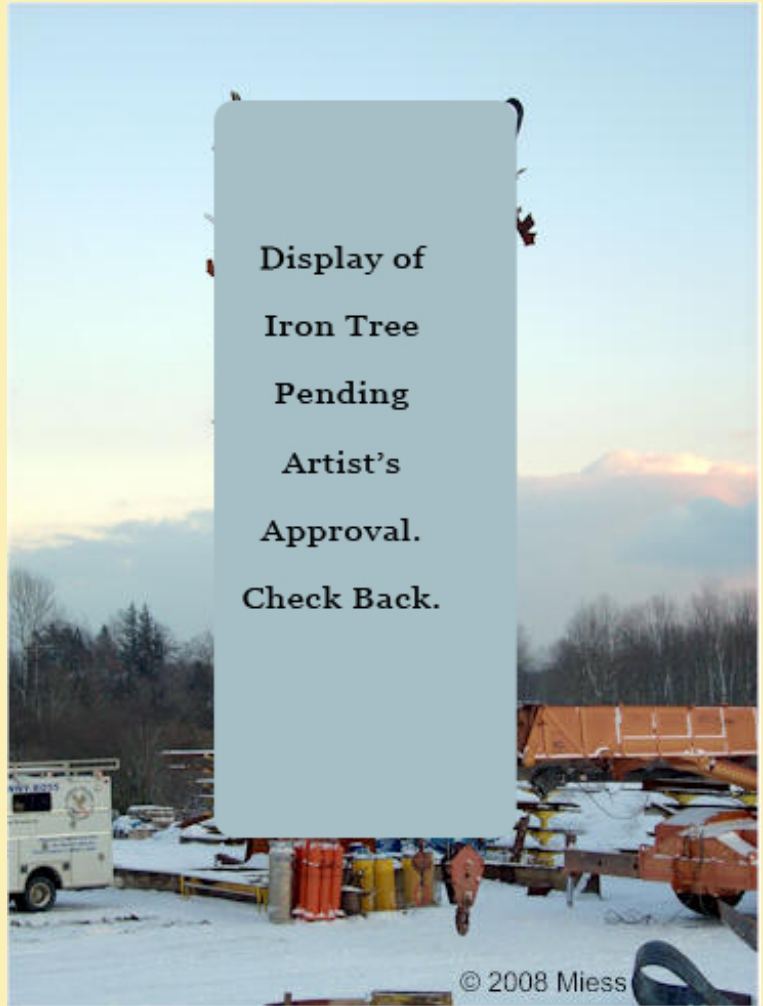
Years later, I attended an art show by university students working toward their fine arts degree. One young woman's exhibit was—stop now if you're squeamish—a bowl of spit! She had all of her classmates spit into a bowl and presented it, suitably tagged and documented, for our viewing pleasure. A young man had a slightly different slant on a similar theme. He drank as much as he could of a gallon of chocolate milk, clawed a hole in the university lawn, barfed in it, and snapped a picture for his project. Before I could register my disgust, I heard distinctive “ooohs” and “ahhhs” from fellow viewers. To hide my ignorance, I adopted a contemplative, pensive look as if an expert at evaluating such things for their artistic merit.

The foregoing examples should have convinced you of my original statement: I am really dumb when it comes to art. On the other hand, I'm not the kind of person to reject something simply

because I don't understand it. I have tried very hard over the years to find ways to appreciate those things that appeal to the more cultured classes. I'm tired of being a phony—I'm tired of pretending to love and understand things that I don't. And, I think I'm making some progress.

A friend of mine recently enticed me to drive by a local welding shop to see a sculpture they were assembling for an exhibit in Washington, D. C. It was huge, making the cranes and other heavy equipment used in its construction look small by comparison. I figured it was supposed to be a tree, but in many other respects it resembled *Reclining Woman*. Yet, there was something profound and genuinely beautiful about it. I couldn't stop staring and marveling at this awesome assemblage of scrap iron. I felt a bit like Winston in the end of the novel *1984* when he looked up with a tear in his eye and finally realized that he loved Big Brother. What an epiphany it was to me!

So, as you can see, I'm making progress on my appreciation of fine art. I'm sorry to say, however, that I still can't get excited over *Reclining Woman*. I now attribute that more to my innate sexualism rather than any lack of artistic merit in the piece. I'm embarrassed to admit that I prefer *my* reclining woman to be more lifelike. But I'm working on that too.



[Cover] [Greetings] [Editorials] [Letters] [Columns] [Arts] [Links] [Classifieds] [Archives]

Word Worth Publisher: [M H Perry](#) Editors: [M Helz](#) [C Miess](#) [A Carter](#) [S Perry](#)

Contributors: Susan Johnson Banwell Goddard David Clark Tiffany M. Stuck Wayne Johnson Alastair Reid Pei-Hua Chiang Ilna Sen [Rita Banerji] Ruth Hitchings Darin Boville Ron Colgrove Carl Dennis Renee Oubre Carolyn Scott Panzica K Srinivasan Cam Adams Michelle M Mayer Gary Earl Ross Cheryl Rofer Charles Bartolotta Joy Walsh Kevin H. Siepel John T. Baker Tambourine Gray Harvey Kaye Nettie Veling Graceann Maciolek Anna Seymour Kateri van Huystee Kevin Roe Beverly Roe Dave Trageser Susanne Wojciechowicz Nancy Palmer Miess

Distinguished Selections: Hale Chatfield Armin W. Helz Rabindranath Tagore Herman Melville William Shakespeare E. A. Robinson Mark L Kaufman Gerard Manley Hopkins

©2008 Word Worth®—World magazine of Ideas & the Arts





February 2008

Volume VIII Number 2

COVER

GREETINGS

EDITORIALS

LETTERS

COLUMNS

ARTS

LINKS

CLASSIFIEDS

ARCHIVES

REID

READINGS

Gerard Manley Hopkins

(1844-1889)

The Windhover

To Christ our Lord

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

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
 Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
 Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion
 Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
 Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

[Back to editorial](#)

Spring and Fall

To a young child

Márgarét, are you gríeving
 Over Goldengrove unleaving?
 Léaves like the things of man, you
 With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
 Áh! ás the heart grows older

It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you will weep and know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sórrrow's spríngs áre the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

[Back to editorial](#)

Heaven-Haven

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

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

Sonnet 42

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief
Woe, wórl-d-sorrow; on an áge-old ánvil wince an sing—
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No ling-
ering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief'.

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

[Back to editorial](#)

Sonnet 44

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.
What hours, O what black hoürs we have spent
This night! what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!
And more must, in yet longer light's delay.
 With witness I speak this. But where I say

Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent
To dearest him that lives alas! away.

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.
Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

[Back to editorial](#)

[\[Cover\]](#) [\[Greetings\]](#) [\[Editorials\]](#) [\[Letters\]](#) [\[Columns\]](#) [\[Arts\]](#) [\[Links\]](#) [\[Classifieds\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)

Word Worth Publisher: [M H Perry](#) Editors: [M Helz](#) [C Miess](#) [A Carter](#) [S Perry](#)

Contributors: Susan Johnson Banwell Goddard David Clark Tiffany M. Stuck Wayne Johnson Alastair Reid Pei-Hua Chiang Ilna Sen
[Rita Banerji] Ruth Hitchings Darin Boville Ron Colgrove Carl Dennis Renee Oubre Carolyn Scott Panzica K Srinivasan Cam
Adams Michelle M Mayer Gary Earl Ross Cheryl Rofer Charles Bartolotta Joy Walsh Kevin H. Siepel John T. Baker Tambourine
Gray Harvey Kaye Nettie Veling Graceann Maciolek Anna Seymour Kateri van Huystee Kevin Roe Beverly Roe Dave Trageser
Susanne Wojciechowicz Nancy Palmer Miess

Distinguished Selections: Hale Chatfield Armin W. Helz Rabindranath Tagore Herman Melville
William Shakespeare E. A. Robinson Mark L Kaufman Gerard Manley Hopkins

©2008 Word Worth®—World magazine of Ideas & the ArtsTM

