

Hopkins's Kestrel: Drafting "The Windhover," 1877-1884

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This article offers the first full account of the textual genesis of “The Windhover,” situating the revisions made to the poem between 1877 and 1884 in their specific social and theological contexts to clarify the spiritual axis along which it was written. Tracing the poem’s compositional history also has significant implications for understanding Hopkins’s verse craft and the development of sprung rhythm. The seminal changes of 1884 can be dated very specifically to a fortnight between late February and early March, coinciding with the start of Lent. This is consolidated by juxtaposing them alongside several entries particularising Hopkins’s daily meditative practices in the Dublin Notebook that are extremely pertinent to the poem and which have not hitherto been assessed in conjunction with it. Whereas the 1877 emendations to “The Windhover” record a poet’s instinctive joy in the natural world, those of 1884 are predominantly determined by a priest’s wish to adhere to the will of God.

I

Situating the revisions made to “The Windhover” between 1877 and 1884 in their specific social and theological contexts clarifies the spiritual axis along which it was written, in turn complicating William Empson’s famous interpretation of the poem. Tracing in detail this compositional history also has significant implications for understanding Hopkins’s verse craft and the development of sprung rhythm. There are three extant manuscripts of “The Windhover”, two in the poet’s hand dating from the early and late summer of 1877 and one made by Robert Bridges, Hopkins’s friend and literary executor, in the autumn of 1883.¹ Both autograph manuscripts were forwarded to Bridges and mounted by him into an album, MS A, for safekeeping. The earliest autograph, MS A¹, intended as a fair copy of the first version written on May 30, 1877, instead bears evidence of the energies of fresh composition (fig. 1).² Bridges received it “before 16 July 1878” and possibly eleven months earlier.³ The second autograph, MS A², is a *bona fide* fair copy with further substantive revisions to lines two through five thought to date from the late summer of 1877 (fig. 2). It was most likely sent to Bridges “after 14 May 1880” (*PW*, p. 377). In 1883, Bridges transcribed many of Hopkins’s autographs, including “The Windhover,” into a second album, MS B, to lend to friends (fig. 2). Before loaning it out, Bridges dispatched this album to Hopkins for editing and it arrived at Stonyhurst in mid-December 1883 for the purpose.

Norman MacKenzie has stipulated that Hopkins “had little leisure” for revision that Christmas and, in any case, was hampered “by having few fair copies of his own creations against which to check the Bridges transcripts” (*PW*, p. xxxvii). Moreover, he was anxious about his prospective life in Ireland. MacKenzie does not mention “The Windhover” as amongst the poems Hopkins did manage to revise before moving to Dublin on February 18, 1884, to take up his dual appointment as Professor of Classics at University College and Fellow of the Royal University of Ireland. Coventry Patmore asked to see Hopkins’s poems

in a letter of January 21, 1884, a solicitation that may have encouraged revision, and was in possession of MS B on March 6.⁴ Taking MacKenzie's provision alongside Patmore's receipt of the second album, Hopkins's last amendments to "The Windhover" in MS B can be dated very specifically to a fortnight between late February and early March 1884, nearly seven years after the poem was begun. Patmore returned MS B to Bridges, not Hopkins, in July 1884, and in red ink Bridges adjusted the latest autograph of the poem he had in his possession, MS A², to incorporate the changes Hopkins had made most recently in MS B. To be clear: the underlying text of "The Windhover" in MS B is Bridges's 1883 italic transcription of MS A² with Hopkins's February-March 1884 corrections superimposed upon it (which taken together supply the copy-text in MacKenzie's edition). Conversely, the underlying text of the poem in MS A² is Hopkins's latest autograph from the summer of 1877 overlaid with Bridges's refinements from July-August 1884.⁵ Bridges returned MS B to Hopkins, once he had copied the changes across albums, in August 1884.

A caveat to this intricate chronology of revision should be noted. It concerns possibly the most vital word in the poem and certainly its crux, not capitalized until 1884: "AND" (B, l. 10).⁶ Confronted with the natural grace of the kestrel in the octave, Hopkins's late modification makes explicit the Christology that had underpinned his vision from the beginning, and which was considerably more muted in both autograph manuscripts of 1877 where the conjunction was printed "And" (A¹ and A², l. 10) with a *sforzando* above the initial letter. He capitalized it to focus attention on the kestrel's transformation in the "fire" (RT, l. 10) of the Resurrection, which tempers the bird to "a new brilliance" in Christ as part of "a whole man's 'wincing and singing'."⁷ "AND" conjoins the natural and the divine, two essences in one body, mortal flesh and God's spirit; it is the grammar of Christ, quite literally the word of God. As such, it is the poetic analogue to "divine stress," which Hopkins understood as an act of grace that "carries the creature to or towards the end of its being,

which is its selfsacrifice to God and its salvation.” The conjunction gains substantiality in 1884 as confirmation of Hopkins’s renewed allegiance to the will of God; it is reified in imitation of Christ’s reification of the Word, “as if a man said...That is Christ *being me* and me being Christ.”⁸ By 1884, Hopkins’s earnest engagement with Church dogmatics had superseded his initial delight in watching a bird fly.

This word has borne the weight of critical scrutiny from Empson onward, yet it was subject to the subtlest sequence of compositional alterations of any in the poem. One of Bridges’s habitual customs in reproducing Hopkins’s autographs was to transliterate appearances of “and” as ampersands. When revising “The Windhover” in MS B, Hopkins let this shorthand prevail in lines three, six, nine, thirteen, and fourteen, but firmly rejected it in line ten, replacing “&” with “AND” (B, l. 10). This was not done for straightforwardly prosodic reasons to ensure that Bridges respected the differential accentuation of the original *sforzando* in his own fair copy, where ampersands otherwise collapsed all such distinctions. As will be shown, the typographic strangeness of the transformation makes prominent Hopkins’s own feelings of estrangement in 1884, exhibiting his pressing need for grace to continue to see how the kestrel could “Buckle!” (RT, l. 10) and be fastened to Christ to reflect His glory. Contrary to his usual practice, Bridges did not transfer this famous capitalization back into MS A² in red ink over the summer of 1884 when the second album was briefly in his care once again. Accordingly, it is just conceivable that Hopkins had still to make the change and did not do so until MS B was in his permanent possession from August 1884 onwards.⁹ This article, however, uses material from the *Dublin Notebook* to make the contextual case for dating all of Hopkins’s MS B revisions in “The Windhover” to the same short period between late February and early March 1884, thus bolstering MacKenzie’s supposition that the poem was not amongst those Hopkins revised before leaving for Ireland.

Nonetheless, the strongest argument for ruling out post-August 1884 revision to “The Windhover” is textual. The poet indicated his preference for “AND” with three decisive backslashes through Bridges’s ampersand that are typographically indistinguishable from the backslashes through “Of,” “O,” and “for” (B, ll. 2, 4, and 8) in the same copy. These other deletions were present before the manuscript was sent to Patmore in very early March 1884 because Bridges heeded the changes connoted by them, updating MS A² with their replacements over the summer before sending MS B back to Hopkins. Consequently, if Hopkins adapted “&” at this later juncture in 1884, at least six months after his other alterations to the poem, then discrepancies in the thickness, color, temporal application, or overlay of inks should have been detected by the Infra-red Image Converter through which this poem, and every other in MS B, was scanned by MacKenzie (*PW*, pp. xxxix-xliii). Any incongruities would have been sedulously documented by MacKenzie in the indispensable commentary to his critical edition.¹⁰ Their absence offers the most persuasive case that the last changes to “The Windhover” were made simultaneously by early March 1884.

Notwithstanding MacKenzie’s observation that amongst the revisions to MS B overlooked by Bridges when he took stock of the album in the summer of 1884 “were many unobtrusive changes in punctuation,” it is hardly likely Bridges would have knowingly disregarded “AND,” especially given its insertion at the expense of a word Hopkins emphatically crossed out three times (*PW*, p. xxxviii). It would have been uncharacteristically negligent of him to have done so. And yet, it is barely more satisfactory to propose he forgot it altogether, not least because it went unheeded on a second occasion. When Bridges recovered album B after Hopkins’s death in 1889 he went through it again, updating the autographs in album A to incorporate any corrections the poet had implemented since August 1884, this time with “a thin pen in black ink” to differentiate this set of alterations from the red ink he had used five years previously for the same task (*LPM*, p. 8). The capitalized

conjunction in “The Windhover” remained conspicuously omitted from MS A² at this stage as well. Since Bridges unquestionably passed over “AND” in 1889 this lends auxiliary weight to the possibility he missed it twice. It does not, however, definitively solve the issue of whether or not Bridges noted the emendation at least once in the 1880s and considered it unimportant, or spotted it for the first time when collating all of the manuscripts in both albums for the inaugural edition of Hopkins’s *Poems* in 1918 (*PW*, p. xlii).¹¹ The latter scenario seems more plausible.

The sole adjustment to “The Windhover” in MS B that MacKenzie does record after August 1884 is Hopkins’s retrospective addition of the date of initial composition: “St. Beuno’s. May 30 1877” (*PW*, p. 377). When Bridges retrieved this album in 1889 he appended the same date to MS A¹, the first Hopkins autograph, ostensibly aligning the earliest and latest versions despite their distinct contexts and chronologies (*PW*, p. 376). This effaces the textual and social history of the poem which is worth reconstructing explicitly from the surviving manuscripts. Hopkins wrote “The Windhover” on May 30, 1877, during his *annus mirabilis* at a theological seminary in the rousing Welsh countryside, a place he left later that year “Much against...inclination.”¹² It is not known exactly when MS A¹ was drafted and corrected, though features of its presentation suggest soon after the poem’s conception.¹³ Hopkins subsequently reworked the poem as MS A² in the weeks before his ordination in September 1877, possibly whilst staying with his parents in Hampstead. He revisited it again for a final time in Bridges’s transcript in MS B between late February and early March 1884 from St Stephen’s Green, Dublin, as he embarked on a university career in “weakness and fear.”¹⁴ Put like that, key phases of the poem’s gestation seem to fit alongside two contrasting psychological states induced by Hopkins’s response to his station and surroundings: first, to a poet’s delight in the natural world in rural Wales in 1877; second, to a deep pessimism which had been growing throughout 1883 and which was intensified by the

responsibilities of academic life in urban Ireland in 1884.¹⁵ It could be claimed that Hopkins's trajectory from priest to professor was broadly marked by a turn, to use his own words, from "enthusiasm" to "unfitness."¹⁶ This is mirrored in his pathologies of bad health, which developed from occasional physical ailments in the 1870s to persistent periods of depression throughout the 1880s.¹⁷

The dualism inherent in this biographical account corresponds well with William Empson's renowned appraisal of the contending vision at the centre of the poem. For Empson, Hopkins was torn between "the active physical beauty of the bird" in the octave and his "patient spiritual renunciation" in the sestet. The poet's twin compulsions for a kestrel and for Christ were deemed to be "incompatible" by "different systems of judgment," each of which is honorably accorded "a transient and exhausting satisfaction" to ensure neither is negated. Perception and conviction are suspended in "open conflict" within the sonnet's structure, thereby dramatizing "a fundamental division in the writer's mind" that qualified as an ambiguity of the seventh type. This explication is a typical piece of early Empsonian brilliance, working centrifugally from features of local significance to arrive at irresolvable generalities that "tap the energies of the very depths of the mind."¹⁸ Nevertheless, although Empson's evaluation offers compelling witness to life's contrariness, this is achieved by apprehending the relationship between Christ and the kestrel in a binary form that Hopkins the Jesuit would have resisted.

Reviewing the poem's compositional history clarifies the spiritual axis along which it was written, which is more valuable than relying on circumstantial evidence to build up Hopkins's oppositional world. "The Windhover" was conceived in a series of Welsh sonnets rejoicing in "dearest freshness" and praising God for "dappled things."¹⁹ It was revised, nearly seven years later, on the cusp of a set of Irish sonnets when nature's bounty seemed to the poet all but exhausted: "her dápple is at énd."²⁰ Hopkins's "dapple-dáwn-drawn Falcon"

(RT, l. 2) is instinct with the exuberance and agony that characterized his conception of both sequences. Since the latter group are now known as the sonnets of “desolation,”²¹ it is illuminating to label the former the sonnets of “consolation,” deriving the term from the contrary spiritual condition in Ignatius Loyola’s “Rules for the Discernment of Spirits” (*SD*, pp. 203-204).²² It should be emphasized that these states exist on the same plane, indicating proximity to the divine will; they are not antithetical in the way Empson imagined when he pitted the “ecstasy!” (RT, l. 5) of secular experience against theological rapture of another order. In both situations, the kestrel prompts Hopkins to interrogate his own faith; it is not a pressure that suddenly unravels it.

Nature’s “consolation” and “desolation” was inflected for Hopkins through Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises* (1548). The “First Principle and Foundation” taught that creatures were designed “for man’s sake and to help him in the carrying out of the end for which he was created,” that being “to praise, reverence and serve God Our Lord” (*SD*, p. 122). In notes to the Foundation Exercise, Hopkins professed that “brute things” venerated God in expressions of splendor, though in their obliviousness “the praises fall short.” Despite this, he maintained that “what they can *they always do*” (*SD*, p. 239). At times of “consolation,” the natural world motivated an “interior joy” that spurred the glorification of God (*SD*, p. 203). In the same passage of the Foundation, however, Ignatius instructed that it was necessary to “withdraw” or “make ourselves indifferent...to all created things” if their alluring vitality impeded worship, twisting it away from God and towards the thing itself (*SD*, p. 122).

The conditions governing these two responses of the soul were adumbrated in the Ignatian “Rules” and are traceable in the gradations of Hopkins’s spiritual sensibility: in 1877, he saw a bird of prey in flight and was “inflamed with the love of its Creator and Lord”; in 1884, the memory of the kestrel no longer stimulated delight in God but in the “low and earthly” creature itself. This growing “disquietude” was not the predictable conflict of a

religious man fighting his material desires, as Empson intimated, but the far more painful one of unexpectedly losing the capacity to see what is holy and spectacular in the world (*SD*, pp. 203-204). As a poet, separation from the miraculous wounded Hopkins's imagination; as a priest, it offended his soul, becoming the root cause of his anguish by 1884. Hopkins's course from "consolation" to "desolation," from "enthusiasm" to "unfitness," was essentially the outcome of a withdrawal of God's love "to try how much we are worth" (*SD*, p. 204), leaving him perplexed and alone to face "dark heaven's baffling ban."²³

In "desolation," Ignatius counselled that one should "never make a change" in resolution but rather "stand firm," consolidating the idea that tension functions in the poem on a dynamic continuum susceptible to progression and relapse and not by Empsonian division into concrete parts (*SD*, p. 204). Deprivation from God was not permanent. In annotations to the "Rules," Hopkins remembered Fr. Whitty's injunction that "consolation" was a state God "wishes us to strive to recover" and that "tepidity" only begins "when we give up struggling and let ourselves drift" (*SD*, p. 205 and p. 208). The 1884 revisions substantiate Hopkins's bid to salvage his spirit from a crippling isolationism by following the Ignatian rubric for countering "desolation": "insisting more on prayer and meditation...making our self-examination more searchingly...increasing in some suitable manner our penance" (*SD*, p. 204). The final adjustments to "The Windhover" were not a means of distorting the kestrel into something other than itself. Instead, they constitute a determination to restore what had vanished – the source of the bird's lustre – by petitioning God to reinstate Himself in the poet's heart.

It was precisely because Empson simplified the interaction of the sensuous and the spiritual that the "enormous conjunction" introduced into MS B in 1884 affected him "rather like shouting in an actor."²⁴ In fact, acting has nothing to do with the real sentiment, serving instead to reveal Empson's own belief that it is altogether more decent and convincing to be

“Stirred for a bird” (RT, l. 8) than for Christ. Hopkins did not share that assumption.

Juxtaposing Hopkins’s February-March 1884 revisions with contemporaneous meditations from the *Dublin Notebook* illuminates the point that far from exposing an instance of forced dissimulation the capitalized conjunction captures the urgent solicitations of Jesuit prayer. In the language of Hopkins’s Long Retreat notes from the winter of 1881, it is the typographic manifestation of the “mere wish” or “least sigh of desire” to do God’s will and to “say Yes to him”; the earnest expression of “the work of corresponding with grace” when divinity seemed most distant (*SD*, pp. 154-155). Empson would not have repudiated Hopkins’s spiritual writings being brought to bear on the poem. Despite the impetus his analyses gave to New Criticism, he was an advocate of intentionalism throughout his career.²⁵ Besides, the implications of Hopkins’s theological commitments are more complex than Empson’s dichotomy will allow, and more profound too than any other set of sociological factors that might be sought to determine the textual history of the poem out of sheer circumstance. The Jesuit life of obedience was proofed against such contingencies.²⁶

II

The opening five lines of “The Windhover” depict a falcon in flight: initially mastering a gust, then stalling in a hover, before finally taking off in a sweep. Hopkins took special care in honing the bird’s muscular reflexes and no lines received more sustained attention than these. His first extant attempt in 1877 seems very familiar but is in fact appreciably different from the published version (fig. 1 / fig. 3). The text can be excavated using the deletions from MS A¹, as below:

I caught this morning morning’s minion, king
 Of daylight’s dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, riding
 Rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding

Hung so and rung the rein of a wimpled wing

In an ecstasy; then off, forth on swing (A¹, ll. 1-5) [.]²⁷

“Falcon, riding / Rolling level” is supposed to characterize the bird “riding” the wind like a knight on his horse, but bringing two participial adjectives together over the verse line sounds clunky, threatening the bird’s competence to crest the conditions.²⁸ Whilst “dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon” neatly encapsulates windhover, air, and dawn “not as three separate elements, but as one whirl of action,” to quote Geoffrey Hartman, the abruptly alliterative “riding / Rolling” crabs the rhythm across the line as an unwanted consequence of a densely asyndetic style.²⁹

At his first effort to revise it in MS A¹, Hopkins tried: “Falcon, he was riding / Rolling level” (A¹, ll. 2b-3b), though this redundantly describes the bird with subject and object pronouns in quick succession (“he was”; “him,” A¹, l. 3b). Furthermore, “he was” interposes a narrative voice diverting focus away from the source of the poet’s delight and towards the poet himself. This contrasts unfavorably with the self-effacing anacrusis of “I caught” (A¹, l. 1) which metrically privileges the encounter with the bird over the person perceiving it. Hopkins refined the line over the summer, successfully tempering its staccato in MS A²: “Falcon, in his riding / Of the rolling level” (A², ll. 2-3) The additions “in his” and “Of the” give fluency back to the bird because the phrases do not carry primary metrical stress; the phonetic and prosodic pressure generated by the proximate alliteration of “riding / Rolling” is released by transforming the feet into dipodies.³⁰ In contradistinction to “he was,” “In his” neither gives pause to the falcon’s flight nor makes the poet obtrusive; indeed, the possessive pronoun accords the bird greater self-possession in its activity. Moreover, “riding / Of the” splits the metrical foot firmly over two lines in what Hopkins called a “rove-over”.³¹ Its presence between two dipodic feet creates a gently undulating rhythm that nicely imitates the

reactions of the bird as it skilfully contends with the rise and fall of the wind, as shown in the scansion below:

Fálcón, ìn his | ríding

Of the | rólling level [.]

This outcome is a decisive improvement on the original version in MS A¹: “Falcon, riding / Rolling level” replicates instead a uniform marching beat preventing the bird from showcasing its aerial acrobatics. The value of “in his” and “Of the” might easily be overlooked by consulting the published text alone, where such words are inconspicuous amidst the auditory and imagistic qualities of the bird’s regality. Yet, their worth can be reclaimed by returning to the manuscripts, where incredibly small changes demonstrate Hopkins’s ability to engineer the physics of flight in the lightest adjustments to the sonnet’s prosodic structure.

After the glide, the hover, originally portrayed thus:

underneath him steady air, and striding

Hung so and rung the rein of a wimpled wing

In an ecstasy [.]

At one stage in MS A¹, Hopkins experimented with “He hung so” (A¹, l. 4b) before reverting back to “Hung so” (A¹, l. 4c), possibly conscious of the concentration of third-person pronouns in the octave, what with the short-lived trial in that manuscript of “he was riding” (A¹, l. 2b).³² Walking in Devon in August 1874, Hopkins spotted “a hawk...hanging on the hover,”³³ a memory he instinctively recalled years later in the 1888 ode “Epithalamion” when, back in the landscape of “Southern dean or Lancashire clough or Devon cleave,” “flake-leaves” were imagined to “Hang as still as hawk or hawkmoth.”³⁴ Essential to the success of this image is the use of the present tense to apprehend the exploits of the hawk in

mid-air, poised and suspensive rather than frozen and suspended. This is precisely the quality that is lost with the heavy-handed exactitude of “Hung so,” which works against “striding” to project the hover into the past, sacrificing stillness for stasis. “Hung so” characterizes a bird caught in the mind of a poet, not one flying freely in the world, and Hopkins may well have remembered that in two other contemporaneous sonnets he reserved this past participle for inanimate objects, not living creatures: “each hung bells’s / Bow” in “As kingfishers catch fire” and “the azurous hung hills” of “Hurraing in Harvest.”³⁵

In any case, in the context of imagery associating the kestrel with Crusading knights and the medieval French court, “Hung” summoned an unwanted homophone that made the bird appear moribund. It did not survive into MS A², by which time the line had been substantially reformed:

O how he | rung upon the |rein of a | wimpling | wing (A², l. 4) [.]

Removing the internal rhyme of “hung” and “rung” accentuates the alliterative connection in “rung” and “rein,” the wing being “a rein from the bird to the air it rides and controls” (*PW*, p. 381). Moreover, the voice registers “Hung so and rung” as an especially dense collocation within the acoustical fabric of the first five lines, otherwise rich in front vowel assonance. A modern study into the perceptual quality of speech sounds has shown that back vowels “occupy more mental processing space and are perceived as heavier, or slower” than front vowels, which are deemed to be “somehow higher...even when pronounced on the same fundamental frequency.”³⁶ Cognitive linguistics offers a useful model for thinking about whether or not Hopkins’s aversion to “Hung so and rung” was based on his belief that the phrase was sonically incapable of mimicking the lightness and agility of the hovering bird, especially given his loyalty to the principle that “till [poetry] is spoken it is not performed.”³⁷ Deleting “Hung so” facilitates the change from “wimpled” to “wimpling” which reclaims the

rippling of the wing as audibly present activity rather than past event. The insertion of “upon” lengthens the second foot of the line so that it is metrically identical to the third and fifth feet (another “rove-over”), each containing a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables. This heightens the juxtaposition with the two-syllabled fourth foot, “wimpling,” which collapses sound to bring out the crispness of a single ripple of the bird’s wing in the final syllable of the line.

The one advantage of “Hung so” was that it clearly signalled the transition from gliding into hovering, obscured in the summer of 1877 by new-found incredulity and admiration: “O how he” (*LPM*, p.124). This is Hopkins’s joy, not the kestrel’s, and the invocation resituates the poet in his poem – in the same fashion that “he was riding” had done so in MS A¹ – at a pivotal junction in the bird’s flight pattern. This is especially gratuitous given that the vocative was rendered superfluous following the substitution that summer of “In an ecstasy” (A¹, l. 5) for “In his ecstasy!” (A², l. 5) Unlike “he was riding” and “He hung,” both temporarily mooted in MS A¹, this was an example of lasting pronominal success. “In his ecstasy!” ostensibly refers to the bird; the virtue of the pathetic fallacy is that it enables the poet to smuggle in his own elation by attributing it to the kestrel rather than by stating it explicitly and interrupting the description. This produces a tautology of sorts since the emotion prompting the exclamation “O” is in fact more subtly recuperated by the new exclamation mark in the same manuscript. Twice jubilant in the summer of 1877, the line survived intact until February-March 1884 when Hopkins returned to it, correcting Bridges’s transcript of MS B.

On this occasion, “O” was replaced with the impersonal qualifier “High there” (B, l. 4) to give the delineation with which readers are familiar:

únder | néath him stèady | áir, and | stríding

| Hígh there, hòw he | rúng upon the | réin of a | wímpling | wing (RT, ll. 3-4) [.]

“High there” smoothly recaptures the move into the hover rather than the poet’s surprise. The front vowels provide an assonantal link between the first syllable of “striding” and “High” and establish a full internal rhyme between “air” and “there.” These sonic reverberations evenly stretch the hover across two lines, creating an aural effect that cannot be heard in “Hung so and rung,” where the voice identifies the abrupt weight of the back vowels as unsuitable for a nimble and expansive movement.

It was also at this time, in February-March 1884, that Hopkins polished the kestrel’s arc out of the hover and into the sweep by repeating a word already in the line:

In his | éctstasy! |[R] then | óff, òff | fòrth òn | swing (RT, l. 5) [.]

Duplicating “off” (B, l. 5) indicates the beginning of the sweep more explicitly than in the earlier manuscripts (*LPM*, p. 124). However, the two words have different emphases, and the new syllable separates the sprung, strong stress collocation “óff, fòrth” by introducing a secondary stress between them: “óff, òff | fòrth.” This slight metrical adjustment mimetically signals the bird’s change of position, tacking out of the full force of the wind and easing alongside it into its sweep. That this revision was made in 1884, together with “High there” in the preceding line, shows that Hopkins required distance from his own poem to elucidate the distinct phases of the kestrel’s manoeuvres.

Again, the general point is worth stressing. Without working comparatively from the manuscripts to recover the textual variants it would be easy to neglect the various articles, pronouns, suffixes, prepositions, and adverbs added by 1884, to include: “in his (riding)”; “Of the (rolling level)”; “High there”; “upon”; “(wimpl)ing”; “his (ecstasy)!”; and “off.” From the published version alone it is impossible to gauge what happened by trial and error during the seven years in which Hopkins revised “The Windhover,” thus occluding what was attempted and ultimately abandoned. For the first five lines this list comprises: “Falcon,

riding / Rolling”; “Falcon, he was riding”; “Hung so and rung”; “He hung so”; “rung the rein”; “wimpled”; “O how he”; “an ecstasy”; and “off, forth on.” Examining the phrases that Hopkins refined or rejected clarifies what he valued in their counterparts, leading in turn to a deeper appreciation of his metrical art and aural sensitivity. The parts of speech that are routinely taken for granted in ordinary discourse are “in hiding” (RT, l. 7) in this poem. Though they may appear insignificant, they are in fact crucial in enabling Hopkins to celebrate the kestrel as an abundance of energy pushing at the sonic and structural limitations of the sonnet.

Indeed, this set of modest amendments has important ramifications for understanding Hopkins’s verse craft and his experimentations with sprung rhythm. In MS A¹, as Figure 3 clearly shows, the first two lines of the poem appear on the page like this:

I caught this morning morning’s minion, king

Of daylight’s dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Fal- (A¹, ll. 1b-2) [.]

The remainder of line two in the first instance – “con, riding” (A¹, l. 2a) – follows beneath it, which means that the break in the manuscript preserves the metre of the first two lines as exemplary iambic pentameter. If it is objected that it was merely want of space determining the arrangement of “Fal-/con, riding,” it should be noted that when Hopkins first wrote “Fal-/con, riding / Rolling level” (A¹, ll. 2-3b) across three manuscript lines in MS A¹, his verse thinking was still fundamentally iambic. Despite his insertion below “dauphin” and “Fal-con” in the manuscript of “outrides” to signal extrametrical syllables not counted in the scansion, the voice still registers the second line as a hypermetrical Alexandrine. At this early stage of the poem, common rhythm and sprung rhythm were in a war embrace: the “outrides” and weak “rove-over” in line two pull against the prevalent iambic pattern, which nonetheless remains dominant in MS A¹. Hopkins appreciated this. He lengthened these feet into dipodies in MS A² precisely because he realized a sequence of iambs could not do justice to the kestrel

negotiating a gust. Evidently, sprung rhythm needed to be fleshed out. Line four in MS A¹ is also perfectly admissible iambic pentameter, commencing with an inverted first foot: “Hung so.” The trochee accentuates the perceived weight of the back vowel at the moment the bird is supposed to be balancing in a hover. Hopkins may have tried “He hung so” in an effort to allay the force of the past participle by removing the trochee altogether, but front vowels were required to blend lightly with the other proximate sounds, making “High there” a good choice in MS B.

There is no sign from the published version that “The Windhover” was not in sprung rhythm all along, but in fact the rhythm in Hopkins’s ear when he initially began it was regularly iambic. Figure 4 shows the growth in the first five lines of the poem between MS A¹ and MS B; they acquired nine extra syllables over seven years. In a sonnet by the likes of William Wordsworth, Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Meredith, or Matthew Arnold such expansion would have generated a sixth line, albeit a catalectic one. Not so for Hopkins. The expressive possibilities of sprung rhythm enabled him to re-envisage the sonnet form. This was a gradual process. In the sprung rhythm of “The Windhover,” there are still five strong stresses per line, but unlike in regular iambic metre the feet are logaoedic, or mixed, so that stresses either follow one another directly or are interposed with a varying number of weak syllables from one to four; they are also isochronous, meaning lines must be spoken in the same amount of time whether or not they contain ten syllables or sixteen.³⁸ These features gave Hopkins the flexibility to refine the poem as he saw fit, distorting the iambic beat with revisions that slowly set it to a new pulse. Metrically, MS B hardly echoes MS A¹. From the final text alone the original tempo is inaudible. It has disappeared from all but the first line, as if it never existed.

Hopkins was the central figure behind Geoffrey Hill’s characterisation of the nineteenth century as an epoch “marked by a drastic breaking of tempo and by an equally

severe disturbance of the supposedly normative patterns of speech.”³⁹ In the same vein, Eric Griffiths has commented that Hopkins’s poetry “is in part at odds with the attitudes of the language-community.”⁴⁰ These judgements are reasonably based on what was published. However, looking at the development of “The Windhover” in Figure 4, and speaking exclusively of that poem, the “dogged resistance” with which Hopkins countered common rhythm was neither “drastic” in its immediacy nor its success, but rather the controlled and intermittent work of seven years.⁴¹ In “The Windhover,” sprung rhythm was a generative practice that was recalibrated and consolidated over time. It was not therefore a mode of thinking that Hopkins instantly assumed at the start of the first draft of poetic composition in 1877, at which point sprung rhythm was imperceptible. In the opening lines of MS A¹, the voice is carried by an iambic cadence quite in keeping with “the attitudes of the language-community”; the manuscript exhibits Hopkins warming up and tuning in. This suggests that the traditional rhythms of English poetry were irresistibly ingrained in the minds of even the most inventive poets and that, rather than being burdensome, they served as a template for innovation. Convention lay beneath the sound of immediacy. To discover his own voice in “The Windhover,” Hopkins needed time and patience; the rhythm was the outcome of “laborious” concentration and not a single surge of creative “enthusiasm.”⁴²

Hopkins modified the iambic foot across the manuscripts to create a pentameter that, in a Darwinian age, could constantly adapt to its surroundings. Although he credited sprung rhythm with “the essential elements of speech,” it did not come as fluently as conversation.⁴³ Mellifluousness belies the complexity of its design. As the drafts of “The Windhover” confirm, sprung rhythm was a supremely artificial poetic mode so expertly constructed as to appear chanced upon rather than meticulously engineered. Hopkins’s evolving and experimental poetics made the rigid structure of the sonnet responsive to new content in ways not available to his poetic forbears or contemporaries. This was a serious achievement in its

own right, permitting substantial deviations in rhythm and line length within the same pliant form. At least in “The Windhover,” it was a painstaking process of revision that fully enabled Hopkins, in the words Hill borrowed from T.S. Eliot, to “redeem the time.”⁴⁴

III

Hopkins’s discussion of personality, grace, and free will during the Long Retreat of November-December 1881 informs the theological implications of his final revisions. The 1884 corrections reflect the workings out of sacred conscience so that MS B attests to crucial nuances in an ever-developing grammar of his Christian belief. In these retreat notes, Hopkins separated volition into two parts to explain the degrees by which the spirit consents to God’s wishes. According to him, the “affective will” was wholly regulated by God towards goodness and was “really no freer than the understanding or the imagination,” whereas the “elective will” or “*arbitrium*” was “free towards all alternatives, even though one of them should be absolute evil” (*SD*, p. 152 and p. 149).⁴⁵ The capacity for the “elective will” to choose between eventualities was an expression of an individual’s “moral freedom” or “pitch,” realized through the existential categories of “play” and “field” (*SD*, p. 147 and p. 149). Analogically recasting Hopkins’s revisionary practice with these terms clarifies his evolving condition of faith, elucidating several late changes to “The Windhover” as significant spiritual manoeuvres instinct with his deepest convictions.

In Hopkins’s interpretation, “play” was the natural faculty without which there could be “no apprehension, desire, action, or motion of any kind” (*SD*, p. 139). It resided in “execution”; in this case, the poet’s decision to amend the page (*SD*, p. 149). In turn, textual reconfigurations affected the underlying “pitch” of “The Windhover,” memorably described elsewhere by Hopkins as that “taste of self” or “selfbeing” which constituted personality (*SD*, p. 123). “Pitch” was an innate measure of “self determination” responsive to variations in

essential energy, such as the “instress” emitted by a new word in the pattern of a poem, thus reconfiguring its “simple positiveness” (*SD*, p. 149 and p. 151).⁴⁶ Although revision was typically purposive, a poem’s “pitch” could nevertheless be distorted by a chance occurrence epitomising “the intrinsic possibility which things have,” much as in the Christian faith a person could be seduced from the “eternal destiny” God planned for them (*SD*, p. 123 and p. 338).⁴⁷ Bridges’s automatic use of shorthand for Hopkins’s conjunctions throughout MS B altered the “pitch” of “The Windhover” in this way. The variety of conjunctions across line ten of the drafts of that poem comprises the “freedom of field” based on Hopkins’s and Bridges’s manuscript choices. In both MS A autographs from 1877, Hopkins wrote “And” (A¹ and A², l. 10) with a *sforzando*, but following Bridges’s 1883 transliteration of it as “&” Hopkins introduced “AND” (B, l. 10) into the final version. Accordingly, MS B enshrines an instance where accident threatened to undermine intention. Bridges’s efficiency risked trivialising a word whose religious consequence had increased enormously for Hopkins since its use in MS A¹. Taken together, “And,” “&,” and “AND” represent the cumulative “freedom of field” between summer 1877 and winter 1884, generating a “range of pitch” along which to trace reformulations in Hopkins’s “selfbeing” (*SD*, p. 148).

These “possible worlds” of “pitch” were not exclusively summoned by Hopkins’s “elective will.” Nonetheless, each manuscript articulates a distinct kind of “moral freedom” because it uniquely embodies a material version of the poem’s ethical and theological reality – “the world as one cleave,” as Hopkins called it – extracted from “an infinity of possible strains of action and choice for each possible self in these worlds” (*SD*, p. 151). In the poet’s terms, the trajectory from “And” to “&” to “AND” marked a shift out of the “possible world” – the “burl of being” – which encompassed all the amendments never recorded or even considered, and through three “cleaves” of “this actual one” (*SD*, p. 155). Collectively, Hopkins compared these “cleaves” of selfhood to the “exposed faces of some

pomegranate...cut in all directions across.” No two “faces” were identical because the interior force of each revision resonated differently within the overall structure of “The Windhover.” Thus, in Hopkins’s metaphor, the “splay” of “AND” profoundly changed the poem’s “neap,” giving it new potentiality (*SD*, p. 152).⁴⁸ Authorial or otherwise, revision was an act of incision into the fabric of experience, the composite sum of which resembled for Hopkins “a pomegranate in the round” that only God “sees whole” (*SD*, p. 151). The manuscripts afford surrogate access to this holistic vision by chronicling the subtle adjudications in Hopkins’s imagination over time, conserving multiple personas of the poet through which “self can in every object it has see another self” (*SD*, p. 152). Investigating these selves reveals a qualitative difference in “pitch” between the poet who wrote “And” twice in 1877 and “AND” in 1884.

February 27, 1884, was Ash Wednesday, by which point Hopkins had been in Ireland for just over a week. In the *Dublin Notebook*, where he drafted poems, scribbled teaching memoranda, and kept reading lists, Hopkins planned a sequence of Lenten meditations for that year. These observances have not hitherto been brought into conjunction with “The Windhover,” yet several of them considerably bolster the case for dating MS B revision to the poem exclusively to Hopkins’s first fortnight at St Stephen’s Green and also provide an original context in which those changes occurred. Salient excerpts are set out below:

Friday Feb. 29 Christ crowned with thorns

[...]

Crown him king over yourself, of your heart [.]

Sunday March 2 – Christ tempted in the wilderness

He was led by the spirit into the wilderness. Pray to be guided by the Holy Ghost in everything. Consider that he was now led to be tempted and the field and arena of the struggle was a wilderness...Here admire our Lord in this struggle [.]

The Lance and Nails March 7

[...]

Seeing Christ's body nailed consider the attachment of his will to God's will. Wish to be as bound to God's will in all things, in the attachment of your mind and attention to prayer and the duty in hand; the attachment of your affections to Christ our Lord and his wounds instead of any earthly object [.]⁴⁹

The editorial introduction to the *Dublin Notebook* notes that these gospel prayers, typically proclaimed at morning Mass, were “stepping-stones” to promote “the coalescence of human and divine desire” (p. 47). Hopkins was in need of such synergy. The same day as the last entry quoted above, March 7, he wrote to Bridges about his new post, disclosing that he was “not at all strong, not strong enough for the requirements.” He also gave an update on album B, containing the final revisions to “The Windhover”: “It is only a few days since I sent the MS book to Mr. Patmore.”⁵⁰

At the close of a Dominical preached on Mid-Lent Sunday in March 1877, Hopkins repeatedly exhorted the congregation to “crown Christ king,” avowing that “He is and shall be king, lord, and master of my mind, heart, and will. I have crowned and I do and will crown Him there” (*SD*, p. 232).⁵¹ On February 29, 1884, by contrast, the same injunction was made privately in the *Dublin Notebook* with the renewed resolve of a man who would have felt very acutely the Christian truth of the penitential liturgy two days previously, crossed with ash on his forehead: “quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris” (for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return).⁵² In this deed of repentance, Christ is literally “crowned” on the worshipper as “self is put off for...sonship.”⁵³ The practice imitated Christ's own act of self-sacrifice, which Hopkins considered “very secret” and “the root of all moral good in other men,” as he explained to Bridges in February 1883: “finding...his human nature informed by

the godhead – he thought it nevertheless no snatching-matter for him to be equal with God, but annihilated himself; taking the form of a servant.”⁵⁴

During the Long Retreat in 1881, Hopkins took comfort in Christ’s servitude, recalling “the hidden life at Nazareth” to fortify him to “suffer with Christ suffering” and to “keep sight of the godhead hiding” (*SD*, p. 176 and p. 187).⁵⁵ It was a message Hopkins revisited, both in translating the Eucharistic prayer of Thomas Aquinas on the concept of *latens Deitas*: “Godhead, I adore Thee, fast in hiding; Thou / God in these rare shapes, poor shadows, darkling now”;⁵⁶ and in the Ignatian Foundation Exercise, from which Hopkins deduced that “brute things” may “tell of him,” but were equally just “poor shadows” of the Real Presence, offering “faint reverence” (*SD*, p. 239). The poet whose “heart in hiding / Stirred for a bird” (*RT*, ll. 7-8) was also a priest convinced that his desires could only be truly satisfied in giving his heart’s service to God, as directed by the Psalms: “Thou *art* my hiding place”; “Thy word have I hid in mine heart.”⁵⁷

Whilst it was standard New Testament theology that self-surrender was the indispensable pre-requisite to “Crown [Christ] king over yourself, of your heart,” Hopkins also registered the point etymologically, which may account for his lasting affinity for the phrase.⁵⁸ As an Oxford undergraduate in 1863, he was drawn to “crown” in a philological note on the word “horn”:

From the curve of a horn, *κορωνίς*, corona, crown...*κορωνή* in Greek and corvus, cornix in Latin and crow (perhaps also raven, which may have been craven originally) in English ~~shd.~~ bear ~~such~~ a striking resemblance to cornu, curvus.⁵⁹

In this entry, Hopkins worked “crown” out of its roots in the Greek word for curvature (*κορωνίς*) before recognizing an onomatopoeic similarity between the bend of that shape (*curvus*) and “raven” (*corvus*) that was supported by an edition of the *Greek-English Lexicon*

with which he was familiar. Under “ΚΟ΄ΡΑΞ” (raven) in that dictionary, he could have read: “Cf. *κορώνη*...Prob. akin to onomatop. words *κράζω*, *κρώζω*, our *croak*, Sanskr. *kruç*. This Root is also used in sense of curved, cf. *κορώνη*, *κορώνίς*, Lat. *curvus* (*corvus*), *cornu*, etc.”⁶⁰ Linguistically and doctrinally, Hopkins imagined that to “Crown [Christ] king” was to renounce oneself by curving away from the world like a bird and turning towards God.⁶¹

There was sound precedent for this salvific geometry. John Donne preached from Lincoln’s Inn in 1618 that “one of Saint Augustines definitions of sinne, *Conversio ad creaturam*...is a turning, a withdrawing of man to the creature.” The word that Donne repeated in two sermons on Psalm 38 to characterize “this *declination*...this descent of man, in the *inordinate love of the Creature*” was “incurvation,” a curving inwards.⁶² This echoed an article of Lutheran soteriology that held that “our nature has been so deeply curved in upon itself because of the viciousness of original sin,” possibly taken from Augustine’s “*detortae in infima voluntatis perversitatem*” (a perversity of will twisted away from the highest substance).⁶³ As a Jesuit, Hopkins’s intimacy with the doctrine of “*Conversio ad creaturam*” stemmed primarily from the Ignatian “Rules”: “consolation” was induced by “any interior joy which calls and attracts one to heavenly things,” whereas “desolation” was impelled by “attraction towards low and earthly objects, disquietude caused by various agitations and temptations” (*SD*, pp. 203-204).

When Hopkins received MS B from Bridges in December 1883 the kestrel was still “king” (B, l. 1) of “The Windhover,” remaining so until the move to Ireland. The decree to “Crown [Christ] king” at the end of February 1884, however, days before the final version of the poem was sent to Patmore, instigated a new hierarchy. Hopkins’s alteration of “king” to “king-/dom” (B, ll. 1-2) was of profound spiritual consequence. It signified a curving outwards in the poet’s attractions (*aversio ad creaturam*) from the kestrel to Christ in an attempt to recover the state of “consolation” in which the poem had initially been written in

1877. Although it is well-known that making this change over the line-ending ingeniously preserved the rhyme scheme in the octave (*LPM*, p. 124), the turn had a far greater significance, guarding Hopkins's soul against "incurvation" and "desolation." The revision manifests the struggle of Hopkins's "elective will" to overcome "perversity." With the kestrel demoted, the rightful King was "crowned" in the title of the poem in MS B in another pen: "to Christ our Lord." It was a modification made with a philologist's and poet's instinct for all that words could do to procure the redemption of a priest around Ash Wednesday 1884.

It has been said that "The Windhover" is a "poetic restatement" of the Ignatian meditation on "The Kingdom of Christ," which Hopkins began performing in 1868 and which he took notes on during the Long Retreat of 1881. In this meditation, the loyalty owed by a knight to a temporal king is compared to that demanded by Christ the King of his followers.⁶⁴ Hopkins's 1865 edition of the *Exercitia Spiritualia* issued the regal analogy as part of the following set of practices:

considerare quid debeant respondere boni subditi Regi tam liberali ac tam humano; et per consequens, si quis non acceptaret petitionem talis Regis, quantopere dignus esset qui vituperaretur ab universo mundo, et perversus [ignavus] haberetur eques...

Secunda pars hujus Exercitii consistit in... applicando supradictum exemplum Regis temporalis ad Christum Dominum nostrum [.]

(to consider what good subjects ought to answer to a king so liberal and so gracious; and consequently if anyone were not to accept the call of such a king, how he would deserve to be despised by all the world and held as a recreant knight. The second part of this Exercise consists in applying the above example of a temporal king to Christ our Lord) [.]⁶⁵

Adding "to Christ our Lord" in MS B decidedly shifts the "pitch" of "The Windhover." It reveals that the poem is not simply a "restatement" of this meditation but an

integral part of Hopkins's continued performance of it and thus of his desire "to live up to a standard of courage" expected of knights when he felt "not at all strong" in 1884. The final alterations testify to Hopkins's endeavor to banish the "wretched inconsistency" that would make a knight "decline a glorious campaign from dislike of the hardships to be borne" (*SD*, p. 163). That the new title was also a slightly adjusted formulation of the incantatory response Hopkins uttered daily during the Roman Missal – "per Christum Dominum nostrum" (through Christ our Lord) – further emphasizes the congruity between the meditative practices of the poet and the priest. Revision and redemption were not separate activities in 1884, by which time the linguistic and grammatical changes to "The Windhover" were deeply implicated in attesting to Hopkins's desire for salvation.

This is compounded by his prayer in the *Dublin Notebook* for March 7, which is a miniature précis of the poem Patmore received in album B the day before. In this entreaty, Hopkins had recourse both to the identical terminology from "The Kingdom of Christ" meditation that he had most recently recalled days before for the title of "The Windhover" in MS B, and to the definition of "desolation" in the Ignatian "Rules," to steer his affections "to Christ our Lord and his wounds instead of any earthly object." He had appealed to Christ's own trials "in the wilderness" on the first Sunday in Lent, March 2, to derive resilience to withstand the "various agitations and temptations" of "desolation," vividly expressed on March 7 as a "Wish to be as bound to God's will" as Christ's body to the cross. Volition, however, was "the condition of the affective will before action" (*SD*, p. 184). Given that the kestrel's ability to incite praise "to Christ our Lord" had been dampened by 1884, Hopkins needed to be determinedly explicit to "the duty in hand," verifying his Christian "*knighthood*" with a commitment that exhibited him "turning the will from one direction or pitting into another" (*SD*, p. 163 and p. 158).

On retreat at Beaumont Lodge in September 1883, Hopkins “earnestly prayed” to God to “lift me above myself to a higher state of grace” and solicited that his poems “might not do me harm” (*SD*, pp. 253-254). Five months later, in revising “The Windhover,” he overtly tried to ensure this by amending the first line and the title, but it was the mysterious change in line ten that did most to elevate Hopkins “to a higher state of grace.” This has been obscured by interpretations that have variously taken “AND” to express: “the point of friction” between Christ and the kestrel;⁶⁶ “‘and’ used with the maximum active, almost verbal sense”;⁶⁷ “surprise”;⁶⁸ stress lift;⁶⁹ and “excitement.”⁷⁰ These tonal and prosodic effects are subsidiary to the theological essence of the capitalization, which is of another order entirely. It can be recovered by resituating the revision amidst Hopkins’s Lenten meditations in 1884 and alongside his Long Retreat notes on the “grace of correspondence” (*SD*, p. 151).

The new form of the conjunction signifies the “least sigh of desire” from Hopkins’s “elective will” to pledge to “the work of corresponding with grace” (*SD*, pp. 154-155). As such, the revision is the correlative act to Hopkins’s “Wish” on March 7 to be “bound to God’s will in all things” and is therefore the ultimate expression of his “attachment” to Christ despite his “desolation.” Although Geoffrey Hill’s assertion is accurate that “The Windhover” dramatizes “the movement from affective will to arbitrium,” the “pitch” of this transition from worldly to divine beauty is in fact represented in three qualitatively distinct ways across the manuscripts.⁷¹ In 1877, “Buckle! And” (A¹ and A², l. 10) was twice sufficient to convey how Hopkins’s natural delight in contemplating the kestrel in the octave led him to be “inflamed with the love of its Creator and Lord” (*SD*, p. 203) in the “fire” (RT, l. 10) of the sestet. It was not in doubt. By 1884, however, that “consolation” had faded and his soul was no longer “quiet and at peace” (*SD*, p. 204). He had to forge anew the bond between the sensuous and the spiritual, reaffirming his allegiance to God by emphasizing his

humble vow to praise Him with “shéer plód” (RT, l. 12). “Buckle! AND” (B, l. 10) indicates that it took all of Hopkins’s resolve to “Crown [Christ] king” in 1884.

By replacing “And” with “AND,” Hopkins exchanged “one whole for another whole, as they say in Transubstantiation...lifting him from one self to another self” (SD, p. 151). The substitution instantiated Hopkins’s faith in his capacity to re-perceive the supermundane in the mundane, the Real Presence in the kestrel, by “corresponding with grace.” Consequently, Bridges’s ampersand in MS B was heavily deleted as a “blank unlikeness” (SD, p. 123), false to the magnitude of Hopkins’s self-sacrificing “attachment” to Christ in February-March 1884. Hopkins, though, would surely have made the change in any case. Only by capitalizing the conjunction could he articulate the precise “pitch” of his “desolation” – which had been mounting in 1883 before he was transferred to Dublin – and supplicate for the “purifying and...mortifying grace” (SD, p. 158) to be lifted to another “cleave” of being in accordance with divine will. This was not the posturing of an “actor,” as Empson maintained, but a Jesuit’s plea for relationship that demonstrated Hopkins’s perseverance to forsake his individuality in imitation of Christ’s “hidden life,” clothing his “old self...with a gracious and consenting self” (SD, p. 161 and p. 154).

The reason Hopkins gave Bridges in February 1879 for not writing more poetry was that “the only person that I am in love with seldom, especially now, stirs my heart sensibly and when he does I cannot always ‘make capital’ of it.”⁷² The poet’s heart “Stirred for a bird” (RT, l. 8) at St Beuno’s theologate in the summer of 1877 when he twice drafted “The Windhover,” paying special attention at that time to the kestrel in flight. Hopkins returned to the poem at St Stephen’s Green in February-March 1884, his natural “enthusiasm” replaced by a priest’s Lenten vigilance to be “nailed” to God’s will. This painful and uncompromising devotion “to Christ our Lord” resulted in a conjunction “ma[d]e capital” out of love for Him, only a few months before he reminded himself in the *Dublin Notebook* to ask God “to

strengthen my faith...in this present state of lethargy.”⁷³ It was the most vital of all the revisions to encode “unfitness” into the tempo and temperament of a sonnet that broke the confines of a love poem. The early consolations of common rhythm were disturbed first by the “pitch” of intense joy and subsequently by ineffable “desolation.” Hopkins’s strenuous self-examination for the grace to harmonize his “affective” and “elective” will was infused deep into the grammatical conscience of “The Windhover” over seven years. Despite feeling absent from God in 1884, Hopkins newly insisted upon “the achieve of” (B, l. 8) the kestrel in MS B, though not without simultaneously and subconsciously confirming the integrity of his “wish to correspond” (*SD*, p. 155) in even the most hidden, Christ-like gesture: “After ‘bird’ (8) he strengthened the dash” (*LPM*, p. 123).

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¹ These manuscripts are reproduced in *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Norman H. MacKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 145-147 (hereafter *PW*); also in MacKenzie, *The Later Poetic Manuscripts of Gerard Manley Hopkins in Facsimile* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1991), p. 120 and pp. 122-125 (hereafter *LPM*). In this article, the manuscripts are replicated from the plates in *PW*, pp. 144-147 and *LPM*, p. 125. They are located at the end of the text. Figure 1: Reading Text and MS A¹, pp. 94-95 (*PW*, pp. 144-145); Figure 2: MS A², p. 96 and MS B, 10^v (*PW*, pp. 146-147); Figure 3: Hopkins’s revisions to the first five lines of “The Windhover” in MSS A¹, A², and B (*LPM*, p. 125). Figure 4: my reconstruction of the syllabic and prosodic development of the first five lines of “The Windhover” in MSS A¹, A², and B.

² For a full account of these misspellings, false starts, deletions, revisions, corrections to indentation, and other textual features, including Hopkins’s writing of the last three lines on the verso, consult MacKenzie, *LPM*, p. 5 and p. 120.

³ Hopkins may have sent this version to Bridges “by 8. Aug 1877” (*PW*, p. 376).

⁴ *The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, gen. ed. Lesley Higgins and Michael F. Suarez, SJ, vol. 2, *Correspondence: 1882-1889*, ed. R.K.R. Thornton and Catherine Phillips (Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), p. 659 and p. 661.

⁵ For full details of the textual histories of MSS A and B consult *PW*, pp. xxxii-xxxix. Several serious misattributions of textual authority are evident in the only other focused study of Hopkins's revisions to this poem of which I am aware: Eugene R. August, "The Growth of 'The Windhover'," *PMLA* 82 (1967): 465-468. For MacKenzie's assessment of how this article is "badly confused" see *PW*, p. xxxiv and p. 377; also *LPM*, pp. 8-9. Various prosodic effects of the manuscript changes are considered in Edward A. Stephenson, *What Sprung Rhythm Really Is* (Alma, Ont.: The International Hopkins Association, 1987), pp. 39-80. MacKenzie notes that Stephenson's scansion of the poem, followed throughout this article, is the most convincing to have been produced (*PW*, p. 378). For the complexities inherent in generating a critical theory of Hopkins's prosody see Michael D. Hurley, "Darkening the subject of Hopkins' Prosody," *VP* 43 (2005): 485-496. The idea that it is a fantasy to propound a stable theory for Hopkins's metrics is propounded by Meredith Martin, "Hopkins's Prosody," *VP* 49 (2011): 1-30.

⁶ All quotation from Hopkins's poetry is from the reading texts in *PW* with the exception of "The Windhover," which is quoted parenthetically in the text either by manuscript letter and line number or from the reading text (hereafter RT) and line number.

⁷ Seamus Heaney, "The Fire I'the Flint: Reflections on the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins," Chatterton Lecture, British Academy (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), p. 429.

⁸ *The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Christopher Devlin, SJ (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959), p. 154 (hereafter *SD*).

⁹ This possibility is held open by MacKenzie in his manuscript introduction to *PW*: "Some of the corrections that Bridges did not transfer in red into A may, of course, have been inserted by Hopkins after August 1884 when MS B became his own possession" (p. xxxviii).

¹⁰ MacKenzie does not explicitly address the issue of why Bridges never transferred 'AND' into MS A². For his commentary on "The Windhover," complete with sections on manuscript history and variants, dating queries, a selection of critical studies, and an individual word glossary see *PW*, pp. 376-384. It is not possible to recreate the entire genesis of the poem from earlier editions, e.g., *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. William H. Gardner and MacKenzie, 4th ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 266-268.

¹¹ The conjunction appeared in "The Windhover" in capitalized form in *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Robert Bridges (London: Humphrey Milford, 1918), p. 29.

¹² GMH to Robert Bridges, August 10, 1877, in *Collected Hopkins*, vol. 1, *Correspondence: 1852-1881*, ed. Thornton and Phillips (Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), p. 278.

¹³ See nn.2-3 above.

¹⁴ GMH to John Henry Newman, February 20, 1884, in *Correspondence: 1882-1889*, p. 660.

¹⁵ Hopkins's "bad depression" in Ireland was "exacerbated by frequent and heavy exam-marking" (Norman White, *Hopkins in Ireland* [Univ. College Dublin Press, 2002], p. xvii); see also White, *Hopkins: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 369-370.

¹⁶ Nearly a year after writing "Hurrahing in Harvest" in the Clwyd Valley on September 1, 1877, Hopkins told Bridges on July 16, 1878, that the poem was the "outcome of...half an hour of extreme enthusiasm" (*Correspondence: 1852-1881*, p. 308); on arriving in Ireland to take up his professorship, Hopkins confided to Newman on February 20, 1884, that he "felt and feel an unfitness which...led me at first to try to decline the offer made" (*Correspondence: 1882-1889*, p. 660).

¹⁷ This can be gauged most effectively by consulting the index page on Hopkins's health in *Correspondence: 1882-1889*, p. 1034; cf. GMH to Alexander William Mowbray Baillie, April 24-May 17, 1885: "The melancholy I have all my life been subject to has become of late years not indeed more intense in its fits but rather more distributed, constant, and crippling" (p. 731).

¹⁸ William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, 2nd ed. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1947), p. 192 and pp. 225-226.

¹⁹ Hopkins, "God's Grandeur" (Feb 23, 1877), l. 10; "Pied Beauty" (summer 1877), l. 1.

²⁰ Hopkins, "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" (c. Oct 1884-Nov 1886), l. 5.

²¹ The term was coined in Gardner, *Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89): A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition*, vol. 2 (London: Secker and Warburg, 1949), p. 330.

²² Hopkins received a copy of Jan Roothaan's edition of the *Exercitia Spiritualia* on November 25, 1869 (see *Collected Hopkins*, vol. 3, *Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, ed. Higgins [Oxford Univ. Press, 2015], p. 33 n.108). Roothaan's edition first appeared in 1837 but Devlin notes that Hopkins owned the 1865 edition, from which all Latin quotation is taken (*SD*, p. vii). All English quotation from the *Spiritual Exercises* is from the text given in *SD*.

²³ Hopkins, "To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life" (c. 1884-1885), l. 12.

²⁴ Empson, *Seven Types*, p. 226.

²⁵ "When Mr. James Smith objected to my dealing with 'conflicts supposed to have raged within the author' I think he was overplaying his hand very seriously; he was striking at the roots of criticism, not at me. If critics are not to put up some pretence of understanding the feelings of the author in hand they must condemn

themselves to contempt” (Empson, *Seven Types*, pp. xiii-xiv). Empson’s opinion of the “Wimsatt Law” was unchanged at the end of his life when he still considered it “a powerful means of destroying all literary appreciation” (*Using Biography* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984], p. 225 (cf. pp. vii-viii and p. 104)). For a view challenging Empson’s method of close analysis as unconcerned by “non-meaningful levels of language” (p. xiv) and that sees intentionalism as an unwarranted extraction and naturalisation of poetry consult Veronica Forrest-Thomson, *Poetic Artifice: A Theory of Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Manchester Univ. Press, 1978).

²⁶ For details see R.F. Clarke, SJ, “The Training of a Jesuit,” *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review* 40 (1896): 211-225; Alfred Thomas, SJ, *Hopkins the Jesuit: the Years of Training* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969). For clarification on the true nature of Jesuit obedience see *SD*, pp. 116-117.

²⁷ For the exact *mise-en-page* and other metrical marks see Figure 1.

²⁸ In this article, virgules mark line breaks and vertical bars mark metrical feet.

²⁹ Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Unmediated Vision: An Interpretation of Wordsworth, Hopkins, Rilke, and Valéry* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1954), p. 50.

³⁰ MacKenzie notes, without giving analytical details, that these changes “allow the kestrel to glide more smoothly up to the hover” (*LPM*, p. 124).

³¹ For the use of “rove-over” lines as an integral element of sprung rhythm consult Stephenson, *Sprung Rhythm*, 35-36.

³² Regarding the precedence of “Hung so” and “He hung so,” it is worth stating that the attributions ‘4a’ and ‘4b’ on the plate of MS A¹ are the wrong way round and that ‘4c’ is absent altogether (see fig. 1). This can be confirmed by scrutinizing the recorded variants in *PW*, p. 377; also *LPM*, p. 124.

³³ Hopkins, *Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, p. 589.

³⁴ Hopkins, “Epithalamion” (1888), ll. 4, 25-26. Cf. Thomas P. Harrison, “The Birds of Gerard Manley Hopkins,” *Studies in Philology* 54 (1957): 448-463 (esp. 459).

³⁵ Hopkins, “As kingfishers catch fire” (c. March-April 1877), ll. 3-4; “Hurrahing in Harvest” (Sept 1, 1877), l. 9.

³⁶ Reuven Tsur, *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive: The Poetic Mode of Speech Perception* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1992), p. 25 and p. vii.

³⁷ GMH to Everard Hopkins, November 5-8, 1885, in *Correspondence: 1882-1889*, p. 748.

³⁸ Stephenson, *Sprung Rhythm*, pp. 5-6 and pp. 35-36.

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- ³⁹ Geoffrey Hill, "Redeeming the Time," repr. in *Collected Critical Writings*, ed. Kenneth Haynes (Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), p. 88.
- ⁴⁰ Eric Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 340.
- ⁴¹ Hill, "Redeeming the Time," p. 108.
- ⁴² GMH to Robert Bridges, February 15, 1879, in *Correspondence: 1852-1881*, p. 334: "I have...of myself made verse so laborious."
- ⁴³ GMH to Everard Hopkins, November 5-8, 1885, in *Correspondence: 1882-1889*, p. 748.
- ⁴⁴ Hill, "Redeeming the Time," p. 108.
- ⁴⁵ Devlin notes that Hopkins stressed the opposition between desire and choice more strongly than either Duns Scotus or St Ignatius intended (*SD*, pp. 116-121).
- ⁴⁶ In a letter to Bridges on February 15, 1879, Hopkins referred to "inscape" as "design, pattern" (*Correspondence: 1852-1881*, p. 333). For an appraisal of the centrality of "inscape" and "instress" in Hopkins's thinking see J. Hillis Miller, "The Creation of the Self in Gerard Manley Hopkins," *ELH* 22 (1955): 293-319 (esp. 300-302 and 310).
- ⁴⁷ The latter quote is from Devlin's explication of "pitch" as "a pre-existing determination of man towards his eternal destiny by his creator, but in such a sort that the man is left free to determine himself."
- ⁴⁸ For a definition of these terms see *SD*, p. 294.
- ⁴⁹ *Collected Hopkins*, vol. 7, *The Dublin Notebook*, ed. Higgins and Suarez (Oxford Univ. Press, 2014), p. 76 (fol. 4^r / Leaf 5) and p. 74 (fol. 3^r / Leaf 4). The Dublin meditation points from February 1884 to March 1885 are also printed in *SD*, pp. 254-260; also Hopkins, *Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, pp. 616-630.
- ⁵⁰ Hopkins, *Correspondence: 1882-1889*, p. 662. Patmore acknowledged receipt of MS B on March 6 (see n.4 above).
- ⁵¹ Cf. *SD*, p. 233: "Therefore crown Christ king of our minds and hearts and wills and now in your bodies glorify God."
- ⁵² Gen. 3:19 (Vulg. and AV).
- ⁵³ Griffiths, "The poet's calling: Hopkins and the surrendered life," *The Times Literary Supplement*, April 12, 1991: 6.
- ⁵⁴ Hopkins, *Correspondence: 1882-1889*, p. 569. Cf. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John 11-27*, trans. John W. Rettig (Washington, DC: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1988), p. 123: "He did not empty

himself, losing what he was, but receiving what he was not”; also James Finn Cotter, “Hopkins and Augustine,” *VP* 39 (2001): 69-82 (esp. 70).

⁵⁵ Cf. *SD*, pp. 161-162.

⁵⁶ Hopkins, “S. Thomae Aquinatis Rhythmus ad SS. Sacramentum” (‘c’ text; first two lines c. 1882), ll. 1-2.

⁵⁷ Ps. 32:7, 119:11 (AV).

⁵⁸ E.g., “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” Matt. 16:25 (AV).

⁵⁹ Hopkins, *Diaries, Journals, and Notebooks*, p. 109.

⁶⁰ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, comps., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 5th ed. (Oxford, 1861), p. 778. See also Alan Ward’s valuable appendix on Hopkins’s philological notes in *Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Humphry House, rev. Graham Storey (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 502-504.

⁶¹ Although Hopkins could have discovered in Liddell and Scott’s *Lexicon* that “κορώνη” was onomatopoeically “akin to...our croak,” he would not have known that the Proto-Indo-European root for this word – “krop-” – imitative of the bird’s harsh voice, was a source of the Latin “crepare” (creak, clatter) from which “kestrel,” from Old French “crécerelle,” cognate with “crécelle” (rattle), was also ultimately derived (see W.B. Lockwood, *The Oxford Dictionary of British Bird Names* [Oxford Univ. Press, 1993], p. 90 and p. 125).

⁶² *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, vol. 2 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1955), p. 132. Cf. p. 97: “And the nature, and inconvenience of a Burden is, first to *Crooken*, and bend us downward from our naturall posture, which is erect, for this incurvation implies a declination in the inordinate love of the Creature, *Incurvat*.”

⁶³ *Luther’s Works*, gen. ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 25, *Lectures on Romans: Glosses and Scholia*, ed. Hilton C. Oswald (Saint Louis, MO.: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), p. 291; Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. James O’Donnell, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 3:84; *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), p. 126.

⁶⁴ Raymond V. Schoder, SJ, “What Does *The Windhover* Mean?” in *Immortal Diamond: Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Norman Weyand, SJ (London: Sheed and Ward, 1949), p. 285. Cf. *PW*, p. 380.

⁶⁵ *Exercitia Spiritualia S.P. Ignatii de Loyola cum versione litterali ex autographo Hispanico, notis illustrata, addita appendice; De ratione meditandi*, ed. Joannis Roothaan (Paris, 1865), pp. 71-72. For the translation see excerpted text in *SD*, p. 160.

⁶⁶ Empson, *Seven Types*, p. 226.

⁶⁷ F.N. Lees, "The Windhover," *Scrutiny* 17 (1950): 35.

⁶⁸ Hartman, *Unmediated Vision*, p. 61.

⁶⁹ Gardner, *Hopkins: Poetic Idiosyncrasy*, pp. 99-100.

⁷⁰ Stephenson, *Sprung Rhythm*, p. 71.

⁷¹ Hill, "What you look hard at seems to look hard at you," Oxford Professor of Poetry lecture, May 6, 2014, podcast audio, 51:44-51:51, <https://www.english.ox.ac.uk/professor-sir-geoffrey-hill-lectures> (last accessed July 9, 2018).

⁷² Hopkins, *Correspondence: 1852-1881*, p. 333.

⁷³ Hopkins, *Dublin Notebook*, p. 80 (fol. 6^r / Leaf 9), c. June-August 1884.