Chapter - II

Flexibility of Poetic Language.

Hopkins was born into a family of artists. His father, Manley Hopkins, although not a poet by profession, took interest in poetry and published a volume of poetry. He 'had a passion for word-play and puns'. His mother, the daughter of a successful doctor was a fellow student of Keats. 'There were painters and musicians on both sides of the family'. Two of his brothers became professional artists. Several uncles and aunts of Hopkins took active interest in music and painting. One of his maternal uncle was a well-known landscape painter. Hopkins grew up with art and literature.

Hopkins wrote his first poems while at Highgate. These poems are traditional in nature and show the influence of Romantic and pre-Raphaelite poets. As W.H. Gardner very aptly says - "The poet had something to say, though its purport was sometimes slight .... In each poem or fragment the manner was, in the main, an involuntary adaptation of contemporary forms, or else an approximation to poetic modes which, upto that time, had impressed Hopkins most deeply".

If one examines some of Hopkins's early poems, one
will see how conventional they are thematically and artistically. The earliest known poem of Hopkins is *The Escorial* (1860). In this school prize-poem Hopkins in fourteen Spenserian stanzas describes the building of the Escorial by Philip II, its plan, style, decoration and finally its spoilation and decay. In this poem the influence of Keats and the Pre-Raphaelites is immediately traceable. The lines -

No finished proof was this of Gothic grace
With flowering tracery engemming rays
Of colour in high casements face to face;
And foliag'd crownals (pointing how the ways
Of art best follow nature) in a maze
Of finished diapers, that fills the eye
And scarcely traces where one beauty strays
And melts amidst another, ciel'd on high
With blazoned groins, and crowned with hues of majesty.

This was no classic temple order'd round
With massy pillars of the Doric mood
Broad-fluted, nor with shafts acanthus-crown'd,
Pourtray'd along the frieze with Titan's brood
That battled Gods - for heaven; brilliant-hued,
With Golden fillets and rich blazonry,
Wherein beneath the cornice, horseman rode
With form divine, a fiery chivalry
Triumph of airy grace and perfect harmony.

(stanzas 6-7)

are reminiscent of Keats and the Pre-Raphaelites in their sensuousness, use of colour and decorativeness. Hopkins's use of compound words like 'acanthus-cron'd', 'broad-fluted', 'brilliant-hued', are also in the manner of Keats. Hopkins's second poem is a Vision of the Mermaids (1962). Although showing a great advance upon the first, this poem is Keatsian in inspiration through and through. A few lines from the text will illustrate the point:

Plum purple was the West; but spikes of light
Spear'd open lustrous gashes, crimson-white;
(Where the eye fix'd, fled the encrimsoning spot,
And gathering, floated where the gaze was not;)  
And thro' their parting lids there came and went
Keen glimpses of the inner firmament:
Fair beds they seem'd of water-lily flakes
Clustering entrancingly in beryl lakes:
Anon, across their swimming splendour strook,
An intense line of throbbing blood-light shook
A quivering pennon; then, for eye too keen,
Ebb'd back beneath its snowy lids, unseen.

(Lines 7-18)
"The manner of Keats is imitated to excess in the copious images drawn from the precious and semi-precious stones: in a poem of one hundred and forty three lines, we find pearl, ruby, sapphire, garnet, beryl, turquoise, onyx, jacinth, coral and lapis lazuli; and there is a similar profusion of Keatsian classical allusions". In his use of colour Hopkins is a true follower of the Pre-Raphaelites, 'purple', 'crimson', 'scarlet', 'carmine', 'pansy-dark', 'violet', 'blood-vivid', 'cromson-golden' - these colours pass before our eyes in a quick succession. But barring sporadic use of alliterations ('bubbles bugle-eyed, struggle and stick', 'their lush long tresses weep', 'dainty-delicate fretted fring of fingers') the texture of the poem is in the conventional pictorial romantic tradition. The diction, the images, the syntax - in every respect Hopkins here is in line with Keats, the Pre-Raphaelites and occasionally with Shelley. Two other poems which belong to Hopkins' school days are Spring and Death and Winter with the Gulf Stream. W.H. Gardner has traced the echoes of Keats, Coleridge, Blake, and Shelley in the former and although the latter is held by the same critic to have shown marked individuality, it shows touches of Wordsworth, Shelley, Tennyson and Coleridge. Thus Hopkins's early poetry is traditional in theme, diction, imagery, syntax and rhyme and there is very little in them to suggest their later maturity and individuality.
It would not be wrong to suppose that their logical development would be in the best tradition of the English Romantic School with special affinity with Keats, Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites. It was in 1864 that Hopkins for the first time began to 'doubt Tennyson'. But the influence of Keats distilled through Tennyson, D.G. Rossetti and R.W. Dixon, is apparent in still later poems of Hopkins. And even when Hopkins was able to overcome the influence of Keats, Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites, he came under the influence of Christina Rossetti and George Herbert. It is of course, true that Hopkins has left no completed poem showing the influence of Christina Rossetti, but only seven fragments of the projected poem A Voice from the World. But as W.H. Gardner says, "There can be no doubt that the poetry of Christina Rossetti exerted a strong influence on the Hopkins of these early poems".

New Readings and the poem beginning with 'He has abolished the old drouth ....' are the most Herbertian of Hopkins's early poems. The former is a plea for asceticism and the other is 'joyous confession of faith'. Other early poems of Hopkins are also conventional although showing "far more intrinsic merit". Among them are nine sonnets written in Italian rhyme-scheme. They are more personal in nature. But in the two sonnets written in praise of Oxford ('New-Dated from the terms that reappear' and 'thus, I come
underneath this chapel side') and in sonnet No. 13 beginning 'There art thou friend, whom I shall never see' there is nothing to suggest the later developments of Hopkins. The diction, imagery and syntax are all traditional. Among the early poems of Hopkins only the _The Half-Way House_ is obscure and _The Habit of Perfection_ shows marked individuality. In _Lines for a Picture of St. Dorothea_ Hopkins made his first experiment in stress meter. Among his early poems these last three poems stand out but generally speaking the large body of his early poems are conventional exercises in traditional form. They "contain much Pranassion, initiative, second-rate poetry". Here and there they contain lines of exceeding beauty but "yet in spite of sporadic indications, we cannot trace, in these early poems, any continuous and steady development towards later style. The final change, when it came with _The Wreck of the Deutschland_, was sudden and unexpected".  

Hopkins himself was aware of the deep chasm that existed between his early and mature verse. The early verses and fragments were hidden away in two Oxford notebooks and elsewhere. Hopkins did not show any enthusiasm about them. Rather he remained silent about them. When someone expressed his desire to copy the verses preserved in the MS "A", Hopkins wrote to Bridges, "Your freind may
do as she likes, but I disavow those things. I believe I should not disavow but retouch 'Elected silence' and St. Dorothy". 6

We have dwelt on the early poems of Hopkins at some length to show how conventional they are. If Hopkins was content to write along the same line, perhaps Bridges would not have the opportunity of deploring 'the lack of continuous decorum' that he noticed in Hopkins's later poetry. In that case Hopkins would develop into just another typical Victorian poet. But we would have missed the unique beauty that Hopkins's mature poetry is.

As it is, readers of Hopkins's poetry have observed the deep chasm between his early and mature poetry and commentators have put forward various theories to explain the strange use of his language. Mature Hopkins has rare beauty, but he baffles the reading mind by violating every grammatical norm. As we have seen, critics have thought that conflict between Hopkins's two vocations have resulted in the 'tension' and obscurity of his poetry. Others have thought that Hopkins deliberately violated the rules of grammar to get as much meaning as was possible out of English words. It will be our effort in this and subsequent chapters to show that Hopkins's apparently individualistic
use of language was entirely conscious and in conformity with his theory of poetry. And his theory of poetry was inextricably bound up with his theory of language. Unless we grasp these two things, and until we have a clear understanding of Hopkins's 'poetics' and his theory of language of poetry, we shall be approaching Hopkins from the wrong end and much beauty of his poetry would elude us.

But before we enter into the deeper aspects of Hopkins's theory of poetry, it should be kept in mind, that Hopkins also thought deeply on the nature of Language and its relation with poetry. Of course, Hopkins has not said very much explicitly about the nature of Language. He has thrown out hints here and there in his Journal and Papers and above all it will be found in his numerous letters written to Robert Bridges.

Hopkins's early poetry was conventional so far as the use of language was concerned. But all the while he was groping for the right way. There is evidence of this in his early diary and Journal and papers. As Hopkins went on in years, his search intensified and he came nearer and nearer to his goal. The seven years during which Hopkins had not written any poetry did not go waste. All this while he had thought about the nature of Language and its relation with
poetry. Then had come the opportunity to put his theory into practice. It came with the drowning of the 'Deutschland'. Hopkins at once realised on paper what he had been thinking about all these years.

Hopkins's mature poetry is written in accordance with a theory of poetry and language and the crux of it is that 'meaning' is not essential to poetry. The failure to grasp this fact has led critics to approach his poetry from the wrong end. Almost all the critics of Hopkins, Bridges downwards have failed to understand this aspect of Hopkins's poetry. They have looked upon the language as a medium of thought or idea. So, if the language was difficult or if it departed from the established conventions, the poet was either trying to express a difficult thought, or straining the language too much for it. They have thought that to be good poetry must have a hard core of meaning. It must communicate. But Hopkins conceived of poetry from a different angle. He did not believe that meaning was all that important in poetry. In fact, in more places than one he clearly stated that poetry need not be unmistakably clear. The so-called defenders and apologists of Hopkins thought that Hopkins took liberty with English language because he wanted to get the utmost meaning out of language while the fact was that Hopkins was very little interested in language as vehicle of meaning. Indeed
when we read Hopkins's letters to Bridges, the first thing that strikes us is that here was a poet who conceived of poetry not as an embodiment of meaning. At least meaning, clear and unmistakable, was not the poet's first concern.

When Hopkins sent Bridges the copy of The Wreck of Deutschland, Bridges did the obvious thing. He tried to tackle it from the angle of communication. The failure to grasp the meaning led Bridges to complain about its obscurity. What Bridges actually wrote, we do not know since Bridges had destroyed his side of correspondence. But we know what Hopkins replied. Hopkins said:

"You say you would not for any money read my poem again. Nevertheless I beg you will. Besides, money, you know, there is love. If it is obscure do not bother yourself with the meaning but pay attention to the best and most intelligible stanzas, as the two last of each part and the narrative of the work. If you had done this you would have liked it better and sent me some serviceable criticism, but now your criticism is of no use, being only a protest memorialising me against my whole policy and proceedings."

Again a few months later Hopkins wrote to Bridges:
"Granted it (The Wreck of Deutschland) need study and is obscure, for indeed I was not over-desirous that the meaning of all should be clear, at least unmistakable. you might, without the effort that to make it all out would seem to have required, have nevertheless read it so that the lines and stanzas should be left in the memory and superficial impressions deeped, have liked some without exhausting all. I am sure I have read and enjoyed pages of poetry that way. Why sometimes one enjoys and admires the every lines one cannot understand, as for instance, "If it were done when 'tis done" sqq. which is all obscure and disputed, though how fine it is everybody sees and nobody disputes."^8

A few days later Hopkins wrote to Bridges:

"Obscurity I do and will try to avoid so far as is consistent with excellences higher than clearness at first reading. This question of obscurity we will sometime speak of but not now. As for affectation I do not believe I am guilty of it. You should point out instances, but as mere novelty and boldness strikes you as affectation your criticism strikes me as — as water of the lower Isis."^9
Hopkins knew what he was doing. He also knew that poetry had an excellence 'higher' than the excellence of meaning. So he concentrated on what was 'higher excellence' and was not particularly scrupulous about the niceties of meaning. What that higher excellences are we shall discuss in a later chapter. But here what is important to note is that meaning is not all that important in poetry. At least precision of meaning is not essential to poetry.

In an essay entitled Poetry and Verse Hopkins made this point more clear.

"Poetry is speech (framed for contemplation of the mind by way of hearing or speech framed to be heard for its own sake and interest even over and above its interest in meaning." 10

So poetry, according to Hopkins, has a beauty higher than the beauty of meaning.

Hopkins makes this point again in his essay Rhythm And the Other Structural Parts of Rhetoric - Verse:

"Definition of verse - Verse is speech having a marked figure, order of sounds independent of meaning and such as can be shifted from one word or words to others without changing it." 11
When we go deeper into Hopkins's 'poetics' we shall discover the subtler points of his theory of poetry. But here it will suffice to note that poetry is something which can be 'independent of meaning'.

From these remarks of Hopkins, it is clear that he was not much interested in poetry as an embodiment of meaning. Or we may say he did not think that communication of thoughts and ideas was the sole purpose of poetry. Rather he thought that in poetry meaning could always take second place. Hopkins was so very convinced of this conception of poetry that he never changed his opinion about it. Charge of obscurity was brought against him repeatedly by Bridges. But Hopkins knew that Bridges was approaching his poetry from the wrong angle. He tried to convert Bridges to his theory. But Hopkins's theory of the language of poetry was completely unintelligible to Bridges. Bridges hoped Hopkins would make his poetry more comprehensible. But that did not happen. Hopkins never altered a single word in his poem. Bridges was Hopkins's sole reader. Bridges's hostile criticism led Hopkins to append prose synopsis to his poems. Hopkins would rather do this than change a single line of his poetry. From this stubbornness and obduracy, we can easily understand with what sincerity he clung to his theory. At last the insensitivity of Bridges led him to cry out in despair:
"I laughed outright and often, but very sardonically, to think you and the Sanon could not construe my last sonnet; that he had to write to you for a crib. It is plain I must go no further on this road; if you and he cannot understand me who will."  

It is clear from the above remarks that Hopkins did not consider intelligibility as a sine qua non in poetry. They also show how inadequately critics have grasped the true beauty of Hopkins's poetry by insisting that Hopkins violently wrenched the language in order to extract maximum meaning out of it. Hopkins did not only bother his head about intelligibility of his poetry, he firmly believed that easy intelligibility was not always possible. There is at least one evidence in his letters that he thought so. In a letter written to Bridges Hopkins once remarked:

"Plainly if it is possible to express a subtle and recondite thought in a subtle and recondite way and with great felicity and perfect, in the end, something must be sacrificed, with so trying a task, in the process, and this may be the being at once, nay perhaps even the being without explanation at all, intelligible."  

This line has been generally overlooked by critics.
Yet the elucidation of this line is vital to the true enjoyment of Hopkins's poetry. Among the critics of Hopkins, James Milroy in his *The Language of Gerard Manley Hopkins* has paid cursory attention to this line. He glosses this line as "If the thought is difficult, then the language in which it is expressed will also be difficult, and perhaps unintelligible." But since Milroy looks upon Hopkins's poetry as "current language heightened", he has not paid any more attention to this line. But this line together with Hopkins's insistence on having his poems read with the ears holds the key to the true appreciation of Hopkins' poetry.

As James Milroy has remarked, Hopkins was in essence saying that if the thought was difficult, the language in which that thought was expressed was bound to be difficult, even unintelligible. In other words, Hopkins was suggesting that a too subtle and recondite thought could not be adequately conveyed through the language. Paradoxical as it may sound, Hopkins was suggesting that language was not always the best means of communicating one's thoughts and ideas.

We have noticed how keenly interested Hopkins was in various aspects of language. His early diary is full of jottings where he collected words from dialects and tried to connect them on the basis of their sound. His wrestling
with language in the Journals, his various coinages clearly show that he felt that language was far too inadequate for complete communication. At last he had arrived at the conclusion that it was in the very nature of language to retard communication. There is some hint of this thinking in an incomplete note Hopkins jotted down in his note book in 1868. Incomplete as it is, the note is sketchy and does not give us a clear idea of Hopkins’s thinking. But it does show that Hopkins was groping for a solution to the problem of the relationship between words and their meanings. We quote at some length from this note:

"All words mean either things or relations of things. You may also say them substances or attributes or again wholes or parts, eg. man and quarter. To every word meaning a thing and not a relation belongs a passion or pre-possession or enthusiasm which it has the power of suggesting or producing but not always or in everyone. This is not always refers to its evolution in the man and secondly in man historically. The latter element may be called for convenience the pre-possession of a word. It is in fact the form, but there are reasons for being cautious in using form here, and it bears a valuable analogy to the soul, one however which not complete, because all names but proper names are general while the soul is individual."
"Since every definition is the definition of a word and every word may be considered as the contraction or coinciding point of its definitions we may for convenience use word and definition with a certain freedom of interchange."

"A word therefore has three terms belonging to it: its pre-possession of feeling; its definition, abstraction, vocal expression or other utterance; and its application, 'extension', the concrete things coming under it."

"It is plain that of these only one in propriety is the word; the third is not a word but a thing meant by it; the first is not a word but something connotatively meant by it, the nature of which is further to be explored."

"But not even the whole field of middle term is covered by the word. For the word is the expression, uttering of the idea in the mind. That idea itself has its two terms, the image (of sight or sound or scopes of the other senses), which is in fact physical and a refined energy accenting the nerves, word to oneself, an inchoate word, and secondly the conception."}

Quoting this extract from Hopkins's note-book W.A.M. Peters concludes:
"..... to Hopkins a word was very much more than a sign for a thing. To this poet a word was as much an individual as any other thing."16

This extract clearly shows that Hopkins knew that words have a life of their own and they do not always follow the rules of grammar and syntax. They obey only their own laws. In other words the extract shows that Hopkins looked upon Language as a living organism with an organism's life, mutation and decay. This changefulness of language is a modern notion. Thus Bloomfield in his Language asserted that - 'linguistic change is far more rapid than biological changes, but probably slower than the changes in other human instances." But the writer who has thought most seriously about this aspect of language is George Steiner. In his book After Babel he has made an in-depth study of the dynamism and seminal fluidity of language and come to the conclusion : "Language - and this is one of the crucial propositions in certain school of modern semantics - is the most salient model of Heraclitean flux. It alters at every moment in perceived time."17

George Steiner has shown how language mutates both on the temporal and spatial levels. Thus in reading any book written in the past, a book written by Shakespeare or Jane Austin or D.G. Rossetti, for example one needs a lot of pre-information. Not only have grammar and syntax of those periods
undergone subtle changes. Seminal words conveying key-concepts have changed their meanings in course of time. We cannot appreciate and enjoy these books without making suitable adjustments to these texts. Hence the necessity of various dictionaries, lexicons and glossaries. Steiner rightly concludes - "One thing is clear: Every language - act has a temporal determinant. No semantic form is timeless." So "when we read or hear any language-statement from the past, be it Leviticus or last year's best-seller, we translate." This is not transition from one language to another, but from one language to itself.

In the same way 'transfer of meaning in space' is going on continuously. "There is a centrifugal impulse in language" and there will be regional, dialectal and communal variation within the same language. In the same way, social status, ideology, profession, age and sex have given rise to their own vocabularies. But "more important and diffuse are the uses of inflection, grammatical structure, and word choice by different social classes and ethnic groups to affirm their respective identities and to affront one another."2

In the same way language alters from generation to generation. Each generation uses its own vocabulary and its own language. Adults, for example do not speak the language of the children. Children, in their turn, have a language
very much their own. When adults speak to the children they try to come down to their level and children do not speak to the adult in the same way they do among themselves. Thus "At any given time in a community and in the history of the language, speech modulates across generations."\textsuperscript{21}

In the same way "There is a language world of women as there is of children."\textsuperscript{22} The difference between the speech of men and women is the result of 'inter-action of language and eros'. "Ethno-linguists report a number of languages in which men and women use different grammatical forms and partially distinct vocabularies .... The far more important, indeed universal phenomenon, is the differential used by men and women of identical words and grammatical constructs".\textsuperscript{23} Thus "Any model of communication is at the same time a model of translation, of a vertical or horizontal transfer of significance. No two historical epochs, no two social classes, no two localities use words and syntax to signify exactly the same things, to send identical signals of valuation and inference. Neither do human beings. Each living person draws, deliberately or in immediately habit, on two sources of linguistic supply: the current vulgate corresponding to his level of literary, and a private thesaurus. The latter is inextricably a part of subconscious, of his memories so far as they may be verbalized, and of the singular, irremediably specific ensemble of his
somatic and psychological identity. Part of the answer to the notorious logical conundrum as to whether or not there can be "private language" is that aspect of every language - act are unique and individual. They form what linguists call an 'idiolect'. Each communicatory gesture has a private residue."

Steiner is of the view that Language conceals and internalizes more perhaps than it conveys outward and concludes: "In short inside or between languages, human communication equals translation".

Hopkins did not, of course, say it in so many words. He might not have arrived at this precise conclusion about the nature and essence of language. Busy as he was with different branches of knowledge, he might not have the time to go so deep into the problem. Moreover, without the development of linguistics, anthropology as psychology it was not possible for Hopkins to arrive at the definite and precise conclusion about the essence of the language, as is possible for George Steiner. But Hopkins's insistence that he was not over-desirous that the meaning of his poems should be crystal clear, his desire to have his poems read by the ear, 'the subtle and recondite line'; his jottings of 1868, and the 'obscurity' and unintelligibility' of his poetry, point to the fact that Hopkins anticipated Steiner.
Hopkins's original use of language in his mature verse is indeed a recognition of this dynamism and semantic fluidity of language. Language of course, changes at the hand of poet when they take routine licences in respect of the rules of grammar and syntax. But Hopkins's experiments in the language of poetry is a marvel even today. Apparently he does every kind of violence to language. His vocabulary is richly varied and colourful. Besides words of Anglo-Saxon origin, he uses words belonging to Romance languages (dauphin, chevalier, minion) and numerous dialect words (bole, co-ged, fashed, fettle, deged). He occasionally uses archaic words like 'hallows' and 'housel', 'throp'. He often uses a noun as a verb and verb as a noun: e.g. 'let him 
ки сaster in us', 'should tongue that time', 'with dare and with downdolphinry', 'the achieve of, the mastery of the thing', 'leaves me a lonely began'. The last two example have become the classics in books of linguistics. His rich and colourful coinages are the glory of English poetry: 'louched', 'slogerring', 'twindle', 'flitch', unselfe', 'jackself'. Compounds can be called another type of coinage. Here also Hopkins is unrivalled among English poets: 'quickgold', 'manmarks', 'moon-marks', 'bloom-fall', 'lovescape', 'fallow-boot-fellow', 'forepangs', 'doomfire', 'betweenpie', 'treadmire', 'wanwood, leafmeal', 'May-mess' etc. But not content with this Hopkins went on to invent 'Miracle-in-Mary-of-flame',
Hopkins syntax is a nightmare of the critics. The repeated use of possessive case in the Wreck of Deutschland:

'Our heart's charity's hearth's fire, our though's chivalry's through's Lord.' (The Wreck of the Deutschland), his use of inversion:

And frightful a nightfall folded rueful a day

(Deutschland)

No not uncomforted: lovely-felicitous Providence

Finger of a tender of, 0 of a feathery delicacy, the breast of the

Maiden could obey so, be a bell to, ring of it, and

Startle the poor sheep back!

(Deutschland)

his breaking of the elements in a compound-word and keeping them far apart -

Brim, in a flash full!

(Deutschland)

his utterly compressed syntax

.... Commonweal

Little I reck ho! lack-level in, if all had bread:

(No. 70)
the utterly convoluted syntax

...... Low be, lustily he his low lot (feel
That ne'er need hunger, Tom; Tom seldom sick,
Seldomer heartsore; that treads through, prickproof, thick
Thousands of thorn, thoughts) swings, though ......

(Tom's Garland)

are a testimony to the kaelidscopic change language can take
at the lexical, morphological, syntactic and above all at the
semantic levels.

Indeed Hopkins's mature verse can be described as the
best example of language as the 'Heractitean flux'. No wonder
that Hopkins's various experiments in the language of poetry
have led to semantic confusion among the critics. Bridges was
not the only critic of Hopkins to complain of the semantic
opacity of Hopkins's poetry. There are poems like Tom's Garland
and Harry Ploughman where meaning is difficult to disentangle.
But leaving these two extreme examples aside, almost every poem
of Hopkins frustrate at some point or other the reader's mighti-
est effort to disentangle their meaning. A case in example is
"The Windhover" which is considered by critics to be the often-
est explicated poem in English language. Here the word 'pluckle'
has given rise to endless controversies among the critics. The
last three lines of the poem
No wonder of it: sheer plod makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gash themselves, and gash gold-vermillion

are also a source of perennial confusion among the critics.

What does Hopkins mean when he says 'World's strand, sway of the seas' (The Wreck of Deutschland); 'a May-mess' (The Starlight Night), '... to-fro tender tranbeams truckles at the eye' (The Candle Indoors), 'Her fond yellow hornlight wound to the West, 'her wild/hollow hoarlight hung to the height' (Spelt from Sibyl's leaves). In the same way, we wonder what the word 'slogaering' (Deutschland) means. What are we to make of 'fallowboot-fellow' (Tom's Garland), 'roughcast', 'shadow-tackle' (No. 72), 'A man strength' (Harry Ploughman), 'Disremem-bering' (Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves), 'Throughther' (Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves), 'mansex' (The Buglar's First Communion), 'very-violet-sweet' (Hurrahing in Harvest). Such examples could be multiplied ad infinitum. Critics and commentators have, of course, stretched their imagination to find answer to everyone of these linguistic conundrums. John Wain has beautifully discussed the confusion of the critics trying to peel off meanings of Hopkins's poem. He was analysing the poem 'Andromeda'. Thus Dr. Gardner glossed: "Line Time's Andromeda (Symbol), the Church". "To Allen Henser also" 'Time's Andromeda' was the Roman Church militant in England ('on this rude rock') persecuted in the past, now threatened from the West with industrial
"mob-rule ('A wilder beast')." Wain himself looks upon the poem as a "music, painting or sculpture." Almost every single poem of Hopkins lays itself open to multiple interpretations at the hands of critics. Yet the poems do not embody any abstruse philosophy or contain any difficult allusion. The semantic confusion is purely 'textural' in sense that it obtains purely at the level of words and their arrangement i.e. at the level of grammar and syntax.

But looked at from another angle, the language of Hopkins's mature verse illustrates how language changes at different levels. And these, constant changes within the language render the reader's attempt to grasp at their meaning futile. If 'sense' was all that Hopkins aimed at, he would have been content to use language like other nineteenth century poets, following the rules of grammar and syntax. But since 'sense' or 'meaning' of the words was not Hopkins's primary concern, he was not 'over-scrupulous' always to follow the rules of grammar and usage. Hopkins was primarily interested in Language as a phenomenon. Hopkins believed that over and above the interest of 'meaning' Language has a beauty and fascination of its own which manifest themselves as the Language changes in its zigzag course. In writing poetry, Hopkins's primary interest was to catch this beauty of Languages which was far above the beauty of meaning. Indeed
Hopkins's mature verse is constructed to show this dazzle, this witchery of language whose beauty was far greater than the beauty of meaning. Thus language is used in Hopkins's poetry not so much to convey any idea, as to show that it is a thing in itself. In other words, in writing poetry, beauty and subtlety of idea is not the poet's chief concern, his chief concern is language itself.

In recent times James Milray's researches has shown how Hopkins was deeply influenced by nineteenth century philologers. Nineteenth, particularly, the middle part of it, is characterised by intense philological activities. This is the period enriched by the works of Otto Jespersen, Jacob Grimm, William Chenevix Trench and above all Max Muller. They were tireless in emphasising that beside the standard form of language there were other forms of languages which are called dialects. Milroy's contention is that Hopkins was part of these philological activities and his poetry is constructed to show that "weeds and wilderness" of language as Milroy calls dialect words, have a beauty of their own and can be used profitably in poetry. But Hopkins's interest in philology can be described as his interest in the changefulness and beauty of language for what is a dialect but language changed spatially? Milroy has, in particular, stressed the influence of Max Muller on Hopkins. Hopkins might have got some of
his notions of language - language as a constantly changing phenomenon, for example, - from Muller. In this respect Milray is worth quoting:

"Muller's chief argument is that linguistics is what he calls a physical science, by which is meant that it has more in common with the study of geology or biology than it has with the humanities, such as the history of art, morals or religion. He insists on speaking of 'the growth of language in contradiction of the history of language'. It is not in the power of man, he argues, to produce or prevent change in language; in an important sense, it is independent of man." 

In this respect Milray quotes an extract from Max Muller's lecture, which is worth quoting. Muller has said:

"We are bewildered by the variety of plants, of birds, and fishes, and insects, scatted with lavish prodigality over land and sea; but what is the living wealth of that Fauna as compared with the winged words which fill the air with unceasing music."

The similarity of conceptions between Hopkins and Muller is striking. Like Muller Hopkins was also strongly convinced that language has a life of its own which is not always bound by norms of grammar and usages. Thus language
itself can become a fascinating thing for the poet. Not
their meanings, but the words themselves can be of sufficient
interest to a poet. This is what Hopkins believed and he
constructed his poems to show the beauty of words independent
of their beauty of meaning.

When Ezra Pound describes poetry as "more highly
energised" or when he implicitly compares the language of
poetry to 'electricity' 'radioactivity' or 'water' he has
obviously this changefulness of language in mind. He is worth
quoting in full :

"We might come to believe that the thing that matters in
art is a sort of energy, something more or less like
electricity or radioactivity of force transfusing,
welding and unifying. A force rather like water when
it spurts up through very bright sand and sets it in
swift motion. You may make that image you like."

"I do not know that there is much use in composing an
answer to the often asked question : What is the difference
between poetry and prose?"

"I believe that poetry is more highly energised. But
these things are relative. Just as we say that a certain
temperature is hot and another cold. In the same way we
say that a certain prose passage is 'poetry' meaning to
Praise it and that a certain passage of verse is 'only prose' meaning dispraise. And at the same time 'Poetry!!! is used as a synonym for 'Bosh! Rot!! Rubbish!!! The thing that counts is 'Good writing'.

"And good writing is perfect control. And it is quite easy to control a thing that has in it no energy - provided that it be not too heavy and that you do not wish to make it more."27

Pound's position is very close to Hopkins's attitude to the language of poetry.