This study deals primarily with the ideas that helped form the intellectual context in which Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote and the context in which, a generation later, his poetry was read. One aim of this investigation is to establish that those two contexts are not interchangeable, for to assume that the basic ideas of the critics are the same as Hopkins' ideas leads to a serious misunderstanding of the poems themselves. This is not proposed as a final analysis of Hopkins' art, but as a first step toward a new critical approach to his poetry.

The classical scholar will perhaps forgive me for presuming to discuss classical poetry in the course of this study if he keeps in mind that in doing so I do not necessarily aim to reconstruct the way a Roman or a Greek scholar would have understood his own literature, but how a Victorian scholar—perhaps at times mistakenly—would tend to understand the style in relation to movements current in English literature. Translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own and are intended only as an explanation of my reading of the original text.

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T. K. B.

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