Gerard Manley Hopkins

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The Non-logical Structure of “The Wreck of the Deutschland”: Hopkins and Pindar

“The Wreck of the Deutschland” is Hopkins’ first mature verse, his longest poem, and by far his most puzzling work. He seems to have constructed the poem carefully, but the reason for his structure, his principle of organization, is not apparent. How did he put the poem together? What was he trying to do? He considered the poem an ode and an examination of his understanding of the Greek odes may therefore illuminate his method of composition and, at the same time, show whether or not the study of Greek lyrics could encourage the use of non-logical structure in the way Ford Madox Ford and Herbert Read demanded as a technique of modern art.

Hopkins believed that his most important literary work was to be a commentary on Greek lyric art, in comparison with which he thought his English verse unimportant. If indeed this work was ever completed, it is now lost; but the general drift of it can be reconstructed from his extant papers. It was to be in two volumes: one treating Dorian metrics, the other dealing with the technique of composition of the Greek choral and lyric odes. Subsequent scholarship tends to show that his volume on metrics was based on a misconception about
Greek verse; but his volume on structural principles has since been at least partially verified and, in fact, shown to be a brilliant insight into the method of composition of certain Greek lyrics. It is unfortunate therefore that what little attention has been given to his analysis of Greek lyric art has been concentrated on the metrical side of his study. An examination of Hopkins' theory of the structural principle of lyric and choral odes shows: (1) that he accurately foresees Gilbert Norwood's hypothesis about Pindar's method of composition, (2) that Norwood's hypothesis, in turn, explains the structure of "The Wreck of the Deutschland," and (3) that Hopkins' theory about the organization of Greek lyrics is consistent with Ford's theory of the unearned increment or Read's theory of the collage effect in modern art.

Since Hopkins considered his book on Greek lyric art to be his most important work, its loss is a great misfortune. In a letter to Dixon on January 27, 1887, he speaks of it as partially completed:

I have done some part of a book on Pindar's metres and Greek metres in general and metre in general and almost on art in general and wider still, but that I shall ever get far on with it or, if I do, sail through all the rocks and shoals that lie before me I scarcely dare to hope and yet I do greatly desire, since the thoughts are well worth preserving: they are a solid foundation for criticism. What becomes of my verses I care little, but about things like this, what I write or could write on philosophical matters, I do.\(^1\)

Four years earlier he had written to Baillie that he was about to undertake a major work on the Greek lyric art which was to be divided into two parts, one on meter and the other on style. In a letter to Bridges of October 21, 1886, he outlines the "great discovery" which presumably was to provide the basis for his metrical study. He says, "The Dorian rhythm,

\(^1\) Correspondence, p. 150.
the most used of the lyric rhythms, arises from the Dorian measure or bar. The Dorian bar is originally a march step in three-time executed in four steps to the bar. Out of this simple combination of numbers, three and four, simple to state but a good deal more complicated than any rhythm we have, arose the structure of most of Pindar's odes and most of the choral odes in drama.\(^2\) It seems that Hopkins believed that the Greek verse, which he called logaoedic, was composed of dactylic and trochaic feet mixed indiscriminately, but that the feet were equivalent because they were isochronous. Modern classical scholarship, although not absolutely conclusive, tends to show that his theory, insofar as it describes Greek practice, is not accurate.\(^8\) But even if Hopkins' theory of Dorian meter is inaccurate as a description of the Greek, his misconception may have influenced his English meter (or vice versa) and therefore his study would have been of great interest to the student of his poetry if the manuscript had not been lost. John Louis Bonn, S. J., whose essay, "Greco-Roman Verse Theory and Gerard Manley Hopkins," is the best study of the accuracy of Hopkins' classical metrics, says,

In the history of the development of metrical art forms there are three things that are incontrovertible—first, that there may be a good deal of difference between the theory and the practice of a poet; second, that theories invented posteriorly to the writing of the poems by an experimentalist may have little in common with the way in which, as a creative artist, he actually conceived his rhythmic pattern; and third, that a false theory may lead to excellent metrical and architectonic effects. To these general facts the work of Gerard Manley Hopkins was no exception.\(^4\)

It would appear therefore that the part of Hopkins' proposed book dealing with the Dorian measure is, in fact, a misconcep-

\(^2\) Letters, p. 233.
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 73.
tion which would be interesting to the modern reader because it might illuminate Hopkins’ practice, but not because it explains the Greeks’ practice.

The other part of the proposed book, which was to deal with style, has been almost totally neglected by critics and it, unlike the section on meter, has been supported by subsequent scholarship. In the letter to Baillie of January 14, 1883, he explains that his book on style will be about a new structural principle which he has discovered at work in many Greek lyrics:

My thought is that in any lyric passage of the tragic poets (perhaps not so much in Euripides as in the others) there are—usually; I will not say always, it is not likely—two strains of thought running together and like counterpointed; the overthought that which everybody, editors, see (when one does see anything—which in the great corruption of the text and original obscurity of the diction is not everywhere) and which might for instance be abridged or paraphrased in square marginal blocks as in some books carefully written; the other, the underthought, conveyed chiefly in the choice of metaphors etc. used and often only half realized by the poet himself, not necessarily having any connection with the subject in hand but usually having a connection and suggested by some circumstance of the scene or of the story.  

To illustrate the principle of underthought which governs imagery, Hopkins offers the first chorus of Aeschylus’ Suppliants as an example. He says, “The underthought which plays through this is that the Danaids flying from their cousins are like their own ancestress Io teazed by the gadfly and caressed by Zeus and the rest of that foolery.”  

This chorus, indeed, demonstrates puzzling diction and metaphors. For example, lines 4 and 5: “δἰαν δὲ λιπόσαι χθόνα σύγχροτον Συρία φεύγομεν” (Leaving the holy land chorton with Syria we flee). What can sunchorton mean? Apparently sunchortos —

*Further Letters, p. 252.
*ibid.
sun, chortos, and chortos means either a feeding place or fodder especially for cattle, grass or hay, as opposed to food for man, sitos. There is a metaphor implied in the word therefore. When the Danaids are said to leave their chortos which is next to Syria, clearly the author implies that somehow they are like cattle. Shortly after these lines there is an explicit mention of Io and her story. The chorus tells us about their geneology and how they found a haven in the Argive land, then they say (in lines 15–18), “κέλσει δ’ Ἀργοὺς γαῖαν, ὅθεν δὴ γένος ἡμέτερον, τῆς οὐστρεφόνου βοῶς ἔξ ἐπαφῆς καὶ ἔπιπνοῖς Δίως εἰχόμενον, τετέλεσται” (Whence our race boasts to have sprung from Zeus’ engendering breath and handling of the gadfly-tormented heifer). As Hopkins points out, the “engendering breath” (epipnoia in line 17) by which Epaphus was conceived is echoed a few lines later in lines 27–29: “δεξιωθ’ ἱκέτην τὸν θηλυκένη στόλον αἰδώς πνεύματι χώρας: ’Dexasth’ is conjectural. Probable translation: (Receive the suppliant band of women with the reverent spirit of the land). Thelugenē means, of course, of female sex, but its etymology is still strongly felt, Thelus genesthai teat-bearing, milk-producing. Aidōio Pneumati clearly echoes epipnoia in line 17, the breath by which Epaphus was be­gotten. Then the chorus continues (lines 30–32), ἐσμον ὑβριστὴν Αἰγυπτογενῆ, πρὸν πόδα χέρως τῇ ἑν ἀσώδει θειναι” ([Drive out] the insolent swarm of licentious sons of Aegyp­ tus before they set foot on this marshy land.) Why hesmon? Hesmos means a swarm of insects and again, as Hopkins points out, there is an implied metaphor comparing the band of men born of Aegyptus to the swarm of gadflies which tormented Io. In short, this chorus employs a series of puzzling words which at first sight seem to be perversely unsuited to the topic and which make sense only when given a strained metaphorical meaning. Yet these words are all related to the underlying idea of the myth of Io so that again and again there is an
implied comparison of the plight of Danaids and the troubles of Io. After Hopkins has examined the diction of this chorus, he summarizes his idea of overthought and underthought: “Perhaps what I ought to say is that the underthought is commonly an echo or shadow of the overthought, something like canons and repetitions in music, treated in a different manner, but that sometimes it may be independent of it. I find this same principle of composition in St. James’ and St. Peter’s and St. Jude’s Epistles, an undercurrent of thought governing the choice of images used.” That is, the use of metaphor is not intended to illuminate the argument, but to suggest a logically superfluous comparison between the subject of the poem and a related story. That is a justification for the use of metaphor of which Bridges would not approve.

The modern reader takes it for granted that the vehicle of a metaphor ought to illuminate the logical meaning by illustrating its tenor and also ennoble the sentiment by attaching new and appropriate connotations to the tenor. Thus when Wyatt says, “Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind . . . ,” hind is the vehicle of a metaphor which illustrates the qualities of the girl, her wildness, shyness, and beauty, and thus illuminates Wyatt’s meaning. Moreover, the reader’s emotional response to the word hind is appropriate to the sentiment which Wyatt hopes to express about the girl. But Aeschylus, in the first chorus of the Suppliants quoted above, seems to use metaphor differently. Saying sunchorotos to mean adjacent neither illuminates the meaning nor evokes an emotion appropriate to the subject. The word sunchorotos in itself has no connotation appropriate to the topic under discussion; but, when a series of such words occurs so as to suggest the myth of Io, collectively they refer to a story which evokes an emotion suitable for the subject. The actual metaphor is suppressed. The item to be compared to the subject of the poem

7 Ibid., p. 253.
stands quite apart from the text, governing the diction, but nowhere expressed. We have a hint of some such technique in Donne's "The Ecstasy," for example, and the practice runs throughout Greek lyric and choral odes—especially those by Pindar.

There is an apocryphal story about Pindar's style which, I believe, originated in Perrault although it has been widely quoted. An admirer of Pindar mentioned the beginning of the First Olympian Ode with approval, whereupon his wife demanded a translation. He complied: "Water is indeed very good, and gold which shines like blazing fire in the night is far better than all the riches which make men proud. But, my spirit, if you desire to sing of contests, do not look for any star brighter than the sun during the day in the empty heavens, nor let us sing any contest more illustrious than Olympia." His wife was outraged because she thought that he was inventing nonsense to make a fool of her. After puzzling over an epinikian ode for an hour or two, the average reader will feel a certain, although probably suppressed, sympathy for the poor wife. Why does Pindar go to such perverse lengths to be difficult? The reader begins to suspect that it might be better to be bored to death by a simple catalogue of victors in the games than to be worried to death by this torrent of twisted imagery and oblique allusion.

Any ode will serve as an illustration; take, for example, Pythian I. This poem celebrates the victory of the chariot of Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse, in the Pythian games of 470 B.C. Hiero's son, Deinomenes, ruled the recently founded city of Etna and Hiero dedicated his victory to the honor of that city. The poem seems to have very little connection with its ostensible subject. Strophe A is an invocation to Apollo's golden lyre which governs singers and dancers. Antistrophe

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Gerard Manley Hopkins

A concerns the eagle of war which sleeps on Zeus’ scepter. Epode A asserts that the creatures whom Zeus hates are astonished to hear the voice of the muses, for example Typhon crushed under snow-capped Etna. Strophe B depicts the eruption of Etna. In antistrophe B the speaker beseeches Zeus, who dwells on Etna, to grant him grace. Epode B requests that Zeus be as gracious to the city of Etna as he is to a sailor who has a favorable wind throughout his journey. In strophe G the speaker asserts that all good comes from the gods and in praising Hiero he compares himself to a skillful javelin hurler. Antistrophe G compares Hiero to Philoctetes. Epode G asserts that the victory of Hiero should be a joy to his son and therefore proposes to sing in his son’s honor. Strophe D offers to sing of the sons of Pamphylae and the Heracleidae as well. So the ode proceeds presently to recount a series of historical battles and finally concludes with the assertion that the best reward is good fortune, next is fame, but whoever wins both has the highest crown of all.

It is apparent that Pindar’s metaphors and allusive digressions do not illuminate the meaning of his discourse. What does the eruption of Etna or the battle of Cumae have to do with Hiero’s victory? It is clear that the structure of this poem is not logical. It does not proceed through a series of connected propositions to a logical conclusion. It appears, rather, as a series of vivid images with only the most tenuous associative links between them, as the eruption of Mount Etna in antistrophe B seems to bring the poet to a discussion of the city Etna, which Hiero founded. How are these images connected? Is there any unifying element in the poem? Why does Pindar choose these particular scenes rather than others? He is, after all, quite definite in identifying each scene precisely. Why does he choose to speak of Typhon in Epode A rather than some other enemy of Zeus? In short, Pindar seems to select his images deliberately, but his principle of selection
is not apparent and, whatever the principle may be, it definitely is not to choose images so as to illuminate a deductive or inductive argument.

In 1885, Gildersleeve commented on *Pythian I*, “Pindar’s poems are constellations. There are figures in the heavens, a belt, a plough, a chair, a serpent, a flight of doves, but around them clusters much else. The Phorminx is the name of the constellation called the First Pythian.” The golden lyre to which the invocation of the poem is addressed, he says, is the unifying element around which the imagery clusters. From this suggestion, Gilbert Norwood in his Sather Classical Lectures on Pindar in 1945 constructed a rationale for the structure of Pindar’s odes.9 He believes that Pindar uses a unique method of composition: “Beyond question here lies the greatest difference between his work and that of all other poets—a difference of poetical method naturally corresponding to the difference of fundamental interest.” 10 This poetical method is, of course, non-logical: “When he gazes upon his miscellaneous material—the circumstances of the victory, the athlete’s career, family, and native town, contemporary events in general and any detail in particular which his client has requested him to include—he broods emotionally upon these until there arises in his imagination some sensible object round which these varied topics may crystallize.” 11 We might say that Pindar finds a single, symbolic objective correlative for his subject. It is important to note that his subject is not necessarily the athlete himself, but more likely the emotion which accompanies the victory. Pindar then allows the objective correlative to dictate his imagery and so he is able to bring together logically unconnected metaphors: “To feel them all and portray them all in terms of this symbol, this

familiar sight—a beacon-fire, it may be, a horse, a pebble, or a sapling—which confers upon them a unity not logical but aesthetic.” In short, there is a key to the imagery and diction which stands outside the poem and which is intended to provide an embodiment for the emotion which the poet is trying to evoke. The proof that such a key exists is found in the nature of the diction: “We regularly come upon at least one word in the poem which cannot be understood fully or perhaps at all without reference to the symbol, and which therefore serves as a signpost or revelation of it.” Disparate metaphors and inappropriate diction refer to a common concept which exists outside the text. An unstated key unifies the poem.

Although Norwood’s conjectures as to the various keys to Pindar’s odes are not uniformly felicitous, a number are assuredly correct and, as he says, “If an ode has been proclaimed unintelligible in its whole drift, or if striking details have been given over as inexplicable by all commentators from the Alexandrians to the present day; and if this new doctrine reveals the whole poem as a unified work of art, the seemingly irrelevant items falling into place, may we not claim to have lit upon Pindar’s conception of his topic and traced with some sureness the journey of his imagination?” Pindar surely did not articulate this theory of key words so precisely as Norwood and, perhaps, he did not even realize that he was using a theory at all, but in practice it seems undeniable that he did allow a key word to dictate much of his imagery. This seems to be the way he assumed poetry ought to be written.

Norwood tries to recreate Pindar’s process of writing *Pythian I*, quoted above: “Bidden to celebrate the aging and crafty prince, the youthful king, the newly founded city,
he ponders also the achievement of Hiero and his brothers in conflict with barbarians, and the Dorian constitution just granted to Aetna, a limited monarchy, a western Sparta, with freedom for its burghers. Dominating the scene of this celebration towers the Pillar of Heaven, the great volcano which but a few years before had burst into dreadful activity.”

He tries to find the objective correlative for the emotion which these topics evoke: “All these thoughts blossom and entwine themselves till he sees the picture, the symbol round which they may be assembled. Where another would think and speak of the underlying idea, he sees and displays the visual object which represents and unites all these events, hopes, and prayers.

“This symbol is the Lyre, that χρυσέα φόρμωξ which his illustrious prelude directly addresses, as other preludes address gods or goddesses.”

Pindar invokes the harp because it produces the Platonic mousike—the spirit of order. Zeus and Hiero are identified as champions of order; the eagle of war, the titans like Typhon, the eruption of Etna, the barbarians opposing the Greeks at Salamis, Plataea, Himera, and Cumae, are the enemies of order. In this way the disparate scenes of the ode are connected. Norwood concludes, “Two things, at least, must surely be granted; first, that Pindar did not fling out a handful of topics pell-mell; second, that had he made his symbolism entirely clear and unmistakable, he would have half ruined his ode, since the delight of such things resides not least in the eager questing of those for whom it was composed.” While his theory does not solve every problem in Pindar, in his commentary he resolves an impressive number of obscurities in the odes.

Norwood’s hypothesis is most valuable when it reveals the

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16 Ibid., pp. 101–2.
17 Ibid., p. 126.
meaning of an otherwise difficult passage as, for example, in his discussion of the obscure lines 29 and 30 in *Pythian XI*: "ισχει τε γὰρ ἀλβος οὐ μείονα φθόνον ὥ δὲ χαμηλὰ πνέων ἀφαντον βρέμει." Norwood tentatively translates, "For prosperity bringeth jealousy in equal measure, but... he whose breath is of the earth murmureth obscurely." The main problem here lies with *bremei*. How can *bremei* mean *esti*, as it apparently must? "βρέμει, which means 'utters a hoarse indistinct noise,' must by some mysterious transvaluation here be used to mean or imply merely 'lives.' 'Is that possible?' I asked myself." But the difficulty is resolved when we realize that the key to this poem is *bee*: "The word *βρέμει* is after all quite natural from one point of view: for, instead of using 'live' or 'exist,' we may name some characteristic and vital action of the person or creature whereof we speak. ... So in our Pindaric passage: the Greek is quite normal if we take it as alluding to the 'lowly life' of some creature that hums. The symbol, in fact, of this ode is the Bee. That prophetesses were often called 'bees' is well attested." Returning to the text of the poem, then, everything falls into place. Obscure diction becomes clear as related to the key words,

(v. 2b) ὀμοβάλαμε
(v. 4) μελίαν
(v. 7b) ἐπίνομον
(v. 8) ὁμαγερέα
(v. 23) ἔκνυξεν
(vv. 33 ff.) πυρωβέντων τρώων ἔλυσε δόμους ἀβροτάτος
(v. 38) ἐδυνηθην
(v. 55b) νεμόμενος
(v. 57) γλυκυτάτα

18 Ibid., p. 121.
19 Ibid., p. 122.
20 Ibid., p. 124.
So the theory of a key word solves the puzzle of why Pindar substituted *bremei* for *esti*.

We have seen above that Norwood’s hypothesis developed out of ideas which were available in Gildersleeve’s commentary and elsewhere in the 1880’s. Hopkins’ theory of underthought and overthought in Greek lyric poetry foresees Norwood’s hypothesis, and therefore this method of analysis may help to resolve some of the difficulties in Hopkins’ English verse. The composition of “The Wreck of the Deutschland” marks the beginning of his adult period of poetic creation. The poem has been variously called a great dragon folded in the gate to forbid all entrance to the other poems, the incoherent raving of a madman, and an intense and immediate expression of the poet’s personality. Although these descriptions seem contradictory, they have in common the assumption that there is no premeditated principle of unity in the poem, that the diverse parts have little connection one to another. It is certainly true that the poem is neither a unified description, a coherent narration, nor an argument proceeding through a series of connected propositions to a logical conclusion. Gardner maintains that the poem falls into four parts:

Part the First (stanzas 1–10):
Meditation on God’s infinite power and masterhood, on the direct mystical ‘stress’ or intuitive knowledge by which man, the dependent finite creature, apprehends the majesty and terror, the beauty and love of his Maker. . . .

Part the Second:
(Stanzas 11–17): Sudden, unexpected disaster overtook the Deutschland, with her emigrants and exiles bound for America. . . .

(Stanzas 17–31): Amid the tumult and horror, the voice of a nun is heard calling on Christ to ‘come quickly’. (She was one of five Franciscan exiles: surely Five, the number of Christ’s wounds, is the symbol of Sacrifice and the heavenly Reward.) . . .
(Stanzas 32-5): Return to the theme of Part the First: the poet adores the majesty and inscrutable wisdom of God. . . .

If we grant these divisions, the question arises, "How are these four sections connected?" If one section were removed from the poem, its absence would hardly be noticed. For example, the poem even seems to become more coherent when the first eleven stanzas are omitted. What principle, then, did Hopkins follow in constructing this poem?

Not only is the principle of organization obscure, but the use of metaphors and images seems peculiar. For example, in stanza 8 the poet apparently compares the moment of revelation of God's grace to eating a blackberry,

... How a lush-kept plush-capped sloe
Will, mouthed to flesh-burst,
Gush!—flush the man, the being with it, sour or sweet,
Brim, in a flash, full!—Hither then, last or first,
To hero of Calvary, Christ's feet—

It is possible that this peculiar kind of blackberry bursts suddenly and fills the mouth with its flavor all at once and thus the vehicle of the metaphor may illustrate the suddenness with which the revelation comes, but Bridges would surely call this a low figure. The emotional response evoked by sloe is hardly appropriate for God's grace and the image therefore seems contrived to no effective purpose. In general, it seems that Hopkins goes to great lengths throughout the poem to introduce far-fetched metaphors which neither illuminate his meaning nor ennoble his sentiment. It seems legitimate to inquire what reason, if any, Hopkins may have had for using metaphor in this way.

Finally, the diction of the poem is not clear. It begins,

Thou mastering me
God! giver of breath and bread;
World's strand, sway of the sea;

"The Wreck of the Deutschland"

Lord of living and dead;
Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened me flesh,
What does the third line mean? Lines 1, 2, 4, and 5 seem clear enough: "You, God, who rule me, who give life and food, who hold the living and the dead as subjects, have created me." The punctuation seems to indicate that line 3 is intended to be grammatically parallel to lines 2 and 4. It therefore should mean, "You, God, who are 'world's strand, sway of the sea.'" But does that mean that God is the strand (or rope which holds together) of the world and also the sway (or motion) of the sea? If so, in what sense is God like a rope holding the earth together or like the motion of the sea? What meaning is the metaphor intended to illustrate? Perhaps the line means that God is the dominating power (sway) of the sea and of the shore (strand) of the earth. If so, why does the poet introduce this peculiar enumeration? Why does he forget to mention that God rules the earth itself as well as the sea and the shore? If he wants to illustrate the extent of God's power, he need not choose to name only these particular items as subject to his rule. Indeed, the poet seems needlessly to limit the scope of God's dominion.

There are at least three difficulties with the structure of the poem, therefore: (1) It falls into four sections which are apparently unconnected, or very tenuously connected, in their subject matter. (2) Within those sections the poet introduces images and metaphors which neither illuminate his meaning nor introduce a sentiment appropriate to his topic. (3) The meaning of the poet's diction is not clear. In short, the poem seems carefully contrived—indeed, overwrought—but the reason for the contrivance, the principle behind the composition, is not clear. We have seen above that Hopkins had perceived in Greek lyric poetry an underthought and an overthought and that his discovery has subsequently been supported by Norwood's commentary on Pindar. We might therefore
apply Norwood's method of analysis to Hopkins’ poem to see whether we can discover there a structural principle similar to that of Pindar or of the Greek choral passages which Hopkins analyzed. If the presence of the difficulties in “The Wreck of the Deutschland” can, in general, be accounted for by Norwood’s hypothesis, it would tend to show that Hopkins—perhaps unconsciously—was trying to write his poem in what he understood to be the manner of a Greek lyric or choral ode.

In order to understand what the “constellation” is, around which a Pindaric ode “clusters,” Norwood first reviews the material on which the poet “broods” until he finds some material object around which these varied topics may crystallize. In the case of “The Wreck of the Deutschland” the material would seem to be the drowning of the nuns, the poet’s own state of faith, and the separation of the English from the Roman Catholic Church. Norwood asserts that the poet constructs one symbol, a “familiar sight,” which confers “a unity not logical but aesthetic” upon such diverse elements and, once we grasp this key symbol properly, we will understand why the poet introduced apparently disparate images and obscure diction into the poem.

Is there such a suppressed key image or underthought unifying “The Wreck of the Deutschland”? The nuns were drowned in a storm at sea. The wild water, therefore, manifests the awesome power of God at once cruel and kind, destroying the life of the nuns but bringing them to Heaven. Let us propose, for purposes of argument, that this is the key image—the grace and power of God, bringing physical death but eternal life, manifest and symbolized in water. Such a key image standing outside the text of the poem should dictate the choice of words and figures so as to connect otherwise logically disparate elements, if Hopkins was imitating Greek practice as he understood it. It should therefore be possible to
clarify the obscure diction and metaphors which suggest liquids in terms of the key image. For example, stanza 1, line 3: "World's strand, sway of the sea." If God's grace and power is manifest in the storm at sea, it is only natural for the poet to mention specifically that God rules the sea and the strand, where in fact the wreck occurred, while neglecting to mention God's rule over the land itself. Indeed, he specifically says in stanza 34 that England has been separated from God since its break with the Roman Catholic Church and he prays for God to "shower" his grace on the dry land once more. In terms of the proposed key image, therefore, there is good reason for Hopkins' peculiar invocation.

I am soft sift
In an hourglass—at the wall
Fast, but mined with a motion, a drift,
And it crowds and it combs to the fall;
I steady as water in a well, to a poise, to a pane,
But roped with, always, all the way down from the tall
Fells or flanks of the voel, a vein
Of the gospel proffer, a pressure, a principle, Christ's gift.

(stanza 4)

Gardner comments on this passage, "The two metaphysical images (hour-glass and well) convey the idea that as the physical life disintegrates the spiritual life is built up—by faith and grace." 22 It seems clear that the image of the hourglass is intended to illustrate that life drifts away as time passes. Hopkins knew the poetry of George Herbert well 23 and the figure of the hourglass was probably suggested by Herbert's "Church Monuments":

Dear flesh, while I do pray, learn here thy stem
And true descent; that when thou shalt grow fat,
And wanton in thy cravings, thou mayst know,

22 Ibid., p. 222.
23 Correspondence, pp. 23-24.
That flesh is but the glass, which holds the dust
That measures all our time; which also shall
Be crumbled into dust. . . .

But the figure of the well indicates that a vein (or stream) of grace (Christ’s gift) is filling the speaker as his life wanes. As the sand which symbolizes physical life runs out, the stream of Christ’s gift rushes in, filling the speaker “steady as water in a well.” Physical dust is replaced with spiritual water.

Not out of his bliss
Springs the stress felt
Nor first from heaven (and few know this)
Swings the stroke dealt—
Stroke and a stress that stars and storms deliver,
That guilt is hushed by, hearts are flushed by and melt—
But it rides time like riding a river
(And here the faithful waver, the faithless fable and miss).

(stanza 6)

In stanza 4, the poet compares the grace and power of God (“Of the gospel proffer, a pressure, a principle, Christ’s gift”) to a stream of water (a vein) flowing from the mountains into a well. Now, in stanza 6, the poet says that the stress (pressure in stanza 4) does not spring out of Christ’s bliss and that the stroke dealt does not come first from Heaven although few people realize this to be the case. The stars and storms (presumably nature) deliver both the stroke and the stress (death and God’s grace). He says,

Stroke and a stress that stars and storms deliver,
That guilt is hushed by, hearts are flushed by and melt—

Both death and God’s grace are manifest in nature, especially in storms, and they hush guilt, wash or fill hearts and cause them to turn to liquid. The meaning of stress is, of course, complicated by Hopkins’ coinage of the word instress, but there is some evidence that Hopkins thought of instress at times as analogous to a hydraulic pressure flowing through a
body and filling it with power as, for example, a hydraulic press.\textsuperscript{24}

But, he continues, death is the natural consequence of life, "But it rides time like riding a river." That is, time carries physical destruction along with it naturally as something floats on the current of a river.

It dates from day
Of his going in Galilee;
Warm-laid grave of a womb-life grey;
Manger, maiden's knee;
The dense and the driven Passion, and frightful sweat;
Thence the discharge of it, there its swelling to be
Though felt before, though in high flood yet—
What none would have known of it, only the heart, being hard at bay,

8
Is out with it! Oh,
We lash with the best or worst
Word last! How a lush-kept plush-capped sloe
Will, mouthed to flesh-burst,
Gush!—flush the man, the being with it, sour or sweet,
Brim, in a flash, full!—Hither then, last or first,
To hero of Calvary, Christ's feet—
Never ask if meaning it, wanting it, warned of it—men go.

In line 7 of stanza 6, the antecedent of it is apparently \textit{stress} and \textit{stroke} meaning both Christ's grace and man's death. In line 1 of stanza 7, therefore, the antecedent of it likewise seems to be \textit{stress} and \textit{stroke}. If so, stanza 7 means that the mercy and power of Christ began when he first went to Galilee.

"Warm-laid grave of a womb-life grey" (stanza 7, line 3) is a difficult line. I suspect that Hopkins intended the alliterative pattern to indicate chiasmus here, "Grey grave of a warm-laid womb-life." Although his syntax is not clear, it

\textsuperscript{24} See Todd K. Bender, "Hopkins' ' God's Grandeur,'" \textit{Explicator}, XXI (Feb., 1963), Item 55.
seems evident that he believes that the incarnation (womb-life) contains the necessity of death (grave). Both life and death are part of the incarnation.

The dense and the driven Passion, and frightful sweat;
   Thence the discharge of it, there its swelling to be,
       Though felt before, though in high flood yet—
     (stanza 7, lines 5–7)

Here we have a summary of Christ’s life. He progressed from the manger, to His mother’s knee, and thence to the Passion. But what a peculiar detail of description Hopkins chooses to epitomize the suffering. Christ’s Passion was a frightful sweat which was discharged. The sweat apparently symbolizes Christ’s gift (see stanza 4) which flows down from the mountain into the poet filling him with grace. Lines 6 and 7 of stanza 7 seem to say that the stream of God’s grace was felt before the Passion but it was Christ’s suffering, his discharged sweat, which swelled the stream into the flood of Christianity. The use of the word sweat to signify Christ’s sacrifice perhaps was suggested by the Anglo Saxon idiom for blood.

What none would have known of it, only the heart, being hard at bay,  
   Is out with it! . . . . (stanza 7, line 8)  
   (stanza 8, line 1)

Apparently this means that only Christ’s heart, being tormented, is able to express God’s power and mercy, to discharge the sweat, which no one would have known so well if Christ had not suffered for man.

   . . . Oh,  
   We lash with the best or worst  
   Word last! . . . (stanzas 8, lines 1–3)

This is perhaps intended to mean that we struggle finally with the word of God which is best in that it promises eternal life and worst in that it ordains physical death.

Then we come to the metaphor of the blackberry, completing stanza 8. The vehicle of the metaphor is clear enough:
a sloe will burst suddenly and fill the mouth with its juice which is at once both sour and sweet. The tenor of the metaphor seems to be the moment of conversion. A man suddenly is aware of the divine influence, at once sour and sweet because it promises eternal life but requires physical death. This tenor is explicitly stated in stanza 10:

With an anvil-ding
   And with fire in him forge thy will
   Or rather, rather then, stealing as Spring
   Through him, melt him but master him still:
   Whether at once, as once at a crash Paul,
   Or as Austin, a lingering-out sweet skill,
   Make mercy in all of us, out of us all
   Mastery, but be adored, but be adored King.

In general, this first section of the poem is obscure and my reading is therefore only tentative. The drift of the meaning, however, seems clear enough even though some lines defy paraphrase.

In the stanzas quoted there are four major metaphors: (1) the speaker compared to sand in an hourglass in stanza 4, (2) the speaker compared to water in a well in stanza 4, (3) the Passion of Christ compared to a flood of sweat in stanza 7, and (4) the moment of conversion compared to eating a blackberry in stanza 8. Although the effectiveness of the four varies, Bridges would surely object to at least the sloe and the sweat as inappropriate. Why did Hopkins include them? If we assume that the key concept, the Pindaric “constellation” of this poem, is the power and mercy of God manifest in water, these four images are, of course, unified. In stanza 7, the poet asserts that the stream of power and mercy of God was felt before Christ’s Passion but the discharge of his sweat swelled it and brought it to the flood. In stanza 6, it is this flood of physical death and eternal life which the storms deliver to flush and melt men’s hearts. In stanza 8, it gushes, flushes, and fills the convert brimful
in a flash as the juice of a bursting blackberry fills the mouth and so, in stanza 4, the dust of physical life runs out as the stream of spiritual life flows down from the mountains to fill the man like a well.

The first eleven stanzas deal with the faith of the poet, the next five describe the shipwreck, while stanzas 17 to 32 deal with the drowning of the tall nun. We see the average passengers losing their lives in the water:

They fought with God's cold—
    And they could not and fell to the deck
    (Crushed them) or water (and drowned them) or
    rolled
    With the sea-romp over the wreck.     (stanza 17)

The passengers find only destruction in the water, but not so the five nuns:

    . . . sisterly sealed in wild waters,
    To bathe in his fall-gold mercies, to breathe in his all-fire glances.
    (stanza 23)

As the water overwhelms the nun, she is suddenly and intimately aware of God:

    . . . the Master,
    *Ipse*, the only one, Christ, King, Head:
    He was to cure the extremity where he had cast her;
    Do, deal, lord it with living and dead;
    Let him ride, her pride, in his triumph, despatch and have done
    with his doom there. (stanza 28)

And so the nun's death in the water is at once a manifestation of the awesome power of God in the storm and his infinite mercy which brings her to Heaven. It is a terrible baptism.

In the remaining stanzas of the poem, Hopkins contrasts the felicity of the nun to the perilous state of England where the true faith has been rejected:

    Well, she has thee for the pain, for the
    Patience; but pity of the rest of them!
    Heart, go and bleed at a bitterer vein for the
    Comfortless unconfessed of them—     (stanza 31)
He again invokes God who in stanza 1 was "sway of the sea":

I admire thee, master of the tides,
Of the Yore-flood, of the year's fall;
The recurb and the recovery of the gulf's sides,
The girth of it and the wharf of it and the wall;
Stanching, quenching ocean of a motionable mind;

(stanza 32)

He implores God to bring England back to the true church before it is too late:

A released shower, let flash to the shire, not a lightning of fire hard-hurled.

(stanza 34)

Finally, he asks the drowned nun to intercede for England in Heaven:

Dame, at our door
Drowned, and among our shoals,
Remember us in the roads, the heaven-haven of the
Reward:

(stanza 35)

Roads, as here, in the plural can mean only a place for safe anchorage, especially since it is used in conjunction with shoal and haven. Heaven is compared to a safe harbor, whereas England is in the dangerous shoals.

Going back to the text of the poem now, we should find that there are a number of cases where peculiar diction gains new significance in terms of the key image of water symbolizing God's power and mercy. Indeed, this seems to be true:

(stanza 1) strand . . . sea
(stanza 4) water, etc.
(stanza 6) springs . . . flushed . . . melt, etc.
(stanza 7) sweat . . . discharge . . . flood
(stanza 8) gush . . . flush . . . brim . . . full
(stanza 9) storm
(stanza 10) melt
(stanza 11) flood . . . storms
Some of these examples are clearer than others, but taken together all seem to refer to the key concept which is nowhere stated.

Norwood’s hypothesis seems to fit “The Wreck of the Deutschland” well. If Hopkins wrote the poem with the underthought in mind that water manifests at once God’s power and mercy, the problems in the structure of the poem are resolved. (1) The four disparate sections of the poem are connected by the unstated key. The poet examines and compares four different situations in which God’s power and mercy is manifest in water. First, the poet himself, converted, is filled with God’s mercy like water in a well as his physical life runs out. Second, the passengers of the Deutschland who drown see only the terrible power of God in the destructive water. Third, the nun too sees the awful power, but in her extremity realizes that God is harvesting her by means of the water, that her death is taking her to God’s Heaven-haven.
Finally, the English have willfully deprived themselves of the water of faith and the poet prays that God will shower His mercy on the nation before it is too late. (2) The presence of images and metaphors which appear inappropriate can be accounted for in terms of the key concept. We have seen above how the sloe, the sweat, the well, and the hourglass are dictated by the unstated key. Although in themselves they seem needlessly contrived, they are included in the poem because they refer to the key concept. (3) The repeated use of puzzling diction referring to liquids, as for example in the mode of addressing God in stanzas 1 and 32, can also be explained by reference to the symbolic key image of water. The symbolic function of water in Christian baptism, of course, supplied this key image, ready made for Hopkins' use. As in the case of Pindar's poetry, Norwood's hypothesis does not solve every difficulty in the text, but it does supply a principle of unity, or explains the poet's method of composition, where no unity is otherwise apparent. In a similar manner in Hopkins' shorter poems, when the logical connection of the components is least apparent, some unifying key symbol usually seems to be implied, as for example in "The Windhover." Out of all that has been written about "The Windhover," at least one fact has emerged. The poem consists of three images, the hawk, the plough, and the ember, and these three images are connected in the word buckle. The argument of "The Windhover" has perhaps been summarized in the opening lines of "St. Alphonsus Rodriguez":

Honour is flashed off exploit, so we say;
And those strokes once that gashed flesh or galled shield
Should tongue that time now, trumpet now that field.

Like honor, something is flashed off exploit when the hawk dives, when the plough turns the soil, when dead ashes fall from the grate and burst open revealing an inner spark. As many commentators have suggested, the real subject of the
Gerard Manley Hopkins

poem is stated only in the dedication: that when the Jesuit novice dedicates himself to Christ, as St. Ignatius says, he buckles on the armor of the Lord and thus becomes more honorable in God's sight. So the hawk is more beautiful when it buckles or falls, so the plough is shined when it buckles to and works, so the ash at last flashes as it buckles and crumbles away to death. The unity of this poem exists in an extended pun on the word *buckle*. The use of a pun to unify apparently unconnected elements in a poem, of course, is not unknown in English. The unity of "Lycidas" resides largely in the pun of the word *pastor*, but the structure of Milton's poem too is closely related to Greek models. The Pindaric "constellation" of "The Windhover" is the *buckle* around which the imagery clusters.

Much of Hopkins' poetry is neither unified description, nor coherent narration, nor yet an argument with logically related propositions. How, then, did he go about writing such poems? We have seen that he identified a structural principle in Greek lyrics which involves an overthought and an underthought. This structural principle has since been verified, in the case of Pindar at least, by Norwood's commentary. When we apply Norwood's method of analysis to the more obscure of Hopkins' poems, it seems to clarify at least partially the connection of the parts of the structure, to provide a reason for the intrusion of otherwise inappropriate metaphors, and to explain the significance of puzzling diction. It seems therefore that Hopkins at times, perhaps unconsciously, fell into a method of composition comparable to that of Pindar. It is possible therefore that the study of Greek lyric odes may have reinforced a fundamental proclivity toward a non-logical structure in his poetry. If Hopkins approached the Greek odes with an inclination to believe that, as Ford Madox Ford says, art must not narrate but render "various and unordered pictures," he would have found there encouragement for that belief.