

Hopkins's Poetic Porcupines and the Aesthetic of Taste

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Abstract Using Friedrich Schlegel's conceptualisation of the fragment as something beautiful in its own isolated and incomplete yet integral form, «Poetic Porcupines and the Aesthetic of Taste» examines the unfinished Hopkins poem as something finished and bearing its own attendant beauty. A prevailing fragmentary impulse is evident in Hopkins's poetry as well as in his prose texts. Even his life might be characterized as fragment, defined by incompleteness, injury, waste, wreck, and ruin. The Hopkins unfinished poem should be read in light of seminal aesthetic notions of perfection in which aesthetic closure satisfies even as it preserves continuance. Kant's concept of the end and of perfection also comments informatively on Hopkins's poetic oeuvre as well as on his personal and priestly life. Hopkins's fragments are poetic porcupines, miniature works of art severed and isolated from the larger whole, but entirely self-contained and unfinished in their completion.

Keywords Closure. Fragment. Gerard Manley Hopkins. Taste.

The Hopkins unfinished poem is a much understudied subject. Scholars loosely classify it as poems he himself refers to as fragments, or poems he presumably did not complete because of the absence of fair copies. At other times, poems by their very typographical signatures (ellipses, asterisks, dashes, unfinished thoughts) are considered fragments, and, in the case of «St. Thecla», poems that do not tell the complete story. Critics of the Hopkins poetic fragment ignore the fact that «each fragment», in the words of Naomi Schor, is «a microcosm of and acceptable aesthetic substitute for the whole», a «disintegration of the textual whole, the increasing autonomy of the parts, and in the end a generalized synecdoche» (Schor 1987, pp. 28, 43). In Friedrich Schlegel's conceptualisation, fragments are «not against systems», but are «a brilliant substitute» that «can and do bring the entire noisy federation of literary and philosophical quarrels under one roof» (Firchow 1971, p. 18).¹ Put in the context of the aesthetically impure, Hopkins's fragments, deliberately or accidentally unfinished, are

¹ In *Critical Fragments*, Schlegel writes, «There is so much poetry and yet there is nothing more rare than a poem! This is due to the vast quantity of poetical sketches, studies, fragments, tendencies, ruins, and raw material» (Firchow 1971, p. 143).

often viewed as formalistically flawed, flaunting an im-pure taste in their embrace of «the pathos of the unfinished» and «the inadequacy of words» (Harries 1994, p. 47).² To James Vigus, the fragment as a form rejects «the totalising impulse of a systematic architectonic» and embodies «a strong form of resistance to prevailing norms» (Vigus 2011, pp. 2-3). «Fragmentation, by definition, resists totalisation» (Regier 2010, p. 5).

Using the seminal writings on incompleteness, fragmentation, and ruin,³ along with Hopkins's poem «St. Thecla» as a case study, this article argues that the critical failure to appreciate the formalistic and formulaic complexities of Hopkins's aesthetics has led to a sense of his fragments as crude or vulgar, and lacking a universally sanctioned aesthetic of taste.⁴ Central as the fragment is to Hopkins's poetry, poetics, life, and vocation, its canonical demystification, I argue, has contributed to the general neglect of its «appendant beauty», described by Kant as «a concept of the end that defines what the thing has to be, and consequently a concept of its perfection» (Hutchins 1952, vol. 42, p. 488). This aesthetic slighting, this failure to observe in Hopkins a certain aesthetic norm (common sense), not merely a Kantian «taste of sense» (private pleasure) but a «taste of reflection» (public validity), overlooks the myriad ways the fragment comments informatively on Hopkins's poetic oeuvre as well as on his personal and priestly life. The need to rethink the role of the unfinished in Hopkins finds validation from reading his poetic fragments in light of seminal aesthetic notions of «perfection», especially considering the fact that the unfinished is often conceived as a type of impure aesthetics. Making an important distinction between incomplete and unfinished poems, Balachandra Rajan, in *The Form of the Unfinished*, considers «incomplete» «poems which ought to be completed», and «unfinished» «poems which ask not to be finished, which carry within themselves the reasons for arresting or effacing themselves as they do. If an unfinished poem were to be finished it would ideally erase its own significance» (Rajan 1985, p. 14). As E.F. Carritt observes, «perfection» is «obscurely apprehended» as «beautiful» by the «unsophisticated mind», which also confuses «beauty with goodness»; for «Many things which, though organic, do not satisfy a concept

2 To Schiller, for example, the beautiful is formalistically pleasing. He writes in Letter XVIII, «By beauty the sensuous man is led to form and to thought; by beauty the spiritual man is brought back to matter and restored to the world of sense» (Schiller 1899?, p. 85).

3 Kant's «Analytic of the Beautiful», I.A. Richards's «How Does a Poem Know When It Is Finished?», Marjorie Levinson's *The Romantic Fragment Poem*, Barbara Herrnstein Smith's *Poetic Closure*, Alison Pearce's «'Magnificent Mutilations': John Keats and the Romantic Fragment», Thomas McFarland's *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin*, Elizabeth Wanning Harries's *The Unfinished Manner*, and Balachandra Rajan's *The Form of the Unfinished*.

4 According to Schiller, «The beautiful is not only pleasing to the individual but to the whole species» (Schiller 1899?, p. 263).

of perfection are beautiful» (Carritt 1962, pp. 4, 77). To cite Kant again, «Beauty, therefore, as a formal subjective finality, involves no thought whatsoever of a perfection of the object». For, «strictly speaking, perfection neither gains by beauty, nor beauty by perfection» (Hutchins 1952, vol. 42, pp. 487-488). The «judgement of taste», according to Kant, is «independent of the concept of perfection»; and «The judgement of Taste which declares an object beautiful with reference to a definite conception is not pure» (Carritt 1966, pp. 115-116).

As unfinished, the fragment exemplifies not only incompleteness but impurity, given the fact that as a hybrid or miscegenized literary type it represents «impossible purities». ⁵ In the «Analytic of the Beautiful», Kant views the judgment of taste as «aesthetical» and «subjective», not «scientific», not one of «cognition», and definitely not «logical». ⁶ Furthermore, he adds: «In order to decide whether anything is beautiful or not, we refer the representation, not by the Understanding to the Object for cognition but, by the Imagination (perhaps in conjunction with the Understanding) to the subject, and», anticipating Freud, «its feeling of pleasure or pain» (Hutchins 1952, vol. 42, p. 476). In other words, we use the imagination and not cognition to discern the beautiful. ⁷ Terry Eagleton finds that «When the Kantian subject of taste encounters an object of beauty, it discovers in it a unity and harmony» reflective of «the free play of its own faculties» (Eagleton 1990, p. 87). Taste, therefore, is aesthetic, and determined subjectively, albeit universally, and perhaps with the aid of the understanding. Schiller agrees, calling taste «the faculty for apprehending the beautiful» which «holds at once the spiritual elements and that of the sense». It is taste that can «ennoble the perceptions of the senses so as to make ideas of them» (Schiller 1899?, p. 185). Reflecting on Kant in *Shakespeare and Impure Aesthetics*, Hugh Grady finds discussion of the aesthetic as «invariably a discourse about beauty and unity», which Grady sees as a «narrow conception» of the term, «a radical separation from reality that denies rather than challenges existing reality» (Grady 2009, pp. 2-3). He rightly concludes that aesthetics addresses «the ugly as well as the beautiful» (p. 3). ⁸ E.F. Carritt agrees on this idea of the aesthetic: «To be tormented

5 Brody (1998) is writing here not about the fragment per se but about hybridity and racial mixing in Victorian culture.

6 Carritt agrees with Kant, writing, «the experience of beauty is not a logical judgement nor a perception of fact» (Carritt 1962, p. 8).

7 Schiller concurs: «the aesthetic judgment depends on the imagination» (Schiller 1899?, p. 258).

8 In his essay, «Detached Reflections on Different Questions of Aesthetics», Schiller writes, «the same object can be ugly, defective, even to be morally rejected, and nevertheless be agreeable and pleasing to the senses; that an object can revolt the senses, and yet be good» (Schiller 1899?, pp. 263-264).

with a passion for beauty, a sensitiveness to ugliness, is the condition of the aesthetic experience» (Carritt 1962, p. 48). Grady looks to Theodor Adorno, a Frankfurt School critic of enlightenment ideals, for support of his idea that aesthetics engages the elegant and the inelegant: «The definition of aesthetics as the theory of the beautiful is so unfruitful because the formal character of the concept of beauty is inadequate to the full content [...] of the aesthetic. If aesthetics were nothing but a systematic catalogue of whatever is called beautiful, it would give no idea of the life that transpires in the concept of beauty» (Grady 2009, p. 3).⁹

Led by Kant to consider the autonomy of the beautiful in such concepts as the good, the perfect, the pleasant, and the agreeable, Friedrich Schiller assumes a different stance on the beautiful. He moves Kant's subjectivist aesthetics further by assigning it a moral value and situating it outside the realm of the subjective. In Schiller's conceptualisation of a moral aesthetic, the Hopkins poetic fragment, like «St. Thecla», would still retain its beauty even as it asserts the moral. Schiller, like Hopkins, and unlike Kant, sees the beautiful as one with the moral. As such, art to Schiller possesses an «educative power», contains «the cure of souls», and is the «great healer of our cultural ills» (Schiller 1899?, pp. xxviii, xxxi, lii). Schiller separates beauty into any number of categories: ideal («the beau-ideal», «eternally one and indivisible»); experimental («eternally double»); energetic («sav- age violence and harshness»); and graceful (assuming at times the form of «effeminacy and weakness»), the latter of which «relax[es] the mind in the moral sphere as well as the physical» (pp. 81-82). The poeticising of this idea in Hopkins finds expression in poems such as «To what serves Mortal Beauty», where beauty, albeit «dangerous», «keeps warm / Men's wit to things that are; | to what good means». «God's better beauty», the poem concludes, is «grace». In a 13 October 1886 letter to Bridges, Hopkins elaborates on this idea of art and the usefulness: «What are works of art for? To educate, to be standard. Education is meant for the many, standards are for public use. To produce then is of little use unless what we produce is known» (Thornton, Phillips 2013, vol. 2, p. 813). He would go on to assert a nationalistic function to art, that works of art are a great power

9 For Grady, Kant's aesthetic theory was «an attempt to conceptualize the specific states of mind associated with the beautiful and the sublime in Enlightenment culture» (Grady 2009, p. 8). Following Kant, Grady ties the rise of the aesthetic to mercantile capitalism and commodity culture, «a new kind of religion for a decentered, secular world» (2009, p. 21). He sees impure aesthetics as «primarily a product of 'Western Marxism'» (p. 22). Eagleton, similarly, talks about the aesthetic as a bourgeois enterprise (Eagleton 1990, p. 8). For him, the aesthetic was «one answer to this vexed question of how values are to be derived, in a condition where neither civil society nor the political state would seem to provide such values with a particularly plausible foundation». The birth of aesthetics was «an intellectual discourse» that «coincides with the period when cultural production is beginning to suffer the miseries and indignities of commodification» (pp. 63-64).

in the world and a strength to the empire, not unlike Blake, for whom art is the true embodiment of nation. In his *Aesthetical and Philosophical Essays*, Schiller describes the beautiful as «an obligation of phenomena», in which the senses render judgment before the understanding takes over (Schiller 1899?, p. 188). «Beauty results from the harmony between spirit and sense» to which man brings «an open sense, a broad heart, a spirit of freshness» (p. 336). Schiller sees beauty as «the sphere of unfettered contemplation and reflection; beauty conducts us into the world of ideas, without however taking us from the world of sense»; the «aesthetic disposition of the soul [...] gives birth to liberty» (pp. 111, 113).

The theory of the fragment owes much to Friedrich Schlegel's conceptualisation of it, seeing it as beautiful in its own isolated and incomplete yet integral form. Schlegel writes in his *Athenaeum Fragment*, «Many of the works of the ancients have become fragments. Many modern works are fragments as soon as they are written» (Firchow 1971, p. 164). According to him, «A fragment, like a miniature work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a porcupine» (p. 189). This sense of the fragment speaks well not only to Hopkins's «St. Thecla» but to any number of his other fragments, such as «I am like a slip of comet». While the poem might well be part of the larger «Floris in Italy», as a type of the Schlegel fragment, as I will later show, it asserts its own coherence, legitimacy, authenticity, independence, completeness. In Fragment 116 of the *Athenaeum Fragments* (1798), Schlegel calls the fragment «the only kind of poetry that is more than a kind» (p. 16).¹⁰ He believes that the fragment – and this is especially relevant to Hopkins – is the most appropriate form to capture «the entire spirit of an author». As he would write regarding the organic nature of the Romantic fragment, «The romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that is should forever be becoming and never be finished» (p. 175).

Hopkins saw Schlegel as a competent critic of poetry and was quite likely influenced by his conceptualisation of the fragment as a legitimate art form. The influence also comes from Keats and Parmenides, especially the latter's celebrated *Fragments*. Yet, there remains no governing principle on the Hopkins fragment, given the way his poetry has been categorized historically and canonically. Here is what we know: one, that there are a number of unfinished poems in Hopkins, abandoned because they lost «the one rapture of an inspiration», their «blowpipe flame» quickly «quenched»

10 As Peter Firchow observes, «one of Schlegel's own definitions for his fragments was 'condensed essays and reviews', and certainly a large number of the fragments are just that» (Firchow 1971, p. 16). In the language of Jonathan Arac, the fragment is «the genre that transcends genre because it is both 'progressive' and 'universal', thus going beyond fixity and limitation» (Arac 2011, p.20).

(«To R.B.»); secondly, poems are unfinished because Hopkins either did not have time or took the time to complete them – as such, they have multiple variants, no fair copies, and appear altogether messy, unfinished; lastly, poems he refers to as fragments are, in fact, finished in the sense that he intended them to be of a supposedly unfinished character. In other words, in presenting the fragment in an «unfinished manner», as Harries observes, «writers – novelists, philosophers, poets, essayists – insisted on presenting their finished texts as fragmentary» (Harries 1994, p. 1). Fragmentation asks these important questions: «How do we fill gaps? Why do we want to fill them? What is the nature of fracture and fragmentation, in contrast to wholeness and plenitude, and our fascination with them?» (Regier 2010, p. 1).

The fragmentary landscape concerns «issues of terminology, issues of periodization, issues of intentionality or agency», or «rhetorical clues embedded in them [fragments] and in their particular material (prefaces, glosses, afterwords, subtitles and the like)» (Harries 1994, pp. 3-4). Harries raises a series of critical questions about the aesthetic character of the fragment: «What does it mean to ‘finish’ a work? What is the process by which literary texts ‘evolve’ into ‘unfinished’ works? How is it that people came to see some fragments as ‘finishable’? What kinds of literary judgment are implied in this distinction?» (p. 3). Kant uses the same language, «internal finality», to talk about «perfection», which he sees as the «essential character of beauty». In any critique of taste, he writes, it is of «utmost importance to decide whether this beauty is really reducible to the concept of perfection». In order to «represent an objective finality in a thing, we must first have a concept of *what sort of a thing it is to be*» (Hutchins 1952, vol. 42, p. 487).

The idea of a poem fulfilling its goal by realising its own sense of completion, its own beauty, is the subject of I.A. Richards’s groundbreaking essay, «How Does a Poem Know When It is Finished?». Although he does not make completion coeval to perfection and the beautiful, Richards asks some of these same questions, insisting, for example, that «the minimal problem a poem can set itself is the mere finding or creation (discovery or invention) of a situation which will permit its growth»: «How does a poem grow? How does it learn how to become itself? How does it know when it is finished?» (Richards 1963, pp. 164-165). Richards’s organic metaphors conceptualize the poem as something embryonic and physiologic, something about the poem’s DNA that is not parthenogenic: it does not birth itself, but has a beginning and an end.¹¹ Addressing the aporetic nature of the fragment, he finds that «language works not only by and through

11 «Nothing finite can exist of itself», Hopkins writes. «In anything finite it cannot be self-bestowed; nothing finite can determine what itself shall, in a world of being, be» (Devlin 1967, pp. 124-125). In Hopkins’s «To R.B.», for example, a poem’s coming to be is organic, even orgasmic: «the blowpipe flame, | Breathes once and, quenched faster than it came».

the words used but through words not used [...]. There is endless opposition and collaboration among words that do not appear at all: shaping, modifying, directing the activity of the growing poem at all points, guiding it and helping it to find out what has to be, and warning it when, if ever, it has become itself» (p. 167). Richards's caution must take into account any consideration of Hopkins's called and so-called fragments, including even a finished poem as «St. Thecla», which decidedly does not retell the entire hagiographical account from which it is derived: «Even when the poem *uses* verbal material, which is reported as having occurred in some biographically important incident, we would be rash to assume too confidently that the incident in any deep way determined the poem. [...] The poem may just be using for its own purposes something that, in life, belonged in a different web». Thus, «The completion of a poem may be no matter of addition or excision» (pp. 168, 174).

Classification of fragments, understandably, concerns itself with ideas and ideals of closure, with how poems end, whether they end, whether there is some sense of formal closure, whether readers leave the experience feeling relatively satisfied, and whether agreeableness or enjoyment not only pleases but gratifies. In her seminal study, *Poetic Closure*, Barbara Herrnstein Smith believes that «personal and literary history» never entirely accounts for a poem's «particular existence and form», and that, consonant with Richards, «certain intraverbal relations have a great deal more to do with the structure and integrity of the poem» (Smith 1968, p. 97). Smith's real concern is a poem's ontology (existence, formation, character, integrity, and wholeness), and in particular its sense of an ending, along with the satisfaction or taste the poem leaves on readers. The «sense of conclusiveness in the last lines of a poem», she writes, «seems to confirm retrospectively, as if with a final stamp of approval, the valued qualities of the entire experience we have just sustained» (p. 4). It is this very desire «*to preserve a continuance*» that can be said «to denote in a general way what is called pleasure» (Hutchins 1952, vol. 42, p. 484).¹² Formal closure, then, occurs when the intellectual and emotional satisfaction at the end of a poem makes us feel that the poem ends, that it concludes, providing as it were a circularity, a roundedness to the poem and to the reading ex-

Here the poem's gestation is not unlike the partum period of a fetus: «Nine months [...] she long | Within her wears, bears and moulds the same» (Phillips 1986, p. 184).

12 Closure, as Smith sees it, means being «satisfied by the failure of continuation», the «expectation of nothing» (Smith 1968, p. 34): «Closure occurs when the concluding portion of a poem creates in the reader a sense of appropriate cessation. It announces and justifies the absence of further development; it reinforces the feeling of finality, completion, and composure which we value in all works of art; and it gives ultimate unity and coherence to the reader's experience of the poem by providing a point from which all the preceding elements may be viewed comprehensively and their relations grasped as part of a significant design» (p. 36).

perience. This, says Kant, is the height of the aesthetic experience, «for the very reason that its determining ground cannot be a concept, but is rather the feeling (of the internal sense) of the concert in the play of the mental powers as a thing only capable of being felt» (p. 487). Smith's sense of closure, along with Kant's, comports well with Hopkins's fragmentary practice and sense of the aesthetics in which closure satisfies even as it keeps the poem open, preserving its continuance.

Hopkins was obsessed with endings, perhaps because much of his life was defined by so little personal and professional closure. His intriguing poem, «Peace», written on the eve of his departure from Oxford for Leigh, raises questions about the state of continuance, a place of rest: «Your round me roaming end». Hopkins's priestly reassignments were so abrupt that the poet in him longed for some «lovely ease in change of place» («The earth and heaven, so little known»). His life might well be characterized as fragment, defined as it was by incompleteness, injury, waste, wreck, and ruin, at least «superficially like the fragments and failures of a life» (Thornton, Phillips 2013, vol. 1, p. xli). Even the life of Christ was made to mirror Hopkins's own incompleteness, «cut short [...] and doomed to succeed by failure; his plans were baffled, his hopes dashed, and his work was done by being broken off undone» (vol. 2, p. 795). Hopkins admitted as much in a 24 April-17 May 1885 letter to Alexander Baillie: «Some time since, I began to overhaul my old letters, accumulations of actually ever since ~~seh~~ I was at school, destroying all but a very few, ~~but~~ ^and^ growing ever loather to destroy [...]; and there they lie and my old notebooks and beginnings of things, ever so many, which it seems to me might well have been done, ~~Old~~ [heavy deletion illegible] ruins and wrecks» (vol. 2, p. 730). He wrote to Bridges on 7 August 1868 concerning his poetic ruins: «I cannot send my s Summa for it is burnt with my other verses: I saw they wd. interfere with my state and vocation» (vol. 1, p. 186). And in a 29 October to 2 November 1881 letter to Richard Watson (Canon) Dixon, he would go on to describe the creative process and how it applies to him. The high expectations of Hopkins's vocation meant that things seemingly unrelated to his ministry would assume less priority and urgency; many projects, then, once begun would remain unfinished, incomplete. Fragments also convey to us the nature of Hopkins's compositional and creative process, where seemingly incomplete poems are complete, meaning finished as time and the occasion would allow, the absence of fair copies illustrating just this dilemma:

[...] I shall, in my present mind, continue to compose, as occasion shall fairly allow, which I am afraid will be seldom and indeed for some years past have ^s^ been scarcely ever, and let what I produce wait and take its chance; for a very spiritual man once told me that with things like composition it the best sacrifice was not to destroy one's work but to

leave it entirely to be disposed of by obedience. But I can scarcely fancy myself asking a superior to publish ^a volume of^ my verses and I own that humanly there is very little likelihood of that ever coming to pass. (vol. 1, p. 493)¹³

Thomas McFarland's description of Wordsworth's corpus as «disparactive» (McFarland 1981, p. 6), with its triad of incompleteness, fragmentation, and ruin, applies to Hopkins. A prevailing fragmentary impulse is evident in his poetry as well as in his prose texts, such as letters, diary, journal, sermons, and religious writings. MacKenzie correctly captures the Hopkins practice as one of «false beginnings and much re-working of material» (Gardner, MacKenzie 1967, p. lii), concluding, «Hopkins often does not appear to have made final copies of his poems» (p. lvi). He points to Hopkins's 29 April 1889 admission to Bridges: «we greatly differ in feeling about copying one's verses out: I find it repulsive, and let them lie months and years in rough copy untransferred to my book. Still I hope soon to send you my accumulation». MacKenzie praises Humphry House's handling of Hopkins's poetic remains, especially the fragments, which MacKenzie relegates to the status of the unelegant, the unaesthetic, the tasteless: «The poems could not have been appreciated in their disarray, and House's fine contribution to the canon of Hopkins's verse was to rearrange the incompleting fragments into some artistic order» (p. lvi). He also draws attention to House's enlarged edition of *Note-books, the Journals and Papers* (1959), where «a number of new fragments of verse were carefully reproduced» (p. lvi). Still, Hopkins's fragments, in MacKenzie's view, remain flawed poems and aesthetically displeasing. His marginalisation of them in edition after edition of Hopkins's poems is evidence enough of his view of them as incomplete if imperfect.

Hopkins struggled to complete projects, either because of the lack of inspiration (his muse turning «sullen»), or the demands of his religious vocation. He never knew when and where he would be assigned; and even when dispatched to one place ended up, not infrequently, in another – gingerbread permanence is how he unenthusiastically called it; his other metaphor was the proverbial football pumped up and waiting another kick of the boot. «And in this life I lead now, which is one of a continually jaded and harassed mind», he writes to Bridges on 1-8 September 1885, «if in any leisure I try to do anything I make no way: – nor with my work» (Thornton, Phillips 2013, vol. 2, p. 743). Examining Hopkins's oeuvre, then, through the «disparactive», a severance as well as a rupture and a reassembling,

13 In his 4-14 November 1881 response, Dixon declares, «Surely one vocation cannot destroy another: and such a Society as yours will not remain ignorant that you have such gifts as have seldom been given by God to man» (Thornton, Phillips 2013, vol. 1, p. 496).

is a unique if useful way of conceiving his life as well as his poetics.¹⁴ In the new *Correspondence*, R.K.R. Thornton and Catherine Phillips describe his «brilliant but unfinished literary projects, [...] archaeological remnants from which we can begin to imagine the structures which he dreamed» (vol. 1, p. lxi). It would take a separate study to investigate the many things Hopkins contemplated or begun which never saw the light of day, whether music, Greek meters, studies of Aristophanes and Homer, a critical edition of St. Patrick's *Confession*, an ode on the Valley of the Clywd, or a treatment of Greek Negatives: «I am now writing a quasi-philosophical paper on Greek Negatives: but when shall I finish it? or if finished will it pass the censors? or if it does will ^the Classical Review or^ any magazine take it?» (vol. 2, p. 914). There are any number of scientific treatises Hopkins never completed, such as a non-technical study of light and the ether. «I can scarcely believe that on that [writing on meter] or on anything else anything of mine will ever see the light – of publicity nor even of day» (vol. 2, p. 744). In Kantian language, this inability to realise completion is where «the subject feels itself quite at home in its effort to grasp form in the imagination, but no perfection of any object» (Hutchins 1952, vol. 42, p. 487). Ironically, Hopkins's poetry might well be the only place where he experienced an ideal of closure seldom found in the personal and professional.

There are not many fair copies of anything in Hopkins, who seems to have adopted the view that his writings are organic, a work in continual progress. His 17-29 May 1885 admission to Bridges that «we compose fragmentarily» (Thornton, Phillips 2013, vol. 2, p. 736) extends to his poetry, causing editors, biographers, and critics to routinely but mistakenly employ the term «fragment» to describe many of Hopkins's poems, including completed ones like «St. Thecla». The critical impulse has been what Simon Humphries has described as a «dismissive approach to what Hopkins achieves in [his] drafts» (Humphries 2009, p. 30). In other words, critics have failed to appreciate the beautiful because, wanting Hopkins's poems to satisfy a certain desire, charm, or emotion, they have been unable to approach his oeuvre with a certain measure of disinterest.¹⁵ In a 17-29 May 1885 letter to Bridges defending himself against the charge of writing «fragments of a dramatic poem» in the composition of «St. Winefred's Well», Hopkins observes that artists compose «fragmentarily». The letter contends that fragments can in fact be finished or completed poems: «To

14 The «multifacetedness and intricacy» of fragmentation «enable conceptual and textual analysis of texts not normally thought of in relation to brokenness» (Regier 2010, p. 25).

15 «Taste [‘the one and only disinterested and *free* delight’] is the faculty of estimating an object or a mode of representation by means of a delight or aversion *apart from any interest*. The objective of such a delight is called the beautiful» (Hutchins 1952, vol. 42, p. 479). Kant again writes, «the satisfaction of taste in the beautiful is the only one that is disinterested and free» (qtd. in Carritt 1966, p. 111).

me a finished completed fragment, above all of a play, is the same unreality as a prepared impromptu. No, but we compose fragmentarily and what I had here and there done I finished up and sent as samples to see if I cd. be encouraged to go on» (Thornton, Phillips 2013, vol. 2, p. 736). Hopkins elaborates further on the aesthetically imperfect in a 1-2 April 1885 letter to Bridges on Chopin's fragments, something he had thought long and hard about and considered complete in their incompleteness: «When I hear one of Chopin's fragmentary airs struggling and tossing on a surf of harmonies ^accompaniment^ what does it matter whether one or even half a dozen notes are left out of it;? its being and meaning lies outside itself in the harmonies; they give give the tonality, modality, feeling and all. But I could write reams on the matter, which time does not allow» (vol. 2, p. 722).¹⁶ This is the Kantian beautiful: «*that which, apart from concept, is represented as the Object of a UNIVERSAL delight*» (Hutchins 1952, vol. 42, p. 479). To Kant, aesthetic taste does not depend on individual or private interest but on public approval, what he sometimes calls «subjective universality» (Carritt 1966, p. 112).

Our critical disparagement of fragments is built on the assumption that, possessing some crude or untrained taste, they reveal little or nothing. Rather, fragments disclose a considerable amount about themselves and the larger corpus from which they have become detached, severed, cut off, mutilated. These small suns possess relevant data, shedding light on their own origin, history, and evolution as well as on those of their stellar companions. Take, for example, «I am like a slip of comet», a poem in which a comet, like the poem, breaks off from a larger mass. Formerly an autobiographical fragment severed from the greater «Florin in Italy», «I am like as slip of comet» presumes to discuss the inconspicuous or negligible status of the poetic persona, a theme consistent with Hopkins's artistic self in seclusion, as in «God's Grandeur» and the voyeuristic «Epithalamion». Like comets, often invisible to the naked eye, the speaker sees himself «Scarce worth discovery, in some corner seen / Bridging the slender difference of two stars». Whether the comet comes «out of space, or suddenly engender'd» by combined elements of ice, frozen gases, and small meteoric dust, it remains enigmatic: «no man knows». Temporarily suspending the comparison, the speaker focuses exclusively on the comet's numerous metamorphoses. As the comet moves from its aphelion

16 Hopkins is using «impromptu» to mean improvised or extemporized music, made up on the spot at the whim of the player. Chopin, as well as Schubert, wrote down their «impromptus», and pianists learn them, «prepare» them, and by so doing carry out the contradiction/unreality of a prepared improvisation. This, Hopkins suggests, is parallel to setting out to write a fragment of a play, i.e. with no intention of writing a complete play - what is a play that is only fragmentary? It's not a play, which by definition, is a complete work. I owe this to Catherine Phillips.

to its perihelion position, its tail grows under evaporation by solar heat. Poetically presented, when the comet, now a coquette, «sights the sun she grows and sizes / And spins her skirts out». The nucleus through evaporation loses some of its central condensation, and light from the sun is reflected in those separated dust particles that resemble, we are told, dim searchlights: «her central star», the poet writes,

Shakes its cocooning mists; and so she comes
 To fields of light; millions of travelling rays
 Pierce her; she hangs upon the flame-cased sun,
 And sucks the light as full as Gideon's fleece.
 (Phillips 1986, p. 40)

No longer able to maintain her shape («her tether calls her»), the comet gradually loses her tail; as light dissipates she «shreds her smock of gold» between her other planetary sisters. Intense solar heat eventually evaporates all that remains of the comet, an event compared to the sun's effect on Gideon's drenched fleece: «And then goes out into the cavernous dark». The comet's many transformations now fully accounted for, the speaker locates some personal parallels, although the gender is now switched. Not only is he as inconspicuous as a comet, but he also has an energetic attraction to the «contagious sun», eventually to see his own light consumed by that very life source. The sun/Son analogy is now much in play in Hopkins's energy physics. That final movement or law, a «not ungentle death», is not, however, a cessation of life. Rather, it is the death that is the peak of sexual ecstasy. As the comet collides and is consumed by the sun, returning to the life source from which it originated, so the speaker sees himself tending. His own consummation and reconstitution is equally dramatic and certain.

The theme of «I am like a slip of comet» is cosmic copulation (Michel Serres's term), an incestuous romance between the sun and a comet. The fragment addresses courtship, foreplay, penetration, consummation, death, and, ultimately, renewal. Drawing heat from the sun's rays is a process not unlike what occurs in «God's Grandeur». God's heat ensures a continuation of the world's energy supply because of the re-creative act of the Holy Ghost. In the fragment, the sun and comet are subtly engaged in a joint procreative and secretive act, their «little sweet». As female, the virginal comet possesses a «slip» and «smock», lifts her «skirts» to the penetrative rays of the sun, «draw[s] » and «sucks» his heat, is «Pierce[d]» by his light, and is summarily deflowered: «shreds her smock of gold». Not a poem on entropy - on decline, disorder, irreversibility - «A slip of comet» is Hopkins's attempt to illustrate collision and absorption in the cohabitive relationship between the sun and other stellar bodies. The Hopkins poem fragment shows that «more direct attention should be paid to

the fragment as a literary form of special importance». But while the fragment «can be viewed as that form which more completely than any other embodies romantic ideals and aims», as an «infinite or unending poem», it is «not attractive» (Rauber 1969, pp. 212, 214). Still, as Kant points out in his subjectivist aesthetic, «There can, therefore, be no rule according to which any one is to be compelled to recognize anything as beautiful» (Hutchins 1952, vol. 42, p. 482).

Is the Hopkins poem fragment, then, based on the following assumptions about completion and aesthetic taste? (1) the poem was left incomplete because the poet was not through working on it, wanted to, but could find neither the time nor the inspiration, the autograph copies and variants bearing all of the conventional signs of its unconsummated end; (2) the poet did not bring to a close in the poem the closure present in the originating narrative; in other words, poetic closure does not mirror narrative closure, does not tell the complete and full account; (3) the poet deliberately chose to end the poem the way he did, leaving it seemingly incomplete, as is the case in the genre of such Romantic fragments as Coleridge's «Kubla Khan», Byron's «Don Juan», and Keats's «Hyperion» poems. Fragments in this latter categorization are not «accidental, or the result of some disproportion between idea and execution», but fundamental to writers' «conception of their texts» (Harries 1994, p. 2). Considering the above listed typologies, we see that there are three possible generic forms of the Hopkins fragment: (1) a poetic thought, gesture, or idea never fully developed or advanced; (2) a poem left unfinished because Hopkins wanted to complete it but ran out of time or inspiration, leaving no discernible fair copy; and (3) a finished poem that has a seemingly unfinished quality or feel to it (the so-called Romantic fragment) but where the poet clearly felt satisfied with the result; or, in the isolated case of «I am like a slip of comet», a finished or displaced fragment, a textual fracture, severed from a larger and still extant whole. Some Hopkins critics would perhaps add another: a poem where the poet does not tell the entire original story but truncates the account. Commenting on «St. Thecla», for example, Norman MacKenzie writes: «The leisurely pace of Hopkins's heroic couplets [...] had not even reached her conversion after thirty-four lines» (MacKenzie 1981, p. 220). As a poem that corresponds to both the third and fourth types of fragment, and illustrating an entirely moral aesthetic on spiritual and physical beauty, «St. Thecla» reveals an intentionality in its structure that illuminates Hopkins's reworking of the fragment form:

St. Thecla

That his fast-flowing hours with sandy silt
Should choke sweet virtue's glory is Time's great guilt.
Who thinks of Thecla? Yet her name was known,

Time was, next whitest after Mary's own.
 To that first golden age of Gospel times
 And bright Iconium eastwards reach my rhymes.
 Near by is Paul's free Tarsus, fabled where
 Spent Pegasus down the stark-precipitous air
 Flung rider and wings away; though these were none,
 And Paul is Tarsus' true Bellerophon.
 They are neighbours; but (what nearness could not do)
 Christ's only charity charmed and chained these two.
 She, high at the housetop sitting, as they say,
 Young Thecla, scanned the dazzling streets one day;
 Twice lovely, tinted eastern, turned Greek —
 Crisp lips, straight nose, and tender-slanted cheek.
 Her weeds all mark her maiden, though to wed,
 Withal her mien is modest, ways are wise,
 And grave past girlhood earnest in her eyes.
 Firm accents strike her fine and scrolled ear,
 A man's voice and a new voice speaking near.
 The words came from a court across the way.
 She looked, she listened: Paul taught long that day.
 He spoke of God the Father and His Son,
 Of world made, marred, and mended, lost and won;
 Of virtue and vice; but most (it seemed his sense)
 He praised the lovely lot of continence:
 All over, some such words as these, though dark,
The world was saved by virgins, made the mark.
 He taught another time there and a third.
 The earnest-hearted maiden sat and heard,
 And called to come at mealtime she would not:
 They rose at last and forced her from the spot.
 (Phillips 1986, pp. 59-60)

Instancing the evanescence of time and how quickly memory and the historical record succumb to it, «St. Thecla» tells of the eponymous heroine's encounter with Paul, one so profound that it redirects her passions and priorities. She is held spell-bound by this new and strange accent and voice, Paul's «virginal tongue» («The Wreck of the Deutschland»), refusing to eat all day and had to be forcible moved. Hopkins's rhymes reach back spatio-temporally to Thecla's eastern home in Iconium, and to «that first golden age of Gospel times», to momentarily reclaim Thecla's legendary

reputation, beauty, and virtue.¹⁷ Hopkins compares Thecla's erasure to the ravages of time on ancient ruins, the way the sands of time «choke sweet virtue's glory». His account covers roughly the first ten verses of the longer forty-five verse apocryphal version with its extended coda. It includes Thecla's association to Mary as a young, pure, and betrothed virgin; the early church as an iconic figure; Paul's specialness; the historical links between Paul and Thecla; Thecla's beauty matched only by her modesty; Paul's sermons on chastity; and Thecla's response to them and her resolve. The account is void of all drama, such as Thecla's two trials, her miraculous rescues, and baptism by fire and water; Paul's imprisonment; Thecla's haircutting and cross-dressing; her itinerant ministry, movements, and pursuit of Paul; and the combative exchanges between Paul and Thecla. It adds the mythology of Pegasus and Tarsus. «St. Thecla» is a truncated poem if by that is meant only that the poem is a short version of a longer story. It manipulates form to achieve the kind of aesthetic taste Levinson describes as «sensible unfinishedness» (Levinson 1986, p. 130).

The poem's four-part structure is unevenly divided: Part I (lines 1-12) covers Thecla's fading glory due to the ravages of time; Part II (lines 13-20) describes Thecla's celebrated beauty inextricably connected to her virtue; Part III (lines 21-30) comments on Paul's sermon reaching a reclining Thecla; and Part IV (lines 31-34) picks up Paul's second and third sermon on chastity and Thecla's resolve. Written in heroic rhyming (masculine) couplets, perhaps to re-inscribe, to fix, Thecla's transgressive person and personality, «St. Thecla» opens with an apostrophe to personified Time, whose hourglass effects, its «great guilt», threatens because it temporizes «virtue's glory». Time's culpability, the poem maintains through its use of prosopopœia, is how quickly it erases the glory of virtue. The poem's aestheticism also comes from the attendant beauty of easily the most dominant figurative element in the poem, its rich alliterations, beginning with «golden» and «Gospel», on which the poem is built. The first set of extended alliterations is the «f» alliteration, with such words as «fast-flowing», «first», «free» and «fabled», later picked up with «Firm», «fine», «Father», and «forced». The poem's «c» alliteration, one occurring on a single line, «Christ's», «charity», «charmed», and «chained», continues in «contenance», «came», «court», and earlier «choke». The extended «t» alliteration is shown in such words as «That», «time», «Thecla», «Tarsus», «Twice», «tinted», «turnèd», and «tender». The «m» alliteration shows up in «Mary», «mark», «maiden», «mien», «modest», and «made, marred, and mended». It is then picked up later in «most» and «mealtime». The «n» alliteration connects «name», «next», «none», and «neighbours», the

17 Like «The Silver Jubilee», the poem attempts to revive the eclipsed reputation of an unheralded religious.

«v» alliteration contrasts «virtue» with «vice», and the extended «w» alliteration is shown in such words as «whitest», «Weeds», «wed», «Withal», «ways», «wise», «wings», and «won». By far the longest series of alliterations, the «s» alliteration, shows up in «sandy silt», along with «strike», «scrolled», «speaking», «spoke», «she», «sitting», «say», «scanned», «streets», «straight», «slanted», «sense», «some», «such», and «Son».

Largely unread because uncommented on, «St. Thecla» is one of Hopkins's uncanonical texts orbiting around larger canonical bodies; that «while it appears to be broken off or partial», to use a Harries distinction, it is «not necessarily opposed to some existing or imagined whole» (Harries 1962, p. 8).¹⁸ The rationale for considering «St. Thecla» a fragment is based on the poem's failure to mirror the entire historical account surrounding this eponymous first female Christian martyr.¹⁹ It leaves off before her two trials, the one in Iconium and the more angst-filled one in Antioch (Elliott 1993). «St. Thecla» was not intended to be an expansive account of the apocryphal story, but only a truncated version of it, the taste of which has been unappreciated largely because of the bias, prejudice, or interest brought to the poem, robbing it historically of broad universal acclaim to the beautiful, which, along with Kant's subjectivist bias, is fundamental to the beautiful: the «universality of the subjective conditions of estimating objects forms the sole foundation of this universal subjective validity of the delight which we connect with the representation of the object that we call *beautiful*» (Hutchins 1952, vol. 42, p. 483). For when «we call an object beautiful» – and the Hopkins poem fragment by its very marginalization has been assigned to the unaesthetic, the vulgar – «we believe ourselves to be speaking with a universal voice, and lay claim to the concurrence of everyone» (p. 482).

«St. Thecla» is generated by what I.A. Richards calls a «linguistic problem, whose solution by language will be the attainment and its end» (Richards 1963, p. 168): «Who thinks of Thecla?»: «the phrase to which the rest of the poem is a response – becomes, in the final version, the close» (p. 172). As Rajan observes, «the form of a poem is still seen by many critics as contingent on its closure [...] The fascination of the unfinished may be precisely that it both incites closure and resists it, that to bring it to a conclusion is both desirable, given its commitments, and inappropriate, given its procedures» (Rajan 1985, pp. 279-281). Absent any clear theory of the fragment, the governing principle appears to be that unfinished

18 Writing in *Matter and Memory* on pure memory and pure perception, Henri Bergson sees perception as impure. He describes «'pure' perception» as a «fragment of reality, detached just as it is», «unable to mingle with the perception of other bodies that of its own body», and considers it «an ideal, an extreme» (Bergson 1929, pp. 310, 317).

19 Were Hopkins to have pursued more fully the stuff of the saint's life, the poem might well have fallen prey to the heresy of the paraphrase.

poems and fragments are texts for which there are no extant fair copies, which would imply completion. «St.Thecla», then, should not be considered a fragment given the fact that there is an extant fair copy of the poem. Norman MacKenzie describes the autograph as «a fair copy with a number of emendations» (MacKenzie 1981, p. 220). And the only extant fair copy of the poem shows minimal changes, clearly indicating that Hopkins was satisfied with the result.²⁰ The poem has a finished and satisfied feel to it. There are a number of poems Hopkins considers fragments because he did not consider them finished, whether or not he had a fair copy. And of these, as Bridges observes, Hopkins often had «some 3, 4, or even 5 versions of the same poem» (Stanford 1984, vol. 2, pp. 652-653). And those «perpetual amendments and corrections», he felt, «give some trouble» (Nixon 1992, p. 287).

«St. Thecla», then, is a short version of a longer story, perhaps not unlike Hopkins's curial sonnet «Pied Beauty», which, surprisingly, has never been thought of as a fragment despite its widely acknowledged truncation. «St. Thecla» does not simply terminate before its appointed end; Hopkins elected to end it there. «A poem that is properly unfinished should be less satisfactory if we were to pursue any of the conceivable ways of finishing it» (Rajan 1985, p. 5). There is really no unintentional irresolution in the poem. As an «achieved» or «deliberate» fragment (Levinson 1986), or an «unfinished» poem (Rajan 1985), «St. Thecla» does not desire to flesh out the hagiographical and historical account of Thecla. To use Carritt's comment regarding Kant's appreciation of the beautiful, «the poet was stimulated by some interest or external experience to discover the beauty which is his poem» (Carritt 1962, p. 78). Poems ought not to be a text only slightly different, perhaps more terse and elliptical, from the account that generates it. Rather, as Smith suggests, a poem should be «unmoored from such a context, isolated from the circumstances and motives that might have occasioned it» (Smith 1968, p. 15).

The poem, moreover, shows that for Hopkins the aesthetic is a condition of the moral, the virtuous. Responding in part to Kant's subjectivity, Friedrich Schiller, in «On Grace and Dignity», repeatedly links the aesthetic to the moral, writing, for example, that «if we consider in him the moral person, we have a right to demand of his face an expression of the person», for it «requires an expression of the morality of the subject in the human face, so much, and with no less rigor, does the eye demand beauty». Ad-

²⁰ As Norman MacKenzie has noted, the poem originally ended with line 18 (MacKenzie 1989, p. 207), and well it could, for «bed» and the new ending «spot» are points of rest or cessation from activity. One could even argue that the original ending, «ready are bower and bed», provides even more satisfactory closure than the new ending, «forced her from the spot», which sounds somewhat anti-climactic. Internally, and without any reliance on the apocryphal account, we are left wanting to know who forced her, why, and what happened?

ditionally, says Schiller, «the moral cause, which in our soul is the foundation of grace, brings, in a necessary manner [...] precisely that state which contains in itself the natural conditions of beauty»; for «the state of moral perfection is precisely in it the most favorable for the accomplishment of the physical conditions of beauty. [...] [T]he moral perfection of man cannot shine forth except from this very association of his inclination with his moral conduct» (Schiller 1899?, pp. 199-200, 206).²¹ As Wilkinson and Willoughby would write regarding Schiller, «the two ideals of freedom, the aesthetic and the moral, are presented as two possibilities of the human psyche, constantly interacting, the relations between them never fixed. The aesthetic has to contribute to the development of the moral; and the moral then in turn takes its place within an overall aesthetic ‘tone’. [...] Here we have the Aesthetic exercising its disruptive-formative influence on Moral harmony to produce a still higher Morality» (Wilkinson, Willoughby 1967, pp. lix, lxxxvii). On more than a few occasions in the poem, Hopkins ties Thecla’s physical beauty to her moral condition, her virtue: «Twice lovely, tinted eastern, turned Greek – | Crisp lips, straight nose, and tender-slanted cheek. [...] | Withal her mien is modest, ways are wise». According to Eagleton, «Beauty is in this sense an aid to virtue, appearing as it does to rally support for our moral endeavors» (Eagleton 1990, p. 89). Singled out from Paul’s sermon is destruction replaced by recreation and an aesthetic of asceticism: «Of world made, marred, and mended, lost and won; | Of virtue and vice; but most (it seemed his sense) | He praised the lovely lot of continence».

The links between beauty and morality established by the likes of Kant, Schiller, Schlegel, and others are relevant to an understanding of Hopkins’s poetry, which, by focusing on the symbolic and the analogical, fits well into the tradition of a Tractarian aesthetic.²² Still, Hopkins did not always recognise or acknowledge that his poetry has a deeply religious function. Even the poetry of his friend and religious sceptic, Robert Bridges, approximates the sacred.²³ Bridges’s *The Testament of Beauty: A Poem in Four Books* (1929), by its very title, testifies to a religious (Testament) aesthetic (Beauty). One of its sonnets, «For beauty being the best of all we know», as Catherine Phillips points out, «went so far as to place beauty

21 Hopkins knew Schiller well enough to direct his friend Dixon to Schiller’s riddle on the rainbow.

22 See Nixon (1989; 1994), Tennyson (1981), Grove (2006), and Johnson (1997).

23 Catherine Phillips would describe Bridges’s work as of a «broad Christian kind» (Phillips 1992, p. 178). In calling Bridges a religious sceptic, I refer only to his reservations about Hopkins’s conversion to Catholicism and especially his joining the Jesuits. But Bridges was a staunch Anglican, organizing *The Yattendon Hymnal*, a collection of 100 hymns to enhance worship. In *The Testament of Beauty*, he would describe Hopkins’s «asceticism», his rejection of the sensual (a mere peach) as a type of «self-holocaust».

in the role normally thought of as God's» (Phillips 1992, p. 79). Hopkins's Scotist poem, «Pied Beauty», cataloging the multitudinous diversity, the variegated piedness, in the creation, generated by a single genus, the creator, declares an unbridled celebration of an altogether impure aesthetics. Hopkins's friend, biographer, and editor, Bridges drew from this poem and from «As kingfishers catch fire» in his own judgment of beauty: «Creator and mover of all as activ Lover of all, | self-express'd in not-self, without which no self were» (Bridges 1929, vol. 4, pp. 1440-1441). Hopkins routinely tied aesthetics to morality, as his poem «The Handsome Heart» illustrates: «Héart mánnery | is more than handsome face» (Phillips 1986, p. 145). We are admonished in «To What Serves Mortal Beauty» to love what are «World's loveliest - men's selves», seen most when the «Self flashes off frame and face» (p. 167). Providing his Leigh congregation a description of the human qualities of Jesus, Hopkins, in a 23 November 1879 sermon, draws on a sense of the moral, evident in the face: «far higher than beauty of the body, higher than genius and wisdom the beauty of the mind, comes the beauty of his character, his character of man» (Nixon, Barber forthcoming). Hopkins's Jesus, however, unlike the image presented by the Pre-Raphaélites, receives Aryan rather than Oriental, Middle-Eastern features, and conforms to the Victorian, Aryan iconographic tradition:

There met in J.C. all things that can make man lovely and loveable. In his body he was most beautiful. This is known first by the tradition in the Church that it was so //and by holy writers agreeing to suit those words to him Thou art beautiful in mould above the sons of men:²⁴and we have even accounts of him written in early times. They tell us that he was moderately tall, well built and slender in frame, his features straight and beautiful, his hair inclining to auburn, parted in the midst, curling and clustering about the ears and neck as the leaves of a filbert,

24 For the psalmic use of the phrase, «Thou art beautiful in mould», see Psalm 44: 3 («Thou art beautiful above the sons of men»). This psalm is a poem for a royal bridegroom, understood by Christians as prefiguring Christ. Hopkins used the expression in a number of poems, among them «Margaret Clitheroe» («The Christ-ed beauty of her mind | Her mould of features mated well»), «The Lantern out of Doors» («Men go by me, whom either beauty bright | In mould or mind or what not else makes rare»), «The Loss of the Eurydice» («They say who saw one sea corpse cold | He was all of lovely manly mould»), «On the Portrait of Two Beautiful Young People» («Of favoured make and mind and health and youth»), by way of an allusion in «The Bugler's First Communion» («Breathing bloom of chastity in mansex fine»), and in «Henry Purcell» («It is the forgèd feature finds me; it is the rehearsal | Of own, of abrupt self»). The clearest poetic reference to the beauty of Christ himself is in the sestet of «As kingfishers catch fire»: «For Christ plays in ten thousand places, | Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his | To the Father through the features of men's faces». So even here, Christ-ed beauty is best inscaped in the features of men as well as in the natural landscape, as in «Hurrahing in Harvest»: «And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder | Majestic - as a stallion stalwart, very-violet sweet! -».

so they speak, upon the nut. This hair, was never touched as well as a forked beard He wore also a forked beard and this as well as the hair locks upon his head were never touched by razor or shears; neither, his health being perfect, could a hair ever fall to the ground.²⁵

Hopkins grieved the loss of beauty, whether the diminished beauty in nature, found everywhere in his poetry, correspondence, and diary entries, or the compromised beauty in humans (as in Digby Dolben).²⁶ Women, especially such martyred saints like St. Winefred and Margaret Clitheroe, occupy an important place in Hopkins's lament: «The Christ-ed beauty of her mind | Her mould of features mated well» («Margaret Clitheroe», Phillips 1986, p. 126). Hopkins connects beauty of mind to the beauty of Christ's mind, the beauty, that is, of his intellectual interest and concern as well as his benevolent care. But despite Schiller's and Hopkins's conflation of the aesthetic with the moral, the aesthetic is also seen as something entirely apart. Carritt cautions, «What is distinctively beautiful need not by any means be distinctively useful, comfortable, or morally good», for «aesthetic theory, when it existed, was almost invariably distorted by the assumption that the essential thing in art was its moralizing purpose» (Carritt 1962, pp. 4, 29).²⁷ Even if the aesthetic does not necessarily (or not only) coincide with the moral, a reflection on the formal aspects and the appreciation of the beautiful in «St. Thecla» remains essential to clarifying Hopkins's contribution to the Romantic poetic fragment as a form that can inspire aesthetic emotions.

The unfinished is not simply a «variant» of the ruin: «the unfinished is other than the ruin», and as such «should not invite completion» (Rajan 1985, pp. 4-5). Regier puts it this way: «Fragmentation encourages us to look for details, and to perceive the importance of minuteness anew. It requires of us a certain attentiveness that reminds us how each fracture, textual or phenomenological, demands scrutiny in its relation to a larger structure. The relation between the two might uncover the impossibility of the broken piece to be reabsorbed into an original totality. Neverthe-

25 The human features of Jesus have much in common with Holman Hunt's lantern-carrying, Jesus, in *The Light of the World* (1851-1853).

26 The subject of Hopkins, beauty, and ugliness requires a separate study, including the beauty of nature often compromised by industrialism. His use of the terms «inscape» and «instress» speak informatively on his aesthetics. Helpful in this discussion is the chapter on Pater and a Victorian aesthetic in Nixon (1994); see also Nixon (1992), and Catherine Phillips (2007).

27 According to Kant, to determine the good in a thing is to know what that thing ought to be. But this is not necessary for the beautiful. The judgment of taste and appreciation of the beautiful cannot rely on the good, which would demand reason, cognition, objectivity, and the scientific.

less, the initial fantasy of plentitude, of wholeness, can turn out to be enabling and creative» (Regier 2010, p. 25). In Schlegel, «one of the reasons why the fragments are fragmentary, ruins and not complete edifices», is that Schlegel «wants us to intuit what might have been but never was, wants us to take the fragment and make of it a whole, take the ruin and reconstruct the edifice» (Firchow 1971 p. 18). Put similarly, «The dignity of a fragment in a poetry of self-formation lies in its finding its place in a process, in its being justified by its own extinction. It makes the truth instead of returning to it. It contributes to a whole which is neither beginning nor end but only history. The unfinished, in such a view, carries with it no natural citizenship, no whole from which it was disinherited, or from which its incompleteness has been made to proceed» (Rajan 1985, p. 249). Describing this move to where completion is enacted by the reader, Rajan talks about the fragment engaging the reader «more fully with the poem by assigning him the responsibility of joining the fragment to the implicit destiny [...]. Indeed, the reader's response can continue a poem that is formally closed and can even be guided in doing so by forces within the poem's containment» (pp. 278, 303). Or as Rauber puts it, the fragment «encourages us to continue beyond the poem; it converts the bounded into the boundless» (Rauber 1969, p. 221). Michel Foucault, in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, calls this a «positivity», to analyse a «discursive formation» by coming to terms with its «verbal performances at the level of the statements and of the form of positivity that characterizes them». In this way, a group of statements are viewed «not as the closed plethoric totality of a meaning, but as an incomplete, fragmented figure». Here we are attempting to «rediscover not the moment or the trace of their origin, but the specific forms on an accumulation», the simulacra, the text as it exists (1972, p. 125). Seen in this light, «St. Thecla», though gesturing to events beyond itself, is complete.

If a poem might be defined as a linguistic moment, then «St. Thecla» is a controlled and restrained utterance, a gesture, a historical and linguistic event. «Every beautiful thing, or, in other words, every work of art, is an individual expression, an expression of something that cannot be expressed in any other way and therefore cannot be known apart from its unique expression» (Carritt 1962, p. 118). A poem is not a neatly contained paraphraseable unit of verbal materials, but an explosive device anxious to break free from its formal container, charged and ready to go off at any time. Not an ossified, static, closed entity, a poem is a living, pulsating, dynamic, open thing. Reflecting brilliantly on the poetic process and product, Levinson writes, «Poets do not write poems that are increasingly intelligent or apropos or beautiful. They simply revise. And if the revision is good, if the guess at Heaven is truly a vision in finer tone, the poem becomes, as it were, a transitional object, able to comfort us as we die into life, repeatedly shedding our fondest illusions and acquiring some

new knowledge of terrible because pointless misery. Such poems chronicle and thereby confer upon their readers the past, the loved precursors, the outlived selves» (Levinson 1986, p. 187).

A virtually non-existent aesthetic form, the Victorian poem fragment survives only in the rediscovery of Sappho and re-appropriation of her fragments by poets such as Letitia E. Landon, Michael Field, and Swinburne. A subtle manifestation of the form resides in incomplete information and the need for evidence, as in Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and *The Idylls of the King* and Browning's *The Ring and the Book*, where the poets, confronting fracture, seek to stitch things together. The only declared Victorian fragment remains Robert Browning's *Pauline: A Fragment of a Confession* (1833), which reveals an indebtedness to Wordsworth's autobiographical lyric *The Prelude* and Shelley's elegy *Adonais*. Browning's dramatic monologue features an unnamed speaker, who, in seeking to arrive at some knowledge of the self, addresses a woman Pauline. The poem's mirror motif reflects the Romantic tradition of the autobiographical self observing its fictional double as the poet's solipsistic persona, undertakes, in the journey of the soul, a quest for self-knowledge. Lines of asterisks, the characteristic Romantic indicator of incompleteness, wreck, and ruin, structure this poem on dreams, visions, and hallucinations. Clyde de L. Ryals describes *Pauline* as «an open-ended 'fragment' [...] reflecting the imagery of expansion and contraction adumbrated in the confession». Although Browning conceived of the work as an aborted project, Ryals warns against seeing it as an attempt instead of a completion (Ryals 1983, p. 30).

What Hopkins undertakes in his fragments, then, is quite novel to the nineteenth century. His preoccupation with the aesthetic form is at once evidence of the inheritance of Romanticism as well as its anticipation in Modernism, where the fragment would disclose its Romantic legacy.²⁸ Hopkins's fragments are poetic porcupines, miniature works of art severed and isolated from the larger whole, but entirely self-contained and unfinished in their completion. As a genre always in a state of becoming, and more than the whole of which it is a part, the unfinished teases us into thought by its suggestiveness, its openness, its organicity, its potential. The Hopkins poem fragment shows the legacy of the Romantic tradition, one aspect of his Romanticism all but ignored by critics. Poems such as «St. Thecla», in the tradition of the Romantic poem fragment and in light of the then prevailing aesthetic theories, strive to make sense of our ideas of taste, beauty, purity, and completeness. «[I]n reality no purely aesthetic

28 See, for example, Jacque Barzun on the four phases of Romanticism. According to Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, nineteenth-century literature is «Romantic». Romanticism has «a recognizable general meaning and serves as a broad stylistic description of a whole era [...]. Modernism has been used, from time to time, analogously to Romanticism, to suggest the general temper of the twentieth-century arts» (Bradbury, McFarlane 1991, p. 23).

effect can be met with», for «the excellence of a work of art can only consist in its greater approximation to its ideal of aesthetic purity» (Schiller 1899?, p. 97). Hopkins's «St. Thecla» is a shard of pottery and poetry, a magnificent mutilation, cut off from the whole, but an entirely pleasing aesthetic experience.

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