



# Christina Rossetti & Gerard Manley Hopkins

*“The Mind Has Mountains”*

# Christina Rossetti

- ✦ *Born 1830 in London, England; youngest of four children; parents were Gabriele Rossetti, an Italian political exile, and Frances Polidori Rossetti, an English-Italian scholar; educated at home*
- ✦ *Became a devout Anglo-Catholic and refused three offers of marriage on religious grounds*
- ✦ *Participated in the Pre-Raphaelite movement with her brothers and published several volumes of poetry, the first of which was Goblin Market and Other Poems (1862)*
- ✦ *Devoted herself to charity, especially work for “fallen women,” i.e., ex-prostitutes; died in 1894 in London*
- ✦ *Was respected in her time as the successor to Elizabeth Barrett Browning as England’s best female poet, work went slightly into eclipse with modernism, but was revived for its psychoanalytic and feminist themes*



# Rossetti and the Female Sonnet

## A Triad — ironic sonnet

Three sang of love together: one with lips  
Crimson, with cheeks and bosom in a glow,  
Flushed to the yellow hair and finger tips;  
And one there sang who soft and smooth as snow  
Bloomed like a tinted hyacinth at a show;  
And one was blue with famine after love,  
Who like a harpstring snapped rang harsh and low  
The burden of what those were singing of.  
One shamed herself in love; one temperately  
Grew gross in soulless love, a sluggish wife;  
One famished died for love. Thus two of three  
Took death for love and won him after strife;  
One droned in sweetness like a fattened bee:  
All on the threshold, yet all short of life.

↳ perhaps the threshold of religious faith

the options for  
Victorian love:

1.) die for lack of love

2.) become promiscuous

3.) grow useless  
in marriage

1862

## In an Artist's Studio<sup>1</sup>

One face looks out from all his canvases,  
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans;  
We found her hidden just behind those screens,  
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.  
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,  
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,  
A saint, an angel;—every canvas means  
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.  
He feeds upon her face by day and night,  
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him  
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:  
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;  
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;  
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

Lizzie Siddal

↓  
images of women in  
Pre-Raphaelite  
art

# “Goblin Market”: Commodity Culture, Female Desire, & Sisterly Love

White and golden Lizzie stood,  
Like a lily in a flood,—  
Like a rock of blue-veined stone  
Lashed by tides obstreperously,—  
Like a beacon left alone  
In a hoary roaring sea,  
Sending up a golden fire,—  
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree  
White with blossoms honey-sweet  
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—  
Like a royal virgin town  
Topped with gilded dome and spire  
Close beleaguered by a fleet  
Mad to tug her standard down.



She cried “Laura,” up the garden,  
“Did you miss me?  
Come and kiss me,  
Never mind my bruises,  
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices  
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,  
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.  
Eat me, drink me, love me;  
Laura, make much of me: → this  
For your sake I have braved the glen  
And had to do with goblin merchant men.”

# Walter Pater & Art for Art's Sake

...forces unite in their purest energy?  
To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits: for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike. While all melts under our feet, we may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colors, and curious odors, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening. With this sense of the splendor of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch. What we have

# Walter Pater & Art for Art's Sake

Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and molded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the Middle Age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias.<sup>6</sup> She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants, and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy,<sup>7</sup> and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the

sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has molded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.

# Gerard Manley Hopkins

- ✦ *Born in 1844 in Essex, the eldest of nine children; father was a marine insurance adjuster; family was prosperous and devoutly Anglican*
- ✦ *Studied classics at Oxford where Walter Pater was his tutor and converted to Roman Catholicism; joined the Jesuits in 1868 and then entered the priesthood in 1877*
- ✦ *Wrote but did not publish innovative poetry throughout his life, struggling with a perceived conflict between a religious and a poetic vocation, as well as his sexuality*
- ✦ *Died in Ireland in 1889 of typhoid fever*
- ✦ *Friend Robert Bridges, later Poet Laureate, published his poems in 1918, when they were celebrated as an anticipation of modernism*



# Hopkins on Inscap and Instress

Hopkins's sense of his own uniqueness is in accord with the larger philosophy that informs his poetry. Drawing on the theology of Duns Scotus, a medieval philosopher, he felt that everything in the universe was characterized by what he called inscape, the distinctive design that constitutes individual identity. This identity is not static but dynamic. Each being in the universe "selves," that is, enacts its identity. And the human being, the most highly selved, the most individually distinctive being in the universe, recognizes the inscape of other beings in an act that Hopkins calls instress, the apprehension of an object in an intense thrust of energy toward it that enables one to realize its specific distinctiveness. Ultimately, the instress of inscape leads one to Christ, for the individual identity of any object is the stamp of divine creation on it. In the act of instress, therefore, the human being becomes a celebrant of the divine, at once recognizing God's creation and enacting his or her own God-given identity within it.



# Hopkins's Poetics of Inscap

## As Kingfishers Catch Fire

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;

As tumbled over rim in roundy wells

Stones ring; like each tucked° string tells, each hung bell's plucked

Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:

Deals out that being indoors° each one dwells;

Selves<sup>1</sup>—goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,

Crying What I do is me: for that I came.

I say more: the just man justifies<sup>2</sup>

Keeps gráce: that keeps all his goings graces;

Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—

Christ. 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.

— commenting "essential act of stones, bells, dragonflies, ..."

→ everything brings forth what is within it

each individual is a verb rather than a noun as it becomes itself — i.e., Christ

# Hopkins's Elegy for the Common Man

Felix Randal

Felix Randal the farrier, ° O is he dead then? my duty <sup>→ as priest, giving last rites, tending to his parishioner</sup>  
all ended, <sup>blacksmith</sup>  
Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome  
Pining, pining, till time when reason rambled in it and some  
Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

Sickness broke him. Impatient, he cursed at first, but mended  
Being anointed<sup>1</sup> and all; though a heavenlier heart began some  
Months earlier, since I had our sweet reprieve and ransom<sup>2</sup> <sup>→ power of the sacraments</sup>  
Tendered to him. Ah well, God rest him all road ever<sup>3</sup> he offended!

This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears.<sup>4</sup> <sup>to them (?)</sup>  
My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had quenched thy tears, <sup>→ priest benefits too</sup>  
Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal;  
How far from then forethought of, all thy more boisterous years,  
When thou at the random<sup>4</sup> grim forge, powerful amidst peers,  
Didst fettle<sup>5</sup> for the great grey drayhorse his bright and battering  
sandal! <sup>→ contrast time of sickness w/ that of health - end on the note of craftsmanship, of vitality, of animal nature</sup>

80 <sup>craftsman & nature in collaboration</sup> 1918

# Hopkins's Medieval Nostalgia

## • Duns Scotus's Oxford<sup>1</sup>

the effect of giving up these compounds is to express dynamic variety etc as a unity - to express All in one 5

Towery city and branchy between towers;  
Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmèd, lark-charmèd, rook-racked, river-rounded;  
The dapple-eared lily below thee; that country and town did  
Once encounter in, here coped and poisèd powers;  
Thou hast a base and brickish skirt there, sours  
That neighbour-nature thy grey beauty is grounded → ugliness of modern & industrial development ruining the medieval atmosphere  
Best in;<sup>2</sup> graceless growth, thou hast confounded → a certain kind of artistic-craftsmanship-like world substance nature as its neighbor  
Rural rural keeping—folk, flocks, and flowers.

10 Yet ah! this air I gather and I release  
He lived on; these weeds and waters, these walls are what  
He haunted who of all men most sways my spirits to peace;

Of realty<sup>o</sup> the rarest-veinèd unraveller; a not  
Rivalled insight, be rival Italy or Greece;  
Who fired France for Mary without spot.<sup>3</sup>

1879

→ civilizational glory of medieval Catholicism - don't be so sure the classical is superior reality  
1918  
et al on that idealized feminine virgin icon  
- also a bit of nationalism - claiming a native English Catholic tradition

# Hopkins's Crisis of Faith

• No worst, there is none

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,  
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.  
Comforter, where, where is your comforting? *> cry to God*  
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?

My cries heave, herds-long;<sup>1</sup> huddle in a main, a chief-  
woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing—  
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked "No ling-  
ering! Let me be fell: force<sup>2</sup> I must be brief."  
O the mind, mind has mountains, cliffs of fall *→ mind is  
dangerous  
place  
over*  
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap  
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small  
Durance<sup>o</sup> deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,

Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all  
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.