Daniel Westover and William Wright, eds.

The World Is Charged: Poetic Engagements with Gerard Manley Hopkins. Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2016. Pp. xxii + 164. Pb, \$24.99.

Both fascinating and deeply original, this book is also brave—yes, brave—for it seeks a reader who knows well the rich and complex poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, the great Victorian Jesuit now recognized as a major poet. Such a reader is grandly rewarded, for to celebrate Hopkins's continuing influence, the book prints 130 poems by sixty-nine contemporary poets *without a single comment on any of the poems*, so that the reader can *personally* discover, appreciate, and enjoy how each poem echoes Hopkins's distinctive style. This integrity of discovery is preserved by printing the poems in the alphabetical order of the poets' names—men and women from the United States, England, Wales, and Ireland. In this fresh, compelling way, the book proclaims and celebrates the strong influence of Hopkins a century and a quarter after his death. *The World Is Charged* even takes its title-image of an electrical "charge" from the bright, flying sparks of Hopkins's beloved poem "God's Grandeur." These 130 poems sparkle with Hopkins's originality and verve, and wonderfully establish the editors' point that, as a poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins is pulsingly alive.

The book first offers a "Foreword" and an "Introduction" by the two editors, both poets themselves. In a two-page "Foreword," William Wright describes his own college-encounter with Hopkins's images, sounds, and wisdom, and argues that today's living poets, notably younger poets, demonstrate that Hopkins's "legacy [...] thrives in the minds of many of today's best writers," and will likely "blossom in the words of many future poets" (xv). Then Daniel Westover, in a five-page "Introduction," records his own students' simultaneous "bewilderment, [...] whiplash, [...] and awe" as they see how Hopkins can still effectively "strike wonder," be unique, and present the world as an "expression [...] of God" (xvi). The poet, "obsessed with words and their infinitely variable, infinitely peculiar combinations" (xvii), had a fine ear for unusual phrasings, rhythms, and sounds, and maintained that his "verse is less to be read than heard," and should be "read [...] with the ears" (xvii). In sum, writes Westover, Hopkins is not a Victorian, nor a modernist, nor an imagist—he "cannot be pigeonholed"—and thus has "remained relevant for almost a century" as "a foundational influence" for "some of the foremost poets of the twentieth century" (xix), such poets as Ivor Gurney, W.H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, Robert Lowell, John Berryman, Robert Hayden, Elizabeth Bishop, Sylvia Plath, Seamus Heaney, Randall Jarrell, and Geoffrey Hill. With their help, "Hopkins has entered the mainstream of contemporary poetry" as a continuing influence (xix).

Evidence for this assertion is the heart of the book: 146 pages of 130 poems by sixty-nine poets, printed only as texts, with no dates, background, or commentary. As the heart of the book, these poems shine and sparkle as they reflect Hopkins's style. By way of example, I first offer one poem to show the book's methodology, then, by way of breadth, I record my own jottings as I read the rest of the poems.

A complete poem by Robin Chapman typifies Hopkins's influence today:

Spare

I watch the black crow, wing-wrenched,
 walking on snow—how we can go on,
 go on, memory-borne, through cold,
 through wind's work, loved world,
 till owl-dusk or fox-dawn. I want to walk
 with my friends through broken-winged
 days,
 want words to lift us back to the
 ordinary air,
 to spare us pain. I want the words when
 time
 comes, to speak by our graves, to comfort
 the living, honor the dead, lay each of
 us to rest
 earth-borne, shroud-wound or wind-
 kissed,
 grateful for life's brief flight of joy,
 light-blest. (11)

Many basic touches of Hopkins grace this poem: (1) hyphenates: "wing-wrenched," "memory-borne," "owl-dusk," "fox-dawn," "broken-winged," "earth-borne, shroud-wound or wind-kissed," "light-blest"; (2) *cynghanedd* (a Welsh word pronounced "king-hah'-neth" and meaning "consonant-chime," a musical technique of Welsh poetry): "watch the black crow, wing-wrenched, / walking on snow," "want words," "ordinary air, / to spare"; (3) unusual metaphors: "wing-wrenched," "owl-dusk," "fox-dawn," "broken-winged days"; (4) random rhyme: the poem's only rhyme is "rest" / "light-blest." In this poem of Robin Chapman, Hopkins lives on well and musically.

The other poems likewise exhibit many Hopkinsean resonances in style and content. For examples, I quote from my random jottings as I read the po-

ems: “images/colors”; “birds”; “magical metaphors”; “VIVID, VIVID, VIVID images”; “*cynghanedd*”; “form (traditional or experimental sonnet)”; “invented words (“unsleep,” “woodblanket”)”; “rhyme (often irregular)”; “nature, nature, nature”; “sound”; “compressed meaning/image”; “rhythm”; “the limits of language”; “consciousness/self-awareness”; “landscape”; “wordplay”; “meaning/syntax to be puzzled out”; “hyphenates”; “about strange things, e.g., a bent nail, a finger-bone”; “seeing nature (and other things) from unusual perspectives”; “word-loving wordplay”; “religion”; “animals”; “color”; “life”; “God and faith.” My conclusion: This book defines Hopkins through his imitators, rather than through written commentary. It helped me to enjoy Hopkins even more, and above all, to better appreciate both his originality and his striking influence today.

Two final sections follow this textual heart of the book: a three-page “Afterword” by Paul Mariani, and fourteen pages of biography about the book’s sixty-nine poets. Mariani, himself a poet and biographer of poets, begins, “Gerard Manley Hopkins’s influence on English poetry [...] has been nothing short of extraordinary” (147), offering as specifics fifteen English, Welsh, Irish, and American poets, and translations into French, German, Spanish, Polish, Italian, Czech, Russian, Chinese, and Japanese. (I might add Korean and Hebrew.) He then points out Hopkins’s “logocentric” understanding of reality and how his love of words ultimately grew from “the Word made flesh made Word” (147), that is, from divine creation of the world through Christ-the-Word, to Christ’s becoming human, to Christ’s re-creation through the words of poets. Finally, after again noting Hopkins’s influence on poets, he praises, wonderfully, “this rich garland of poems which Daniel Westover and William Wright have gathered” (149): it is “a stunning collection of poems [...] ringing in the air like the giant wind chime these poems play” (150). Then comes the book’s last section, fourteen-pages of brief biographies of the sixty-nine poets, ranging from “B” to “W.” It is a fitting, deeply human ending for this wonderful book, a celebration of Hopkins’s ongoing life as a poet and a celebration of his sparkling poetic heirs.

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DOI 10.1163/22141332-00404008-20