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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF G M HOPKINS AND MATTHEW ARNOLD

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Abstract: Living behind the Victorian restlessness and religious controversy Hopkins observed in his nature poems, undisturbed beauty and harmony as his mind was filled with praising of God. Haunting description of nature was also distinguishable in Arnold's poems, but like Hopkins, Arnold never felt any divine presence in nature that his cold intellectualism denied. Both poets expressed a deep discontent with the infidelity and alienation of modern people. The more significant difference between Hopkins and Arnold is that Hopkins spiritual barrenness was caused by his obdurate selfhood which retarded him from absolute surrender to God, and Arnold's spiritual sterility was caused by lost faith resulting from the failure of religious ideas and facts. Feeling of sterility, loneliness and emotional crisis influenced both of them. But difference lies in the fact that Hopkins was a devout Catholic whereas Arnold had no belief in traditional religion. Finally, both Arnold and Hopkins searched for a way by which they could be free from spiritual barrenness.

Keywords: selfhood, spiritual sterility, emotional crisis.

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Hopkins was an institutionalized religious figure whose poetry rang with religious ebullience. On the other hand, Arnold had disgust for everything that is structured religion and he judged everything with cold rationality. Arnold believed that code of belief must be free from religious fervor that was in seriously conflicted with Hopkins, a devoted Jesuit priest. He reduced religion to

a mere system of morality what he termed righteousness. Yet the poet expressed a deep discontent with the isolated state and materialistic outlook of the Victorian era. It would seem that Arnold had little faith in a universal revitalization and Hopkins also suffered from spiritual barrenness. However, they were fundamentally different, for Arnold was an agnostic disillusioned with

the state of Christianity, whereas Hopkins attempted to achieve spiritual perfection sacrificing his poetry and continuing his responsibility as a priest.

The idea about poetry was, justifiably, key to both poets. Arnold maintained an almost religious-like faith exerts from poetry, the essential source of his spiritual power. On the other hand, Hopkins to praise Christ, developed a distinctive pattern of poetry. Living behind the Victorian restlessness and religious controversy Hopkins observed in his nature poems, undisturbed beauty and harmony as his mind was filled with praising of God. Haunting description of nature was also distinguishable in Arnold's poems. Like Hopkins or Wordsworth, he never felt any divine presence in nature that his cold intellectualism denied. Arnold's "Dover Beach", and Hopkins's "Thou art Indeed Just, Lord", and "God's Grendeur" reflected the view of nature and religious crisis.

Picturesque description of the beach at Dover created a haunting experience in the reader's mind. The time was night, and the sea remained calm. The sound of the pebbles grated because it disturbed an enchantment. The opening lines of the poem enchanted us and provided the image for the enthrallment of Faith:

*The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;- on the French coast
the light*

*Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of
England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the
tranquil bay. ("Dover Beach" 102)*

The quiet ocean and the full tide, moonlight on the straits, the sparkle of lights, the bluffs reflected gleaming out in the serene bay were the images of delight and illusion. The poet here just featured the pictorial quality of nature. There was a grinding interchange between the charm they attracted us to and the picture they accommodated positive human states. The following line definitively modified just visual experience:

*Come to the window, sweet is the
night-air! ("Dover Beach" 102)*

The grinding roar of the pebbles was heard to acquire the interminable note of misery. Sophocles had heard the sound on the Aegean "and it brought/ Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow/ Of human misery" ("Dover Beach" 102) So the turbid developments of human hopelessness remained in a grinding transaction with the shining pictures of enchantment and illusion, supported while the window stayed shut. Arnold heard a similar sound and contemplatively longed for the past. It was that the Sea of Faith was once too at the full, as at Dover:

*... and round earth's shore.
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle
furled. ("Dover Beach",102)*

Then he addressed his beloved to be faithful to one another. In any case, he realized that one cannot depend on the reality of the beloved. Arnold was clear enough about the constraints of human love; a similar view is uncovered in "The Buried Life", for example:

***Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what indeed they
feel? ("The Buried Life" 107-110)***

Arnold's deep discontent and pessimism regarding Victorian way of life comes forth toward the end of the poem:

***And we are here as on a darkling
plain
Swept with confused alarms of
struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by
night. ("Dover Beach", 102)***

Sense of nothingness and the meaninglessness were given powerful expression through the confused action of the ignorant people. Their activity was purposeless and consequently, tranquility and spiritual bliss were replaced by the spiritual unproductiveness and faith-crisis. Like Arnold, Hopkins expressed a deep discontent with the infidelity and alienation of modern people as he felt that modern man was concerned with profit and who systematically failed to notice God's significance:

***Generation have trod, have trod,
have trod;***

***And all is seared with trade; bleared,
smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge shares
man's smell ("God's Grandeur",
1546)***

His feeling of wonder and magnificence in God's made world was apparent in his different outcries and discharge as he entreated the peruser to 'look at the stars! look up at the skies! or look at all the fire-fold sitting in the air! ("The Starlight night" 1548). The capacity of Hopkins to discover a paradise in a wild bloom is rich as he remarked that "Thrush's egg s look like low heavens" ('spring'). His happiness, even delight and satisfaction, at rediscovering nature brought about the way that he saw everything as made in Christ. Like Arnold's conviction that God's affection could be felt through individual inclination, Hopkins kept up through his diary and through his verse that God stays ubiquitous and that one essentially needs to look, truly take a gander at the excellence of nature to see the magnificence of Christ:

***I walk, I lift up heart, eye's,
Down all that glory in the heavens to
glean our Savior
("Hurrahing in harvest", 1548)***

However, the more significant unlikeness between Hopkins and Arnold is that Hopkins spiritual barrenness was caused by his obdurate selfhood which retarded him from absolute surrender to God.

And Arnold's spiritual sterility was caused by lost faith resulting from the failure of religious ideas and facts. While Hopkins looked outside he observed that every object is charged with the stateliness and magnificence of God but as he looked into his soul he encountered only despair.

Arnold was a spiritual refugee as dismay and nihilism of the loss of faith surrounded his spiritual faculty. In "Dover Beach" he communicated a very deem plausibility of awakening from the place that is known for dreams. It is a befuddled awakening to an internal impulsion towards the potential outcomes of what he was later to call "conduct" and "righteousness". Their separation from clear awareness decided the despairing, which was the voice of their attestation. As he said in "The Buried Life",

***Yet still, from time to time, vague
and forlorn,
From the soul's subterranean depth
upborne
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs, and floating echoes, and
convey
A melancholy into all our day (107-
110)***

Arnold did not "offer the consolation of human love" in "Dover Beach" since he was persuaded by the disappointment and frustration of human relationship, as he said in "The Buried Life". Here he investigated and analyzed the disappointments of human correspondence, and found

the name of our anonymous trouble. Arnold gave a wellspring of the despairing in the shared and self-distance. Be that as it may, regularly, even on the planet's most packed avenues and in the racket of struggle, "there rises an unspeakable desire". After the knowledge of our buried life:

***A thirst to spend our fire and restless
force
In tracking out our true, original
course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which
beats
So wild, so deep in us - to know
Whence our lives come and where
they go
(*"The Buried Life"*, 107-110)***

Hopkins did not deal with human relationship, for he was socially isolated. His sense of loneliness and sterility was caused by the non-communication with God. In nature poems Hopkins looked at the nature and recorded their uniqueness, diversity, and manifestation of God. This productivity and fruitfulness reminded him of his own disappointment at his vocation to priesthood. At this point he was convinced that he could produce nothing worthy as a poet and his preaching proved a failure at this point. In "Thou Art Indeed Just, Lord", Hopkins looked at the success of nature which was always full of beauty. Birds built nests in which to breed, whereas the poet failed to accomplish anything

worthwhile. He saw himself as a eunuch to Time. No matter how much he might have tried, he remained impotent, being unable to breed anything worthwhile. The eunuch imagery was very apt to expose his sterility. He used the metaphor, which referred to him as a spiritual eunuch, unable to enlighten people with his words of wisdom. At the end of the poem he made an earnest appeal to God:

***Time's eunuch, and not breed one
work that wakes.***

***Mine, O thou lord of life, send my
roots rain.***

("Thou Art Indeed Just, Lord" 1553)

Feeling of sterility, loneliness and emotional crisis influenced both of them. But difference lies in the fact that Hopkins was a devout Catholic whereas Arnold had no belief in traditional religion. He believed in certain ultimate truth and beauty. He, moreover, could never be a full-fledged agnostic. The roar of sea of faith, though withdrawing, was heard clearly. Often he yearned for the past when faith gave a direction and certainty to man's life. In "The Scholar Gipsy" we find him envying the Gipsy:

***Born in days when wits were fresh
and clear***

***And life ran gaily as the sparkling
Tames.***

("The Scholar Gipsy" 1359)

Besides, he believed in soul's immortality. In "The Scholar Gipsy"

Arnold strongly felt that scholar gypsy was immortal. Like mortal man, he was not worn out by the continuous shift in their aims. In the same poem the poet lamented the spiritual barrenness of the Victorian people:

***This strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied
heartys.***

("The Scholar Gipsy" 1359)

Being perplex by the conflict between science and religion, and deafened by the turmoil and tumult of the age, he lost his inherent faith. In "The Scholar Gypsy" he asserted the promising condition of faith:

***Still nursing the unconquerable hope
Still clutching the inviolable shade.***
("The Scholar Gipsy" 1359)

Like Arnold, Hopkins' spiritual conflict was not between faith and faithlessness, rather his conflict resulted from the inquisitive soul that prompted him to question the ways of God about his own failure and barrenness. His ego or inquisitive mind was the only obstacle in the way of self-surrender to the will of God. He recorded his experience of self-loath and inescapable selfhood in the following lines:

***I am gall, I am heartburn. God's
most deep decree***

***Bitter would have me taste: my taste
was me;***

***Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood
brimmed the curse.***

***Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours.
I see***

***The lost are like this, and their
scourge to be***

***As I am mine, their sweating selves;
but worse.***

***("I Wake And Feel The Fell Of
Darkness, Not Day" 1552)***

Another fundamental difference between the two poets regarding their view about poetry should be taken into consideration. Arnold considered poetry to be the superior to any other form in reflecting the divine. In the introduction to "The Study of Poetry" Arnold spoke about the failure of religion in holding spiritual perfection. However, he thought:

***For poetry the idea is everything: the
rest is a world of illusion. Poetry attaches
its emotion to the idea: the idea is the
fact. The strongest part of our religion
today is its unconscious. (Brett77)***

Arnold eventually thought that the poets and poetry would echo the voice of God. He saw great poetry as "a glass in which man could discern an image of eternal truth" (Brett 7). Therefore, he regarded poetry as the significant way of establishing the reconnection with God.

Finally, both Arnold and Hopkins searched for a way by which they could be free from spiritual barrenness. Hopkins searched for a perfect form of religion to attain spiritual success, while Arnold found an alternative of religion. Hopkins' spiritual sterility was not caused by faithlessness but sometimes by duality between sensuous self and restricted Jesuit life that instigated him to question the ways of God. Though he several times failed to have God's response, he was able to endure his faith ultimately. He asked for deliverance only to God. But Arnold believed in rationalism that could provide him with spiritual ease.

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