

IMMORTAL DIAMOND. Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins. Edited by Norman Weyand, S.J. (Sheed and Ward; 21s.)

This is a collection of detailed studies by American Jesuits of various aspects of G. M. Hopkins and his work, valuable *because* they are detailed, including analyses of sprung rhythm, Hopkins's Greco-Roman verse investigations, the meaning of *The Windhover*, *The Loss of the Eurydice* and *The Wreck of the Deutschland*; examinations of his poetic diction and his specific rôle as a poet of nature and the supernatural, with a Hopkins glossary and bibliography. The most valuable sections are those by John Louis Bonn (though he does use words like 'rhythmisation' and 'patterning') Raymond V. Schoder and Walter J. Ong, who emphasises and explains Hopkins's most fruitful gift to poetry, his restoration of sense-stress rhythm and 'the current language heightened'.

The first essay reminds us that Hopkins was by his own choice priest first and poet second; the book would not have been produced, though, had he not won fame as a poet. The problem is complex. Hopkins chose the stern vocation of priest; he was a good and a valiant man, but an ill one, and the body's weakness affects the mental ability to fulfil a vocation whether as priest or as poet. His poetry is that of a genius, but a tormented one—his stature is measured by the fact that like all great poets he deals entirely with realities of nature and the spirit, but in Hopkins's case the terms he uses are almost aggressively Hopkins and the method often involuted or convoluted. Hopkins himself writes: 'After all there is nothing like the plain truth: paradox persisted in is not the plain truth and ought not to satisfy the reader'. Hopkins's poetry is sometimes ambiguity persisted in. For this reason the contention of Arthur MacGillivray, S.J., that Hopkins be used as 'a model for a creative writing group' seems open to question. Only universal writers, whose greatness transcends their struggles, Shakespeare, Goethe, are adequate as models, but not Thompson, Donne or Hopkins, fine poets though they are, whose struggles *are* their verse, and in whose tortuosities imitators and students often get lost. The achievement of poetry is a moral achievement, not merely a technical obedience to inspiration, and the achievement of great poetry is the achievement finally of simplicity. There are two kinds of simplicity, that of innocence, and the simplicity which is wisdom distilled from suffering and experience. This latter Hopkins achieves in flashes—then he speaks the plain truth in his own unique terms and is great. Obscurity due to complexity of thought is valid, but obscurity due only to ambiguity or difficulty of language is suspect. Had he not been tormented by illness, his 'masculinity' for this reason being sometimes almost forcibly heightened, Hopkins would have been among England's greatest poets—or among her greatest priests. As it is he remains a remarkable, original and a fascinating one, certainly a greater man than we who have the presumption to write of him. J.B.P.