Abstract: The poetic theories of inscape and sprung rhythm developed by British poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89) have baffled critics for years. Most critics have relied upon the published poems for clues to their significance. This study advances the analysis further by revealing the genesis of the theory of inscape to be Hopkins' undergraduate notes on the pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides and is influenced by commentaries on Parmenides' work “On Nature.” A study of Hopkins' letters to fellow poets Robert Bridges and Richard Watson Dixon reveals that sprung rhythm emanates from his overarching theory of inscape; sprung rhythm is, thus, the application of inscape to the metrical patterns of poetry. After determining a working definition of both poetic theories, this study applies these terms to the manuscripts to determine to what extent Hopkins adhered to and developed the theories when writing two of his canonical poems: “God's Grandeur” and “The Windhover.” It thus fits in the field of genetic criticism, a critical approach developed in France and centered at the Institut des Textes et Manuscrits Modernes (ITEM). Most analyses conducted have thus been done on French works and to prose. Deletions, additions, and substitutions, as well as the consistencies from one version to another, reveal Hopkins' priorities as he strove to attain the desired effect. Therefore, this study endeavours to unveil the meaning of Hopkins' poetic theories by determining their geneses and their application to two of his best known poems, “God's Grandeur” and “The Windhover,” through the practice of genetic analysis. It contributes to genetic criticism in applying it to works written in the English language and to poetry rather than prose. The hope is to renew interest in Hopkins as a viable poet to study and to incite further appreciation in his prowess as both poetic theorist and poet.
'The Windhover' was written by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89) in 1877, but, like many of Hopkins’s poems, was not published until 1918, long after his death. It’s one of his most widely anthologised poems and some analysis of it may help readers to appreciate it as a curious and interesting example of the sonnet form. So, what follows is a very brief analysis of the poem, designed to act as a short introduction to its linguistic power and its themes. The Windhover. To Christ Our Lord. I caught this morning morning’s minion, king- dom of daylight’s dauphin.