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MICHAEL MATTHEW KAYLOR

**“BECAUSE BENEATH THE LAKE A TREASURE SANK”:
DOLBEN AS JOHNSON’S URANIAN HEIR**

William Johnson (*later* Cory; 1823–92), a Classics master at Eton until dismissed in 1872 for exercising a pedagogy which was tinged with the sensual, left his mark upon the Uranian Movement, a group of pederastic writers and artists which was, in many ways, his creation – or, in the phrasing of Timothy d’Arch Smith, “Cory gave the Uranians at once an inspiration and an example” (11). Johnson’s influence sprang, in part, from the verses of his *Ionica*, a “classic paean to romantic pederastia” (Dowling 114), verses such as his “An Invocation”, which concludes with the most concise elucidation of pederastic pedagogy that a Uranian ever penned – “two minds shall flow together, the English and the Greek” (line 30). Such a “flow” can be seen in the intertextual intimacy between Johnson and his former Etonian Digby Mackworth Dolben (1848–67).¹

While reading Dolben’s poems in manuscript, poems intertextually responsive to his own, Johnson must have felt the feverous pleasure of influence that Oscar Wilde’s Lord Henry describes:

No other activity was like it. To project one’s soul into some gracious form, and let it tarry there for a moment; to hear one’s own intellectual views echoed back to one with all the added music of passion and youth; to convey one’s temperament into another as though it were a subtle fluid or a strange perfume; there was a real joy in that – perhaps the most satisfying joy left to us in an age so limited and vulgar as our own, an age grossly carnal in its pleasures, and grossly common in its aims. (*Dorian* 39–40)

Johnson would have recognised the echo of his own soul, intellectual views, and temperament in lines such as these by Dolben:

For the sweet temperance of your youth,
Unconscious chivalry and truth,
And simple courtesies;
A soul as clear as southern lake,

Yet strong as any cliffs that break
 The might of northern seas;

For these I loved you well, – and yet
 Could neither you nor I forget,
 But spent we soberly
 The autumn days, that lay between
 The skirts of glory that had been,
 Of glory that should be. (“To –”, lines 19–30)

Particularly the “St. Michael” stanza of “Homo Factus Est” caught Johnson’s attention, and he “marvelled that it could have been written by a schoolboy” (*Dolben* 1915, lviii).

D’Arch Smith claims that “had [Dolben] not died in 1867 at the very early age of nineteen he would undoubtedly have become involved with some of the group” (188), a claim with which I disagree. By the time he left Eton at seventeen, Dolben – who “found himself writing perfect Uranian verse when intending or perhaps pretending to indite religious stanzas” (191) – already possessed an uncanny sense of what constituted “membership” in the Uranian circle, which is displayed by his discrete circulation of his own verses to sympathetic Uranians such as Johnson and Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–89). In contrast, this circulation was more restricted in terms of his friend, distant cousin, and Eton prefect Robert Bridges (1844–1930),² whose failure to appreciate that the privileges of friendship, family ties, and proximity do not necessarily extend to private papers provoked an archetypal Uranian bonfire resembling Hopkins’s “slaughter of the innocents”:

One evening when I was sitting in [Dolben’s] room and moved to pull out the [bureau] drawer where he kept his poems, the usual protest was not made. The drawer was empty; and he told me that he had burned them, every one. I was shocked, and felt some remorse in thinking that it was partly his dislike of my reading them that had led him to destroy them.

(*Dolben* 1915, xxi)

Of the most romantic of all [Dolben’s] extravagancies, that idealization and adoration of his school-friend, which long after they were parted went on developing in his maturer poems, I have a better memory. It was well known to me in 1863, indeed the burning of the poems may have been due to the existence among them of poems to “Archie” [“Archie Manning” is the pseudonym by which Bridges disguises Martin le Marchant Hadsley Gosselin]: for Dolben would have been almost as reluctant to submit them to me as to the eyes of their unwitting object. (xxv)

It slowly dawned on Bridges that Dolben was being cautious about which poems he was permitted to see, adding emphasis to the “some” in statements like “I send

you some verses, as you were kind enough to wish for them” (lxxxiii). Eventually Bridges came to realise that Dolben’s “Greek sympathies” (xcix), not artistic coyness, determined which poems he was shown, as well as had fuelled the bonfire which he himself had provoked. Despite his youth, Dolben was intuitive enough to recognise that un-Uranian Bridges would never prove a sympathetic audience for many of his verses, which was insightful. Even after a lifetime of contemplation, Bridges, as editor of Dolben’s poems, could only conclude, particularly of the earlier poems which he (mis)labels “sentimental trash” (xxiii): “The reading of these poems makes one see why schoolmasters wish their boys to play games” (lv).

Upon discovering that Bridges had been shown several of his poems through a third party, Dolben inquired of him pointedly, though attempting to mask his displeasure: “You were very welcome to see my verses, though I certainly should not have selected them to show you. *Did Coles or Hopkins give them you, and why?* Please remember to tell me” (Dolben 1915, xc; emphasis is Dolben’s). Beyond a divergence in opinion over religious devotion, as well as poetic style, the principal difficulty for Bridges as Dolben’s future editor and critic was that his own erotic desires had never run parallel to his cousin’s

Strange, all-absorbing Love, who gatherest
 Unto Thy glowing all my pleasant dew,
 Then delicately my garden waterest,
 Drawing the old, to pour it back anew. (“[Strange, all-absorbing Love]”,
 lines 1–4)

Such desires, desires which Dolben shared with Vincent Stuckey Stratton Coles (1845–1929) and with Hopkins, proved problematic for Bridges, for he found himself, as editor, in a modern, scholarly conundrum: Dolben’s poems would never allow for an absolute avoidance of this “strange, all-absorbing Love”; and, given his own Georgian position as Poet Laureate, Bridges could hardly claim anachronism, heighten their “homosocial” aspects, or disguise them as “homosexual”. The only option available was a disingenuous excising of some materials and the alteration of others: “It was Bridges’ mission, in editing Dolben’s works, to establish the young poet among the upholders of orthodox sexual expression in the face of clear evidence to the contrary” (M. Johnson 83). As Margaret Johnson further notes, a “major blank in Bridges’ account of Dolben’s life occurs in the area of his relationships with other young men and masters at Eton” (90), with

the most remarkable example of this [being] his treatment of the poems addressed to [...] Gosselin, many of them mentioning him by name. Bridges insists that Dolben’s affection was one-sided and that Gosselin was unaware of the strength of Dolben’s emotional attachment to him; nevertheless, he felt it necessary to amend the poetry which might otherwise suggest an improper passion [...] [attempting to make that passion] seem no more than a boyish crush. (93–94)

As for Dolben's relationships with his masters at Eton, Margaret Johnson recognises that various lacunae exist, though not in the case of William Johnson, who, she asserts, "produced a revised edition of Dolben's poems. It has been suggested that Bridges' own edition of Dolben's poetry was undertaken, at least in part, in response to Cory's" (93). This detail is inaccurate: Johnson never produced an *edition* of Dolben's poems, though he did circulate handwritten copies among sympathetic readers such as J. A. Symonds, who "already had his eye on [Dolben's] work for he added four stanzas to [Dolben's] poem, 'A Song', which he included in *Many Moods*" (1878) (D'Arch Smith 188).³

Such Uranian textual and intertextual exchanges involving Dolben's "honey-eyed poetry" were what Bridges was attempting to curtail by solidifying his own claims over Dolben's poetic legacy – as family member, as friend, as former schoolmate, and finally as editor. Stultification of this Uranian "infringement" on his cousin's legacy required that Bridges diminish any claim that, when not mediated through the Christian imagery of John Henry Newman, Frederick William Faber, or Arthur Hugh Clough, one of Dolben's relatives, Dolben's "strange, all-absorbing Love" was mediated through the Classical imagery into which he had been initiated by Johnson's pederastic pedagogy. Bridges merely notes that "[Dolben's] school-books brought him into contact with Greek poetry" (*Dolben* 1915, lviii). However, in spite of ardent attempts in his "Memoir" of Dolben and in his editorial practices to excise or alter, to foster lacunae, and to chide Johnson for assuming the role of poetic "grandsire", Bridges has been thwarted nonetheless – by Dolben's intertextually.

Although for one untitled poem Dolben makes a proem from two lines of William Wordsworth's "The Force of Prayer" – *What is good for a bootless bene? / The Falconer to the lady said* – recalling the falconry imagery of Johnson's "Reparabo", the poem's most revealing intertextuality is derived from Johnson's treatment of Comatas in "An Invocation", with Dolben asserting that "from the great Poet's lips I thought to take / Some drops of honey for my parch'd mouth" ("[From the Great Poet's Lips]", lines 1–2). Johnson's allusion to Comatas had found another, younger wielder.

Johnson's allusion to Comatas would have been far more allusive to his Eton/Oxford coterie – a "fellowship of pederasts" – than it would to most readers today, relying as it does on a Hellenistic intertextuality which Johnson hoped to foster among his followers such as Dolben. By invoking the myth of Comatas, Johnson encapsulates the "boxed" positionality of the Uranians, as well as posits their potential to sustain each other aesthetically through intertextual nourishment. Comatas, a young goatherd of Thurii on the gulf of Tarentum in southern Italy, after spying the nine Muses amidst their dance, sacrificed a goat in their honour: such an act was a Homeric triviality, almost an expectation, save that the goat was not his own, but his master's. Comatas' enraged master, after a flourish of curses, sealed the goatherd within a cedarn chest, hoping to starve him to death. Fortunately for the coffered goatherd, the Muses got not only his master's goat but also his master's goad. Moved by Comatas' devotion, the Muses thwart-

ed his death-sentence by sending bees to feed him honey through a slight crack in the cedarn chest. For Johnson, this particular myth was pregnant with suggestive potential. Ever the Classicist, Johnson absconds this Grecian tale, transforming it into a fable of pederastic positionality, Victorian “Otherness”, and Uranian continuity.

However, Dolben soon realises that an overdependence on this intertextual nourishment – the honey from Johnson and from the Greeks Johnson had instilled a love for among his Etonians – has resulted in his own aesthetic passivity and lack of an *Ionica* (in the sense of “breastplate”), Dolben recalling Johnson’s admonishment to his successor to “leave thine arms, when thou art tired, / To some one nobler yet” (“A New Year’s Day”, lines 23–24):

Alas! no armour have I fashioned me,
And, having lived on honey in the past,
Have gained no strength. (Dolben, “A Poem without a Name I”, lines 49–51)

Even if the cedarn, bee-attended chest (resembling the proverbial “closet” of modern homosexual discourse) serves to foster creativity, it does so through an excess of solitude, and Dolben clearly desires more palpable contact than “drops of honey from the great Poet’s lips”:

We seek for Love to make our own,
But clasp him not for all our care
Of outspread arms. (“[We Hurry On, Nor Passing]”, lines 9–11)

This desire to “but clasp him” is what Bridges, as editor, found most problematic and unpalatable in dealing with Dolben’s poems.

Since he had himself been privy to Johnson’s pedagogy at Eton,⁴ as well as its influence over his cousin and others, Bridges’s chiding of Johnson for taking particular interest in one passage from Dolben’s “Vocation”, a passage intertextually related to Johnson’s own “An Invocation”, seems duplicitous. Nevertheless, Bridges writes: “It is strange to think of Cory copying out this” (*Dolben* 1915, lvi). By such comments, Bridges attempts to distance his cousin, as much as possible, from Johnson and the “strange, all-absorbing” desires that they shared at Eton, though the only way he can find to do so is through frivolous editorial criticisms:

We know too, from Bridges’s unnecessarily derogatory remarks in which he accuses Cory of the unlikely crime of inaccurate transcription and gross liberties with another’s text, that [Cory] took an interest in the poems of [...] Dolben. (D’Arch Smith 9)

Bridges’s strictures on Cory’s transcriptions of Dolben’s poems were first made in the four-page addenda and corrigenda he found necessary to issue

as a supplement to the first edition of Dolben's poems (London, 1911) and were later incorporated in the text of the second edition of 1915. At first sight, the list of variants is remarkable but it seems clear after a moment's thought that Cory was *revising*, not transcribing. (Ibid. 40, note)

Although Bridges admits that Dolben's poems "were jealously guarded by his family and a few close friends" (*Dolben* 1915, viii), he never accounts for how copies of those poems found their way into Johnson's hands, and it seems likely that they had been given by Dolben himself. Bridges merely relates that "from [Johnson's] MS. his friends took other copies" (lviii), as was the case with Reginald Baliol Brett (1852–1930; second Viscount Esher), who informed Bridges that his own copies of six of these poems were "made in Wm. Johnson's pupil-room three years after Dolben's death" (as quoted on 136, note).

Only in the context of attacking Johnson as "editor" – "We gladly dismiss Wm. Cory's *heaven* for *hope* with the rest of his corruptions" (*Dolben* 1915, 138, note) – does Bridges deem it appropriate to quote from Dolben's "Vocation", a poem which he deceptively claims to be unworthy of inclusion in the collection, and has therefore excised:

If thus divinely fair
 This image, carved in cold unfeeling stone
 What must [Apollo] be, the living god himself!
 My whole soul longs to see him as he is
 In all the glory of immortal youth,
 Clothed in white samite. (*Dolben* 1915, lvi)

Accompanying his voyeuristic gaze in this passage is a forestalled desire to position himself as Hyacinth, the pederastic beloved of Apollo, a boy killed by the machinations of Zephyr, a lesser deity angered that the boy's ardour rested with another. Dolben is ever mindful here that "Death / Is palpable – and Love" ("A Song", lines 11–12), with an earlier variant proving far more erotic: "Love / Is palpable – and death" (*Dolben* 1915, 137, note). This desire to assume the role of Hyacinth, even in his fateful mortality, is hardly surprising, given that Hyacinth was, for the artists of the nineteenth century, one of the most palpable of pederastic icons, and that visual depictions of his relationship with Apollo constituted a ready source of honeyed imagery for the pederastically inclined. Later in "Vocation", Dolben exclaims, "Soon very soon, Apollo, O my love!" (lvi). These passages about Apollo, passages which garnered Johnson's lingering admiration, have a Keatsian palpability, a longing for touch that Dolben explains elsewhere, figuring himself as Pygmalion:

And, as the passionate sculptor who kissed
 The lips of marble to red,
 Ask I a breath that is part of my own,

Yet drawn from a soul more sweet; –

Or, as the shaft that upsoareth alone
 Undiademed, incomplete,
 Claim I the glory predestined to me. (“A Song of Eighteen”, lines 23–29)

Such phrasing is not an anomaly, for Dolben has a penchant for casting himself in Hellenic roles – “the glory predestined to me” – and in one case beckons the moon to gaze upon him as “a new Endymion”, as

The boy who, wrapped from moil and moan,
 With cheeks for ever round and fair,
 Is dreaming of the nights that were
 When lips immortal touched his own.
 (“[Lean Over Me – Ah So]”, lines 9–12)

Through such lines, Dolben displays himself to be the poetic beloved that Johnson hoped to invoke, one in whom “two minds shall flow together, the English and the Greek”.⁵

This confluence of “the English and the Greek” is strikingly illustrated in “A Poem without a Name II” (dated December 1866), a love poem which, less discreetly, might have borne the title “A Love without a Name”. In this poem, Dolben, like an impassioned museum curator, provides a tour of his own Comatas chest, a chest which constitutes a brilliant elucidation of the Uranian positionality, a positionality which would soon become, for this group, a form of self-fashioning no less marked than that of the Elizabethans, though taking a different stance, a stance gilded by an astonishing degree of secrecy. This secrecy was necessary for the Uranians, especially given the arguable immorality and assured illegality of their desires, desires that Dolben has depicted on the walls of his own cedarn chest, that positionality where “I keep, / Stored in a silent Treasury I know, / The pure reality” (lines 35–37):

Within that Treasure-house of mine I wait,
 I wait, with Erôs glowing at my side;
 From him, the mighty artist, I have learned
 How memories to brushes may be tied;
 And tho’ I moistened all my paints with tears,
 Yet on my walls as joyous imagery,
 With golden hopes in framčd, now appears
 As e’er of old was dreamed to vivify
 Ionian porticoes, when Greece was young,
 And wreathed with glancing vine Anacreon sung. (lines 48–57)

These allusions to “Ionian porticoes” (an apt, architectonic description of John-

son's *Ionica*) and to Anacreon (a Greek pederast who had poetically immortalised his favourites Cleobulus, Smerdies, and Leucaspis) set the pederastic tone for Dolben's subsequent description of the paintings which decorate the interior of his own cedarn chest, the walls of his treasure-house, "joyous imagery" crafted by paints "moistened [...] with tears":

And here, a stranded lily on the beach,
 My Hylas, coronalled with curly gold,
 He lies beyond the water's longing reach
 Him once again essaying to enfold; –
 Here, face uplifted to the twinkling sky
 He walks, like Agathôn the vastly-loved.
 [...]
 And here, like Hyacinthus, as he moved
 Among the flowers, ere flower-like he sank
 Too soon to fade on green Eurotas' bank. (lines 64–75)

That Dolben has decorated his own cedarn chest with images invoking Hylas and Hyacinth – the first the *erômenos* (or "hearer") of Heracles, the second the *erômenos* of Apollo – would have been fully appreciated by the Doric goatherd Comatas, since among the ancient Dorians these images bespoke

the clean, youthful friendship, "passing even the love of women", which [...] elaborated into a kind of art, became an elementary part of [Doric] education. [...] The beloved and the lover, side by side through their long days of eager labour, and above all on the battlefield, became respectively, [*erômenos*], the hearer, and [*erastes*], the inspirer; the elder inspiring the younger with his own strength and noble taste in things.
 (Walter Pater, *Platonism* 231–32)

However, Dolben's poem is more an act of (inter)textual insinuation than exhibitionism, and he redirects the thrust of the poem towards his own "hearer", his contemporary not Grecian reader; hence, the poem "passes from its poetic form into an epistolary address" (*Dolben* 1915, 134, note):

But it is profanation now to speak
 Of thoughtless Hellene boys, or to compare
 The majesty and spiritual grace
 Of that design which consummates the whole.
 It is himself, as I have watched him, where
 The mighty organ's great Teutonic soul
 Passed into him and lightened in his face,
 And throbbled in every nerve and fired his cheek.
 ("Poem without a Name II", lines 76–83)

Dolben recognises that his own potential “hearer”, a boy to whom he has been playing voyeur (“I have watched him”), has already been ravished – at least aesthetically or through a pedagogy like Johnson’s at Eton – and Dolben’s erotic description of this penetration is lent utterly ejaculatory connotations, disguised as music. Dolben recalls watching “the mighty organ” (rather Priapic phrasing to be certain) ravish the boy: “The mighty organ’s great Teutonic soul / Passed into him”. Although “great Teutonic soul” suggests a German composition played upon an organ, the phrasing also seems to allude to the pro-Teutonic stance of Charles Kingsley, who had acquired his Cambridge professorship in competition with Johnson while Dolben was still a student at Eton.⁶ Although the result of this boy’s “Teutonic” ravishment appears almost transcendental, it also proves palpably tactile, for it “lightened in [the boy’s] face, / And throbbled in every nerve and fired his cheek”, a shiver and a blush which Dolben recognises because he has hitherto assumed the same passive role himself:

I will not sing my little puny songs.
[...]
Therefore in passiveness I will lie still,
And let the multitudinous music of the Greek
Pass into me, till I am musical. (“After Reading Aeschylus”)

The next lines of “A Poem without a Name II” mark a transition, an extension beyond the liminal box, Dolben fulfilling Johnson’s request to “lift the lid a moment” (“An Invocation”, line 29), to take up his pen, his lute, his sword, to become his Uranian successor:

See, Love, I sing not of thee now alone,
But am become a painter all thine own. (lines 84–85)

This shift from passive to active, from the role of *erômenos* to that of prospective *erastes*, from the confines of an “In-Vocation” to a more externalised “Vocation” is demarcated in the last section of the poem by a volta – “enough” – a volta which is less a renunciation of physical contact than a turn away from “thoughtless Hellene boys” like Hylas and Hyacinth and towards the boy whom Dolben asks to have faith in him as prospective *erastes*: “Enough, the yearning is unsatisfied, / Resolved again into a plea for faith” (lines 122–23). Through this appeal to “faith”, Dolben seeks to assure his prospective beloved that his love for him is “elevated”, a necessary assurance since, at public schools like Eton, “romantic, sacrificial friendships and rabid sensual lusts all went on in the same community together” (Chandos 301). That Dolben’s “yearning is unsatisfied” (as of yet) alters neither his desire nor its potency, which arouses an immediate return to the former ejaculatory imagery, imagery which recalls the “limpid liquid within the young man, / The vex’d corrosion” that Walt Whitman describes as “so pensive and so painful, / The torment, the irritable tide that will not be at rest” (“Sponta-

neous Me”, lines 27–29). This is the desire of the *erastes* to assume the role of Doric ravisher:

Believe the true elixir is within,
 Although I sought to draw from that full tide
 Some crystal drops of evidence, to win
 A little vapour only – yet believe,
 Believe the essence of a perfect love
 Is there, and worthy. Not a tinge of shame
 My words can colour. Of *thine own* receive,
 Yes, of thy very being. It shall prove
 Indeed a poem, though without a name. (lines 124–32)

As with the title, by replacing “poem” with “love”, the final lines become, more daringly, “It shall prove / Indeed a love, though without a name”, a statement which would have predated Lord Alfred’s (in)famous formulation – “I am the love that dare not speak its name” – by three decades.

Johnson’s pleasure over such lines by his rightful successor must have proven bittersweet; for, although Dolben had indeed been able “to string [Johnson’s] lute with silver wires” (“A Separation”, line 46), his death by drowning at nineteen (on 28 June 1867) had seemingly set aside that newly strung lute. Johnson must have lamented Dolben’s drowning as a partial submerging of his own hopes, “because beneath the lake a treasure sank” (“Epoch in a Sweet Life”, line 40). He must have felt that Dolben, like Adonais, was one of those “inheritors of unfulfilled renown” – a Chatterton, a Sidney, or a Lucan.⁷ Ironically, fate may have bestowed more through Dolben’s death than it could ever have bestowed through longer life (and certainly more than Johnson had envisioned): many of Gerard Manley Hopkins’s best poems – impregnated with an elegiac longing for Dolben, his lost beloved and his muse – were the result. Inspired by an unsatisfied yearning for Dolben, his “dearest him that lives alas! Away” (“[I Wake and Feel the Fell]”, line 8), Hopkins took up that hollow lute and restrung it with gold, continuing that intertextual relationship as the “thrice ennobled heir” of Johnson’s legacy. Through Dolben, Johnson had unwittingly passed his legacy to Hopkins, a poet who was oblivious to his own impending fame, who felt assured that the grandeur he was painting on the walls of his own cedarn chest would forever remain unappreciated, would follow him into the grave. Hopkins had no conception that, less than half a century after his death, his own cedarn chest would become canonical, would move the Uranian positionality into the pantheon of English literary discourse. While I. A. Richards could definitively assert in 1926 that “Gerard Hopkins [...] may be described, without opposition, as the most obscure of English verse writers”,⁸ the publication of the second edition of Hopkins’s *Poems* in 1930 changed that forever, as the following comments from the 1930s attest:

[Hopkins] feared that he was “Time’s eunuch”, contriving nothing that could survive; but his poetry was essentially enlightened, honest and rebellious, and made to last. (Hildegard Flanner)

In fact the reviewer [of the 2nd edition of Hopkins’s poems] ought to indulge not in criticism but in town crying. He ought, if he has it, to expound his conviction that Gerard Hopkins was a great poet. I have that conviction; and let me start to expound it. (Geoffrey Grigson)

The *patent* influence of Hopkins has therefore hardly had time to work itself into the body of English poetry. But the *latent* influence – that is a different question. It is a question of an impregnating breath, breathed into the ear of every poet open to the rhythms of contemporary life, the music of our existence, and the tragedy of our fate. Hopkins is amongst the living poets of our time, and no influence whatsoever is so potent for the future of English poetry. (Herbert Read)

He is likely to prove, for our time and the future, the only influential poet of the Victorian age, and he seems to me the greatest. (F. R. Leavis)

The heroism that affects the English language, English poetry and us is Hopkins’s. (F. R. Leavis)

Through the last poem he ever wrote, a sonnet addressed “To R.B.”, Hopkins elicited, perhaps unintentionally, a Marius-like devotion in his closest friend Robert Bridges (who would, three decades later, edit Hopkins’s manuscripts as he had Dolben’s). While reading this sonnet-letter in early May 1889, Bridges would not have failed to notice that Hopkins, although still bemoaning the solitude of his cedarn chest, has jettisoned his usual spiritual concerns and imagery, has “thrown off the mask” of religiosity that Bridges always believed him to be wearing (*Letters* I, 148), revealing, in the eleventh hour, a visage far more John-sonian than Jesuitical:

The fine delight that fathers thought; the strong
 Spur, live and lancing like the blowpipe flame,
 Breathes once and, quench’d faster than it came,
 Leaves yet the mind a mother of immortal song.
 Nine months she then, nay years, nine years she long
 Within her wears, bears, cares and combs the same:
 The widow of an insight lost she lives, with aim
 Now known and hand at work now never wrong.
 Sweet fire the sire of muse, my soul needs this;

I want the one rapture of an inspiration.
 O then if in my lagging lines you miss
 The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation,
 My winter world, that scarcely breathes that bliss
 Now, yields you, with some sighs, our explanation.

After invoking the “sweet fire”, the “sire of muse” – an encapsulation of the savour of the proffered honey, the continual torch-race, the Hippocrene, and the flowing rill of pederastic desire (all Johnsonian metaphors) – Hopkins begs for “one rapture of an inspiration”, for a rapture from his “winter world that scarcely breathes that bliss”, his own frigid and asphyxiating version of Comatas’ cedarn chest and Dolben’s treasure-house. Attended not by a Dolbenian Erôs but by a Paterian fear that “from the drops of his blood there would spring no miraculous, poetic flowers” (*Marius* II.209), Hopkins never anticipated that those songs be-moaning his perpetual solitude would become the grandest Uranian expressions, the ultimate Uranian intertextual *tour de force*. By weaving into his own orchestrations the lesser songs of Johnson, Dolben, and a score of others, by merging “the English with the Greek”, by blending the Roman Catholic sacred with the homoerotic and pederastic profane, Hopkins had, unbeknownst to himself, extended the Uranian positionality, most profoundly, into the future.

Notes

- 1 This article is the second part of a diptych. The first part was published as “‘In Thy Cedarn Prison Thou Waitest’: Johnson’s *Ionica* and Uranian Intertextuality”, in *Theory and Practice in English Studies* (Proceedings from the Eighth Conference of English, American and Canadian Studies) (Brno: Masaryk University, 2005, 79–85).
- 2 The term “prefect” might be too formal, though Bridges does note: “I happened to be captain of the house [...] [and] enrolled Dolben among my fags, and looked after him” (*Dolben* 1915, xi-ii).
- 3 In an endnote, d’Arch Smith details that “‘A Song’ was first printed in Symonds’s privately circulated *Lyra Viginti Chordarum* (c.1878), p.33, under the title ‘Tema con Variazioni with a Prelude and a Finale’, without the mention of Dolben. [...] It was one of the poems revised by Cory” (200) – making it likely that Johnson, one of Symonds’s correspondents, had provided the occasion by which Symonds acquired a copy of the poem.
- 4 Johnson’s influence extended far beyond the Classics; and, of this, Bridges writes: “I remember how I submissively concluded that it must be my own dullness which prevented my admiring Tennyson as much as William Johnson did” (*Dolben* 1915, xxi).
- 5 Critics have continually commented that Dolben “failed” his entrance examination at Balliol College, Oxford, and that this is an indication of his lack of proficiency in Greek and Latin. Even Bridges lapses into this dubious claim while praising his cousin’s translation of a passage from Catullus: “It is interesting that this translation [...] should have been written by a boy who was unable to pass his entrance examination at Balliol college” (*Dolben* 1915, 134). Although “failed” is *technically* accurate, it skirts the context of that failure: Dolben, in doubtful health, fainted before or during the examination (cvi-vii), and either did not take or complete it. Besides, the Balliol entrance examination emphasised Latin as well as Greek, and Dolben’s relationship to Latin is explained by his private tutor, Constantine Prichard:

- “His Latin writing was rather drudgery to him ... he took much pains with it ... his appreciation of classical poetry was very deep” (as quoted on cx). Dolben approached the Classics (particularly in Greek) not as a scholar, but as a poet.
- ⁶ Charles Kingsley seems a likely source for this allusion to the “great Teutonic soul”, either through his *Saint’s Tragedy* (a drama) or *The Roman and the Teuton* (a series of university lectures). *The Roman and the Teuton: A Series of Lectures Delivered before the University of Cambridge*, with a preface by Professor F. Max Müller (Cambridge and London: Macmillan, 1864), was the published version of a series of lectures delivered in 1860, directly after Kingsley had been appointed Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge. Dolben and the other Etonians may have been particularly intrigued by Kingsley’s appointment, since Johnson was one of those nominated:
- In 1860 [Johnson] was passed over in favour of Kingsley, when the Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, submitted his name to the Queen for the Professorship of Modern History at Cambridge. Four men were suggested, of whom Blakesley and Venables refused the post. Sir Arthur Helps was set aside, and it would have been offered to Johnson, if the Prince Consort had not suggested Kingsley. (Benson, “Introduction”, *Ionica* 1905, xx).
- ⁷ Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Adonais* (line 397). There is a degree of truth to Bridges’s hyperbolic claim that “the poems which [Dolben] now began to produce will compare with, if they do not as I believe excel, anything that was ever written by any English poet at his age [eighteen]” (*Dolben* 1915, xcvi).
- ⁸ I. A. Richards, “Gerard Hopkins”, *Dial* (September 1926), 195–203; extracted in Gerald Roberts, ed., *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 141. Hildegard Flanner, Review, *The New Republic* (4 February 1931), 331–32; extracted in *ibid.* 206. Geoffrey Grigson, “A Poet of Surprise”, *The Saturday Review* (14 February 1931), 237–38; extracted in *ibid.* 207. Herbert Read, “The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins”, in *English Critical Essays of the Twentieth Century* (London: Oxford UP, 1933), 351–74; extracted in *ibid.* 261. F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry: A Study of the Contemporary Situation* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932), from 180–93; extracted in *ibid.* 237. F. R. Leavis, “Doughty and Hopkins”, *Scrutiny* (December 1935), 316–17; extracted in *ibid.* 325.

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