

— Condensed Thesis —

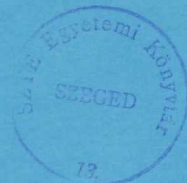
*Sanctus Paederasta:*  
A Consideration of the Major Uranians:  
Hopkins, Pater, Wilde, Johnson and Dolben

A Dissertation submitted by  
**Michael Matthew Kaylor, M.A.**

for the degree of  
**Doctor of Philosophy**  
from the  
**Doctoral Program,**  
**British and American Literatures and Cultures,**  
**Graduate School of Literary Studies,**  
**Faculty of Arts,**  
**University of Szeged, Hungary**

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## — Abstract —

Only Timothy d'Arch Smith's *Love in Earnest* (1970) has ever attempted a 'Uranian approach' to Victorian literature, though not engaging writers of the calibre of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Walter Pater, and Oscar Wilde. Otherwise, Victorian criticism has avoided these pederastic elements, quelling meaningful consideration by preferring silences, claiming anachronism, heightening the 'homosocial', or disguising as 'homosexual'. This dissertation is a corrective demarcation of the distinctly pederastic elements within a series of highly nuanced texts — Hopkins's 'Epithalamion', Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, and Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* — as well as a consideration of the influence of William Johnson (*later Cory*) over Digby Dolben. All educated at Eton and/or Oxford in a 'Greats curriculum' based upon Greek and Latin texts, these writers had a shared appreciation for a Greco-Roman world where pederasty was a valued aspect. Hence, even at their most oblique, these Uranians were allusive enough to have been understood by their Oxford-educated coterie, a coterie which constituted a 'fellowship of pederasts', even if only on the level of desire. In the face of stringent opposition, these Uranians established an eccentric positionality worthy of consideration — to further our understanding of Victorian sexuality and culture.

The Uranian rejection of the system of controls over the body that Victorian culture attempted to instil drew into question many of the tenets of that culture, and served as an affront which fronted issues normally considered categorical or which remained unnoticed. The dangers associated with this affront often led to the sublimation of desire into poetry and prose, and to a number of daring strategies for fulfilling what-cannot-be-fulfilled — a stylistic complexity, a multifaceted psychology, an uncanny audience-awareness, and an ironic stance. These strategies create unique scholarly problems which this dissertation addresses.

In skeletal form, 'Chapter One' considers recent critical engagement of Hopkins in regard to homoeroticism and pederasty. 'Chapter Two' considers Hopkins's distinct scholarly problematics — the chess-problem of his 'Inversnaid', the defiance of his '[I Wake and Feel]', the lack of seriousness surrounding his 'Dark Sonnets', and the episodes of his manuscript burnings. 'Chapter Three' and 'Chapter Four' are close readings of Hopkins's 'Epithalamion' and Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, respectively, displaying the techniques of close reading needed to unexpurgate the pederastic nuances of Uranian texts. 'Chapter Five' considers the breach between Pater and Wilde (partly facilitated by Pater's review of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*), a breach which illustrates the two strands of Victorian pederasty — the elevated and the carnal — the latter culminating in Wilde's 'Young King' and scandalous trials. The 'Conclusion' considers Johnson's influence over the poems of Dolben, as well as his editorial and personal responses to those poems after Dolben's death — a lesson in pederastic pedagogy, elevated friendship, erotic dalliance, and thwarted love — a lesson which serves to elucidate the pederastic continuum that stretches, unbroken, from the Greco-Roman period to our own, a continuum that is here contemporarised through the fiction of Guy Davenport.

— Chapter One —  
**Victorianists and the Taxonomies of Desire**

**Absolute Avoidance:**

After the publication of the two volumes of Hopkins's *Facsimiles* (1989-91), an absolute avoidance of Hopkins's eroticism is no longer possible, for his confession notes and manuscript drafts serve to define him as a voyeur of cart-boys, choristers, and 'heavenfallen freshmen', serve to define him as a 'pederast', even if only on the level of desire.

**Claiming Anachronism:**

Critics such as Michel Foucault, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, David Halperin, and Linda Dowling have claimed that it is anachronistic to consider 'masculine desire' as 'nameable' prior to 1870 (at the earliest), disregarding the danger of labelling oneself in a hostile environment like that in which the Uranians were then living. Their claim is that English theological and religious discourses (as well as the judicial application or adaptation of these) determined not only the content and the currency of the English language, but also the constructs by which desires were made textual and perceptible for the English. Hence, it was impossible to formulate anything outside of those strictures and structures.

Although these critics recognise that there *were* various taxonomies bespeaking biblical, legal, or popular opprobrium — taxonomies that certainly had currency in the pulpit, pamphlet, courtroom, parlour, and street — these expressions of opprobrium denoted 'acts' or 'perpetrators of acts' rather than 'modes of being', and arose from commission rather than constitution. However, what these critics fail to regard is that, for the Victorians and those before them, championing a more positive name to replace 'sodomite' or 'bugger' would have been tantamount to being accused of participating in or condoning the acts or qualities being named, for why else would one risk doing so.

Besides, most of the Uranians had some connection to Oxford University and its *Literae Humaniores* (Greats) curriculum, and were fluent in Greek and Latin. Even a moot acceptance of the modernity of 'homosexuality' does not alter the verity that historical evidence undercuts such a claim for 'pederasty', since antiquity did possess abundant terminology for pederastic 'inclinations' and 'preferences'. If one forgoes the Classical and merely consigns oneself to evidence more recent, the title of a 1769 volume by Johann Matthias Gesner suggests that a *tropos* (way, character, disposition, or inclination) was assigned to at least one individual: *Socrates Sanctus Paederasta*, or 'Socrates: The Holy Pederast'. Gesner's title points to a hole in Foucault's arguments, a hole arising from 'the problem of the boy' and the symposial discourses surrounding it. Further, writers such as Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Beckford, Lord Byron, Jeremy Bentham, Richard Burton, and Horace Walpole (not to mention Hopkins, Pater, Wilde, Johnson, and Dolben) did have a dozen suitable words in their vocabulary for the eroticism of the Uranians, or they coined them.



### **Heightening the Homosocial:**

Another avoidance strategy is to claim that Hopkins's eroticism is buckled within Sedgwick's 'homosocial' conception of 'homoerotic code'. In *Between Men and Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick coins the term 'homosocial' to describe a dynamic involving a triangular relationship between male-male attraction/repulsion and the female body, a dynamic that arises 'because the paths of male entitlement, especially in the nineteenth century, required certain intense male bonds that were not readily distinguishable from the most reprobate bonds'. However, this claim is thwarted by the pederastic response to the 'female body'. From the Classical poetry of Lucian to the modern prose of Frederick Rolfe, pederastic writers have often expressed a revulsion for the 'female body' and its feminine trappings — a 'body' to be avoided, chided, or pitied, not a vital corner of the triangularity around which their own desires were formulated.

Since the term 'homosocial' covers everything from a handshake to sodomy, it allows Feminist critics to maintain the possibility of considering all men and their 'paths of male entitlement' in a similar vein: consequently, women (or at least the 'female body') can maintain an angle in Sedgwick's 'homosocial' triangularity. Since the usefulness of any term as a taxonomic category is weakened by its span, and since Sedgwick's 'homosocial' seems to span at least half the range of human experience, the usefulness of such a term must be rather meagre and almost primary, like 'democracy', 'freedom', and 'Other'.

### **Labelling as Homosexual:**

Anachronism aside, the problem for many critics is the general (in)applicability of sexual categories to a celibate priest, even when this state of celibacy seems, as in Hopkins's case, to have facilitated rather than suppressed erotic expressiveness, at least poetically. Recognising that, given the extant biographical and literary evidence, an absolute avoidance of Hopkins's 'suspect' eroticism is no longer possible, Dennis Sobolev and others nonetheless construct a Hopkins beyond such erotic considerations. Recast in the language of contemporary Christian polemics (intentionally or not), Sobolev's Hopkins becomes merely the possessor of certain 'homosexual tendencies', tendencies which, when they surfaced, were cast aside by Hopkins in disgust. However, even critics willing to recognise Hopkins's 'homosexual tendencies' refuse to comment on his 'pederastic tendencies', revealing a collective 'embarrassment' about this aspect of the poet and his verse, scholars choosing to label these, more palatably, as 'homosexual'.

For modern Western culture, this collective 'embarrassment' particularly surfaces in those cases where our culture must — as in the case of Hopkins — recognise the importance or superiority of such an individual, despite his 'suspect' erotic desires or actions. Moreover, in this regard, the vilest of the vile are the Uranians and their fellows, those scurrilous free spirits who are always posing a problem, who are always worthy of exclusion, who are always embarrassing the 'collective we' by drawing our attention to 'the problem of the boy'.

### The Problematic Uranians:

The subtitle of d'Arch Smith's book — 'Some Notes' — expresses the inherent difficulty in reconstructing the Uranian atmosphere, a difficulty which arises, in part, from the group's overt or covert discretions, discretions which took several forms. The Uranians often sacrificed or broke with their fellows as necessity required (as Pater did with both Simeon Solomon and Oscar Wilde). Further, the Uranians often left behind only second-hand evidence, the validation of which is problematised or thwarted because they frequently burned their correspondence and diaries (or their friends and families did so) — or, as in the case of Pater, they covered their tracks by avoiding both.

Also heightening their biographical and literary obscurity is that the Uranians often printed their volumes privately and circulated them only among their fellows. Frequently, the history of the Uranians is contained only in the sales catalogues of auction houses such as Sotheby's and Christie's. Amid antiquarian concerns for curio and rarity, the Uranians' works — so ostentatious, well crafted, and elegant — have disappeared into private collections like Seymour Stein's or have not surfaced again since auctions over fifty years ago. Beyond the privately published, exquisitely bound, and thoroughly dispersed, the rarest of Uranian texts often existed or still exist as vulnerable manuscripts, the prime example being Rolfe's *Desire and Pursuit of the Whole*, the recovery of which is famously chronicled in A. J. A. Symons's experimental biography of the writer.

If this elusive strand of pederastic writers is ever to be properly engaged and known, it will probably be through Hopkins, for only in the case of Hopkins do we find poetry of grandeur blended with Uranian sentiment. Laid alongside Hopkins's poetry, the poetry of the others seems facile, the prose equally so, such that only in Pater — and to a limited extent in Henry James — does this sentiment ever reach 'high art'. However, it is because of three other aspects that Hopkins also lends himself to such a choice. Firstly, Hopkins detested the self-fashioning distinctly this group's, or at least he claimed to. While Rolfe's *nom de plume* of 'Baron Corvo' allows him to be both playful and scathing, its absence allows Hopkins a self-honesty equally comic and brutal. It is this degree of honesty that makes Hopkins unique among the Uranians. Secondly, Hopkins almost always speaks from his own distinct perspective, unlike Pater who 'rarely speaks for himself; normally he lets his feelings emerge from his attention to something else, a group of paintings, a story from Greece, Lamb's essays, Sir Thomas Browne's tone, Wordsworth's poems'. Thirdly, as an anonymous reviewer made clear half a century ago in *The Times Literary Supplement*: 'No modern poet has been critically commented on in more detail. Rarely has a poet attracted such a burden of documentation and commentary'. His poems, letters, journals, confession notes, as well as the 'biographically known' (such as his perpetual friendship with Pater), enable us to reconstruct Hopkins's Uranian desires and his responses to them more fully than those of others like Rolfe or Pater. Hence, Hopkins is the most obvious bull's-eye for future Uranian scholarship.

— Chapter Two —  
Hopkins and Uranian Problematics

**Hopkins and Issues of Inversion:**

In their stylistic analysis of Hopkins's 'Inversnaid', Mick Short and Willie van Peer find that the poem has 'little aesthetic reward': eminent Hopkins scholars such as Norman White have seconded this conclusion. This assessment arises because of a failure to appreciate Hopkins's comparison of artworks to chess-problems, and that 'solutions so beautifully ingenious' are often required in poetry, for 'everything need not and cannot be intelligible' on a first reading — or maybe a hundredth.

A close examination of this poem, its manuscript drafts, relevant letters, and the evolving 'Epithalamion' reveals that Hopkins's 'Inversnaid' — an impromptu performance recorded in a tiny booklet that he had withdrawn from his pocket while on the deck of a steamer or walking along a path at the edge of the waterfall, following the water uphill, against its current, towards its source — is a sudden confluence of poetic skill and landscape description, an appeal for the preservation of natural beauty, a straightforwardly readable poem which deconstructs itself if read in reverse, a master poet's creativity being completely seized and sized. The result is a brilliant puzzle-poem.

In essence, Hopkins moves backwards creatively, inspired by the name 'Inversnaid' to express an 'inverse made in verse', inspired to trace his own writing process back to its source. Its 'aesthetic reward' requires recognising this.

**Hopkins and Issues of Identity:**

'More holes than cloth' — this remains the dilemma for Hopkins biography and a feature of his poetry which adds to its subtlety and suggestiveness, its danger and depth. A close reading of '[I Wake and Feel the Fell of Dark, Not Day]' draws into question the concept of 'identity' employed by critics such as David Anthony Downes, and reveals a multifaceted psychology in the poet.

Particularly the poem's last phrase — 'but worse' — lingers to defy syntactically Hopkins's readers, his biographers, his unfortunate reality, his unsympathetic God, his 'selfbeing of my own'. If the poem's earlier allusion 'to dearest him that lives alas! away' refers to the dead Dolben and not to Christ, then the Hopkins displayed here has moved beyond priest, poet, Victorian, and Jesuit: he is a defiant troubadour, a lover not unlike Tristan. 'But worse' defies ready explanation because it leaves two contradictory options: either 'this pain of love' is not as intense as the pain of Hell, or it is more so. Hopkins never opts syntactically to side or decide — hence, its Paterian greyness blends the sacred with the profane.

If this sonnet does, at least syntactically, make 'the strange suggestion of a deliberate choice between Christ and a rival lover', a lover such as Dolben, then Hopkins is also defiantly challenging, or at least defiantly questioning, traditional Church teaching on the immorality of homoerotic and pederastic acts, even if those acts are only committed in the heart, for the Church recognises little distinction between the two.

### **Hopkins and Issues of Seriousness:**

Sometime during 1885, Hopkins's 'coffin of weakness and dejection' became too much to bear, and the ensuing depression resulted in the creation of his brilliant 'Dark Sonnets', believed to have been written while he was on a Jesuit retreat in late August 1885. If their composition parallels the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola, these undated poems would be easier to sequence, hence understand.

On the evening of 21 August, after commenting about the 'abuses high contemplation is liable to', Hopkins went into retreat for over a week and contemplated to the point of an absolute deconstruction of his soul (captured onto paper as the 'Dark Sonnets'); then, immediately afterwards, embarked on 31 August on 'an absurd adventure' with 'a hairbrained fellow on board his yacht', a near-erotic adventure Hopkins was afraid 'would be compromising', but found 'fun while it lasted'. Something is amiss here, negating the seriousness of this retreat.

Hopkins had once written that 'not to love my University would be to undo the very buttons of my being', and his love for Oxford was encapsulated in his university friendships. His own suicidal tendency; his renewed friendship with his university friend E. M. Geldart; his subsequent reading of Geldart's autobiography (in which he himself appears as an undergraduate); his reading about Geldart's suicide in a newspaper; his own resultant nostalgia; his overhauling and burning of letters collected since his schooldays — these sequential events from the preceding spring are the logical, non-religious impetus for these heart-wrenching poems.

### **Hopkins and Issues of Post-mortem:**

Hopkins's biographical post-mortem has been altered immensely by the choices of which manuscripts to burn and which to preserve, and those choices have often involved a sensitivity to the homoerotic and pederastic. Fr Thomas Wheeler (SJ), Robert Bridges (Hopkins's literary executor), and Hopkins's family participated in this purging, opting for a clarification of Hopkins's life through choosing which manuscript evidence to preserve. However, what remains is still problematic.

As a conundrum, Hopkins's textual remains became the test case for employing forensic tools in the study of literary manuscripts, with various instruments installed in the Bodleian and British Libraries specifically for Norman MacKenzie's authoritative *Oxford English Text* edition and Garland Press *Facsimile* volumes. Such forensic tools, modelled on those at Scotland Yard, have altered our view of Hopkins forever, and the resultant manuscript autopsies have proven unpleasant and unethical to many scholars. These autopsies, added to the publication of suppressed materials, reveal a far more Uranian Hopkins.

Erotic disclosures in Hopkins's confession notes and 'Epithalamion' drafts serve to define him as a voyeur of cart-boys, choristers, and 'heavenfallen freshmen', serve to define him erotically — by dictionary definition — as a 'pederast', even if only on the level of his 'looking'. Such disclosures have left many critics wondering whether these manuscripts should have been burned or kept (as when James Earl bemoaned the survival of the 'Epithalamion' in 1990).

— Chapter Three —  
**A Whitmanesque Reading of Hopkins's 'Epithalamion'**

Traditionally, scholars have dismissed Hopkins's 'Epithalamion' as a spurious improvisation, ignoring the existence of earlier drafts, drafts indicative of a thoughtful process of revision. Norman White's classification of the poem as a pitiable fragment and James Earl's suggestion that it should have seen the flames reveal a deliberate avoidance of the homoerotic and pederastic qualities that infuse it. Unexpurgated through a Whitmanesque reading, the 'Epithalamion' becomes recognisable as a masterpiece deserving inclusion among the seriously studied poems of Hopkins's canon, for it displays a complete mastery of the painterly, the priestly, and the prurient.

By casting aside the poem's fig-leaf (its nuptial title and appended fragments), one discovers a poet inflamed with pederastic desire, a poet who guides his reader into a woodland abounding with bathing boys, then directs that reader's gaze towards an advancing stranger who, inspired by the sight of these naked striplings, undresses and bathes alone, caressed by a vacillating stream. This is not a typical, Roman Catholic wedding-scene, to be certain.

Poignantly, Hopkins seems to have composed some portion of his 'Epithalamion' while invigilating a university examination, allowing his thoughts to drift from that shuttered schoolroom towards communion with his 'heavenfallen freshmen' sanctified as 'summer's sovereign good'. This mingling of boys, water, and eroticism was a common aesthetic theme for the Victorian Uranians, especially for painters such as Henry Scott Tuke and Frederick Walker (one of Hopkins's favourite artists, whose *Bathers* may have partially inspired this poem).

The poem begins with a direct address to a 'hearer', an address with miscreant connotations which would have been clearly evident to a Classical scholar like Hopkins, professor of Greek at University College, Dublin. Especially among the ancient Dorians, this direct address emphasised the beloved's role within a pederastic, pedagogic relationship, a relationship between a young *erômenos* (or *aitês*, the 'hearer') and an older *erastês* (or *eispnêlas*, the 'inspirer'). After this erotic address, the narrator invites his 'hearer' to participate aesthetically in the creation of a mutual fantasy, a liminal space conducive to the flow of pederastic desire, a space where a bevy of naked boys bathe in a river.

Meanwhile, Hopkins's abstracted sensuality takes on human shape and moves unseen towards the bathing boys: a 'listless stranger' enters the scene to play voyeur, a stranger for whom 'this garland of their gambol' is so sensually arousing that it 'flashes in his breast'. For Hopkins, this is the way 'boys stir us' while we lie in the shadows. Aroused by the sight and sound of boys stirring a river '*boi-ster-ous-ly* beautiful' (giving that word a bit of pederastic distance), Hopkins's listless stranger, warmly dressed in 'woolwoven wear', is motivated to undrape and bathe alone in 'a pool neighbouring', a pool hidden from the boys' view by a canopy of trees. Taken as a progressive cluster, Hopkins's description of these trees produces connotations clearly phallic and ejaculatory.



It is beneath these trees that the stranger responds as he would not dare elsewhere, declaring, as if to establish a poetic volta: ‘Nó more’. When coupled with its visual illustration of undressing, ‘Nó more’ anticipates far more than a discarding of clothing: it is also a discarding of Jesuitical moralising, Victorian prudery, celibate asexuality, and personal shame. Although hesitant, the now naked stranger moves towards a partially submerged coffer continually filled by the moorland water. Hopkins depicts this coffer as a natural cathedral whitened in places by the river’s sway, a sway which now descends into it as feathery ribbons of water, giving the effect of a stained-glass window. Of all of Hopkins’s spaces, this coffer, described with the intricacy of a Leonardo sketch, is the most masterfully charged with the grandeur of God, abounding with spiritual relevance, creative incubation, and physical enjoyment, expressing the best of ‘earthworld, airworld, waterworld’ — though not ‘thorough hurled’ like the river into which the boys dive. Mastery, not masturbatory hurling, is aflow in this seclusion.

Syntactically, the state of ‘froliclavish’ which results from this watery embrace (an embrace which concludes the poem) belongs to the stranger, or to ourselves, or to both. However, while we — the reader and narrator, the ‘hearer’ and ‘inspirer’ — attempt to leave our own poetic, voyeuristic seclusion, we seem to be discovered by the gaze of the stranger, that voyeur whom we thought we were watching unseen. Seeming to laugh at our newly acquired embarrassment, the stranger invites us to join him in the sensual pleasures of his secluded pool.

Given the frolicsome quality of the poem as a whole, it may seem remarkable that Hopkins’s most sensual expression should end in a ‘coffer’ (a medieval cognate of ‘coffin’) amidst a continual overflow of water, a coffer occupied by a stranger who beckons us seductively — a dangerous invitation. Danger does permeate Hopkins’s ‘Epithalamion’, all the more dangerous because of its subtlety. Like an unnoticed *memento mori*, the leaves above the epithalamic pool are described as resembling a ‘hawk or hawkmoth’ (both harbingers of death), tarot cards, and the doom that only Daniel could read. Threateningly, these symbols of menace overhang a pool in which a coffer (‘coffin’) is partially submerged, a coffer filled continually by a window of variegated water, ‘a heavenfallen freshness’.

Taken as a whole, this pool with its coffer seems a skilfully executed, symbolic representation of Digby Dolben’s drowning place coupled with the altar of Finedon Chapel, below which the family vault formerly gave access to Dolben’s tomb. This poem is tinged with a sadness and danger which becomes particularly meaningful when it is considered, partially, as a loving remembrance of Dolben, that young poet who had imagined death as a nuptial embrace.

More than a spot where boys bathe, more than a pool aflow with masturbatory connotations, more than a place suitable for pederastic expression and phallic imagery, the bushybower of Hopkins’s ‘Epithalamion’ is the nostalgic spot ‘where the stream widens into a small pool’, the place where his beloved Dolben drowned, ending the one chance Hopkins seems to have had for meeting (and perhaps in some way actualising) romantic love in his lifetime.

## — Chapter Four —

Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* and Pederastic Pedagogy

At the time Hopkins, an Oxford undergraduate, began coaching with Pater in preparation for his finals in *Literae Humaniores* (or Greats), Pater was an obscure Fellow at Brasenose College who was fostering an expansive secrecy.

The pederastic potential of this pedagogical moment is revealed through the elusive Pater-Hardinge scandal, Pater's apparent sexual involvement with an Oxford undergraduate. Although this scandal occurred in the decade following Hopkins's Greats coaching, Hopkins also seems to have been woven into this subversive world. Lunching with Pater, visiting Solomon's studio, lingering before Frederic Leighton's painting *Jonathan's Token to David* — such was a typical day for a Uranian disciple of Decadence. Since Hopkins kept such a schedule, it is difficult to accept Robert Martin's claim that 'there is no reason to think that Hopkins was in any way involved in the world in which the others moved', a world later shaken by Solomon's arrest and sentence for homoerotic adventures in public urinals. After being stationed in Oxford in the 1870s, Hopkins mentions, 'Pater was one of the men I saw most of'. Though there is no extant evidence that this Jesuit knew the specifics of any of the scandals then surrounding Pater and his circle, he would certainly have recognised the dangerous residue clinging to Pater because of them, for there was much that he would have known: the negative public and pulpit reactions to *The Renaissance*; perhaps the Pater-Hardinge 'affair' through R. L. Nettleship and Benjamin Jowett, both of whom were involved in its containment; perhaps Solomon's conviction, from Pater or someone else; W. H. Mallock's *New Republic*, with its portrayal of Pater as the pederastic 'Mr. Rose'; perhaps even Oscar Browning's dismissal from Eton under suspicion of pederasty.

Pater most fully depicts his own pederastic pedagogy in *Marius the Epicurean*, a novel which not only portrays the sensations and ideas of a protagonist from Classical Rome, but also those of his own immediate contemporaries, whom he frequently addresses in authorial asides. Pater's constant shifts in time and location constitute a 'cultural continuum', in direct contradiction to Foucault's claims (as well as those of most Social Constructionists) that such a continuum is inherently anachronistic, whether in word or concept. It is to those 'shores of Tiber' that Pater turns in order to trace a continuum from Greece to Rome, from Rome to Paris to London, drawing his reader's attention, sole-thoughted, to one boy there, a boy who will serve as his means of depicting 'Greece merged in Rome', as well as 'the Hellenic spirit' — Marius the Epicurean.

As a boy, Marius yields himself to a 'feverish attachment' to Flavian, an older schoolmate — in much the same way that Flavian 'had certainly yielded himself, though still with untouched health in a world where manhood comes early, to the seductions of a luxurious town'. Thus Marius's pederastic education begins. This pair consummates their growing devotion through a rather-nuptial embrace — as a naked Flavian, barely conscious and dying of fever, is held by Marius amid the scattered fragments of Flavian's epithalamion, the *Pervigilium Veneris*.

Unlike Flavian, who had surrounded himself with flamboyance, with the admiring gazes of his fellows, and with an exhibitionist's death at a casement in the nude — Cornelius, Marius's later beloved, surrounds himself with an atmosphere both discrete and graceful, an atmosphere about which he manoeuvres with the ease of an initiate, an atmosphere which heavily influences Marius. During their stay in the Provinces and their leisurely journey back to Rome, Marius begins to appreciate the pederastic overtones inherent in his relationship with the 'irrepressibly young' Cornelius (this time, Marius cast as the 'inspirer' rather than the 'hearer').

Beyond such mortal friendships, 'the beloved and the lover side by side' — which between Marius and Flavian elaborated into a kind of touch, between Marius and Cornelius into a kind of art — Marius also interacts with aesthetic and philosophical masterpieces, an interaction which elaborates into a kind of 'abstract friendship', a kind of 'mystic companionship'. Arising from this companionship is a conscience which Marius also recognises in the early acolytes of Christianity, who embrace him as one of their own after he gives his life for Christian Cornelius.

By chronicling this imaginary 'martyrdom for friendship's sake' and by casting it as the principal ennobling act of a life well lived, Pater voices 'an eloquent utterance' validating homoerotic and pederastic passions as a heightened form of 'friendship' and 'comradeship', whether experienced in art or in life, validating a 'cultural continuum', particularly when that continuum is endowed with 'classical motive'. Hence, Pater reveals a Uranian continuum which flows from the shores of the Tiber to the shores of the Thames, from the Greco-Romans to those of his own day.

In Leonardo da Vinci and Johann Joachim Winckelmann, Pater found two exemplars who blended Platonism, pederasty, and aesthetic instruction. After gathering a score of pederastic blooms from the dialogues of Plato, the apprenticeships of Leonardo, and the criticisms of Winckelmann, Pater crafted, particularly in his *Renaissance*, a pederastic laurel which would wreath the scholarly and sexual temperaments of many an Oxonian such as Hopkins, and would mislead many such as Wilde, who prized *The Renaissance* above all books.

A comparison of Pater's *Renaissance* with his later *Marius* reveals that the first involves a form of self-refinement through contact with the choicest of aesthetic works, stimulating and attuning one's brief life in order to create a form of exquisite 'self-culture'; the second, a renunciation of everything, even one's brief life, if that is what is required to achieve an ideal, an ideal bastioned by a 'sort of chivalrous conscience'. This comparison reveals the maturation of Pater's views.

Had Hopkins not encountered Pater's pederastic pedagogy, the result would have been an utterly different Hopkins, a Hopkins far less Decadent and Uranian, a Hopkins far less suggestive, multifaceted, and grand. The result would also have been an utterly different Pater, a Pater whose pederastic pedagogy would not have had its greatest flowering — a flowering not in his own works, but in a work by his ablest 'hearer', 'the fit executant' who would seize and size Pater's elaborate *Weltanschauung* into a single masterful poem, the 'Epithalamion'.

— Chapter Five —  
Wilde as Priapic Educationalist

**Pater's Evaluation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:**

Informed of the death of his former friend and mentor Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde immediately retorted: 'Was he ever alive?' This question spurns the fact that they had been close friends for fifteen years, one a flamboyant dandy on the vanguard of late Victorian society, the other a reserved Oxford don whose appearances before the public were usually in print. The breach between these two friends was the result of a bevy of 'boys' and a single text. As early as 1891, Pater had begun to concede that the sexually predatory Wilde was far too dangerous a person to know, and responded accordingly. The text which additionally provoked this breach, a text equally indiscreet, was *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, still in manuscript in 1890 when it was shown to Pater in hopes that he would review it, which he later did.

Not surprisingly, Pater took the occasion of his review not to flatter, elucidate, or cloak, but to distance himself as much as possible from both Dorian and his corrupter, Lord Henry — both of whom were unmistakably modelled on himself and the ideas he had expressed in his volume *The Renaissance*. Like the painter Basil whom he praises in his *Bookman* review, Pater always advised discretion, even in things only 'liable to misconstruction'; however, discretion was a quality Wilde rarely, if ever, enjoyed; and, for Wilde, enjoyment was everything.

While Pater could expect his own readers, his literary coterie, to be well-versed in Plato, Wilde could subsequently expect those same readers to be well-versed in Pater, could expect that they would recognise the Decadent seed from which his own *Dorian Gray* had sprung, Pater's *Renaissance*. In fact, the 'yellow book' which corrupted Dorian is provided a dangerously direct allusion to Pater's *Renaissance*, lacking only the italicisation of its title — 'The Renaissance knew of strange manners of poisoning. Dorian Gray had been poisoned by a book'. After contact with this book and Lord Henry, beautiful things (whether aesthetic or fleshy) begin to stir in Dorian obdurate passions, passions which require not only that beauty be touched and handled and possessed, but ultimately, ravished.

For 'common' Decadence (if Decadence can be labelled such a paradoxical thing), the pattern is circular in its replication: a Decadent uses his influential style to spark the curiosity of an Innocent. The Innocent is then enticed to imbibe 'sinful' poisons, poisons which only increase his appetite for them. As a result, the Innocent loses his innocence — hence, becomes 'corrupted' — through a futile attempt to satisfy his ever growing and ever more complex appetites. Eventually, boredom with this process forces the newly created Decadent to re-evaluate this process, to become imaginative. Though he may try otherwise, this re-evaluation inevitably takes two Decadent forms, each becoming a pleasure in itself: the pleasure of opting not to 'tempt innocence' and the pleasure of corrupting as a form of art, as 'corruption for corruption's sake'. This is the pattern and desire of 'common' Decadence in which Lord Henry luxuriates.

However, Dorian is *not* a ‘common’ Decadent. Directly after Dorian’s murder of Basil, an oblivious Lord Henry asserts, amid a discussion of murder, that ‘anything becomes a pleasure if one does it too often’, undoubtedly even the pleasure of murder. This is the ‘uncommon’ Decadence in which Dorian seems destined to luxuriate.

From August to November 1888, while Wilde was busily crafting *Dorian Gray*, ‘Jack the Ripper’ was busily introducing Wilde’s London and the modern world to one of its still-current fascinations — the serial-killer — a figure who serves to encapsulate several Decadent issues, as Wilde clearly recognised. A disproportionate number of the ‘prime suspects’ for those murders were connected to the ‘male brothel’ at 19 Cleveland Street and its scandal involving ‘postal boys’, suggesting that a correlation was drawn (at least by Scotland Yard) between pederastic/homoerotic dalliances like those of Francis Tumblety, M. J. Druiitt, J. K. Stephen, Prince Edward, and others in Cleveland Street and the propensity to commit the most famous criminal rampage of the Victorian period. In the hierarchy of ‘sins’, the pederastic was (and often still is) seen as the pinnacle, with an individual capable of committing a pederastic act capable of anything, even the Whitechapel Murders. Wilde seems to have acknowledged this correlation — at least from society’s perspective — hence his pederastic Dorian becomes the budding Uranian replacement for ‘Jack the Ripper’, the more gruesome descendent of the T. G. Wainwright considered in Wilde’s essay ‘Pen, Pencil, and Poison’.

For Wilde, all that murder-as-pleasure or murder-as-a-fine-art requires is a gradated reconsideration, a moral negation distinct from Pater’s comments on Ludovico Sforza. Notice how, after killing Basil, Dorian begins to reconsider him: ‘Poor Basil! what a horrible way for *a man* to die!’. His ‘friend’ becomes merely a ‘man’, then merely a ‘thing’: ‘Besides a horrible smell of nitric acid in the room, *the thing* that had been sitting at the table was gone’. This reconsideration is more concisely expressed in a repeated refrain from ‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol’, the hero of which is executed for slitting his wife’s throat (recalling the *modus operandi* of ‘Jack the Ripper’) — ‘Each man kills *the thing* he loves’.

The absence of *Marius the Epicurean* from Wilde’s prison reading-lists (through which he amassed a veritable library of Pater volumes) is perhaps more revealing than the actual contents of those lists. A rudimentary juxtaposition of the diaries of the two protagonists serves to explain its absence. The depth of Marius’s diary vs. the shallowness of Dorian’s fouled portrait would have reminded Wilde that he had taken the lesser of the two ‘Uranian paths’ — the path of Priapic lust rather than Uranian love. Therefore, it is understandable that Wilde had no place in his life or prison-cell for a book which would have acted as a ‘chivalrous conscience’, which would have reminded him of what he had sacrificed though the hubris of his legal attack on the Marquess of Queensberry: not only his own reputation, literary career, family, and health, but also the aspirations of many like John Addington Symonds and Pater who had attempted to keep a tactful, homoerotic and pederastic flourish while yet in the public eye.



### **James's Approach to Childhood Knowing:**

Wilde also had descendants who were neither textual nor pictorial — two charming and distanced sons, Cyril and Vyvyan, sons whom he seems to have intended to follow in his own heavy, Decadent footsteps, footsteps left across their nursery in the form of fairy tales. One of those tales, 'The Young King', is particularly subversive in its pederastic import. However, to defend a claim that, for Victorian Decadents, precocious children could, given the proper environment, perceive such an import, Henry James's novel *What Maisie Knew* serves as a justification. James's novel illustrates how far a child's language and societal navigation can be expanded under morally reprehensible circumstances.

It has not been uncommon for critics, from F. R. Leavis onwards, to complain that James (un)intentionally made this novel into a comedy by giving his small heroine uncanny powers of moral navigation and personal insight. However, Maisie represents, instead, a distinct species among the young: those treated as potential or fractal adults, those able to engage the adult world on their own terms.

### **Wilde's Sons as the Audience for 'The Young King':**

The pruriency of 'The Young King' is heightened exponentially when placed alongside biographical evidence for Wilde, such as his letters to Robert Ross. The young king, 'a brown woodland Faun', clearly has his equivalent in the boys of Kabyle, 'lovely brown things' that followed Wilde and Lord Alfred about the Moroccan woodlands, then to bed — though, in his domesticated and palatial state, the young king would lie 'on the soft cushions of his embroidered couch wild-eyed and open-mouthed', resembling the 'hyacinth on the sofa', Wilde's Lord Alfred.

In scenes such as the young king 'pressing his warm lips to the marble brow of an antique statue inscribed with the name of the Bithynian slave of Hadrian', Wilde implores his sons to inquire, 'What is his name?' — hence, to occasion insinuation about the pederastic relationship between Emperor Hadrian and his slave-boy Antinoüs. Their father would have had much to say on that theme, since his letters to Ross abound with allusions to his 'nights with Antinoüs'.

Wilde seems to have enfolded his sons — Cyril in particular — directly into the dangerous, erotic atmosphere he had structured around himself, a poignant example being a summer holiday spent at the seaside of Worthing, Wilde and his sons accompanied by Lord Alfred and Conway, a young man from the pier in Brighton acquired for erotic purposes. When coupled with André Gide's account that, after Lord Alfred had described Cyril's beauty to him, he had whispered 'with a self-satisfied smile, "He will be for me"', this atmosphere becomes particularly dangerous, illustrating the disparity between Pater's Uranian 'Epicureanism' and Wilde's Uranian 'Paedobaptistry' — one leading to Platonic aestheticism, the other to Priapic satiation; one leading to 'a sort of chivalrous conscience', the other to 'a madness for pleasure'. This disparity involves the personal ethics of whether the proximity to the object of desire should be crossed or not, involves the presence or absence of self-mastery, involves a concern for the 'problem of and to the boy'.

## — Conclusion —

## The Uranian Continuum, 1858-2005

**Johnson's Shaping of *Ionica* and Dolben:**

William Johnson (*later Cory*) was a Classics master at Eton until dismissed in 1872 for exercising a form of pederastic pedagogy. While yet at his beloved Eton, Johnson left his mark upon the Uranian movement, a movement which was, in many ways, his creation — or, in the phrasing of d'Arch Smith, 'Cory gave the Uranians at once an inspiration and an example'. Johnson's influence sprang, in part, from the verses of his volume *Ionica*, such as 'An Invocation'.

By invoking the myth of Comatas — a youth imprisoned in a cedarn chest, a youth fed by bees sent by the Muses — Johnson profoundly encapsulates the Uranian positionality. Ever the Classicist, Johnson absconds this Grecian tale, transforming it into a fable of pederastic positionality, Victorian 'Otherness', and Uranian continuity. Recalling the bee-carried honey of Alexandrian intertextuality, Johnson's verses became a hoard of honeycomb, a supply of nourishment to sustain others in their solitude, in the cedarn chest where Western culture hopes to starve their desires.

Such Uranian textual and intertextual exchanges involving Digby Dolben's 'honeyed poetry' were what Robert 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 Christian imagery, Dolben's 'strange, all-absorbing Love' was mediated through the Classical imagery into which he had been initiated by Johnson.

In 'A Poem without a Name II', Dolben provides a tour of his own Comatas chest, a chest which constitutes a brilliant elucidation of the Uranian positionality and of Johnson's influence. Allusions to 'Ionian porticoes' (an architectonic description of *Ionica*) and to Anacreon set the pederastic tone for his subsequent description of the paintings which decorate the interior of his own cedarn chest, his 'treasure-house', 'joyous imagery' of Hylas and Hyacinth crafted by paints 'moistened with tears'. The poem ultimately becomes an address to the boy he loves; and, although his 'yearning is unsatisfied', that desire loses none of its potency, with the poem's ejaculatory imagery revealing an *erastês*' desire to assume the role of Doric ravisher.

Johnson's pleasure over such verses must have proven bittersweet, for Dolben's death by drowning at nineteen had seemingly set aside the promise that they bespoke. Ironically, fate may have bestowed more through Dolben's death than it could ever have bestowed through longer life: many of 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', Hopkins continued that intertextual relationship as the 'thrice ennobled heir' of Johnson's legacy. Through Dolben, Johnson had unwittingly passed his legacy to Hopkins, a poet whose own Comatas chest would become canonical, moving the Uranian positionality into the pantheon of English literary discourse.

### **Guy Davenport and the Uranian Present:**

The Uranian continuum which began with Johnson's *Ionica* in 1858 is still recognisable today in the works of a number of contemporary British and American authors, such as Guy Mattison Davenport, who died in January 2005.

It is against the predatory banality of novels like Alan Hollinghurst's *Swimming-Pool Library* — novels representative of 'acclaimed' homoerotic and pederastic writing since 1967, writing which usually extends the poisoned chalice of Wilde's Priapic pedagogy — that Davenport's fictions like *The Jules Verne Steam Balloon* would have been recognised by Hopkins, Pater, Johnson, and Dolben as a 'Classical Annex' attached to their own 'elevated' Uranian positionality.

In the recurring Danish Arcadia of Davenport's fictions — the school NFS Grundtvig — boys woo each other with lines from Arthur Rimbaud and Greek poetry, for the 'Grundtviggers' have a precocity nurtured by Hugo Tvemunding, who, like Johnson more than a century before, is an assistant Classics master and a staunch apologist for those 'ancient Greek sentimental loyalties' that began with the Dorians, 'loyalties' that flourished in the Renaissance and in Victorian Oxford, 'loyalties' that continue in the aesthetic works of Davenport and others. More daringly than Johnson as Classicist, Hugo imparts a pederastic 'knowledge' that is concise, accurate, and uncompromising, 'knowledge' adapted to his students' competence. Hence, his eroticised lessons construct a Paterian *Plato and Platonism for Boys*.

In Davenport's fictions, textual placement is vital and constitutes a suggestive colour-element in his fictional palette, serving to delineate the pederastic nuances as if by a form of Cubism or collage. Through a score of Modernist and Post-Modernist techniques, Davenport's prose manages to fulfil what-cannot-be-fulfilled amid denials, scrupulosities, and beliefs; amid ethical, legal, and religious restrictions; amid the concern of Western culture (in general) and Anglo-American culture (in particular) to limit physical intimation and actualisation of homoerotic and pederastic desires. The result is a textual, pederastic Arcadia.

Although Hugo's artistry, friendships, allusions, and pedagogy literally trumpet his pederastic desires, Davenport never allows Hugo to be relegated to the margins of society, to the Dantean Vestibule of Hell, or to a Comatas coffer. Instead, he depicts Hugo as forever fulfilling Johnson's request to 'lift the lid a moment', to exercise a 'Vocation' not an 'In-Vocation'. In the Arcadia that is Davenport's *Jules Verne Steam Balloon*, all charges of 'corrupting the innocent' are rendered mute or moot; and all erotic touches and their accompanying 'knowingness' lead only to the 'chivalrous conscience' that Pater advocated. Hugo's boys literally bask in this form of love, a love that infuses their world with an aesthetic, erotic playfulness.

This imaginary Denmark is merely a 'backdrop for Davenport's reimagining of Western civilization along Fourierist lines', and his continual, intertextual playfulness reveals that the Uranian continuum which Johnson sired, Pater cultivated, and Hopkins perfected is still alive and relevant today, a positionality that is not limited to what many would dismiss as an aberrant or abhorrent cluster of 'crazy' Victorian poets or Oxford eccentrics. For good or ill, 'the Uranian' continues.

## Relevant Publications

Kaylor, Michael Matthew, "Beautiful Dripping Fragments": A Whitmanesque Reading of Hopkins' "Epithalamion", *Victorian Poetry*, 40.2 (2002), 157-87 (E-ISSN: 1530-7190. Print ISSN: 0042-5206)

—, "Backward I See": Hopkins's Inverse in Verse', in *Předzvěsti, předchůdci, precedenty: pokračující vliv 19. století na moderní texty a kontexty* (Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2002), 8-20 (ISBN: 80-7194-426-2)

—, "The Faint Intelligence": Vocabulary and Its Void in Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" and Henry James's *What Maisie Knew*', in *Children's Literature in English at the Turn of the Millennium* (Hradec Králové: The British Council, Gaudeamus, 2002), 129-38 (ISBN: 80-7041-940-7)

—, "Pen, Pencil and Poison" Wilde-Style', *Scientific Papers of the University of Pardubice*, Series C, 8, 2002 (Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2003), 41-60 (ISBN: 80-7194-537-4)

—, 'The Poet's Undergarments: the Problematic Concept of Identity in the Life of Gerard Manley Hopkins', in *Problematika identity: Identita a globalizace* (Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2003), 12-26 (ISBN: 80-7194-590-0)

—, "Scattered Parts": Writing the Life of Gerard Manley Hopkins', in *Prague Conference on Linguistics and Literary Studies (10 May 2002) Proceedings* (Prague: Pedagogická fakulta, Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 2003), 118-25 (ISBN: 80-7290-104-4)

—, "The Divine Friend, Unknown, Most Desired": The Problematic Uranian Poets', in *Theory and Practice in English Studies*, vol. 2 (Proceedings from the Seventh Conference of English, American and Canadian Studies) (Brno: Masarykova Univerzita, 2004), 71-76 (ISBN: 80-210-3394-0)

—, "Little Porcelain Cup in Which Biting Acids Could Be Mixed": Wilde's Sons as the Audience for "The Young King"', in *New Interpretations of Cultural Phenomena* (Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2004), 23-32 (ISBN: 80-7194-710-5)

—, 'To Cremate or Bury: Coventry Patmore, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and the Biographical Postmortem', forthcoming in *Prague Conference on Linguistics and Literary Studies (14 May 2004) Proceedings* (Prague: Pedagogická fakulta, Univerzita Karlova v Praze, 2005)

—, "A Sort of Chivalrous Conscience": Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* and Pederastic Pedagogy', forthcoming in *Scientific Papers of the University of Pardubice*, Series C, 2004 (Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2005)



*The Bathers*

Frederick Walker

Oil on canvas, 1865-67

Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight, near Liverpool



