Hellenic fantasies: aesthetics and desire in John Addington Symonds' *A Problem in Greek Ethics*

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Framing 'A Study of Symonds'

In a portrait produced during his time at Harrow [Fig. 1], we see the famous classicist and aesthete, John Addington Symonds standing 'cap in hand', resting his elbow on a fluted plinth whose capital is decorated with palmettes. Upon it stands another pointer to the antique past – a neo-classical urn of krater form. This assemblage in many ways presents itself as Symonds' alter ego. At roughly the same height and width, it neatly divides the composition and balances the image of the youthful boy.[1] Both have faces which stare impassively back at us. The vase and the boy are united through a critical vocabulary. We can analyse both in terms of the treatment of their mouths, lips, shoulders, bellies, and feet, and we are invited to interpret the relationship between the two. At the same time, the portrait serves to highlight the difficulties of the relationship between them.

On one level, these classical props function (like the cane and the uniform) as the accoutrements of youth, privilege and power. The picture becomes easily assimilated into a standard repertoire of portraiture which aims to mask its subject behind a facade of élite images. Yet Symonds can never be masked in this way for us. Symonds has ensured that any juxtaposition between himself and the classical past can never be innocent, given the associations of his own species of 'Hellenic passion'; a passion which sought to embed his homosexuality in a regime of classical aesthetics.[2]

These associations are particularly present in this picture. Harrow was for Symonds a place where he was exposed to 'crude sensuality': it formed the backdrop to the scandal involving Symonds and the headmaster, Dr. Vaughan.[3] Moreover, Symonds' 'Hellenic nature' was obvious to his contemporaries at Harrow. While Symonds gives one a nickname like 'Buzzard' because of his 'awkward, unwieldy, flopping flight', he in turn recognizes Symonds' nature and gives him the nickname 'Monny' – 'an affectionate diminutive of

FIGURE 1
PORTRAIT OF JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS
A BOY AND HIS URN – THE INNOCENCE OF YOUTH?
(Reproduced by permission of The Librarian, The University of Bristol)

Simonides, my patronymic in the isles of ancient Hellas'.[4] Our portrait prompts many questions. In what ways are the commissioners of this work complicit in Symonds' Hellenic self-presentation? (After all, isn't the iconography supposed to tell us that it is the classical world which gives Symonds his support?)[5] Did they know what they were doing? Could they ever have foreseen the results or implications?[6] Our reading is further complicated by our suspicion that Symonds would have hated this assemblage: the column stunted and deprived of its 'correct' proportions; the vase (an art-form far inferior to sculpture) adorned with a gaudy, embossed relief – a poor substitute for even the more mundane Greek ware.[7] In the way that this image slips between one of 'safe authority' and 'radical transgression' – between high art and grotesque pastiche – we are presented with a sample of the problems of 'nailing down' the reception of antiquity for any period or individual.

In this article, I wish to explore Symonds' attempts to relate to Hellenic culture by focusing on his portrayal of Greece in *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, his treatise published in defence of 'sexual inversion'. Recent studies on Victorian culture have stressed the importance of, almost obsession with, Hellenism for the period, especially amongst homosexuals.[8] However, the reception of the past is rarely straightforward. It almost never involves the blanket acceptance of one set of values, precepts or outlooks. Instead, for every individual it involves a series of negotiations, modifications, acceptances and rejections. The past provides a repertoire of moves for negotiating with the present. Theoretical models of interpretation must attempt to be responsive to such complexities. This study hopes to demonstrate some of the complexities which can accompany an examination of an individual's relationship with cultural norms.

Symonds provides an interesting specimen for such a study. As one of the important intellectuals of the late Victorian world, he shaped and contributed to the aesthetic sense and priorities of the period. Thus, to understand his aesthetics is to gain a handle on ways of seeing and viewing material (particularly antiquity) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The volume of his public and private writings permits us to trace out his conflicting, developing and paradoxical positions on a variety of issues.[9] He occupies an almost unique position. Symonds is both establishment figure (successful author, intellectual, and Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford) and outcast (invalid, member of a sexually persecuted minority, and exile in Switzerland). In trying to understand these tensions, it is possible to develop a more complex view about how a culture relates to and forms its ideas about antiquity, and the way in which our own simple narratives of the recent past

and its understandings have the potential to be wrong-footed by the complexities of that past.

Studies of Symonds' work on sexuality have tended to focus on his later pamphlet, *A Problem in Modern Ethics*. After Foucault, such attention is understandable.[10] The development of the *scientia sexualis* has become one of the key moments in the rise and multiplication of sexualities:

> It is no longer a question simply of saying what was done – the sexual act – and how it was done; but of reconstructing, in and around the act, the thoughts that recapitulated it, the obsessions that accompanied it, the images, desires, modulations, and quality of the pleasure that animated it ... For a long time this archive dematerialized as it was formed ... until medicine, psychiatry, and pedagogy began to solidify it: Campe, Salzmann, and especially Kaan, Krafft-Ebing, Tardieu, Molle, and Havelock Ellis carefully assembled this whole pitiful, lyrical outpouring from the sexual mosaic ... This was an important time ... It was a time when the most singular pleasures were called upon to pronounce ... the discourse of science.[11]

In such a model of the history of sexuality, Symonds must play a prominent part. Not only was he a collaborator with Havelock Ellis on his pioneering work on sexual inversion, but his pamphlet *A Problem in Modern Ethics* constitutes a summary and analysis of those authors whom Foucault cites as crucial in the development of the *scientia sexualis*.[12] This work, written by a homosexual with an eye to a homosexual readership, provides one of the important points of reference in Foucault's model of sexuality as confession. The pamphlet is one of the more obvious methods of diffusion for sexological ideology. The imperative to read and absorb Symonds' work constitutes precisely the sort of 'confessional-act' which Foucault envisaged as part of the 'will to sexuality' implicit in the *scientia sexualis*.

However, there is an important sense in which Symonds cannot be analysed as merely a product of the drive towards the *scientia sexualis*. It is true that Symonds did consider himself a suitable subject for psychological observation. He believed that science could contribute to an understanding of his nature. He was fully complicit and compliant in assisting the 'progress' of scientific investigation.[13] Nevertheless, there were moments when he resisted the pull of sexology. In his study of Greece, he found a place where he could find relief from the burden of these scientific investigations. In his isles of Hellas, he was no longer an aberrant freak of nature, a case-study in medical pathology. Instead, he became a normal, healthy member of society. His

romanticized Greece provided an antidote for the clinical narratives which his research uncovered: 'The truth is that ancient Greece offers insuperable difficulties to theorists who treat sexual inversion exclusively from the points of view of neuropathology, tainted heredity or masturbation'.[14]

The most complete and complex statement of Symonds' belief about 'Greek love' is found in his treatise, *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, a work which aimed, by employing the cultural prestige of Greece, to show that love between men was not only acceptable, but socially beneficial. Indeed, Symonds describes *A Problem in Greek Ethics* as 'one of the few adequate works of scholarship I can call my own'.[15] The first version of this work was written at Clifton Hill House between 1866 and 1868, in the period of Symonds' convalescence following a scandal over his alleged involvement with Magdalen choristers.[16] This version coincided with a cycle of poems Symonds wrote 'illustrating the love of man for man in all periods of civilization' and the passion which accompanied his discovery of Whitman.[17] It was subsequently re-written in 1873–74 whilst Symonds was working on his most important and monumental piece of classical scholarship, *Studies of the Greek Poets*. Its importance for the understanding of Symonds' work should not be underestimated. It constitutes one of Symonds' most detailed explorations of the Hellenic *ethos*. Its influence on the *Studies of the Greek Poets* was substantial. Not only did it influence the final chapter on the Greek spirit,[18] but its resonances can be felt throughout the work. The pamphlet often serves to make explicit what is only implicit in the larger work. Additionally, we find echoes of Symonds' other writings throughout the pamphlet. For example, his discussions of the feelings of a hoplite seeing his lover slain at Syracuse finds poetic form in Symonds' 'In the Syracusan Stone-Quarries'.[19] Initially, Symonds had it printed privately in an edition of ten copies in 1883 – receiving in turn a note from one of the compositors berating him for his iniquity.[20] However, its widest publication was to be found when it appeared as an appendix to Havelock Ellis' *Sexual Inversion* in 1897.[21] This was a realization of Symonds' hope that 'the treatise itself ... ought at some time to be given to the world'.[22]

The problematics of *A Problem in Greek Ethics*

> ... κούρῳ αἰσυμνητῆρι ἐοικώς,
> πρῶτον ὑπηνήτῃ, τοῦ περ χαριεστάτη ἥβη.
>
> ... appearing as a boy whose lip was downy,
> in the first bloom of manhood, a young prince.
>
> *Iliad* 24.347-8 (tr. Robert Fitzgerald)

Asked to construe these lines by his tutor, Mr Knight, the adolescent Symonds was to witness a profound epiphany. In his memoirs, that remarkable work of dramatic self-performance and determined *apologia pro vita sua*, he describes this revelation in the following terms:

> The Greek in me awoke to that simple, and yet so splendid, vision of young manhood ... The phrase had all Greek sculpture in it; and all my dim forebodings of the charm of males were here idealized. The overpowering magic of masculine adolescence drew my tears forth. I had none to spare for Priam prostrate at the feet of his son's murderer; none for Andromache bidding a last farewell to Hector of the waving plumes ... disguised Hermes, in his prime and bloom of beauty, unlocked some deeper fountains of eternal longing in my soul.[23]

I choose this passage as an introduction to Symonds' Greece (and its manifestation in *A Problem in Greek Ethics*) because it contains a number of the themes which are central to understanding his views. First, his belief in his innate Hellenic *psyche* ('The Greek in me awoke'). Secondly, the colour of his passion which allowed him to weep over the gorgeous Hermes, but not the prostrate Priam. Thirdly, the role and importance of the visual arts and its strong connection with literature ('The phrase had all Greek sculpture in it'). These lines from the *Iliad* were to stay with Symonds for the rest of his life. He quotes part of them in a lecture on beauty in Greek sculpture to the boys of Clifton College (in the hope of bringing about similar awakenings?) – an audience which included his schoolboy lover, Norman.[24]

Symonds was not unusual amongst his contemporaries in believing that he was touched by the Hellenic spirit.[25] Embodied in a canon of rules, primarily aesthetic, this spirit linked all poetry, drama, history, art, religion, language, politics and social life across the geographically broad and politically diverse culture of ancient Greece. What makes Symonds unusual is his belief that this spirit was innate in him and was linked especially strongly to, and made manifest through, his homoerotic desires. He litters his memoirs with occasions when his 'Hellenic spirit' guides his every involuntary act.

For example, at roughly the same time as he was having such a violent reaction to the *Iliad*, he records his growing dislike for missionaries; a group of which he states that 'even as a boy, *and long before I could reason*, I was profoundly sceptical'. This barely teenage boy's reaction is due to what he perceives as some innate sensibility which he explicitly calls Greek: 'How I hated and mistrusted the cooked accounts and sordid pietisms of that vaunted Mission! The *Greek in me* instinctively rebelled ...'.[26] However, for Symonds,

the most obvious manifestation of his Hellenism was his homosexual desire. Without any study of Greece, he claims that he knew his homosexual desire was 'Greek'. Thus, before even reading any bucolic or pastoral poetry, the phrase 'Arcadian love' seems to him somehow a correct name for his desires.[27] This unity between Greece, as he understands it, and his own internal desires appears in his decision to use flowers gathered from the wooded grove where he exchanged his first kiss to mark the place in his Theocritus where the poet remarks 'ἦ ῥα τότ' ἦσαν χρύσειοι πάλαι ἄνδρες, ὅτ' ἀντεφίλησ' ὁ φιληθείς' ('O for men of that long lost Golden Age; a time when the beloved offered love in return').[28]

Given this strong personal attachment to Greece, a study of 'Greek love' could never be a dispassionate, impersonal activity for Symonds. It is a surprise, then, to find him adopting a tone of scholarly detachment in his treatise. From its subtitle, 'Being an inquiry into the phenomenon of sexual inversion addressed especially to medical psychologists and jurists', we would never guess anything about the author's personal feelings.[29] While this distance may be understandable in a world which (especially after the Labouchere amendment of 1885) criminalized homosexual activity, it contrasts (self-consciously?) with the confessional tone of Symonds' memoirs.[30] Public discussion of Greek homosexuality was always a dangerous enterprise, liable to misfire at any moment. In 1874, Mahaffy's *Social Life in Greece from Homer to Menander* attracted hostile reviews for raising the topic: the author suppressed the section in subsequent editions, replacing it with a section on the ancient Greek appreciation of female beauty.[31] Even Symonds' considerably less frank discussion in the section on the 'genius of Greek art' in *Studies of the Greek Poets* was to lay him open to attack. In 1877, Richard St. John Tyrwhitt's essay, 'The Greek spirit in modern literature', in the *Contemporary Review* criticized Symonds (amongst others) for his work's moral ambivalence. This attack was to prove disastrous for Symonds' chances for election to the Oxford Professorship in Poetry.[32] In such a climate, Symonds' caution may be understandable, even in a pamphlet with such limited circulation.

This pose of objectivity is carried through in the opening section of the work, the discussion of Homer. For a nineteenth-century work on homosexuality in Greece, it was odd, even perverse, to begin by playing down any potential homosexual content in your sources or to examine the absence of references to homosexuality. Yet, this is precisely what Symonds does. He begins by looking at the absence of homosexuality in Homer.[33] This is particularly interesting because, as he himself points out, some Greeks of the classical period were ready to assume that the relationship between Achilles

and Patroclus was an erotic one. Where homosexuality has been said to occur by the ancients, Symonds shows that it did not.

One of the benefits of this particular move is that it allows Symonds to adopt the pose of scholarly integrity. By ridding Homer of any taint of pederasty, he portrays himself as the serious, objective investigator. He is able to see what many Greeks of the classical period failed to see: he can reveal that the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus was non-sexual. In his opening chapter, he presents himself as the non-romantic – perhaps thereby ensuring that the later excessively fantastic and romantic picture of the origins of 'Greek love' as it occurred in the Dorian camps is more likely to be believed by the reader:

> the Dorian warriors had special opportunity for elevating comradeship to the rank of an enthusiasm. The incidents of emigration into a distant country – perils at sea, passages of rivers and mountains, assaults of fortresses and cities, landings on a hostile shore, night-vigils by the side of blazing beacons, foragings for food, picquet services in the front of watchful foes – involved adventures capable of shedding the lustre of romance on friendship. These circumstances, by bringing the virtues of sympathy with the weak, tenderness for the beautiful, protection for the young, together with corresponding qualities of gratitude, self-devotion and admiring attachment, into play, may have tended to cement unions between man and man no less firm than that of marriage ... In these conditions the paiderastic passion may have well combined manly virtue with carnal appetite, adding such romantic sentiments as some stern men reserve in their hearts for women.[34]

Symonds adds support to his hypothesis through a combination of ethnography (the contemporary practice of the Albanian mountaineers and the nomadic Tartar tribes) and classical learning (Aristotle's observation that the migrant Celts were pederastic). We are never in any doubt that we are dealing with a 'man of letters'.

Another aspect which presumably influenced Symonds' writing on Homer and archaic pederasty is the culture of art criticism. A prime intellectual concern of his milieu was the preoccupation with seeking to define what made objects the finest, purest, most complete and most satisfying examples of their kind. The aim was to slough off decadent or primitive traits. It was not sufficient to advocate a model of homoerotic attachment derived from antiquity. It must be '*Greek* love'. Further, it must be the right type of 'Greek love'. It must be the love as advocated (or as imagined to be advocated) by Plato.

Indeed, not just any Plato, but the *right* Plato. We must take Plato only at his prime. It is the *Symposium* with its discussions of the distinction between vulgar and heavenly love which represents the apogee: 'They express in pure Athenian diction a true Athenian view of the matter'.[35] So the passage in the *Laws* which causes Symonds some anxiety because it suggests that sex between men and women is better and more natural than sex between men can be dismissed as a work of old age, and deficient because Socrates does not appear in it.[36] This elevation of Plato has important implications for Symonds' reading of the material before Plato (Homer) and after Plato (the Roman empire).

This elevation allows Symonds to sharpen his own particular version of the Hellenic spirit: 'In as much as Homer gives no warrant for this [pederastic] interpretation of the tales ... we are justified in concluding that homosexual relations were not prominent in the so-called heroic age of Greece'.[37] By arguing that the Greeks of the Archaic period were unable to appreciate the homoerotic aspects of male friendship, he firmly aligns himself with the Greeks of the time of Plato. As we have seen, Homer may expect us to weep over the figure of the prostrate Priam. Symonds (like his imagined Greeks of the fourth century) has tears only for the beautiful Hermes. Symonds' sensitivities as 'sexual invert' preclude him from really coming to terms with Homer. Rather, he understands Homer as he imagines any fourth-century Platonist (read nineteenth-century aesthete) would understand Homer. Symonds reads Homer as he imagines the author of the *Myrmidons* read Homer.[38]

Symonds' discussion of Homer functions as a way of constructing his aesthetic sensibilities. It needs to be viewed in the contexts of the literary debates of the period. The Victorian age had an obsession with Homer. Epic poetry was the prime genre, and Homer the unrivalled master of the epic. Jenkyns has analysed the challenge which this gave to contemporary poets and the way in which they negotiated this challenge.[39] The high standing of Homer created a slightly different challenge for the Victorian homosexual aesthete. His preferred text was not Homer, but Plato.[40] Socrates' words were on the lips of every homosexual apologist and boy-lover. He provided the sanction and justification for their conduct. Homer's failure to deal with Greek love is a sign of his lack of sophistication. Paradoxically, the true Hellenic spirit will not be able to read Homer correctly, because the true 'Hellenic spirit' is Platonic.

This idea of connoisseurship and this definition of what is *really* 'Greek love' flow all the way through the work. Not only is Homer omitted, but women and non-Europeans are denigrated. Symonds' treatise in many ways functions not just as the description he claims, but as a prescriptive set of rules for living as a homosexual in the nineteenth century.[41]

It is clear from the start that women have no part in Symonds' view of single-sex love. He describes sexual inversion amongst the Greeks as 'a powerful and masculine emotion, in which effeminacy had no part ... Companionship in battle and the chase, in public and in private affairs of life, was the communion proposed ... not luxury or the delights which feminine attractions offered'.[42] In explaining the naturalness of the rejection of women he argues that:

> it is sufficient for the present purpose to remember that free Athenian women were comparatively uneducated and uninteresting, and that the hetairai had proverbially bad manners. While men transacted business and enjoyed life in public, their wives and daughters stayed in the seclusion of the household, conversing to a great extent with slaves, and ignorant of nearly all that happened in the world around them. They were treated throughout their lives as minors by the law, nor could they dispose by will of more than the worth of a bushel of barley ... Demosthenes, in his speech against Neaera, declares: 'We have courtesans for our pleasures, concubines for the requirements of the body, and wives for the procreation of lawful issue.' If he had been speaking at a drinking party, instead of before a jury, he might of added 'and young men for intellectual companions'.[43]

This depiction of the state of Greek household affairs invites immediate comparison with the Victorian household.[44]

Symonds' treatment of lesbian love is revealingly perfunctory, even derogatory. He believed that 'while the Greeks utilized and ennobled boy-love, they left Lesbian love to follow the same course of degeneracy as it pursues in modern times'. Whereas he is prepared to quote extensively the male poets who deal with the romantic associations of single-sex love, he fails to quote at all from Sappho.[45] Indeed, the only quotation in the section on female homosexuality is Lucian's protest at the horrible thought of tribadism among women. For Symonds, lesbian love was an obscene parody of a love which only men can enjoy.

However, women are not the only group whose sexuality is deficient. Almost all non-Greek peoples' sexual practice is perverse. Thus, while the Greeks practised restraint, Symonds believes that the Jewish and Oriental peoples were 'addicted to this [homosexual passion] as well as other species of sensuality'.[46] Indeed, he is keen to point out that 'Greek love' cannot be confounded with any merely Asiatic form of luxury. This creates a problem for Symonds because of his belief that homosexuality was introduced to the Greeks

from outside the Hellenic world. His solution is to argue that it was only through the superiority of the Greeks that such base passions could be transformed into admirable passions: 'In this, as in all similar cases, whatever the Greeks received from adjacent nations, they distinguished with the qualities of their own personality'.[47] For this reason, he can dismiss from his study the 'prevalence of sodomy among the primitive peoples of Mexico, Peru and Yucatan and almost all half-savage nations'.[48] Indeed, he feels obliged to discount 'the effeminacies, brutalities and gross sensualities which can be noticed alike in imperfectly civilized and in luxuriously corrupt communities'.[49]

Despite its striking focus on chastity and restraint, Symonds' model still holds out some hope of physical pleasures. In a manoeuvre of breath-taking audacity, he does allow that if your motives are pure, it is acceptable to let your standards slip and for society to turn a blind eye. Otherwise, 'Alcibiades could not have made his famous declaration about Socrates, nor would Plato in the *Phaedrus* have regarded an occasional breach of chastity ... as a venial error'.[50] This passage which precedes a long discussion on the prevalence of male prostitution in Athens is a clear nod of approval to Symonds' own practice of maintaining lifelong male friendships while at the same time allowing transitory meetings with prostitutes. His memoirs contain accounts of meetings with male prostitutes, Swiss peasants, and gondoliers – encounters which (in Symonds' words) must be dismissed as reality falling short of the ideal, like 'the spirit of the Gospels ... (that has not been) ... realized by ... Christian nations'.[51]

Associated with the contrasting types of love is a distinction between Greece and Rome, and the inferiority of the latter:

> Greece merged into Rome; but, though the Romans aped the arts and manners of the Greeks, they never truly caught the Hellenic spirit. Even Virgil only trod the court of the Gentiles of Greek culture. It was not, therefore, possible that any social custom so peculiar as paiderastia should flourish on Latin soil. Instead of Cleomenes and Epameinondas, we find at Rome Nero the bride of Sporus and Commodus the public prostitute. Alcibiades is replaced by the Mark Antony of Cicero's *Philippic*. Corydon, with artificial notes, takes up the songs of Ageanax. The melodies of Meleager are drowned in the harsh discords of Martial. Instead of love, lust was the deity of the boy-lover on the shores of the Tiber.[52]

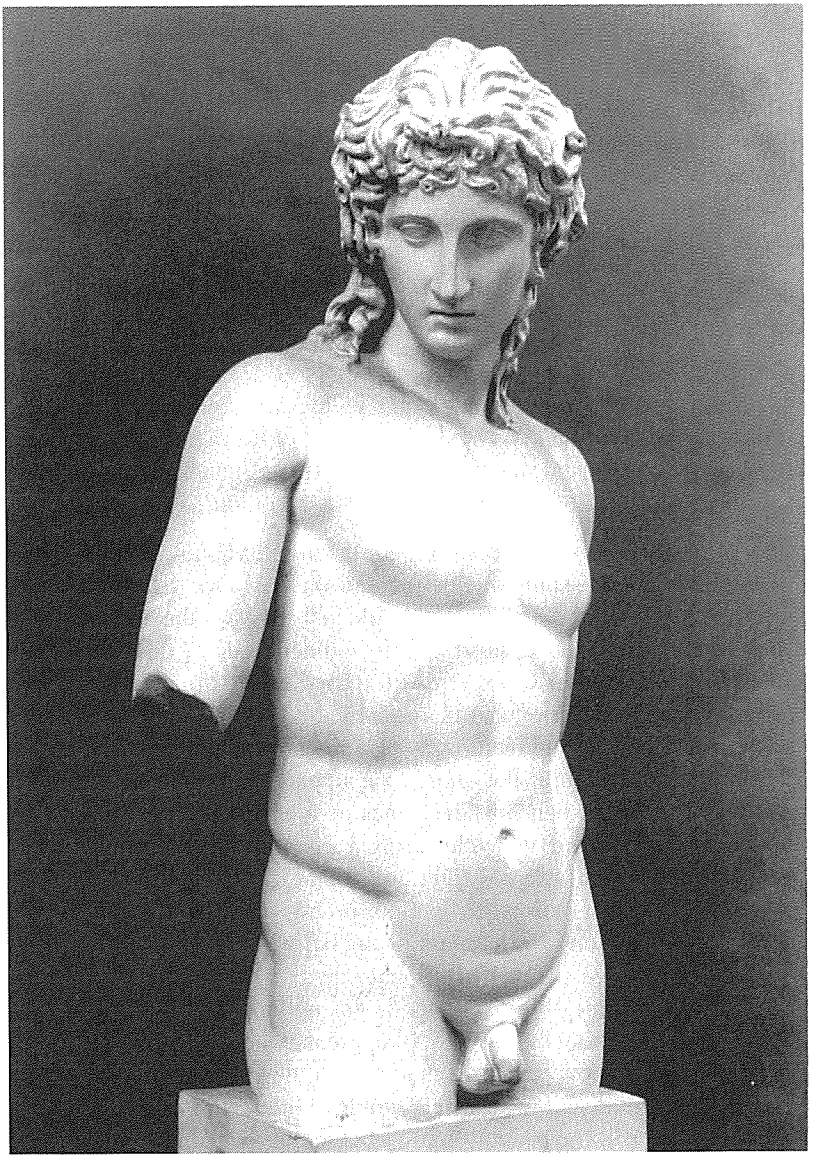
Here we see the direct link which Symonds draws between aesthetic and moral decay. Furthermore, the totality of this aesthetic decay is readily apparent. Rome's decadence and self-indulgence are found in every flaccid metre, every over-wrought epigram, and every extravagant line of drapery.

This position is interesting because it has implications for Symonds' view of the Egyptian Antinous, beloved of the emperor Hadrian. Symonds wants to reclaim Antinous. His long poem 'The Lotos-Garland of Antinous' is an eulogy to this affair.[53] Antinous' love for Hadrian is portrayed by the poem as love of the purest sort. Through his self-sacrifice, Antinous saves not only the Emperor's life, but the whole Roman empire. On the other hand, Symonds' whole intellectual framework should point to a rejection of Antinous and the degeneracy he stands for. How can Symonds rescue Antinous? The rescue involves a series of negotiations and plays which become more and more problematic as he refines his definition of acceptable love. While he dismisses most of the imperial beloveds as mere prostitutes, he rescues the relationship between Antinous and Hadrian by presenting it as a caricature of the relationship between Alexander and Hephaistion – itself a parody of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus.[54] Antinous and Hadrian are saved, but only as a caricature of a parody of the true spirit. It is this degree of intellectual leg-work which unites aesthetes like Symonds and Winckelmann. Both are concerned not only with presence and absence, but presence *in absence*. Their exemplars 'function not simply as pure embodiments of the Greek ideal, but also as signs of its disappearance and loss, marked by a history of reappropriations and revivals during a period already distanced in ancient times from the pure Greek ideal'.[55]

The paradoxical positions and constant series of slippages and negotiations which underpin Symonds' written work become most manifest in his treatment of the plastic arts. Symonds' elaboration of his views on the relationship between 'Greek love' and the plastic arts is found in section XVIII of *A Problem in Greek Ethics*. Even though the discussion is confined to just this one section, the visual arts (particularly sculpture) are vital to his understanding of the 'Greek spirit'.[56] Significantly, Symonds' critical vocabulary is derived from sculpture: 'Aeschylus rough-hewed like a Cyclops, but he could not at the same time finish like Praxiteles ... Sophocles attempted neither Cyclopean nor Praxitelean work. He attained to the perfection of Pheidias.'[57]

Symonds constructed himself as a visual being. He explained, for example, that he could never learn arithmetic, but had no problems with geometry because he 'always learned best through the eyes'.[58] Similarly, photographs of Greek sculpture begin to stimulate 'the yearnings deeply seated in ... [his] nature'.[59] So devoted did he become to pictures of Lysippus' *Apoxyomenos* and the 'Eros of the Vatican' [Fig. 2], that his father begged him to ponder some other statue – perhaps a Nymph or Hebe.[60] The fixation on the *Apoxyomenos* was not an innocent choice. The statue was no doubt given a certain spice in

FIGURE 2
EROS OF THE VATICAN
'DREAM OF IMMORTAL YOUTH REVEALED TO MORTAL MAN'
(Cast E229 – Eros of Centocelle, Museum of Classical Archeology, Cambridge)



Symonds' imagination by the account of Tiberius' lust for the statue and his abduction of it to his *cubiculum*.[61] Ellis records in notes on 'Case 18' (now generally regarded as Symonds) that the subject's previous dreams about being a sexual plaything to a crew of Bristol sailors were replaced in adolescence by 'visions of beautiful young men and exquisite Greek statues'.[62]

In particular, the 'Eros of the Vatican' attributed to Praxiteles stands out in Symonds' estimation. The choice of the Vatican version (a torso with missing wings) instead of other copies (e.g. the more complete Naples example) shows a preference for the more vulnerable, youthful, and human. This statue occasioned his homoerotic poem 'The Genius of the Vatican' which begins with talk of 'Uranian love' (l. 13) and then plunges into images of Jove snatching the statue (à la Ganymede) and 'lapping it in his soft Elysian bed' (l. 42). The poem ends with the statue calling to Symonds to run away with it so that they can enjoy the pleasure of each other's bodies in some wooded grove (l. 57-70).[63]

The Eros provides the starting point in his description of sex with his schoolboy lover, Norman.[64] The significance of this passage lies in the importance of statuary and statuesque imagery (in particular ideas of hardness, whiteness and absence of body-hair)[65] to this description:

> We lay covered from the cold in bed, tasting the honey of softly spoken words and the blossoms of lips pressed on lips. Oh, the strain of those delicate slight limbs and finely moulded breasts – the melting of that stately throat into the exquisite slim shoulders – as of the Genius of the Vatican – the στέρνα θ' ὡς ἀγάλματος κάλλιστα (that stunning chest, as if of a statue) ... the head that crowned all, pillowed with closely cut thick flocks of hair and features as of some bronze statue, sharp and clear – the chiselled mouth, the short firm upper lip, the rounded chin, the languid eyes black beneath level lines of blackest brows, the low white forehead overfoamed with clustering hair and flakes of finest curls. I stripped him naked, and fed sight, touch and mouth on these things. Will my lips ever forget their place upon his breast, or on the tender satin of his flank, or on the snowy whiteness of his belly? ... there is the soul in the fingers. They speak. The body is but silent, a dumb eloquent animated work of art ... Beneath his armpits he has no hair. The flesh of his throat and breast is white as ivory ... the breastbone is a spot of dazzling brightness, like snow or marble that has felt the kisses of the sun. His hips are narrow, hardened where the muscles brace the bone ... Shy and modest, tender in the beauty-bloom of ladhood, is his part of sex κύπριν

> ποθοῦσαν ἤδη (immediately desiring passion) ... If I could only paint him, as he lay there white upon the whiteness of the bed ...[66]

The passage with its interchange between flesh and statue is evocative of Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, X.245-97, the Pygmalion episode, a narrative to which aesthetes related, especially the decision of Pygmalion to live his life *caelebs* on account of his disgust at the *crimina* and *vitia* of women.[67] Given this erotic background to Symonds' viewing of statuary, his description of the relationship between statuary and 'Greek love' in *A Problem in Greek Ethics* is surprising.

Greek statuary becomes, for Symonds, Hellenism at its most chaste and restrained. Out of all the objects left by the ancients, statues become the easiest to read and the most unambiguous about the morals they embody. Symonds introduces his topic with the words: 'Whoever may have made a study of antique sculpture will not have failed to recognize its healthy human tone, its ethical rightness. There is no partiality for the beauty of the male sex, no endeavour to reserve for the masculine deities the nobler attributes of man's intellectual and moral nature, no extravagant attempt to refine upon masculine qualities by the blending of feminine voluptuousness.'[68]

Symonds argues that the Greeks accorded equal treatment to the beauty of the male and of the female form: 'Eyes accustomed to the "dazzling vision" of a naked athlete were no less sensitive to the virginal veiled grace of the Athenian Canephoroi'.[69] This preference given to the female form contrasts with the impression given by the rest of the treatise. In response, Symonds notes that '[just] because Greek literature abounds in references to paiderastia, and because this passion played an important part in Greek history, [it does not follow] that therefore the majority of the race were not susceptible in a far higher degree to female charms'.[70] He even argues that 'there is not [a single Eros] before which we could say – The sculptor of that statue has sold his soul to paiderastic lust'.[71] Praxiteles, who in Symonds' poem on 'The Genius of the Vatican' is clearly and passionately in love with the statue he is carving, becomes in *A Problem in Greek Ethics* the paradigm of heterosexuality. Symonds assures us that we possess a score of anecdotes about his love for Phryne.[72] Only Pheidias is shown by his love for Pantarkes to share the tastes of the 'sexual invert'.[73]

This de-eroticization and heterosexualization of Greek sculpture may strike us as odd, given both the political aim of the work and (as we have seen) the generally misogynistic tone it adopts. If sculpture is, for Symonds, the ultimate expression of Greek ideals, the source of his sexual fantasies and the subject of his own erotic writings, why are women as objects of desire given such a

prominent position? This paradox is, I suggest, understandable once we remember Symonds' stress on chastity. Symonds (following the Platonic model) constantly seeks to deny physical pleasures in favour of spiritual ones. It is within the economy of such divisions that this stress on the appreciation of women within an homoerotic environment works. The principle is that, if we are to distinguish a love of beauty from lust, then no better proof of this distinction can be demonstrated than by having an interest in a beauty for which one can feel no lust. Thus, women are pure beauty, because by not being men they cannot be tainted by being the objects of Greek lust.[74]

And yet into these arguments on the chastity of Greek sculpture, is woven another quite contradictory theme – namely, just how erotic ancient sculpture can be, especially male sculpture. From the very beginning, despite Symonds' claim that 'Ares is less distinguished by the genius lavished on him than Athene',[75] he puts women's bodies and their aesthetic value under attack. First, using his favourite criteria of chastity and restraint, he observes that often sculptures of women tend towards 'luxuriousness', 'voluptuousness' and (that most damning of words in his vocabulary) 'profligacy'. By contrast, erotic attachment to men often purifies feelings, so that the statues display 'modesty' and restraint. This attack culminates towards the end of the section when Symonds abandons any ideas of aesthetic equality between the sexes and, adding to his arguments the authority of Winckelmann and Pater, returns to one of the commonplaces of art history:

> 'When distinction of feature and symmetry of form were added ... the Greeks admitted, *as true artists are obliged to do*, that the male body displays harmonies of proportion and melodies of outline more comprehensive, more indicative of strength expressed in terms of grace, than that of women.'[76]

It is perhaps to be expected then that, despite the liberal theme with which it began, the section should end with a homosocial vignette drawn from the similarities between men and the Gods: 'Do not our wives (also) stay at home and breed children? [Like them] 'Our favourite youths' are always at our side'.[77] Having dispatched women from the picture, Symonds, in a move that recalls his tacit approval of sexual activity, manages to remove excessive chastity as well. It is hard not to see the delight he derives from his descriptions of the statues, especially the ones he singles out for falling short of his ideals.

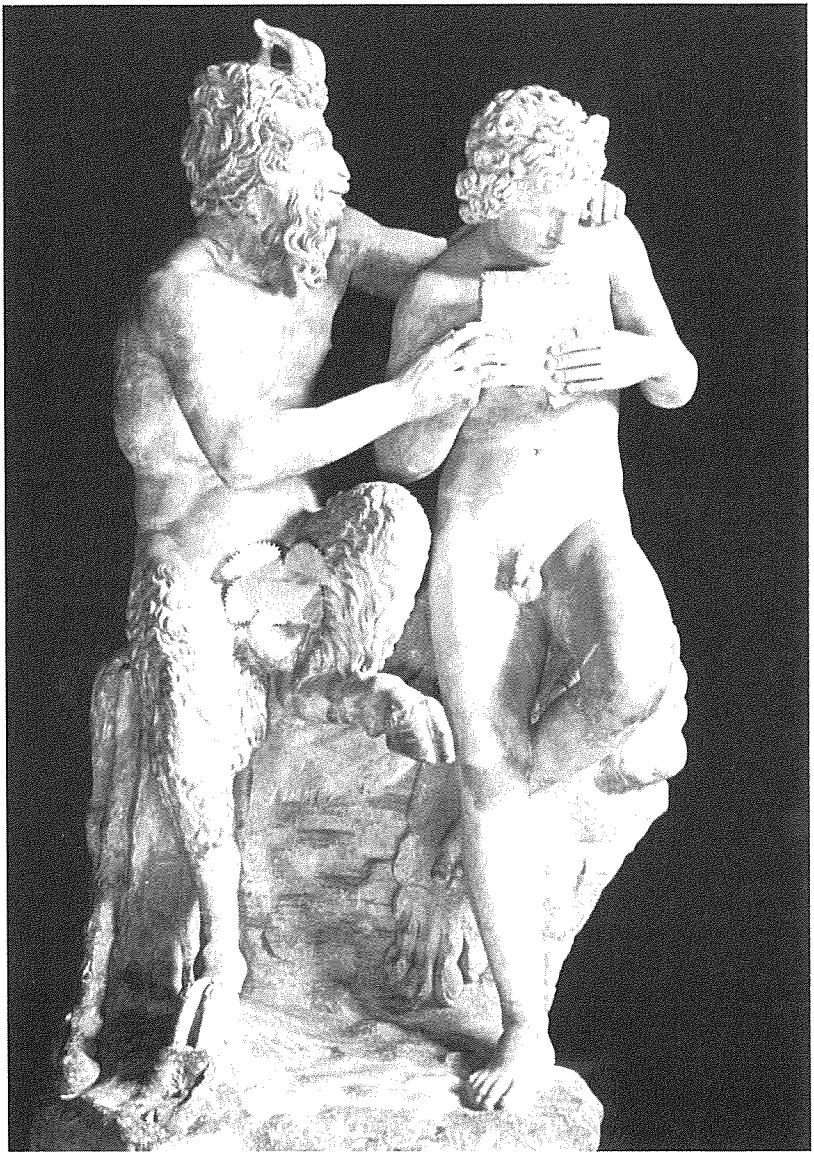
It must be remembered that, as a pamphlet which hopes to talk about what it means to be a 'sexual invert', Symonds' work does not merely constitute a

disinterested study of a 'phenomenon', but an activist's intervention. It is this motive which I suggest explains the oddity of section VIII of the treatise, which lists the lovers of the gods. As a section, this adds little to the total argument; yet, it does provide a rich source of homosexual iconography and vocabulary. It is an abbreviated list of almost all homosexual allusions in Greek poetry and prose, and it invites the reader to appropriate and use them. Similarly, his description of the statues functions as a means of helping the 'sexual invert' to plan his travel itinerary to Classical lands and order his prints and plaster casts.[78]

Thus, Symonds is keen to tease/warn us about the voluptuous Dionysus, the androgynous Hermaphrodite, and the raffish fauns[79] which await us on our tour of the Continent. He singles out for particular concern the 'group of a Satyr tempting a youth at Naples ... which symbolize[s] the violent and comprehensive lust of brutal appetite'.[80] Here he is presumably referring to the group normally identified as 'Pan and Daphnis'.[81] His downgrading of the subjects to a lesser divinity and a mortal bolsters his argument about the lack of importance of this sculptural group for understanding the nature of Greek conceptions of desire.[82] Interestingly, his aesthetic reservations about the sensual nature of the statue find their echo in the decisions of the authorities (revealed by early photographs) to cover Pan's half-erect phallus with a fig leaf, while leaving the chaste youth's genitals uncovered for our inspection [Fig. 3] – a decision which mirrors Symonds' dichotomy of chaste (acceptable) and lascivious (unacceptable).[83] He tantalizes his readers with those delicious horrors which await them when they get access to the reserved cabinet of the Neapolitan museum.[84] His literary squeamishness about such objects like the votive phalluses contrasts with the thrill of delight – almost swoon – that he feels on seeing a Victorian graffito of a phallus with the caption 'prick to prick, so sweet'.[85]

Symonds is not entirely concerned with drawing our attention to those works that express the more base elements of desire. The 'sexual invert' is offered the (as it turns out) not so inferior Ares[86] and the 'sublime personification' of Love as represented by the graceful Eros of the Parthenon East Frieze.[87] There are lessons for the viewers contemplating Scopas' Pothos – 'the longing of souls in separation from the object of their passion'[88] – an emotion presumably not unknown to his readership of almost entirely closeted homosexuals. Interestingly, he places it in a homo-social context as part of a sculptural group with Eros.[89] Even the inherently barbaric Romans, when confronted with a suitable Greek theme such as Zeus and Ganymede, can conquer their 'grossly sensual natures' and produce figures of suitable modesty.[90]

FIGURE 3
PAN AND DAPHNIS(?)
STOPPING 'GROSS SENSUALITY' WITH A FIG LEAF
(Naples, National Museum)



Ars adeo latet arte sua: a conclusion

Symonds' works provides an example of the way in which talking about the past can have important political effects in the present. We see here at its most raw the politics of aesthetics, whereby statements and conceptions of beauty can have profound meaning within a political discourse. Yet, at the same time, Symonds' work highlights the problematics of reception. In many ways, he is utterly dependent on the dominant ideology of his age, thoroughly embedded in his time and place. His narratives of decline and fall, his aesthetic opinions, his admiration of Plato, his focus on chastity and restraint are all highly conventional. None of his contemporaries would have considered them outrageous or bizarre. His entire approach is dependent on the 'artlessness of his art'. It is impossible for him to make his political points, unless we consider those chaste torsos to be masterpieces, the Praxitelean Eros to be the height of fashion, or youthful males to be better subjects than women. Even his paradoxical (and often hypocritical) positions on chastity, the status of women and the positions of other races, will not surprise an historian of Victorian culture. It is relatively easy to find their echo elsewhere, even if the form they take is peculiar to Symonds.

In many ways, *A Problem in Greek Ethics* can be considered typical of Victorian imaginings of Greece. Yet its very normality highlights its atypicality. This work by its very nature cannot be just *any* work. In its advocacy of pederastic love, it cannot just be assimilated. Everyone, from the compositor who penned his objection to Richard St. John Tyrwhitt, knew the game which Symonds was playing. In arguing for the seamless transition from an admiration of Greece to the embrace of the guardsman, Symonds exposes the rhetoric of the idealization as just that: a *rhetoric* which was insubstantial, not grounded in reality, and open to manipulation for political ends. In the end, we are left with a paradox. As much as Symonds' work seeks to reinforce the edifice of Classicism, he only succeeds in undermining its position.

NOTES

A version of this paper was read at the Classical Association Conference held in Lampeter, 6–9 April 1998. Many thanks to Sara Owen for engineering my appearance there. I would like to thank the CA audience for a subsequent discussion which proved an admirable example of the complexities which the reception of the classical past arouses. I am also extremely grateful to Paul Cartledge, Christopher Stray and the anonymous referees of *Dialogos* for their advice and comments on subsequent drafts. I am grateful to the University of Bristol Library for permission to reproduce the portrait of Symonds.

1 The marked use and placement of the urn is especially noticeable when the painting is compared

to a photograph of Symonds' sister, Edith, in which the same urn lies off centre, hidden in the background by folds of drapery. The photograph is illustrated facing p. 81 in P. Grosskurth (ed.), *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds* (London 1984) [hereafter, *Memoirs*].

2 The validity of the term 'homosexuality' as a tool for analysing Victorian sexual identities has become debated. Symonds tends to refer to 'sexual inversion' throughout his writings. However, he knew of the term 'homosexual' through his reading of Krafft-Ebing. He thought the term was useful 'though ill-compounded of a Greek and a Latin word': J. A. Symonds, *A Problem in Modern Ethics. Being an inquiry into the phenomenon of sexual inversion addressed especially to medical psychologists and jurists* (London 1896) 44. For a recent review of the controversy, see J. Bristow, '"A complex multiform creature": Wilde's sexual identities' in P. Raby (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde* (Cambridge 1997) 195-218. Bristow's concerns about the reductive potential of homosexual reading of Wilde's work are equally applicable to scholarship on Symonds, a figure who increasingly threatens to be subsumed by his sexual identity, and be seen as nothing more than a homosexual apologist.

3 For a description of Symonds' views of the moral nature of Harrow and the behaviour of Dr. Vaughan, see *Memoirs*, 94–107; cf. P. Grosskurth, *John Addington Symonds. A Biography* (London 1964) 22-41.

4 *Memoirs*, 91.

5 The stance is a wonderful example of the collusion between the allegorical games of portraiture and the technical requirement of providing support for the sitter. The long exposure times for early photographs similarly necessitated highly mannered posing by their subjects.

6 For a similar (innocent?) juxtaposition, compare the photograph of Jane Ellen Harrison as Alcestis resting against a phallic-looking column in S.J. Peacock, *Jane Ellen Harrison: the mask and the self* (New Haven 1988) 42.

7 This is not to say that Symonds was indifferent to the charms of Greek vase-painting. For example, he compares the beauty of Idyllic poetry to 'vases of Greek art, in which dramatic action is presented at one moment of its evolution, and beautiful forms are grouped together with such simplicity as to need but little story to enhance their value': J.A. Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (London 1893) 2.245.

8 See R. Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford 1980); F. M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven 1981); 'Why the Greeks and not the Romans in Victorian Britain' in G. W. Clarke (ed.), *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination* (Cambridge 1989) 61–81; R. Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art and Homosexual Fantasy* (London 1993); L. Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca 1994).

9 See P. L. Babington, *Bibliography of the Writings of John Addington Symonds* (London 1925).

10 As Dowling (*Hellenism and Homosexuality*, xi) remarks, Foucault's *History of Sexuality* has become 'the charter for ... current writing about homosexuality'. On Foucault's enormous influence in the general field of homosexual history and politics, see D.M. Halperin, *St Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford 1995).

11 M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1*, trans. R. Hurley (London 1978) 63–4.

12 For an examination of the complex relationship between Ellis and Symonds, see W. Koestenbaum, *Double Talk: the Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration* (London 1989) 43–67; P. Grosskurth, *Havelock Ellis: A Biography* (London 1980) 111–13, 173–83; *John Addington Symonds*, 284–94; D. K. Barua, 'John Addington Symonds's share in *Sexual Inversion*', *Notes and Queries* 12 (Aug. 1965) 307–8.

13 On Symonds' tendency to see himself as a subject for sexological investigation, see Koestenbaum, *Double Talk*, 51–2.

14 Symonds, *A Problem in Modern Ethics*, 36–7. Such resistance to sexological explanations is echoed in Wilde's letter to his publisher, Leonard Smithers: 'My life cannot be patched up. Neither to myself, nor others, am I any longer a joy. I am now simply a pauper of a rather low order: the fact is that I am also a pathological problem in the eyes of German scientists: and even in their works I

am tabulated, and come under the law of *averages*! *Quantum mutatus*' quoted in Bristow, 'A complex multiform creature', 199.

15 *Memoirs*, 232.

16 *Memoirs*, 231. For an account of the scandal, see Grosskurth, *John Addington Symonds*, 65–8.

17 *Memoirs*, 189.

18 *Memoirs*, 173.

19 Symonds' 'In the Syracusan Stone-Quarries' is printed in *Many Moods. A Volume of Verse* (London 1878) 30–2.

20 *Memoirs*, 232.

21 There was a subsequent republication of the 1897 edition in a limited edition of 100 in 1901 and 1908 (for the Areopagitica Society). For convenience, I cite the 1897 edition [hereafter *Greek Ethics*] by section numbers. The differences between the 1883 edition and the 1897 edition, while not insignificant, are generally unimportant for my arguments. The only serious emendation is the addition of §XIX on Lesbianism in the post-1883 editions.

22 *Memoirs*, 232.

23 *Memoirs*, 73–4.

24 The lecture is reprinted with an introduction in P.J. Holliday, 'John Addington Symonds and the ideal of beauty in Greek sculpture', *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic Studies* 2.1 (1989) 89–107. On Symonds' lectures to Clifton College and the Society for the Higher Education of Women, see Grosskurth, *John Addington Symonds*, 139.

25 On the role of shared classical allusions in promoting group identity, see C. Stray, *Classics Transformed: Schools, Universities, and Society in England, 1830–1960* (Oxford 1998) 65–8.

26 *Memoirs*, 72 – emphasis mine.

27 *Memoirs*, 110.

28 *Memoirs*, 105 (Greek corrected). The quotation is from Theocritus 12.15–16. On Symonds' decision to read πάλαι for πάλιν see *Memoirs*, 303 n. 5.

29 The 1883 edition lacks this subtitle. However, even in this pamphlet produced for limited circulation amongst associates, Symonds still presents his treatment in §I as a 'dispassionate interpretation'.

30 Symonds admits in his memoirs that he lacked the courage to publish the pamphlet publicly: *Memoirs*, 232. The extent to which homosexuals like Symonds were liable to face prosecution is debated. For a summary of the views and the evidence on the causes of prosecutions, see Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, 148 n. 38. In any case, the decisive issue is the fear of prosecution, rather than its actual probability.

31 For a discussion of the issue, see W.B. Stanford and R.B. McDowell, *Mahaffy: A Biography of an Anglo-Irishman* (London 1971) 155–8. Mahaffy remained characteristically unrepentant, arguing that 'there were certain phases in Greek morals, which had hitherto not been fairly discussed and had been consequently misunderstood and upon these I wrote freely what I though due to the Greeks and their culture. I see no reason to retract one word I have written ... but there are things which ought to be said once, and which it is nevertheless inexpedient to repeat.'

32 See R. Dellamora, *Masculine Desire: the Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill, NC 1990) 158–66, esp. 162–3.

33 The presence or absence of homosexual content in Homer remains a vexed question for both modern and ancient commentators. The relationship was portrayed at sexual in Aeschylus, *Myrmidons* (F. 134–7 Radt); however, such a relationship is denied by one of the interlocutors in Xenophon, *Symposium* 8.31. Although most modern commentators deny that relationship was sexual (cf. K. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London 1978) 194–7; E. Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World*, trans. Cormac O'Cuilleanain (New Haven 1992) 8–12), this position was by no means orthodoxy in Symonds' time and it was open to him to argue the contrary position. For a study of the politics of homo-social friendship in Homer, see D. Halperin, 'Heroes and their pals' in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (London 1990) 75–87.

34 *Greek Ethics,* §X. The section is heavily inspired by K.O. Müller's *Die Dorier* (Breslau 1824). For

the importance of Müller's work on the Dorians in homosexual imaginings of ancient Greece, see P.A. Cartledge, 'The importance of being Dorian: An onomastic gloss on the Hellenism of Oscar Wilde', *Hermathena* 147 (1989–90) 7–15. On the influence of Müller's archaeological and art-historical work on Symonds, see Holliday, 'John Addington Symonds and the ideal of beauty in Greek sculpture', 94.

35 *Greek Ethics,* §XIII.

36 *Greek Ethics,* §XV.

37 *Greek Ethics,* §II.

38 Symonds even tries to remove the Homeric taint from the *Myrmidons*: 'It may be plausibly argued that Aeschylus drew the subject of his *Myrmidones* from ... non-Homeric epic' – *Greek Ethics,* §X.

39 Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 21–38.

40 On the importance of these two authors in the Victorian period and the various roles which they played, see Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 192-210, 227-63; Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 135–86, 369–446; cf. the discussion of the importance of Plato in Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, 67–103.

41 In his focus on discrimination and taste, we can see most obviously Symonds' intellectual debt to his undergraduate contemporary at Oxford, Walter Pater. The compatibility of their views was recognized by Wilde whose Commonplace Book's section on aesthetics quotes in turn from Symonds' *Studies of the Greek Poets* and Pater's essays on Winckelmann; cf. P.E. Smith and M.S. Helfand (eds.), *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks: A portrait of Mind in the Making* (Oxford 1989) 22–7, 137–42; H. Schroeder, 'Wilde's Commonplace Book and Symonds' "Studies of the Greek Poets"', *Notes and Queries* 40 (1993) 53–4.

42 *Greek Ethics,* §III. The complex relationship between nineteenth-century homosexuality and the portrayal and denigration of women is comprehensively discussed in B. Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of feminine evil in fin-de-siècle culture* (Oxford 1986) 160–209, esp. 199–209.

43 *Greek Ethics,* §XIII.

44 The reader is left to wonder at how different things were in late Victorian England in which higher education for women was still a novelty. On this point, it is worth noting Symonds' long association with Henry Sidgwick, the founder of Newnham (cf. *Memoirs* 165, 168–9, 202–3, 209). In 1869, Symonds gave a series of lectures on the Greek poets for the Society for the Higher Education of Women. These lectures were later published and were identical to the lectures which he gave to the sixth-form boys at Clifton College in the same year.

45 Symonds treats lesbianism in §XIX. His omission of Sappho is all the more marked given his fulsome praise for her lyrics in Chapter X of *Studies of the Greek Poets* (see esp. i.292–93). In his contradictory treatment of Sappho, we see again the tensions between Symonds' aesthetic regime and his intellectual stance on homosexuality.

46 *Greek Ethics,* §V.

47 *Greek Ethics,* §V. Symonds' position on the oriental origin of homosexuality echoes the opinions in Sir Richard Burton's famous Terminal Essay appended to Burton's 1886 translation of the Arabian Nights. Symonds acknowledges the similarity in the preface to the 1897 edition of *Greek Ethics.*

48 *Greek Ethics,* §X.

49 *Greek Ethics,* §X. The 1883 version of the text contains a more detailed treatment of the anthropology of sexuality. Interestingly, in distinguishing between the transvestism of Native Americans and the homosexuality of Greece, he prefigures the important and celebrated study of H. Whitehead, 'The bow and the burden strap: A new look at institutionalised homosexuality in native North America' in S.B. Ortner and H. Whitehead, eds. *Sexual Meanings: The cultural construction of gender and sexuality* (Cambridge 1981) 80–115.

50 *Greek Ethics,* §XIV.

51 *Greek Ethics,* §IV. Eventually, Symonds was to renounce the supremacy of the chaste Platonic ideal: 'Dantesque and Platonic ideals of love' in *In the Key of Blue and other prose essays* (London 1893) 55–86. On the implications of Symonds' rejection of Platonic Eros, see Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, 128–30.

52 *Greek Ethics,* §XX.
53 Symonds, 'The Lotos-Garland of Antinous' in *Many Moods*, 119-34. Discussed in Rosemary Barrow, 'Mad about the boy', in the present volume.
54 *Greek Ethics,* §X.
55 A. Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the origins of art history* (New Haven 1994) 61.
56 Symonds' fullest defence of the primacy which he accords sculpture is found in the third edition of his *Studies of Greek Poets*. Starting from the position that 'the Greeks alone have been unique in sculpture: what survives ... transcends in beauty and in power, in freedom of handling and in purity of form, the very highest work of Donatello, Della Quercia, and Michael Angelo', he proceeds to argue that 'the one art which a nation has developed as its own, to which it has succeeded in giving unique perfection, and upon which it has impressed the mark of its peculiar character, will lend the key for the interpretation of its whole aesthetic temperament.' – *Studies of the Greek Poets*, ii.389. On the primacy accorded to sculpture in the Victorian period and the tendency to see all art in sculptural terms, see Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 75–7, 87–8, 127, 133–54, 169; Turner, *Greek Heritage*, 36–76. On the particular body focus of Victorian Hellenism and its connection with the rise of the discipline of physical anthropology, see A. S. Leoussi, *Nationalism and Classicism: The Classical Body as National Symbol in Nineteenth Century England and France* (London 1998) 1–84.
57 Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets*, i.424.
58 *Memoirs*, 57.
59 *Memoirs*, 77.
60 *Memoirs*, 78.
61 See Pliny, *Naturalis Historiae* 34.61–5. The statue was also a declared favourite of Wilde.
62 H. Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex. Vol. I: Sexual Inversion* (London 1897) 60. Importantly, this transition seems to accompany his transition from Bristol to Harrow.
63 Symonds 'The Genius of the Vatican' in *Many Moods*, 20–3.
64 For an account of Symonds' involvement with Norman, see *Memoirs*, 193–214; Grosskurth, *John Addington Symonds*, 128–40.
65 In his focus on whiteness and absence of body hair, Symonds reflects contemporary aesthetic attitudes. Whiteness is particularly associated in the Victorian mind with statuary, see the discussion in Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 146–54. On the fascination with whiteness in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see R. Dyer, *White* (London 1997) esp. 41–81. The issue of body hair has both classical and contemporary resonances. So, Ruskin's notorious aversion to his wife's pubic hair parallels the discourse in Greek literature on the development of body-hair as a signifier of approaching male sexual unattractiveness. For references in Greek literature and discussion, see S.L. Tarán, 'Εἰσὶ τρίχες: an erotic motif in the *Greek Anthology*', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 105 (1985) 90–107; Halperin, *One Hundred Years*, 88–90, 181 n. 5.
66 *Memoirs*, 209-10. The ability to paint 'white on white' was considered one of the marks of technical excellence in Victorian painting.
67 On the use of the Pygmalion episode in the Victorian period and its importance to art history, see Elsner's contribution 'Visual mimesis and the myth of the real: Ovid's Pygmalion as viewer' in J. Elsner and A. Sharrock, 'Re-viewing Pygmalion', *Ramus* 20 (1991) 149–82, 154–68. cf. Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 141–5.
68 *Greek Ethics*, §XVIII. An extension of this line of thought in the Greek poet Cavafy is discussed by Liana Giannakopoulou, 'Moulded by Eros with skill and experience', in the present volume.
69 *Greek Ethics*, §XVIII.
70 *Greek Ethics*, §XVIII.
71 *Greek Ethics*, §XVIII.
72 Symonds alludes here to Athenaeus 13.590–91; Pausanias 1.20.1–2, 9.27.3; Pliny, *Naturalis Historiae*, 34.70; cf. Aelian, *Varia Historia*, 9.32.
73 *Greek Ethics*, §XVII. The reference to Pantarkes is not entirely disinterested. It alludes to Pausanias 5.11 (the description of the statue of Zeus at Olympia). It can hardly be a coincidence that

Symonds wishes to highlight the association between the inspiration of homosexual love (as represented by Partarkes and Pheidias) and the statue of Olympian Zeus. Symonds (following Cicero, *Orator*, 8) argued that in this statue 'the Athenian sculptor touched the highest point of art, and incarnated the most sublime conception of Greek religious thought': *Studies of the Greek Poets*, 1.334. Later in his description of this statue, Symonds cannot resist drawing our attention to the fact that 'at his feet stood figures symbolic of victory in the Olympian games: among them the portrait of Pantarkes, himself a victor, the youth whom Pheidias loved.' It is easy to see why this story with its associations of homoeroticism, and physical and artistic perfection was irresistible to Symonds.

74 The converse of this position is argued by Symonds in 'Notes on the relation of art and morality'. Here he argues that heterosexual men in their preference for the female form are blinded to real beauty by sex. For discussion of this text, see Holliday, 'John Addington Symonds and the ideal of beauty', 96.

75 *Greek Ethics*, §XVIII.

76 *Greek Ethics,* §XVIII. The similarity of many of Pater's aesthetic opinions to Symonds' views underscores much of the conventionality of Symonds' argumentation. On the reverence for male subjects, the denigration of female subjects and their influence in subsequent art history, see C. M. Havelock, 'Plato and Winckelmann: ideological bias in the history of Greek art' *Sources* 5 (1986) 1–5; Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean*, 49–55; Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal.*

77 *Greek Ethics*, §XVIII.

78 On travel to the Mediterranean, see Aldrich, *Seduction of the Mediterranean.* On the collection of casts, see F. Haskell and N. Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture 1500–1900* (New Haven 1981) 93–8, 117–24; P. Connor, 'Cast-collecting in the nineteenth century: scholarship, aesthetics, connoisseurship' in Clarke, *Rediscovering Hellenism*, 187–235; M. Beard, 'Casts and cast-offs: The origins of the Museum of Classical Archaeology', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 39 (1993) 1–29.

79 One immediately thinks of those homoerotic favourites, the Capitoline and Barberini fauns.

80 *Greek Ethics,* §XVIII.

81 Alternatively Pan and Apollo or Pan and Olympos. In his identification of this group as satyr and youth, Symonds follows J. Spence, *Polymetis* (London 1747) 254.

82 Pan, with his strong associations with sexuality and extravagance, causes a problem for Symonds. For an analysis of the image of Pan and his associations in art history, see J. Boardman, *The Great God Pan: The Survival of an Image* (London 1998). On Pan as the quintessential symbol of pagan extravagance, see the antitheses in Ruskin's question to his audience 'Ask yourselves what you expect your own children to be taught ... Is it Christian history or the histories of Pan and Silenus?' (J. Ruskin, *Lectures on Architecture and Painting* (London 1854) §118).

83 Symonds' favouring of the Naples version over the arguably more famous Cesi version, or the copies in the Uffizi or Petworth House collections may be related to Naples' position as a destination for homosexual travellers, see Aldrich, *Seduction of the Mediterranean*, 64–5, 91, 101–35. The influence and fame of this sculptural grouping is discussed in A. Giuliano (ed.), *La Collezione Boncompagni Ludovisi. Algardi, Bernini e la fortuna dell'antico* (Venice 1992) 23–5; Haskell and Penny, *Taste and the Antique*, 286–8.

84 For a history and discussion of the collection, see the discussion of Antonio De Simone in M. Grant, *Erotic Art in Pompeii: the secret collection of the National Museum of Naples* (London 1975) 168–71.

85 *Memoirs*, 187. On the subject of graffiti, it is worth noting Symonds' description of the palaestra: 'the centre of Athenian profligacy, the place in which ... disgraceful bargains ... were concluded. Their walls and plane-trees ... were inscribed by lovers with the names of boys who had attracted them.' – *Greek Ethics,* §XIII.

86 It is tempting to see the mention of a sculpture of Ares as a reference to the famous example by Scopas. This had strong homoerotic connotations. For example, it appears as the frontispiece in the 1932 English translation of Hans Licht's *Sexual Life in Ancient Greece*. 'Hans Licht' (real name Paul Brandt) was one of the early important German homosexual activists and pederastic apologists. For

an analysis of his work and its role in the history of sexuality, see D.M. Halperin, J.J. Winkler and F. I. Zeitlin (eds.), *Before Sexuality: the construction of erotic experiences in the ancient Greek world* (Princeton 1990) 10–12.

87 Again, despite Symonds' viewpoint, a highly conventional choice. A much admired figure, it appears for example as the opening detail in the section on Pheidias in the English edition of Furtwängler's canonical *Masterpieces of Greek Sculpture: A series of essays on the history of art*, ed. E. Sellers (London 1895) 3.

88 *Greek Ethics*, §XVIII. The definition of *pothos* is, of course, taken from Plato's *Cratylus* 420a. This interpretation stresses the more intellectual nature of this concept as opposed to a more base reading as exemplified (as we have seen) by his use of the verb ποθέω in his description of Norman's genitals. On Symonds' use of *pothos* and his attempt to associate it with German romanticism, see Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 153.

89 The alternative interpretation made it a companion to the Aphrodite at Samothrace. Symonds thereby privileges the account in Pausanias 1.43.6 over the description in Pliny, *Naturalis Historiae*, 36.25.

90 Most probably a reference to the sculptural group of Zeus and Ganymede in the museum at Naples, the most famous Roman treatment of the subject; cf. the Uffizi version in G. A. Mansuelli, *Galleria degli Uffizi: Le sculture*, 2 vols. (Rome 1958) 1.142, pl. 111.