The Greek Mirror:
The Uranians and Their Use of Greece

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SUMMARY. The Uranians comprised a loosely knit group of British and American homosexual poets writing between approximately 1880 and 1930, sharing a number of basic cultural and literary assumptions derived on one hand from Walter Pater, and on the other from Walt Whitman. Although they used Oriental, Christian and other motifs, one of the major elements many shared was a use of various allusions and themes from ancient Greece, including paganism, male companionship or intimate friendship (which was not defined in terms of sameness), and

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democracy and a natural aristocracy of virtue, which they applied to
the concerns of their own society and era. The model of male relationships
which they advocated (and in at least some cases practiced) was almost
uniformly asymmetrical, either by age or class, or both. In addition to
their poetry, various theoretical writings by members of the group are
also involved in the discussion, and this article argues that these histori-
cal/literary allusions and themes should not be understood as means of
evasion which allowed them to write of tabooed subjects safely, but as
part of a consciously adopted artistic/cultural strategy for homosexual
emancipation. It also suggests that their arguments should be reexam-
ined as a corrective to the present egalitarian model of homosexuality.

KEYWORDS. Poetry, homosexual, Uranians, Calamites, homosexuality,
19th century, homosexuality, 20th century (pre-1940), literary use of
Greece, asymmetrical relationships, boy-love

With the assertive self-confidence that marked so many spheres of
Victorian life, in 1901 the Oxford classicist (and Uranian poet) J. H.
Hallard wrote in the introduction to the second edition of his transla-
tions of Theocritus, “It may be said without cavil that no age has better
understood both the spirit and letter of Greek literature than our own”
(Hallard, 1894, p. viii). He could not have been more right—or more
wrong. Indeed, with the advances in archeology, and the scientific study
of philology being applied to vastly more manuscripts than had been ex-
amined before, there was a firmer basis for understanding Greek life
and literature than previous ages had had. Yet it is also undeniable that
every age at the very least looks at history and literature through its own
spectacles, perhaps seeing some things clearly that others did not see
before, while equally failing to see other things, blinded to them by their
presuppositions, failing even to ask questions which would discover
them. In this contribution I will take that visual metaphor a step further,
and suggest that what the particular group of British and American
homosexual poets and literary figures in the late 19th and early 20th cen-
tury saw in the Greeks was a reflection of themselves, of their own
concerns, their own ideals, their own answers to their own questions.
This is not to say that what they saw there was false—there were certain objective outlines they perceived in the mirror which they filled in with their own image—but the question of whether their vision of ancient Greece accords with the historical Greek situation (whatever that may have been) is something which ultimately falls outside the scope of this study.

URANIANS, CALAMITES AND OTHERS...

The existence of a group of poets writing in English on homosexual themes between roughly 1880 and 1930, who are the focus of our investigation here, was first noted in print and discussed by Walter Breen ("J. Z. Eglington") in his pioneering study Greek Love, where he terms them "The Calamites: a Victorian Paidophilic Poetaster Clique" (Eglington, 1964, pp. 375-405).¹ The group he discusses is specifically British, and includes A. E. Housman, John Addington Symonds, E. C. Lefroy, E. E. Bradford, Lord Alfred Douglas, Richard Middleton and Edmund John; he has already dealt with 19th century Americans such as Bayard Taylor, Thoreau and Whitman in a previous section.

Six years later the British bibliographer, reviewer and antiquarian book dealer Timothy d’Arch Smith first used the term “Uranians” for this literary movement, in his book-length 1970 study Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English ‘Uranian’ Poets from 1889 to 1930 (D’Arch Smith, 1970). As his use of quotation marks around the word indicates, it was not a designation the poets he discusses had used for themselves, although it was in use in that period as a designation for homosexuals in general, originally coined by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, later being picked up by Marc André Raffalovich, E. I. Prime-Stevenson ("Xavier Mayne"), John Addington Symonds and Havelock Ellis—two of whom, Raffalovich and Symonds (as a "precursor"), figure in D’Arch Smith’s study. The circumstances under which D’Arch Smith’s book came to be written, however, make his delimitation of the group problematic. As a book dealer, D’Arch Smith had access to a collection of books by these poets, which became the basis both for his study and for the book catalog which forms a handlist of the Uranians, the Michael deHartington Booksellers catalog 3, English Homosexual Poetry of the Nineteenth & Twentieth Centuries (1972). This collection in turn had included (and been based on?) a previous sale catalog of a similar, but wider collection, A Catalogue of Selected Books from the Private Library of a Student of Boyhood, Youth and Comrade-
ship (1924), which includes not only a first section on poetry, but additional sections on "Belles-Lettres, Essays and Biography" and fiction. D'Arch Smith suggests this catalog may have represented the sale of the library of one of the Uranians themselves; he proposes two candidates, John Gambril Nicholson or Charles Kains Jackson (D'Arch Smith, 1970, p. 153). There was in fact a central core within this group, its existence established by their correspondence with one another, and also by their participation in the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology (D'Arch Smith, 1970, pp. 137-138; 2001; 2004). But at the same time, the wider composition of the group as he discovered it was based on the critical judgements and knowledge (however broad that appears to have been) of one or more previous collectors. This meant that a number of poets (particularly World War I poets) who must somehow have caught the attention of the collector whose library it represented were included in the Catalogue, but whom D'Arch Smith admits appear, on the basis of their work and what is known of their lives, to have no connections or shared interests with the others. At the same time D'Arch Smith was forced to add a pair of appendices, one to cover two post-1924 poets (D'Arch Smith, 1970, p. 161 n. 102) and another on a figure who could not be ignored but did not appear in the Catalogue, Ralph Chubb (D'Arch Smith, 1970, pp. 219-232).2 Inevitably, research since indicates that there were other poets who should have been included but who slipped through the net.

One of the most problematic areas was the relation to America. At least one Anglophile American plays a major role in D'Arch Smith’s Uranian circle, the art dealer Edward Perry Warren, who wrote poetry and Uranian theory under the pseudonym Arthur Lyon Raile.3 Both the Catalogue and D’Arch Smith also mention an American book which came out the same year as the Catalogue, the anonymous Men and Boys: An Anthology (Slocum, 1924/1978).4 D’Arch Smith observes that it “still remains the best collection of Uranian poetry” (D’Arch Smith, 1970, p. 187), which perhaps should have alerted everyone that there were close ties between those who had produced it and the English Uranians.5 Several of the British Uranians are given separate sections in the anthology under their own names, and yet others appear in the “Various Present-day Poets” section, along with poems by a larger number of Americans working with similar themes (Slocum, 1924/1978, pp. xxii-xxv). However, when my research, published as an introduction to the 1978 reprint, revealed this previously anonymous volume to have been edited principally6 by an American chemist, Edward Mark Slocum, while he was working on his doctorate at Columbia University.
his life remained shadowy enough that the full extent of his connections with the British Uranians was not yet clear. At the time, his only known letter was to the Uranian collector, the Rev. A. R. T. Winckley, found along with Winckley’s copy of *Men and Boys* in the British Museum (D’Arch Smith, 1970, p. 146); since then some of his correspondence with the more central Uranian figure Leonard Green has turned up,7 and D’Arch Smith, in an article on the poet Edmund John, suggests that Slocum may also have been in touch with Norman Douglas,8 whom he proposes is the source for the biographical information in the introduction to John’s poems in *Men and Boys* (D’Arch Smith, 1998, pp. 28-29), though why he should suppose this rather than what seems to me a more obvious connection, a direct correspondence between Slocum and John, is not made clear. At any rate, there now appears to have been considerably more contact between the Uranians and their American counterparts, at least through Slocum, than was realized twenty-five years ago.

In the light of what was known in 1978, in my introduction to the reprint of *Men and Boys* I made a distinction between the British and American circles, then believing the American poets to be an almost totally independent development. At that time, as a way of distinguishing them from their British compatriots I borrowed Breen’s original term “Calamites” as a designation for the Uranians’ American contemporaries, as its reference to the “Calamus” poems in Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* seemed appropriate for Americans, and to express my belief that Whitman—who, although an influence on the Uranians through Symonds and Edward Carpenter, was only indirectly so—was certainly more of a direct influence on his countrymen. Here too, however, there were problems in defining the group, the result of approaching them through an anthology representing the taste and knowledge of its editor. It rapidly appeared that some of the poets included were there as the result of editing which misrepresented their poems—the most egregious example being the inclusion of Louis Untermeyer (Slocum, 1924/1978, p. xxvii)—while others who clearly should have been present, such as George E. Woodberry, the only other American poet aside from Whitman discussed in Prime-Stevenson’s *Intersexes* (Mayne, 1908/1975, p. 382), are inexplicably absent. Nonetheless, *Men and Boys* provides us with the names and access to the work of nearly 30 American counterparts to the British Uranians.

The names of still further American poets were added as a result of the valuable inventory conducted by Stephen W. Foster (Foster, 1982), who focused on American poets not included in *Men and Boys*. Valuable additions through these are, Foster’s list is also limited as a result of
what appears to have been his methodology, which at least on occasion seems to have come down to combing poetry collections for poems with Greek references. This means that work on homosexual themes which did not contain such—normally mythological—references might be missed, a prime example involving the work of James Lattimore McLane, where Foster does pick up his poem on Hyacinthus, while missing an impassioned sonnet cycle for McLane’s dead lover, Charles MacVeagh Jr., the younger brother of the famous Lincoln MacVeagh, American diplomat and principal of the Dial Press, which began in the same volume with “Hyacinthus” and was concluded the following year in his next volume (McLane, 1920; 1921). Several further names which were similarly missed have also been added as a result of continued research through the 1980s and 1990s, perhaps most important among them that of Wilbur Underwood, an American diplomat who published five volumes of his homosexual verse in England, and so successfully covered his tracks that, despite his working for the State Department, during his lifetime the Library of Congress catalogued him as a British author.9

A figure like Underwood, an American publishing with Elkin Mathews, the publisher of choice for many of the British Uranians, plus the revelations about the close connections E. M. Slocum maintained with several in the central circle of British Uranians, now force us to discard the distinction between “Calamites” and “Uranians” based on nationality. While some of the Americans were, as might be expected, more directly influenced by Whitman, as the work of Edward Carpenter and others demonstrates Whitman was not without influence in England; on the other hand many of the Americans still worked in traditional verse forms indistinguishable from most of the British Uranians. Aside from their homoerotic sentiments, one important theoretical quality is also shared by both the British and American groups—one which may prove problematic for many readers today—namely an acceptance of both age-structured and egalitarian erotic relationships between males as being of equal worth and value. This will necessarily become an issue as we examine their use of Greece. In recognition of all the connections and likenesses, perhaps it is best at this time to simply term the whole group “Uranians.” Even at its best, on neither side of the ocean did the group contain any figures of signal importance to the development of modern poetry; on the other hand, the names of a number of ‘minor major’ and ‘major minor’ authors whose work continues to appear in anthologies and collections are to be found among their ranks.
One final point should be noted, namely that the Uranians’ use of the Greek heritage in speaking about homosexuality was not limited to their poetry. Many of the poets also wrote theoretical treatises—J. A. Symonds’s *Problem of Greek Ethics* (Symonds, 1901), George Ives’s *Graeco-Roman View of Youth* (Ives, 1926), E. P. Warren’s massive *Defence of Uranian Love* (as “A. L. Raile,” Warren, 1928-30), and tangentially, in its handling of the theme of “paganism,” G. E. Woodberry’s *Relation of Pallas Athene to Athens* (Woodberry, 1877)—and there were several figures close to or in the Uranian movement who confined themselves entirely to prose—the homosexual socialist William Paine, who proposed age-structured relationships as a path to social reform (Paine, 1920), Kenneth Ingram (regarding Ingram: D’Arch Smith, 1970, p. 141; 2001, pp. 3-4) and Leonard Green, though many of the essays of the latter might be regarded as prose poems. Thus it will also be necessary to examine some of these prose texts here also.

**FORMAL ALLUSIONS**

Before beginning with an examination of the Uranians’ use of the Greeks, we must note that there were other periods or peoples to which they also appealed. Indeed, among the precursors of the Uranians the Orient was almost a more common reference; one can think of Bayard Taylor’s blatantly outspoken “To a Persian Boy” (Taylor, 1855, p. 125), which surely would not have passed muster in anything other than oriental dress.10 The Middle Ages also enjoyed some popularity, with the term ‘chivalry’ often being used, and stories of knights and their pages. The use of the medieval would seem particularly frequent among Roman Catholic authors—one can think of Frederick Rolfe’s various medieval romances, or the narrative poems by the American Uranian William Alexander Percy, “In April Once” and “Enzio’s Kingdom” (Percy, 1920; 1924), as well as shorter pieces such as his “Page’s Road Song” (Percy, 1915, p. 24), which also, in a somewhat “improved” form, shows up in *Men and Boys* (Slocum, 1924/1978, p. 81).11 It would appear that with some level of deliberation they sought to both exploit the authority of the Gothic—the last era when Europe’s moral, intellectual and political life was unified—with which the Roman Catholic Church clothed itself in that era, with its neo-Gothic architecture and ritual, while at the same time subverting it. There were also Christian references, both from the Old Testament—Jonathan and David in J. A. Symonds’s “Meeting of David and Jonathan”
(Symonds, 1878, pp. 151-158), E. E. Bradford's sonnet "Passing the Love of Women" (Bradford, 1908, p. 11—which curiously enough does not appear in his volume which bears that title!) and George Sylvester Viereck's two poems "Ballad of King David" and "2. Samuel, I. 26" (Viereck, 1912, pp. 22-24, 44)—and the New—Jesus and John, in Willard Wattles's startling "John" ("I see the lanterns gleaming. Kiss me, John." (Wattles, 1918, pp. 104-105)—Christian art, as in G. L. Raymond's "On Raphael's Angels" ("I wonder not that artist's hands, / Inspired by themes of joy, / Presuming forms of angel-bands, / Are moved to paint the boy." (Raymond, 1870, pp. 157-158)), or Christian boy-saints such as Hugh of Lincoln (Bradford, 1980, p. 107; Rolfe, 1974, pp. 38-39) or William of Norwich (Rolfe, 1974, p. 50). Still, it was Greek allusions that predominated.

At the same time, we must also briefly note that there was a similar use of the Greeks in the visual arts, particularly photography. The Greek allusions in the photography of Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden (and his competitors Wilhelm Plüschow and Vincenzo Galdi) are too well known to need further commentary; those in the work of the American photographer F. Holland Day are much more complex and interesting, and we will return to them later. Suffice it to say here that an analysis such as we are doing here for poetry could equally be performed with these visual materials.

At the first level, the Uranians made formal use of the Greeks by translating or paraphrasing Greek (and Greco-Roman) texts which suited their purposes. Theocritus was twice subject to this: there is not only the Hallard translation with which we began (Hallard, 1894), but also the Echoes from Theocritus by E. C. Lefroy (Lefroy, 1885)—and further isolated translations from Theocritus can be found scattered elsewhere in Uranian collections, such as the pair by verses translated by H. C. Beeching and J.W. Mackail which appear in both of the collective volumes they did with J. B. B. Nichols, Love in Idleness (Beeching, 1883, pp. 173, 174) and Love's Looking Glass (Beeching, 1891, pp. 72, 73), though neither of these have quite the Uranian interest displayed elsewhere in the volumes. On the other side of the Atlantic, E. C. Stedman, who engaged in a three-way relationship with fellow poets Bayard Taylor and Richard Henry Stoddard, also produced Theocritus adaptations—specifically, of "Hylas" (Stedman, 1869, pp. 186-192). Philostratus, the Greek poet of the Roman Imperial period, is similarly adapted in English by Percy Osborn in his Rose Leaves from Philostratus (Osborn, 1901)—the source from which the Philostratus in Men and Boys was taken (Slocum, 1924/1978, p. 15).
However, in comparison with these, there was almost an industry at translating the Twelfth Book of the Greek Anthology in its entirety, or Strato or Meleager as individual authors. At least four translations were done: the ill-fated collaboration between Frederick Rolfe/Baron Corvo and Sholto Douglas, which did not make it into print until 1937, and is, to cite D’Arch Smith’s judgement of it, “almost unintelligibly put down” (D’Arch Smith, 1970, pp. 183-185; a longer account is found in Symons, 1934, pp. 146-153); a verse translation by two army officers, Sydney McIlree Lomer and Lionel Oswald Charlton (Lomer, 1914); another verse translation of Meleager by F. A. Wright, who was normally more at home with heterosexual material (Wright, 1924); and lastly Shane Leslie’s prose translation, published by Fortune Press in 1932 (Leslie, 1932), only to be ordered destroyed under the Obscene Publications Act with a number of other Fortune Press titles in 1934 (Craig, 1963, pp. 90-91). As had been the case for Theocritus, there are frequent translations of individual verses from the Twelfth Book to be found throughout the Uranians’ work: at the one end, in 1885, J. A. Symonds contributed a translation of Strato’s famous “Garland Weaver” (XII:8) to an anthology of poetry on roses, coyly altering the sex of the weaver (D’Arch Smith, 1970, p. 133), while at the other end the Rev. S. E. Cottam gives us his straightforward version in 1930, along with four others (Cottam, 1930, pp. 138-142), and five more appear in his posthumous collection of verse (Cottam, 1960, pp. 82-86).14

A next step in the formal use of the Greeks is their retelling of various Greek myths of gods and heroes involving male bonding, or the stories of historical figures. To begin at the top, so to speak, with Zeus, there are expectably references to Zeus and Ganymede. Both Cottam in “Ganymede on Mount Ida” (Cottam, 1960, p. 66) and Bradford tell the story in a rather upbeat manner, the latter characterizing Ganymede as “More dear to Jove than any other friend” and “Jove’s eternal friend” (Bradford, 1913, pp. 70-79); Roden Noel, in his retelling, is rather more aware of the Greek’s ambivalence about being loved of the gods, and emphasizes Ganymede’s loss of worldly companionship (Noel, 1902, pp. 74-75).15 Rather more attention is given to the loves of Apollo, particularly Hyacinthus. Once again both Cottam and Bradford weigh in (Cottam, 1960, p. 70; Bradford, 1913, pp. 91-102); among American authors Hyacinthus is the subject of three poems (Allen, 1919, pp. 11-12; McLane, 1920, pp. 57-58 and a rather purple—and extremely rare—version published by an otherwise unknown author, Phillip Steffens, Hyacinthus, A Love-Myth (Foster, 1982, p. 17). The later Virgilian account of Apollo and Iapis is retold rather more chastely
by another American (Crank, 1875, pp. 173-182). Apollo appears individually in Brian Hill’s exquisite “Meeting at Millow” (Hill, 1959, pp. 8-9), and Hyacinthus appears individually in a poem by F. O. Call, a British-born Uranian living in Canada, in “White Hyacinth” (Call, 1944, p. 2), where Hyacinthus is resurrected in modern life as the poet’s contemporary lover. One final relation involving an Olympian, that between Ares and Electryon, is retold by an American (Stedman, 1869a, pp. 95-105).

At the level of demi-gods and heroes we find probably the most used pair of lovers, Hercules and Hylas. On the British side, the “Song of Hylas” appears in Love in Idleness (Beeching, 1883, pp. 59-61), and two other poets, E. E. Bradford and Cecil Roberts, provide retellings of the story (Bradford, 1913, pp. 80-90; Roberts, 1914, pp. 21-29). Roden Noel, in his “Waternymph and the Boy,” gives us a tragic recasting of the story as a ‘Black Forest’ legend, in which the poet assumes the viewpoint of the nymph (Noel, 1902, pp. 126-128). On the other side of the Atlantic, the myth is first utilized by Bayard Taylor (Taylor, 1883, pp. 72-75) and then, into the 20th century, by the justifiably obscure James B. Kenyon and the rather better known Hervey Allen (Kenyon, 1920, pp. 27-29; Allen, 1921, pp. 18-24; regarding Allen’s homosexuality, see Sears & Allen, 2000, pp. 123-126). In his “Song of Friends,” a poem dedicated to the theme of friendship, John Erskine, a pupil of G. E. Woodberry at Columbia and once prominent professor at the same University and novelist, uses the story as his central example (Erskine, 1907, pp. 31-34). If Bradford and Erskine tend to celebrate the friendship, Roberts and Allen, writing against the background of losses of comrades in the First World War, use the story to mourn the loss of a beloved. Hercules and Iolaus, curiously, do not rate any poetic treatments, although this relationship is memorialized in the title of Edward Carpenter’s pioneering anthology of friendship (Carpenter, 1902). Another semi-divine pair celebrated for their relationship are Hesperus and Hymenaeus (Symonds, 1880, pp. 51-56; Symonds, 1902, p. 27; see Sergent, 1986, pp. 109-110 for background). Symonds, always assiduous at uncovering such themes, found two other individual heroes to celebrate: Philippus (Symonds, 1878, pp. 33-36, 252) and Diocles, the hero at whose tomb outside Thebes erastai and eromenoi swore to be faithful to one another (Symonds, 1880, pp. 60-61; Sergent, 1986, pp. 167-173 for the background). Curiously, the devotion of the famous pair Achilles and Patroclus seems to merit far less attention, with only Cottam’s “Achilles on the Trojan Plain” (Cottam, 1960, p. 67). Finally, the tragic mythical figure who spurned friendship, Narcissus, receives
prominent attention, from the British clergymen Cottam in “Narcissus by a pool in Attica” (Cottam, 1960, p. 69) and Bradford (Bradford, 1913, pp. 50-51), and from the American judge Walter Malone in one of his few forays into mythology (Malone, 1919, pp. 277-296). In a spirit diametrically opposed to their praise of his beauty, he is also taken up by the American Carl MacIntyre in a cycle of poems mocking classical themes (MacIntyre, 1936, p. 36).

Moving into human pairs, we have celebrations by Cottam of Plato and Astor in his “Aster in the Grove of the Academy” and of Plato and Agathon in “Agathon in the Grove of the Academy” (Cottam, 1960, pp. 71-72), both based on poetic fragments attributed to Plato. Another historic pair of lovers to be celebrated by Symonds are Aristodemus and Callimachus (Symonds, 1878, pp. 92-102). But by far the most attention goes out to the Hellenic romance of Hadrian and Antinous. Again, the story is approached in a variety of ways. Cottam, as a Christian clergymen, emphasizes the almost ‘Christian’ virtue of Antinous’s self-sacrifice in his “Antinous on the Nile off Aeinoe,” writing, “Mistaken? Yes, but what a sacrifice!” and providing the poem with a footnote: “Antinous was within an ace of becoming the god of the modern world. We may say it was only the divinity of Christ which prevented this” (Cottam, 1960, p. 68). Others emphasize Hadrian’s loss, casting their poems as his reflections: E. E. Bradford’s “Hadrian’s Soliloquy,” again, as befits a poem by a clergymen, seeks to put the story somewhat in a Christian perspective: “Their Christ . . . taught that love was more than sacrifice” (Bradford, 1916, pp. 12-14); Fernando Pessoa, writing in English, is much more pagan, with its stunning first line, “The rain outside was cold in Hadrian’s soul” (Pessoa, 1991), as is Hervey Allen’s ‘new legend’ “Hadrian at Tivoli” (Allen, 1929, pp. 75-80): “Æsculapius himself could not cure my soul’s disease!” J. A. Symonds’s long “The Lotos-Garland of Antinous” is a straightforward retelling of the story (Symonds, 1878, pp. 121-134), as is Charles Kains Jackson’s sonnet “Antinous” (Kains, 1970, p. 247). Alan Seeger’s sonnet “Antinous” focuses on the boy before his meeting with Hadrian (Seeger, 1917, p. 85), although he also evokes the story in his longer poem “The Deserted Garden”: “That gentle face, forever beautiful, forever sad” (Seeger, 1917, p. 19); the early-dead American Hugh McCulloch focuses on Antinous as he is preparing to sacrifice himself for his lover: “The fair face . . . that tells us without need of speech or breath / the joy of life, the wondrous peace of death” (McCulloch, 1902, pp. 53-58). For a decadent Montague Summers it is the extravagance and excess of the story that fascinates (Summers, 1995, pp. 33-39),
while in the sonnet cycle which closes Robert Hillyer’s *Five Books of Youth* it is precisely Hadrian’s extravagance in “invoking the worship of the crowd” that is unfavorably compared with the poet’s own private devotion to his lover (Hillyer, 1920, p. 110).

It is interesting that D’Arch Smith, when conducting a similar survey of classical themes in his *Love in Earnest*, chooses to do so under the title “The Ways of Evasion” (D’Arch Smith, 1970, pp. 180-187). It is his argument that the Uranian poets adopted all these allusions—not merely Greek, but also Oriental and Christian—as a means for smuggling their sentiments into the public domain without shocking readers, while at the same time addressing the initiated. To use the classics gave them a justification for saying things about which they would otherwise not have dared speak. However, it is not merely when one notes the complexity of concepts which these poets were expressing through some of these themes—the relationship of Heracles and Hylas and that of Hadrian and Antinous prime among them—that one begins to doubt that these were just sly ways of being able to talk about the beauty of boys.

Having begun my own research in that period in which D’Arch Smith wrote, I remember the atmosphere well; we were still convinced that homosexuality was the “love that dared not speak its name” in the Victorian era, whereas, after decades of rediscovering the various social and literary discourses that had been going on, and of which the Uranians were only one strand (cf. Gifford, 1995 for a not wholly satisfying summary and exposition of these discourses), and research into the various urban subcultures and their expressions (Chauncey, 1994; Shand-Tucci, 1995; and Robb, 2003 being perhaps the best examples), we have now come to realize it was precisely the love that would not shut up. (Around 1970-75 we were also quite busy congratulating ourselves on being so much braver and more open than our predecessors, who we thought had hidden and practiced ways of evasion.) Although in 1970 D’Arch Smith was at pains to dismiss any consideration of the Uranians as a movement (D’Arch Smith, 1970, p. 196)—and I would agree that one must not overstate their degree of organization—thirty years on I propose that we must reevaluate the Uranians’ use of these allusions, not as a means of evasion but precisely as a very conscious and deliberate strategy for a sexual cultural politics through art, a valorization of homosexuality—in this case, their Uranian vision—on one hand by connecting it with the classics, which still enjoyed greater social and cultural authority than they do today, and on the other by means of aesthetic arguments in poetic expression, the thought being that if some subject can produce a work of beauty, it must have a moral validity.
Thus it is not only a wider understanding of the currents that were at work in homosexuality, and at work in defining it, but also our understanding of the processes of art which allows us to see this. Since the 1970s, thanks especially to feminist, gay and queer art—and in particular to analysis of the intentions behind the work of figures such as Robert Mapplethorpe (Danto, 1995) at valorizing sexual dissidence in art—we now have the tools to read that process in the past. Once we can begin to see F. Holland Day as the Mapplethorpe of his era—not so large a step—we can perhaps also begin to see J. A. Symonds as akin to Mapplethorpe, outrageous as that comparison might initially sound. Indeed, the idea of an artistic strategy for valorizing homosexuality would particularly suit a personality such as Symonds, who, after all, in addition to his poetry and scholarship—often harnessed to his sexual interests—also wrote tracts “addressed especially to medical psychiatrists and jurists” and participated in the medical discourse in his collaboration with Havelock Ellis. I will acknowledge that this degree of consciousness was possibly not present in every Uranian who took up his pen to produce a handful of poems, but suspect it certainly was in the more vocal and prolific, such as E. E. Bradford (when someone publishes twelve books of poetry on the same controversial topic over a period of better than 20 years, one really must suppose a propagandizing purpose!), or others like George Ives and E. P. Warren who were also writing theoretical texts, or in more combative personalities like George Sylvester Viereck and Willard Wattles in America—and with the last of these, one touches on the circle which produced the *Men and Boys* anthology, and their reasons for producing it. Far from a means of evasion, allusions to the Greeks were a tool for valorization in a strategy for social acceptance.

Surveying the allusions, one sees that they are largely to asymmetrical relationships, either clearly age-structured, or between a god and a mortal, or a warrior/hero and his protégé (“Heroes and Their Pals,” as Halperin famously put it), or various combinations of these. In light of the “ideal standards of reciprocity, equality and gender identity imposed by the crypto-normative force of the homosexual category” (Halperin, 2002, p. 136), such relationships today are regarded as inherently morally culpable, paternalistic and patronizing at best, exploitative or even ‘abuse’ at the worst; to hold up such relationships as an ideal is accordingly viewed either as self-justification on the part of the “superordinate” party, or hypocrisy. Yet this inequality is part of the objective outline that Uranians saw in their Greek mirror; the Greek relationships were asymmetrical, and the Uranians saw themselves in this
outline and filled in their own features. Indeed, we find this asymmetrical model being accepted and advocated not only by those who explicitly idealized age-structured relationships, but also by those like Symonds and Roden Noel, whose personal interests were in age-consistent relationships (albeit relationships which crossed class lines). Were they all merely protecting their privilege? Did they fail to see or appreciate the significance of the social and power inequalities that were going on in the Greek allusions (and perhaps their own relationships)? Was this, on the part of figures like Symonds, simply cynical appropriation or reinterpretation of a culturally authoritative Greek ideal, as a strategy to gain acceptance for their own egalitarian relationships? Or was it indeed a valorization of the asymmetrical, the unequal as such, for a purpose and on the basis of values and ideals we no longer recognize, or to which we are no longer sympathetic?

Even in their day the asymmetrical model, at least with regard to age, was certainly not the only one available. We find the same acceptance of a cultural view of homosexuality, with a similar acceptance of asymmetrical relationships, on the part of Von Kupffer, Friedlander, Brand and the Der Eigene circle in Germany, where it stood opposed to Hirschfeld and his circle, whose medical and biological theories strongly implied reciprocity—if you are of a third sex, you will want to have relations with somebody like yourself, not with a boy—and who were already busily proposing age of consent laws which would criminalize relations which transgressed age equality, as a trade-off for legalizing their own relations (Oosterhuis, 1991, particularly the General Introduction). The Uranians fit well with this Der Eigene circle, with its emphasis on the arts, friendship, male bonding, pedagogical Eros—and asymmetrical relationships. Yet Brand and his circle were marked by a certain elitism, which we will discover that the Uranians lacked. In that lies the final key to the Uranians’ handling of the Greek heritage as they perceived it.

**Reflections in a Greek Mirror**

The first of the general themes which the Uranians saw reflected in the Greeks was what may be called ‘paganism.’ For them this had little or nothing to do with Greek religion as such, in contrast to Christianity; several of the leading Uranian voices were clergymen, and many others continued to identify with certain Christian values. Rather, it was a matter of a general approach to life, one which several of the Uranians in-
deed sought to reconcile with Christianity by redefining Christ as the ideal comrade, an ethical teacher and guide who also taught the essential life-affirming truths they found in this paganism, or, in contrast, by emphasizing the principle of suffering for truth (or even as truth) which they saw embodied in both, and equating the slain Socrates and Christ as twin lights. Others sought to hold the two, though irreconcilable, in creative tension. To the extent that the Uranians’ paganism was in opposition to Christianity, it was to bourgeois, evangelical Christianity—with particular emphasis on the bourgeois; it swept in various elements of opposition to middle class, industrialized, mass society as well. Perhaps the first and best exponent of what it meant for them was Walter Pater, in his famous “Conclusion" to the first (1873) edition of his The Renaissance: “To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life” (Pater, 1919, p. 197). It involved a reorientation to this world, to its truths which emerge in analysis, to its beauty, to art, to experience, to the senses, to friendship and human values, and away from habit ("our failure is to form habits"), from dogmas and stereotypes, from convention, from a slavery to a hereafter to be gained by the practice of conventional morality, every bit as much as from slavery to material palliatives. It was this vitality and immediacy, something which had been present at the beginning of our culture, which the Uranians, looking through the lenses of Pater, Winckelmann and the Renaissance, saw reflected in the Greek mirror. Or to use a different metaphor, from Alan Seeger, this was the “Deserted Garden” to which they sought return—and in which, among other things, stands “the dear Bithynian shepherd lad” (Seeger, 1917, p. 19). In the same year Brian Hill was writing that his Arcady ("I hate this modern world of strife.... My heart is back in Arcady, my soul is far away, far away in Arcady....") is peopled by “the shepherd in his coat of wool, the goatherd on the hill... the careless boys at play beside the merry chattering rill... the little fauns with cloven hoofs...” (Hill, 1917, p. 9).

There were some, even within the Uranians themselves, who had their doubts about this paganism, and particularly its effect on morals. The Rev. E. C. Lefroy, who could write to a friend, “I have an inborn admiration for beauty of form and figure... in most football teams I can find one Antinous, sometimes two or three...” could also, in his 1877 address on "Muscular Christianity," write against what he termed "Pater—paganism and Symonds—sophistry." "What Mr. Symonds and Mr. Pater, and their followers, advise us to do may be summed up in a single sentence, 'Act according to the promptings of nature, and you cannot go wrong.'... In the present case, what is meant by the term 'nature'? Is it
Anglo-Byzantine... for the worst passions and most carnal inclinations
of humanity? I fear there is too much reason to dread an affirmative
answer” (cited in Symonds, 1893, pp. 91-92). Lefroy opposes this with
both “Hellenism properly so-called” (Lefroy’s own words) and “the
Christian faith as a divinely appointed way of surmounting the corrup-
tion and imperfection of nature” (Symonds’s summary of the other half
of Lefroy’s argument) (Symonds, 1893, pp. 92-93). Symonds’s own re-
sponse—“I need not discuss the question of how far Lefroy was just to ei-
ther Mr. Pater or myself, as regards our doctrine and our practice
[italics added]” (Symonds, 1893, p. 94)—nonetheless makes it clear that
he regards accusations against the former as unfounded as the accusa-
tions against the latter are uncomfortable. He (and as we will see, other
Uranians such as Woodberry and Warren) regard the appeal to ideals in
their ‘paganism’ as providing an adequate ethical framework for it. At
any rate, we must note that Lefroy’s critique, involving a veiled re-
ference to homosexuality as an immoral practice, is not the same as
modern objections to the Uranians’ advocacy of asymmetrical relations
as ‘non-reciprocal’ and exploitative.

In America, one of the first to fall under the influence of Pater’s vision
was a brilliant Harvard student, George Edward Woodberry, who
would go on to become a distinguished and highly popular professor of
literature at Columbia, and, as we saw, be the only other American ho-
mosexual poet other than Whitman who Prime-Stevenson esteemed
worth mentioning in his Intersexes. In 1877, the year Pater published
the second edition of his studies on the Renaissance without the contro-
versial “Conclusion,” and also the year of Lefroy’s attack on Pater and
Symonds, Woodberry’s oration as valedictorian of his class, The Rela-
tion of Pallas Athene to Athens, was cancelled by the University author-
ities on the grounds that it was too “pagan” (Erskine, 1930, p. 276), or,
as Woodberry himself put it in an introductory note to the 30 copies he
had privately printed for friends, “This Oration was not delivered upon
Commencement Day because the Committee on Commencement Parts
decided that certain passages in it, which the author declined to change,
were likely to shock the religious sensibilities of the audience” (Wood-
berry, 1877, p. 3). Leaving aside the equivalence between homosexual
practice and ‘paganism’ attributed by its enemies, on the face of things
it is a bit hard to see what all the fuss was about, though one could imag-
ine the opening lines falling on rocky ground in certain circles of Ameri-
can Evangelicals yet today, though no longer at Harvard: “It is hard to
realize to ourselves that religion did not enter the world with Christian-
ity; that long before the Blessed Feet trod the weary way to the Mount of
Sacrifice, men had in their hearts a faith which set their souls on noble living and strengthened their arms for fearless action" (Woodberry, 1877, p. 5). He continues, "Christ, who is love, is the centre of our civilization. Pallas Athene, who is intelligence, was the centre of Greek civilization" (Woodberry, 1877, p. 8), and then traces how from her sprang all the blessings the civilization of Athens—"and that means the civilization of the world" (Woodberry, 1877, p. 5)—enjoyed: peace, prosperity in trade, athletics, philosophy, ethics, art in its greatest glories, summed up in the Parthenon and its sculpture. This was what Greece was to mean for him in his poetry; his "Agathon" is not an opportunity to praise a human relationship, but a dramatic poetic dialogue in which "the desire which in early youth is fed by mortal loveliness" learns to discover its eternal object, following the passage of Agathon, instructed by Diotima and with Eros, "desire of beauty," as his companion and guide, to find "the eternal element in which life has its ground and being" (from "The Argument" of "Agathon," Woodberry, 1903, p. 227; poem, pp. 229-278); in short, a poetic syllabus of Platonic idealism. The pursuit of such idealism, which had made Greece supreme, he hopes will reemerge to provide its blessings to our world: in his "Winged Eros of Tunis, recovered from the sea near Mahdia in 1904" Woodberry both praises the beauty of the statue, and expresses his hopes that in its return, this Eros will be a guide for us today, as he was for Agathon:

Beautiful bronze boy . . .
Thy loveliness disdained
A rude barbarian fate;
No Christian touch profaned
Thy form inviolate;
But plunged in ocean-peace
The blue waves did thee cover;
A score of centuries
Thou hadst the sea for lover.
Late thence emerging now
Into the gray light wan,
Thou bringest the youthful brow
The world's dawn rests upon.
Strange is the sight, forlorn
The heart with the sense thereof,
Beautiful boy, reborn
Of the waves for our worship and love. (Woodberry, 1914, pp. 29-30)
Yet we must not think of Woodberry as someone turning endlessly in the aether of idealist philosophy; his poetry is equally rooted in the sense impressions from which this passionate search for the spiritual springs. Those impressions are often of place—his “Taormina” deals not with the Sicilians who modeled for Von Gloeden, whom he clearly was not unaware of on his visits there, but with the impressions of its landscape and nature (Woodberry, 1903, pp. 10-12)—but frequently also of boys and boy-children. As the author of the only study of Woodberry’s poetry puts it, his poems contain “a whole row of young Sicilians” (Ledoux, 1918, p. 21), and in a letter to Ledoux, Woodberry enthuses about “a boy of ten and Sicilian of the Sicilians to look at” (Woodberry, 1930, p. 63); for their presence in his poetry, one should see, for example, his “Flower of Etna” or “The Sicilian” (Woodberry, 1914, pp. 68-70 and 79, respectively). His own relationships also provide a starting point for his passionate search for the ideal; his first long poem, “The North Shore Watch,” is an elegy to a deceased companion of his youth, but more heartfelt is his “Comrades,” another elegy to young friends, but in particular one whom Woodberry had met when he was 22 and newly arrived to teach at the University of Nebraska, and the boy 17:

Where is he now, the dark boy slender
    Who taught me bare-back, stirrup and reins?
I loved him, he loved me; my beautiful, tender
    Tamer of horses on grass-grown plains...
O love that passes the love of woman!
    Who that hath felt it shall ever forget,
When the breath of life with a throb turns human,
    And a lad’s heart to a lad’s heart is set? (Woodberry, 1914, pp. 55-56)\(^{20}\)

Much more could be said of Woodberry—much more deserves to be said of him, in his quality as both a poet and homosexual poet—but we must move on.

By the end of his life, battered by a somewhat mysterious departure from Columbia in 1904 at the height of his powers,\(^{21}\) years of occasional lecturing and roaming in somewhat genteel poverty\(^{22}\) in Europe and North Africa, Europe closing to him with the start of World War I and the loss in that conflict of friends, both among former students from Columbia and young Italians he had known, one can sense from his letters that Woodberry’s idealism was becoming somewhat brittle. An-
other American who similarly celebrated the 'pagan' faced his conflict earlier and more directly. For all its brightness, the pagan flame had its shadows: concentration on experience in this world and the search for the impersonal eternal truths that lay behind them meant the loss of the sense of ultimate transcendence, hope and moral values provided by Christianity, hope for an afterlife, and the assurance of forgiveness in relation to a personal God. William Alexander Percy made precisely this conflict the crux of his poetry. For the most part—that is to say, in his verse play "In April Once" and the narrative poem "Enzio's Kingdom"—he set this conflict between the attractions of pagan ecstasy and transcendent faith in the times of Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Sicily, whose illustrious court was the first light in the sky heralding the dawn of the Renaissance, as it saw the first reentry of Greek scholarship—and with it Hellenistic attitudes—into Europe as a result of Frederick's contacts with Arab lands where they had been preserved. Percy's evocation of this era was far from just decorative, a chance to write of knights and their young pages—though the final scene of "In April Once," with Guido, the darkly handsome Sicilian knight expiring in the arms of his faithful little page Felice, is surely one of the most affecting in all Uralian literature. The issue runs deeper here: whether paganism, for all its attractions, was indeed (to cite Woodberry's words) a "faith which set . . . souls on noble living and strengthened . . . arms for fearless action":

_Guido_ Stay here.
I am beyond the laying on of hands.
My deeds were not. My aspirations lacked
Not beauty, but singleness of purpose.
And I have lived.
No priest can mend what's broken here.
And for the rest . . .
I shall miss the iris skies and wet, clear stars
Of these our April evenings . . .
And thee, Felice . . .

_Felice_ (sobbing). I am thy page. Ah, leave me not alone.

_Guido_. Hush, hush! But yet, forget me never . . .
O littlest comrade of my heart. (Percy, 1920, pp. 56-57)

Yet with equal fervor Percy continued to sing of paganism. As it was for Woodberry, Taormina becomes a focus for this (Percy, 1915, pp. 45, 61). Percy also appropriates the Arcadian metaphor we also noted with Seeger and Hill, a garden sometimes not merely deserted, but lost with
the death of a "comrade" ("Arcady Lost," Percy, 1915, p. 44), sometimes still occupied by

    A stripling, brown and roughened by the sun.
    Limpid breezes,
    Running slim fingers through his burnt black hair,
    Have tousled it to elf-locks;
    Slender and straight,
    His thighs are hardened to the upward pull. ("An Arcadian Idyll,”
    Percy, 1924, p. 59)

Still another Uranian to succumb to the attraction of "paganism," and without Percy’s ambivalence, was Edward Perry Warren. Several major collections of classical art—including that of the Metropolitan in New York and Boston Museum of Fine Arts—are testaments to his devotion to all things Greek. His particular contribution was to seek a praxis of boy-love—or, as he termed it “Uranian Love”—which would satisfyingly hold together both the ecstasy of worldly experience and the eternal ideals behind it, doing justice to both. That is his quest from the first words of his Defence of Uranian Love: "If a theory of love is to satisfy man, its feet must be planted on the earth and its head raised toward the sky; in other words, it must include both his bodily and his spiritual nature. If it is true only to the latter, it is insubstantial; if it is true only to his fleshly instincts, it is condemned by his self-respect" (Warren, 1928-30, Vol. 1, p. 1). The same defense is present in his poem “Body and Soul”:

    An earth-born love? Yea, love, nor nobler birth
    could lift thee from the earth.
    As bedded flower that drinketh all the sun . . .
    so doth thy soul its body bring to me . . .
    a gift of Love’s own giving;
    for all that makes thee real is added grace;
    loves not who loves the face
    all other parts forgetting or forgiving.
    . . . and now I know
    that what I dreamed is so:
    that love can melt the body and soul in one . . . (Warren,
    1913, pp. 59-60)

On this basis he can appeal to the boy,