

Ten Unpublished Letters by John Addington Symonds at Duke University*

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In 1934 Duke University acquired a small collection of papers which were eventually catalogued in 1994: ten unpublished letters by John Addington Symonds (1840-1893) to Edmund Gosse (1849-1928), a short list of the contents of these letters by an earlier compiler, an envelope, and a small monograph.

Of the letters nine are complete and one is an undated post script; all fall within the period 17 December 1889 to 29 March 1892.

The large envelope (15x23 cm.) was addressed to Edmund Gosse, 1 Whitehall, London and sent 4 December 1894 by registered mail. The envelope therefore could not have been mailed by Symonds, who died 16 April 1893, even though the back flaps of the envelope are sealed in red wax and stamped with his signet ring bearing part of his coat of arms; "1 & 4, Symonds 'party per fere sable & or, a pale & three trefoils counterchange,' 2 & 3, Mainwaring, 'bony of twelve pieces argent & gules'" (Schueller & Peters L1963: to Gosse). Since the envelope was sent from Venice (no return address), it might have been sent by Horatio Forbes Brown, Symonds's literary executor; Brown owned a house, 560 Zattere, on the Guidecca Canal in which Symonds leased a mezzanine apartment from 1883, usually spending the Spring and Fall there (see, e.g. Schueller & Peters L1845).

The small monograph is by Octave Delapierre, an 1870 copy of his 1861 treatise, "Un point curieux des moeurs privés de la Grèce" written in part as a response to the 17th-century homoerotic romance, "L'Alcibiade fanciullo a scola," by Antonio Rocco. Symonds collected erotica, as his references in the Duke Letters make clear: an edition of the Priapea (Duke Letter I), the Erotica Biblia Society (Duke Letter III), and pornographic literature in general (Duke Letter V: "This kind of literature is not good for me. . ."); and it is possible that this Delapierre treatise is Symonds's copy that might have accompanied his 1862 reprint copy of Rocco's romance, to which he refers in Schueller & Peters L1846 (15 November 1890). Or it could have belonged to Gosse, who also did "prize rare books" and apparently had an "enfer de bibliothèque" to put them in (Duke Letter II). The connection between Symonds and Delapierre/Rocco is made slightly more intriguing by the fact that the Gennadeion library in Athens, Greece, has a 1908 copy of his "A Problem of Greek Ethics" with which is bound another copy of Delapierre dated 1871.

The rest of the Duke collection consists of Symonds's ten letters. Four of the letters (Duke Letters I-III, VIII) are written on Symonds's personal stationery, sheets of light creme-yellow paper laid-out horizontally and imprinted with AM HOF, DAVOS PLATZ, SWITZERLAND in the upper

right corner. Symonds then folds each sheet vertically in half and begins as if writing a book, beginning with the right half of the obverse (p. 1), the left half of the reverse (p. 2), and so on; page 5 begins a new sheet. Similar paper, but without the AM HOF imprint and laid out horizontally, is used for Duke Letters IV, VI, and the Post Script X; perhaps the AM HOF sheets were designed to be covers and the unaddressed sheets seconds.

When at the Countess Pisani's villa, Symonds uses her stationery for his Letter V, a dark blue onion skin paper; it, like the AM HOF stationery, is also laid out horizontally and folded vertically with her address occupying the two top corners of p. 1 (right half of the obverse), in italics: *Stazione e Posta Stanghella* obliquely at the left and *Vescana, Provincia di Padova* horizontally at the right. For Letter VII, Symonds experimented with a light blue onion skin laid out vertically but with the same AM HOF, DAVOS PLATZ, SWITZERLAND across the top right corner and printed by the same printer. Letter IX is similar in color, a light blue, but as thick as the creme-yellow AM HOF paper and laid out similarly horizontally, but no address is printed.

In the transcription that follows, I append minimal notes to the end of each letter, and I use standard epigraphical conventions, of which perhaps the following two need explanation here: //word// = word written above the line; and [word] = my clarification. Postscripts to two letters are tucked into available spaces: most of the postscript to Duke Letter VI is squeezed in perpendicularly into the top of the first page of the letter, and the postscript to Duke Letter VIII is written up in the left side of the last page.

Several Duke letters have received later marks; some of these may reflect intended changes to have been made for publication that did not take place. Some of these changes occur in pencil: brackets around the penultimate three paragraphs of Duke Letter III, and around the propenultimate three paragraphs and most of the last paragraph of Duke Letter VI; in Duke Letter V, the second paragraph in the section written on 7 April is struck through, as is the tag to paragraph eight This, please, is said privately to you and as is the postscript to Duke Letter VIII. In Duke Letter VII, however, the strike-outs are done in black ink, and violently—these I have indicated in the transcription.

One theme that runs through the Duke letters is JAS's homosexuality, especially his collection of homoerotic photographs of nude males, and his two homosexual apologiae: *A Problem of Greek Ethics* (1883) and *A Problem in Modern Ethics* (1891b). Related themes also appear: outrage over the social and legal condemnation of "inversion," Symonds's con-

*I am grateful to Duke University's Perkins Library, Special Collections, and to Melissa Delbridge, Associate Librarian, for the opportunity to study and publish this collection. I also wish to thank Dr. Rictor Norton for much help and many suggestions, amongst which that the collection may have come from a box containing Symonds's papers, letters, photographs, diaries, and

pamphlets left by Horatio Forbes Brown to the London Library (of which Gosse was the Chairman of the Committee of the London Library); Gosse's death in 1928 may have freed up the collection for its eventual acquisition by Duke in 1934.

cern over the critical reception to his biography of Michelangelo (1893a), especially to its chapter XII, his epistolary friendships with Walt Whitman and Karl Ulrichs, and remarks about a few lovers. All these themes appear in letters already published.

Duke Letters IV and VII also imply more about Gosse's own homoeroticism, which has occasioned little comment. Schueller & Peters (451, n.1) identify Gosse's *Firdausi in Exile* as having "homosexual themes. On February 24, 1890, Gosse had written to Symonds of his homosexual tendencies, and they had exchanged other letters skirting the subject." Gosse's letter of 24 February is partly published: "Years ago I wanted to write to you about all this, and withdrew through cowardice. . ." (Grosskurth 280-81, fn. 29).

The available letters in the period between Duke Letters IV and VII develop their mutual discovery (Grosskurth 280-82 and fn. 29 for Gosse's letters; for JAS letters, Schueller & Peters Ls 1783, 1786, 1792, 1797, 1810, 1845). One of the remarkable aspects of this series of letters is the homoerotic language Gosse and Symonds use. They speak through photographs of nude youths and men, through the "aura" they perceive in themselves and others, and through a language of silence. This last, the theme of silence and being silenced, is a well known topos of the period (cf. Grosskurth 282, 81), even before it was epitomized in the last line of Alfred Douglas's notorious poem "Two Loves" (qtd. in Harris 549-51 and dated September 1892): "I am the Love that dare not speak its name." Symonds and Gosse use this topos early in their correspondence (cf. the letter from Symonds to Gosse, 28 October 1886: Grosskurth 230 fn. 70) and passionately. If JAS could write a "L'Amour de l'Impossible," Gosse could counter with a "Tragedy without Words"; in their letters and their poetry they write the unspeakable.

[Duke Letter I]

Am Hof, Davos Platz, Switzerland, Dec: 17 1889

My dear Gosse

I am extremely grateful to you for that most magnificent study of Sandow. It is superb, & I am already like you *éperdument épris*.

I wonder whether you would do me a great kindness; & that is, to get & send me at once copies of all the nude studies which have been taken of this hero. I say at once, because they will be really useful to me in some work wh. I am doing—or rather passing through the press again, upon the relation of the model to the work of art. I wrote to Van der Wyde himself, but have had no answer—perhaps because I could give no other address than London to my letter.

I hardly venture to write what I feel about the beauty of this photograph. It not only awakens the imaginative sense. But beats every work of art except for a few bits of the Pheidian period. And no sculpture has the immediate appeal to human sympathy which this superb piece of breathing manhood makes.

I should think that just at present in England Sandow could make a colossal fortune, if he were indifferent to virtue.

It seems to me rather odd, though it quite squares with

my personal opinions & wishes, that the authorities should allow the wide circulation of this nude portrait of a man attracting thousands to his feats of strength.

Odd, I say, when one remembers the extraordinary attitude of the English law toward certain practices, & what is notorious about the state of London, & last not least the disturbance going on at the present moment in the radical press.

As Ulrichs, in one of his strange pamphlets, speaking of the English Home Guards, says:

Perdet te pudor hic! Habere, Britannia,
Severitatem non licet hanc et hos praetorianos!

It is really illogical of the authorities, knowing what morals are & what the law is, to permit the open sale of such photographs.

The whole matter is a worrying problem, about which I should be glad to talk, but which cannot to [sic, 'be'] discussed in a letter. But all I wanted now to observe is the absurdity of maintaining such monstrous laws, in the face of patent-~~great~~//natural// facts, & then of authorizing the sale of pictures wh. cannot fail to be verführerisch in many instances. They would not allow a fancy female dancer to be sold in effigy like this; and ~~the~~ yet there are no laws about women.

I am glad you like that "Page of my Life." It was very hurriedly written, & printed off without the benefit of the elaborate corrections I gave it. This annoyed me greatly; for an autobiographical sketch of this sort is risky anyhow, & it ought to be flawless in mere typographical accuracy. I should like, now I have begun, to produce a good many more pages of my life here. It has attractive sides for a man of letters, who has accepted his barbarian surroundings—Ovid's *Tristia* are not in it.

By the way, Walt Whitman sent me an American paper, with your kind remarks on my *Gozzò!* Thank you much.—He is a very kind old friend, always paying some pretty little attention of this sort.

Please do not forget about the Sandow studies. Tell me what the cost is, & I will send it. After I have used them for my work, I will have them framed & put up in a gymnasium I have recently built & given to Davos Platz.

Referring to an older letter of yours, wh. I had not the time to answer, I see that you have inscribed one piece of your forth-coming volume of early poems to me. Thank you indeed heartily. It is a great honour, & I value it extremely as a sign of your friendship. When will the book appear? Soon I hope.

You also mention a private edition of the *Priapeia* (£ 3.3.0). I should like to take a copy, provided the alia you speak of add to the collection considerably. Anyhow, if the list is not closed, & you think the book worth my having, I am ready to subscribe.

In the same letter you allude to something from my private press, wh. I talked of sending you. I have no very certain memory of what this was. But if you will revive my memory, I will attend. From time to time, I have printed a great number of opuscula for my own use, wh. I did not choose to circulate to the public, & which I wanted to get out of the tiresome Ms. condition.

My daughter writes that she spent a very pleasant time with you & Mrs. Gosse one day, speaking of your wife's kind-

ness to her—for which I am sincerely grateful.

Everyours

JASymonds

People ought to subscribe, & get a complete cast of Sandau. This has been done in Germany for a man of his perfection.

Notes to Duke Letter I: About Eugene Sandow, see Schueller & Peters L1770, and 436 n.3. In his studies of aesthetics JAS used photographs of the male nude; see Symonds 1891a, Schueller & Peters Ls 1767 & 1770, & 434 n. 2, and below, Duke Letter VIII. Van der Wyde may be another publisher of photographs of male nudes. The “disturbance” refers to the Cleveland Street male-prostitute scandal that involved Lord Somerset in mid-November; see Schueller & Peters 556 n. 4, and below, Duke Letter III. Ulrichs’s Latin elegiac couplet (Ulrichs 93 n. 64, a paraphrase of Martial 10.98) translates: “Your modesty is lost here. Britain, you cannot both be puritan and have those Praetorians!” For “A Page of my Life” see Symonds 1889; and Schueller & Peters Ls 1748, 1750, 1751, 1758, & 1759. For Gozzò,” see Symonds 1890d. The “Priapea” appears again at the start of Duke Letter II and in Schueller & Peters L1770, a reference the editors could not explain at the time.

[Duke Letter II]

Am Hof, Davos Platz, Switzerland, Dec: 24 1889

My dear Gosse

For your kind letter of the 21st & for all the trouble you have taken about the photographs & the book, very many thanks! The packet has not come by this night’s post; but it will I hope do so tomorrow, & before I can send this letter off, I hope to tell you so & to enclose a cheque.

I think artists are right in criticizing Sandow from the point of view of plastic beauty. There is a want of agreeable proportion between his immense muscularity & the fine articulation of the wrists. I expect to detect the same abnormal fineness in the ankles.

I have already observed these signs in professional athletes. A powerfully developed peasant, who has used his hands & feet at ordinary work in the years of adolescence, makes a better proportioned model.

What attracted me in the portrait you sent of Sandow was the personal rather than the purely plastic beauty of the man—his carriage—the feeling that one would like him for a comrade.

I knew that you prize rare books. So I am going to send you one of my private publications, wh. is a great rarity, in as much as only 10 copies were struck off. One of these I bound for my own use, & have enlarged (I will not say enriched) with copious annotations. One I gave to [Benjamin] Jowett //(Master of Balliol);// a third to my friend H. G. Dakyns, the translator of Xenophon’s works. No one else has a copy.

You will perceive that it is an elaborate study of pederastia among the Greeks; & unluckily, it bristles with

Greek texts.

I wonder, when you have looked at it, whether you think it could be published?

Please be discreet with the little book, & put it into l’enfer de votre bibliotheque. Chaste as I am sure it is in treatment, there are many persons who would condemn me for having even handled such a topic. And I believe I am the only Englishman who has attempted the task, so cynically & prudishly held out as a bait to scholars by Gibbon (cap. xlv, note 192).

To this rather singular Christmas present I will add one of the Viennese studies of a nude young man, which seems to me to have considerable beauty of line & attitude. I will enclose it in the little vol: “A Problem in Greek Ethics.” at p. 24.

Very sincerely, & with all best wishes of the season,
yours

John Addington Symonds

Notes to Duke Letter II: The “private publication” is Symonds 1883 (written 1873); I have seen the later editions Symonds 1901, 1908, and 1931; see Schueller & Peters L1770 and 436 n. 4, a reference which the editors could not explain at the time. JAS provides the correct reference to Gibbon. Page 24 of the British Museum’s 1883 copy of “Greek Ethics” contains a passage deleted from later editions that ends “in ancient times [i]t was enough that physical needs and spiritual emotions blent together in one impulse, drawing the strong to the graceful, the young to the athletic.” (I am grateful to Rictor Norton for having examined the British Museum’s copy.)

[Duke Letter III]

Am Hof Davos Platz, Switzerland, Jan: 25 1890

My dear Gosse

Thank you for your very kind letter. I think I may say (to begin with) that I have pretty well shaken off the results of the influenza. It has taken all the month to do this, & has left my lungs & head both weak; so that I shall not be able to reckon this as a successful winter.

I am really surprised by the appreciation which you express for my essay on Greek Love. It was written with considerable care in order to keep a certain tone I felt needful in the treatment of the subject. But I thought that, as a piece of literature, it had suffered in consequence. You are quite right about the last section. It is out of harmony with the text, & was thrown in while the pamphlet was being printed. I will tell you why. I helped [Benjamin] Jowett to translate the Symposium of Plato; & at the end of the work came to serious words with him upon the anomaly of his straining every nerve to put that dialogue into English, & to disseminate it, while he holds the most Philistine notions about the slightest shade of Greek feeling. We had been discussing the affaire of V[iscount] H. Somerset, whom I know, & whose wife Jowett regards as the martyr to an unmentionable rascal. I told him that either he ought to be more tolerant, or that he ought to keep the Greek classics out of the hands of sympathetic &

appreciative youths—that he was deliberately inciting to what he considers vice in quarters where the very finest natures might catch an infection from the eloquent imaginative enthusiasm of Plato.

It was in bitter irony that I wrote the section. Surely it is paradoxical for parents to put the whole Greek and Latin library into the hands of boys & young men, & then to hunt them out of society if they follow the example of Harmodius & Aristogeiton.

I wanted, in fact, to raise the question, to make people think what perils they expose their sons to, finally to suggest that more toleration is required if the classics are to form the staple of our higher education.

But, in my corrected copy of the essay, marked & enlarged for possible publication, I have deleted the whole section. The essay itself avoids polemics & ought not to pose problems.

You are quite right about Aeschines. In that oration against Timarchus we get the purest & clearest expression of Attic morality—the exposition of what gentlemen thought right & what they thought wrong in these matters. He & Maximus Tyrius do this with great precision. But while M: Tyrius (p. 10 of my essay) writes merely like a sophist or man of stylistic letters, Aeschines was speaking to the whole nation assembled in the Pnyx or the theatre; & such utterances as he there delivered are the strongest testimony to the existence of a finely marked code of social morals on this matter in Athens.

If I could ever give a wider circulation to my pamphlet, I think I would follow your suggestion, & emphasize the distinction drawn by Aeschines.

Would it be possible to publish it?—adding translations of the Greek passages? What do you think?

By the way, who are the Erotika Biblia Society? I should much like to know that they are doing. Can you inform me?

To return to the point I dropped about Jowett. I have a letter of his before me (written during the ground-swell caused by my quarrel with him about the Symposium).

He says: "I am always surprised to hear you say what you have said before to me about the influence of Plato on persons who have tendencies towards such feelings. I do not understand how what is in the main a figure of speech should have so great a power over them."

The italics are mine. But fancy a Greek Professor calling Greek Love "a figure of speech"! He has presumably all the facts I have marshalled in my essay at his fingers' ends: or ought to have them, & to know more about them than I do, who am not a Greek Professor. He admits that persons have "tendencies towards such feelings". And yet he sophisticates his intellect into thinking that he can supply these persons with Plato, & translate Plato for them, & not be responsible for the development of their feelings by contact with a luminous & glorious panegyric upon those feelings in incorruptible & monumental literature. And "a figure of speech", with Aeschines on the Bema, with Phaedias at Olympia, with Alcibiades tempting Socrates, with Epameinondas & Cephisodorus, with Cleomachus & Panteus, with the Sacred Band of Thebans, with Sophocles & the boy of Samos, with all the Spartan kings, with everything & everybody in Greek history staring him as facts (not figures of speech) in the face.

Dante says, in the Inferno, that all Brunetto Latini's fellow sufferers were "cherce"—clerks, men of humanistic education. If so, why were they infected with Latini's sin? Not because they were educated, but because they had found in classical literature what society around them (following S. Paul) would not so much as speak about.

I am running on & wandering. But I have few people to whom I can communicate my thoughts & questionings upon this serious topic.

There is no longer, I fear, any chance of your coming out to see us here? The grippe is over & gone; & we talk about it as little as we can. It has made many victims & raised the death-rate among our colony of invalids very high. But here as elsewhere it has now relaxed its hold. The winter, however, is not a very favorable one. We have had little snow & much too much mild weather.

I wish you could come to visit me here. I can only peck at you in the few days I spend in London. And here we have unlimited leisure, otia dia, chants royal of illimitable tally.

Just at present I am deep in the medieval history of Graubünden, I want to write a book about the 30 years war in this Canton. It is a fine subject. But it wants a lot of preparatory studies.

Please send me any notes you have. I shall receive them with high interest. Also your poems. When are they to appear?

Believe me sincerely & aff^{ly}

Yours

J. A. Symonds

Have you read Haigh's "Attic Theatre"? It is a good book of its kind: one of the best bits of literary scholarship sent out in these years by our universities.

Notes to Duke Letter III: JAS and Jowett translated the Symposium together over the summer of 1888 (Schueller & Peters Ls 1694 and 1709; Grosskurth 268). JAS planned a history of Graubünden centered around the Swiss soldier Georg Jenatsch (1596-1639); see Schueller & Peters L1751.

[Duke Letter IV]

Feb: 21 1890

My dear friend

I do not want those studies back. I only wished you to see samples of Neopolitan models, & to have Plüschow's address. They are by no means the best out of the 96 specimens I bought the other day (at 6 apiece), but the one I w. spare. The praeturi do not seem to be favourite models in Naples. If I obtain other nudes wh. I think you would like, I will send them.

I am collecting hundreds with the view of illustrating an essay. I have written on the relation of plastic art to the nude in nature. Plüschow's studies have the great merit of open-air illumination & scenery.

I understood the drift of your undated scrap. Your letter of the 19th lies before me. You may trust to my discretion as to what you write. I destroy writings of a private nature.

I am touched to deep sympathy by your letter. If I say

little, it is not because I do not feel much. It is indeed a mad world, my masters, when you & I cannot come together for a few hours, & exchange the thoughts wh. have been pent within the hearts of both. There is some solace for old incurable & aching wounds in the mere unbosoming of all that perilous stuff.

We lead different lives, you say. That is true. But if you are inclined to envy me my *otia*, I envy your *negotia*. The central passions concentrate their fires in solitude, & entame the heart. I am driven to incessant brain-work. I wonder whether you ever read between the lines of some sonnets I wrote on *L'Amour de l'Impossible*?—What is there in nature or society of [sic, "so"] cruel & unjust, that the lives of some people, born like their brethren unwarped, ~~or~~ uncrippled, should be doomed to such mischance of everlasting self-repression? The thin fine thread of purest incorruptible gold which runs through warp & woof of their spiritual nature, though it gives its value to the brocade, rendering it as dreadful to wear as Creusa's marriage robe.

I talk in parables & hide my meaning. You are right. It is better not to publish that essay on the Greeks—or any of the other writings—the best writings of a life-time—wh. touch on the forbidden theme. Good God! why should it be forbidden? Will the time for prophecy never come—the hour of emancipation never strike? It will, I know, come some day: when we are dead. But posterity will not know how many martyrs suffered under the superstitious tyranny of a brutal majority. Else we might with confidence look forward to crowns & choral hymns.

What waste, what waste, what suffering, what useless shame, what undeserved agony of sinless sinning, what lapse from virtuous passion to vice through loss of heart, what false self-torturings & crucifixions by bewildered conscience! And the world goes its way, without recking that ~~by~~ perhaps two percent of the population is maimed, maddened, and unmanned, through its own stupidity of prejudice.

My heart burns within me to speak out. Did you ever study the contemporary literature of this matter—Ulrichs in particular & Krafft-Ebing? These wild wailings of mine would not seem to you spasmodic, if you had writhed, as I have done, with impotent wrath at the heart-breaking confessions of scores of wronged and outraged victims. A deliverer is called for; a champion; some one at any rate to fling his gauntlet in the face of Goliath, & let the truth look. But, as Goethe's Faust says, *entbehren sollst du sollst entbehren*.

It is very late. I must not go on groaning here, especially as these inarticulate utterances do not accord with your manner & more modest strain of feeling.

I would fain speak to you. Perhaps you will come & see me in the Summer days. On the vast upland meadows, in the pine-woods, by the lake-shore, ~~are~~ there one can talk best of these things.

Addio.

JAS

I send you an old idle ebullition of incoherent verse about Erôs Masculus in Hellas, Rome, Renaissance, Now, Future.

Notes to Duke Letter IV: Guglielmo Plüschow (Schueller &

Peters 645 n. 2, L1969, and pl. 16) and Count Wilhelm von Gloeden (1986) were cousins who both "specialized in studies of nude youths." JAS and Gosse correspond more about their lives: Schueller & Peters L1792. The 14-sonnet cycle "*L'Amour de l'Impossible*" appears in Symonds 1882: 36-49, and, as his "autobiography shows, Symonds addressed the sonnets to a series of male friends, especially to Angelo Fusato" (Schueller & Peters 96 n. 3). Among "the best writings of a life-time" JAS considered his "*Modern Ethics*" "my best work, my least presentable" (Schueller & Peters L1758, Dec. 6 1889). "[T]he contemporary literature" on homosexuality includes the sources JAS uses in "*Modern Ethics*," especially Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing. The poem "*With Caligula in Rome*," also mentioned in Duke Letters VI and X, is Symonds 1890e (Schueller & Peters Ls 1780 & 1781).

[Duke Letter V]

Stazione et Posta Vescovana, Stanghella, Provincia di Padova
Friday, April 4 1890

My dear Gosse

Your letter with the enclosures wh. I will return reached me at Davos last Friday just before the beginning of my journey to Italy. It is always a great business this spring journey to Italy; for we all of us prefer to drive for two days over the Passes to the Lake of Como, instead of taking the rail by the Gothard. And this year we all of us nearly lost our lives, for we had to run the gauntlet of three huge avalanches—~~of~~ on the Fluela Pass, one of which would have swept us away if we had reached the spot two minutes earlier. As it was they gave us infinite trouble delay & physical fatigue, & kept us in peril of our lives for two hours.

I came here from Milan yesterday. This is an ancient fief of the House of Este, wh. passed from them by a marriage in the 15th century to the great Venetian family of Pisani. The Pisani are extinct now in the direct male line; & my friend the Contessa Evelina Almarò Pisani, with whom we are staying, is the widow of the last count & the heir of this very considerable landed estate. She is a grand woman—English originally—the dr. of Byron's Dr. Millingen—but she was educated at Rome as the Pope's adopted child from the age of ~~5~~//five// till she married. So is at least as much Italian as English.

I stayed a couple of days at Milan to see a soldier friend there. I had known him as a young peasant in the Berginesque for two years; & last autumn he was drafted into the Alpine, or Chasseurs des Alpes, a picked regiment of specially strong men. I found him reposing on his bed in a barrack-room, snipped out of one of those vast halls in the Castello of the old Dukes in Milan—a dark solemn place illuminated by a sombre fourteenth century arcaded window. Bonfazio is like the Hermes of Praxiteles with the coloring of a Giorgione St. Sebastian, just over six foot high, & 20 years of age. He was very glad to see me, & we went straight to his Captain, who gave him leave to spend the greater part of the two days with me. This was very nice & I enjoyed myself immensely. He had never been inside a theatre. Fortunately the Scala gave

two Grand Ballets one evening. When we came away from the entertainment I had to tell him that most probably he would never see anything in a theatre during his life so good as this, & that he must not found his expectations on so gorgeous an experience. You know the Balli at the Scala are as good as at the Alhambra, & the stage is thrice as grand—the house classically grand, harmonious.

Well, so I tumbled out of that life into the large solemn harmonies of this venerable Italian Castello under the shadow of the Euganean Hills; & tomorrow I hope to go on & take up my abode in our own little dwelling at Venice

560 Zattere.

April 5. While I was writing this yesterday morning, in came the domestic chaplain (who looks after the 30 or so inhabitants of the villa & blesses the 300 head of white oxen in the stables) to tell me it was the Countess's birthday, & would I not write her an ode on the occasion to be presented at the 12 o'clock déjeuner? The Chaplain is so thoroughly Italian that I could not refuse. And there I was, from 10 till 11.15, beating my brains & hammering out rhymes like Hogarth's Distressed Poet. I must leave the question of the books till I reach Venice. There is no time for anything.

April 7. I must really not delay this letter longer. Much as I should like to see some of the books in question, I do not think I can buy any. This kind of literature is not good for me in any way; & unless I am actually studying some aspect of such things, it supplies only an unwholesome element to fancy!

I too felt deeply moved by the analysis of Jaques Lautier in "La Bete Humaine". On my way from Milan I wrote a letter to Zola, suggesting that he should make a study of Sexual Inversion. I think I am going to send it. But I do not suppose he will follow my suggestion. And, as Shelley in Hogg cried, "What would Miss Warner say if he did?" There are a good many poems & prose writers in wh I trace his note—certainly in Marlowe. In all Loti's sailor novels: a touch of it in "La Vita Militaire": in a great many number [of] books of poems (like Ionica, "Bertha"): in Stothard's "South Sea Idylls": but the diagnosis is difficult & dangerous. The aura, when I feel it, seems to me very distinct. By the way, did you ever come across V. H. Somerset's "Songs of Adrien"? A weak book. Italian literature has a great deal here & there—but not of a good alloy.

You see I have got your last 3 letters. You cannot write too often to me. I wish you were spending yr. Easter here. Venice is so lovely.

A long procession has just passed beneath my windows along the quay of the Guidecca—young men stoled in white bearing huge candles flaming in the morning sun, with all the dance & glitter of the waves for background. They crossed the dark pool of blood where a soldier dashed his brains out last evening from the upper windows of the barracks wh. is our next door neighbors. Strange contrast! What was the man's mystery, I wonder? To choose Easter Day, & such a day the whole world's en fête, for such an act of desperation!

Goodbye & believe me, yours always—

JAS.

P. S. After all I should like to hear whether Forberg is to be got, & at what price. It is a classical repertory.

Notes to Duke Letter V: JAS's traveling companions included his wife Catherine, his daughters Margaret and Katharine, and their maid Rosa (Schueller & Peters L1788, p. 454 n. 1). For more information on the Countess Evelina Millingen Pisani, see Schueller & Peters Ls 1717 and n. 2, 1785, & 1850. JAS writes Gosse more about his "soldier friend" (Schueller & Peters L1911); Symonds 1891c describes a young friend similar to Bonfazio; and mentions the Scala production again (Schueller & Peters L1789). JAS wrote about the Euganean hills: Symonds 1890a. The "domestic chaplain" at the Pisani estate is Don Antonio (Schueller & Peters L1691 n. 4). The "study of 'Sexual Inversion'" finally emerged as a collaboration with Havelock Ellis. Symonds mentions homoerotic literature in other letters (Schueller & Peters 412-14 ns. 8 & 9, L1755), and uses the word "aura" when he senses another's homoeroticism; (see Schueller & Peters Ls 1868 & 1872). For another procession along the Guidecca, compare Schueller & Peters 1845. The suicide resembles one which he describes as by "a man of high position in London" (Symonds 1931: 150). Frederich Karl Forberg wrote *Manuel d'Erotologie Classique. De figuris Veneris* (Paris 1882), illustrated with pictures of performed sex (I am grateful to Rictor Norton for this reference).

[Duke Letter VI]

Davos, July 12 1890

My dear Gosse

It seems a long time since we exchanged letters; & I really do not know whether I am in your debt or you in mine.

I joined the Incorporated Authors, at your suggestion. I wonder whether I could obtain information there, or whether you could advise me on the following point? I have finished my treatise on "A Problem in Modern Ethics: being an Enquiry into the Phenomenon of Sexual Inversion"; & I should like to print it privately. But is absolutely needful that I should find a printer of confidence, dealing with whom I could be quite secure against the divulgence of proofs or the abstraction of them by some enterprising compositor.

The Greek essay I sent you was printed for me at Edinburgh by Ballantyne & Hanson. I have not had to complain of them, except that one of their compositors wrote denouncing the wickedness of ~~the~~ my work, & had to be dismissed from the establishment. This Modern Essay is a much more dangerous affair, & would incite a disturbance if it exploded on the public.

Apropos I have another thing to ask. While I was at Venice I wrote an article on the "Platonic & Dantesque Ideals of Love" in relation to the contemporary Beatrice Festival in Florence. It is a really interesting demonstration of a very singular historical parallel, the true bearings of which have never yet been pointed out. But of course I have to make it plain that the Platonic Love arose out of paiderastia & a paiderastic chivalry—Athens playing the same part to the originally martial enthusiasm of the Hellenes, as Florence subsequently played to the previously martial chivalry of Romance & the Teutonic race.

Frank Harris, to whom I wrote about this article, said he

could not venture to publish it. He did not see the thing, & does not perhaps give me credit for touching the subject with delicate adroitness.

Do you know of any periodical that would take it? I have lived so long out of the world of letters that I am ignorant. There may be psychological or semi-scientific journals open to such things. I thought of the Westminster.

Please, if you can find time, answer me on these two points.

By the way, I wonder whether I sent you a poem on "Caligula in Rome", wh came out in a most "incongruous concatenation". It was written long ago, as one number in a series wh. I meant to illustrate the contrasts—~~been~~ between Greek, Roman, between Renaissance, & Contemporary passion. This Cycle of poems remains unpublished—a colossal ruin: only a piece here & there, like "The Lotos Garland of Antimenes", having seen the light. Caligula suffers by being detached from its context. I abandoned the scheme, not only on account of its audacity, but also because I came to feel that I had not succeeded artistically—in fact that I had not the proper gift of poetical narration.

It is pleasant to see you & Mary Darmesteter & myself side by side in the Fortnightly. My article was hastily put together in one day at Harris's urgent request that I should show the public our exchange of compliments in the PMG [Pall Mall Gazette] had left no rancour on either side. But I had to omit the nicest parts of my diary, to wh. the rest (what I printed) served but as setting. Some things cannot be published; and the frame goes to the Salon without the picture. I could not introduce Augusto to the English public. They would have thought my perfectly innocent relations with a working-man were at the least startlingly unconventional. But here are two portraits of Augusto, wh. please return. You may put him on the top of Penolice or among the acacia groves of Galgigniano or the stately pleasure-grounds of Val San Zibio, in your mind. He is dressed in 3 harmonized blues—light for the Camiciotto, darker for the trousers, bright & sharp for the fascia around the waist.

As usual, when I begin to write to you, I go running on. I do wish you were coming here. We have had some American friends on a visit, & are now expecting the Henry Sidgwickes together with Miss Poynter & the Countess of Temple & two of her sons. It is rather a strain on the resources of our not very extensive house. Afterwards come the Dowager Princess of Montenegro & her daughter Olga, who is a great friend of my daughter Madge. We manage to get a good many miscellaneous people here in the course of a year; & one sees more of them in a place like Davos than it is possible anywhere else.

But it is a horrid summer. I have just come back from a cold wet week at Munich, where I went to see German pictures & some artists. Today it is snowing out of doors, laying the whole hay-crop of the valley (der only crop) flat. I am huddled up by the stove, writing on my knees.

I made lately a version of Bion's Adonis in hexameters, imitating the dactylic bounds & Phrygian outcry of the original. It satisfied me, & I have sent it to be splendidly printed in that odd journal "The Century Guild Hobby Horse".

Nudes pour in on me from Sicily & Naples. I have a vast collection now—enough to paper a little room I think. They

become monotonous, but one goes seeking the supreme form & the perfect picture.

My wife is in England. Her sister Miss North is sinking rapidly I fear, & I expect every hour this dismal morning to hear the telegraph boy ring upon the bell. With kindest regards to Mrs. Gosse, ever yours.

JAS

Notes to Duke Letter VI: For "Platonic & Dantesque," see Symonds 1890b. Frank Harris was editor of *The Fortnightly Review*, in which JAS published many articles. *The Westminster Review* last published a scandalized critique of Symonds 1884 in January 1885 (Grosskurth 219). The three articles by Gosse, Darmesteter, and Symonds appeared in *The Fortnightly Review* 48.233 (July 1890). "Augusto" is Augusto Zanon, a porter in Venice, whose dress JAS mentions in another letter (Schueller & Peters L1982). Henry Sidgwick, an old friend and ethical philosopher, was still a visitor in late July (Schueller & Peters Ls 1807 & 1809); Eleanor Frances Poynter wrote the novel *Mme de Presnel* (1885) and was a frequent visitor (Schueller & Peters L1667); the Countess of Temple should be the wife of William Stephen Gore-Langton, 4th Earl Temple of Stowe (Schueller & Peters L1809, and p. 477 n.2); Princess Darinka Krekviceva of Montenegro (Schueller & Peters Ls 1790, 1958, & 1959) was "one of the very few foreign women whom I ever seemed to know intimately" (Schueller & Peters L1958). JAS's translation of Bion's "Adonis" is Symonds 1890f; the inspiration for it occurred "when I was sobbing myself upon the mountains for Augusto's wound" (Schueller & Peters L1891; cf. L1798). Marianne North died 30 August 1890 (Schueller & Peters Ls 1802 & 1831).

[Duke Letter VII]

Am Hof, Davos Platz, Switzerland, August 4 1890

My dear Gosse

I was deeply interested in a "Tragedy without Words" & both for its literary merits (which are great, & in a line of marked originality, both of diction & versification the style of the last century being blent with a curious modernity, eg. in the six lines about "the shapely bird") and also for the aura which, your light cast upon the poem, I am able to discern in it.

The whole of the middle portion of the eclogue—from "But when the snow" to "sting of his defeat"—seems to me quite masterly, in the precise delineation of the two moods & the subtle & quiet analyses of the diverse situations of the lovers, in whom nascent love was so indirectly & by influences light as air diverted from its natural development.

I wish that the real motif could have been unfolded, for it strikes me that a something of superfine refinement, almost bordering on euphemism, remains in the treatment of the subject; ~~a between~~ [3 WORDS] & that just this would have been right, under the conditions of modern life & amid the perplexities of sentiment, if the names ~~unfortunately~~ had not been disguised.

In short, I believe that every genuine emotion has a com-

plexion sui generis, & will not bear without injury the transposal from its own key into that proper to a sister emotion. Some of the finest touches which you have laid, as indirections (in the W. W.'s [Walt Whitman's] phrase) to indicate the difficulty of the situation between Blair & Sebaste, would in my opinion, have been most appropriate, more inevitable to the dramatic unfolding, ~~had Sebaste not appeared instead of Auguste.~~

But I am not sure whether I should have felt this, had I not been into the secret. I am certain that I should have felt the literary skill, peculiarity, & subtle detail of the poem. But I think too that, not reading as I do between the lines, I should have been inclined to judge the theme slightly wiredrawn, excessive in tenuity—wh. it is not when the ~~actual thought~~ is known.

I duly received the photographs in excellent condition, & I will send you some more. If you really care for N. M., I will order it, & beg you to keep it. I can always get these things from Sicily, though the photographers are rather tiresome & casual in their execution of orders. I will sort out some other "visions of the woodland", really pretty bits of studied humanity in natural surroundings. Only, I thought that this class of study struck you as artificial—you said something once about their reminding you of the bouquets of zoophytes which used to adorn your late respected father's books.

I am glad that my Essays have reached you at last; & pray thank Mrs. Gosse from me for reading them. I have got some interesting & appreciative letters on the subject of these volumes—have seen no reviews, except the pieces Ch & H [Chapman & Hall] use for advertizing.

I still remain in doubt what I ought to do about my "Problem". When Henry Sidgwick was here, he thought I had made out a good prima facie case for the ~~altering~~ //reconsidering// the English court. Indeed he was clearly much impressed by the flood of new light which has recently been thrown upon the subject, & by the arguments addressed to utilitarian moralists & jurists against maintaining the present state of things. But he urged me very strongly not to run those risks which are inseparable from having matters of this sort set up in type. He thinks that (short of surreptitious disclosure of the proofs, or chantage) some gossip about my doings might leak out & get into the newspapers—my name & position, in his opinion, being enough to give an edge to curiosity.

So, you see, I am still undecided. I shall try to make up my mind soon. But for a while I must dismiss the subject. My doctor gave me a severe lecture upon over-work, & "the enormous demands I make upon my nervous energy", yesterday. In fact I had to send for him because I was ill. And without knowing what very trying work I had been engaged upon for some months, he went straight to the point of the nervous system.

Believe me always affectionately yours

JASymonds.

Notes to Duke Letter VII: Duke Letter VII was written the day after he writes his well-known appeal to Walt Whitman (Schueller & Peters L1814). Gosse had apparently provided a "key" to the real subject of his "Tragedy without Words"; this "key" is probably that which Schueller & Peters L1786, 25

March 1890, identify as "The Taming of Chimaera," the "key," unpublished, to the meaning and the sequence of poems in *Firdausi in Exile* (1885) Seen now in the context of Duke Letters IV and VII, it seems likely that Gosse's "Chimaera" let JAS "into the secret" of "Tragedy without Words." "N.M." may be an abbreviation for "nude men," "natural male," or the name of a Sicilian model. The "Essays" that Gosse apparently received are Symonds 1890c. JAS's "Problem" should be his *Problem in Modern Ethics* (1891b).

[Duke Letter VIII]

Am Hof, Davos Platz, Switzerland. March 6 1891

My dear Gosse

I feel jealous of all your wonderful activity. It seems to deprive me of what you might give to my greedy self. Do not think I repine.

My wife & I have nearly finished your father's life; so we have been living in close sympathy with you these few days past. It has interested us both immensely; & I enjoy the limpidity of the style of your narration. Sometimes, if you will pardon me for saying so, I feel that you break the pellucid diction by rather forced images—e.g., the "tea-kettle" of Boston. But then I pardon much in gratitude for the splendid application of Juvenal's "*Lassata viris-see-nec dum satiata*" to your father and his sea-beasts!

The whole is vivid with life; & you have drawn the sad pale silhouette portrait of your dear mother with singular delicacy. I almost feel her spiritual atmosphere. You can imagine too that I catch as eagerly at the rare glimpses I get of you in your boyhood.

I should be untruthful if I said that I felt myself in sympathy with your father either as man or stylist. His quality is remarkable & pungent: but while I admire his vigour of intellect & character, I cannot appreciate the species of his genius.

Perhaps; because I had a Plymouth Sister for my grandmother, in the very Ascalon or Gates of that dreary sect //Bristol//. She was an old lady of great pride & ancient blood, every inch une grande dame de la vielle roche, wh. made her fanaticism more distressing, & her association with greasy brethren of the Chadband species more revolting. I had to live alone with her in her big house at Clifton, often, & for weeks together, when I was a boy of from 7 to 10. It was dreadful. She used to pray every night against my father & get an especially loathsome "pharmaceutical chemist" to do the same. She put her servants in the basement of her house to sleep, me alone on the first floor, & herself alone on the second floor. The third she had turned into a large garden of shrubs and flowering plants.

I had "the horrors" all night long, with her deep voice echoing in my ears: "Thus saith the Lord." Jeremiah was her favorite classic! Good gracious!

I have tried to draw a portrait of this dame in my Autobiography. And I—my soul was lodged in Italy and Greece already—I dreamed already of young gods & heroes.

I am working as hard at Michelangelo as my bad health (unusually bad now) permits. Very curious things work out

about his devotion to beautiful young men. If the Italian Government permits me to examine the Archivio Buonarroti (wh. is closed to foreigners) I may find much of interest there upon this topic. For it is certain that the three men who had dealt with the Mss., (Milanesi, Guasti, Gotti) did all they could to conceal or explain away important facts. This, please, is said privately to you.

I sent a letter to the king of Italy in Council today, praying for the permission.

Please keep your copy of my "Problem" with care. It may turn out to be one of six in existence. The rest of the small edition was sent me on the same date that yours was posted. But the parcel has not arrived. Things never take so long a time en route. And I wonder whether it has been lost or detained or something.

Mrs. Myers sent me a lot of her photographs the other day: about 25: including your portrait, wh. I am very glad to have. I have written an article on them (really on the relation of Photography to Art & Nature) for "Sun Artists". I did this to please her.

I wish there were more of you in your Father's Life. You could write a fascinating autobiography if you chose; & I hope you will do this. Only how can we do veracious psychological self-portraiture? I have felt, all my life, like a man whose right hand was tied up & covered.

Ever^{YTS.}

JAS

what became of Sam, when your father left Jamaica?

Notes to Duke Letter VIII: The book JAS and Catherine Symonds read together is Gosse 1890. The quotation from Juvenal (Satire VI.130), concerning the Roman empress Messalina, translates: "exhausted by men but still unsatisfied." See Grosskurth 12-14 for a characterization of JAS's maternal grandmother, Mrs. Sykes, leader of the Plymouth Brethren in Bristol. Janet Ross, who lived in Florence, was instrumental in gaining permission for JAS to conduct research in the Archivio Buonarroti (Grosskurth 304-5; Schueller & Peters 561 n.2, and Ls 1869, 1871, 1873). For the three previous biographers of Michelangelo, see Schueller & Peters 567 ns. 1-3 and 566 n. 3. Eveleen Tennant Myers was "an admirable photographer" who photographed JAS at Cambridge (Schueller & Peters 402 n. 3, Ls 1744 & 1751).

[Duke Letter IX]

Davos. March 29 1892

My dear Gosse

I fear there is no chance of my being able to send you even first proofs of "Michelangelo" before the date April 8. We are at present in the middle of Chap: xi & there are xv chaps as well as a large appendix of comments & an elaborate preface. Also the illustrations have not been settled on.

The slowness with wh. the book has been advancing (after I had worked very hard to get my part in Ms. ready by the middle of December) has annoyed me greatly.

When I see myself within a reasonable distance of com-

pletion I will get Nimmo to send you advance sheets & if possible to let you see the illustrations. I should value an early notice from your pen in some leading periodical, not as a puff, but, because I am sure you would treat the difficult chapter //xii// on Michelangelo's poems & his loves with discernment. In such matters some brutal unsympathetic note given out at the beginning of the review business, is apt to dominate the opinion of critics who are not strong enough to form their own opinion.

Would you be so kind as to read through the proofs of this chapter xii for me? If you would, I will send them to you with my corrections and additions. I feel that the public may reasonably think itself ill-used by the view I have given out of Michelangelo's emotion. But my own corrections are only strengthened by repeated testings of the evidence, & have been curiously corroborated by essays wh. have appeared in Italy & Germany after I had formed them.

I suppose I may have Chapter xii in print within about eight or ten days at the snail's pace we are going.

This slow work keeps me up here, where the spring is appallingly disagreeable. I cannot leave my library until the whole of my own Ms. is in type.

I am glad you liked what I wrote about Lefroy. His friend & literary executor, a Mr. Gill, seems to have misled me as to the small amount of recognition he obtained in his lifetime. I wish I had known that you admired his work. ~~It~~ //It, the work// came upon me as a surprise, which shows perhaps how imperfectly I had studied Sharp's "Sonnets of the Century". But I do not think Sharp made a very good selection.

You have heard no doubt by this time of Whitman's death. I got a telegram on Sunday morning. I shall try to write something expressive of my thoughts & feelings about him as a whole. But this is exceedingly difficult.

Ever yours

JASymonds.

I am in a low state of health & spirits, suffering from depression caused by the abominable thaw of enormous snow-masses & also by a need of change. I've had an attack of haemoptysis the other day, while driving over one of our passes in an open sledge. This kind of thing is no joke. Nothing else within the range of my experience seems to bring death so clearly & nearly before the vividly stimulated consciousness.

Notes to Duke Letter IX: About *Michelangelo* (Symonds 1893a, see Schueller & Peters 634 ns. 4-7, 671 n. 3, Ls 1934, 1946, 1947, 1955, 1965: the book was already sold out by subscription in mid-November 1891, the manuscript was finished by 10 December 1891, and the proofs began arriving by 12 February 1892. JAS was worried about the critical reception of his treatment of Michelangelo's homoerotic affairs and would have liked a favorable advance review, although such a practice had earlier been criticized (Grosskurth 231); also see Schueller & Peters 570 n. 2, Ls 1880, 1960, 1891, and Symonds 1893a, vol. II: 400-6 (Michelangelo's own letters). The essays that appeared to corroborate JAS's interpretation of Michelangelo's homoeroticism are given in Schueller &

Peters L1977, 685 ns. 3-5, and L1984, 695 n. 3. The winter of 1891/2 had been unusually severe: "a fine young man I know was swept away two days ago" in an avalanche (Schueller & Peters L1947). For the essay on Lefroy, see Symonds 1892. Sharp 122-25 publishes four of Lefroy's sonnets. Whitman died 26 March 1892 after a long illness (Schueller & Peters L1941, 641 no. 2); the two had been corresponding for some time. The essay on Whitman complains of his hypocrisy; see Symonds 1893b: 6-7, and section VIII; and Schueller & Peters L1814 (3 August 1891) and L2088 (13 February 1893), which quotes Whitman's reply of 19 August.

[Duke Letter X: a postscript]

P. S.

I forgot to thank you for what you said about my Roman poem, & to tell you that I quite understand & appreciate your point of view. It ought not to have been published alone, coming, as it did, in my original plan, at the end of a series of poems on Greek life, & in the middle of a series upon Rome, which were followed by subjects chosen from Italian Renaissance & Contemporary life—all illustrating the psychology of the topic. I believe that the hint in it of ἀγροῦτης and ὑβρῖς [wildness and audacity] was ethically justified. I should like, by the way, to show you some time a poem on modern life called "John Mordan". But I have it only in Ms & feel sure beforehand that you would not care for its workmanship.

Notes to Duke Letter X: The "Roman poem" is Symonds 1890e, obliquely referred to in Duke Letters IV and VI; on 22 July 1890, JAS writes Gosse (Schueller & Peters L1810): "I am not surprised that you do not sympathize with 'Caligula'." The Duke postscript may belong to this letter; it fits better there than at the end of JAS's next available letter to Gosse, Duke Letter VII, although JAS often repeats himself from one letter to the next. John Mordan was a newsboy at Piccadilly Circus; JAS sent a copy of the poem to Henry Sidgwick, who was so scandalized Symonds urged him to destroy it, but obviously he had kept the original (Grosskurth 116).

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