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James E. Harding

David and Jonathan

Between Athens and Jerusalem

This article seeks to explain what made it possible for modern biblical scholars to ask whether the relationship between David and Jonathan in 1–2 Samuel should be regarded as sexual. The answer is to be found in the way the David and Jonathan narrative was read in the nineteenth century alongside passages in Greek and Roman texts that refer to analogous pairs of friends who had already become, or were on their way to becoming, tropes for homoeroticism.

Were David and Jonathan gay lovers? This modern question, which I have phrased here in deliberately modern terms, has been on the agenda for biblical scholars working on 1–2 Samuel since at least the publication of

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Tom Horner's book *Jonathan Loved David* in 1978.[1] What biblical scholars have been less keen to explore is why this question gets asked at all, and in particular what has made it possible for modern readers to ask this question of the text.[2] What made the idea of a gay relationship between David and Jonathan *thinkable* for contemporary biblical scholars? The purpose of this article is to address this lack, with reference to primary sources that bear witness to the nineteenth-century reception and use of the David and Jonathan narrative.[3] My basic case is that David and Jonathan came to be understood as lovers because the biblical text in which their relationship is portrayed came to be read, from the early nineteenth century onwards, in light of ancient Greek and Roman texts that contained references to other male companions whose relationships were already coming to be understood homoerotically. I am not suggesting that David and Jonathan were not, still less were never, read as homosexual lovers before that point, but rather that it is from this point that the extant sources begin to make this reading explicit, and this, in turn, helped to make this reading more widely thinkable.

[1] Tom Horner, *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), esp. 26–39. Aware of the many terminological pitfalls accompanying any attempt to describe or define erotic relationships, especially in texts and societies far removed in time and space from whoever is doing the describing or defining, I have not tried to be precise or consistent in describing relationships portrayed in texts whose meanings are themselves difficult to pin down. I have merely tried to avoid anachronism as far as possible. For a helpful outline of the problems, see e.g., Martti Nissinen, "Die Liebe von David und Jonatan als Frage der modernen Exegese," *Biblica* 80, no. 2 (1999): 250–263 (cited below).

[2] The key passages in the Hebrew Bible pertaining to the relationship between David and Jonathan are: 1 Sam 18:1–4 (MT); 19:1–7; 20:1-21:1; 23:14–18; 2 Sam 1:17–27. The first passage, 1 Sam 18:1–4, is attested in the Masoretic Text but is absent from the most ancient Greek witnesses.

[3] This article can be read, then, as an extensive supplement to Jeffrey Richards, "'Passing the Love of Women': Manly Love and Victorian Society," in *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, ed. J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 92–122; Frederick Roden, *Same-Sex Desire in Victorian Religious Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); "'What a Friend We Have in Jesus': Same-Sex Biblical Couples in Victorian Literature," in *Reclaiming the Sacred: The Bible in Gay and Lesbian Culture*, 2nd ed., ed. Raymond-Jean Frontain (London: Haworth, 2003), 115–136. I have cited nineteenth- and early twentieth-century authors—particularly Lord Byron, Jeremy Bentham, John Addington Symonds, Oscar Wilde, and E. M. Forster—at length for the simple reason that I doubt the texts in question are much read by biblical scholars, on the shaping of whose questions, I suggest, these texts have had a significant, albeit indirect, impact. I particularly doubt that many biblical scholars have spent time reading *Teleny*—though I may yet be proved wrong.

A question of modern exegesis

At the beginning of an important article from 1990 on the tradition-historical development of 1 Sam 16–20, Otto Kaiser wrote that

> Although in Greek literature there is no lack of classical pairs of friends like Achilles and Patroclus, Orestes and Pylades, or Harmodius and Aristogeiton, and philosophers of the rank of Plato and Aristotle devoted many pages to the theme of friendship, in the Old Testament we encounter only a single pair of friends, in the form of David and Jonathan.[4]

One might expect from such an opening that Kaiser's article would go on to discuss the theme of friendship in the Hebrew Bible, to examine more closely the reasons why that corpus does not contain further references to pairs of friends or detailed discussions of friendship of the sort we find, for example, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*,[5] or, in later Roman literature, in the *Laelius de amicitia* of Cicero. We might, alternatively, expect Kaiser to explore the similarities and differences between David and Jonathan and the Greek friends he cites. This is not, however, the focus of Kaiser's nonetheless important article, which soon proceeds to a detailed engagement with questions of *Traditionsgeschichte*.[6]

[4] Otto Kaiser, "David und Jonathan: Tradition, Redaktion und Geschichte in 1 Sam 16–20, Ein Versuch," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 66, no. 4 (1990): 281–296; repr. *Studien zur Literaturgeschichte des Alten Testaments*, Forschung zur Bibel 90 (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2000), 183: "Während es in der griechischen Literatur nicht an klassischen Freundespaaren wie Achill und Patroklos, Orest und Pylades oder Harmodios und Aristogeiton fehlt und Philosophen vom Rang eines Platon und Aristoteles dem Thema der Freundschaft viele Seiten gewidmet haben, begegnet uns im alten Testament nur ein einziges Freundespaar in Gestalt von David und Jonathan." The question of friendship in classical Greek literature engages Kaiser's attention elsewhere, in "Lysis oder von der Freundschaft," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 32 (1980): 193–218; repr. *Der Mensch unter dem Schicksal: Studien zur Geschichte, Theologie und Gegenwartsbedeutung der Weisheit*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 161 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985), 206–231.

[5] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, books 8–9.

[6] It is worth noting that the tradition-historical development of a text, and developments between manuscripts and versions where there are significant differences between those manuscripts and versions—as, for example, in the case of 1–2 Samuel and Jeremiah between Qumran, the Septuagint, and the Masoretic Text—bear witness to the fact that the history of reception is often already in progress *within a text itself*, which in turn problematizes the notion that there must be a firm distinction between a text and the history of its reception.

There is clearly room for further discussion of the similarities and differences between David and Jonathan and ancient Greek traditions of pairs of friends. What do they each have in common? Do David and Jonathan have more in common with one or other of these pairs of Greek friends than each of them has with the others? Do David and Jonathan have more in common with Greek friends than they do with other figures in the Hebrew Bible, and if so, how is this to be explained? In the case of Achilles and Patroclus, this comparative study has already begun,[7] though there remains much room for further study. In the case of Orestes and Pylades and Harmodius and Aristogeiton, we might explore the ways in which the extant traditions portray male comrades opposing the abuse of power, with David and Jonathan opposing the increasingly desperate and deranged King Saul as he seeks to kill David to secure his own rule,[8] with Orestes murdering his mother Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus in revenge for the murder of his father Agamemnon, and with the role of Harmodius and Aristogeiton in the overthrow of the Peisistratid tyranny, and the subsequent process by which democracy came to be established in Athens.

There are important historical-critical questions to be asked here, taking account not only of the difficulty of establishing clear, historically verifiable links between the traditions of Israel and Judah on the one hand and Hellas on the other, but of the difference between different Hebrew traditions connected with David and Jonathan in the one case (e.g., 1 Sam 18:1–4 appears in the Masoretic Text but not Codex Vaticanus, and 2 Sam 1:26 is possibly, but not certainly, an insertion into 2 Sam 1:19–27),[9] and between different Greek traditions connected with the above-mentioned pairs of friends mentioned in the others (e.g., between Homer and Aeschines on Achilles and Patroclus, between Euripides and Pseudo-Lucian on Orestes and Pylades,

[7] See e.g., David M. Halperin, "Heroes and their Pals," in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love*, New Ancient World Series (London: Routledge, 1990), 75–87, discussed below.

[8] Though it is worth noting that in contrast with all the Greek friends cited, David and Jonathan do not operate together in 1–2 Samuel, either in battle or against the tyranny of Saul. Rather, David goes into hiding and Jonathan pleads his case at court, with the result that Saul and Jonathan die as heroes in battle, whereas the former fugitive David becomes king in Saul's stead. This may well suggest that what is most significant is not what David and Jonathan have in common with other pairs of friends, but what they do not share.

[9] On 2 Sam 1:26 see e.g., Diana V. Edelman, "The Authenticity of 2 Sam 1,26 in the Lament over Saul and Jonathan," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 1 (1988): 66–75.

and between Aeschines and Thucydides on Harmodius and Aristogeiton).[10] These are significant questions but not those I am primarily concerned with here.

I am more concerned with a particular question that has arisen in recent scholarship on the David and Jonathan narrative, a question that, I wish to suggest, cannot be considered in isolation from the reception history of the narrative, and from the reception histories of the Greek traditions pertaining to Achilles and Patroclus, Orestes and Pylades, and Harmodius and Aristogeiton. One strand of scholarship has fixated on whether or not the biblical text portrays David and Jonathan as involved in a sexual relationship. At one end of the spectrum, Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli have suggested that

> David and Jonathan shared a homoerotic and, more than likely, a homosexual relationship. The books of Samuel recount the love of the two men with utter frankness. In his song mourning the death of the beloved, David explicitly ranks the love of men he experienced with Jonathan above the love of women (2 Sam. 1.26).[11]

At the opposite end of the spectrum, in the context of a detailed exegetical study of texts pertaining to same-sex desire in the Hebrew Bible and Greek New Testament that sadly fails to avoid lapsing from time to time into virulently homophobic rhetoric,[12] Robert Gagnon has remarked that

[10] In an early example of a kind of corrective historical criticism not too dissimilar from that which Halperin employs (see below), Thucydides responds to the tradition that the assassination of Hipparchus at the instigation of Aristogeiton and his beloved Harmodius was essential to the overthrow of tyranny in Athens, on the grounds that the tyranny of Hippias grew more severe after his brother's death. See Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* 6.53–59. On Aeschines see below.

[11] Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli, "Saul, David and Jonathan—The Story of a Triangle? A Contribution to the Issue of Homosexuality in the First Testament," in *A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings*, ed. Athalya Brenner, trans. Barbara Rumscheidt and Martin Rumscheidt, FCB 2/7 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 26. German original: "Saul, David und Jonathan—Eine Dreiecksgeschichte? Ein Beitrag zum Thema 'Homosexualität im ersten Testament'," *Bibel und Kirche* 51 (1996): 15–22. Markus Zehnder has responded at length to the exegetical problems raised by Schroer and Staubli's article, initially in German and more recently in English: "Exegetische Beobachtungen zu den David-Jonathan-Geschichten," *Biblica* 79 (1998): 153–179; idem, "Observations on the Relationship between David and Jonathan and the Debate on Homosexuality," *Westminster Theological Journal* 69, no. 1 (2007): 127–174.

[12] Gagnon is not unfairly dubbed an "academic turned ayatollah" by Jean-Fabrice Nardelli in *Homosexuality and Liminality in the* Gilgameš *and* Samuel, Classical and Byzantine Monographs 64 (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 2007), vii.

> [N]othing in the stories raised any suspicion that David and Jonathan were homosexually involved with one another. Only in our own day, removed as we are from ancient Near Eastern conventions, are these kinds of specious connections made by people desperate to find the slightest shred of support for homosexual practice in the Bible.[13]

Statements of this sort led Thomas Naumann to conclude that

> While on the one hand, the possibility of David's homoerotic love is vehemently denied with the support of a centuries-old, biblically grounded, condemnation of homosexuality, on the other hand the story counts as an important piece of evidence that the Hebrew Bible can also portray homoerotic relationships between men positively. On this question hardly anyone escapes the circle of apologetic interests.[14]

What is at issue in this debate is whether or not the biblical text portrays David and Jonathan as involved in a sexual relationship. That is, the biblical text is taken to be open to one particular construal, and the role of the interpreter is, using the tools of historical-critical analysis, to work out what the most likely construal of the text would have been for its author and earliest readers.[15] Naumann's claim, however, is that modern "apologetic interests" (*apologetische Interessen*) have exercised a decisive and potentially distorting influence on the conclusions such interpreters have drawn. It is important, then, to determine not simply what the text may or may not have meant, but to try to understand why scholars ask the questions they ask of ancient texts, and, beyond this, what makes it even possible to ask them.

Martti Nissinen has raised a question of just this sort in a cautious analysis of the David and Jonathan narrative that shows a strong awareness of the risks

[13] Robert J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 155.

[14] Thomas Naumann, "David und die Liebe," in *König David: Schlüsselfigur und europäische Leitgestalt*, ed. Walter Dietrich and Hubert Herkommer (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003), 54: "Während auf der einen Seite die Möglichkeit einer homoerotischen Liebe Davids mit einer jahrhunderte-alten biblisch begründeten Verteufelung der Homosexualität im Rücken vehement bestritten wird, gilt die Geschichte auf der anderen Seite als wichtiger Beleg dafür, dass die hebräische Bibel homoerotische Männerbeziehungen auch positiv darstellen kann. In dieser Frage entgeht kaum jemand dem Zirkel apologetischer Interessen."

[15] The most thorough study to date that takes this approach is Zehnder, "Observations."

of importing modern ideas and assumptions, particularly regarding sexual relationships, into ancient texts.

> If, then, the term "homosexuality" is needed in connection with the David-Jonathan scenes, it must first of all be clear what is required in order to be able to label the relationship of these two men properly as "homosexual." Which features of the relationship are emphasized? The personal sexual orientation of the participants, or their concrete behaviour, or both? If it is not concerned with orientation, but only with behaviour, which kinds of same-sex behaviour are to be labelled "(homo)sexual"—all expressions of affection and desire, or only intimate physical contact, or exclusively sexual union? Can the word only be applied to the relationship between the two men, or does the societal assessment of this relationship also necessarily play a role; in other words, is there a "homosexuality" apart from the societal interpretation of the behaviour of the participants? Who needs an answer to the question whether the relationship of David and Jonathan was "homosexual"? Why is this question even put? These questions are not hair-splitting, if we are seriously asking after the applicability of the term "homosexuality" to the sources of the ancient world.[16]

My concern is with Nissinen's final question. Why are scholars at all concerned with whether or not David and Jonathan were lovers? One way of approaching this question would be to analyse the way various contributions

[16] Nissinen, "Die Liebe von David und Jonatan," 252: "Wird also der Begriff Homosexualität in Beziehung auf die David-Jonatan-Szenen gebraucht, müßte zunächst einmal geklärt werden, was erforderlich ist, um die Beziehung dieser beiden Männer sachgerecht als homosexuell bezeichnen zu können. Welche Eigenschaften der Beziehung werden betont? Die persönliche sexuelle Orientation der Beteiligten, oder aber ihr konkretes Verhalten, oder beides? Wenn es nicht um die Ausrichtung, sondern nur um das Verhalten geht, welche Formen des gleichgeschlechtlichen Verhaltens sind denn als (homo)sexuell zu bezeichnen—alle Ausdrücke der Zärtlichkeit und Begierde, oder nur intime physische Berührung, oder ausschließlich die sexuelle Vereinigung? Kann das Wort nur auf die Beziehung zwischen den beiden Männern bezogen werden, oder spielt dabei notwendig auch die gesellschaftliche Bewertung dieser Beziehung mit; m.a.W., gibt es eine Homosexualität ohne die gesellschaftliche Auslegung des Verhaltens der Beteiligten? Wer braucht eine Antwort auf die Frage, ob die Beziehung von David und Jonatan homosexuell war? Warum wird diese Frage überhaupt gestellt? Diese Fragen sind keine Haarspalterei, wenn wir nach der Anwendbarkeit des Begriffs Homosexualität auf die Quellen der alten Welt ernstlich fragen."

to the modern scholarly debate are ideologically determined, by the need, for theological or political reasons, or for some combination of the two, either to affirm or to deny that David and Jonathan were involved in a sexual relationship. I wish, though, to take a step back even from this issue, and ask why it is even possible to raise the question whether the biblical narrative might be read in such terms.

For Schroer and Staubli, it is a relatively simple matter of laying aside our prejudices and paying attention to "the assumption which the text itself nearly compels us to make, namely, that it speaks of a homosexual relationship."[17] This assumes a very simple relationship between text and reader, in which the text communicates a message that any reader is capable of deciphering without difficulty because the text, which functions as an agent, more or less compels the reader to do this. Readers can interpret the text differently, but only because they wilfully avoid what the text unambiguously wants the reader to acknowledge.[18] Thus when David, in his dirge, sings to the slain Jonathan that "your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women" (נפלאתה אהבתך לי מאהבת נשים)[19] the comparison *must* be between homosexual and heterosexual relationships.

But Schroer and Staubli naively ignore three factors: the openness of the text to a range of construals, the *apparent* absence of a *clearly* homosexual construal by readers before the nineteenth century,[20] and the influence of much later ideas on how modern readers perceive a text to be compelling them to see certain things within it. The first and second points can be partially illustrated by a glance at the history of the transmission of the text. Targum Jonathan specifies the love with which Jonathan's is compared as "the

[17] Schroer and Staubli, "Saul, David and Jonathan," 22.

[18] It is on these grounds that Schroer and Staubli—not entirely without justification—attack Georg Hentschel, Hans Joachim Stoebe, and Fritz Stolz (Schroer and Staubli, "Saul, David and Jonathan," 22).

[19] 2 Sam 1:26.

[20] The earliest interpretation I have found of the David and Jonathan narrative as an *unambiguous* portrayal of a sexual relationship is in an unpublished manuscript of 1817 by Jeremy Bentham (see further below). I would be interested to know of earlier unambiguous references to a sexual relationship between David and Jonathan that I am not yet aware of, my point here being that I have been unable to find interpretations that I, *as a twenty-first-century Western reader*, with my particular intertextual competence, am able to interpret as *unambiguously* sexual. Precisely how references to David and Jonathan such as Targum Jonathan to 2 Sam 1:26, or the Vetus Latina on the same verse, were *actually read*, and in particular whether they were construed sexually by their readers, cannot, I think, be determined with certainty.

love of two women" (רחמת תרתין נשין),[21] perhaps Abigail and Ahinoam,[22] thus comparing Jonathan's love with that of two unspecified female characters without identifying the precise grounds for the comparison. Whatever the grounds for the comparison are, there is hardly a simple opposition here between homosexual and heterosexual love: rather, there is an opposition between one named character's love, and the love of two other unnamed characters. In part of the manuscript tradition of the Vulgate, and in the 1592 Clementine edition, Jonathan is lovely (*amabilis*) above the love of women, "as a mother loves an only son" (*sicut mater unicum amat filium*).[23] Again, this is not a question of homosexual versus heterosexual love, but of a contrast between the quality of the love of two particular men and maternal love

[21] On Targum Jonathan to 1–2 Samuel, see esp. Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel*, Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), and particularly 480–88 on the Aramaic rendering of 2 Sam 1:17–27.

[22] Cf. 1 Sam 27:3; 30:5, 18; 2 Sam 2:2.

[23] In the case of the Vulgate, the Clementine text retains a fascinating medieval gloss that responds to the ambiguities of the verse: *doleo super te, frater mi Ionatha, decore nimis, et amabilis super amorem mulierum. Sicut mater unicum amat filium suum, ita ego te diligebam*, "I grieve over you, my brother Jonathan, exceedingly beautiful, and lovely above the love of women. As a mother loves her only son, so did I love you." The ambiguous "your love" has been transformed into the love of David for Jonathan. The question of what sort of love this is the Latin text solves by comparing David's love for Jonathan with the love of a mother for her only son. The Stuttgart edition prunes back what its editors regard as a somewhat wayward version to *doleo super te frater mi Ionathan decore nimis et amabilis super amorem mulierum*. The *apparatus criticus* traces the wayward gloss. Three manuscripts (Amiatinus, Legionensis^2, and Lyon, Bibl. de la Ville 401 [327]) read *mulierum sicut mater unicum amat filium*, with the eighth-century Lyon manuscript adding *suum*. In two medieval Spanish manuscripts (Cavensis, Toletanus) the verse is expanded to *mulierum sicut mater unicum amat filium ita ego te diligebam*. In the manuscripts of recension Φ (Alcuin), which also reflect this expanded text, *filium* is qualified by *suum* and *ego* is omitted. The sixteenth-century Clementine text takes the most expansive possible option, while the Stuttgart edition works on the reasonable principle that the shorter version is more likely to be original (*lectio brevior potior*). See the *apparatus criticus* in Robert Weber, ed., *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgata Versionem*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 417. The expansive versions make it clear that David loved Jonathan, a point that is never clear in the Hebrew, where it is Jonathan who loves David (1 Sam 18:1), not the other way round. An ambiguity in the Hebrew of 2 Sam 1:26 is whether (אהבתך), "your love" refers to Jonathan's love for David, David's love for Jonathan, or both. The Vetus Latina, cited by Ambrose (*De officiis* 3.61) and traceable to an older Greek variant (Frederick Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt; sive Veterum Interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum Fragmenta* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1875), 1.549a n. 38), renders 2 Sam 1:26 considerably more effusively: "I grieve over you, brother Jonathan, so very beautiful to me. Your love fell on me, just like the love of women" (*Doleo in te, frater Ionatha, speciosus mihi valde. Ceciderat amor tuus in me sicut amor mulierum*).

for an only son. In the Geneva Bible of 1560 the phrase "passing ye loue of women" in 2 Sam 1:26 is accompanied by a marginal note that reads "Ether towarde their housbandes, or their children."

The issue in each case is that the "love of women" is not taken to signify "heterosexual love of women for men and/or men for women," but a specific kind of textually- (in the case of the Targum) or culturally- (in the case of the Geneva Bible and the variant reading from the Vulgate) determined[24] love associated with women. The study of the reception of a text is, above all, what teaches the interpreter that the relationship between text and reader is extraordinarily complex, with the process of signification shifting depending on the cultural, linguistic, and literary competences of each successive generation of readers. But it is with my third objection to Schroer and Staubli that I am most concerned. In a slightly earlier study, Martti Nissinen made the following claim about how later readers might interpret the David and Jonathan narrative:

> The text thus leaves the possible homoerotic associations to the reader's imagination … [T]hose who have added to the story have augmented its intensity by making the men meet one another again and again, restating their love, and reinforcing their friendship with a pledge. This was hardly considered particularly inappropriate, and it raises the question whether a modern reader is more prone than an ancient to find a homoerotic aspect to the story … Modern readers probably see homoeroticism in the story of David and Jonathan more easily than did the ancients … The relationship of David and Jonathan can be taken as an example of ancient oriental homosociability, which permits even intimate feelings to be expressed. In this sense it can be compared to the love of Achilles and Patroclus (in Homer's *Iliad*) or the love of Gilgameš and Enkidu. In these relationships emotional partnership is emphasized, whereas erotic expressions of love are left in the background and only to be imagined.[25]

[24] By "textually determined" here I mean that the translator of the Targum seems to have sought to relate the "love of women" here to specific women mentioned elsewhere in the text. By "culturally determined" I mean that the Vulgate and the marginalia of the Geneva Bible reflect ideas about what the "love of women" might connote that are drawn from the way their cultural contexts define womanhood. A firm distinction between the two categories does not, of course, exist.

[25] Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective*, trans. K. Stjerna (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 56.

The latent orientalism of Nissinen's treatment aside, two key issues arise here. The first is the extent to which interpreters import the ideas and values of their own native context into the ancient texts they study. The second is the way interpreters use ostensibly analogous ancient texts to disambiguate other ancient texts. I want to problematize this situation radically by suggesting that the main reason modern Western readers find traces of homoeroticism in the David and Jonathan narrative is because (1) the David and Jonathan narrative has been read in this way by certain influential readers for at least two centuries and, in fact, (2) this narrative was one of the key ancient sources in the late nineteenth century for the reconstruction of a genealogy of same-sex desire. The narrative was, furthermore, (3) interpreted outside the canonical context in which it had been transmitted, being read alongside ancient Greek and Roman texts that themselves had become, or were on their way to becoming, tropes for homoeroticism, rather than simply for close friendship.[26] This intertextual process (4) effectively turned "David and Jonathan" into a coded reference to homoeroticism, and created a reading convention that modern historically-oriented exegeses have sometimes—e.g., in the different cases of Nissinen, Zehnder, and Gagnon—sought to overturn. Thus (5) one strand in the recent reception history of the David and Jonathan narrative has made a homoerotic construal possible and, in turn, helped to dictate one particular modern scholarly agenda. We might say here that the reception history of the narrative has influenced, consciously or—more often than not—unconsciously, the questions scholars of a historical-critical bent have been wont to ask. But perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the questions scholars of a historical-critical bent are wont to ask of this narrative are, themselves, part of the complex history of its reception.

[26] I have not made any attempt here to account comprehensively for the scholarly literature on the relevant ancient texts, because I am concerned principally with how these texts were subsequently *read* and *used*, not with what they may, and may not, originally have meant. For bibliographical resources on the ancient Greek sources referred to below, see esp. Kenneth J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love*, New Ancient World Series (London: Routledge, 1990); Thomas K. Hubbard, ed., *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook of Basic Documents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); James Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love: A Radical Reappraisal of Homosexuality in Ancient Greece* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007).

The reception of ancient heroes and their pals

In his essay "Heroes and their Pals," David Halperin compares the portrayal of the friendship between Achilles and Patroclus in the *Iliad* with the friendships between David and Jonathan in 1–2 Samuel, and Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Halperin's intention is to read the Homeric pair in light of more or less contemporary ancient Near Eastern analogues in order to explore the symbolic dimension of the representation of friendship in the *Iliad*, its "role in producing and purveying the means of collective understanding that constitute social 'labels.'"[27] Halperin finds a common set of structures in the three texts that enabled the organization of the basic elements of each friendship:

> [A]ll three narrative traditions feature a close friendship between two, and no more than two, persons. These two persons are always male; they form not only a pair, but a relatively isolated pair: the two of them are never joined by a third; there are no rivals, no other couples, and no relations with women that might prove to be of a "distracting" nature. The relationship … always has an outward focus, a purpose beyond itself in action, in the accomplishment of glorious deeds or the achievement of political ends. Each of the six friends … is an exceptionally valiant warrior: we are dealing not with an instance of some neutral or universal sociological category called "friendship," then, but with a specific cultural formation, a type of heroic friendship which is better captured by terms like comrades-in-arms, boon companions, and the like.[28]

Furthermore, the three friendships have ideological ramifications with respect to the relation between private and public:

> Friendship, it seems, is something that only males can have, and they can have it only in couples … The male couple constitutes a world apart from society at large, and yet it does not merely embody a "private" relation, of the sort that might be transacted appropriately in a "home." On the contrary, friendship helps to structure—and, possibly, to privatize—the social space; it takes

[27] Halperin, "Heroes and their Pals," 76.
[28] Ibid.

> shape in the world that lies beyond the horizon of the domestic sphere, and it requires for its expression a military or political staging-ground. This type of friendship cannot generate its own *raison d'être*, evidently: it depends for its meaning on the meaningfulness of social action.[29]

Nor are these friendships strictly between equals:

> They are based alike on a structural assymetry, consisting in an unequal distribution of precedence among the members of the relationship and a differential treatment of them in the narrative: one of the friends has greater importance than the other; the latter is subordinated—personally, socially, and narratologically—to the former.[30]

In each case, the weaker or less favoured friend—Enkidu, Patroclus, Jonathan—dies. It is the death of this friend that produces the most intense expressions of tender affection, and binds them forever in the memory of the survivor.[31] In each case, the friendship is portrayed using language used elsewhere, in Akkadian, Hebrew, and Greek, for kinship and sexual relations.[32] This points to the interstitial character of friendship. Because friendship tends to stand outside more precisely codified social structures, alternative semantic resources must be used, metaphorically, to define the nature and social function of the relationship in question. This creates serious problems

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 77–78.

[31] Halperin, "Heroes and their Pals," 78–79. Cf. in the nineteenth century John Henry Newman, "David and Jonathan," in *Lyra Apostolica* (London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1836), 20–21; repr., *Hymns* (1885; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1892), 68–69. "David and Jonathan" appears in the section of *Lyra Apostolica* entitled "Affliction." The original date of the poem is given as January 16, 1833 at Lazaret in Malta in *Hymns*, 68–69. The poem was written seemingly in reference to Newman's friend Richard Hurrell Froude, whose death on February 18, 1836 preceded the publication of *Lyra Apostolica* later the same year (it is dated at All Saints, November 1, 1836), and turned the poem into a memorial. Charles Kingsley, who was, ironically, in some respects the ideological polar opposite of Newman (cf. e.g., Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 44–46), invoked David and Jonathan in a response to Tennyson's poem "In Memoriam A. H. H.," an impassioned memorial to Tennyson's close friend Arthur Henry Hallam (see further below).

[32] Ibid., 81, 83, 84, 85.

for the interpreter, given that it is difficult to determine whether the language of kinship and sexual relations is being used metaphorically to refer to other kinds of intense personal bond, or whether the reverse, or some other more complex construal more accurately reflects the process of signification. Halperin does not make this point, however, suggesting instead that the effect of the use of kinship and sexual language to represent male friendship was to turn such friendship into a "paradigm case of human sociality," replacing the kinship and conjugal bonds whose proper signifiers had been colonized on its behalf.[33]

Halperin's essay is an exercise in a form of historical criticism and as such he is at one with Nissinen in placing a strong emphasis on the distance between the cultural milieux of the texts under discussion and the cultural milieux of their modern interpreters. In particular, he is intent on correcting the distorting effect of fifth- and fourth-century BCE works by Aeschylus, Plato, and Aeschines that have shaped how the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus in the *Iliad* would later be construed.[34] He is using the tools of historical criticism to produce a corrective to the distorting effect of one moment in the reception history of the texts he is discussing. It is worth spending some time on these texts, because it is precisely the traditions whose reworking in fifth and fourth century BCE Athens is reflected in Aeschines, Aeschylus, and Plato that would, I argue, later influence the reception of David and Jonathan.

Achilles and Patroclus in fourth-century Athens

The modern reception of biblical and classical—especially Greek—accounts of male friendships is, to a certain extent, a reprise of the ancient reception of Achilles and Patroclus, inasmuch as by the fourth century in Athens the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus had come to be re-read back through the lens of contemporary understandings of same-sex love. In the case of Aeschylus, Plato, and Aeschines, the Homeric portrayal of their relationship was reconfigured in relation to παιδεραστία: it became a relationship between

[33] Halperin, "Heroes and their Pals," 85–86.

[34] Halperin, "Heroes and their Pals," 86–87. In this essay Halperin does not cite the *Studies of the Greek Poets* of John Addington Symonds, who long ago emphasised the distinction between the comradeship of Achilles and Patroclus in the *Iliad* and the παιδεραστία of fourth century Athens (see below). Symonds could not take account of the Epic of Gilgamesh, of course, which had only been deciphered in 1872, the year before the first volume of *Studies of the Greek Poets* was published.

an older man and his younger male beloved. Thus regardless of how the poet or poets who stand behind the *Iliad* intended their relationship to be construed—a matter that is still very much open to debate—it was understood by some in fifth- and fourth- century Athens in light of a particular contemporary social institution. The fourth-century texts in question not only anticipate the way yet later readers would interpret ancient friendships in light of contemporary concerns, but also themselves contributed to subsequent re-interpretations of Homer, and, further down the line still, to subsequent re-interpretations of 1–2 Samuel.

A key point of disagreement in fourth-century Athens was not so much *whether or not* the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus was sexual, but rather which *role the two men took in a paiderastic relationship*. Thus in his speech against Timarchus, Aeschines appeals to what he and his audience have been told about Achilles and Patroclus, and refers to them alongside Harmodius and Aristogeiton, a pair of friends whose sexual relationship was a much less contested aspect of the tradition to which they belonged.[35]

> παραφέρων πρῶτον μὲν τοὺς εὐεργέτας τοὺς ὑμετέρους, Ἁρμόδιον καὶ Ἀριστογείτονα, καὶ τὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλους πίστιν καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα ὡς συνήνεγκε τῇ πόλει διεξιών· οὐκ ἀφέξεται δέ, ὥς φάσιν, οὐδὲ τῶν Ὁμήρου ποιημάτων οὐδὲ τῶν ὀνομάτων τῶν ἡρωικῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν λεγομένην γενέσθαι φιλίαν δι᾽ ἔρωτα Πατρόκλου καὶ Ἀχιλλέως ὑμνήσει
>
> [one of the generals] will first cite your benefactors, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, going in detail through their faithfulness to one another and how their deed conferred benefit on the city. As they say, he will leave aside neither the poems of Homer nor the names of the heroes, but will sing the praises of the friendship of Patroclus and Achilles which, it is said, had its root in sexual desire. (Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*, 132–33)

Aeschines is countering an accusation by Timarchus that his diplomatic relationship with Philip of Macedon constitutes treason. He thus brings an accusation against Timarchus, charging that he is disqualified from participating

[35] Aristogeiton is described as the "lover" (ἐραστής) of Harmodius in Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* 6.54.2, and the assassination of Hipparchus is described as "due to an incident connected with a love affair" (δι᾽ ἐρωτικὴν ξυντυχίαν) at 6.54.1. See also Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 13.602a.

in the public, political life of Athens because he has prostituted himself.[36] In this passage Aeschines is referring to the defence he expects to be offered on behalf of Timarchus. What is significant is that a sexual component to the friendship of Achilles and Patroclus is assumed without question, and is not regarded as open to debate. Despite the fact that the *Iliad* itself never explicitly portrays Achilles and Patroclus as sexually involved with one another, a customary interpretation of Homer in the fourth century, an interpretive habit or convention, if you will, that Aeschines could assume was familiar not only to him but to his audience, interpreted their relationship in light of contemporary notions of sexual love between an older, free male, the "lover" (ἐραστής) and his younger partner, the "beloved" (ἐρώμενος).

In order to appeal to Homer in this way, Aeschines must read a particular construal of male-male love back into his text of the *Iliad*, then impute to the poet the intention to leave an aspect of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus unstated, and open for the hearer to fill in the gap.

> ἐκεῖνος γὰρ πολλαχοῦ μεμνημένος περὶ Πατρόκλου καὶ Ἀχιλλέως, τὸν μὲν ἔρωτα καὶ τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν αὐτῶν τῆς φιλίας ἀποκρύπτεται, ἡγούμενος τὰς τῆς εὐνοίας ὑπερβολὰς καταφανεῖς εἶναι τοῖς πεπαιδευμένοις τῶν ἀκροατῶν. λέγει γάρ που Ἀχιλλεὺς ὀδυρόμενος τὸν τοῦ Πατρόκλου θάνατον, ὡς ἕν τι τοῦτο τῶν λυπηροτάτων ἀναμιμνῃσκόμενος, ὅτι τὴν ὑπόσχεσιν τὴν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα τὸν Πατρόκλου Μενοίτιον ἄκων ἐψεύσατο· ἐπαγγείλασθαι γὰρ εἰς Ὀποῦντα σῶν ἀπάξειν, εἰ συμπέμψειεν αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν Τροίαν καὶ παρακαταθεῖτο αὐτῷ. ᾧ καταφανής ἐστιν, ὡς δι᾽ ἔρωτα τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν αὐτοῦ παρέλαβεν.
>
> Although [Homer] makes mention in many places of Patroclus and Achilles, he keeps hidden their love [ἔρως] and the name of their friendship [φιλία],[37] in the belief that the [meaning of the] extravagances of the[ir] goodwill [for one another] should be obvious to those among his hearers who are educated. For somewhere when he bewails the death of Patroclus, as recalling one of the most painful sorrows, he says that he involuntarily broke the promise [he had made] to Menoetius, the father

[36] Aeschines speaks openly about his own sex life, defending his emotions and actions as a "lover" (ἐραστής) on the grounds that he loves men honourably, whereas Timarchus has acted dishonourably by selling his body.

[37] On the distinction between ἔρως and φιλία in the context of the representation of paiderastic relationships, see Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 52–53.

> of Patroclus. For he promised to bring him to Opus safe and sound, if he would send him along with him to Troy and entrust him to his care. By this it is clear that he undertook to care for him on account of love [ἔρως]. (Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*, 142–43)[38]

The move Aeschines makes here is fascinating. He appeals to the intention of the putative author as, precisely, the *author*ity for his interpretation. At the same time, Aeschines suggests that the poet has a particular kind of intended reader in mind, assuming that his hearer(s)/reader(s) will have the intertextual and extratextual competence to infer a paiderastic relationship between the lines of his epic. "Homer" provides a gap, and intends his hearer(s)/reader(s) to fill it in a specific way. But it is not Homer himself—or perhaps better, given the difficulty of reconstructing the "author" of the *Iliad*, the implied author himself—but Homer *as reconstituted by Aeschines* who does this. Aeschines, then, constructs both an implied author for the *Iliad* and an (implied) intended reader. He is using Achilles and Patroclus to justify his own, honourable, erotic relationships with free boys in contrast with Timarchus dishonourably selling his body. He is, at the same time, writing a particular kind of ἔρως between the lines of the *Iliad*.

Prior to Aeschines, the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus had already been construed erotically by both Aeschylus and Plato. Indeed, the *Symposium* of Plato refers back to a three-part work by Aeschylus of which only tiny fragments remain. In frag. 135 of the lost *Myrmidons*, Achilles seems to reproach the dead Patroclus for disobeying his instructions not to advance too far towards Troy.

> σέβας δὲ μηρῶν ἁγνὸν οὐκ ἐπηδέσω,
> ὦ δυσχάριστε τῶν πυκνῶν φιλημάτων[39]

[38] On this passage in particular, see ibid., 53; Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love*, 262–64. In general on this speech of Aeschines, see e.g., Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 19–109; Eva Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World*, 2nd ed., trans. Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 17, 20–22, 35–36, 47, 48–53; Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love*, esp. 65–67, 117–20 (responding to Dover), 423–25, 451–59.

[39] This passage is quoted in Plutarch, *Erotikos*, 751c; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 13.602e. See August Nauck, ed., *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, 2nd ed. (1889; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1964), 44; Stefan Radt, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, vol. 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 250. The recent Loeb Classical Library edition of A. H. Sommerstein adopts the reading κατηδέσω in place of ἐπηδέσω, citing the aforementioned passage

> And you did not show reverence for the pure holiness of thighs,
> you who were unthankful for countless kisses.

Similarly, in frag. 136 we read

> μηρῶν τε τῶν σῶν ηὐσέβησ' ὁμιλίαν
> κλαίων[40]
>
> Wailing I honoured the intimacy of your thighs.

It is extremely difficult to know what to make of such tiny fragments taken in isolation, though the reference in Plato to the complete work of which they were originally a part is more informative.[41] It is certainly worth noting that Jeremy Bentham refers to this passage as part of a lengthy, unpublished defence of the legitimacy of same-sex erotic relationships,[42] and later in the nineteenth century the following remarks were made by John Addington Symonds in reference to these fragments.

> Achilles, front to front with the corpse of his friend, uttered a lamentation, which the ancients seem to have regarded as the very ecstasy of grief and love and passionate remembrance. Lucian, quoting one of the lines of this lament, introduces it with words that prove the strong impression it produced: "Achilles, when he bemoaned Patroclus' death, in his unhusbanded passion burst forth into the very truth." It would be impossible to quote and comment upon the three lines which have been preserved from this unique Threnos without violating modern

from Plutarch (Aeschylus, *Fragments*, ed. Alan H. Sommerstein, LCL 505 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 144). See further on this passage Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 70, 197; idem, "Greek Homosexuality and Initiation," in *The Greeks and their Legacy: Collected Papers*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 128; Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World*, 10–11; Davidson, *The Greeks and Greek Love*, 261.

[40] Aeschylus, *Fragments*, 146–47, following the reading of Peter Paul Dobree. For the textual variants for this line, see Radt, *TrGF*, 251. This passage is cited in Pseudo-Lucian, *Amores* 54.

[41] See below.

[42] Bentham archive, University College London, Box 161b fol. 460, December 24, 1817. Citing the Greek without translation, Bentham reads καλλίων instead of κλαίων (cf. the variants listed in Radt, *TrGF*, 251).

> taste. To understand them at all is difficult, and to recompose from them the hero's speech is beyond our power.[43]

What we have here is a multi-layered history of reception in which later works (in reverse chronological order Symonds, Pseudo-Lucian, and Aeschylus) cumulatively influence the reading and interpretation of earlier ones.[44]

That the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus was sexual is again assumed in the speech by Phaedrus in the *Symposium* of Plato. The issue was which of the two performed which role in the paiderastic relationship. Phaedrus mentions the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus as an example of the courage of love. Achilles was honoured by the gods for being willing not only to die for Patroclus, but also to die as well as him. Patroclus was, according to Phaedrus, the "lover" (ἐραστής) of Achilles, a view Phaedrus justifies by appeal to Homer, but on which he takes issue with Aeschylus, effectively correcting Aeschylus with reference to Homer.

> ὁθεν δὴ καὶ ὑπεραγασθέντες οἱ θεοὶ διαφερόντως αὐτὸν ἐτίμησαν, ὅτι τὸν ἐραστὴν οὕτω περὶ πολλοῦ ἐποιεῖτο. Αἰσχύλος δὲ φλυαρεῖ φάσκων Ἀχιλλέα Πατρόκλου ἐρᾶν, ὃς ἦν καλλίων οὐ μόνον Πατρόκλου ἀλλ' ἄρα καὶ τῶν ἡρώων ἁπάντων, καὶ ἔτι ἀγένειος, ἔπειτα νεώτερος πολύ, ὡς φάσιν Ὅμηρος.
>
> For this reason the gods, being exceptionally pleased [with him], honoured him pre-eminently, because he thus set such high store by his lover. Aeschylus talks rubbish when he claims that Achilles was *Patroclus*' lover, Achilles being more beautiful not only than Patroclus, but also than all the other heroes, and still beardless, thus much younger [than Patroclus], as Homer says. (Plato, *Symposium*, 180a)

This fascinating remark offers an important glimpse into the nature of reception history. It belongs to the reception histories of both the three-part *Achilleis* of Aeschylus, of which only scant fragments remain and to which the *Myrmidons* belonged, and of the *Iliad*. Like Aeschylus, Plato takes liberties

[43] See John Addington Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (1873; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1893), 102 (citations from this work are from this edition). Symonds does not give references to the texts he quotes here, but he is referring to the citation from Aeschylus in Pseudo-Lucian, *Amores* 54.

[44] The work of Symonds would, in turn, influence later readers still, notably Oscar Wilde, on whom *Studies of the Greek Poets* seems to have been very influential.

with the *Iliad*, prompting Kenneth Dover to remark on the phrase νεώτερος πολύ that, "Phaedrus' addition illustrates how easily (in ancient and modern times alike) the evidence of texts can be bent."[45] It illustrates, as Aeschylus and Aeschines do, the way earlier texts are reconfigured by being read through the lens of later social norms. It also illustrates how later construals of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus came to be shaped.

[45] Plato, *Symposium*, ed. Kenneth J. Dover, Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 95. Dover's comment on this passage in *Greek Homosexuality*, on the other hand, does not stress the difference between Homer and Plato's *Symposium* with respect to the social dynamics of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus: "Phaidros is right in saying that Homer represents Achilles as younger than Patroklos (*Il.* xi 786), yet he does not discard the erotic interpretation of the story" (Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 197; cf. 53). Homer, however, does not portray Achilles as *much* younger than Patroclus. The tension between Plato and Homer here is to some extent comparable with the use of the David and Jonathan narrative by Ambrose of Milan, who assumes that Jonathan is the younger of the two. For Ambrose David was older and more experienced (*prudentior*) than the younger (*iunior*) Jonathan (*De officiis* 1.32.167). The biblical text, if anything, seems to imply the reverse. Ambrose sees David's trust in Jonathan as an example of trust in someone of goodwill (*benevolentia*). Jonathan and David were naturally inclined towards similar virtues, because *benevolentia* produces likeness of character. Jonathan sought to imitate the gentleness of David because he loved him (*De officiis* 1.33.171). Saul's anger in 1 Sam 20:33 stems from his belief that Jonathan had placed his friendship with David above duty (*pietas*) and deference to paternal authority (*De officiis* 2.7.36). Jonathan's friendship is an example of a friendship that derives from virtuous character (*honestas*), that takes precedence over wealth, honour, and power (*De officiis* 3.21.125). Ambrose is a good example of the way the David and Jonathan narrative was already being read in light of classical intertexts in the patristic period. The context is a lengthy reworking of the *De officiis* of Cicero. This to some extent anticipates the use of the David and Jonathan narrative in the *De spiritali amicitia* of Aelred of Rievaulx, which, itself dependent on the *De officiis* of Ambrose, is a medieval Christian reworking of the *Laelius de amicitia* of Cicero. For Aelred, echoing the ancient rabbinic tradition preserved in *m. Avot* 5:16 (albeit presumably unintentionally), the friendship of David and Jonathan is one between equals that is not motivated by a desire for material advantage (*De spir. am.* 2.62–62; 3.47, 92). For the text of the *De officiis* of Ambrose, see Ivor J. Davidson, *Ambrose/De Officiis: Edited with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 2 vols., Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). For the text of the *De spiritali amicitia* of Aelred, see Anselm Hoste and Charles H. Talbot, eds., *Aelredi Rievallensis Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Medievalis 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971). On the question of the difference in age between David and Jonathan, see now Jonathan Y. Rowe, "Is Jonathan Really David's 'Wife'? A Response to Yaron Peleg," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 34, no. 2 (2009): 183–193, which challenges the assumption that there was much age difference between them at all; Rowe is responding to Yaron Peleg, whose earlier article, "Love at First Sight? David, Jonathan, and the Biblical Politics of Gender," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30, no. 2 (2005): 171–189, assumed that Jonathan was much the older of the two.

Notably, Plato is not the only fourth-century Athenian lens through which Achilles and Patroclus have been refracted, though it has arguably been the most influential one. The *Symposium* of Xenophon, which is at least to some extent dependent on the *Symposium* of Plato, also re-reads Homer. Xenophon, however, explicitly denies that Patroclus was the boy lover, the παιδικά, of Achilles. Xenophon would seem, then, to be denying the construal of their relationship implied by the allusion to the *Myrmidons* of Aeschylus in Plato's *Symposium*, though on different grounds to Phaedrus. For Xenophon, Achilles sought to avenge the death of Patroclus because of the *spiritual* love implied by their comradeship, rather than because of a predominantly physical bond (though it may be that Xenophon is merely denying that the physical bond is *what mattered* in the relationship: what he is certainly doing is defining the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus as one of noble, selfless *comradeship*, rather than unequal, interested *paiderasty*, leaving the question of bodily eroticism unanswered). The relevant passage reads

> καὶ ἐγὼ δέ φημι καὶ Γανυμήδην οὐ σώματος ἀλλὰ ψυχῆς ἕνεκα ὑπὸ Διὸς εἰς Ὄλυμπον ἀνενεχθῆναι. μαρτυρεῖ δὲ καὶ τοὔνομα αὐτοῦ· ἔστι μὲν γὰρ δήπου καὶ Ὁμήρῳ
>
> γάνυται δὲ τ᾽ ἀκούων.
>
> τοῦτο δὲ φράζει ὅτι ἥδεται δέ τ᾽ ἀκούων. ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἄλλοθί που
>
> πυκινὰ φρεσὶ μήδεα εἰδώς.
>
> τοῦτο δ᾽ αὖ λέγει σοφὰ φρεσὶ βουλεύματα εἰδώς. ἐξ οὖν συναμφοτέρων τούτων οὐχ ἡδυσώματος ὀνομασθεὶς ὁ Γανυμήδης ἀλλ᾽ ἡδυγνώμων ἐν θεοῖς τετίμηται. ἀλλὰ μήν, ὦ Νικήρατε, καὶ Ἀχιλλεὺς Ὁμήρῳ πεποίηται οὐχ ὡς παιδικοῖς Πατρόκλῳ ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἑταίρῳ ἀποθανόντι ἐκπρεπέστατα τιμωρῆσαι. καὶ Ὀρέστης δὲ καὶ Πυλάδης καὶ Θησεὺς καὶ Πειρίθους καὶ ἄλλοι δὲ πολλοὶ τῶν ἡμιθέων οἱ ἄριστοι ὑμνοῦνται οὐ διὰ τὸ συγκαθεύδειν ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ ἄγασθαι ἀλλήλους τὰ μέγιστα καὶ κάλλιστα κοινῇ διαπεπρᾶχθαι.
>
> And I say that Ganymede, too, was brought to Olympos by Zeus not on account of [his] body, but on account of [his] soul. His name also testifies to this. I presume you know that, according to Homer, "Hearing it, he is glad." That is to say, hearing it,

> he is pleased. Somewhere else there is, "Knowing close counsels in [his] heart." Based on both of these together, Ganymede is honoured among the gods not because he is sweet in bodily form, but because he is sweet in mind. So then, Nikeratos: Achilles too was made by Homer to take exceptional vengeance on behalf of Patroclus not as a [viz. Achilles's] beloved boy [παιδικά] but as a comrade [ἑταῖρος] who had died. Likewise, Orestes and Pylades, Theseus and Peirithous, and many others of the noblest of the demigods are praised in song not because they slept together but because they honoured one another, having accomplished great and glorious things together. (Xenophon, *Symposium*, 8.31)

Not only does Socrates, according to Xenophon, portray the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus as one of comradeship motivated by spiritual, rather than physical love, but he begins to associate their comradeship with that of other *paria amicorum*,[46] in this case Orestes and Pylades,[47] and Theseus and Peirithous. Each can then by read in light of the others.

[46] Cf. Xenophon, *Symposium* 8.28.

[47] In Pseudo-Lucian, the relationship between Orestes and Pylades has gone through a similar process of revision to that experienced by Achilles and Patroclus in the work of Aeschylus, Plato, and Aeschines. Orestes was the son of Agamemnon who, after his father's murder by his wife Clytemnestra, assisted by her lover Aegisthus, was taken to Phocis for his own safety (see e.g., Euripides, *Electra* 14–18). There he was protected by King Strophius, and grew up with the king's son, Pylades. Orestes and Pylades journeyed together to Argos where, in response to an oracle, they took vengeance on Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. In Pseudo-Lucian, the fictional Athenian Callicratidas cites the friendship of Orestes and Pylades in his defence of παιδεραστία. According to Callicratidas, their "loving friendship" (τὴν ἐρωτικὴν φιλίαν, contrast the ἑταιρικὴ φιλία, "comradely friendship" to which Aristotle refers in *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.10, apparently alluding to famous pairs of friends) was that of a "lover" (ἐραστής), Pylades, and his "beloved" (ἐρώμενος), Orestes (*Amores* 47). Orestes refuses Iphigenia's request that he take a letter on her behalf to Mycenae, claiming that Pylades is more worthy to do so, a refusal that Callicratidas argues shows Orestes to be acting the part of ἐραστής rather than that of ἐρώμενος. Lucian is dependent on Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, a few verses of which he cites in *Amores* 47 (*Iphigenia in Tauris* 311–12, 598–99, 603–5). Notably, the language of παιδεραστία as such is absent from the portrayal of their comradeship in Euripides, suggesting that Pseudo-Lucian—or, perhaps better, his character Callicratidas—is reading this kind of relationship between the lines of Euripides, much as Aeschylus, Plato, and Aeschines did with Homer's portrayal of the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus.

David and Jonathan between Athens and Jerusalem

By the fourth century BCE, it had become possible to read ancient friendships between heroes in light of contemporary understandings of male-male love. In some cases (Aeschylus, Plato, and Aeschines), though by no means all (Xenophon), this could have sexual overtones. It had also become possible to read traditions about the earlier heroes Achilles and Patroclus, Orestes and Pylades, and Theseus and Peirithous, as well as the more recent Harmodius and Aristogeiton, in light of one another. The very fact that Xenophon could differ from Plato in his use of these traditions suggests that these traditions were open to more than one construal and in no way compelled the hearer or reader to find sexual overtones in them, even though certain readers would interpret them thus. This ancient process of re-reading, I suggest, anticipates the use of these traditions in the nineteenth century when, in the wake of both the post-Renaissance rediscovery of the literary and philosophical heritage of ancient Greece, and the rise of biblical scholarship outside the Church during the Enlightenment in Western Europe, biblical and ancient Greek texts came to be interpreted in light of one another. It is not so much the simple fact *that* biblical and ancient Greek texts were being read in light of one another that is significant, because this had, of course, always been the case in the Christian tradition. Rather, it was in the nineteenth century that the intertextual appropriation of biblical and ancient Greek sources pertaining to what Cicero dubbed *paria amicorum* (*Laelius de amicitia*, 15: *ex omnibus saeculis vix tria aut quattuor nominantur paria amicorum*) came to be redeployed in the service of a positive appraisal of same-sex eroticism *without* the stultifying strictures of a religious tradition that, at least officially, had nothing but contempt and condemnation for same-sex erotic relationships.

At this point we must return to David and Jonathan. In *Ioläus*, his 1902 anthology which is both an attempt to construct a genealogy of same-sex relationships throughout history and a key contribution to the emerging discourse of human sexuality, Edward Carpenter cited Byron and Shelley as figures in the early nineteenth century who wrote on the theme of romantic friendship between men.[48] Byron and Shelley are not only significant because of their contribution to our understanding of the portrayal of ro-

[48] Edward Carpenter, in *Ioläus: An Anthology of Friendship*, 2nd ed. (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1906), 160–66. The 1906 edition contains an appendix with additional references (185–224). The title *Ioläus* is an allusion to the Iolaus who, according to a tradition recorded by Plutarch (*Pelopidas* 18.4), was the beloved (ἐρώμενος) of Heracles.

mantic friendships between men in the early nineteenth century. They were, at the same time, evidence for the reception of biblical and Graeco-Roman sources during this period and, alongside other Romantics such as Coleridge, Leigh Hunt, and Keats, major influences on figures of the late nineteenth century—especially John Addington Symonds and Oscar Wilde—who were connected in different ways and to varying degrees with aestheticism and the emerging discourse surrounding human sexuality.

In his discussion of Byron, Carpenter cites a letter from Byron to Elizabeth Bridget Pigot of July 5, 1807, which reads

> At this moment I write with a bottle of claret in my *head* and *tears* in my *eyes*; for I have just parted with my "*Cornelian*," who spent the evening with me. As it was our last interview, I postponed my engagement to devote the hours of the *Sabbath* to friendship:—Edleston and I have separated for the present, and my mind is a chaos of hope and sorrow. To-morrow I set out for London: you will address your answer to "Gordon's Hotel, Albemarle-street," where I *sojourn* during my visit to the metropolis.
>
> I rejoice to hear you are interested in my *protegé*: he has been my *almost constant* associate since October, 1805, when I entered Trinity College [Cambridge]. His *voice* first attracted my attention, his *countenance* fixed it, and his *manners* attached me to him for ever. He departs for a *mercantile house* in *town* in October, and we shall probably not meet till the expiration of my minority, when I shall leave to his decision either entering as a *partner* through my interest, or residing with me altogether. Of course he would in his present frame of mind prefer the *latter*, but he may alter his opinion previous to that period;— however, he shall have his choice. I certainly love him more than any human being, and neither time or distance have had the least effect on my (in general) changeable disposition. In short we shall put *Lady E. Butler* and *Miss Ponsonby* to the blush, *Pylades* and *Orestes* out of countenance, and want nothing but a catastrophe like *Nisus* and *Euryalus*, to give *Jonathan* and *David* the "go by." He certainly is perhaps more attached to *me* than even I am in return. During the whole of my residence at Cambridge we met every day, summer and winter, without passing

> *one* tiresome moment, and separated each time with increasing reluctance. I hope you will one day see us together, he is the only being I esteem, though I *like* many.[49]

The way that the four same-sex pairs—the Ladies of Llangollen, Orestes and Pylades, Nisus and Euryalus,[50] and David and Jonathan—are referred to is suggestive of a shorthand for a certain kind of devoted relationship between persons of the same-sex that Byron expected his reader to understand. This implies, of course, that David and Jonathan already constituted a well-known

[49] This is printed as letter XIV in Thomas Moore, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron with Notices of His Life*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1830), 112–14, and the section alluding to the Ladies of Llangollen, Orestes and Pylades, and David and Jonathan is cited from this edition by Carpenter, *Ioläus*, 160–61. My citation is from Moore, but cf. Leslie A. Marchand, ed., *Byron's Letters and Journals* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1973), 124–26. Ruth Vanita cites part of this letter in *Sappho and the Virgin Mary: Same-Sex Desire and the English Literary Imagination*, Between Men—Between Women: Lesbian and Gay Studies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 50, in a discussion of the influence of Sappho as a model of same-sex relationships both between women and between men in Romantic poetry (37–61). The "Cornelian" referred to is a choirboy at Trinity chapel called John Edleston, two years Byron's junior, to whom Byron had written a poem of that title. Edleston had given a cornelian to Byron as a gift. See further Marchand, *Byron's Letters and Journals*, 1: 87–88 (to Augusta Byron, January 7, 1806), and 1: 122–24 (to Elizabeth Bridget Pigot, June 30, 1807). In his journal for January 12, 1821, Byron writes of his friendship with Edward Noel Long and his romantic attachment to Edleston thus: "*His* friendship [viz. Long's], and a violent, though *pure*, love and passion [viz. Edleston's]—which held me at the same period—were the then romance of the most romantic period of my life" (ibid., 8: 24). For the text of "The Cornelian," see Thomas Moore, ed., *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (New York: P. F. Collier, n.d.), 398b.

[50] Nisus and his younger companion Euryalus are Trojan warriors who take part in the funeral games in Sicily to honour the deceased father of Aeneas (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 5.294–296, 315–61), and are killed during a daring raid on the Rutuli (*Aeneid*, 9.176–502). The "catastrophe" to which Byron refers is presumably the death of the two friends. Virgil's account inspired Byron's poem "The Episode of Nisus and Euryalus: A Paraphrase from the Æneid, Lib. IX" (ibid., 393a–396a). The reference to Nisus and Euryalus, and indeed to the *Aeneid* generally, is significant also on another level, because whether Byron intended it or not it echoes an older tension between pagan epic and Christian scripture. In a study of Abraham Cowley's use of the Nisus and Euryalus passages from the *Aeneid* in his unfinished sacred epic *Davideis* (London: H. Moseley, 1656), Stephen Guy-Bray has argued that Cowley was unable fully to contain the homoeroticism that such allusions would inevitably have connoted to the classically literate reader, and that this prevented Cowley from completing a sacred epic that would have had to culminate in a version of David's lament for Jonathan that could in no way have avoided making the homoerotic obvious. See Stephen Guy-Bray, "Cowley's Latin Lovers: Nisus and Euryalus in the *Davideis*," *Classical and Modern Literature* 21, no. 1 (2001): 25–42.

model of the kind of relationship Byron has in mind, and, indeed, it did already have a significant pedigree. To cite but one example among many that could be mentioned, Thomas Ellwood's 1712 *Davideis* contains the following passage, corresponding to David's lament for Jonathan in 2 Sam 1:19–27:

> For Jonathan, as for an only brother,
> Or as a virgin for her constant lover,
> So mourned he; for 'twixt them two had past,
> A friendship that beyond the grave must last;
> Immortal friendship! Never two were twin'd
> More close; they had two bodies, but one mind.
> Patroclus to Achilles was less dear;
> Hylas to Hercules not half so near;
> Not Pylades did more Orestes love;
> Nor Damon to his Pythias truer prove;
> To Pirithous more close not Theseus
> Did cleave; nor Nisus to Euryalus;
> Than did to David princely Jonathan.[51]

It is important to note that while Byron's letter clearly refers to a close emotional bond between the two young men, it is by no means clear that this must be understood sexually (though this cannot be categorically excluded). The same cannot, however, be said of the use made of the David and Jonathan narrative in a hitherto unpublished manuscript by Jeremy Bentham (1748– 1832). Bentham cites the David and Jonathan narrative in the context of an impassioned case for the relaxation of laws against erotic relationships between persons of the same sex, which is to be read in the context of the gradual emergence, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, of a minority discourse in defence of same-sex erotic relationships.[52] In turn, this minority discourse belongs to a much more extensive trend towards the

[51] Thomas Ellwood, *Davideis* 3.4.39–51 (*Davideis: The Life of David, King of Israel. A Sacred Poem in Five Books*, 5th ed. (London: James Phillips, 1796), 100). Lines 57–58 make it clear that David and Jonathan had, by this time, become proverbially synonymous with close friendship. Such appeals to ancient *paria amicorum* have a great deal to do with reflection on the nature of friendship during, and in the wake of, the Renaissance. A comparable list of *paria amicorum* appears, for example, in Edmund Spenser's late sixteenth-century masterpiece *The Faerie Queene*, IV.10.26–28.

[52] See Faramerz Dabhoiwala's study "Lust and Liberty," *Past and Present* 207, no. 1 (2010): 89–179 (esp. 160–74). Biblical texts other than the David and Jonathan narrative had already acquired homoerotic connotations, notably the passages from the Gospel of John that refer

advocacy of sexual liberty in general, which in England can be traced back into the seventeenth century.[53]

The earliest extended defence in English of same-sex erotic relationships during this period seems to be a largely lost work by Thomas Cannon, *Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplify'd* (1749),[54] though the earliest scholarly essay known to exist on this theme in English is a ca. 1785 work by Bentham.[55] The printer of Cannon's essay, John Purser, was indicted and it is from the indictment against Purser that we know something of the contents of this work. Its importance for the present discussion lies in its appeal to classical precedents to justify same-sex eroticism. While Cannon's work seems on the surface to be presented as a *condemnation* of same-sex eroticism, according to two recent commentators this must be regarded as disingenuous.[56] Cannon appeals, in particular, to Lucian and Petronius.[57] Further, according to the affidavit of Purser's business associate Hugh Morgan, when

to Jesus and the Beloved Disciple. For example, in November 1698, Capt. Edward Rigby attempted to seduce William Minton. Having asked Minton "whither he should fuck him," a naive Minton responded "how can that be," to which, according to Minton's evidence, Rigby replied: "I will shew you how, for it was noe more then what was done in our forefathers tyme: our Saviour called St. John the handsome Apostle for that Reason … doe you not read it in the scripture?" (London Metropolitan Archives, MJ/SP/1698/12/24 [information of William Minton, 7 Nov. 1698]; *non vidi*, cited in Dabhoiwala, "Lust and Liberty," 162–63). Dabhoiwala (168–74) discusses Bentham's contribution to the advocacy of decriminalizing same-sex erotic relationships. I wish to thank Philip Schofield for directing me to Dabhoiwala's important work, and for sharing with me his own preliminary transcriptions of the relevant Bentham manuscripts, which are in places exceedingly difficult to decipher.

[53] See, in detail, ibid. Dabhoiwala's case is that the advocacy of sexual liberty was a pervasive, if wholly unintentional effect of the intellectual developments of the European Enlightenment. It is noteworthy that the same intellectual developments that made possible the advocacy of sexual liberty also made possible the modern (and postmodern) approaches to the biblical texts. Both together made possible the construal of the David and Jonathan narrative as representing an erotic relationship.

[54] See Hal Gladfelder, "In Search of Lost Texts: Thomas Cannon's *Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplify'd*," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 31, no. 1 (2007): 22–38; Dabhoiwala, "Lust and Liberty," 164.

[55] See Louis Crompton, "Jeremy Bentham's Essay on 'Paederasty': An Introduction," *Journal of Homosexuality* 3, no. 4 (1978): 383–387; "Jeremy Bentham's Essay on 'Paederasty': Part 2," *Journal of Homosexuality* 4, no. 1 (1978): 91–107. Bentham's unpublished notes on the subject apparently go back to ca. 1774 (Crompton, "Introduction," 383; Louis Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in 19th Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 20).

[56] See Gladfelder, "In Search of Lost Texts," 29–30; Dabhoiwala, "Lust and Liberty," 164.

[57] Gladfelder, "In Search of Lost Texts," 30–32. According to Gladfelder, Cannon appeals to Lucian's representation of the myth of Zeus and Ganymede (*Dialogues of the gods*, 4), the ac-

accused by Purser of having imposed on him, Cannon "made an elaborate Display of Learning, in which he talked of Petronius Arbiter and Aretine, and quoted other antient [*sic*] Writers Greek as well as Roman."[58] The heritage of Greece and Rome, then, had by now become a decisive element in the advocacy of a non-condemnatory attitude towards same-sex eroticism.

With Bentham, David and Jonathan become an essential part of the mix. Although Jeremy Bentham's extensive written notes on homosexuality begin ca. 1774, his reference to David and Jonathan as part of a defence of a liberalization of English legislation against homosexuality dates from his notes of November 28, 1817. This belongs to the second part of a major treatise, begun in 1817, entitled *Not Paul but Jesus*, the first part of which was published under the pseudonym Gamaliel Smith in 1823.[59] Bentham's reading of the David and Jonathan narrative is one element in a thoroughgoing reinterpretation of biblical texts connected with same-sex eroticism, preceding by almost a century and a half the kind of treatment of these texts that would not be widely available in print in English before Derrick Sherwin Bailey's 1955 work *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*.[60] I suggest that it should be regarded as an urgent *desideratum* that Bentham's interpretation of these texts be more intensively studied, not simply by students of utilitarian philosophy, or by those interested in attitudes to sex in early nineteenth-century England, but *by biblical scholars*.

Bentham addresses the apparent disjunction between a sexual construal of the David and Jonathan narrative and the sexual laws of the Holiness Code (Lev 18:22; 20:13).[61] Rather than citing large chunks of 1–2 Samuel, he

count in Petronius Arbiter, *Satyricon* 85–87, of Eumolpus and his lusty ephebe beloved—who at one point (87) inquires of an exhausted Eumolpus, "Why aren't we doing [it]?" (*Quaere non facimus?*)—and apparently also to (Pseudo-)Lucian, *Amores* (on which see above). In ch. 51 of Tobias Smollett's 1748 novel *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, Earl Strutwell, who is "notorious for a passion for his own sex," defends sex between men with reference to Petronius (*The Adventures of Roderick Random*, ed. Paul-Gabriel Boucé (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 309–10).

[58] The National Archives, Public Record Office, KB 1/10/5, affidavit of Hugh Morgan (6 May 1751). *Non vidi*, quoted here from Dabhoiwala, "Lust and Liberty," 164; cf. Gladfelder, "In Search of Lost Texts," 27.

[59] Gamaliel Smith (pseudonym for Jeremy Bentham), *Not Paul, but Jesus* (London: John Hunt, 1823).

[60] Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans, Green, 1955). Bailey, incidentally, briefly discusses (56–57) the David and Jonathan narrative but does not advocate a sexual construal of their relationship.

[61] His broader case is that the position of Jesus on sexual relations was contradictory to

excerpts what he regarded as the most salient verses (1 Sam 17:56–58; 18:1–4; 20:17; 2 Sam 1:17, 19, 26).[62]

> In a country which could give birth to such /an occasion/[63] a scene as that which originated in the beauty of the young Levite,[64] is it possible to entertain a doubt that the nature of that love which had place between David and Jonathan would be matter of doubt? or that it could be more clearly designated by any the grossest than by this sentimental language?
>
> Between two young men and the strength of their affection, was not merely to equal but to surpass /the strongest/ that can bind together man and woman? So far as regards the inner love of mind no love capable of having place between /male and male/ can equal that which is capable of having place between man and woman … [W]ith all love between body and body it is impossible to assign any reason why the /strongest/ love between men should exceed the strongest love between man and woman: the love of body to body … can amount to nothing if being added /joined/ to the love of mind to mind it makes no addition to its strength.
>
> But from /at/ the very outset of the story, the clearest exclusion is put upon any such notion as that the love of mind to mind or in a word *friendship* was in the case in question clear of all indications of the love of body for body in a word of sexual

the Mosaic Law. The folios among which those dealing with David and Jonathan are to be found are collected together under the following title and summary:

> Ch. 12 or B III. Doctrine Part II
> In Jesus no asceticism
>
> 1. Disregard shown to the Mosaic prohibitions against the eccentric pleasures of the bed. [*sic!*]
> 2. Story of Jonathan and David.

[62] Box 161b fol. 457, December 21, 1817. The verses from 2 Samuel are listed as belonging to "2 Kings," and verse 19 is listed as verse 18.

[63] Words placed between slashes in my transcription are superscript in the manuscript. It is possible to read them as "*on* occasion," (i.e. "occasionally"), which is how Crompton construes the sentence: "In a country which could give birth on occasion to such a scene" (*Byron and Greek Love*, 276).

[64] The reference is to Judg 19:1–30 as evidence for the existence of same-sex desire in ancient Israel, on which see further Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love*, 275–76.

> love. "Love at first sight" in the words of the title to the play … [N]othing can be more natural. But friendship at first sight, and friendship equal in ardency to the most ardent sexual love! At the very first interview, scarce had the first words that Jonathan … issued from his lips, when the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. In a country in which the /concupiscence of the/ whole male population of a considerable town is /kindled/ inflamed to madness by the sight /a transient glimpse/ of a single man, what /impartial/ eye can refuse to see the love by which /the young warriors/ Nisus and Euryalus were bound together in Virgils fable, and Harmodius and Aristogiton [*sic*] in Grecian History?[65]

Thus Bentham discards the view that the love of David and Jonathan was that of mind for mind, or was inspired purely by David's virtue, or could be reduced to the notion of "friendship" exclusive of sexual desire. Notably, like Byron, he places David and Jonathan alongside Nisus and Euryalus and, anticipating John Addington Symonds several decades later, he adds the Athenian tyrannicide lovers Harmodius and Aristogeiton to the list. Importantly, unlike the treatment of Orestes and Pylades in Euripides, say, or the portrayal of Achilles and Patroclus in Homer, the extant traditions about Nisus and Euryalus and Harmodius and Aristogeiton depict their relationships as much less ambiguously paiderastic. Thus unlike Byron, Bentham's allusion to these ancient lovers must be to *unambiguous* examples of same-sex eroticism, and it is precisely because of this that they are used by Bentham to highlight the sexual nature of the relationship between David and Jonathan. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that other passages from the Old Testament are *not* considered relevant to understanding the David and Jonathan narrative. Rather, Bentham draws on his rich intertextual competence in extant *pagan* sources to find analogues to David and Jonathan. Bentham continues:

> The connection thus represented as having had place between these two young men not infrequently ties it together with the

[65] Box 161b, folio 458, December 21, 1817. Part of this passage is cited in Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love*, 276–77, but I have followed my own transcription, checked (and at certain points corrected) against Philip Schofield's. Bentham's script at this stage in his life was such that it is often impossible to determine with any real confidence what he intended to write, and even where the words are clear, the syntax is often awkward. Where I was completely floored I have replaced Bentham's words with ellipses.

> song in which it is /represented as having been/ held up to admiration,[66] and numbered among the /passages and/ examples in holy writ by which edification is afforded. Of course by those by /on the part of/ whom it has been presented to view in this light no suspicion /apprehension/ has on that occasion been introduced that by those … whom they expected to have for readers any thing of sensuality[67] … would /could/ be regarded as having had place.
>
> Jonathan /the one loving the other/ loving David as his own soul! Sensuality in so impure a shape is it possible that it could ever have proved the basis of so ardent a love of an affection so ardent so sentimentally expressed? And this love in a book in which the /any/ indication of sensuality is represented as sufficing to convert the attachment into a crime of the foulest complexion and which as such is accordingly appointed to be visited by the severest of punishments?
>
> But if among the Jews this same propensity which under /some/ circumstances the law on which it was made capitally punishable[68] was regarded without disapprobation this same propensity was under other circumstances regarded not merely with indifference but with admiration, and spoken of in correspondent terms, in this whatever inconsistency there were there would be nothing at all extraordinary. Considered as mere sensuality it would be /regarded with disapprobation/ … Considered as a bond of attachment /a support to virtue/ between two persons jointly engaged in a course of life regarded as meritorious, it would /might/ nevertheless be respected and applauded.[69]

Bentham here sets himself apart from earlier commentators on the David and Jonathan narrative who pass over any suspicion of eroticism in the narrative. Noteworthy also is the fact that he treats the biblical texts as speaking with different, indeed contradictory voices. Different texts reflect different

[66] I.e. 2 Sam 1:19–27.

[67] It is not clear whether Bentham had specific examples in mind here, but the verses cited above from Ellwood's *Davideis* would fall into this category.

[68] I.e. Lev 18:22; 20:13.

[69] Box 161b fol. 459, December 24, 1817.

circumstances, and the prohibitions of Leviticus are, for Bentham, irrelevant to understanding David and Jonathan.[70]

In the next folio,[71] Bentham expands his engagement with Greek and Roman sources, again anticipating developments later in the century. The tyrannicidal courage of Harmodius and Aristogeiton Bentham takes to have been grounded in their passion for one another. Likewise, an "admixture of sensuality" is taken by Bentham to be the distinguishing characteristic of the union of the members of the Theban Band.[72] Citing frag. 136 of Aeschylus from the lost *Achilleis*,[73] Achilles and Patroclus are added as a further example, before Bentham alludes once more to Nisus and Euryalus.

In a passage dated a month earlier, Bentham places David and Jonathan alongside Jesus and the Beloved Disciple.

> If /in/ the love which in /and by/ these passages Jesus was intended to be represented as having towards this John was not the same sort of love as that which appeared to have place between King David and Jonathan the son of Saul it seems difficult /not easy/ to conceive what can have been the object in bringing it to view in so pointed a manner accompanied with such

[70] This is in stark contrast with a number of modern biblical scholars, who often assume that the levitical prohibitions, whose precise interpretation is itself the subject of vigorous debate, entirely preclude a homoerotic construal of the David and Jonathan narrative, as if it were impossible for contradictory traditions to exist within a corpus as complex and uneven as the Hebrew Bible. Fritz Stolz may be taken as representative: "Daß David seine Liebe zu Jonathan jeder Liebe zu seinen Frauen voranstellt, sagt genug—dabei spielten Frauen in Davids Leben ein große Rolle (vgl. zu 1 Sam. 25 und bes. zu Kap. 11). Natürlich darf der Text nicht im Sinne von Homosexualität verstanden werden; dergleichen war zwar in Griechenland üblich, in Israel aber verpönt und mit dem Tode bedroht (vgl. 3. Mose 18,22). Es geht um die Zuneigung von Freunden, die das erste Mannesalter miteinander erlebt haben und deren Beziehung alle Wechselfälle des Schicksals überdauerte" (*Das erste und zweite Buch Samuel*, Zürcher Bibelkommentare: Altes Testament 9 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981), 189). See also e.g., Georg Hentschel, *2 Samuel*, Neuer Echte Bibel Altes Testament 34 (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1994), 8; Stephen L. McKenzie, *King David: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 85; Zehnder, "Observations," 157.

[71] Box 161b fol. 460, December 24, 1817.

[72] On the Sacred Band (ἱερὸς λόχος) of Thebes see Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 18–19, where Plutarch records the view that this band of warriors was composed "of lovers and beloveds" (ἐξ ἐραστῶν καὶ ἐρωμένων), who would have been motivated by the desire not to be humiliated in front of their loved ones to fight with the utmost courage (cf. Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 13.602a). Such a band would have been held together "by loving friendship" (ἐξ ἐρωτικῆς φιλίας, Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 18.2).

[73] Cf. the discussions above of Aeschylus, Plato, and Pseudo-Lucian.

> circumstances of dalliance /fondness/ … That the sort of love of which in the bosom of Jesus /Saint/ John is here meant to be represented as the object was of a different sort from /any/ that of which any other of the apostles was the object is altogether beyond /uncontestable/out of/ dispute. For of this sort of love, whatsoever it was, he and he alone is /in these so/ frequently recurring terms maintained as being the object.[74] II. Kings[75] I. 17 And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul, and over Jonathan his son … 19. The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places … 26. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.
>
> David and Jonathan were accordingly to appearances what in Grecian history /were to each other/ Harmodius and Aristogiton, and in Grecian fable Achilles and Patroclus, Nisus and Euryalus.

Here the David and Jonathan narrative is used to interpret the relationship between Jesus and the Beloved Disciple as sexual. In these manuscripts from Bentham, biblical and Graeco-Roman sources have become intertwined, creating an ancient heritage for same-sex erotic relationships. Perhaps erotic connotations would have been perceived in the David and Jonathan narrative without intertexts from ancient Greece and Rome, but to assert this would be to argue from silence. The fact is that texts relating to David and Jonathan, Achilles and Patroclus (according to Aeschylus, not Homer), Harmodius and Aristogeiton, the Sacred Band of Thebes, and Nisus and Euryalus are construed erotically when read alongside one another.

Between the time of Bentham and that of John Addington Symonds, the David and Jonathan narrative was read in connection with various different forms of homosociality. For John Henry Newman (1801–1890)[76] and John Dobree Dalgairns (1818–1876),[77] the David and Jonathan narrative offered

[74] Box 161b fol. 476, November 28, 1817.

[75] I.e. 2 Samuel.

[76] Newman, "David and Jonathan."

[77] With reference to Aelred of Rievaulx, taken as a model for the revival in England of medieval monasticism, Dalgairns wrote: "From his boyhood his sole ambition was concentrated in loving and being loved; his text-book was Cicero on Friendship, which he read with avidity, and endeavoured to carry out in real life. He read romances too, for he knew that story which in after-days he characterised as 'a vain tale concerning one Arthur.' The friendship however

a scriptural model of the kind of friendship that should exist, ideally, within a celibate religious community of men. For Charles Kingsley (1819–1875), by contrast, the memory of medieval monasticism that had been rekindled by the likes of Newman and Dalgairns was to be regarded with nothing less than contempt,[78] and the medieval ideal of the gentle and pious Christian knight honoured instead.[79] David himself, and particularly in his friendship with Jonathan, was read in light of the latter model, and held up as a model for true Christian men,[80] and as the exemplar of the muscular Christian. The friendship of David and Jonathan is the focus of the second of two sermons on 2 Sam 1:26 printed in *David: Five Sermons*.[81] The friendship of David and Jonathan, and the example of Jonathan in particular, is honoured as a model of the true friendship that should obtain between manly, Christian

of David and Jonathan in Scripture, affected him more than all the feats of the Round Table, and the love of Queen Guenever to boot" (John Dobree [Bernard] Dalgairns, "Life of St Aelred," in *Lives of the English Saints*, ed. John Henry Newman, vol. 5 (1844; London: S. T. Freemantle, 1901), 53–210). On Dalgairns and Aelred see further Frederick Roden, "Aelred of Rievaulx, Same-Sex Desire and the Victorian Monastery," in *Masculinity and Spirituality in Victorian Culture*, ed. Andrew Bradstock et al. (London: Macmillan, 2000), 85–99; Roden, *Same-Sex Desire*, 22–34. The dismissal of chivalry by Dalgairns is to be contrasted with its valorization by Kingsley (see below).

[78] See e.g., Charles Kingsley, *David: Five Sermons*, 2nd ed. (1866; London: Macmillan & Co., 1874), 5–6: "The monks of the middle ages, in aiming exclusively at the virtues of women, generally copied little but their vices. Their unnatural attempt to be wiser than God, and to unsex themselves, had done little but disease their mind and heart. They resorted more and more to those arts which are the weapons of crafty, ambitious, and unprincipled women. They were too apt to be cunning, false, intriguing. They were personally cowardly, as their own chronicles declare; querulous, passionate, prone to unmanly tears; prone, as their writings abundantly testify, to scold, to use the most virulent language against all who differed from them; they were, at times, fearfully cruel, as evil women will be; cruel with that worst cruelty which springs from cowardice." Cf. ibid., 49–51, 62–63.

[79] Kingsley, *David*, 6–7: among the warriors of the Middle Ages "arose a new and a very fair ideal of manhood; that of the 'gentle, very perfect knight,' loyal to his king and to his God, bound to defend the weak, succour the oppressed, and put down the wrong-doer; with his lady, or bread-giver, dealing forth bounteously the goods of this life to all who needed; occupied in the seven works of mercy, yet living in the world, and in the perfect enjoyment of wedded and family life."

[80] Kingsley, *David*, 13–14: David's "is the character of a man perfectly gifted, exquisitely organized. He has personal beauty, daring, prowess, and skill in war. He has generosity, nobleness, faithfulness, chivalry as of a mediæval and Christian knight. He is a musician, poet, seemingly an architect likewise. He is, moreover, a born king. He has a marvellous and most successful power of attracting, disciplining, ruling his fellow-men."

[81] "David's Deserts," 71–89, and "Friendship; or David and Jonathan," 93–112.

men.[82] The love of Jonathan for David is, moreover, a type of the love of Christ.[83] It is perhaps ironic, then, that Kingsley, that prophet of Protestant manliness, should read Tennyson's "In Memoriam A. H. H." alongside not only David and Jonathan, but alongside ancient Greek male companions, in the case of Socrates and Alcibiades drawn from Plato's *Symposium*, which in the hands of Symonds, Wilde, and Forster would become more or less the canonical text in the history of same-sex desire:

> Blessed—thrice blessed—to find that hero-worship is not yet passed away; that the heart of man still beats young and fresh; that the old tales of David and Jonathan, Damon and Pythias, Socrates and Alcibiades, Shakespeare and his nameless friend, of "love passing the love of woman," ennobled by its own humility, deeper than death, and mightier than the grave, can still blossom out if it be but in one heart here and there to show men still how sooner or later "he that loveth knoweth God, for God is Love!"[84]

[82] In *Tom Brown at Oxford* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1861), the sequel to his far more widely read *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1857), Thomas Hughes has Jack Hardy tell his father that he loves Tom "as David loved Jonathan" (193). When Hardy and Tom are reconciled after a deep disagreement over Tom's flirtation with a barmaid, "Tom rushed across to his friend, dearer than ever to him now, and threw his arm round his neck; and, if the un-English truth must out, had three parts of a mind to kiss the rough face which was now working with strong emotion" (194). These two novels strongly advocate "muscular Christianity" (cf. *Tom Brown at Oxford*, ch. 11), and the allusion to David and Jonathan is to be interpreted in terms of a deep, non-sexual emotional bond between men. See further John Raymond de Symons Honey, *Tom Brown's Universe: The Development of the Victorian Public School* (London: Millington, 1977), 186–87; Richards, "'Passing the Love of Women'," 103–5. In Frederic Farrar's novel *Julian Home: A Tale of College Life* (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1859), the friendship between Julian and Hugh Lillyston is associated with David and Jonathan and several pairs of ancient Greek comrades, but in a curiously backhanded (and perhaps ambiguous?) way, in that these are labels other schoolboys use to poke fun at Julian and Hugh: "They were constantly together, and never tired of each other's society; and at last, when their tutor, observing and thoroughly approving of the friendship, put them both in the same room, the school began in fun to call them Achilles and Patroclus, Orestes and Pylades, David and Jonathan, Theseus and Pirithous, and as many other names of *paria amicorum* as they could remember" (35).

[83] Kingsley, *David*, 112: "Passing the love of women was His love, indeed; and of him Jonathan was but such a type, as the light in the dewdrop is the type of the sun in heaven."

[84] Charles Kingsley, "In Memoriam [1850] and Earlier Works," in *Tennyson: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John D. Jump (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), 185; abridged reprint from an unsigned review, *Fraser's Magazine* 42 (September 1850): 245–55.

We must conclude from this, I think, that far from seeing the homoerotic in these ancient figures, as did Bentham, Kingsley saw a noble, manly, and distinctly non-sexual homosociality.[85]

We turn now to John Addington Symonds (1840–1893) who was, arguably, the key figure in the mediation of the David and Jonathan narrative as part of a positive heritage of same-sex desire. His importance derives from several factors. First, he himself wrote an erotically charged, though not quite sexually explicit poem inspired by the David and Jonathan narrative—and apparently inspired also by his love for one of his students, Norman Moor—in early 1872,[86] and referred to David and Jonathan at several points in his other works on the Greek poets and on Walt Whitman. Second, at Balliol College, Oxford, he was one of the more brilliant students of Benjamin Jowett, a key figure in the transmission of German modes of criticism into the intellectual culture of Victorian England who played a decisive role in the revitalization of Greek learning at Oxford, and an equally decisive role in the introduction of historical criticism to the study of the biblical texts.[87] Third, Symonds is not simply a major figure in Oxford Hellenism, but also a major figure in the emergence of the discourse of human sexuality, through his works *A Problem in Greek Ethics* and *A Problem in Modern Ethics*,[88] as well as through his collaboration with Havelock Ellis on *Sexual Inversion*.

In his memoirs, Symonds recalls his reading of two of Plato's dialogues during an *exeat* from Harrow in March 1858:

> When we returned from the play, I went to bed and began to read my Cary's Plato. It so happened that I stumbled on the *Phaedrus*. I read on and on, till I reached the end. Then I began the *Symposium*; and the sun was shining on the shrubs outside

[85] Thus Joseph Bristow, *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995), 6. More intriguing still is a letter Kingsley wrote in 1843 to Fanny Grenfell, the woman who would shortly become his wife, in which he honoured her with the words, "Had you been a man we would have been like David and Jonathan" (see Susan Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk: A Life of Charles Kingsley* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1974), 52–53). The letter is dated October 28, 1843.

[86] See below for a justification for this dating of the poem.

[87] On the historical criticism of biblical texts Jowett's contribution to the collection *Essays and Reviews* (London: Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1860), "On the Interpretation of Scripture" (330–433), is fundamental.

[88] John Addington Symonds, *A Problem in Modern Ethics, being an Inquiry into the Phenomenon of Sexual Inversion addressed especially to Medical Psychologists and Jurists* (London: Privately printed, 1896).

> the ground-floor room in which I slept, before I shut the book up.
>
> Here in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*—in the myth of the Soul and the speeches of Pausanias Agathon and Diotima—I discovered the true *liber amoris* at last, the revelation I had been waiting for, the consecration of a long-cherished idealism. It was just as though the voice of my own soul spoke to me through Plato, as though in some antenatal experience I had lived the life of a philosophical Greek lover.
>
> Harrow vanished into unreality. I had touched solid ground. I had obtained the sanction of the love which had been ruling me since childhood. Here was the poetry, the philosophy of my own enthusiasm for male beauty, expressed with all the magic of unrivalled style. And, what was more, I now became aware that the Greek race—the actual historical Greeks of antiquity—treated this love seriously, invested it with moral charm, endowed it with sublimity.
>
> For the first time I saw the possibility of resolving in a practical harmony the discords of my instincts. I perceived that masculine love had its virtue as well as its vice, and stood in this respect upon the same ground as normal sexual appetite. I understood, or thought I understood, the relation which those dreams of childhood and the brutalities of vulgar lust at Harrow bore to my higher aspiration of noble passion.
>
> The study of Plato proved decisive for my future … [I]t confirmed my congenital inclination towards persons of the male sex, and filled my head with an impossible dream, which controlled my thoughts for many years.[89]

Symonds's reading of two of the dialogues of Plato most concerned with παιδεραστία was decisive in helping him to deal with the moral crisis created by his own same-sex desire. It was also an early, critical point in his extensive, and massively influential, engagement with ancient Greek literature.

In 1873 and 1876 the two volumes of Symonds's *Studies of the Greek Poets* were published, and in 1883 his *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, originally written

[89] John Addington Symonds, *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, ed. Phyllis Grosskurth (London: Hutchinson, 1984), 99–100.

in 1873, was privately printed.[90] The modern debates on sexuality in ancient Greece, and human sexuality in general, could not have evolved as they did without these works. His little-studied collection of poems *Many Moods* was published in 1878,[91] containing "The Meeting of David and Jonathan."[92] Also too little studied today are his *Studies of the Greek Poets* and his later work *Walt Whitman: A Study*, in both of which Symonds mentions David and Jonathan.

"The Meeting of David and Jonathan" is mentioned by Symonds in his correspondence.[93] In a letter to Henry Graham Dakyns on January 13, 1872, he wrote

> I cannot write. The one poem of Jonathan & David is done. But the narrative of the Bible is so stupendous that I cannot deal with any more. I can only absorb. It is frantic in me to have thought of mangling it.
>
> How selfish it is to write all this to you. Yet who are you to me but my best dearest Comrade?[94]

[90] John Addington Symonds, *A Problem in Greek Ethics, being an Inquiry into the Phenomenon of Sexual Inversion addressed especially to Medical Psychologists and Jurists* (London: Privately Printed for the ΑΡΕΟΠΑΓΙΤΙΤΑ Society, 1908). It has recently been reprinted in Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, *Sexual Inversion: A Critical Edition*, ed. Ivan Crozier (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 227–95, and is available in many online versions. References are to the page numbers given at http://www.sacred-texts.com/lgbt/pge/index.htm.

[91] John Addington Symonds, *Many Moods: A Volume of Verse* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1878).

[92] John Addington Symonds, "The Meeting of David and Jonathan," in Symonds, *Many Moods*, 151–58. This poem was originally written in 1872 (see below) and first published in pamphlet 7 of Symonds's poems (no place, date, or printer). See Percy L. Babington, *Bibliography of the Writings of John Addington Symonds* (London: John Castle, 1925), 29–35. I do not intend to discuss this poem in detail here, not because it is not relevant to the evolution of the homoerotic construal of the relationship between David and Jonathan—it most certainly is—but because my main interest here is in the way this construal of their relationship was shaped by the placing of the David and Jonathan narrative alongside Greek and Roman analogues. I discuss the poem more fully in my forthcoming book, *Surpassing the Love of Two Women: the Love of David and Jonathan in Text and Interpretation (London: Equinox)*.

[93] Symonds's extensive correspondence is collected in Herbert M. Schueller and Robert L. Peters, eds., *The Letters of John Addington Symonds*, 3 vols. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967-1969).

[94] Letter to Henry Graham Dakyns, London, January 13, 1872 (ibid., 2:198).

Much of this letter is concerned with Symonds's anguished feelings for Norman Moor, who had been his student and with whom he had for some time been in love. With respect to "Jonathan & David," the reference can only be to "The Meeting of David and Jonathan," which was clearly written at some point between January 9 and 13, 1872.[95] On January 9 he visited the Bristol artist Edward Clifford to view his painting *David*, from which he seems to have taken inspiration for his poem,[96] a copy of which he subsequently offered to show Clifford.[97] Symonds seems to have sketched an earlier poem entitled "David's Epilogue,"[98] perhaps a rewriting of 2 Sam 1:17–27, but this appears to have vanished without trace.

In the chapter on Homer's *Iliad* in *Studies of the Greek Poets*, Symonds discourses on the effect Homer's portrayal of Achilles had on the Greek imagination.[99] In his treatment of Achilles and Patroclus, not only does he directly compare their comradeship in Homer with David and Jonathan, but he weaves the language of 2 Sam 1:26 allusively into his discussion, on the assumption that biblical language was so familiar to his readers that no more explicit connection need be made.[100]

[95] Roden, *Same-Sex Desire*, 253 assumes the poem was written in 1878, but this is only the date *Many Moods* was published. Notably, Linda Dowling dates Symonds's "career… as a leading Victorian homosexual apologist and advocate of reform in the British laws and attitudes governing homosexuality" to early 1872, in response to Robert Buchanan's attack on the poetry of the pre-Raphaelites (*Hellenism and Homosexuality*, 12–13).

[96] Symonds wrote thus to Clifford: "My desire to see David is so strong that I have put off my going to London till the afternoon that I may if it is fine come to you soon after 10" (letter to Edward Clifford, Clifton, January 9, 1872; Schueller and Peters, *Letters* 2:195). In Symonds's next two letters to Dakyns we read: "I go at 10.15 to see Clifford's David and return if all be well at noon to depart by PM express" (letter to Dakyns, Clifton, January 9, 1872; ibid.); "With faint presences of David & Jonathan one upon each side of me, with Obidicut before my face, with Flibbertigibbet mowing behind my shoulders, & with the huge fog distilling wings of Melancholia-Ennui overhead, I pace the streets of London. Syria would be a better place for assimilating the Semitic mind. No good will come of *this*" (letter to Dakyns, Union Club Trafalgar Square, London, January 11, 1872; ibid., 2:196).

[97] Symonds's next letter to Clifford alludes to the completed poem: "I hope to come to you tomorrow at 11 or so, & I will try to remember to bring Jonathan & David, if that is the poem you w[oul]d like to see" (letter to Clifford, Clifton Hill House, Clifton, Bristol, February 8, 1872).

[98] "The Poems accumulate. The Song of the Sheepfold was written PM yesterday & AM today David's Epilogue begun. But it as bad as botanizing on one's mother's grave to put these sacred flowers into my Hortus siccus" (letter to Dakyns, Clifton, Spring 1871; ibid., 2:137).

[99] Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets*, 2:40–71.

[100] Cf. Symonds's apology for citing the *Iliad* so extensively: "Some apology may be needed for these numerous quotations from a poem which is hardly less widely known and read than Shak[e]speare or the Bible" (*Studies of the Greek Poets*, 2:59).

> In Achilles, Homer summed up and fixed for ever the ideal of the Greek character. He presented an imperishable picture of their national youthfulness, and of their ardent genius, to the Greeks. The "beautiful human heroism" of Achilles, his strong personality, his fierce passions controlled and tempered by divine wisdom, his intense friendship and *love that passed the love of women*, above all, the splendour of his youthful life in death made perfect, hovered like a dream above the imagination of the Greeks, and insensibly determined their subsequent development.[101]

In his summary of the central theme of the *Iliad*, Symonds writes

> The wrath of Achilles against Agamemnon, which prevented him at first from fighting; the love of Achilles, *passing the love of women*, for Patroclus, which induced him to forego his anger and to fight at last; these are the two poles on which the *Iliad* turns.[102]

Until Symonds shows his hand, one is left to wonder in what sense the love of Achilles for Patroclus passes the love of women, what layers of meaning are added by this gloss, and what connotations it would have borne for educated Victorian readers incubated in the worlds of the Bible and Homer. Symonds goes on:

> Nearly all the historians of Greece have failed to insist upon the fact that fraternity in arms played for the Greek race the same part as the idealisation of women for the knighthood of feudal Europe. Greek mythology and history are full of tales of friendship, *which can only be paralleled by the story of David and Jonathan in our Bible*. The legends of Heracles and Hylas, of Theseus and Peirithous, of Apollo and Hyacinth, of Orestes and Pylades, occur immediately to the mind. Among the noblest patriots, tyrannicides, lawgivers, and self-devoted heroes in the

[101] Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets*, 1:8–9, emphasis mine.

[102] Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets*, 2:45, emphasis mine. André Gide cites this passage in a footnote to the fourth dialogue of *Corydon* (*Corydon*, ed. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1983), 108), as does Edward Carpenter in his discussion of the poetry of male friendship in Greece (*Ioläus*, 69).

> early times of Greece, we always find the names of friends and comrades recorded with peculiar honour. Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who slew the despot Hipparchus of Athens; Diocles and Philolaus, who gave laws to Thebes; Chariton and Melanippus, who resisted the sway of Phalaris in Sicily; Cratinus and Aristodemus, who devoted their lives to propitiate offended deities when a plague had fallen upon Athens; these comrades, staunch to each other in their love, and elevated by friendship to the pitch of noblest enthusiasm, were among the favourite saints of Greek legendary history. In a word, the chivalry of Hellas found its motive force in friendship rather than *in the love of women*; and the motive force of all chivalry is a generous, soul-exalting, unselfish passion. The fruit which friendship bore among the Greeks was courage in the face of danger, indifference to life when honour was at stake, patriotic ardour, the love of liberty, and lion-hearted rivalry in battle. "Tyrants," said Plato, "stand in awe of friends."[103]

Here Symonds takes the example of manly comradeship in ancient Greece as a moral ideal for contemporary life, and in so doing distances himself from the purely physical eroticism of the kind that so disgusted him at Harrow. This becomes clearer when he contrasts Plato's portrayal of Achilles and Patroclus with that of Homer.[104] Further, while Symonds is concerned here

[103] Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets*, 2:60–61, emphasis mine. This passage is quoted by Carpenter in *Ioläus*, 15–16, in connection with evidence for martial institutions of male friendship (cf. 11–29), and quoted in part in Richards, "'Passing the Love of Women'," 101. Richards shows a clear awareness in citing this passage of the way Symonds is repackaging both classical and medieval—though we should also add biblical—traditions in an act of *ressourcement* that was intended to bolster a very particular Victorian construction of the masculine: "Symonds, although himself a homosexual and homosexual apologist, chose here to list male couples representative of both homosexual *paiderastia* and of Aristotelian non-sexual fellowship and to link all to spiritual love as in chivalry. This was typical of the 'official' Victorian attitude to male couples in Greek history; their exaltation as exemplars of comradeship, virtue, patriotism and male love" (101–2).

[104] The distinction Symonds makes here is associated with the Greek distinction between "celestial" (οὐράνιος) and "mundane" or "vulgar" (πάνδημος) love made by Pausanius in Plato's *Symposium* (180c–185c, esp. 180e2–3). Cf. Symonds, *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, 6. Symonds describes the subject of "A Problem in Greek Ethics" thus: "The immediate subject of the ensuing inquiry will… be that mixed form of paiderastia upon which the Greeks prided themselves, which had for its heroic ideal the friendship of Achilles and Patroclus, but which in

with comradeship in ancient Greece, by drawing David and Jonathan into his discussion he is indirectly offering a commentary on 1–2 Samuel.

Symonds is determined to keep separate the moral ideal of comradeship between men from purely physical eroticism: "Achilles and Patroclus cannot be charged with having sanctioned by example any vice, however much posterity may have read its own moods of thought and feeling into Homer." There is a reflection here of Symonds's own struggle to come to terms with his own same-sex desire. In light of this, his comment to Dakyns that "[i]t is frantic in me to have thought of mangling it" (viz. the biblical portrayal of David and Jonathan) suggests that the same struggle may lie behind "The Meeting of David and Jonathan."

Symonds here also shows an awareness that the reception of Homer among later readers involved the anachronistic importation into the *Iliad* of later perspectives and concerns. He makes this point more clearly in connection with the reference to the *Myrmidons* of Aeschylus in Plato's *Symposium*.

> Plato, discussing the *Myrmidones* of Æschylus, remarks in the *Symposium* that the tragic poet was wrong to make Achilles the lover of Patroclus, seeing that Patroclus was the elder of the two, and that Achilles was the youngest and most beautiful of all the Greeks. The fact, however, is that Homer himself raises no question in our minds about the relations of lover and beloved. Achilles and Patroclus are comrades. Their friendship is equal. It was only the reflective activity of the Greek mind, working upon the Homeric legend by the light of subsequent custom, which introduced these distinctions. The humanity of Homer was purer, larger, and more sane than that of his posterity among the Hellenes.[105]

historic times exhibited a sensuality unknown to Homer. In treating of this unique product of their civilisation I shall use the term *Greek Love*, understanding thereby a passionate and enthusiastic attachment subsisting between man and youth, recognised by society and protected by opinion, which, though it was not free from sensuality, did not degenerate into mere licentiousness" (Symonds, *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, 8).

[105] Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets*, 2:67. Cf. Symonds, *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, 28: "Homer represented Patroclus as older in years than the son of Peleus, but inferior to him in station; nor did he hint which of the friends was the *Erastes* of the other. That view of their comradeship had not occurred to him. Æschylus makes Achilles the lover; and for this distortion he was severely criticised by Plato. At the same time… he treated their affection from the point of view of post-Homeric paiderastia."

Symonds concludes that παιδεραστία was unknown "in the so-called heroic age of Greece,"[106] and that this institution as it existed in the fifth century BCE was read back into Homer, drawing an intriguing parallel with the anachronistic reading of the Bible:

> The Homeric poems were the Bible of the Greeks, and formed the staple of their education; nor did they scruple to wrest the sense of the original, reading, *like modern Bibliolaters*, the sentiments and passions of a later age into the text … Homer stood in a double relation to the historical Greeks. On the one hand, he determined their development by the influence of his ideal characters. On the other, he underwent from them interpretations which varied with the spirit of each successive century. He created the national temperament, but received in turn the influx of new thoughts and emotions occurring in the course of its expansion.[107]

Symonds also appeals to David and Jonathan in connection with the theme of comradeship in the poems of Walt Whitman. Whitman's poetry had an extraordinary effect on Symonds. The most important section of his study for our purposes is the fifth chapter,[108] in which Symonds discusses *Calamus* with a particular focus on "adhesiveness, or the love of comrades." Whitman's poems are treated to a richly intertextual engagement, in which they are freely interwoven with classical and, on one occasion, biblical sources. Thus, with reference to "To a Western Boy"[109] Symonds remarks,

> Whitman never suggests that comradeship may occasion the development of physical desire. On the other hand, he does not in set terms condemn desires, or warn his disciples against their perils. There is indeed a distinctly sensuous side to his conception of adhesiveness … Like Plato, in the *Phædrus*, Whitman describes an enthusiastic type of masculine emotion, leaving its private details to the moral sense and special inclination of the individuals concerned.[110]

[106] Symonds, *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, 2.

[107] Ibid., 2, emphasis mine.

[108] John Addington Symonds, *Walt Whitman: A Study* (London: John C. Nimmo, 1893), 67–85.

[109] Walt Whitman, *The Complete Poems* (London: Penguin, 2004), 166.

[110] Symonds, *Walt Whitman*, 72.

Symonds's reading of the *Phaedrus* of Plato is used here to determine the meaning of Whitman's poem, whose interpretation is then treated as a matter for the individual reader to work out in dialogue with an allusive and suggestive text.[111]

What Symonds finds in Whitman is an evocation of the ideal of comradeship between men that Symonds himself had found in his study of Plato and the Greek poets. He regards this as a means of ennobling sexual desires for other men that might so easily have nothing more than a physical focus. The following lengthy, but nonetheless crucial, passage makes this clear.

> Studying his works by their own light, and by the light of their author's character, interpreting each part by reference to the whole and in the spirit of the whole, an impartial critic will, I think, be drawn to the conclusion that what he calls the "adhesiveness" of comradeship is meant to have no interblending with the "amativeness" of sexual love. Personally, it is undeniable that Whitman possessed a specially keen sense of the fine restraint and continence, the cleanliness and chastity, that are inseparable from the perfectly virile and physically complete nature of healthy manhood. Still we have the right to predicate the same ground-qualities in the early Dorians, those founders of the martial institution of Greek love; and yet it is notorious to students of Greek civilisation that the lofty sentiment of their masculine chivalry was intertwined with much that is repulsive to modern sentiment.
>
> Whitman does not appear to have taken some of the phenomena of contemporary morals into due account, although he must have been aware of them. Else he would have foreseen that, human nature being what it is, we cannot expect to eliminate all sensual alloy from emotions raised to a high pitch of passionate intensity, and that permanent elements within the midst of our society will imperil the absolute purity of the ideal he attempts to establish. It is obvious that those unenviable mortals

[111] We might compare this with Symonds's earlier comment that "there is some misapprehension abroad regarding the precise nature of what Whitman meant by 'Calamus.' His method of treatment has, to a certain extent, exposed him to misconstruction … The melody is in the Dorian mood—recalling to our minds that fellowship in arms which flourished among the Dorian tribes, and formed the chivalry of pre-historic Hellenes" (Symonds, *Walt Whitman*, 70–71).

> who are the inheritors of sexual anomalies, will recognise their own emotion in Whitman's "superb friendship, exalté, previously unknown," which "waits, and has been always waiting, latent in all men," the "something fierce in me, eligible to burst forth," "ethereal comradeship," "the last athletic reality." Had I not the strongest proof in Whitman's private correspondence with myself that he repudiated any such deductions from his "Calamus," I admit that I should have regarded them as justified; and I am not certain whether his own feelings upon this delicate topic may not have altered since the time when "Calamus" was first composed.
>
> These considerations do not, however, affect the spiritual quality of his ideal. After acknowledging, what Whitman omitted to perceive, that there are inevitable points of contact between sexual anomaly and his doctrine of comradeship, the question now remains whether he has not suggested the way whereby abnormal instincts may be moralised and raised to higher value. In other words, are those exceptional instincts provided in "Calamus" with the means of their salvation from the filth and mire of brutal appetite? It is difficult to answer this question; for the issue involved is nothing less momentous than the possibility of evoking a new chivalrous enthusiasm, analogous to that of primitive Hellenic society, from emotions which are at present classified among the turpitudes of human nature.[112]

Having offered this bold construal, Symonds reads "When I Peruse the Conquer'd Flame"[113] in relation to ancient examples of his ideal:

> Its pathos and clinging intensity transpire through the last lines of the following piece, which may have been suggested by the legends of David and Jonathan, Achilles and Patroclus, Orestes and Pylades.…
>
> Reading some of his poems, we are carried back to ancient Greece—to Plato's *Symposium*, to Philip gazing on the sacred band of Thebans after the fight at Chaeronea.[114]

[112] Symonds, *Walt Whitman*, 74–77; cf. 81–85.

[113] Whitman, *Complete Poems*, 161–62.

[114] Symonds, *Walt Whitman*, 78, 79–80, alluding to Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 18.5. Here Symonds cites "I Dream'd in a Dream" (*Complete Poems*, 164), "To the East and to the West," (Ibid., 165), and "For You O Democracy" (Ibid., 150).

What Symonds has done here is to weave Whitman's poems together with several examples of comradeship from ancient Greece and the single biblical example of David and Jonathan into a vision of how same-sex eroticism might be ennobled and made into a positive moral force for society. The construal of the David and Jonathan narrative is governed here by the convergence of a particular range of intertexts and the concern of Symonds to use these texts to redeem same-sex eroticism between men from connotations of moral depravity and from social marginalisation.

We turn now to Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), who owned, read, annotated, and was profoundly influenced by Symonds's *Studies of the Greek Poets*.[115] Indeed, it is entirely possible that the connection between David and Jonathan and Greek love made by Wilde is owed to Symonds, though it cannot be ruled out that Wilde made that connection independently. Under cross-examination by Charles Gill at his trial in April 1895 on charges of "committing acts of gross indecency with various male persons,"[116] Oscar Wilde alluded to David and Jonathan to illustrate the "Love that dare not speak its name" of Lord Alfred Douglas's poem "Two Loves":

> "The love that dare not speak its name" in this century is such a great affection of an elder for a younger man as there was between David and Jonathan, such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy, and such as you find in the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare. It is that deep, spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect. It dictates and pervades great works of art like those of Shakespeare and Michelangelo … It is in this century misunderstood, so much misunderstood that it may be described as the "Love that dare not speak its name," and on account of it I am placed where I am now. It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. There is nothing unnatural about it. It is intellectual, and it repeatedly exists between an elder and a younger man, when the elder has intellect, and the younger man has all the joy, hope, and glamour of life before him. That it should be so, the world does not understand.

[115] See Thomas Wright, *Oscar's Books: A Journey around the Library of Oscar Wilde* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2008), 68–70, 89–90, 181.

[116] See H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde*, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), 154. See section 2 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885, the notorious Labouchère Amendment: Chris White, ed., *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1999), 56.

> The world mocks at it and sometimes puts one in the pillory for it.[117]

Wilde here reads David and Jonathan alongside, and in light of, Plato's *Symposium*, particularly the speech of Pausanias in which "heavenly" (οὐράνιος) and "common" (πάνδημος) forms of love are contrasted,[118] as well as alongside and in light of a particular understanding of the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare, both of whom addressed poetry to beloved men. Each of these works contributes to the interpretation of the others, but it is Plato in particular that is decisive. Wilde's use of Plato to defend a particular form of love between men belongs to the broader use of ancient Greek works in the context of late nineteenth-century aestheticism as resources for the subversion of dominant Victorian constructions of morality.[119] Wilde's use of and dependence on the resources of ancient Greece cannot be separated from this intellectual current, nor can they be separated from the influence on Wilde of the works of Pater and Symonds.[120] That said, whereas Wilde associates David and Jonathan with the "heavenly" (οὐράνιος) love of Plato's *Symposium*, Symonds makes a strong distinction between the world of Plato and that of Homer, and associates David and Jonathan instead with the non-paiderastic comradeship of warriors exemplified by the Achilles and Patroclus of the *Iliad*.

Wilde's defence is widely cited in discussions of nineteenth-century developments in the discourses of masculinity and sexuality, and in anthologies

[117] Hyde, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde*, 201. The two letters in question were from Wilde to Douglas, and are reproduced in White, *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality*, 50–51. Douglas's poem "Two Loves" was first published in *The Chameleon* in December 1894, and is reprinted in White, *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality*, 54–56. Wilde's reference to Plato anticipates Edward Carpenter's remark that classical Greek literature "abounds with references to the romantic attachment [between men] as the great inspiration of political and individual life. Plato, himself, may almost be said to have founded his philosophy on this sentiment" (*Ioläus*, 42). It also anticipates Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson's comment with respect to romantic friendship between men in Greece that "[t]heir ideal was the development and education of the younger by the older man, and in this view they were recognized and approved by custom and law as an important factor in the state" (*The Greek View of Life*, 13th ed. (1896; New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1920), 178; cited in Carpenter, *Ioläus*, 46).

[118] Plato, *Symposium* 180c–185c.

[119] Stefano Evangelista, *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece: Hellenism, Reception, Gods in Exile*, Palgrave Studies in Nineteenth-Century Writing and Culture (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), *passim* but esp. 148–57, where Evangelista discusses Wilde's approach to the relationship between ἔρως and philosophy.

[120] See e.g., ibid., 35, 127, 129–39, 143–48.

of sources pertaining to same-sex relationships.[121] It has also been compared with the following passage from Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in which Basil Hallward's love for Dorian is eulogized:

> Basil would have helped him to resist Lord Henry [Wotton]'s influence, and the still more poisonous influences that came from his own temperament. The love that he bore him—for it was really love—had nothing in it that was not noble and intellectual. It was not that mere physical admiration of beauty that is born of the senses, and that dies when the senses tire. It was such love as Michael Angelo [sic] had known, and Montaigne, and Winckelmann, and Shakespeare himself.[122]

This passage clearly distinguishes between two kinds of love, reflecting Wilde's reading of Plato's *Symposium*. While David and Jonathan do not appear here, the similarity between this passage and Wilde's defence at this trial is undeniable. Both reflect the appropriation of historical models of same-sex friendship between men as embroidery for Wilde's own ideal.

At his trial, Wilde was defending himself against a charge of gross indecency by appeal to David and Jonathan, Plato, Michelangelo, and Shakespeare, who are meant collectively to represent to Gill the cultural foundations of the society in which he and Wilde are living.[123] Wilde is implicitly charging that society, and its legal system, with hypocrisy in not honouring

[121] See *inter multa alia* Richards, "'Passing the Love of Women'," 94; Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, 1–5; Paul Hammond, *Love between Men in English Literature* (London: Routledge, 1996), 1–4; White, *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality*, 57–58.

[122] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Robert Mighall (1891; London: Penguin, 2000), 115. See Mighall's note (243–44), and Roden, *Same-Sex Desire*, 141–42. The first edition of the novel, which also contains this passage, was published in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in July 1890. The reference here to Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768) is presumably by way of Walter Pater's highly influential essay "Winckelmann," first published in *Westminster Review* n.s. 31 (January 1867): 80–110, and subsequently in revised form in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1873), 147–206.

[123] Cf. Hammond, *Love between Men*, 3: "Several strategies are employed here by Wilde in his list of impeccably canonical heroes. These are mythic figures for Victorian culture, so at one level they guarantee the innocence and orthodoxy of Wilde's behaviour … by describing this love as pure, intellectual and spiritual, Wilde allows the court to infer that it is not sexual, while many of his hearers will have been used to hearing homosexual desire speak through silences, gaps in texts, moments where language falters and love is left without a name."

the love of which he speaks,[124] which is, according to him, so amply attested in these culturally foundational sources. What is much less clear is the extent to which Wilde is trying to conceal the sexual dimension of that love. Wilde is known to have been sexually involved with several men, suggesting that he may be trying to divert attention from the moral turpitude that would inevitably be read into his casual homosexual encounters by appealing to the most positive models of same-sex love his cultural competence could offer in a manner that does not make their sexual aspects explicit.[125] He may, indeed, have understood the David and Jonathan narrative to portray a sexual relationship, but it would not have served his cause to make such an interpretation explicit to Gill at the Old Bailey. Or, he may have regarded their relationship as non-sexual, and cited it in his support at his trial with the intention of dissimulating, of pulling the wool over the court's eyes so that the actual nature of his relationships with men would remain hidden.

It is not clear, then, that Wilde's speech can be regarded simply as "the beginning of Wilde's explicit defence of homosexuality,"[126] as Frederick Roden puts it, since there is a degree of ambiguity about exactly what Wilde is defending, how his reading of the sources he cites relates to the way he represents them, how he intended this representation to be interpreted by Gill, and how all of this relates to the realia of his own life. Yet Roden does offer a cogent summary of Wilde's historicization of same-sex love between men:

[124] Cf. ibid.: "Wilde is challenging the puritanically selective historiography of the Victorians, which anxiously erased mention of Greek homosexuality or explained as ardent friendship the feelings expressed in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*."

[125] In other words, to follow Linda Dowling, there is a strong contrast being made between a focus on the purely physical expression of same-sex desire (viz. "sodomy") and the spiritually enriching model of male friendship Wilde and others found in the dialogues of Plato. In reference to the work of the Uranian poets, Dowling remarks that "the most radical claim of the new Uranian poetry would always be that it sang the praises of a mode of spiritual and emotional attachment that was, at some ultimate level, innocent or asexual. Uranian poetry was able to give voice to a counterdiscourse of spiritual procreancy underwritten by the authority of Oxford Hellenism to precisely the degree it was able to represent itself as superior to the blind urgencies of a merely animal sexuality, either the imperatives of heterosexual reproductivity or, in the language of ancient social and religious taboo, the bestial degradation of sodomy as anal copulation. This pure and intellectual dimension of Uranian love would allow Wilde to defend it so fearlessly from the Old Bailey witness box, and would persuade even the largely cynical Oscar Browning that there had been something more at stake in Aestheticism than a convenient blind for carnal appetite" (Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, 115; on the Wilde trials see further 1–5, 140–54).

[126] Roden, *Same-Sex Desire*, 147.

> This declaration places male-male love in a historical framework. Wilde spiritualizes love between men. His aestheticization of same-sex affection not only makes it Greek, but also invokes the biblical model of David and Jonathan … Although a secular literary context is Wilde's argument, utilization of biblical history places Wilde within the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition that would make homosexuality a sin rather than a pathology. His deployment of the David-Jonathan pairing permits him to speak from a religious space. The public citation of biblical friendship demonstrates his challenge to a theology that demonizes same-sex desire.[127]

Not only is Wilde effectively attempting to redefine the relationship between the Christian religious tradition and same-sex love between men, he is doing this by bringing David and Jonathan into conversation not with other elements of that tradition, but with Homer, Plato, Michelangelo, and Shakespeare, that is, with a late nineteenth-century reading of ancient Greek and Renaissance sources.

In the early work of English gay erotica *Teleny, or The Reverse of the Medal*, which was privately printed for Leonard Smithers in London in 1893,[128] and has sometimes been attributed, in whole or in part, and with questionable justification, to Oscar Wilde,[129] the narrator and protagonist, Camille Des Grieux, recalls a biblically saturated conversation with his mother the morning after his first meeting with the Hungarian pianist René Teleny, his future lover.

> "Yes, I grant that last night he did play brilliantly, or, rather, sensationally; but it must also be admitted that you were in a rather morbid state of health and mind, so that music must have had an uncommon effect upon your nerves."

[127] Roden, *Same-Sex Desire*, 147. It might be added that the biblical David and Jonathan have—thanks in large part to Byron, Bentham, Symonds, and Wilde—themselves been made "Greek."

[128] Anonymous, *Teleny, or The Reverse of the Medal* (1893; Ware: Wordsworth, 1995).

[129] E.g. Noel I. Garde, *Jonathan to Gide: The Homosexual in History* (New York: Vantage, 1964), 658. On the authorship and publication of *Teleny*, see H. Montgomery Hyde, *A History of Pornography* (London: Heinemann, 1964), 141–45. In general on *Teleny*, see Roden, *Same-Sex Desire*, 254–55. To describe *Teleny* as "gay" erotica is, of course, an anachronism. The novel prefers the language of "socratic love" or "sodomy."

> "Oh! You think there was an evil spirit within me troubling me, and that a cunning player—as the Bible has it—was alone able to quiet my nerves."
>
> My mother smiled.
>
> "Well, nowadays, we are all of us more or less like Saul; that is to say, we are all occasionally troubled with an evil spirit."
>
> Thereupon her brow grew clouded, and she interrupted herself, for evidently the remembrance of my late father came to her mind; then she added, musingly—
>
> "And Saul was really to be pitied."
>
> I did not give her an answer. I was only thinking why David had found favour in Saul's sight. Was it because "he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to"? Was it also for this reason that, as soon as Jonathan had seen him, "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul"?
>
> Was Teleny's soul knit with my own? Was I to love and hate him, as Saul loved and hated David? Anyhow, I despised myself and my folly. I felt a grudge against the musician who had bewitched me; above all, I loathed the whole womankind, the curse of the world.[130]

This passage is a monument not only to late nineteenth-century attitudes to same-sex eroticism, but to the complex relationship between attitudes to male homoeroticism at that period and the social status of women. Filtered through this mix is the biblical text. Des Grieux finds himself and his sexual attraction to Teleny refracted through the attraction to David of both Saul and Jonathan. The erotic attraction of both Saul and Jonathan to David anticipates André Gide's re-reading of the Samuel narrative in his 1896 tragedy *Saül*,[131] published shortly after *Teleny*. There is nothing to suggest that such

[130] Anonymous, *Teleny, or The Reverse of the Medal*, 25. The biblical citations here are both from the KJV, respectively 1 Sam 16:12 and 18:1. Note also the allusion to David's music calming Saul in 1 Sam 16:14–23; 18:10–11.

[131] André Gide, *Théatre: Saul—Le roi candaule—Œdipe—Perséphone—Le treizième arbre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), 7–151. In Gide's play David and Jonathan are in love, and their relationship provokes intense jealousy on Saul's part because he, too, like his son, is in love with David. This triangle to some extent anticipates Michal's recollection of David in Stefan Heym's novel *The King David Report*, though David appears in this novel in a considerably more moral dubious light than in Gide's play: "Jonathan had a wife and children, he had

a reading of the David and Jonathan narrative is a *novum*, though it is noteworthy in terms of focalization that it is Des Grieux alone who makes the connection with David and Jonathan, whereas his mother finds his apparent mental strain mirrored in the madness of Saul. Des Grieux portrays Teleny as modelled to some extent on the biblical description of David. This is fairly obvious in the dialogue just cited, where there are allusions both to David's role as musician in Saul's court and to his physical beauty, but may be more subtly present in Des Grieux's later recollection of his mother's suggestion that, "Every woman was in love with him, and their love was necessary to him,"[132] which echoes the love of women in Israel for David.[133] Furthermore, the allusion to the David and Jonathan narrative cannot be understood in isolation from the use of other ancient texts in *Teleny*. The novel is replete with biblical and classical allusions. Among the many classical allusions, the relationship between Hadrian and his beloved Antinous is especially significant, functioning as a *Leitmotif* throughout the novel, beginning with Teleny's performance in the opening chapter, during which he and Des Grieux share a vision of Hadrian and Antinous that anticipates Teleny's fate.[134]

A further key conduit for the David and Jonathan narrative at the turn of the twentieth century is Edward Carpenter (1844–1929). Carpenter was strongly influenced by Symonds and Whitman, and in turn had a decisive influence on Forster, which Forster recalls in an afterword to *Maurice*.[135]

concubines; but through David he seemed to have discovered a new meaning to his life. He stripped himself of his bow, his sword, his swordbelt, even of his robe, and clothed David with them; he would have given him half the kingdom, had it been his to give. David took it all with that grace of his; he smiled, and spoke his poetry, and played his lute. He let my father King Saul make love to him when that was my father's need; he lay with my brother Jonathan, letting him kiss his feet, his thighs, his wrists, his throat; and in the night in which I lost my restraint and spoke to him in anger, he came to me, later, and took me." (*The King David Report* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1972), 35.)

[132] Anonymous, *Teleny, or The Reverse of the Medal*, 26, cf. 24.

[133] See esp. 1 Sam 18:6–7, 20, 28.

[134] Anonymous, *Teleny, or The Reverse of the Medal*, 10, 16, 18, 85, 107, 141, 142. The relationship between Hadrian and Antinous was of immense interest to Symonds, who wrote "The Lotos Garland of Antinous," published in *Many Moods*, 121–34 along with "The Meeting of David and Jonathan."

[135] E. M. Forster, *Maurice*, ed. P. N. Furbank, with an introduction by David Leavitt (1971; London: Penguin, 2005), 219–24, (dated September 1960). It is surely noteworthy that the *explicitly* homoerotic use of David and Jonathan in *Maurice* is in a novel that was written after Forster had visited Carpenter, and that was massively influenced by this visit to him. The references to David and Jonathan in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905; London: Edward Arnold, 1975), 36, and *The Longest Journey*, with an introduction by Elizabeth Heine (1907; London:

Carpenter's key work for our purposes is *Ioläus*. Carpenter constructs a historical sequence of references to "friendship" attested across a wide geographical and chronological range. *Ioläus* clearly reflects the influence of Symonds, whose *Studies of the Greek Poets*, *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, and translations of Michelangelo's sonnets addressed to Tommaso de Cavalieri are all cited as source material.[136] It also reflects the influence of Jowett, whose translations of Plato and Thucydides are cited.[137] Carpenter places the David and Jonathan narrative alongside extracts from works mentioning same-sex friendship customs among what he regards as other "primitive peoples" such as the men of the Balonda of the southern Congo and the Manganjas of the Zambesi, and the female "flower friends" among what he calls "the Bengali coolies." Carpenter regards the David and Jonathan narrative as reflecting "much the same stage of primitive tribal life" as these other examples, but distinguishes the evidence we have for David and Jonathan by noting that in their case, David's "inner feeling" is preserved in 2 Sam 1:26. Carpenter regards 1 Sam 18:4 as portraying Jonathan's surrender to David of his "most precious possessions," which he compares with the Kasendi ceremony among the Balonda to which he had earlier referred, in which the two parties to the friendship treaty exchange "their most previous possessions" as gifts.[138]

Carpenter places David and Jonathan in the section of his work dealing with "friendship-customs in the pagan and early world," in which he also places references to male bonding in martial contexts in ancient Greece. He thus separates them from what he calls "romantic friendship"[139] in the dialogues of Plato, which he discusses at length in the following chapter.[140] Carpenter here reflects the influence of Symonds, who, as we have seen, made a strong distinction between παιδεραστία in Plato and the comradeship between warriors exemplified at an earlier period by the likes of Achilles and Patroclus.

E. M. Forster (1879–1971) was deeply influenced, in different ways, to different degrees, and at different points in his development, by both

Edward Arnold, 1984), 64, certainly refer to different kinds of male homosociality—among men in Italy and among Cambridge undergraduates respectively—but they are by no means homoerotic in the way *Maurice* is. On *Maurice* see further below.

[136] Carpenter, *Ioläus*, 15–16, 20, 31, 46–48, 68–69, 73, 78, 80, 131–33.

[137] Ibid., v-vi, 32–35, 49–59, 72–73.

[138] Ibid., 3–8.

[139] Ibid., 41–43.

[140] Ibid., 47–59.

Symonds and Carpenter. His work began to emerge in the years when the impact of the Wilde trials of 1895 was shaping attitudes to masculinity and homoeroticism, and both these themes were to play a major role in Forster's fiction. It is in connection with these themes, and against this background, that Forster's use of the David and Jonathan narrative is to be understood. Forster's most telling reference to David and Jonathan is in his most explicitly homoerotic novel, *Maurice*, completed in 1914 but published only after the author's death in 1971. In this novel the narrator offers us an insight into the inner struggle of Clive Durham, an upper class Cambridge undergraduate who falls in love with a fellow student, Maurice Hall. His struggle is a deep-rooted conflict between his inherited Christian convictions and his emerging awareness of sexual attraction to other men, "this other desire, obviously from Sodom … the impulse that destroyed the City of the Plain."[141] Clive finds release both in his discovery as a young man of same-sex love in the dialogues of Plato, and in his rejection of the Christianity in which he had hitherto been incubated. Inasmuch as *Maurice* refracts Forster's perceptions of late Victorian and Edwardian attitudes to same-sex desire, it also refracts aspects of the way ancient Greek and biblical texts were read during these periods. *Maurice* is as much a novel of class as of sexuality, and Maurice's subsequent love affair with Clive's under-gamekeeper Alec Scudder is redolent of the democratic ideal of comradeship between men that we find in the works of Carpenter and Whitman, but it is Forster's use of classical and biblical intertexts that is of particular interest. The relevant portion of the novel should be quoted in full:

> The boy had always been a scholar, awake to the printed word, and the horrors the Bible evoked for him were to be laid by Plato. Never could he forget his emotion at first reading the *Phaedrus*.[142] He saw there his malady described exquisitely, calmly, as a passion which we can direct, like any other, towards good or bad. Here was no invitation to licence. He could not believe his good fortune at first—thought there must be some misunderstanding and that he and Plato were thinking of different things. Then he saw that the temperate pagan really did comprehend him, and, slipping past the Bible rather than opposing it, was offering a new guide for life. "To make the most

[141] Forster, *Maurice*, 59.

[142] Compare the experience of John Addington Symonds on first encountering the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* (see above).

> of what I have." Not to crush it down, not vainly to wish that it was something else, but to cultivate it in such ways as will not vex either God or man.
>
> He was obliged however to throw over Christianity. Those who base their conduct upon what they are rather than upon what they ought to be, always must throw it over in the end, and besides, between Clive's temperament and that religion there is a secular feud. No clear-headed man can combine them. The temperament, to quote the legal formula, is "not to be mentioned among Christians," and a legend tells that all who shared it died on the morning of the Nativity. Clive regretted this. He came of a family of lawyers and squires, good and able men for the most part, and he did not wish to depart from their tradition. He wished Christianity would compromise with him a little and searched the Scriptures for support. There was David and Jonathan; there was even the "disciple that Jesus loved." But the Church's interpretation was against him; he could not find any rest for his soul in her without crippling it, and withdrew higher into the classics yearly.[143]

The allusion here to David and Jonathan, like the allusion to the beloved disciple of the Gospel of John, does not have the character of a new departure, an eccentric diversion from accepted ways of reading the text that had never been thought of before. There is an implicit allusion to a tradition of reading the David and Jonathan narrative, albeit an unorthodox one. The tension between Clive's reading and "the Church's interpretation" makes it clear that, as far as Clive is concerned, what he finds in the David and Jonathan narrative, and in the depiction of Jesus and the Beloved Disciple in the Fourth Gospel, is not what the dominant voices in the Church find. There exists a way of reading the David and Jonathan narrative that is sympathetic to same-sex attraction and that, while not unique to Clive, does not have the backing of the authority of the Church and thus cannot aid Clive in his desire to be reconciled to the Christianity with which he grew up. In *Maurice*, most influential for Clive is the *Phaedrus* of Plato.[144] Elsewhere in the novel the

[143] Forster, *Maurice*, 59–60.

[144] The *Phaedrus*, with its connotations of homoeroticism, is the dominant classical allusion in Mary Renault's novel *The Charioteer*, in which the central male characters, Laurie Odell and Andrew Raynes, are at one point dubbed "David and Jonathan" (*The Charioteer* (1953; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1994), 236–37).

Symposium of Plato functions as a code for Clive to communicate to Maurice the nature of his love for him.[145] The allusion to David and Jonathan is separated in Clive's reading from the interpretation of the Church, and brought into a closer conjunction with Plato's *Phaedrus*. That is, the disambiguation of the relationship between David and Jonathan, together with an appreciation of the pertinence of this relationship for Clive's life, are taken out of the context of the biblical canon and the ecclesiastical tradition of its interpretation and placed alongside Plato instead. Athens here has everything to do with Jerusalem.

Conclusion

What we have been studying here is the development of a particular construal of the David and Jonathan narrative. The idea that David and Jonathan are portrayed in 1–2 Samuel as lovers begins to appear not as a random imposition on an ancient text of alien modern categories, an imposition that works entirely against the grain of the biblical text, but as a reading that gradually evolved as particular individuals in the nineteenth century began to reconsider the nature and history of same-sex desire, and as the biblical text came to be read no longer as part of the biblical canon, subject to authoritative Christian interpretation, but alongside Greek and Roman texts that seemed to offer a positive, even noble vision of same-sex desire.

What should biblical scholars learn from this? First, in relation specifically to the question of reception history, the reception histories of the biblical texts are intertwined in intricate ways with the reception histories of other culturally authoritative texts, in this case the works of Homer, Aeschylus, Thucydides, Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Aeschines, Plutarch, Virgil, Petronius, Athenaeus, Pseudo-Lucian, and others. It would be highly dubious to think in terms of the reception history of biblical texts without reference to broader cultural trends. Second, the questions that we ask of the biblical text must themselves be understood as part of a complex process of development within the history of ideas. Third, and following on from this, whatever questions we ask of biblical texts belong, themselves, to the history of their reception.

[145] Forster, *Maurice*, 42, 48, 53.