"'This Lotus Spell is Intenser': Sources and Selections in Emma Stebbins' *Lotus-Eater*"

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Biographical Note

Melissa L. Gustin completed her PhD at the University of York in 2018, focusing on Emma Stebbins and Harriet Hosmer in Rome and the multivalent ways they incorporated classical material into their neoclassical sculpture. She has held a Henry Moore Postdoctoral Research Fellowship 2018-2020, and an Early Career Research Fellowship at the Watts Gallery—Artist's Village 2021-2022. She has received research funding from the Paul Mellon Centre, Terra Foundation, Francis Haskell Memorial Scholarship, and Association for Art History. Her publications have focused on classical reception in long-nineteenth-century sculpture and neoclassicism, with articles on Harriet Hosmer, Antonio Canova, and Emma Stebbins published in Art History, Journal of Latin Cosmopolitan and European Literatures, The Burlington Magazine, and Nineteenth Century Magazine; her developing work includes material on Pompeii, sculpture, and literature, 3D models and contemporary sculpture, and mermaids.

Abstract

Emma Stebbins' untraced statue, *The Lotus-Eater* (ca. 1857-60) purports to illustrate Alfred Tennyson's poem of the same title, in turn derived from an episode in the Odyssey of Homer. This essay addresses the tension between Stebbins' sculpture and its busts and Tennyson's text. It brings into the discussion a body of antique visual and literary material to which Stebbins had access, images of and references to Antinous, the youthful and tragic lover of the emperor Hadrian. Although the great flowering of Antinous scholarship and critique for queer men developed later in the nineteenth century, this argues that the material was readily available for Stebbins, particularly through the writings of Johan Joachim Winckelmann and the objects in Rome, where she worked; later authors like John Addington Symonds developed their commentary and fiction on Antinous from the same sources. The paper brings together the thematic and visual resonances, references, and overlaps between the texts and images. It uses close attention to the formal qualities of the sculpture and the content of Tennyson's poem to consider roads not taken, and how those options demonstrate the ambiguity in Stebbins' finished sculpture: that is, its lack of clear moral or didactic content through its selection of the lotus-eater and Antinoan imagery, rather than a martial or moralizing figure from the poem. It demonstrates the complexity and subtly of Stebbins' selection of sources for her sculpture, and her rich, multivalent play between texts and images.

Keywords

Sculpture; classical receptions; Antinous; Tennyson; Emma Stebbins; queer theory

Length

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‘This Lotus Spell is Intenser’: Sources and Selections in Emma Stebbins’ *Lotus-Eater*

The American sculptor Emma Stebbins (1815–1882) is best known today for two things: the Bethesda Fountain sculpture in Central Park, New York City, and being the long-term partner and biographer of Charlotte Cushman, an internationally recognized Shakespearean actor. Her debut ideal work, and the first male nude sculpture by an American woman, *The Lotus-Eater* (Fig.1-2), purports to illustrate Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s poem ‘The Lotos-Eaters,’

[1] and has most often been associated with the Resting Satyr of Praxiteles at the Capitoline Museums via Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Marble Faun*.[2] This essay explores the tension between Stebbins’ lost full-length work and busts, and the texts and images to which it makes overt or subtle references— and those to which it does not. Recognizing the visual citations involved in Stebbins’ sculpture opens the field of material which can be addressed in relation to the statue: not just the relevant passages of Tennyson’s poem, but the characters not shown and a wider field of mythological, historical, and philological texts, ancient and modern. Rather than reinforcing a singular conservative position about the risks of decadence or a supporting gesture towards martial heroism, Stebbins’s sculpture, and the readings generated between her various touchstones, demonstrate a narrative and moral ambiguity that is especially queer: not straightforward, not linear, but a rich and erudite interplay. These are developed from the overlapping webs of formal allusion and similarity, iconographic and thematic parallels, and an expansive visual field, to which Stebbins had access in Rome in 1857 as she modelled her sculpture.

[PLACE FIGS 1-2]

This essay will demonstrate that the main visual and historical touchstone for this is Antinous, a young Bithynian man who for several years was the lover of the Emperor Hadrian and who died mysteriously in October 130 CE.[3] Antinous is a figure known to history almost exclusively through fragmentary texts and images, a fitting citation for Stebbins' sculpture. Stebbins's *Lotus-Eater* is a reworking of Antinous imagery, selected not only for the beauty of the original material, but for its historic and mythological resonances with the themes of Tennyson's poem between Antinous's physical appearance and religious connection the god of wine and intoxication, Dionysus. Rather than citing a singular portrait of Antinous, Stebbins's *Lotus-Eater*, in full-length statuette and bust-length form, responds to the large *corpus* of Antinous portraits available in Europe, especially France and Italy, by about 1855, and his history or mythology. This new identification with Antinous is not just pedantic nitpicking. It presents an opportunity to address the literary and sculpture alternatives that Stebbins did not choose, those avenues where Stebbins might have done things differently with her statue and how that can clarify what she did do. This kind of thought experiment offers a chance to think seriously about how Stebbins was engaging with her textual source, how we can better understand her formal decisions without written evidence from her or close sources about those choices, and what those formal choices say about her understanding of a thematically ambiguous poem.

And this is applicable beyond one lost statue by Stebbins, because many artists failed to write explicitly about why they made formal decisions, why they chose subjects, or their general thought processes around art. The references an artist chooses can give the viewer a perception of the author or artist as sophisticated, educated, and original; the artist must be clever enough to select the correct reference, and skilled enough to wield it with refinement. They must be delicate enough to shape the viewer's response, like the fine chisel or rasp adding detail and nuance to a figure, rather than a symbolic sledgehammer hitting the viewer

over the head. In Stebbins's *Lotus-Eater*, the references to Antinous are subtle; it is not a *portrait* of Antinous but an allusion, a trope or a type. This essay will only explicitly mention some of the most relevant and famous images, but it must be remembered that there were dozens of these images available to Stebbins, dating from Antinous' lifetime into to the sixteenth century; relevant textual sources are dated from the first century CE into the years immediately before Stebbins began working.

Although it may be trite to say that this essay is an attempt to 'complicate' our understanding of Stebbins's *Lotus Eater*, that is the case here. While I argue that the visual parallels between the sculpture and images of Antinous or Antinous-Dionysus are clear once you know what to look for, the ambiguity of the sculpture and the wide range of physical examples, texts, and interpretative strategies mean that *The Lotus Eater* is not a straight(forward) object. Because the central, full-length object is presently untraced, the material legacy of the sculpture is obscured: like that of innumerable antique Antinous images yet to be discovered, like his mortal remains, like his individual character. Stebbins, too, is something of a cypher, and complicated; she did not leave a central archive of letters, effaced herself from the book she wrote about her partner Charlotte Cushman, and was not nearly as productive or active in exhibiting or self-promoting as her peers. This essay takes the silences, absences, and gaps in the metaphoric archive as an opportunity to explore her *Lotus Eater* and all its creative, receptive, classical, post-classical potentials and potential complications. It draws on classical reception studies from Martindale and Hind to address the ways modern meanings accrete to objects and texts, building layers of meaning that can be used by artists or poets to increase the richness of meanings, draw attention to their own erudition, and to connect apparently disparate materials.

In queer studies and classical receptions, work has been done to connect the formation of modern identity as queer, homosexual, lesbian, or other self-definitions to understandings of Greece and Rome, and to theorise the reception of antiquity in modernity.[4] I am not arguing that Stebbins was, some male aesthetes and modern artists, constructing her homosexual self through the figure of Antinous. Caroline Vout, for example, wrote "Antinoüs" image is affirmative of homosexual self-fashioning,' in relation to Robert Mapplethorpe and Yves Saint-Laurent both having Antinous images in their studios.[5] Stebbins does not seem to be self-fashioning through the figure of the Antinoan lotus-eater, but the act of fashioning an Antinous puts her in a long line of queer artists and critics using the ambiguity of Antinous as a figure for *something*. Nor does Stebbins seem to be attempting to validate modern same-sex desire by presenting an historic prototype, like Symonds,[6] falling in love with the beautiful image, like Winckelmann,[7] or using Winckelmann writing about images of beautiful boys, like Walter Pater.[8] Instead, Stebbins seems to use Tennyson, Antinous, and Dionysus as a demonstration of her formal appropriation and intellectual sophistication: a queer erudition in the sense of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's definition of camp, when Sedgwick wrote of Cavafy's poetry: 'its visceral, operatic power: the startling outcrops of overinvested erudition; the prodigal production of alternative histories; the "over"-attachment to fragmentary, marginal, waste, lost, or leftover cultural products; the richness of affective variety, and the irrepressible, cathartic fascination with ventriloquist forms of relation.'[9] In merging multiple images and gods, in the form of an ambiguous, decadent figure from a contemporary retelling of an ancient poem, and then refusing to explain herself while producing fragments of her absent statue, Stebbins's *Lotus Eater* is a quietly complex act of queer classical reception.

Furthermore, by paying close attention to the use of Antinous, and by extension Dionysian imagery, in the sculpture, poem, and Stebbins' authorship, the queer aspects of the

work itself can be embedded more thoroughly in the scholarship. Without needing to speculate on the sexual activities of any party (except for Dionysus, whose connection to Antinous and whose sexual activities will be discussed further), the non-heteronormative relationships between Antinous and Hadrian, and Stebbins and Charlotte Cushman, were central to their lives, to historical studies thereof, and their receptions in the modern period. This is not to suggest that Stebbins' queer relationship with Cushman was a central driving factor in her work, that the statue is *about* her lesbianism, but rather that the statue and busts of *The Lotus Eater* have, in subject, authorship, and form, multiple valences of queerness. There are overt queer connotations in Stebbins' authorship as a woman in a committed partnership with another woman, and in the citation of Antinous, a man Sarah Waters called 'the most famous fairy in history,'[10] but more subtly in the ambiguity of the lotus-eater's non-normative behavior in the poem in contrast to the Greek sailors, and in the connections to the god Dionysus, whose mythological exploits include dildos, cross-dressing, and women acting outside the boundaries of the home. Nor is it important to the readings that none of the relevant historical parties had access to the self-identifications of queer, gay, lesbian, or homosexual in the modern terms; these labels denote a spectrum of recognizable interpersonal relationships and activities and are used for clarity in the present day.[11] These multivalent connections to historic and mythic queerness have been elided by a scholarly focus on the *The Lotus-Eater's* putative similarity to the famous Marble Faun of the Capitoline, by way of Nathaniel Hawthorne, but I want to foreground that these should be seen as a key grounding factor for the work and readings thereof: not necessarily explicitly displayed for the wider public to see, but not hidden or secretive. The multiple queer factors are allusive, rather than elusive, drawing attention to themselves and to wider connections for a viewer or reader who has the correct foreknowledge to recognize the citation or trope.

Emma Stebbins was born in 1815 to a wealthy New York family who supported her artistic interests. Stebbins was an amateur painter before taking up sculpture, and was elected to the National Academy of Design as an Associate Member, though the election of her cohort was nullified for an unclear breach in procedure and she never joined the Academy as a member.[12] She practiced sculpture under the instruction of Edward Brackett (1818-1908), which her sister and biographer Mary Stebbins Garland described after her death in 1882 as 'hints' but which pushed her towards sculpture as her primary artistic practice and thus onwards to Rome. Arriving in Rome in 1857, Stebbins began studying with American sculptor Paul Akers—including, her sister noted, the male nude from life[13]—and undertook the first modelling for the Lotus-Eater that winter, encouraged by John Gibson.[14] Gibson was formally Harriet Hosmer's teacher—with whom Stebbins lived along with Charlotte Cushman—and he may have informally mentored Stebbins, as well as providing feedback on the design for the *Lotus-Eater*; Garland, in relation to the model, noted that it 'elicited encomiums from as severe a judge as John Gibson, the well-known English sculptor.'[15]

[PLACE FIG. 3]

The model was finished by 1858; Leonard Jerome—New York business magnate and future grandfather of Winston Churchill—commissioned the marble version that was completed before the end of 1860.[16] The finished sculpture, standing approximately three feet tall, was displayed in January 1861 at Goupil Gallery in New York City,[17] alongside a pair of allegorical works, *Commerce* and *Industry* for industrialist Charles Heckscher.[18] Garland also noted that the 'head of this statue was many times repeated, and a great favorite.'[19] These busts are the primary means of interpreting the expression and floral garland of the bust. The *Lotus-Eater* received good reviews, with even Nathaniel Hawthorne congratulating Stebbins on her success—but tellingly, his note held no commentary on any relationship to his recently

released novel to which later scholarship has related Stebbins's figure, which we might have expected if it was so closely inspired by his book.[20] Furthermore, the marble figure for Leonard Jerome was being displayed in New York by the time *The Marble Faun* was published.[21] The Capitoline's *Resting Satyr* (Fig. 3), a central object in *The Marble Faun*, does offer some visual similarities to *The Lotus-Eater*, but few in iconography, subject, or theme; there are as many visual similarities, and more thematic ones, with other works as there are between the two here, and indeed: one of these references, the Capitoline Antinous, required a visitor to do nothing more than turn themselves no more than 180 degrees from contemplating the Satyr. The lack of such a reference, and more importantly, that Hawthorne did not arrive in Rome until 1858, after the clay model for the work was at the very least well underway if not already completed, suggests that he, and the Resting Satyr, had nothing to do with it. These questions are made more complicated by the fact that the statue is untraced, and all the busts are in private hands; one photograph of the full length work and two views of the bust are retained in the Scrapbook, and an enterprising individual has licensed modern replicas in resin, although these are often sold as after Bernini, as Dionysus, or Antinous, just as the marble busts have been sold as 'Grecian maidens' (about which more later).

What are we actually looking at, in the single extant photo of the full-length figure? Stebbins' youth leans against a tree trunk; the photo does not capture enough detail to be certain of its botanical specificity (if there was any), although the Tennyson poem makes reference to a 'shadowed pine.'[22] We also, unfortunately, cannot see side or rear views of the piece so we have to hope the camera angle is clear and nothing about the pose is too distorted. A single vine of ivy climbs the trunk, mirroring the curve of the figure's right leg. His right hand holds a branch that conveniently covers his genitals, and which appears to be the same type of plant used to make the wreath topping his voluminous hair (more visible in the photo of the bust). The figure's left hand hangs at his side, fingers curled gently; his gaze

is cast to the viewer's left and slightly down to avoid eye contact. The whole of his head droops downward under the visual weight of his crown and curls. Because of his leaning pose, his right shoulder is slightly elevated, while the left droops, and the gentle tilt of his hips enlivens the gently sinuous lines of the contrapposto.

A review in *The Albion* notes these characteristics in language that reinforces the sculpture's relationship to the poem's syrupy, languid tone and melancholy dreaminess: the figure 'leans, in a posture of languor,' while his 'arm hangs down with inexpressibly truthful *abandon* and listlessness. The crossed feet indicate the same purposeless repose.' His lovely face is 'shrouded in melancholy,' and 'almost glows with life, though lost in reverie.'[23] By contrast, the *New York Times* review suggests 'One's idea of a Lotus eater, however, does not allow us to agree with the artist, in the desirability of so muscular a leg, more befitting a youthful Hercules, than one whose energies are sapped…'[24] It is worth noting that 'sapped' is both an appropriately vegetal term, while also evoking the drainage of sexual energies through masturbation or sexual deviancy.[25] While his torso and arms show active, visible musculature, placing the figure within the heroic or ideal male nude tradition of Praxiteles, the softness of the flesh covering those muscles suggests two things. First, it suggests that despite the youthful fitness of this individual, the lifestyle of the Lotos-Eaters does not involve a great deal of body-sculpting exercise (the origin of the *Times* complaint that the exacting anatomy is too developed). Second, it points towards Stebbins's sculptural reference points being something other than Olympian gods and heroes lining the museum galleries, or the spritely Satyr (about whom we shall hear more), but another figure known for his male beauty: Antinous. To understand *why* Antinous was a good (if not the only) choice of model for this statue, we need to do two things: first look closely at the poem and its various interpretations, and then do our thought experiments about other ways Stebbins might have illustrated this.

Let's Talk About Texts, Baby

Alfred, Lord Tennyson's poem, 'The Lotos-Eaters,' appeared in two major versions; the first, 1833, and a decade later with the addition of a further stanza before the Choric Song, in 1843. I focus on the 1843 version, since it represents the fuller version of the poem, published closer to Stebbins's work, and is therefore more likely to have been the version from which she was working. The poem takes up an episode from Book IX of the Odyssey and translates it into fourteen stanzas: six for the main action, and eight for the Choric Song. Driven by a Poseidon-sent storm to the coast of the Land of the Lotus Eaters, Odysseus' crew are tempted to abandon their homeward quest for the chill island life after partaking of the mythical lotus. The poem's tone is soporific and dreamlike: the sailors repeatedly declare their weariness and their preference for the languid, dripping-honey pace of their newfound paradise. While in Homer's episode, Odysseus eventually hauls his scouts back to the ship, ties them up, and sails off again, Tennyson's retelling ends before a satisfying narrative conclusion. The Odyssey has the whole episode take place in under twenty-five lines, with the main action in the last ten. In Emily Wilson's translation, Odysseus narrates:

> The Scouts encountered humans, Lotus-Eaters,
> who did not hurt them. They just shared with them
> their sweet delicious fruit. But as they ate it,
> they lost the will to come back and bring news
> to me. They wanted only to stay there,
> feeding on lotus with the Lotus-Eaters.
> They had forgotten home. I dragged them back
> in tears, forced them on board the hollow ships,

pushed them below the decks, and tied them up.
I told the other men, the loyal ones,
to get back in the ships, so no one else
would taste the lotus and forget about
our destination. They embarked and sat
along the rowing benches, side by side,
and struck the grayish water with their oars. (9.91-105)[26]

By contrast, Tennyson's sailors never quite make it back onto the boat; the final three lines of the poem end in a group voice declaring they will stay put:

Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;
Oh rest ye, brother mariners we will not wander more.[27]

For a reader of Tennyson or viewer of Stebbins' statue unfamiliar with the action of the Odyssey, there is no guarantee that the sailors will resume sailing; they have watched Odysseus get dozens of their friends killed and no end to travelling is in sight, so the languid land of lotus-eaters has its appeal, even if they miss their wives and children:

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears : but all hath suffer'd change;[28]

The Lotus-Eaters are largely passive, described only *en masse* and to a far lesser extent than their island or the sailors' exhaustion. They do not speak at all, but wordlessly (in text) offer the sailors the lotus to eat. Tennyson's poem furthermore lacks a specific character voice from which to derive a singular figure; the sailors speak in plural pronouns. Only Odysseus emerges textually as an active individual, unnamed and in the third person, and only in the first line of the poem. Where in the Odyssey, two sailors and a slave are the only ones who declare their determination to stay, in Tennyson's verses it appears that Odysseus' entire crew speak together of their intent to stay on the island. This undermines attempts to ascribe a moralized or didactic meaning to the sculpture, which might have been possible with a heroic Odysseus reclaiming his sailors from indolence to their life of manly, martial, and marital vigor, or a sailor tempted by the promise of an indolent fleshy paradise.

Reading the poem as an educated, but not expert, consumer of poetry and literature (as Stebbins was), the text seems to critique those who would squander their days in indolence and physical pleasure, rather than practice clean moral living and hard work, although this is ambiguous. It is possible to read the poem as an exhortation to not forget one's own home, no matter how far and wild one may wander— but it could also be interpreted as sympathetic to the bone-weary exhaustion that comes after extended periods of danger, stress, and inescapable bad news. The narrative voice in both parts seems to be drowning in the sorrow of being hopelessly, dangerously far from home in the soothing stupor of the lotus. It might have been that Stebbins, working in Rome in the fall and winter of 1857/8—following a lifetime of New York winters—identified with the desire to stay in the steamy paradise, even with the pleasures and temptations of the flesh distracting her from the honest labor of sculpting.

A further challenge to ascribing a clear moral perspective to the poem, and to Stebbins' sculpture, is that the descriptive passages about the Lotus-Eaters, from which Stebbins could most easily pull details or characteristics, are outnumbered by those which develop the aesthetic mood in the poem or meditate upon the conditions of life among the lotus-eaters versus those among the world of war. The physical description of the lotus-eaters themselves comes in three lines:

> And round about the keel with faces pale,
> Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
> The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.[29]

Essentially, they are pale, sad, and reserved; they also carry branches of the lotos, about the only direct detail possible for Stebbins to incorporate (other than making her statue pale, with white marble). Narratively, Tennyson's text, and therefore Stebbins's work to an even greater degree, relied upon the viewer's previous knowledge of Homer. The poem's reader would be expected to recognize the grown son, over-bold princes, and unwelcoming household waiting for Odysseus in Ithaca.[30] Stebbins' sculpture, without textual explication, relied not only on the viewer's knowledge of Tennyson's poem but the poem's references to Homer, *and* the visual material. The Albion reviewer acknowledged this, but also described the figure as pleasing enough without knowing those references: 'Had we been a stranger to the legend, we should still have lingered near it, fascinated by the beautiful sad *dreamerie* which absorbs it, and wondered "what sad sorrow had its young days clouded."'[31]

Nineteenth-century Anglo-Americans positioned Italy as a sort of modern Land of the Lotus-Eaters, with an indolent and unproductive native population who were prone to intoxication and idolatrous worship. One of the reviews of *The Lotus-Eater* makes the connection between the statuette and the real world clear:

> Miss Stebbins has lived in Italy; and she has, there—like every lover of Art and every luxuriast of spells upon the senses and the soul—eaten the lotos! Few have resided for any length of time in Rome or Florence, without wondering at the chill of reluctance with which any thought of ever leaving it has fallen on the heart—and, how this lotos spell is intenser upon artists, is well enough known to those who have lived with them and shared their thoughts.[32]

This kind of language appears in American reviews of other artists' work and in fictional pieces about artists in Rome, so it isn't unique to Stebbins' lotus-eating subject.[33] Even John Gibson, who commissioned the subject from Stebbins, was told by an older sculptor at the beginning of his career that too much time in Italy would spoil him and his work.[34] Stebbins's reading of the poem may have focused on the elements of exoticism, sensuality and dreaminess, and the risks those pose to productivity; she was fresh from America, embracing independence in a foreign country, surrounded by aesthetic and social distractions, and in a developing relationship with a woman whose career and social standing were far more advanced than hers. Her pursuit of a career could easily have been derailed by any of these factors. However, her finished sculpture lacks any overt condemnation or warning against the dangers of the good life; as Stopford Brooke, a late nineteenth-century critic, wrote of Tennyson's poems of this period, 'No one who has any sense of art will presume to accuse them of being didactic rather than artistic.'[35] The selection of a sensuous, fleshy young male nude for her Lotus-Eater, rather than the heroic Odysseus or a manly, if morally fallen, sailor, suggests an embrace of this lotos-spell.

Having looked at the text of the poem and its interpretations, it is possible to undertake some alternative history thought experiments: what if Stebbins had decided not to

make a sad sexy boy of dubious morals, but gone for something a bit more rugged and heroic? Looking at the what-might-have-beens are productive not only to assess the range of material that was available to Stebbins when she was developing her sculpture, but also for thinking about how the finished work does *not* produce a specific effect on the viewer. In an environment like Rome, where the volume of readily available antique material was huge, and the artistic community was close-knit allowing for the circulation of ideas and discussion, it is disingenuous to presume that an artist simply chose their reference material from the most popular sculptural types without regard to the relevance to the subject or themes. Imagine, then, that Stebbins settled on the idea of a manly, martial Odysseus for her Tennysonian figure. She may have looked to a famous tourist hit like the Apollo Belvedere, gesturing towards the ship and the promise of home, or an armored general— although not the Augustus Prima Porta, which wasn't excavated until 1863. The burly and curly-bearded over-life-size sculpture of Mars Ultor in the Capitoline Museums, would have been a formidable demonstration of her ability to sculpt muscles and multiple textures in contrast (Fig. 4).[36] A statue of a young man with one foot on a rock and gesturing at the viewer had previously served as the model for Christian Wilhelm Beyer's sculpture of *Cincinnatus* in the Schönbrunn Palace gardens in Vienna in 1779[37]; Cincinnatus was a popular classical moral prototype for George Washington, as a general who renounced power to return to farming, and this could have reminded the well-travelled viewer of Odysseus' goal of returning home to his wife, child, and farmlands in Ithaca.

[PLACE FIG. 4]

Or Stebbins could have completely avoided the use of a specific classical precedent and invented a new allegory for American moral superiority, grit and determination, and even American Manifest Destiny through the image of noble Odysseus, a didactic figure (at least

in this instance) that elevated the viewer through heroic example rather than dissuading them from making bad choices. She could have shown a soldier overcoming his intoxication; there are certainly plenty of images of the drunken Dionysus in Roman collections. If an intended function of the sculpture was to be a moralizing reminder of the risks of intoxication, indolence, and expatriation, however, Stebbins's choice to model one of the lotus-eaters rather than Odysseus or a sailor is highly questionable. The lotus-eaters are not far from home or travelling, and they have no work to return to or goals to achieve. The work lacks any overt visual cues or commentary to suggest the moral or metaphysical dangers in the text; instead, the figure is languorous, limpid, and lovely. She could also have chosen to depict a female nude lotus-eater, which would have added a layer of heteronormative eroticism to the work. It would have further expanded or shifted Stebbins's options for reference material and reconfigured the potential readings of the work to include a more heavily gendered, moralized view of Italy and Rome as decadent, sexually suspect, and dangerously enchanting. Instead, we have a pretty boy with great hair and a flower crown. The hair, garland, and sad boy vibes combine to give us one of the most famous gay men of ancient history: Antinous.

Live Fast, Die Young, Leave a Good-Looking **Corpus**

Little is known about the "real" Antinous (c. 111-130 CE), the youthful lover of Emperor Hadrian (76-138 CE). The absence of hard facts about his life and relationship that made him one of the most recognizable faces of antiquity, has made it easy for his legacy to be fashioned and refashioned as needed. There isn't even a firm scholarly consensus on how long he was with Hadrian as his lover, although this was probably fully established by 128 CE when he was brought on Hadrian's imperial tour as a member of his personal retinue; he was likely inducted into the Eleusinian Mysteries alongside Hadrian on this trip. He drowned

in the Nile in October 130 CE, under still–contested circumstances, and before or around his twentieth birthday.[38] A popular belief exists that there was some sort of sacrificial component to his death,[39] though to what end and how much Hadrian knew or had been involved will never be fully understood, if this is the case; it may also have simply been an accident or unrelated suicide. Indeed, much of the romance surrounding Antinous comes from the mysteries surrounding his life and death, and the extraordinary appearance that has survived the ravages and vagaries of history in the form of his innumerable portraits. If we as modern spectators and historians could fully explain Antinous' true nature, his relationship with Hadrian, and the circumstances of his death, there would be less freedom to co-opt his life and image. For Stebbins's uses, Antinous was a decadent, beautiful, ambiguous youth of whom numerous images existed, and whose attributes included a lotus or other intoxicants, often syncretized to Dionysus, with myths of travel and tragedy. Antinous remains relatively obscure outside archaeological, classical, and queer circles, so it is worth pointing towards some of the most relevant antique sources and modern discussions of his life. This demonstrates the path from unknown colonial subject to a god whose worship rivalled that of Christ at one point, his legacy into the nineteenth century, and the highlights of his visual record.

That is not to say there is no historical information about Antinous, although the extant sources are not eyewitnesses nor are most of them unbiased, given the homosexual relationship at the heart of the story. Dio Cassius's *Roman History* is the closest source to the events themselves, written between eighty and one hundred or so years later, and probably incorporated information from a now-lost text called the *Vita Hadriani* (Life of Hadrian) and another text that was potentially Hadrian's own memoirs, written under the name Phlegmon.[40] Post-classical commentary on Antinous was mixed in sympathies, with early Christian writers like Clement of Alexandria declaiming against him.[41] Edward Gibbon's

Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, first published in 1776, delicately danced around discussing the details of Hadrian's relationship with Antinous, but condemned his 'erroneous passions.'[42] Nineteenth- and twentieth-century sources grew more sympathetic as time passed; occasionally the self-sacrifice theory was amended to include the idea that Antinous may have been suicidal, perhaps looking for a respectable way out of the relationship as he passed the age where a Greek boy could honorably be the lover of an older man, since continuing as Hadrian's lover into his twenties and beyond would be shameful.[43] The drowning is framed as an intersection of Antinous's suicidal ideation, genuine feelings for Hadrian, and his desire to protect or help him via the sacrificial act. In the later nineteenth century, John Addington Symonds published essays on the subject, as well as the lengthy poem, 'The Lotus Garland of Antinous' first privately then publicly.[44] Other texts, like Viktor Rydberg's novel *Roman Days* (published in Swedish in 1877, with an English translation following in 1879)[45] largely focused on Christian conversion narratives.

After Antinous' death, Hadrian is supposed to have 'wept like a woman,' (14.6-7)[46] unilaterally declared him a new god in his own right, and founded the city of Antinoopolis in Egypt on the Nile.[47] Hadrian's excessive mourning would later be refigured in the god Dionysus mourning *his* young lover, Ampelos (discussed in the following section). He also allowed himself to be convinced that a red lotus had appeared in the Nile and a new star in the heavens, both in honor of his dead lover. It is this lotus that may have inspired Symonds's poem, and which provides a primary textual link between Tennyson's lotus-eaters and the dead Antinous for Stebbins. Athenaeus records the proposal, made by the poet Pancrates:

> This lotus grows in the marshes in the summer season; and it bears flowers of two colours; one like that of the rose, and it is the garlands woven of the

> flower of this colour which are properly called the garlands of Antinous. (10.7-8) [48]

While this refers to the lotus of the *nymphaea* family, or water lotus, not the mythical lotus or fruit-bearing branch of the statue, you can start to see the narrative connections starting to develop. It is also worth noting that this translation was published in 1854 and was thus, in theory at least, available to Stebbins. Portraits of Antinous were distributed across the empire following his deification, and in many places the worship of Antinous was genuine and long-lasting.[49] The cult was especially popular in the east, especially in Bithynia, where he had been born. It may have been his accessibility, as a man of the people rather than a member of the Imperial family, as well as the beauty of his statues, that prompted the genuine worship.[50] In Egypt and at Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, he was syncretized to Osiris, with portraits in an Egyptian style.[51] In many images, however, he was portrayed as the idealized yet recognizable individual, crowned with floral and herbaceous wreaths, or with the attributes of Dionysus.

What does Antinous have to do with Stebbins's *Lotus Eater*, aside from a connection the lotus? The images available to Stebbins in Europe are the key visual evidence: once you've seen an Antinous, you can recognize him easily, even in fragments or reinterpreted by modern artists like Stebbins. The most famous examples provide the model for the hundreds of copies spread across Europe; of these, no single model can be identified in Stebbins's work, but the overarching character of Antinous images *en masse* feed into the form of Stebbins's *Lotus Eater*. The combination of curls, the softly swelling but masculine breast, an 'undefinable expression of the lips, together with the weight of the brows and slumberous half-closed eyes,'[52] as John Addington Symonds described him, that creates the immediately recognizable effect of an Antinous portrait. These often have a leafy garland with fruit and

flowers. Johann Joachim Winckelmann noted, 'On the other hand, Antinous is always seen figured with a face, which has some melancholy… with his eyes then large, and well outlined, with a gentle slope in profile, and with a mouth, and a chin, in which what is truly beautiful is expressed.'[53] These portraits generally have defined eyebrows with hairs carved into the brow line, a strong nose, and full lips, slightly feminine but clearly male. A good example of the straightforward portrait is the Farnese Antinous in Naples (Fig. 5), the pose of which also offers some similarities to the *Lotus-Eater*. Symonds notes that the portraits are sometimes described as depicting a congenital imbalance in the shoulders but in the busts, this derives from the original pose of the full length, which are generally shown in contrapposto or with one arm raised.[54] The drooping head, too, responds to the habitually downward-looking Antinous figures, which may have originated in the larger works' role as cult images but in posterity and in fragments gives the effect of melancholy or a decadent languor, as if Antinous were too exhausted from his decadent lifestyle to hold his head up properly.

[PLACE FIGS 5-8]

A more stylized, hieratic, and godlike head, singled out by Winckelmann as one of the most beautiful sculptures from antiquity, is the Mondragone Antinous at the Louvre, (Fig. 6), with ornately stylized hair and visible holes where a garland, probably bronze, could be installed. Other wreathed Antinous heads can be found at the Capitoline and Vatican Museums, most notably the monumental Braschi Antinous at the latter (Fig. 7). A final key comparison is the Albani Relief, one of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's treasures of antiquity (Fig. 8).[55] In one of his less-well-known works, *Monumenti Antichi Inediti,* he discussed the Antinous Mondragone, one of his most-beloved antiquities. He connected the absent wreath explicitly to the lotus, and to the poppy: 'Not only the from the poet

[Pancrates] was born the use of the lotus garland for the head of portraits of Antinous, but also, I think, for the similarity between the it and the poppy.'[56] In the *History*, these works together were 'The glory and the crown of sculpture in this age as well as in all others,'[57] and the Mondragone in particular, 'I hold it no heresy to say — so grand and lofty is the art displayed in it — that, next to the Vatican Apollo and the Laocoon, it is the most beautiful work which has come down to us.' Winckelmann then highlighted a sculpture of Antinous-Dionysus, now in Copenhagen,[58] and a group sometimes attributed (unfeasibly) to Hadrian himself, the San Ildefonso group.[59] This last, a pair of two nude young men and a much smaller woman, was restored with the head of Antinous from a different sculpture on the left, was also the frontispiece for Winckelmann's *Monumenti* and a century later, for Symonds' *Sketches and Studies in Italy*, which included Symonds' essay on Antinous (Fig. 9).

[PLACE FIG. 9]

Though the great nineteenth-century flowering of interest in Antinous postdates *The Lotus-Eater*, coming in the 1870s with John Addington Symonds's poem *The Lotus-Garland of Antinous* and erudite essays on the history, iconography, and imagery of Antinous as a homosexual figure, it is unlikely that Stebbins was ignorant of Antinous as a historical figure or an artistic type. There existed by 1857 a huge number of sculptural images of Antinous in a variety of guises across Rome, Italy, and Europe, as well as popular and scholarly texts on him in encyclopedias, history books, and magazines. Dionysus, the Olympian deity with whom Antinous was most associated, was even more widely distributed in sculptural and textual form, along with his followers. These two figures, Antinous and Dionysus, were both associated with decadence, pleasure, male beauty, and intoxication, characteristics suggested in the poem and by Stebbins's sculpture. Antinous-Dionysus as a syncretic deity has textual and visual similarities to both Tennyson's poem and Stebbins's titular character from the

poem, which suggests that the visual similarities between Stebbins's finished statuette and the upcoming comparanda were not accidental. Her translation of Tennyson's mild-eyed and melancholy lotophage into marble drew not only from the putative text, but also from the enormous archive of visual material in Rome and a rich tradition of imitation as invention and originality through nuanced referencing. In referencing the figure of Antinous or Antinous-Dionysus, she was not copying, but imitating and reinvigorating a type that had previously proved meaningful and aesthetically successful in art and culture.

Baby Got Bacchus

Dionysus, though primarily known today as the god of wine, was also a cross-dressing party boy with a taste for driving noblewomen to regicide.[60] He was an epiphanic deity, one of arrival, travel, and rebirth, associated with the wilderness and the East, especially India.[61] While earlier images from vases and sculpture depict Dionysus as a bearded and robed patriarch, sometimes called the Indian Dionysus, the most commonly recognized sculptural image today is the often-androgynous or effete youth, crowned with a wreath. His attributes include, but are certainly not limited to, the ivy, pine, or vine wreath, *thyrsus* (a fennel staff), panther or panther skin, wine cup, and satyrs or maenads. *Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* called Dionysus the 'youthful, beautiful but effeminate god of wine,' and described his association with intoxication, madness to the point of murder, and his travels through Greece, Egypt, and India.[62] Antinous's association with Dionysus was made stronger by the fact that in myth, Dionysus was the only Olympian god with a mortal mother. In the Orphic tradition, Dionysus was merged to Zagreus, the son of Zeus and Persephone, and in that guise murdered by the Titans at the behest of Hera, to be reborn as Dionysus, the son of Zeus and Semele, a human princess burned alive after demanding to see Zeus in all his godly glory, necessitating a

rescue of the unborn Dionysus by sewing him into Zeus' thigh to finish gestating.[63] This cycle of birth, death, and rebirth fed into Dionysus's role as a fertility god, but also the associations with the mortal Antinous, his position within the Eleusinian mysteries,[64] and the later cultic competition with early Christianity.

One of the key themes from Tennyson's poem that is reinforced by Stebbins's use of the Antinous-Dionysus type is intoxication and natural or wild, non-agricultural, non-urban life. The botanical specificity and properties of the mythical lotus cannot be matched to any of the three main types of lotus plants: the well-known *Nymphaea* waterlily (as discussed in relation to Antinous), known in the west as a lotus, the nettle-tree (*Celtis Australis*), or the *Ziziphus* lotus, a fruiting tree or shrub that produces olive-like drupes. The *Ziziphus* is the closest match I have found to the garland on Stebbins' figure, although not an exact one. Of course, this operates on the assumption that the events are true, based on real plants, and that they have been accurately described at all turns, which of course, we can't because it's poetry and based on a narrative from the eight century BCE. Tennyson described the intoxication as coming from the fruit, verse four:

> Branches they bore of that enchanted stem
> Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
> To each, but whoso did receive of them,
> And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
> Far far away did seem to mourn and rave[65]

The poem includes a great deal of botanical specificity, and he could have dropped the names of cultivated plants upon which the epicurean Lotophagi might have feasted. However, of the numerous species in the poem—the shadowy pine, blown roses, cool mosses, creeping ivies, long-leaved flowers, sleeping poppy, full-juiced apple, myrrh bush, grass, amaranth, moly,

acanthus, and asphodel—the edible plants are ones that can be grown without cultivation, and even then, amaranth is included as a sleeping surface, not a foodstuff. The lotus-eaters are not farmers, but gatherers; if they produce anything, it is possibly the intoxicating liquor of lotus-nectar and opium from the poppy. The lotus itself is hardly described, except that it blooms and fruits simultaneously, and blows yellow dust.

The intoxicating substances point to Dionysus as a primary point of reference in translating from text to stone. Though the poppy is not historically one of Dionysus's attributes, its hallucinogenic properties and connection to the rites of Eleusis (into which Antinous was likely initiated), and thus Dionysus-Iakkhos, puts it within bounds.[66] Ivy, in turn, is one of the major attributes of the god, even more so than grape leaves or vines. As Karl Kerényi says, 'It is a significant fact that in Greece the wine god never bore the name or epithet "Ampelos," "vine," but in Attica was called "Kissos," "ivy."'[67] Stebbins, modeling first in clay and then carving in marble, must have consciously modelled and then carefully carved the ivy vine climbing the severed tree upon which her languorous lotus-eater leans; the use of ivy, rather than another vine, flowering plant, animal skin, or even unadorned tree stump makes this a clear allusion to Dionysus. The wreath upon the figure's head, which bears both fruit and flowers as described in verse four, further visually alludes to images of Dionysus wearing leafy, fruiting crowns as well as images of Antinous. Apart from the Mondragone and Albani relief already discussed, we might consider the Lansdowne Antinous, which merges the ornate hairdo and bold ivy crown of the Mondragone with a more naturalistic and lively expression.[68] The most important Antinous-Dionysus, and one that was certainly known and available to Stebbins while she worked on *The Lotus-Eater*, is the monumental Braschi Antinous of the Vatican, with an ornate ivy and berry wreath and restored lotus bud, holding a *thyrsus*. Dionysus in his role as an epiphanic, chthonic god of the wilderness and of wild life would have been a fine god for the Lotophagi. Notably,

Stebbins' mentor John Gibson had completed a standing figure of Dionysus (*Bacchus*, Fig. 10) for the Marquess of Londonderry, begun 1856, which Gibson's biography notes:

> The expression of his godlike countenance is that of tranquility and sweetness; the upper and lower eyelids are a little swelled, which gives softness and a slight touch of dreamy voluptuousness to his rather feminine countenance, whilst his lips are slightly apart… Besides the male models I employed a female one too, so as to enter thoroughly into the spirit of the Greek idea, that Apollo, Dionysus, and Eros are androgynous.[69]

Gibson's sculpture was in development as Stebbins arrived in Rome, with a reference in the *Life of Gibson* of Gibson squabbling with the Marquess' sister about possibly coloring the *Bacchus* at a party 'the following winter' (circa 1857)[70]. Given Gibson provided feedback on Stebbins' figure, and may have even suggested the topic for her *Lotus-Eater*, his youthful and androgynous Bacchus with a dreamy voluptuousness reinforces the relevance of Dionysian and Antinous images for Stebbins' figure.

[PLACE FIG. 10]

Similarly, in a translation of 1850, available to Stebbins, Winckelmann described the typical conformation of beauty in Dionysus images:

> The second kind of ideal youth is … represented, blended with masculine youth, in Bacchus [Dionysus]. He appears under this form, at different ages, until he attains his full growth, and in the most beautiful statues, always with delicate round limbs, and the full, expanded hips of the female sex … the type of Bacchus is a lovely boy who is treading the boundaries of the springtime of life and adolescence, in whom emotions of voluptuousness,

> like the tender shoots of a plant, are budding, and who as if between sleeping and waking, half rapt in a dream of exquisite delight, is beginning to collect and verify the pictures of his fancy…[71]

Winckelmann's language is chosen carefully; the vegetal imagery of the Dionysian images is echoed in the description of his character and figure. Apart from wine, Dionysus was a god associated with ivy, fig trees, forests, and the grape vine before fermentation, as well as grain,[72] and the seasonal cycles, especially in relation to the Orphic tradition where one of his mothers was Persephone. The association with fig trees has a specific queer connotation, as the wood from which ritual *phalloi* were made. In an episode that was recounted by several ancient authors, Dionysus was seeking the entrance to the underworld to rescue his mother Semele, and a mortal shepherd assisted him; in return, Dionysus promised to have sex with him upon his return from Hades. However, the man died before Dionysus returned, and in order to fulfill his promise, Dionysus fashioned a fig-wood phallus and performed what Pausanias euphemistically describes as 'nocturnal rituals.'[73] Dionysus's other male lover, the satyr Ampelos, appears in several images available in Rome, derived from Nonnus of Panopolis's Orphic mystery poem the *Dionysiaca*, Books X-XII, written as late as the fifth century CE. (Fig. 11) Nonnus's text is an etiology of the grapevine, figured by the satyr youth whose tragic death Dionysus mourns by excessive weeping and whose transfiguration from flesh and blood into wine, Christ-like, offers succor to all mankind.[74] After Ampelos's complete conversion into the grapevine, Dionysus twined himself around the trunk in the form of ivy (*Cissos*), a constant companion. Dionysus is therefore both Hadrian *and* Antinous, the excessively mourning lover and mortal beloved, wrapped up in vegetal ecstasy.

[PLACE FIG. 11]

Dionysus's youthful androgyny, sensuality, and homoerotic connotations have echoes in descriptions of Antinous images;[75] to Winckelmann, the garlanded Mondragone and Albani Antinouses are the most beautiful works to survive from antiquity. For Symonds, writing nearly twenty years after Stebbins's *Lotus-Eater* was first displayed (and thus not available to her, but drawing on the same body of material), Antinous's portraits were likewise characterized by their sensuous androgyny: 'his limbs are round and florid, suggesting the possibility of early over-ripeness. The muscles are not trained to sinewy firmness, but yielding and elastic; the chest is broad and singularly swelling.'[76] It is not hard to see, in Stebbins's work, these same qualities: the broad chest, the loveliness of a youthful and exotic voluptuary on the cusp of adult manliness, retaining still the androgynous softness of flesh, the half-rapt dreaminess full of sweetness and the tender budding heralding mature beauty.

Somebody Told Me You Had a Statue That Looked Like a Boyfriend That I Had in 130 CE

There is no single element of Stebbins's *Lotus-Eater* that corresponds exactly to a singular point of reference, either in Tennyson's poem, the images of Antinous or Dionysus in Roman galleries, or in the available art-historical or mythic texts. Rather, the *Lotus-Eater* is a synthesis of numerous objects and layers of iconographic references. It is easy to admit that there is no manuscript letter from Stebbins or any critical review that mentions Antinous in the period; therefore this re-attribution of her reference from the singular Satyr to the amorphous Antinous *corpus* is based on the careful study of the photograph of the original, the bust copies—which have been sold not only as a 'maiden' but as 'Antonius [SIC] as Dionysus,'[77] and the resin knockoffs that are labelled, on the socle, *Antinous* and sold as Antinous with a 'bachic' [sic] wreath (Fig. 12).[78] This suggests that viewers who have the

'correct' foreknowledge of antique sculpture and iconographic programs recognize something in the work as essentially Antinoan. It exists as a derivation or late instantiation of the Antinous replica-mass and sits somewhere on a scale of stylization and accuracy-to-type. The use of the Antinous *corpus* is suggested in the work by the head, his lush curls and heavy-lidded eyes, his broad nose and fleshy cheeks, as well as the body that 'rapidly approaches over-bloom.'[79] His lotus-garland and the ivy climbing his tree derive from Tennyson's poem, yes, but are closely affiliated with the iconography of Antinous-Dionysus. In the context of a poem about intoxication, travel, and deathliness, the assimilation of tragic Antinous into the figure of the titular *Lotus-Eater* makes thematic sense far and above the sprightly Satyr of the Capitoline.

[PLACE FIG. 12]

Let's return briefly to that Satyr and consider not only what the Satyr looks like but its character, and how that might interact with Tennyson's 'Lotos-Eaters.' Winckelmann notes that young satyrs were 'humble conceptions of divinities,' the first step in the formulation of Greek ideal male beauty. However, 'They are distinguished from young heroes by a common profile, and a somewhat sunken nose—so that they might, for this reason, be called Simi—flat nosed.'[80] (Fig. 13) In an explanatory note to the 1850 English translation of Winckelmann, Lodge adds, 'In other respects their conformation is always vigorous and agile, though occasionally slender; and pervaded by strongly-marked muscles and sinews, as required by their occupation of roaming through woods and fields.'[81] In the Capitoline Satyr, the impression is of coiled energy, ready to resume the ecstatic, Dionysiac frolics suggested by the flute he holds and the panther skin tied around his chest. He is lean and spry, lounging against his tree with the exaggerated, come-hither sinuousness of a dancer or athlete beckoning someone to join in. Though he, like the *Lotus-Eater*, wears a wreath and has a shock of curly hair, the impression of those flowers is rather the daisy-chain of a gladsome

youth, than the sacral weight of a remembered sacrifice or the succumbing to a deathly lethargy.

Likewise, the fleshy overripe roundness of the lotus-eater's limbs is to the Satyr type as the beauty of 'a Theseus fed on roses' is to that of one 'fed on flesh,'[82] Winckelmann's evocative distinction between the beauties of a romanticized Spartan past and the 'Sybarite' of his own time. The rose-and-dust-fed lotophagi of Tennyson's poem are unlikely to rouse themselves to join the kind of dancing suggested by images of satyrs and maenads, like the Dancing Faun in *rosso antico* in the Capitoline Museum.[83] Likewise, Stebbins does not seem to have referenced later images of the Drunken Dionysus, though those sculptures do exist; instead, the images of the god she references are those like the Braschi Antinous—impossibly lovely and individual, but melancholy and serene. Even more unlike the languid, seemingly sexless (though still eroticized) Lotus-Eater are images of satyrs raping nymphs or maenads, or even the comic ithyphallic satyrs and *silenoi* of vase paintings and satyr plays. Satyr myth and iconography contradicts the Tennysonian subject; apart from the shared use of contrapposto and crossed ankles—which Winckelmann suggests denote effeminacy in male figures and are primarily associated with the youthful Dionysus—the *Lotus-Eater* and the Satyr are unrelated.

Stebbins' imitative use of the Antinous *corpus* for her *Lotus-Eater* not only sets her sculpture into the body of Antinous images, but also— to a viewer primed to see the Antinous-type— directly calls attention to itself as an imitation or allusion. The artist wanted you to see what she was doing and appreciate it. Because Stebbins was illustrating a poem, which itself was explicitly playing with an earlier text, we can also think about this type of imitation and allusion through literary studies of Roman poetry by modern classicists like Stephen Hinds. Hinds notes that

> alluding poets exert themselves to draw attention to the fact that they are alluding, and to reflect upon the nature of their allusive activity. Certain allusions are so constructed as to carry a kind of built-in commentary, a kind of reflexive annotation, which underlines or intensifies their demand to be interpreted *as* allusions.[84]

That is, the imitation or repetition of key words or phrases call attention to themselves as citations or imitations, and for the reader who recognizes this textual move, brings with it all of the cultural freight and weight of the original text, while *also* demonstrating how clever the new poet is for making that kind of connection. In nineteenth-century sculpture, the imitative, allusive practice can vary from being explicit to a single central prototype, or to the object class. Stebbins' allusion to the Antinous type in *The Lotus-Eater* isn't just thematically appropriate as a visual source, but imbued and continues to imbue her statue (and the busts, and the knockoff replicas) with the connections to Dionysus and Antinous, including the homoerotic subtext/overt text, embodiments of intoxication and male beauty, narratives of travel, and the overwhelming importance of having a good flower crown. As objects are added and removed to the sculptural canon, or texts and historical information added to the literary and scholarly field (like Symonds' poem and the *Sketches*, or Caroline Vouts' exhibition in 2006 on images of Antinous) the meanings might shift.

Building a Myth-tery: Obscurity and Ongoing Developments

The *Lotus-Eater* stands at an awkward junction, historically and critically. The full-length version is lost and exists only in a single photograph, and all the bust-length versions are in private hands. The male nudes produced by Stebbins' contemporaries, like Harriet Hosmer's *Sleeping Faun* (1865), overshadow it in the American sculptural canon. Its

reference material remains obscure, coming in a temporal moment between Winckelmann's championing of Antinous sculptures as the most beautiful to survive from antiquity and Symonds's promotion of the historical figure in print. The work itself is so poorly known that, despite being available in high-quality "marble" "casts," (resin with marble dust) the replicas are never attributed to Stebbins (except the one place I managed to convince the company of my point)—rather, they are after an antique model, or Bernini, and one replica maker has been unforthcoming as to where they obtained the original for copying in the first place.[85] It's also regularly confused for another, similar *Lotus-Eater* by Anne Whitney, made a few years later and now in the Newark Museum in New Jersey,[86] also a small nude male figure leaning on a tree, but which responds more explicitly to a different family of antiquities, images of Pothos, a minor god or personification of longing and desire.[87]

Stebbins did not thoroughly document her intellectual and artistic process for translating Tennyson's poem from textual expression into three dimensions. No clay or plaster model is known to remain, the full-length statue is currently untraced, and references to the work's progress in textual sources is highly limited, as are the reviews— two of which are directly contradictory in their assessment of how accurately Stebbins depicted the character to begin with. What is clear is that the work is *unclear*. It lacks an overt or singular moralizing or didactic perspective; it is melancholy and oneiric but not tragic or decadent. By closely assessing what visual and iconographic content Tennyson's' text and its Homeric precedent provide, it becomes clear that there were other options for Stebbins which might have provided a straightforward commentary on morality or masculinity, with or without a specific antique sculptural reference. Rather than sculpting a martial hero or conflicted sailor, Stebbins opted to model a sensual youth, with precedents drawn from a corpus of antique sculpture depicting Antinous, Antinous-Dionysus, or Dionysus, and thus introduced a greater range of narrative and moral ambiguity. The numerous potential models and sources create

further tension between the few lines of specific description in 'The Lotus-Eaters' and Stebbins' lost lotophage.

The historical contexts of these works are complicated by the present, both in the works' absence and in the increased awareness and acceptance of non-normative people and lives. Antinous has, in recent years, become extremely popular as an historical touchstone for young queer people on sites like Twitter and Tumblr, or on LGBT tours at museums, providing validation and a reminder that queer people have always existed and lived publicly. Likewise, scholarship on Stebbins and her cohort of women sculptors in Rome has become more open about their lesbian relationships and recognizes these as major aspects of their lives, acknowledged in some form by their friends and family, and falling along a spectrum of relationships between women which are now called lesbian but which do not require us to know exactly what kind of sex they were having. The queer resonances and potentials of Stebbins' *Lotus-Eater* begin from the artist's life history, but also from the subtle references to both Antinous and Dionysus, historic and mythologized figures with same-sex lovers, as well as the poem's narrative and moral ambiguity, the statue's oft-confused gender— sold as both youth and maiden— and the long-standing entanglement of classical sculpture, its reception, and queer desire from Winckelmann onward.

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[1] Alfred Tennyson, *Poems by Alfred Tennyson* (London: Edward Moxon, 1833 [1832]), 108–17; Alfred Tennyson, *Poems,* vol. 1 of 2 (London: Edward Moxon, 1843 [1842]), 175–84.

[2] Elizabeth Milroy, 'The Public Career of Emma Stebbins: Work in Marble,' *Archives of American Art Journal* 33, no. 3 (1993): 2-12, at 5; Melissa Dabakis, *Sisterhood of Sculptors* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2014), 104–107. Musei Capitolini, Palazzo Nuovo, inv. S739.

[3] I draw heavily on the excellent work of Caroline Vout on Antinous's imagery, mythology, and historiography, most especially Vout, *Antinous: the face of the Antique* (exh. cat.) (Leeds: Henry Moore Foundation, 2006); "Antinous, Archaeology and History," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 95 (2005): 80–96; "Hadrian, Hellenism, and the Social History of Art," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 18, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2010): 55–78; *Power and Eroticism in Imperial Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[4] See especially the essays in Jennifer Ingleheart, ed., *Ancient Rome and the Construction of Modern Homosexual Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Kate Fisher and Rebecca Langlands, eds., *Sex, Knowledge, and Receptions of the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[5] Caroline Vout, "Rom(e)-antic Visions: Collecting, Display, and Homosexual Self-Fashioning," in *Ancient Rome and the Construction of Modern Homosexual Identities,* ed. Jennifer Ingleheart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 232-52, at 233.

[6] See for example, but by no means limited to, Stephen Bann, "Versions of Antinous: Symonds between Shelley and Yourcenaar," in *John Addington Symonds: Culture and the Demon Desire,* ed. John Pemble (Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 2000), 136-153;

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[7] Caroline Vout, "Winckelmann and Antinous," *The Cambridge Classical Journal* 52 (2006): 139-162.

[8] Dustin Friedman, *Before Queer Theory: Victorian Aestheticism and the Self* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2019), 27-52.

[9] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Cavafy, Proust, and the Queer Little Gods," in *The Weather in Proust* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 42-68, at 66.

[10] Sarah Waters, "'The Most Famous Fairy in History': Antinous and Homosexual Fantasy," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6, no. 2 (Oct., 1995): 195-230.

[11] Jennifer Ingleheart, Introduction to *Ancient Rome and the Construction of Modern Homosexual Identities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1-38, at 1.

[12] Milroy, "Marble," 4.

[13] Mary Garland, Letter and biographical sketch of Emma Stebbins, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, 2. Letter, 1–2.

[14] Garland, Letter, 2.

[15] Garland, 3-4.

[16] Garland, Letter, 3-4; Mary Stebbins Garland, Scrapbook relating to Emma Stebbins, 1858-1882. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[17] "Harvest for the Week," *Spirit of the Times* February 2, 1861, 621; "A New Statue—The Lotus Eater," *The Circular*, February 7, 1861, 4; "Fine Arts: Miss Stebbins' Statue of the Lotus Eater," *The Albion,* January 12, 1861, 21.

[18] Melissa L. Gustin, "Culture Capitalism: Emma Stebbins's Allegories from the Braccio Nuovo," *Nineteenth Century Magazine* 39, no. 2, (Nov. 2019): 12–18; 'Fine Arts,' 21; Milroy, "Marble," 6.

[19] Garland, Letter, 4; Garland, Scrapbook, np., bust reproduced with caption "Head of the Lotus-Eater, frequently repeated."

[20] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Letters, 1857-1864,* in *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne,* vol. 18 of 23 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), 386.

[21] On Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Capitoline sculptures, see Patricia Pulham, "'Of marble men and maidens': Sin, Sculpture, and Perversion in Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'The Marble Faun,'" in "The Arts in Victorian Literature," special issue, *The Yearbook of English Studies* 40, No. 1/2 (2010): 83–102.

[22] Tennyson, "Lotos-Eaters," 176.

[23] "Fine Arts," 21.

[24] "Art Gossip," *The New York Times,* February 4, 1861, 3.

[25] E.g., 'A great number of the evils which come upon the young at and after the age of puberty, arise from *masturbation*, persisted in, so as to waste the vital energies and enervate the physical and metal powers of man. Not less does it sap the foundation of moral principles, and blast the first budding of manly and honorable feelings which were exhibiting themselves in the opening character of the young.' "Remarks on Masturbation," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 12, no. 6 (Mar. 18, 1835): 95-6.

[26] Homer, trans. Emily Wilson, *The Odyssey* (New York: W. Norton, 2017), 243.

[27] Tennyson, "Lotos-Eaters," 184.

[28] Tennyson, 181.

[29] Tennyson, 176.

[30] Tennyson, 181.

[31] "Miss Stebbins' Statue," 21.

[32] "A New Statue," 4.

[33] "Mr Story's 'Rome,'" *Littell's Living Age*, March 14, 1863, 505; Josephine Pollard, "The Artists' Dream," *The Ladies Repository,* October 1862, 22.

[34] Elizabeth Eastlake, *Life of John Gibson* (London: Longman, Greens & Co, 1868), 55.

[35] Stopford Brooke, *Tennyson: His Art and Relation to Modern Life* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1894), 127.

[36] Musei Capitolini, Inv. Scu 58.

[37] Musei Capitolini, Inv. Scu 639; Christian Wilhelm Beyer, *Cincinnatus*, 1779, Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna.

[38] For fuller explorations of Antinous and Hadrian's lives, see Anthony R. Birley, *Hadrian: The Restless Emperor* (London: Routledge, 1997); Royston Lambert, *Beloved and God: the Story of Hadrian and Antinous* (London: Phoenix Books, 1997); T. Corey Brennan, *Sabina Augusta: An Imperial Journey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[39] Birley, *Hadrian*, 247-9. See also, *The Scriptores Historiae Augustae* 14.5-7; Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus*, trans. H. W. Bird, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994), 16–17.

[40] Cassius Dio, *Dio's Roman History* 69.425–67

[41] Clement of Alexandria, 'Exhortations to the Greeks,' 4.44.

[42] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 1 of 6 (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1776), xii n. 40.

[43] Birley, *Hadrian*, 249.

[44] John Addington Symonds, *Sketches and Studies in Italy* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1879): 47-90; John Addington Symonds, *Many Moods: A Volume of Verse* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1878): 121–34.

[45] Viktor Rydberg, *Roman Days,* trans. Alfred Corning Clark (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1879).

[46] *Historiae Augustae,* trans. Magie, 45.

[47] Pausanius, *Description of Greece,* 10.7-8.

[48] Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists,* trans. C.D. Yonge, vol. 3 of 3 (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854), 1081–2.

[49] Vout, "Antinous, Archaeology and History," 83.

[50] Elizabeth Speller compares this in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain to the flowerings of adulation following the deaths of Prince Albert and Diana, Princess of Wales. See Elizabeth Speller, *Following Hadrian*: *A Second-Century Journey Through the Roman Empire* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 160.

[51] Multiple versions at the Vatican Museums, including Gregorian Egyptian Museum, Cat. 22795, and telemons in porphyry, Museo Pio Clementino Inv. Nº 194; Louvre Museums, inv. N° MA43.

[52] Symonds, *Sketches,* 49.

[53] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Monumenti Antichi Inediti Spiegati ed Illustrati*, vol. 2 of 2 (Rome, 1767, this ed. 1821), 237.

[54] Symonds, *Sketches,* 48.

[55] Anton von Maron, *Johann Joachim Winckelmann,* 1767, Schloss Weimar, G 70.

[56] Winckelmann, *Monumenti,* 236, my translation.

[57] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *The History of Ancient Art,* translated by Giles Henry Lodge, vol. 2 of 2 (Boston: J. R. Osgood and Company,1880), 335.

[58] Antinous Casali or Antinous as Dionysus, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, inv. 1960.

[59] San Ildefonso group, now called Orestes and Pylades or Castor and Pollux, Prado Museum, Madrid, inv. E000038. On the attribution to Hadrian, see Sulamith Ish-Kashor, *Magnificent Hadrian* (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1935), 140.

[60] Euripides, *Bacchae*, trans. David Kovacs, Loeb Classical Library 495 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 12–156.

[61] Karl Kerényi, *Dionysos: Archetypical Image of Indestructible Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, 1996 reprint), 129–188.

[62] Smith, *Dictionary*, 1046-8.

[63] Kerényi, *Dionysos*, 110–4. Karl Kerényi, *Eleusis: Archetypical Image of Mother and Daughter*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), 55; 132-44.

[64] Symonds also points out the possibility of games associated with Antinous at Eleusis, as well as the seat dedicated to him at the Dionysiac theater at Athens, 'Among the chairs above the orchestra assigned to priests of elder deities and more august traditions,' Symonds, *Sketches*, 69.

[65] Tennyson, "Lotos-Eaters," 176.

[66] Kerényi, *Eleusis*, 180.

[67] Kerényi, *Dionysos*, 62–3.

[68] Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, inv. GR100.1937.

[69] Eastlake, *Gibson*, 217-8.

[70] Eastlake, 219.

[71] Giles Henry Lodge, trans. and ed., *The history of ancient art among the Greeks, from the German of Johann Joachim Winckelmann* (London: John Chapman, 1850), 73-4.

[72] Dionysus Liknites was visualised in festival processions with a wooden phallus in a winnowing basket.

[73] Hostile Christian commentators like Clement of Alexandria recount this episode, and therefore some accounts should be taken with a grain of salt, but the phallus was closely associated with Dionysus in ritual and in images. Clement of Alexandria, 'Exhortations to the Greeks,' Ch.4.44; Kerényi, *Dionysos,* 225, 311; Pausanias, *Description of Greece,* 37.6.

[74]Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 11.173-206.

[75] For more on the type of the erotic or sexy youthful male nude, see Elizabeth Bartman, "Eros's Flame: Images of Sexy Boys in Roman Ideal Sculpture," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 1 (2002): 249–271.

[76] Symonds, *Sketches,* 48.

[77] Dreweatts 1759, September 3, 2008, lot 101; Skinner Auctioneers, October 15 2011, lot 1239.

[78] 'Antinous with Bachic Wreath,' Marble-Sculpture.com, 2022, https://www.marble-sculpture.com/products/antinous.

[79] Symonds, *Sketches,* 49.

[80] Winckelmann, *History*, 1:322.

[81] Lodge, *History*, 68-70.

[82] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture,* trans. Elfriede Heyer and Roger C. Norton (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1987), 7.

[83] Musei Capitolini, inv. S 657.

[84] Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

[85] Email correspondence with marble-sculpture.com, October 2018.

[86] Anne Whitney, *The Lotus Eater*, 1868. Newark Museum, New Jersey, inv. 63.75.

[87] Uffizi Gallery, *Pothos*, inv. 261.