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Sex, Sign, Subversion: Symbolist Art and Male Homosexuality in 19th-Century Europe

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Abstract: There is something queer about Symbolism. Art historians have long acknowledged the links between Symbolist aesthetics and contemporaneous ideas about human sexuality, and even a cursory examination of artworks by male Symbolist artists working across the continent reveals an eyebrow-raising number of muscled nudes, lithe ephebes, and intimate male couplings. The sensual male body could register the artist's erotic desire, even as he put it forth as an idealized emblem of transcendental truth. But perhaps Symbolism's queerness extended beyond subject matter. Scholars have argued that Symbolism was in part defined by a subversive approach to visual semiotics: a severing—we might say a queering—of the ties binding a sign to its established cultural meaning. Similarly, male homosexual subcultures were sustained by endowing established signs and pictures with a uniquely queer significance. This paper seeks to tease out the relationship between Symbolist aesthetics and male homosexuality in terms of a shared sensibility towards pictorial interpretation. Taking as a case study the work of the Swedish Symbolist artist Eugène Jansson, I argue that Symbolism held appeal for homosexual artists precisely because queer subcultures were primed to read subversive meaning into normative pictures. Offering a new reading of Symbolism's sexual valences, I contextualize the movement's attendant artworks within the broader cultural landscape of homosexual signs and symbols and articulate the parallels between Symbolist approaches to the image and queer modes of seeing in the late nineteenth century.

Keywords: Symbolism; homosexuality; Eugène Jansson; semiotics; landscape; graffiti; tattoo

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1. Introduction: Symbolism and Homosexuality

Symbolism is a notoriously difficult movement. Scholars have aptly conceptualized it as a fin-de-siècle retreat into abstract dreamworlds and "kingdoms of the soul", as a movement primarily concerned with archetypes and metaphysical ideas, and as a slippery and difficult-to-define series of aesthetic experiments with widely varied subject matter and no unifying aesthetic program.[1] Such daunting conceptions have made Symbolism's scholarly landscape a relatively sparsely occupied territory between the densely occupied environs of nineteenth-century Impressionism and early-twentieth-century expressionistic avant-gardes. Despite the oftentimes difficult-to-interpret subject matter of many Symbolist works, however, scholars of the movement have written admirably about the sexual dynamics underpinning them. Using the Symbolist interest in picturing unconscious sexual desires and the shifting boundaries of turn-of-the-century sexual politics as points of departure, scholars have expertly placed its attendant works within the context of contemporary scientific inquiry and Freudian psychoanalysis, pseudo-scientific degeneration theory, theosophic philosophy, and social activism.[2]

Sustained examinations of Symbolism and homosexuality, an identity category that was central to late-nineteenth-century social and scientific discourses, is more limited.[3] There is much fodder for these analyses, as the Symbolist movement attracted a great many male artists we might credibly categorize as sexually non-normative: Sascha Schneider, Ludwig von Hofmann, Otto Greiner, Hugo Höppener ("Fidus"), Magnus Enckell, Eugène Jansson, Konstantin Somov, Károly Ferenczy, Frederic Leighton, Fred Holland Day, and

Gustave Moreau are but a few of the artists that comprise Symbolism's same-sex-desiring cohort. "Queerness", used adjectivally in this essay to denote a quality or affect of artwork produced by homosexual male artists that undermined imposed relational norms, manifested in the work of these artists in different ways; most tended to rely on the nude or semi-nude body to convey their sexual subjectivities.[4] The androgynous, ephebic nude, a mainstay emblem of same-sex desire, frequently appears in Symbolist works, as does the strongman athlete. Mythological figures, from Prometheus to Narcissus, also often signaled homoerotic desire or identity. Rarely individuated and typically located within classicizing or Arcadian settings, these figures formed the foundations for queer Symbolist interventions within the broader movement.

This essay does not intend to contribute to debates about whether particular Symbolist artists were or were not homosexual; indeed, my premise requires that we concede the non-normative sexuality of many of Symbolism's representatives as a matter of course. My intention is rather to offer an alternative to our understanding of where the queerness of the movement lies. The majority of scholarship addressing the queer undertones of Symbolist artworks has offered interpretations that rely on iconography; a particularly pervasive view holds that iconography of the ephebic, athletic, or classicized male body served as a means of satisfying an erotic sensibility without blatantly offending public taste.[5] By aligning the subject of their work with contemporary discourses that *might* signal homosexuality but could very well signal a normative "something else", these arguments hold, artists could successfully toe the line without crossing it. Though scholarship has been happy to accept this generally accurate idea that the queer valence of Symbolist art came from its ability to cloak homoerotic desire or homosexual subjectivity with a passably normative iconographic vocabulary, this interpretation does not adequately explicate why Symbolism attracted homosexual artists and leaves a number of questions unanswered about the works that these artists produced under its aegis.

This essay holds the "queerness" of Symbolism has roots that go much deeper than the idiosyncratic iconographies of works produced by individual homosexual artists. Rather than examine the iconography of Symbolist art as a response to contemporary (pseudo-) scientific or theosophical discourses or shifts in the social arena (e.g., greater visibility for sexual minorities and concerted sexual reform movements across the continent), this essay seeks to examine how we might conceive of Symbolism's queerness as the result of a shared sensibility towards seeing and interpreting visual cues. Stated differently, my interest is not in how Symbolist art reflected the social, political, or cultural status of homosexual men, which is ground well trodden. Rather, my interest is in *why* Symbolist pictorial strategies appealed to homosexual artists and how these same strategies facilitated subcultural identity and community formation.

My investigation lends itself well to a social semiotic approach. Iconography aside, I contend, Symbolism appealed to homosexual men precisely because the modes of making, sharing, and interpretation inherent to the movement's manifest aims were modes of making, sharing, and interpretation that *also* sustained Europe's homosexual communities in the nineteenth century. The first premise of this paper, then, is to assert that Symbolism, as an aesthetic ideology, is inherently and fundamentally queer. As the following section will articulate, Symbolist semiotic maneuvers pivoted on estranging a given symbol from its ostensive significance and re-encoding it with personal significance. I conceive of this estrangement as a kind of queering of normative pictorial value, a shoring up of the slippages and double meanings that define modern queer semiotics.

Following on from this premise, I argue Symbolist art produced by homosexual men did more than gesture towards the unknowable, ungraspable, and universal; the production of Symbolist works actually served specific, concrete, and practical functions for queer artists and viewers. Works produced within the aesthetic program offered by Symbolism required little "queering" on the part of the homosexual artist, precisely because the movement pivoted on modes of looking and interpretation that were already indigenous to homosexual subcultures. As such, these Symbolist artists were able to operate within the

movement's bounds to signal their non-normative subjectivities to a community of kindred queer viewers.

2. Queer Symbolist Semiotics

As members of a movement with roots in literary innovation, Symbolists were no strangers to problems of semiotics and meaning. Indeed, from the movement's very foundation, Symbolists were centrally concerned with reconsidering semiotics and how to make meaning in art and literature. Writing in the 1886 Symbolist Manifesto, Jean Moréas proclaimed that integral to the Symbolist agenda was the notion that "art can only find in the objective a simple, and extremely limited, point of departure (Harrison et al. 1998)". For Moréas and those in his camp, "the objective"—that is, that which is given—should serve only as a starting point from which new meaning may be made. The manifesto is full of calls to endow the mundane with personal meaning, inciting linguistic innovators to make empty "pleonasms" significant and deploy "anacoluthons" to subvert straightforward meanings and expectations.

It is no coincidence that Ferdinand de Saussure's theory that "the relationship between a word and its meaning was not inherent and organic but constructed and contingent" circulated concurrently with early Symbolist artistic experimentation. Michelle Facos and Thor Mednick have articulated the radical revision to visual semiotics staged by the Symbolists, who rejected the nineteenth-century reliance on semiotic unity (Morehead and Otto 2015). Symbolist artists actively and self-consciously drew upon early semiotic theories and developments in experimental psychology in order to *themselves* contribute to an exploratory body of thought that revised extant notions of pictorial signification, in turn becoming "among the first cultural producers to recognize the freedom of both expression and representation that a semiotic model made possible for art".[6] Central to Symbolist thought was the notion that not only should artists sever the connective tissue binding signifier and signified, but that no real, true meaning could exist as such in a representational semiotic relationship. For the Symbolists, art and literature existed to move beyond restrictive semiotic relationships and free meaning from the shackles of its sign: the icon or emblem painted upon the artist's canvas was merely the starting point from which subjective, symbolic meaning could be made.

This semiotic approach accords exceptionally well with definitions of queerness theorized by scholars such as Carolyn Dinshaw, Mel Chen, Sara Ahmed, and others. Dinshaw, for instance, has argued for an understanding of queerness as that which "works by contiguity and displacement, knocking signifiers loose, ungrounding bodies, making them strange. . .provok[ing] perceptual shifts and subsequent corporeal response in those touched (Dinshaw 1995)". In light of such a definition, it is difficult to deny the queerness inherent to Symbolist approaches to the image; "displacing", "making strange", and "knocking signifiers loose" were all actions assiduously undertaken by these artists in their pursuit of a modern, symbolic art. In a broad and general sense, "queerness" was a state toward which most Symbolists strived.

Though this essay will primarily focus on the ways in which Symbolist art was *hermeneutically* queer, it is critical to note that many contemporary artists and writers also saw the movement and its aims as *ontologically* queer and conceptually linked their aesthetic programs with emergent literature on the nature of homosexual subjectivity. These Symbolists consciously pursued methods and formal strategies that privileged pathology, perversity, and randomness in attempts to mirror nature's own often illogical production of subjects like homosexuals, who diverged from social and biological norms. The work of the Swedish artist and playwright August Strindberg provides one exemplary case study; his conception of his own artistic practice seems to implicitly gesture towards certain affinities between the origins of his Symbolist creativity and the origins of homosexuality. Keenly aware of contemporary psychological and sexological research on homosexuality, Strindberg's private writings and fiction theorize instances of male same-sex desire as freak natural occurrences and "outbursts of nature's vengeance (Roy 2002)". As Allison More-

head notes in her analysis of his artistic production, Strindberg and other Symbolist artists consciously sought to harness nature's strange propensity for pathology in their production of symbolic images. Even heterosexual Symbolists, for whom non-normative sexuality represented a natural perversion, saw in homosexual subjectivity a valuable opportunity to stage a "reappraisal of the pathological as useful" and appropriated queerness as an operative term in their practices.[7]

Approaching Symbolism from the vantage point of queer theory helps to explicate the radicality of the movement's break with traditional modes of pictorial representation. Indeed, this new approach to artmaking was quite unlike the approaches to artmaking that preceded it over the course of the nineteenth century. Certainly, mid-century Realism trafficked in the ostensive relationship between signifier and signified (except when it intentionally did not, as in the case of Rosa Bonheur's queer-coded, realist animals).[8] Impressionistic meaning stemmed, in large part, from subjective interpretations of a given signifier—a landscape, a street scene, a bather—but artists typically kept the significance of the sign intact: a landscape was still a landscape, a street scene still a street scene, a bather still a bather.[9] Symbolists, by contrast, ruptured prevalent semiotic models; in their hands, the sign became unmoored and capacious, functioning not dissimilarly to the "open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning" that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick believed queerness engenders (Sedgwick 1993).

To remove the yoke of "signifying *as*" from the sign, a hallmark of Symbolist aesthetic theory, was to free it from the work of making easy meaning. Take, as one example, the Belgian Symbolist Léon Spilliaert's *Dike at Night. Reflected lights* (1908), one of many potently melancholic landscapes based on the nighttime rambles Spilliaert took throughout the city of Ostend when the pain of protracted illness prevented him from sleeping (Figure 1). In Spilliaert's Symbolist works, his home city's streets are no longer *simply* city streets, its beaches and dikes no longer *merely* beaches and dikes. Queering the semiotic relationship between sign and significance, Spilliaert has endowed the signs with a new emotional meaning—one that speaks to the lived experience of physical illness and chronic insomnia—that pushes above and beyond the subject matter's surface significance.[10]



Figure 1. Léon Spilliaert, *Dike at Night. Reflected lights*, 1908. Indian ink wash, pen and colored pencil on paper, 48 × 39.4 cm. © 2024 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SABAM, Brussels. Photo: Patrice Schmidt, RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY. The artwork is excluded from the Creative Commons CC BY 4.0 license.

The primary point that I wish to impress is that Symbolism was, at its heart, a movement that was centrally preoccupied with a foundational semiotic problem: how do we make non-representational meaning from a given sign? More importantly, once we have endowed that sign with a new meaning, how do we communicate that meaning to others? Beyond an interest in the meaning of signs and pictures, late-nineteenth-century aesthetic theorists were centrally concerned with the capability of art to communicate *emotional* meaning. It is unsurprising that the advent of Symbolism coincided with a growing aesthetic and psycho-physical interest in empathy theory throughout Europe, a vogue initiated by Robert Vischer's 1873 theorization of *Einfühlung* [empathy, literally "feeling-in"] as the means by which the viewer of an artwork comes to understand it not by rationally gleaning objective meaning from its iconography but rather by projecting their own subjectivities into its depicted forms (Mallgrave and Ikonomou 1994). Robert Vischer's father, the scholar Friedrich Theodor Vischer, extended this theorization into the realm of symbols, postulating a tripartite scale by which humans endow objects and pictures with symbolic meaning. Symbolism, as a movement, inhabited the intermediary realm of Vischer's scale: artists imbued their icons with symbolic meaning so as to allow the viewer to be drawn in by the "sensuous power" of the image, to recognize their own subjectivity mirrored in the work and empathetically "[slip] into its forms as into a frock (Vischer 2015)".

Symbolist artists sought to communicate subjectivity to the empathetic viewer, who used the symbol as a jumping-off point from which to read their *own* subjectivity into the symbolic representation of *the artist's* subjectivity. In this sense, Symbolism pivoted on an artist's success at creating sites for empathetic investment on the part of the beholder. Indeed, the movement was bound up with contemporaneous theories that anticipated Kris and Gombrich's "beholder's share".[11] Severing the normative relationship between sign and meaning, Symbolist artists hedged their bets on a community of empathetic and emotionally attuned viewers who could "complete" the work of art by reading into the newly endowed meaning of the artist's chosen symbol. Dario Gamboni has articulated the centrality of *Einfühlung* to this mode of picture production and interpretation, citing experimentation with contemporary empathy theories as key to reading an array of "potential images", including those produced by Symbolist artists, that appealed to the subjectivity of a viewer who subsequently "completed" an artwork's features (Gamboni 2002, 2021).

Further building upon the theories of his German colleagues in his 1900 landmark volume *The Origins of Art*, Yrjö Hirn—an aesthetic theorist and close friend of Finnish Symbolist Magnus Enckell—suggested that a primary function of artistic production *must* be to convey information and adequately transmit the artist's idea to a broader audience of viewers. To fulfill their social imperative, artworks could not simply make meaning for their makers; they needed to make meaning for those around them. Citing Vischer's research on empathy theory to support his own budding articulation of art's primary functions, Hirn suggests that the expressionistic impulse yearns for sympathetic community. The work of art presents itself as "the most effective means by which the individual is enabled to convey to wider and wider circles of sympathizers an emotional state similar to that by which he himself is dominated (Hirn 1900)". This empathetic approach to symbolic artmaking well served a cohort of artists searching for a way to render forms that were highly personal while also contributing to a "universal visual language that. . .would turn away from the appearance of things to signify the essence of things" and, in so doing, transcend individualistic interpretations (Morehead and Otto 2015).

Paradoxically, however, attempts at universalization belied the fact that Symbolist art was often encoded so as to be legible only to a select few. The ability to empathize—to "complete" the Symbolist picture—was not a given, but was rather conditional on the observer's capability to draw on specialized knowledge or subcultural sensibilities. In this sense, Symbolists utilized a formal strategy that Jennifer Doyle and David Getsy have recently identified as a "queer tactic": Symbolist images were activated through a coded process of "reading into" and "prompt[ed viewers] to see a material object in a different way (Doyle and Getsy 2013)". For Getsy, this manipulation of form—its deployment to

ends contrary to or beyond the ends to which the form is typically put—"carve[s] out semantic space for differently identified individuals to adopt those artworks". The "search" for form that Allison Morehead has identified at the heart of Symbolist praxis resulted in images that required the viewer to read against iconography itself, to look behind and to the side of a given image's representational significance in order to empathically glean its subversive queer meaning.[12]

The German critic Julius Meier-Graefe's oft-cited polemic against the Swiss artist Arnold Böcklin provides an illustrative example of a critic for whom the inability to empathize with the artist's intent—to "read into" the revised significance of the artist's sign—provided a roadblock to interpretation. Writing in his 1905 essay "The Böcklin Case", the critic decried the confusion that could stem from the Symbolist tendency to endow "objective" subject matter with wildly subjective meaning. Referencing one of Böcklin's depictions of a centaur, Meier-Grafe concluded that "the question as to the objective existence of a thing that we notice in the picture points from the outset to a *false conclusion*, for which either the questioner or the artist is to blame (Meier-Graefe 1905)".[13]

The "blame" to which the critic refers stemmed from the inability of the viewer to derive stable meaning from the work. The fault for such an interpretive roadblock must lie with either Böcklin, who orphaned the symbol and left its interpretation open-ended, or the viewer, who fails to grasp the idea the artist wished to convey. The "objective" reality of Böcklin's mythological subject is not the sticking point for Meier-Graefe; rather, he is troubled by the subject's indecipherability—the suspicion that the centaur is not, in the end, a centaur, but a symbol with an unknown meaning to which he does not have access. "It is not whether the centaur is possible that is in question", Meier Graefe writes, "but whether the picture that bears it is *alive*". In the end, this inability to psychologically empathize with Böcklin's work caused the picture to languish and burn out before his eyes. By estranging the sign of the centaur from its ostensive significance—in other words, by *queering* the sign and transforming it into a personal symbol—Böcklin has thwarted the potential for straightforward, universalized interpretation.

The reception problem inherent to the interpretation of Symbolist art is one that the movement's artists could scarcely avoid. If a primary goal of art was to share the maker's intent with a wider audience—to impart a semblance of their subjective emotional or perceptual experience to others using symbols that read one way but meant another—the success of such a venture necessarily depended on the ability of others to decipher and read into an image what an artist sought to convey in implicit terms. To comprehend the "true meaning" of Spilliaert's desolate Ostend beach or Böcklin's centaur required the viewer to read the work empathetically rather than formally, to understand the picture as an emblem of an experience or subjective emotional state with which they might be able to identify. The issue was not confined to a singular artist or a small faction but was relatively commonplace amongst artists working in the Symbolist vein. The Belgian artist James Ensor, no stranger to the critic's poison pen, humorously visualized the relationship between the Symbolist and an uncomprehending public in *Christ before his Judges* (printed 1921), a work in which Ensor himself takes on the role of a savior beleaguered by Belgian art critics (Figure 2).

As a movement predicated on a viewer's ability to divine the maker's intent from a displaced and ungrounded sign, Symbolist art thrived where intersubjective ties connected maker and viewer: for an artwork to function optimally as a visualization of a subjectivity produced by the artist and received by the beholder, said beholder must be able to locate their own subjectivity in the artist's chosen sign. Approaching Symbolist art as an art form that pivoted on community helps to explicate Meier-Graefe's critique of Böcklin, his inability to crack the artist's symbolic code and gain entry into the world Böcklin depicted for the privileged viewer. But such an approach also opens new avenues for investigation. In what remains, I hope to demonstrate the ways in which Symbolist semiotics were harnessed by artists within subcultural communities, who drew on the same principles to produce symbolic images that sustained a sense of communal identity.

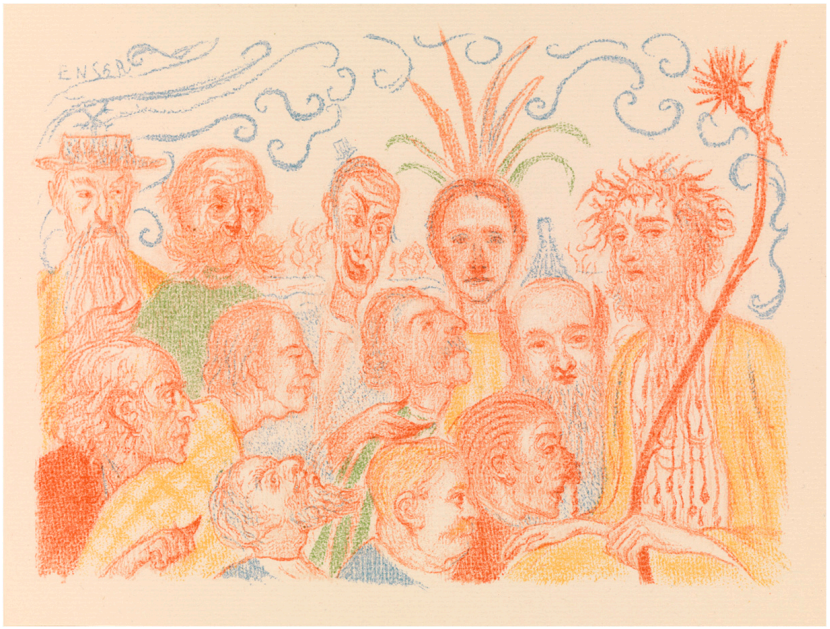


Figure 2. James Ensor, "Christ before his Judges" from *Scenes from the Life of Christ*, 1921. Lithograph. Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen. CC0.

3. Signs, Symbols, and Homosexual Subcultures

My premise thus far has been that Symbolist art, in semiotically severing signifier and signified, pivoted on the existence of communities primed to empathetically perceive the artist's intent. In its approach to picture production and interpretation, we might say that Symbolism was, broadly and fundamentally, a queer movement. I would like to further suggest, however, that the movement held particular appeal for homosexual men because it approached pictures and signs in much the same way that they themselves approached them in their lived realities. That is to say, the production of Symbolist art—the relationship it constructed between artist and viewer in order to successfully convey its coded message—closely paralleled modes of image-making and interpretation developed by homosexual men to signal and sustain community under the threat of surveillance and prosecution.

Queer subcultures have long depended upon symbols for their survival. Harold Beaver, writing in his 1981 essay "Homosexual Signs (In Memory of Roland Barthes)", powerfully articulated the contours of a homosexual semiotic system by which homosexual men view and interpret signs in ways that nourish personal subjectivity and create points of connection between them. In a section that bears quoting at length, Beaver argued that:

> The homosexual is beset by signs. . .he is a prodigious consumer of signs—of hidden meanings, hidden systems, hidden potentiality. Exclusion from the common code propels the frenzied quest: in the momentary glimpse, the scrambled figure, the sporadic gesture, the chance encounter, the reverse image, the sudden slippage, the lowered guard. In a flash, meanings may be disclosed. . .Every sign becomes the cause for elaborately inconclusive fantasizing (Beaver 1981).

Alienated from the world of normative signs by a public quick to detect and persecute his subjectivity, the homosexual was compelled to find coded and symbolic meaning in signs that had been revised and incorporated into a subcultural lexicon. Much like the Symbolist, the homosexual both encoded these signs as symbols of his subjectivity *and* developed strategies to interpret the symbolic signs of others as deeply personal and meaningful.

The use of pictorial symbols as communication devices used by marginalized subsets of European society was a topic of great interest to late-nineteenth-century scientists and researchers, who provide useful material for contextualizing Symbolist art within

this practice. Representative of the turn-of-the-century preoccupation with subcultural symbols is the work of the Austrian criminal anthropologist Hans Gross. In his 1899 essay "Die Gaunerzinken der Freistädter Handschrift" ("The 'Crook Signs' of Freistadt Handwriting"), Gross creates a visual lexicon of secret symbols known to be used by various undesirable subsections of the German and Austrian populaces for the purpose of undetected communication (Gross 1899). Gross's essay was based upon the collection of an Austrian investigator named Kajetan Karmayer who collected these hand-drawn symbols in the early nineteenth century from the walls of houses, alleys, and public toilets. Though Gross's topic is not homosexual men specifically, the method with which he approaches criminal symbols closely approximates the methods used to document and collate symbols used by homosexual and same-sex-desiring men. Undaunted by the sheer number and variety of the symbols under consideration, Gross organized them by semiotic meaning, enumerating each symbol so that readers could locate its descriptive entry in the accompanying index (Figure 3).

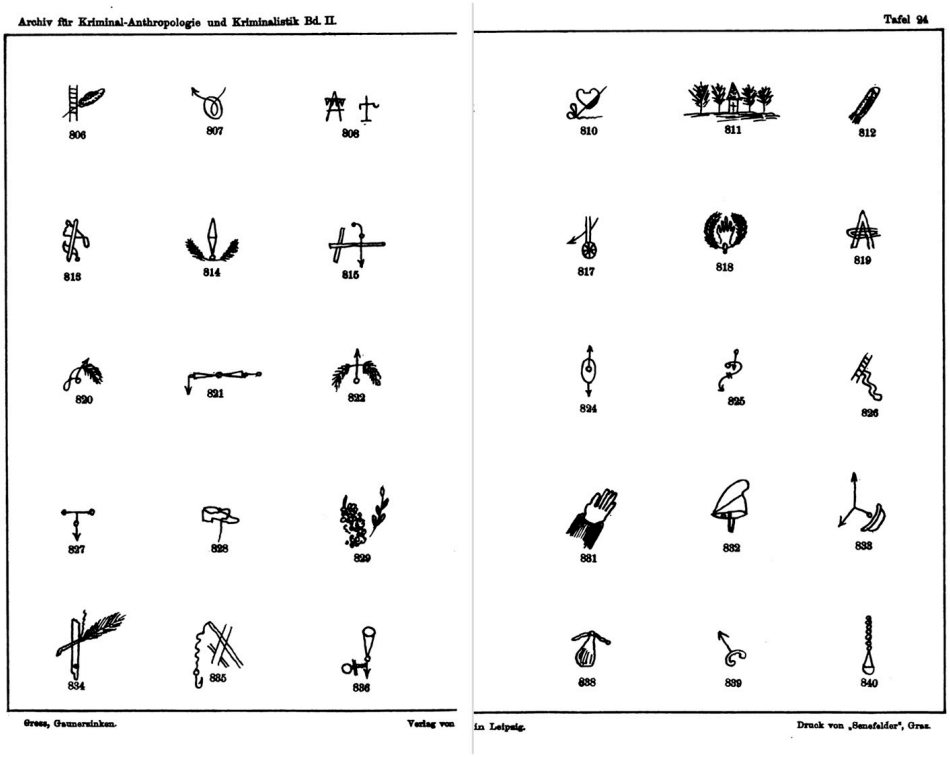


Figure 3. Hans Gross, Table 24, "Die Gaunerzinken der Freistädter Handschrift", Reprint from *Archiv für Kriminal-Anthropologie*, v. 2 (1899). Public domain.

Such efforts closely mirror similar projects undertaken by amateur symbologists such as the Swedish researcher Bengt Claudelin, whose extraordinary line drawings of sexual graffiti taken from bathrooms across Sweden comprised a lexicon of vernacular homoerotic symbols (Figure 4).[14] Claudelin, who was an employee of the Hallwyl Museum in Stockholm, began his project around 1905 in hopes of thoroughly documenting a phenomenon that was commonplace throughout the nineteenth century and persisted into the twentieth: the doodling of erotic symbols and icons on the walls of public toilets and urinals by men seeking sex with other men.[15] Sometimes these icons were paired with explicit requests for sex or personal details; often, they were standalone symbols that spoke for themselves. While many of the pictures recorded by Claudelin are easily recognizable as genital sex acts, other graffiti verged on abstraction, providing those who encountered them the opportunity to puzzle out their meaning and add their own symbols to the wall's iconographic program. Claudelin clearly understood his project as a kind of sociological study of the sex lives of

Stockholm's homosexual men. As in most of Europe, homosexual acts were forbidden in Sweden under threat of criminal prosecution; for working- and lower-class men interested in communicating their sexual desires to a receptive homosexual public while avoiding police intervention, erotic symbols were exceptionally useful.

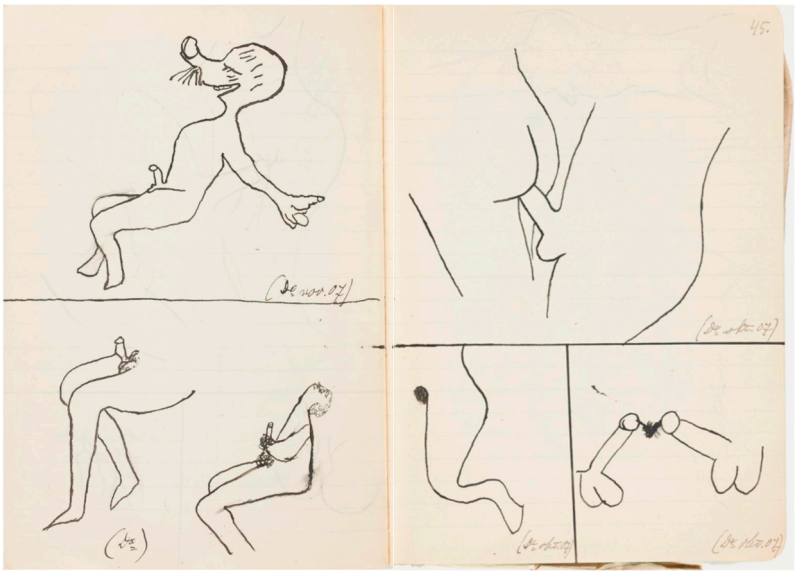


Figure 4. Bengt Claudelin, obscene homosexual graffiti from Swedish toilets, c. 1910–30. From the *Klotterböckerna*, Vol. 1, pp. 44–45 (Hallwylska museet, Stockholm). Public domain.

That this kind of project was also pursued by researchers across the continent is suggested by a cartoon that graced the cover of the popular French periodical *L'Assiette au beurre* in July 1909. The cartoon depicts an older gentleman in a top hat and coattails precariously perched on the toilet of a filthy public lavatory, magnifying glass in hand as he examines the graffiti on the walls (Figure 5). A caricature of the French criminologist Alphonse Bertillon, the cartoon pokes fun at the methods used by social scientists attempting to deduce the meaning of coded pictorial symbols used for communication in subcultural communities. These sorts of ethnographic projects, including that by Gross, were often used as evidence of creative degeneracy; as the architect and theorist Adolf Loos wrote, "one can measure the cultural development of a country by the amount of graffiti on the bathroom walls (Loos 1931)". But they were also understood to be key to understanding how homosexual subcultural networks communicated messages to which the average researcher did not have access.

Tattoos functioned as another mode of symbolic signaling that sustained homosexual community networks. As with the aforementioned graffiti, much of the extant evidence that speaks to nineteenth-century homosexual tattoo cultures comes from ethnological or sexological publications, such as Albert Moll's 1912 *Handbuch der Sexualwissenschaften* (*Handbook of Sexual Science*) (Figure 6) (Moll 1912). German researcher E. Kleemann wrote extensively about tattoos as part of specific underground languages. No matter their subject matter or the feelings they were meant to invoke in the viewer, Kleemann noted, tattoos were primarily communicative: not only were they part of an intentionally exclusionary language, but they also provided a sense of community and belonging to those who bore them (Kleemann 1908). Kleemann undoubtedly had homosexuals in mind in this essay; he later uses the development of homosexual slang to demonstrate that pictorial languages, like verbal languages, can also change, and are subject to the inner workings of those who use them. Kleemann's essay is notable because it spelled out that which the research of so many of his contemporaries had taken for granted, namely that tattoos functioned as communicative signals meant to be recognized and deciphered only by those in the know.



Figure 5. Cesare Annibale Musacchio, Caricature of Doctor Alphonse Bertillon from *L'Assiette au Beurre,* July 1909. Color lithograph. Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

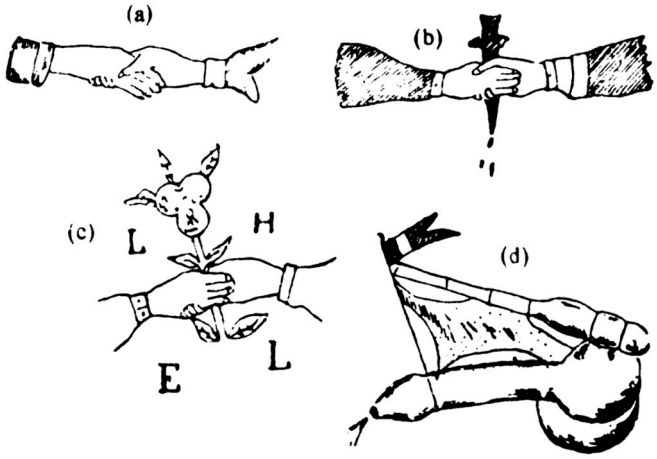


Figure 6. Unknown illustrator, "Erotic symbols (**a**–**c**) and obscene tattoos (**d**) from the buttocks of pederasts", 1912. Printed in Albert Moll, *Handbuch für Sexualwissenschaften* (1912), 687. Public domain.

As homosexual symbols like graffiti and tattoos were intended to function as unspoken pictorial codes, virtually no written archival evidence exists that details how homosexual men tacitly agreed on which patterns or symbols should comprise a queer iconographic lexicon. As such, we are left with the task of critically piecing together how such symbols *might* have functioned on the ground based on the reports of those who made it their task to define and surveille the homosexual body or on rare anonymous accounts that refer to such visual codes. In his 1897 firsthand account of homosexual life in German-speaking Europe, *Die Enterbten des Liebesglückes* (*Those Dispossessed of Love's Bliss*), the Austrian writer Otto Rudolf Podjukl (writing under the pseudonym Otto de Joux) wrote about the highly developed capacity for homosexual men to "instinctively recognize each other at first sight while average people overlook us, as if struck by blindness, so that we remain completely hidden from them (Joux 1897)". There was surely no comprehensive codebook that these men could use to ascertain the meanings of such symbols; it is more likely that homosexual men learned to recognize and interpret particular patterns over time. Like a Symbolist sign, a tattoo glimpsed while cruising Hamburg's docklands, Stockholm's Kungsträdgården, or St. Petersburg's Nevsky Prospect offered the homosexual viewer a pictorial starting point from which to intuit non-representational, highly personal meaning.

I do not wish to suggest that homosexual male Symbolists used the *same* symbols that homosexual men used in everyday life, but rather that the Symbolist process of assigning pictorial icons subversive, symbolic meanings not legible to a normative viewership was also integral to the sustenance of homosexual European subcultures. In the homosexual visual lexicon, the motif of a pair of clasped hands or a six-pointed star might be reinterpreted to signal homosexual identity or sexual availability to receptive viewers, the sign divorced from its normative meaning and re-encoded to serve the purposes of intersubjective homosexual communication.[16] Participants in these subcultures, I argue, were thus optimally primed to find Symbolist pictorial approaches useful, as they were the same approaches these men took in their everyday lives: homosexuals had come to understand the power of assigning subjective meanings to normative pictures long before Moréas published a Symbolist manifesto or the movement gained traction internationally.

4. Eugène Jansson and the Queer Symbolist Cityscape

The history of Symbolist art in Europe is replete with examples of pictorial revisions that placed (hetero)normative symbolic subjects in the service of queer worldmaking, communicating personal subjectivities to homosexual male viewers prepared to recognize them on the canvas. The Swedish artist Eugène Jansson, a homosexual artist perhaps best remembered for his late-career, non-Symbolist works depicting athletes, gymnasts, and military bathhouses, provides a useful case study. The artist produced most of the works we would today classify as Symbolist in the 1890s, during which he came to be known as the "blue painter"; throughout the decade, he painted a number of landscapes, cityscapes, and self-portraits defined by their extensive and striking use of a blue palette. The majority of these works depict desolate streets remembered from Jansson's long nighttime walks around his home city of Stockholm. Like Léon Spilliaert, Jansson spent his nights on foot—one way of dealing with recurring bouts of depression. The cityscapes depicted in the artist's "blue" works are rarely populated, but specifically titled: Jansson identifies his subjects as well-known streets, beaches, islands, and alleys throughout Stockholm.

One such work is Jansson's 1899 *On Skeppsholmen*, a blue-hued canvas that depicts the artist's nighttime ramble around the island of Skeppsholmen (Figure 7). The island's location in the Saltsjön, a bay of the Baltic Sea, made it a natural defense checkpoint for those entering the city from the Baltic east. As such, the island was home to a naval base throughout the nineteenth century and was the site of the Swedish Admiralty House, the Old Naval Academy, and naval lodgings and training facilities. The island was close to the city center but inaccessible to the public until the mid-19th century, when it was opened to visitors from the city keen to escape into the island's parks.

Jansson was one of these visitors. Beyond providing relief from the congestion of the city center, Skeppsholmen also had an added perk for Jansson, who took an interest in observing the naval cadets and soldiers who lived and trained on the island. As Patrik Stoern notes, Skeppsholmen served not only as a source of creative inspiration but also as an erotic meeting place (Steorn 2021). By the end of the nineteenth century, military men had been thoroughly incorporated into homosexual subcultures in cities across Europe. Stockholm was no exception. In addition to the soldiers who sought out civilians to satisfy their own sexual urges, a significant number of Stockholm's soldiers earned incomes as male sex workers, catering to the sexual fantasies of Swedes attracted to soldiers and military men (Parikas 1999). Following Skeppsholmen's opening to the general public, the island undoubtedly served as a site for sexual encounters between these men, offering both the convenience of close proximity to naval barracks and a wooded landscape at a remove from the surveillance of inner-city police.

To queer eyes, Jansson's *On Skeppsholmen* is a canvas thoroughly imbued with the anticipation of the erotic encounter. The viewer is afforded a momentary glimpse of the island's naval barracks from a clearing nearby. The warm glow of lights in the distance contrasts with the darkened blue and black landscape that engulfs the barracks house. Only a light in the extreme foreground (Jansson's own lantern, perhaps?) signals human

presence. Tucked away between concealing trees, Jansson is afforded the privacy necessary for an erotic liaison. The expressionistic brushstrokes that the artist uses to depict the middle ground dart and pulsate: quickly dashed blues, blacks, and browns affect a sense of energy and potentiality. The rays of light coming from the barracks do not function as "symbols of obscure human destinies" for the homosexual viewer but rather as intimations of the men who occupy them.[17] Standing on the outside looking in, Jansson invites his viewer to join him on the cruising ground, waiting expectantly for a figure to emerge from the shadows.



Figure 7. Eugène Jansson, *På Skeppsholmen*, 1899. Oil on canvas, 148 × 135 cm. Stockholm, Stadsmuseet i Stockholm. CC-BY.

Of course, such a message would likely not be legible to a viewer unaccustomed to visiting the site with the goal of meeting men for the purposes of sex or non-sexual intimate encounters. Like a graffito or tattoo, Jansson's symbolic landscape appealed to the perceptive faculties and subcultural knowledge of homosexual men, not the normative public. Herein lay the utility of a symbolist-oriented pictorial program for a homosexual artist like Jansson: that which reads as a representation of Skeppsholmen in the artist's by-then characteristic blue-hued style might well be read by homosexual men as a manifestation of erotic desire, symbolically expressed in a depiction of the Skeppsholmen landscape by night. In true Symbolist fashion, the representation is but a point of entry by which Jansson's personal, interior world is made accessible to an empathetic, subcultural viewing public who recognizes this world as their own.

In addition to Jansson's depiction of Skeppsholmen, the artist produced a number of other landscapes and cityscapes that depict Stockholm's cruising locales and meetup sites by night, including his 1896 *Söder Mälarstrand*, which depicts a popular waterfront promenade in Stockholm's Södermalm district (Figure 8). A so-called "Toalettkarta" (toilet map) from 1928, altered by an unknown, inside source, helpfully alerts us to the fact that the Söder Mälarstrand was the site of several public urinals known to serve as meet-up locations for homosexual men (Figure 9). Jansson has evacuated his composition of actors, dotting the promenade instead with pinpricks of light that recede into the distance.

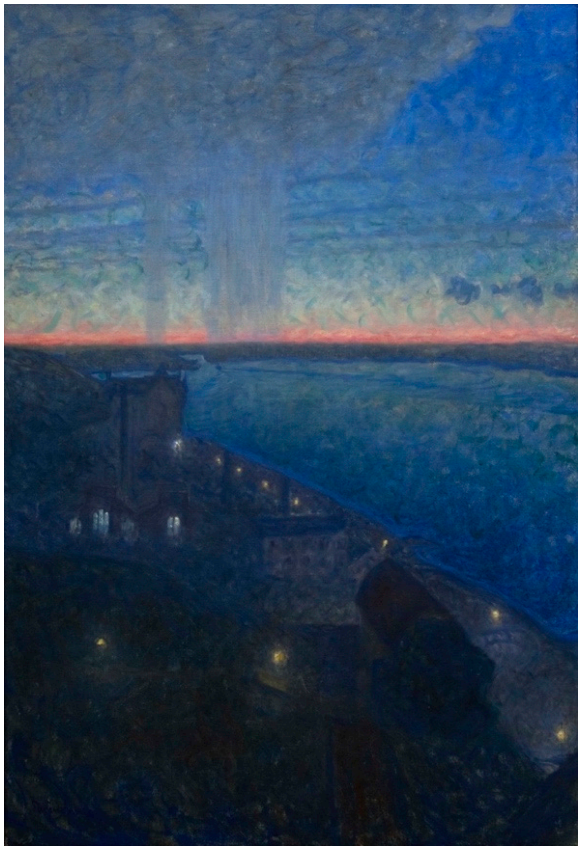


Figure 8. Eugène Jansson, *Söder Mälarstrand*, 1896. Oil on canvas, 159 × 109 cm. Stockholm, Thielska Galleriet. Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

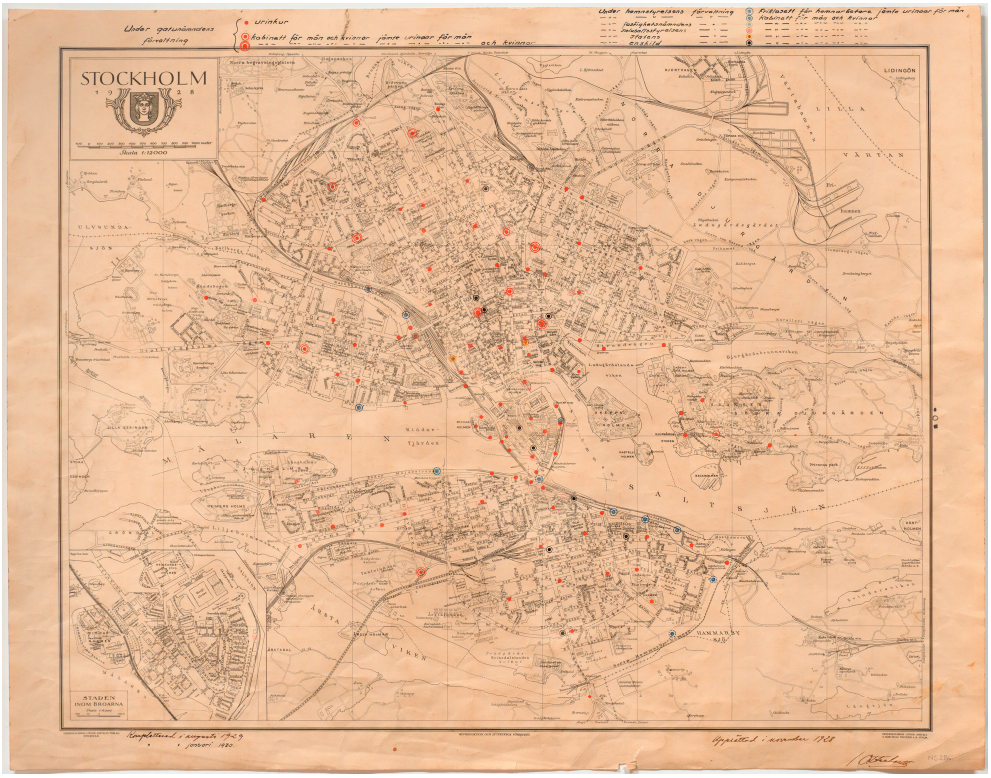


Figure 9. Unknown cartographer, Map of public urinals and toilets in Stockholm, 1928. Stockholm, Stadsarkivet. CC-BY.

As in the depiction of Skeppsholmen, Jansson has revised the setting in his imagination: though for the casual viewer the painting is an ambient depiction of a public promenade, for Jansson, the cityscape transforms into an emblem of a subjectivity at once personal and collective. The Mälarstrand becomes both a symbol of Jansson's subjective queer personhood *and* a more general symbol of the city's homosexual topography. The sign (the cityscape) is detached from its surface significance *as* a cityscape, its meaning rewritten for a specialized audience capable of gleaning its symbolic meaning. Signe Thiel, wife of Jansson's patron and collector Ernest Thiel, seemed to pick up on this semiotic subversion when she noted that Jansson's cityscapes contained indecipherable "personal hints of bitter secrets and agonizing anxiety", a clear reference to the queer sensibility Jansson has secreted into the subject matter (Brummer 1999).

Jansson's strategy of encoding physical, urban landscapes to signify as emblems of homosexual subjectivity contrasts with the approaches of other homosexual Symbolists who instead sought to stage their semiotic revisions within a *psychic* landscape. The German artist Sascha Schneider is a prime example of an artist who located his compositions in the dark and otherworldly environs of the homosexual psyche. Works like *The Feeling of Dependency* (1894) and *Awakened Recognition* (1904) ostensibly appealed to universal emotions and psychological states while in reality evoking experiences unique to homosexual life in turn-of-the-century Europe: homosexual viewers of works like these could empathically read into them the experiences of social stigmatization, blackmail, and coming to terms of one's non-normative sexual subjectivity.[18] Even without the muscled nude men that populate Schneider's compositions, which undoubtedly drive the point home, these are works that encode feeling within the highly specific topography of the homosexual mind. Jansson's cityscapes take a different, more direct approach in pursuit of the same end: rather than show kindred viewers images drawn from the artist's own psychic landscape, Jansson presented the viewer with images of the very landscapes within which they moved and existed. Works created in this pictorial mode provide a supplement to works like those by Schneider, demonstrating that subject matter drawn from both the artist's inner world *and* "real world" spaces were rife for queer Symbolist revision.

After 1904, purportedly tired of the painting the cityscapes that had helped make his name, Jansson explored his homoerotic interest in young men quite openly. Works like his 1907 *Naval Bathhouse* and 1910 *Self-Portrait,* which pictures the artist in a white suit, yellow tie, sun hat, and sandals against a backdrop of nude Skeppsholmen navy men, make clear that his ventures to the island were both artistic and erotic (Figure 10). Jansson took a number of photographs of the nude sailors he encountered at the naval bathhouse (at least one of which includes himself in the same attire he wears in his self-portrait), which he likely used as visual aids in the production of the works set on the island. Scholars have traditionally read these works as eroticism masquerading as Vitalism, an ideology centered on physical health and beauty. The popularity of turn-of-the-century health movements has informed scholarly readings of works by many other homosexual Symbolists (including Schneider), whose muscular, athletic nudes could embody both personal desire and "life reform" imperatives and tenets.[19]

But Jansson's transition from "blue period" symbolic cityscapes to homoerotically charged nude figures was surely not so sudden, the shift in subject matter not so drastic as it may at first appear. The sensual exploration of the nude body that characterizes Jansson's post-1904 oeuvre did not suddenly arise all at once but was rather a longer and more sustained exploration that is in fact legible in his fin-de-siècle symbolist cityscapes. David Getsy's theoretical investigations into eroticism and abstraction have demonstrated that an artist need not rely on figuration to represent sensual desire; as such, we might productively read these cityscapes as early expressions of homosexual identity that capitalized upon the potentiality of Symbolist semiotics to speak to the experiences of subcultural community (Getsy 2015).

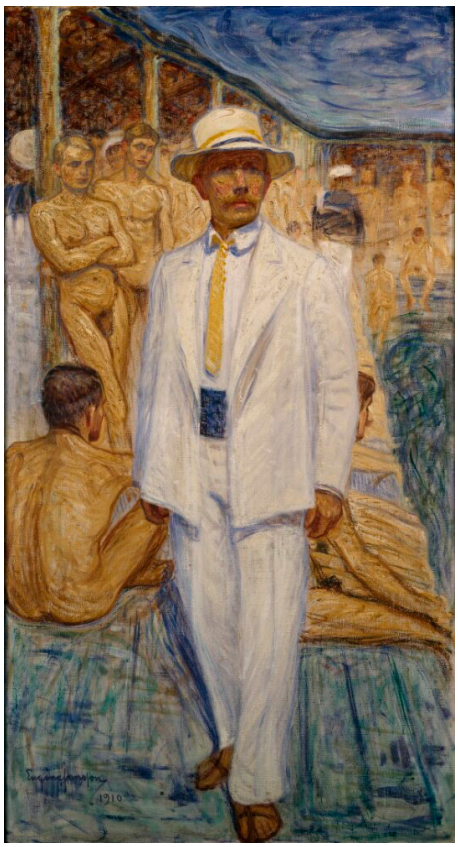


Figure 10. Eugène Jansson, *Självporträtt*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 203 × 110 cm. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum. Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

Jansson's 1907 *Naked Young Man* seems to validate such a reading (Figure 11). The large oil painting depicts Jansson's favorite model, Knut Nyman, standing nude in a doorway, arms outstretched between the jambs. The setting is likely the artist's Glasbruksgatan studio, which he purchased following the success of his 1890s "blue" works. The artist's much improved financial situation allowed him to move from the apartment he shared with his mother and brother and granted him a greater degree of freedom to host models and lovers in total privacy. Nyman was a sailor with whom Jansson had likely become acquainted during his visits to Skeppsholmen; according to Hans Henrik Brummer, Nyman was also likely the artist's lover (Brummer 1999). Behind Nyman in the adjoining space hangs one of Jansson's previously completed paintings: *Sunrise over the roofs. Motif from Stockholm* from 1903 (Figure 12). The painting is one of the final Stockholm cityscapes the artist would produce for exhibition before transitioning to the production of figurative, "vitalist" compositions in 1904. *Naked Young Man* is hardly Symbolist; tender homoerotic desire is not hidden here but made unabashedly clear. The work captures an intimate moment between the artist and his model in Jansson's dreamy, twilit personal quarters.

My interest here primarily lies in the inclusion of the Symbolist canvas, *Sunrise over the roofs*, in the background of the composition. What are we to make of Jansson's citation of the work? The artist produced a number of works depicting Nyman in interior spaces, many of which are nondescript and unidentifiable; as such, juxtaposing the model's nude body with the cityscape seems intentional and significant. For the viewer unacquainted with Jansson's 1903 painting, it is even unclear whether the rectangular plane is a painted canvas at all—might it instead be a window view onto the city? This ambiguity is prompted in part by the viewer's inability to pinpoint the source of the light that illuminates the space. Does light stream into the room through an unseen window at left, or from the "painting", which seems to emit its own light?

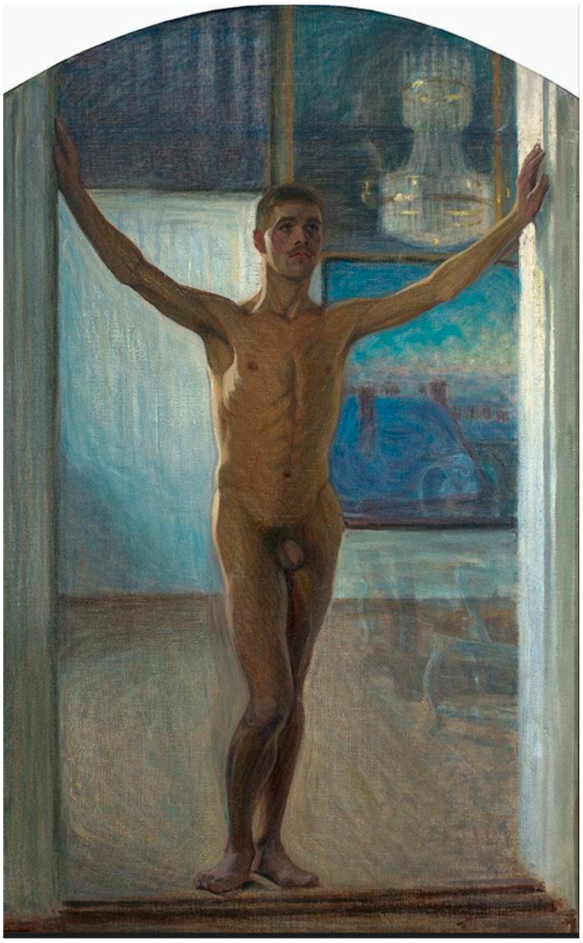


Figure 11. Eugène Jansson, *Naken yngling*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 144 × 90 cm. Stockholm, Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde. Reproduced with permission.



Figure 12. Eugène Jansson, *Soluppgång över taken. Motiv från Stockholm*, 1903. Oil on canvas, 150 × 210 cm. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum. Public domain (Wikimedia Commons).

Painted or otherwise, Jansson semiotically equates the symbolic sign of the vista with the representational sign of the model who stands nude before it. Paired with the sensual depiction of Nyman, the snowy scene's significance becomes apparent: the viewer is not merely looking at a previously painted canvas but at a vantage point shared by the artist and his nude model from the intimacy of the artist's private space. We come to understand *Sunrise*, in other words, as a symbolic trace of a moment jointly shared—not only by Jansson and Nyman, ostensibly, but also by the wider circle of men who frequented the artist's studio. Once again, the view of the cityscape is re-encoded to symbolize something far more personal than its subject matter might suggest. If *On Skeppsholmen* and *Söder Mälarstrand* symbolized homosexual subjectivity to an audience familiar with these meetup sites, Jansson's clever citation of *Sunrise* seems to confirm that this cityscape might offer something similar to an admittedly more limited circle of homosexual viewers: the artist's models, lovers, and intimate friends familiar with the view from Jansson's window.

Magnus Ringgren argued that "the landscape paintings on the studio wall [are] a reminder of a completed stage", while Nyman "represents the beginning of a new creative period, and the introduction of consciously homosexual art in Sweden (Brummer 1999)". Far from merely indicating a "new" direction in Jansson's work, *Naked Young Man* serves as a kind of link between two modes of representation, one that relied on symbolically charged landscapes and cityscapes to evoke shared encounters between men and another that depicted such encounters directly. Both modes converge on this picture plane: the figure of Nyman heralds a new direction in sensual depiction even as the snowy cityscape suggests that symbolic, non-figurative compositions could (and *did*) evince the same.

Patrik Steorn's brilliant examination of Jansson's depictions of nude men provides critical support for my reading of Symbolism's utility for a homosexual artist like Jansson. Steorn argues that the artist's transition from landscapes and cityscapes to figurative compositions was not a break but a transmutation. "Jansson's [cityscapes] can be considered to be populated with the promise of an intimate encounter, even though they are often void of people", Steorn notes (Steorn 2021). Highlighting a thread that connects the artist's cityscapes and figurative compositions, Steorn sees "continuity throughout Jansson's [production both in terms of technique and subject. . .[his] motifs—dark streets and bathhouses—are interconnected in that they represent places where men who loved men would meet and make contact".

For the symbolic cityscape to read as a symbol of an intimate encounter, as Steorn's and my readings suggest, Jansson was compelled to stage a semiotic reevaluation of the scene's significance. The artist's conscious manipulation of sign and meaning to subtly speak to intersubjective homoerotic experience made his "blue" works as potently symbolic as any number of symbols—from graffiti and tattoos to handkerchiefs and green carnations—that facilitated homosexual subcultural communication in nineteenth-century Europe.[20] For Jansson, Symbolist semiotics allowed depictions of Stockholm's streets, rooftops, and wooded clearings to communicate to a specialized audience that which his later, figurative depictions proclaimed to the general public. The artist's Symbolist cityscapes thus functioned in the same way as homosexual subcultural signaling writ large: accustomed to searching for signs that had been queered for his interpretation, the homosexual beholder of Jansson's blue-tinged pictures might "instinctively recognize. . .at first sight" an intimately coded pictorial projection of an experience with which he could fully empathize.[21]

5. Conclusions

What is to be gained by considering Symbolism within the context of queer semiotics? Scholarly analyses of the movement confirm that Symbolism, from the very outset, was predicated on re-envisioning the relationship between a sign and its significance. Considering this maneuver within the context of queer theory, I contend, offers a new way to assess a sometimes-difficult stage in the history of art. Our understanding of Symbolism as a confounding movement that appeared to rely on metaphysics and matters of the soul might

well benefit from a return to quite prosaic and logical semiotic principles; a methodological approach that conceptualizes Symbolist work as a touchstone between artist and viewer—as an artist's active reaching towards communion with another—offers an alternative to viewing these works as iconographic idiosyncrasies or isolated manifestations of the artist's spiritual striving.

More importantly, however, I hope to have offered a new way to consider a substantial body of work by a Symbolist contingent that has yet to receive a thorough survey by historians of art. This is not to say there is no scholarship on homosexual Symbolists. To be sure, excellent monographic studies, articles, and retrospective exhibitions of individual artists like Sascha Schneider, Magnus Enckell, and Konstantin Somov, which recognize and approach these artists *as* homosexual artists, have greatly contributed to a growing body of literature on the queer valences of the movement (see Starck 2016; Selkokari 2020; Golubev 2019). But Symbolism also demands a theoretical approach that can accommodate both the inherent queerness of the movement *and* the non-normativity of its same-sex-desiring participants.

Semiotics, I maintain, offers one such approach. Situating our understanding of these works within the broader landscape of contemporary subcultural modes of perception offers a means of understanding the movement's draw for homosexual male artists. My reading of Jansson's Symbolist paintings also suggests, however, that a sensitivity to semiotics offers new possibilities for understanding how homosexual male artists selected their subjects and transformed them into eminently useful symbols of homosexual subjectivity. Jansson was not a unique case but rather representative of a more pervasive attraction to and deployment of Symbolist modes of meaning making by homosexual male artists. If we accept that Symbolism offered a means of artmaking and viewing that closely accorded with subcultural modes of perception developed in response to social stigma and legal prohibition, we might ourselves turn to the work of these artists with fresh eyes, primed to glean new meanings.

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Notes

1 The esoteric qualities of Symbolism have frequently been foregrounded in exhibitions of Symbolist art. Representative of this characterization of the movement are Ehrhardt and Reynolds (2000) and Gleis (2022). Though these catalogs have greatly contributed to Symbolist scholarship, they also contribute to an understanding of Symbolism as a movement at once multifaceted, fluid, ethereal, and difficult to define.

2 Milestone texts in the history of Symbolist art and gender and/or sexuality that have influenced my work in this area include Hirsh (2004), Facos (2009), and Morehead (2017).

3 The work of Damien Delille provides an example of recent research that offers sustained engagement with Symbolism's queerness. See, for example, Delille (2021).

4 While "homosexual" carries pathologizing baggage, I use this historicized term throughout the essay to describe artists who self-identified as homosexuals and when referring to homosexual subcultures writ large, which were frequently categorized as such in social and scientific discourse. As a descriptor for the *work* of homosexual artists and, importantly, the non-normative aspects of Symbolism as a movement, I have opted to use the generative and capacious term "queer", which points to the affect of a work or the quality of a movement rather than directly to the identity position of an individual artist (even if a work's queerness is inflected by the artist's sexual positionality). My use of "queer" takes its cue from David Getsy's articulation of the term as "adjectival rather than fixed as a stable noun or verb" and a term that is "(always) relational, contingent, and contextual. . .account[ing] for a wide range of historical contexts. . ." In this specific essay, "queer" primarily serves to describe qualities or characteristics of Symbolism and its attendant works that stage a disorientation from heteronormative models of viewing and interpretation. See Getsy (2023, pp. 33–36).

5 See, for instance, Reed (2011, pp. 79–100). References to this double-functioned iconographic ambiguity are especially common in analyses of queer artists whose works speak to contemporary physical reform movements, referenced later in this essay.

[6] For foundational analysis of Symbolists as both devoted consumers and innovative producers of semiotic and psychological knowledge, see Burhan (1979).

[7] See the chapter on Strindberg's artistic philosophy and practice in Morehead (2017, pp. 111–36).

[8] A queer realist artist like Bonheur keenly understood the power of transforming a mimetic sign by endowing it with personal significance. See Boime (1981, pp. 384–409).

[9] Meyer Schapiro noted that while Impressionistic depiction may be non-mimetic, "no basic change has taken place. . .in the semantic relation of image to object". See Schapiro (1972).

[10] Spilliaert has been the subject of recent curatorial attention. See Adriaens-Pannier et al. (2020).

[11] The ties between empathy theory and the concept of the beholder's share have been articulated by a number of scholars, including Eric Kandel in his study of fin-de-siècle Viennese art and culture. See Kandel (2012).

[12] See Morehead's discussion of form in the introduction to Morehead (2017).

[13] Emphasis mine.

[14] Claudelin compiled these sketchbooks between roughly 1910 and 1930. Known as the *Klotterböckerna*, the sketchbooks have been digitized by the Hallwylska museet in Stockholm and are available via the Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/claudelin01/mode/2up, accessed on 4 June 2024.

[15] Swedish scholar Michaela Carlberg has extensively researched Claudelin's work and digitized his sketchbooks. Her bachelor's thesis on Claudelin stands as the primary study of Claudelin's toilet graffiti project. See Carlberg (2018).

[16] Cesare Lombroso was among the first researchers to identify tattoo patterns that signaled homosexual identity. Among these patterns were the clasped hands motif, an "erotic symbol frequently found on pederasts", and a six-pointed star that read as an "emblem of love"on tattooed persons, homosexual and heterosexual alike. Tattoos like these and others allowed homosexual men familiar with the patterns to read homosexual identity into the bodily decoration of other men without raising suspicion from the public at large. See Lombroso (1897, pp. xiv–xvi).

[17] This characterization comes from the Musée d'Orsay's interpretation of another of the artist's works depicting light piercing the darkness of the landscape, *Proletarian Lodgings*. See "*Logement prolétaire*", Musée d'Orsay, accessed 25 November 2023, https://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/artworks/logement-proletaire-104955.

[18] I have previously analyzed the ways in which many of Schneider's images draw on psychological experiences that were unique to homosexual men, including blackmail, social stigmatization, and the need for anonymity. See Vanover (2022).

[19] See, for representative examples, Opitz (2013) and Hvidberg-Hanson and Oelsner (2011).

[20] Numerous scholars have explored the use of signs like neckties, flowers, and handkerchiefs to covertly signal one's sexuality from the nineteenth century through the end of the twentieth century. Important studies include Chauncey (1994), Fischer (1977), and Robb (2003).

[21] I refer once more to de Joux's statement on homosexual semiotic signaling in Otto de Joux, *Die Enterbten des Liebesglückes*, 99.

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