STUDIES IN WALTER PATER AND AESTHETICISM

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Walter Pater's Circle: The Queer Family Relations of John Rainier McQueen 1840–1912

In 1913, Bernard Holland published this striking account of John Rainier McQueen in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*:

> He was then about forty-five, and the most singular man I had ever come across. He was somewhat under middle height, and of a foreign and non-English appearance. His dark hair was long, his dark beard short, his tint was a reddish brown. Dark eyes with a very peculiar gleam in them, shone behind large spectacles. His mouth closed with curious firmness, and when he smiled expanded horizontally, with no vertical deflections. His body had a soft look. It was so enveloped in clothes that its outlines were not clearly discernible. An Inverness cloak usually surmounted the whole structure. His voice was soft, but firm, and even decided. Having unalterable convictions about everything, he spoke without hesitation, and swiftly. His favourite

> food was pork, sausages, and mushrooms of all kinds, including those fungi which most cooks falsely believe to be poison. He liked eels and oysters, everything of a soft kind. His drink was a rich and full-blooded port. Smoking was abhorrent to him. He walked with quick short steps, like a partridge.[1]

The subject of Holland's article was a close and brilliant friend of Walter Pater's at The King's School, Canterbury for three years (1855–1858), and a troubled friend for two more after they entered Oxford (1858–1860). Although they never saw each other again after they graduated, McQueen reappeared in Pater's posthumous life forty-five years later, as an irresistible and influential source for Thomas Wright's two-volume *Life of Walter Pater* (1907). His significance for Wright is marked by the inclusion of McQueen's photograph at twenty-five, dating from 1865, as he was about to embark on his self-fashioned life of queer families (Figure 1). Wright's uncritical adoption of McQueen's perspective has dominated scholars' understanding of this short period of Pater's early career at school and college, but much can be learned by a comparison of the two men's adult lives as well. Where Pater lived under the watchful gaze of Oxford, including the women's colleges, and adopted the regimens of the English gentleman that he aspired to become and the decorum of the family of which he was part, McQueen quickly shed censors and observers—his family, wealthy English provincial society, and his inheritance—by avoiding towns and cities, decamping to a remote part of Scotland, adopting a retrogressive feudal model, and shaping queer families wherever he resided. That McQueen's brilliance at The King's School, Canterbury continued into his adult life is clear in Holland's remarks. Unlike Pater, McQueen left no print record, except for his remediated voice through Wright.

McQueen, known throughout his life as 'René', was from a wealthy military and naval family, and led a freewheeling life—first, in Scotland for twenty years as a self-appointed laird in the Shetland Islands, and then in Chailey, Sussex. While he experimented with marriage in his thirties, he commuted it quickly to a legal separation, banishing his wife summarily from his property on the island of Yell. The alternative family groups that he fashioned over forty years drew in a mixture of classes (servants, university students, and men-about-town), nationalities (Scottish and English), heterosexual and homosexual lifestyles, and sacred and profane practices. He repeatedly married off male subjects of his affection as his

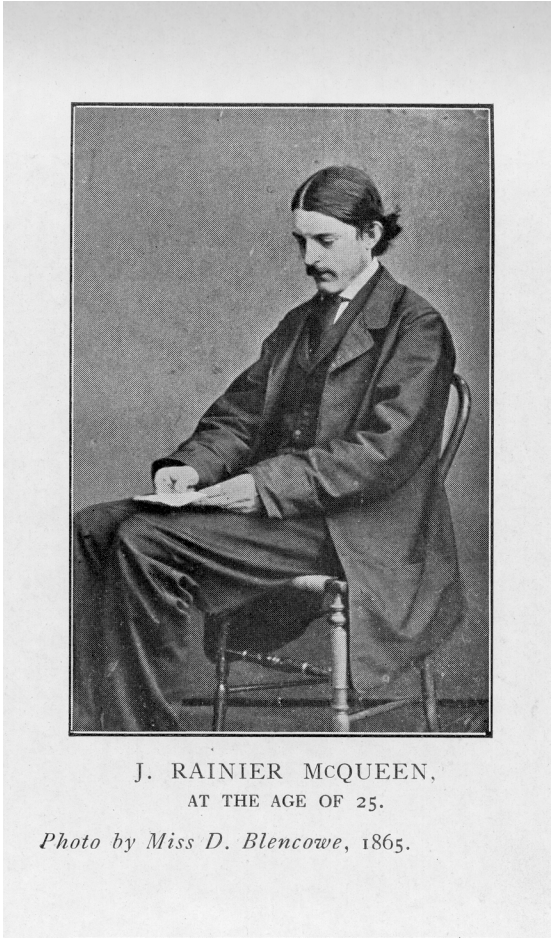

Figure 1: Photograph of John Rainier McQueen by Miss D. Blencowe (1865) in *Thomas Wright, The Life of Walter Pater*, 2 vols (London: Everett, 1907), I, opp. p. 185.

ardour for them cooled, he created a male child of such a union as the heir of his fortune, and he allocated the child's sister to a castoff lover as his fiancée.

A radical Protestant who denounced Roman Catholics and Scottish Presbyterians, McQueen was a vigorous proselytizer of Anglicanism among his Scottish tenants, in parallel with colonial models in the larger empire. In a similar mode, he colonized native subjects, both as faithful servants and extensions of his family.

On Shetland, he continued to pursue the combination of antiquarian studies and imaginative history begun in his schooldays, developing narratives of fully populated imaginary countries, each with its own language and culture, documents not traced to date. The pyrotechnics of McQueen's life did not end with his death. Soon after his will was proven, Ivon Campion—a short-changed lover—sued the executors of his estate for a type of breach of promise, with the result that McQueen's queer family was exposed to public scrutiny. Holland's article, which appealed to *Blackwood's* Scottish readership, was a decorous response to the 'strange tale' about McQueen's will that scandalized the press in October 1913.[2]

Bernard Holland (1856–1926) was part of McQueen's backstory long before they met. The twenty-nine-year-old journalist first met McQueen when Pater's onetime friend was forty-five years of age; McQueen was still wild, strident, and largely resident in Scotland, while Holland was at an early stage of a subsequently illustrious career, having just become a civil servant and recently qualified as a barrister. Holland was introduced to the older man at the McQueen family home in Canterbury, a city with which Holland had a longstanding connection (it was his birthplace). His mother, Sibylla Lyall, had lived in the vicarage in Harbledown, opposite the Paters before she married in 1855, and Holland's father was a young clergyman nearby. Sibylla's grandfather had been W. R. Lyall who, as the Dean of Canterbury Cathedral (1845–1857), was closely involved with The King's School; he had also obligingly transferred Holland's father Francis to a better church living when he married the dean's granddaughter. Eventually back in Canterbury, Francis Holland had attended the funeral of McQueen's father in 1883 as a canon of the cathedral. Two years later, both Bernard Holland and René McQueen were visiting their parents, and in 1889, Bernard served as an executor for René's mother's will. Holland's involvement with McQueen's affairs between 1885 and 1890 and once again in 1913 after René's death therefore formed part of a familial past in and around Canterbury across three generations.

How, then, does knowledge of McQueen impact on our understanding of Pater in Wright's biography? And what might it tell us about the relation of a biographer to his source? The biographical record reveals that McQueen exercised his social privilege to create complex structures of queer kinship on a scale impossible for Pater. Like his father, McQueen conducted himself as an upper-class man, vested with civic authority. He was also of a different class, character and generation than Thomas Wright (1859–1936), who was an industrious, middle-class family

man, educated at a teacher training college. By 1905, Wright was an enterprising, self-promoting forty-six-year-old owner and principal of a thriving private school in Olney, Bucks.[3] Moreover, he was a prolific author.[4] Like McQueen, Wright was an antiquarian. The two men shared a tenacious interest in local history, which may have helped sustain the relationship. But a *Times* obituary of Wright made clear that his 'industrious' and 'remarkable' research skills were not matched by his weak prose style and his incapacity to order his material. With these shortcomings, Wright's work proved vulnerable in its management to McQueen's cultural and social authority.[5]

Then again, McQueen needed Wright's ear: he may have regarded his affiliation with Pater decades earlier to be his only route to fame. McQueen overwhelmed Wright with material to make his case, which resulted in the allocation of fourteen out of twenty-nine chapters to The King's School and the Canterbury years in the first volume of *The Life of Walter Pater*. (By comparison, Wright expended just eight chapters on Pater's undergraduate career.) Moreover, McQueen's short attachment to Pater may have been one of the most intense and stable of his life, in parallel with his love for his young, eventually rejected friend Campion, his heir Magnus Rainier Robertson, and his butler, who was Magnus's father.

In Wright's narrative of Pater's schooldays, sourced by McQueen, nothing appears to have disturbed the idyllic relationship that McQueen and Pater shared with another friend Henry Dombrain, except for their gradual parting because of religious differences. Although the severance that took place between them at Oxford in 1860 is implicitly linked to Pater's mysterious denunciation of his friends without cause in Blean Woods in 1858, Pater's behaviour looks more akin to what we know of McQueen's own tendencies. That Pater's emotional life, as well as his intellectual and religious life were changing may also have been factors here, as Pater transferred his affections and attention to Ingram Bywater, along with adjusting his faith to accommodate configurations of doubt. McQueen's outlook was alien to Pater's belief at this time and certainly at a remove from Pater's subsequent position that Anglicanism was a broad church that could accommodate his brand of religious belief.[6]

McQueen's future life also draws attention to the different social structures, intellectual pursuits, and familial arrangements adopted by the two friends as adults to accommodate their developing intellects, emotions and sexuality. While McQueen fled his birth family to cultivate isolation and eventually to form a

succession of queer families to his individual liking, Pater found in the university a monkish institutional community, one long accustomed to accommodating sexual differences, and eventually a semblance of his own queer nuclear family that both fostered his talent and dedicated itself to his well-being. Just as members of McQueen's family functioned economically in a feudal mode (servants, retainers, chaplains, grandmothers and mothers, sons, godsons, and adopted sons), so Pater and his two unmarried sisters functioned economically as a modern family alternative. Hester kept house (with servants), while both Walter and Clara worked at the university, at Brasenose and Somerville respectively. When the Pater siblings removed themselves from the observation of Oxford to a rented home in London, Walter and Clara entered modernity as commuters to Oxford during term time. Living in their respective colleges during the week, they opened further space in the family, allowing for a remission of their mutual observation as well.

Comparing McQueen's life with Pater's assists us in seeing Pater afresh. There were similarities. Both boys were bookish, and they spent much of their free time in private, reading but also writing. The McQueens, like the Paters, may have been a family shaped by an absent father.[7] René, like Walter, was closest to and brought up by a surrogate mother—McQueen by his grandmother, and Pater by his aunt. The differences are also striking. McQueen entered The King's School in 1855 in conjunction with a national emergency, in the wake of his father's commission to manage the Canterbury military depot during the Crimean War. Pater's entry was child-centred, entailing a removal of the entire family from one county to another, to ensure a good and affordable (free) classical education for a youngest son, the first in a medical family who wished to attend university. For both the McQueens and the less privileged Paters, the Anglican imprimatur that The King's School afforded was important, as I explain below.

School, University, and Departure

Of the three Canterbury schoolboys, René McQueen was the most brilliant and academically gifted. He excelled at classics, history, divinity, English, and French. He also had a vivid historical imagination, creating as a schoolboy volumes of fictional histories of imaginary countries, each with its own language, demography, and geography, which he read aloud to Dombrain and Pater. On speech day in 1858, McQueen decisively took most of the senior school prizes.[8] Pater, however, won the most valuable Exhibition to Oxford, for which McQueen was ineligible

to compete. Since the headmaster was unwilling to let McQueen's brilliance pass unacknowledged,[9] he was awarded the substantial sum of ten guineas' worth of books and a hearty encomium.[10] In the autumn of 1858, McQueen accordingly went to Balliol, distinguished for its academic pre-eminence, and Pater went to Queen's, which was beginning to benefit from the university and college reforms promulgated by William Thomson, its dynamic provost. Thomson had managed to shift its allegedly intellectually debilitating and socially restrictive 'close' college model, whereby most of the students and fellows were selected from a limited geographical pool in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Yorkshire; and Pater's cohort was among the earliest to benefit from open admissions. Still, while McQueen was prodigious at school, and went on to Oxford like his two friends, he did not proceed, as they did, to employment. Instead, he lived as a laird on a remote island in Scotland and, eventually, as a gentleman landowner in Sussex.[11]

All three entered Oxford as potential clergymen, alert to the ubiquitous issues of faith swirling around them. McQueen disliked Oxford, a distaste occasioned possibly by his weak eyes and exacerbated by Balliol's liberal theology. Two years later, Dombrain's choice of Pembroke was influenced by his fervent Anglicanism.[12] McQueen took a second-class degree like Pater (though in law and history) in 1862, and an MA three years later.[13] On leaving Oxford, only Dombrain pursued ordination and the priesthood, although both Pater and McQueen considered this career, from which they were both deflected: Pater through loss of faith and circumstance, and McQueen through bad health—though in Scotland McQueen persisted by obtaining a special license to provide Anglican services. McQueen also implicated Dombrain, as an ordained priest, in his Anglican project on Yell, by inviting him to conduct the first celebration of communion according to the English office in McQueen's Manor House at Burravoe, before his chapel was established.[14]

It is unsurprising, then, that Dombrain and McQueen objected strongly when Pater persisted with his intention to pursue ordination in 1862, despite his altered beliefs. Besides voicing their strenuous objections to Pater, McQueen acted decisively in late 1862 to forestall any application by Pater to the Bishop of London. He warned the bishop of Pater's apostasy. If McQueen's behaviour exemplifies his mercurial temperament, it also indicates the importance of religion in the lives of the three friends, and the intensity of religious controversy in Oxford at the time. The graduation of McQueen and Pater in 1862 followed the controversial *Essays*

and Reviews (1860) associated with Balliol, its riposte *Aids to Faith* (1861) originating in Queen's, and the resonance of Charles Darwin's much-reprinted *Origin of Species* (1859).[15] The febrile state of religious debate was fanned by a continuing supply of infectious and widely-debated publications such as Ernest Renan's *La Vie de Jésus* (1863), and J. R. Seeley's *Ecce Homo: A Survey of the Life and Work of Jesus Christ* (1865).[16]

In the mid-1860s, then, McQueen was a bachelor who was yet to inherit and not required to work. Without his own property and estate to manage, he lived idly with his grandmother and parents. The constraints and forms of polite society, and the observation of his family members, proved trying and even insupportable. The ubiquity of his father in Kentish public life and in the press may have been especially oppressive. In the 1850s, McQueen's father is recorded as a freemason (1855), the inspector of the Kent Militia Artillery (1857), a steward and speaker at the School's Feast Society (1857), and a steward at county balls (1858 onwards).[17] After October 1866, when Major General McQueen was sworn in as a county magistrate, he appeared frequently in the Kent press.[18] The post encapsulated the power and ubiquity of 'General McQueen' in diverse facets of county life, including The King's School. René's first refuge was his grandmother's house in another county, in 1861 and 1871,[19] and his second on Yell from 1865. The father's visibility is matched by René's equally dramatic absence from the south-east and the local press after 1865, apart from occasional notices of his name as a subscriber to charity appeals, such as the Herne Bay Regatta. However intent on escape René was in Scotland, he continued his imaginary countries project and his promulgation of Anglicanism and, in serving in civic offices such as Justice of the Peace, unexpectedly imitated his father.[20]

McQueen's abrupt abandonment in 1865 of his family and family seats in south-east England for the isolation of Shetland probably stemmed from the same extreme behaviour that led him to betray Pater to the Bishop. Holland, who visited him at Burravoe in the mid-1880s, hints at McQueen's mental instability:

> When I stayed with him there, after we had finished supper and drunk the health of Charles I, or the 'Glorious Dundee', or the King of Denmark, he would tell me tales about witches or trolls, or suchlike local demons, until the air became eerie and haunted. The place was so silent that one could hear the tide coming

> down the sound of Yell. One felt that it would be dangerous to one's sanity to remain too long alone with Rainier M'Queen in Yell, notwithstanding the healthy occupation of catching unsophisticated trout all day in the streams of the moorland, where one met no one.[21]

Having moved to Yell, he returned to the south-east only after his father's death, to live from 1887 in his grandmother's house in Chailey, where he resided for the remainder of his life. Likewise, he wished to be buried in Chailey, with his grandmother and the butler, thus avoiding the Canterbury burial ground of his parents. Ensconced in Chailey in his fifties and sixties, McQueen enjoyed the life of a wealthy landowner and a queer bachelor, although three census returns (1891, 1901, and 1911) remind us that he was married, and a fourth (1881) that his wife was living independently, on the proceeds of a separation order. Just as McQueen's restless movements between England and Scotland appear striking, so too does his attitude towards marriage.

Marriage

In 1871, the year before René McQueen married, he appeared in the census at his grandmother's home. The record states that there were also five servants including Robertson, the butler from Yell, and Mary Langridge, the cook from Chailey, both of whom make their first appearance in the census of the household at this date. It is also from this address that René married in June 1872. McQueen's spouse was Mary Rainier, two years his junior. She was a distant cousin and a clergyman's daughter of a neighbouring vicar, the Revd George Rainier of Ninfield (Figure 2).[22] The marriage took place a bare two months after his grandmother Eliza Rainier died and vacated Brookhouse.[23] As a rural clergyman's daughter, Mary did not bring wealth or social prestige to the marriage, although her connections, as a Rainier, might be taken as a guarantor of good blood. Still, the social status of René's family was implicit in the notices of this wedding, held at Hailsham, Sussex, since they were inserted in several London papers, including the *Globe*, the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *John Bull*. In July that year, he and Mary Rainier McQueen, probably on their honeymoon, returned to Yell, where he had established himself as the owner of 'a number of crofts and some 3,500 acres of moorland', and as a pioneer of the revival of Anglican worship that Dombrain had helped him

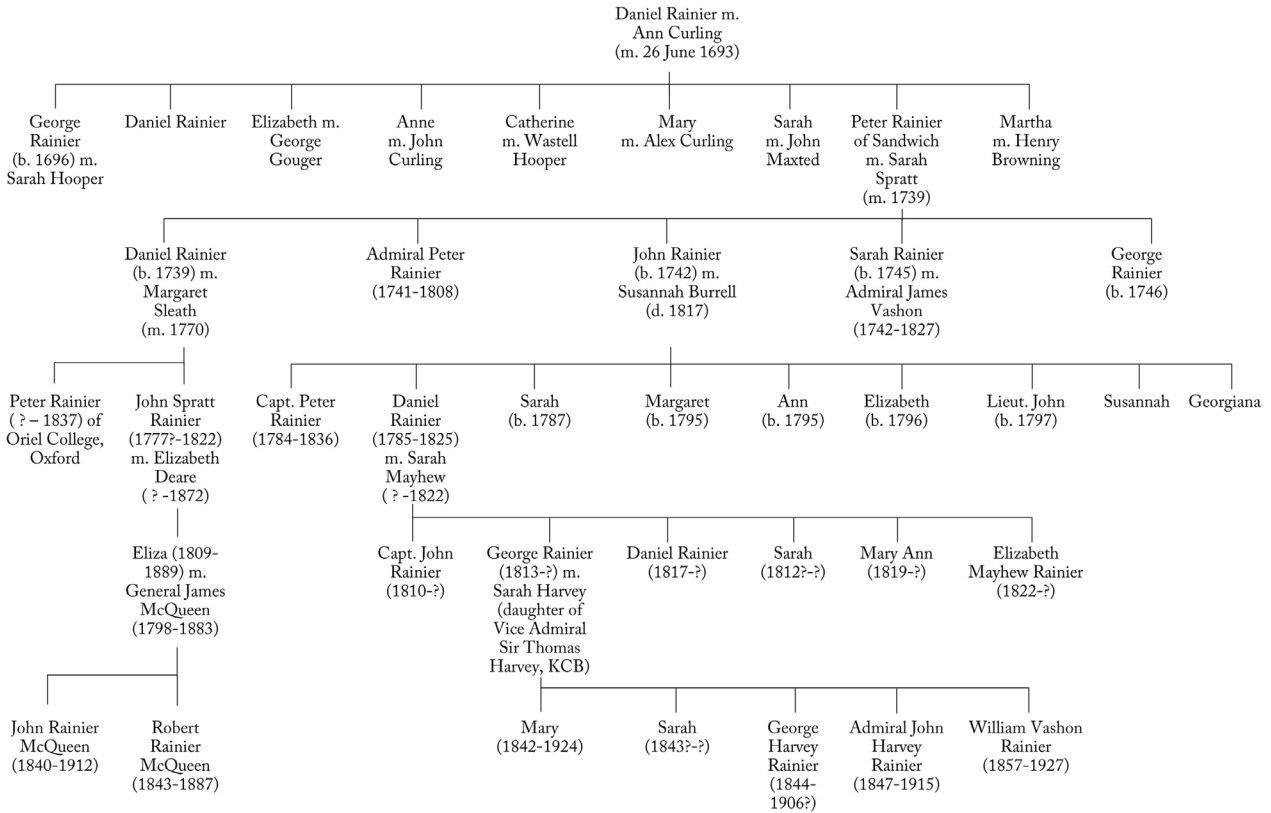

Figure 2: Rainier family tree, researched and compiled by Robyn Jakeman.

launch. Within eighteen months of marrying, however, he put the property up for sale, advertising repeatedly in the local press in November 1873, possibly with the faltering marriage in view.[24] As Holland implies, Yell was no place for a cultivated middle-class southern woman.[25] In the 1881 census, René McQueen appears for the first time as married, but his wife is absent; while his address is his mother's home in Canterbury, rather than Brookhouse or the Manor House at Burravoe, Mary McQueen, his wife, appears in the same census as a lodger in another household, living on an 'Allowance under a Deed for Separation'. Between 1872 and 1881, René and Mary had formally separated, most probably by 1874.[27] There were no children.

Although no earlier records concerning Mary McQueen before 1881 have been located, Holland relays René's own account: soon after the marriage, she left him and Yell, unable 'to endure [its] uncanny solitude'.[28] An alternative narrative, also likely to have originated with McQueen, transfers the agency to himself: 'McQueen ejected his wife from the house, ordering a carriage and summarily requiring her to get in and leave him and the premises'.[29] Recourse to a deed of separation was a radical step for a well-known family, prompted by irretrievable breakdown, one unmanageable by arrangements to live separate lives in the same or separate abodes, as Rene's parents may have done.[30] Due to the nature of separation orders, why they separated is unknown. This route to separation of married partners provided for legal arrangements of a useful but distinct character from those pertaining to divorce, which had been radically transformed through the Matrimonial Causes Act 1857. Where divorce hearings were public and adversarial, with success requiring a high threshold of proof, separation orders were drawn up by a solicitor and agreed privately. Where men normally sued for divorce, women usually sued for separation, which was a longstanding legal procedure predating the 1857 act. Not only were the criteria for separation orders less weighted against women, but the outcome, if the petition was successful, also guaranteed women lifelong financial support, since the parties remained married. Women could therefore keep their marital status without calling attention to its precise nature, while enjoying their present standard of living and avoiding the stigma of divorcee or spinsterhood, the indignities of familial dependency, or the necessity to undertake paid work. As for the men, separation orders offered the possibility that mistresses might be moved into the marital home with impunity, and without the ensuing expectation or possibility of marriage.[31] McQueen, characteristically,

customized this advantage in order to establish a queer family. Meanwhile, Mary Rainier McQueen, who died in 1924 in Chichester, moved around the country and lived modestly on 'independent means', with one or two servants.

There is evidence that the fault lay with René. First, there is anecdotal information from John Ballantyne about McQueen's ejection of Mary from the house. There is also dated archival evidence, which is similarly suggestive but inconclusive. In Chailey, an undated tombstone of René's grandparents, J. S. Rainier (d. 1822) and his wife Eliza (d. April 1872), suggests that René may have offended the family by the time it was erected. Its inscription noticeably excludes René, and reads 'Grandfather of Robert McQueen', René's younger brother. That Robert McQueen was born in 1842, long after his grandfather's death, suggests that either Eliza Rainier herself wrote the inscription before 1872, or that her daughter, René's and Robert's mother, erected it soon after Eliza's death in 1872, on her instruction, when the tomb was changed in order to include Eliza's and Robert's names.[32]

So, it is possible that what dismayed McQueen's family in the 1870s was related to something in existence before René's marriage, that perhaps also came between René and his wife after it, in addition to the wildness and solitude of Yell that Holland suggests. This is most likely René's ongoing friendship with Magnus Robertson from Yell, installed as the butler in Brookhouse by 1871, and probably earlier.[33] Given that Robertson's birthplace was in Shetland, his presence in Brookhouse can only have originated with McQueen, who relocated Magnus from Scotland to south-east England, probably in the spring of 1870 when he returned to Sussex with Robertson as his manservant.

Scottish Laird

Six months after the Yell property had been advertised for sale, it remained unsold; the laird was in residence, actively embroiled in religious controversy, largely not to his credit, according to vehement correspondence in the *Shetland Times*.[34] This was one of several altercations between himself and local residents reported in the press. Furthermore, the consternation that McQueen aroused probably signals his resolution to remain on Yell without his wife. From 1877, he began to embed himself further by accruing local government offices that signal his customary habitation as Yell, and the end of any likelihood of married life in society in south-east England.

In 1882, Magnus Robertson and Mary Langridge, having worked together for over a decade as McQueen's butler and his cook, married at Yell with his undoubted permission, if not contrivance.[35] That McQueen supported the marriage is suggested in a new status and livelihood for Magnus, which René gifted at just this time. The butler begins to appear in advertisements in the press as 'Bailiff for John Rainier McQueen'.[36] The strategy of marrying off his intimate male friends emerges as part of a pattern in René's career, to construct an extended queer family of McQueens, who are otherwise without issue. In this first instance, the only son of Magnus and Mary, their third child, was born in 1887 and raised in Chailey, not Yell. While Magnus was the new-born's first name, the infant carried the middle name of Rainier (the McQueen family name), and on René's death in 1912 Magnus Rainier Robertson inherited Brookhouse, along with the greater portion of René's land and property. Both parents, butler and cook, remained in the cluster of the family that René assembled at Brookhouse. While Magnus's father died when the child was three and Magnus died in 1918, his mother lived until 1933. Having outlived René and her son, Mary Langridge was the sole relic of McQueen's family project at Chailey.

Following the marriage of Mary and Magnus in 1882, and the growth of their young family in Yell, René left them to it, and withdrew from the school board and other local lists. Soon after their marriage in April, we find McQueen at Newnham-on-Severn, Gloucestershire, from June through mid-August, in the vicinity of Dombrain, who resided at Framilode, Gloucestershire.[37] McQueen may also have lived elsewhere in Scotland, possibly in Lanark and at Braxfield House, the seat of his obstreperous distinguished great-grandfather, which he inherited from a cousin in 1886.[38] By 1887, however, René returned to Chailey for the birth of Magnus Rainier Robertson, as well as for two deaths—that of his brother Robert, and that of John Mathewson, a young clergyman from Yell whom he had befriended.[39]

Reading this history, an initial hypothesis might be that the infant, Magnus Rainier Robertson, was the child of René McQueen and Mary Langridge. A settlement on a child of a heterosexual affair between a master and a female servant remained common in the period, together with René's provision of an annuity for its mother, and her right to remain in Brookhouse for the rest of her life. But the language of René's wills suggests a different, decidedly queer, family structure. Insistent on the repeated phrase 'my late faithful servant Magnus Laurence

Robertson', the wills call attention to René's attachment to his deceased butler, to which the legacies to the butler's son and the cook his wife are insistently affiliated, and represented as due legatees. Is an intimate relationship between René and his butler what his grandmother, and perhaps his new wife, witnessed? It seems more likely that René's attachment in the first instance was to Magnus Laurence Robertson, rather than Mary, and that it was this attachment that fuelled the events that followed.

Magnus Robertson the elder, who died at Brookhouse in 1890, never figures in the wills as a legatee himself. I detected René's tribute to Magnus, his 'faithful servant', from its appearance after Magnus senior's death in the writing and phrasing of successive wills, their provision for Magnus's wife, and their increasing bequest to the Robertsons' son. This tribute to Magnus senior is of a piece in the wills with René's shaping of his queer family both in law and for posterity. With the exception of a bequest for his estranged wife, and her brother's son on her death, René's wills also configure an alternative queer family, constituting three young gentlemen—E.R.T. Clarkson, Ivon Campion, and Charles Martindale—along with his two servants (Mary and Magnus) and their children. In his wills, as in his life, this extended family embraces differences of class, nationality, sexual roles and identities, and kinship and friendship.

My reinterpretation of René's life was provoked by discovery of events that emerged after his death not only in the wills but also in the reports about the law case they provoked the following year. In October 1913, as Holland observes, one of McQueen's stable of former favourites, Ivon Campion, sued the executors of his will for £50,000, a sum McQueen had promised Campion as a young man in the 1890s but failed to include in the final will. Campion, who first met McQueen in 1891 shortly after the death of the butler Magnus Robertson, was also paid annually to live with McQueen between 1892 and 1898. To support his case, Campion supplied the court with explicit love letters from McQueen to himself as a Cambridge undergraduate that were quoted in the *Daily Telegraph* and other papers. In the 1890s, McQueen was about thirty years Campion's senior. In court, there was no mistaking McQueen's impassioned desire for the young man in the correspondence, and that the butler ('old Mr Magnus Robertson') was Campion's predecessor in McQueen's affections.[40]

A Queer Family Model

Once René returned from Scotland and re-established himself in Chailey, he modelled a new life to replace that of the Scottish laird. By 1887, he was living at Brookhouse, where he stayed exclusively after his mother's death in 1889. Having inherited it and the family home Tintoch House in Canterbury from her, he promptly sold the latter without regrets.[41] By 1891, he seems to have fashioned a household to his taste at Brookhouse, where he is recorded as its Head. He is living with three children (all Robertsons), aged seven, five, and three, the youngest of whom Magnus Rainier Robertson (as we have seen) bears McQueen's family name, having from birth been designated as a likely heir, which René's will of 1900 substantiates. There are also three adult Robertsons: Mary Robertson, aged forty-five, now the widowed housekeeper, and mother of the children; Jessie Robertson, a retired domestic servant; and William Robertson the butler, Magnus senior's brother, who has replaced him. Also present in the will of 1900 is a Cambridge undergraduate, E.R.T. Clarkson. Of these, Magnus Rainier Roberston and Clarkson remain in McQueen's life until his death, reappearing as executors and legatees of his will, as do Mary and Magnus as beneficiaries. What we therefore see is a loose family structure made up of the servant family of Robertsons, three adults and three children, all of whom are close family relations of the deceased butler Magnus; and a young Cambridge undergraduate, who is soon to introduce René to Ivon Campion, another young man who functions as a substitute for the beloved butler in the wake of his death.

I say 'another young man' because retrospectively the household of 1891 is preceded in the 1870s and 1880s by earlier queer ménages, and other male friendships that thrive through the ambiguities of ordinary bonding structures. In the 1870s, class barriers could be breached discreetly in the relationship between a gentleman and his butler. In different households, such affection might be more or less visible, and thrive or dim. In the large compass of Brookhouse, René's bond with his butler might pass without comment, despite being noticed by his grandmother. At Yell in the 1860s before McQueen was married and in the 1870s after he and Mary had separated, the relationship between the men could thrive in the freedom from scrutiny that had driven McQueen to Shetland in the first place. While Mary was present in the rude, cramped, and isolated Manor in Burravoe, however, it is possible that recognition of the bond between René and Magnus,

and a ménage à trois of which she was an unwilling participant, was for Mary insupportable.

We know that in the 1880s, just before and during Magnus's marriage, René sought two younger male friends: from 1881 onwards John Mathewson (1860–1887), another native of Yell, and Ernest Clarkson, from Sussex, from 1887. Mathewson, having been ordained in Chichester, in Sussex, and appointed a curate in Singleton in the same county, died from consumption at Brookhouse in November 1887. He was twenty-seven years old. The seventeen-year-old Clarkson (1870–1958), from a parish near Chailey, attended this funeral. Clarkson had travelled with René to Yell that summer, where he may have met Mathewson, who had gone home for his health, before returning (probably with both of them) to the south east, where he died.

Mathewson was the younger son of a fish curer from Burravoe, and a promising pupil at the Anderson Institute, where he had worked as a pupil teacher. As the *Shetland Times* put it, once Mathewson 'resolved to devote himself to the Church, he was much encouraged and assisted by Mr. McQueen, who continued to take a great interest in his welfare'.[42] In 1881, aged twenty, Mathewson was invited to journey south by McQueen. The young man appears in the May census at a vicarage in Framilode with the Revd Henry Dombrain, while McQueen was in Canterbury in the family house for the census. Later that summer, Mathewson was with McQueen in Newnham-on-Severn, not far from Framilode, studying Danish and French with McQueen, who was recently back from Yell. It is possible that McQueen's mentorship of Mathewson had signalled the waning of his interest in his butler and provoked his arrangement of the marriage of Magnus and Mary Langridge. At the same time, it could have been that Magnus and Mary's impending marriage provoked McQueen to befriend Mathewson. In any case, early in 1885 Mathewson was, like Magnus before him, brought south; ordained as an Anglican priest in West Sussex, he was then appointed to a curacy in Singleton, near Chichester.

Mathewson was a young priest when he died in November 1887. Having served less than two years, he had been forced to return to Yell to recover his health, before once again journeying south to die at Brookhouse. Separated from his Shetland family, he was buried in Chailey, with René the chief mourner and sole executor of his will. In a letter to an old mentor of Mathewson's on Yell, McQueen writes on mourning stationery in emotional language that moves restlessly among

metaphors to characterize his love for the young clergyman. The loss of 'his dearest friend', McQueen wrote, 'my dearest lad' is '[t]o me [. . .] as the loss of an only and most dear son': 'I may have other friends, but I can only have one John Mathewson'.[43] This language—which combines 'son', 'dearest friend', and 'dearest lad', thus invoking relationships of parent-child, friend, and beloved youth—is similar to that found in McQueen's wills as well as the 1891–1892 letters that in 1913 Campion quoted in court. As we can tell, McQueen was searching not only to express his love for these young men acceptably but also to understand its complexity.

Clarkson was another of McQueen's religious young men whom McQueen cultivated in the 1880s, this time from Sussex rather than Yell. He proved to be a lifelong friend of René's, and a trusted executor of his will. We see him in McQueen's entourage as early as November 1887 at Mathewson's funeral, and we learn from correspondence associated with Mathewson's death that Clarkson had accompanied René to Yell the previous summer. In May 1891, Clarkson, now an undergraduate of twenty, is listed in the census as part of the queer household McQueen had established in Brookhouse after his mother died. It was later that summer that Clarkson who, having known McQueen quite well over four years, introduced McQueen to Campion, a fellow undergraduate at Cambridge who became McQueen's live-in companion.

Besides having been the conduit between Campion and McQueen, Clarkson may have played another role in McQueen's story: he raises the question whether René's ailments—the eye problems at university that necessitated a term's absence, and his invalid state from 1892 until his death—were the result of congenital syphilis. Although Clarkson rightly represented himself throughout his association with McQueen and after as a clergyman, Clarkson from 1891 was bent on becoming a doctor, which he later became, specializing in venereal disease.[44] To be sure, this is a circumstantial connection, but Clarkson's special interest in medicine (which began before he took his first degree) does chime with René's ailments from his late teens, his brother Robert's aberrant behaviour that appeared at the same age, and their father's apparent alienation from wife and family. René's condition, which may have sparked the re-direction of Clarkson's studies, might also relate to Clarkson's loyalty and persistent presence in René's life, which extended to Magnus after René's death. In other words, Clarkson's initial friendship with McQueen may have evolved to include medical oversight as well, once he began to study medicine full-time after 1898; this date coincides with Campion's sug-

gestion that towards the end of his watch, in 1897–1898, René was both a recluse and an invalid.

Before René's death in 1911, Clarkson already described himself in the census as an 'Anatomical Coach' as well as 'clergy'. Immediately after René's death, he began to work as a clinical assistant at the London Hospital, and a university demonstrator in anatomy (1913–1917), finally gaining his qualifications in 1914. Clarkson remained friends with Magnus until the latter's death in 1918, and was both an executor and major beneficiary of Magnus's will, as he was of René's.[45] Clarkson seems to have come from a wealthy family,[46] but certainly after the war, with the benefits of his two legacies from René and Magnus, he was able to set up his medical practice in Queen Anne's Street, Cavendish Square, a fashionable part of London. In 1922, he co-edited and contributed to a book, *The Venereal Clinic: The Diagnosis, Treatment, and Preventing of Syphilis and Gonorrhea*, and from 1925 he co-edited from its inception *The British Journal of Venereal Diseases*.[47] When he died in 1939, he left a substantial estate of nearly £23,000.

Campion, another would-be priest, enters René McQueen's circle through an apparently casual introduction by Clarkson, who advised his friend Campion to stop and visit McQueen on his way elsewhere.[48] This account, and all that follows of Campion's relation with René, emerges in Campion's own testimony to the court hearing in 1913 that ended amicably with a settlement between himself and René's executors, among them his close friends Clarkson and Magnus. On first acquaintance, Campion testified, McQueen invited the undergraduate to accompany him immediately on a visit to Scandinavia. Moreover, McQueen declared his overwhelming affection for Campion towards the end of their tour, followed by an invitation to live with him, the stipulation of an annual stipend, and a trip to Scotland—to see the land that McQueen was proposing to leave to Campion in his will, should Campion agree to McQueen's offer of employment. This remuneration was offered as an alternative to Campion's plan to earn his living as a naval chaplain.

Campion notes that he held out against McQueen's importunities, preferring to return to university and complete his degree. Once McQueen shared his proposal with Campion's parents, 'Admiral Campion and his wife', along with the salary and legacy, Campion joined the McQueen household the following summer. Describing René as living 'the life of a recluse', Campion testified: 'the life at Chailey was extremely quiet. He had as a rule nothing to do but eat, drink, smoke,

and read. He wrote a novel. [. . .] Mr McQueen in his later years was almost blind and a complete invalid'.[49] There Campion remained from 1892 to 1898 as both companion and carer—a telling combination of friend and servant that may have replicated McQueen's prior relationship with Magnus Robertson (his butler and friend), who was only recently deceased. The relationship proposed between Campion and McQueen is characterized in the court report as 'an adopted son',[50] which recalls the census description of Magnus Rainier Robertson as McQueen's 'ward'. This diction normalizes the porous and overlapping categories of filial and sexual affection, of master and employee, of Christian and profane, and of straight and queer.

Having received £200 annually until 1897, Campion was then offered less (£120 and then £100 per annum), which reflected McQueen's allegedly diminishing 'ardour'.[51] In 1898, McQueen also pressured Campion to accept a managed marriage plan that echoed that of the union of the butler and the cook in 1881, which had produced Magnus Rainier Robertson, another of McQueen's potential heirs. As part of his legacy agreement, Campion was prevailed upon by McQueen to agree to marry in future Magnus junior's older sister Eliza, then only thirteen, to whom he was required to formally propose, and to take up a profession in order to support his future wife. Campion did not revert to his plan to become a clergyman, but arranged to be articled to his brother, as a trainee solicitor and, since Eliza suffered from consumption, he helped nurse her after their engagement until she died in 1903.[52] The conflation of Campion's roles as son, lover and employee in René's mind was illustrated in court. McQueen, Campion reported, dismissed angrily any potential objections of Campion's family to the marriage plans for Campion that McQueen set out: 'Whether your father objects or not, he has lost his authority over you [. . .] it is for me to advise you in any of these matters'.[53] In the same vein, McQueen granted permission for Campion to marry a woman of his choice after Eliza's death, so long as she was not Roman Catholic. Both Clarkson (who had himself married in 1896) and his wife expressed support for Campion after René's irascible behaviour. Their continuing friendship with Campion is evident in 1900, when they named their infant son Ivon.

In the 1901 census, Campion was living out René's plan. He was an unmarried solicitor and, now ejected from Brookhouse, he lived with his sister in Streatham, while Eliza, his consumptive fiancée, and her mother Mary Robertson (living 'on her own means') were residing in a lodging house near Hastings. Meanwhile, McQueen

is found at Brookhouse with five servants, including a groom and a butler, and a new iteration of the Brookhouse family, consisting of the thirteen-year-old Magnus junior, who is recorded as 'Ward of Head of Family' and presumably still a 'scholar', together with a visitor, Charles Martindale, who at thirty-seven years of age, is the third of René's young men.[54] Much younger than McQueen (now in his early sixties), Martindale might be said to have replaced Campion. In the judge's summing-up of the court case, he introduced the language of displacement and succession with respect to McQueen's affections: 'It might have been that he afterward cooled in regard to Mr Campion, and supplanted him by somebody else'.[55] This language is at once appropriate to wills, with their unexpected revelations familiar to lawyers, and appropriate to the trajectory of the queer surrogate family of men that McQueen constructed. Martindale is a gentleman bachelor, living on his own means, who remains in McQueen's circle to his death; he is described in the press as among the four 'chief mourners' at McQueen's funeral in 1912, and he receives a stipend of £100 per annum in McQueen's will, another in Magnus's, and a third in Mary Robertson's.[56]

In the final census of McQueen's life, the household in 1911 has once again changed. Mary Robertson, Magnus's mother, has been reinstated; back in Brookhouse, aged sixty-five, she is designated once more as 'servant/housekeeper', and without her daughter (now deceased). Her son Magnus, now twenty-three, arguably always the primary heir once his father the butler had died, is now recorded as McQueen's 'Secretary', and Campion, now married, is also back as a visitor, no doubt looking after his future claim on the will on René's imminent decease.

René was seventy-one in 1911, and his health was poor. That he was suffering from 'diabetes and suppressed gout' is reported in a Scottish report of the trial, headlined 'Adopted Son Claims £50,000. Remarkable Action against Scottish Estate', which sets his ailments in the context of his eccentricity: 'Mr. McQueen did not live like a man of means. He was a great invalid . . . He hated doctors and would only allow candles in the house as an illuminant'.[57] On René's death, the will provided for three executors who bridged aspects of his queer family, with two representatives from the Robertsons. He appointed (1) the Revd Clarkson, who was finishing his medical studies, and already working as an anatomical coach; (2) Herbert Langridge, a plumber, and relative of Mary Langridge Robertson, Magnus's mother; and (3) Magnus himself, his godson and legatee.

What the Wills Disclose

Five versions of René's will survive, beginning in 1900, several of which refer to an absent document—a marriage settlement in June 1872. These re-inscriptions provide a partial narrative of their maker's affections during the course of his formation of his family—from his attempt at traditional marriage, through Campion, and René's tellingly emotionally complex replacements, in Martindale, an adult friend, and Magnus, his butler's son. What is not reflected in the extant wills is the emotional crisis that ensued after the death of Magnus Laurence Robertson in 1890, McQueen's initial financial arrangements with Campion in 1891, and his verbal promises to Campion from 1892. Between that time and 1901, the relationship between René and Campion was changing. Moreover, Magnus was a growing lad who was inscribed variously as René's 'Secretary' and 'godson'. This trope recurs in Campion's reference in court to René's intention to adopt *him* as his son, a notion that the judge and the press readily appropriate to explain this queer family.

The direction of the wills bears out the judge's notion of a succession of heirs and objects of affection. In a narrative of displacement between June 1900 and 1908, Campion's large inheritance, promised verbally, is broken up and passed, not to Martindale, but mainly to Magnus, which indicates the complexity of emotions comprising McQueen's notion of family. In later versions of the will in 1905 and 1908, Campion only inherits a portion of the income from the Scottish properties of Braxfield, Broughton, and Peebles in the event of Magnus's death. In the 1900 will, however, Magnus's inheritance from the Scottish properties does not revert to Campion, but to Magnus's mother and his children on his death (should he have any), or to his mother and Magnus's sister Eliza, to whom Campion was engaged at that date. In both versions of the will, part of the income verbally offered to Campion is allocated to the annuity for René's wife.

If Campion functions as both adopted son and male lover, Magnus is primarily a godson, protected from René's conscious desire because he is formally a godson bearing McQueen's name, and raised in a family, which inhibits any hint of impropriety. This family designation performs several functions. It includes René as godparent, the presence of Magnus's mother, and her parents and extended family who live in Chailey. It also embraces the Scottish family of Magnus's father, several of whom are household servants at Brookhouse. Moreover, it inscribes the venerated memory of Magnus senior, the deceased butler. Although Magnus

Rainier Robertson is not René's biological son, he is at least kin in a social sense, and thus the prohibition of incest protects him. In sum, René was attached at both Yell and Chailey to his butler, whose marriage he arranged in 1882. In the 1880s, he befriended Clarkson and Mathewson. Later, he loved Campion and paid him to live with him while Magnus was a child. In 1898, René reduced Campion's stipend, evicted him from the house, and advised him to marry. In 1900, when Magnus had turned thirteen, René writes successive wills making the boy his primary beneficiary. After Campion's banishment, Martindale appears in 1901 while Magnus is still a schoolboy, and sticks around, as do Clarkson, and Campion who is trained and married by 1911. Each marriage that René arranged was designed to fulfil his vision of the queer family: the butler to produce an heir, and Campion to marry the heir's sister.

After the final will was revealed and proved, the emotional aftermath and legal situation were just as extraordinary as McQueen's life. Messy and disruptive, the wills completed René's queer household by creating a workable solution, moderately harmonious, if through the courts. Unlike his schoolfriend Pater, René was free and willing to play his life out in the press to accommodate his convictions. It is fitting, then, that a master key to his life is provided in a newspaper report of a posthumous law case contesting the will for what amounts to a breach of promise. The report reveals the tenor of the relationship between Campion and McQueen and the strong bond between Campion (the plaintiff) and the defendant and executors, who included Campion's close friends Magnus and Clarkson, and Herbert Langridge. The bond among the friends prevailed before, during, and after the will was read and proved. Campion after all was asked by the executors to prepare the will in his professional capacity as a solicitor, during which process he had observed that the large sum he had expected from McQueen was not among its bequests or extant debts, and that he had been left merely £4,000. Nevertheless, perhaps by agreement with the executors, he did not contest the will before it was proved. While the defendants argued in court that there was no contract between Campion and McQueen as alleged, they agreed to recompense him out of court 'generously' 'against his costs', by a sum 'larger [. . .] than the mere costs' of the proceedings, thus bringing the hearing to a rapid close in a single sitting.[58]

As a child, Magnus Rainier Robertson, born in Brookhouse, grew up in this queer family of McQueen's making. René's young friends, such as Clarkson, Campion, and Martindale, became Magnus junior's advisers and friends. It is both startling

and unsurprising, then, to read that in 1913, three weeks after the court case, Magnus is the main witness at a coroner's inquest held in Brookhouse into the likely suicide—inexplicable and unexpected—of *his* butler Frank King.[59] This case is one measure of the impact of the revelations about René that had emerged in court and in the press on those involved in the McQueen family. It was one thing to know first-hand by observation or imitation of René's mode of life. It was another to have it exposed and named in the public courts. In the short account of King's death in the *Illustrated Police News*, we read: 'It was said that he [King] worried a great deal over the law suit'. King—like Clarkson, Campion and Martindale—was part of Magnus's legacy from René. King, a man of thirty-five, was part of Magnus's childhood, since in 1900 he had been René's butler as well, just as he was also one of several servants who witnessed a will at that time. Now King was poised to marry and, although he was unhappy in his job and would have preferred a post as a caretaker in a museum, he was reluctant to leave Magnus junior's employment, and perhaps his person. It is a recognizable pattern. On this occasion, Magnus junior was encouraging another butler to marry; he also gave him a bonus of £50 and promised him assistance with renting a cottage.[60]

It transpires that Magnus junior was doubly bound to King, who was also his first cousin, which reiterates René's personal involvement with the two working-class families of Magnus's parents and his reliance on their families to build his own: the Robertsons from Yell, and the Langridges from Chailey. His locus of selection seems feudal, in its strong local ties and its employment of whole families of workers to serve the laird. King had admitted to Magnus debts, but they seem those of a gentleman's gentleman, due as they were to playing the stock market. By all accounts, King manifests the ambiguities and ambivalences of the McQueen queer circle. He is both family and employee; he both wants and does not want a new job. As though he is owed them, he seeks funds, preferment, and affection from Magnus junior, who offers him money and encourages him to go ahead with the marriage, about which King is demonstrably ambivalent. Magnus is a notably cool and detached witness. If it is impossible to fathom to what degree King's suicidal angst stemmed from his shock about René's love affair, the emotional ambivalence of a queer sensibility to marriage, his attachment to Magnus, and/or his debts, the report nevertheless raises these questions.

Magnus Rainier Robertson enlisted in the Royal Sussex Regiment scarcely a year later in September 1914, joining the Essex Regiment, 9th Battalion soon af-

ter as a commissioned officer befitting a gentleman, and dying in action in France, in August 1918. He was thirty-one years old.[61] His will, however, is dated 2 December 1913, just two months after the Campion lawsuit. While one executor of his will is René's and Magnus junior's longstanding friend Clarkson, and one of its beneficiaries is Martindale, Campion is nowhere to be found, which suggests that the legal wrangle severed this longstanding friendship. Magnus junior's mother, Mary Robertson, who inherited most of her son's estate in 1918, remained at Brookhouse, dying there in 1933, decades after the deaths of René, her husband, and her son. René died believing that his vision of a bespoke model of the Rainier-McQueen-Robertson family would survive into future generations, but his plan was vitiated by Magnus's premature death during World War One. Buried in France, Magnus junior is remembered in Chailey, where his name appears on the war memorial in the churchyard of St Peter's, where his mother and father, and René and his grandmother, are buried.

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NOTES

[1] Bernard Holland, 'The Last M'Queen of Braxfield', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 194 (1913), 816–23 (p. 818).

[2] Ibid., p. 816.

[3] Wright's Cowper School was housed in a commodious property on the High St (no. 10) of Olney, which had been the site of the family home and business. It signals prosperity. Wright's father, William Samuel Wright (1831–1915), was an early professional photographer between 1864 and 1883, describing himself as 'Photographer & Artist' in successive censuses. In the 1870s, he served as president of the Olney Working Man's Institute, a nonconformist member of the local school board, and a recurrent contributor of readings to entertainments held at the National School. He is, however, an artisanal businessman: his studio on the High Street was designated 'Photographer and Fancy Repository'; it may have closed in 1883 to make way for a new family business, his son's school. By 1900, Thomas was the Principal of the Boys' School, and his wife, Principal of the Girls' School.

[4] Among other titles Wright published before *The Life of Walter Pater* were biographies of William Cowper (1892), Daniel Defoe (1894), Edward Fitzgerald (1904), and Sir Richard Burton (1906).

[5] An example of McQueen's bias to jingoistic military history is the marked discrepancy between his memory of the celebration of the end of the Crimean War in Canterbury, reproduced uncritically by Wright and the coverage of the *absence* of celebrations in Canterbury in the Kent press. See the *Canterbury Journal*, 31 May 1856, p. 2, and the labour-oriented *Kent Herald*, 5 June 1856.

[6] Pater may have had the example of Canon and Regius Professor Arthur Stanley's robust Anglicanism in mind; he certainly continued to keep open the possibility of ordination, when he applied for clerical fellowships after he graduated, before gaining the non-clerical post at Brasenose College, Oxford.

[7] McQueen's family life at home as a child and young man may have suffered from the absence of his father through mutual agreement between his parents, possibly abetted by his military or public duties. James McQueen does not appear in any census with his wife and family, either in 1841, 1851 and 1861 in Chailey, or in 1871 or 1881 in Canterbury. In 1881, two years before his death, he is a lodger in Charles St, Westminster, London, in a house next to the General United Service Club. By this point, he may have informally separated from his wife, though when he dies, she is described as the widow and he dies in the family home, Tintoch House, Barton Fields, Canterbury. Bernard Holland characterizes her, circa 1885, as 'very social, though wild in her way', and knew her well enough to serve as an executor to her will in 1889 (p. 818). Elisa and James McQueen are both buried in St. Martin's churchyard, but not together. If they were estranged, they made arrangements that were not uncommon among the wealthy classes at the time. Information about the layout of the churchyard of St Martin's Canterbury was generously provided by Revd Mark Griffin.

[8] In 1858, René achieved prizes in three of the named awards, the Tenterden prize (for divinity), the Broughton prize (for Latin scholarship and ecclesiastical history), and the Stanley prize (for history); and in 1857, he won the sixth-form prizes for Classics, English, and French.

[9] The Report of the Feast Society for 1858 is clear if succinct about the award to McQueen being a codicil to Pater's attainment of the Exhibition on the basis of a written examination and a viva. However, in the report of the proceedings of the award event in the press, the Headmaster's adulation for McQueen ('In what language am I to address you?') is in notable contrast to the cool words of Wallace's farewell to Pater that precedes it. The paean to McQueen is the last of the three school leavers, but it is an unmistakeable rousing conclusion of robust praise, ending with the special gift of up to ten guineas' worth of books. It follows his earlier remark on McQueen's

achievement in French: 'You are one of the best French scholars we have ever had among us'. See 'The Report of the Proceedings of the King's School Feast Society', Canterbury: Kentish Observer Office, 1858; and 'King's School Feast Society', *Kentish Gazette*, 10 August 1858, pp. 2–3.

[10] The Headmaster's acknowledgement of McQueen's superior intellect is also shared by an examiner, Revd Professor Ellicott, who singles out McQueen among the batch of examinations he read: 'that gentleman expressed a very high opinion of the attainments of the boys, and especially mentioned J. M'Queen. The Chairman explained that M'Queen was not eligible for the exhibition…but he had passed so good an examination, that the society had determined to mark their sense of his high conduct and abilities by presenting him with books to the value of ten guineas' (*Kentish Gazette*, 10 August 1858, p. 3). The Committee for 1858, listed in the Feast Society Report, also recognized McQueen's 'preeminent merit' (*Canterbury Journal*, 7 August 1858, p. 3).

[11] In the census in 1881 and 1891, he describes himself as a Landowner and a Justice of the Peace in Orkney and Shetland.

[12] This was a complicated choice for Henry Dombrain, perhaps initially inspired by his local parish priest, E. H. Woodall who, to Dombrain's subsequent virulent disapproval, converted to Roman Catholicism in the summer of 1859. Woodall took his BA from Exeter College, Oxford in 1836, and his MA in 1841. Dombrain eventually matriculated at Pembroke College, Oxford in 1860, despite Pater's endorsement of Exeter College when he stayed with the Dombrains at Christmas 1859. Pembroke had been significantly transformed and invigorated by Francis Jeune, its Master from 1844. Dombrain's choice, like Pater's decision to enter Queen's, seems to have been guided by Arthur Stanley's advice and experience. Both the Provost of Queen's and the Master of Pembroke actively promulgated university and college reform in the 1850s, along with Stanley. Moreover, Jeune's religious position, an Evangelical and 'a determined opponent of Newmanism (the Oxford movement)', meshed with Dombrain's distaste for Woodall's conversion. See J. H.C. Leach, 'Francis Jeune', *ODNB*, and L.W. Brockliss, *The University of Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 347.

[13] At this time, Balliol College was renowned for the liberal theology characteristic of Benjamin Jowett, Regius Professor of Greek and contributor to the theologically controversial collection *Essays and Reviews* of 1860. McQueen was absent from college in Hilary term 1859 due to his weak eyes.

[14] For an account of Dombrain's celebration of communion on Yell, which McQueen was not permitted to undertake, see John Ballantyne, 'An Eccentric in Yell: John Rainier McQueen of Burravoe', *New Shetlander*, 176 (1991), 27–32 (p. 27). The date of Dombrain's visit is unclear; it possibly took place in 1870, before McQueen's two-year absence.

[15] Jowett's contribution to *Essays and Reviews* on the interpretation of scripture was probably the most controversial in the collection; a riposte, *Aids to Faith*, was edited by Thomson, the Provost of Queen's. Both titles appeared while McQueen and Pater were in their respective colleges.

[16] Seeley's *Ecce Homo* was published anonymously by Macmillan.

[17] For James McQueen and the Freemasons, see *Maidstone Journal and Kentish Advertiser*, 25 September 1855, p. 6; for the Kent Militia Artillery, see *Canterbury Journal*, 7 June 1856, p. 2; for the King's School Feast Society, see *Kentish Gazette*, 4 August 1857, p. 1; 11 August 1857, p. 7; and for his regular stints at the county balls in Canterbury, see *Kentish Gazette*, 30 March 1858, p. 1.

[18] See the 'East Kent Michaelmas Sessions', *Kentish Chronicle*, 20 October 1866, p. 5. James McQueen began adjudicating the following month.

[19] When René was living on Yell, he never appears in the census in Scotland, but always made the effort to be identified with south-east England. In the 1861 and 1871 censuses, his presence in Chailey may have been to secure the inheritance of the house from his ageing grandmother.

[20] John Rainier McQueen was sworn in as a Justice of the Peace on 6 August 1878; he attended only one other meeting of the Shetland JPs on 29 October of that year; and he appears in no further

minutes of the JP Quarter Sessions Books 1887–1912 (Shetland Archives). These dates tally with his presence in Lerwick, the main town of the Shetland Islands, in Mrs Crutwell's visitors' book for her lodging house, Lerwick, on 5 August and 25 October 1878 (Shetland Archives).

Justices of the Peace for Scotland were appointed in London, by an informal system of preferment. After 1820, their role in Scotland was far less important than in England since their duties were increasingly transferred to sheriffs, who were local appointments. See Johan Findlay, *All Manner of People. The History of the Justices of the Peace in Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Saltire Society, 2000), especially chapters 2, 3, and 6; and Ann E. Whetstone, *Scottish County Government in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1981), pp. 58–59.

[21] Holland, 'The Last M'Queen of Braxfield', p. 822. This passage immediately precedes Holland's description of René's short-lived marriage.

[22] René and his wife Mary Rainier were descendants of brothers Daniel (b. 1739) and John (b. 1742) Rainier respectively, whose parents were Peter Rainier (1710–1777) and Sarah Sprat (1712–1781) who married in 1739. René and Mary were distant cousins, separated by a common ancestry four generations ago, but united by the persistence of the family name and a geographical proximity. See Figure 2.

[23] Although by this time René was established on Yell, he absented himself for over two years (1870–1872), perhaps to 'look after' his aging and beloved grandmother who was ninety when she died in 1872, his legacy, and even perhaps finding a wife. In the event, his grandmother bequeathed Brookhouse to her daughter, René's mother, from whom he inherited it at her death in 1889.

[24] See advertisements for the sale of 'The Estate and Manor House of Burravoe, Yell', in the *Shetland Times*, 27 October 1873, p. 1, and the following three issues of 3, 10, and 17 November 1873, all p. 1.

[25] Holland, 'The Last M'Queen of Braxfield', p. 822.

[26] Mary McQueen was living in Walnut Tree House, in Northbourne, Kent, the village in which she was born.

[27] See note 34.

[28] Holland 'The Last M'Queen of Braxfield', p. 822.

[29] Ballantyne, 'An Eccentric in Yell', p. 28.

[30] See note 7.

[31] Divorce itself, despite the clear intention of the act to make it accessible, was substantially undermined by the Divorce Courts, which established 'bars' to its implementation. See the mire of complexity outlined by a disgruntled anonymous reviewer in 'The Laws of Marriage and Divorce', *Westminster Review*, 26 (1864), 442–69. On separation orders, see Ginger Frost, *Living in Sin. Cohabiting as Husband and Wife in Nineteenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce. England 1530–1987* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); and Gail Savage, 'The Operation of the 1857 Divorce Act, 1860–1910', *Journal of Social History*, 16.4 (1983), 103–10.

[32] The exclusion of René on the tombstone in favour of Robert is itself anomalous. Robert was the younger son who, by this time, had left university without obtaining his degree (having matriculated in 1860 at Exeter College aged seventeen). Aged twenty-eight in 1871, he was living in a local pub in Chailey, not in nearby Brookhouse with his grandmother and family, from whom he seems to have been alienated for the remainder of his life. While Robert was in The King's School with his older brother, Pater and Dombrain, glimpses of him were normal and frequent, and his achievement is recognized at Feast Day events. After René left for Oxford, Robert's correspondence gave a similar impression. Once he left school and university, odd anecdotal references to him that survive seem troubled, which the records corroborate. In July 1865, eighteen months before his father became a county magistrate, Robert was in court in Canterbury charged with three other men for allowing their dogs to be 'at large in the public streets without being muzzled'; they

were dismissed with a caution. The story appears in the 'Canterbury Police Court' column in the local press ('The Dog Mania', *Canterbury Journal*, 15 July 1865, p. 4). In 1881, Robert continued to live close to the Five Bells public house in Chailey, although Brookhouse was unoccupied. Holland was told by René, probably in the mid-1880s, that Robert was at home in public houses. Robert, having broken into the grounds of Brookhouse, created a bonfire, around which 'disorderly figures' were reeling. (See Holland, 'The Last M'Queen of Braxfield', p. 823.) According to Robert's death certificate, he did not die of alcoholism or alcohol-related causes, but from a 'Fungus Haematodes of 3 months growth': a lethal soft tissue cancer with poor prognosis at the time. When he died in 1887, aged forty-five, his estate was valued at a meagre £135. Unlike his brother, Robert inherited little of the family property directly; in the wills of his grandmother, father and mother, his legacies were left in trust for him under the supervision of other family members. Together, these glimpses suggest estrangement, possible mental illness, and/or alcoholism.

[33] McQueen noted that on his return to Yell in July 1872 he had been absent for over two years. See T. Mathewson, 'John Rainier McQueen of Braxfield', *Shetland News* (18 May 1912), p. 8. Mathewson incorporates the text of the first sermon delivered by McQueen on his return from south-east England on 7 July 1872.

[34] See the spate of letters in the weekly *Shetland Times* between July and September 1874 (all on p. 3). Highly charged, sectarian, and admonitory, they are signed with pseudonyms such as 'Invictus' and 'Truth Teller'. They began with a visitation of the Archbishop of Aberdeen and Orkney to the Shetland Islands, including Yell in July. By 21 September, these expanded beyond the bishop's ministrations to two entire columns on 'Religious Dissatisfaction in South Yell'.

[35] Mary Langridge married her husband Magnus Laurence Robertson on 20 April 1882 in Shetland, when Magnus, formerly a farmer, was McQueen's butler in Burravoe, having been employed by his grandmother in Brookouse (1871 census). The first two children were born in Shetland, in 1883 and 1885, but by 1887, when Magnus junior was born, Mary at least was back in Chailey, Sussex. Her husband died in Chailey in 1890. By 1891, when Mary first appeared married with the three children in the Brookhouse census returns, she was a widow.

[36] See advertisements for the letting of property in the *Shetland Times*, 15, 22, and 29 April 1882.

[37] These dates are gleaned from a dated correspondence from John Rainier McQueen to Arthur Laurenson, a wool merchant in Lerwick, on antiquarian topics related to Laurenson's decoration scheme for the Lerwick Town Hall. See Shetland Archives D. 3/21.

[38] Robert Macqueen [*sic*], Lord Braxfield (1722–1799). In the 1790s, Macqueen, the Lord Justice Clerk was renowned and hated for his persecution of radicals. See *ODNB* for an unsympathetic description from a Whig critic Lord Cockburn, himself the Solicitor General for Scotland 1800–1830:

> 'Strong built and dark, with rough eyebrows, powerful eyes, threatening lips, and a low, growling voice, he was like a formidable blacksmith. His accent and his dialect were exaggerated Scotch, his language, like his thoughts, short, strong and conclusive' (*Memorials … by Henry Cockburn*, 113). He was a famous drinker and a ruthless card-player, but also had more refined tastes. Like other old-fashioned members of the Scottish bar he scorned modern literature and stuck strictly to the classics, but [. . .] was a pillar of the Edinburgh Musical Society.

The publication of Cockburn's *Memorials of His Time* in 1856, with its portrayal of René's ancestor as an iconoclast may have inspired Rene's self-fashioning soon after. Later in René's lifetime, Braxfield was the inspiration of the uncouth judge in R.L. Stevenson's *The Weir of Hermiston* (1896).

[39] Magnus Rainier Robertson was born 26 August 1887, Robert McQueen died 16 October 1887, and John Mathewson died in Brookhouse 8 November 1887, while a curate in Singleton, Sussex.

[40] The newspaper reports from 1913 reveal that soon after meeting Campion, McQueen invited the young man on a long tour of Scandinavia. Campion testified as follows:

> When Mr McQueen and Mr Campion were at Copenhagen the former said that he could not get on without Campion, and asked him never to leave him. He asked Campion not to go back to Cambridge, but to go and live with him as his adopted son. Young Campion said that Mr McQueen might get tired of him in a few years, and then he would have no career of his own. McQueen was very angry at Campion imagining that he would be inconstant and would leave him in the lurch.

Following the tour, McQueen took Campion to Scotland to see the estates that McQueen was proposing to leave Campion in his will: 'Mr Smith, continuing, said that at the end of the tour, Mr McQueen asked Mr Campion to go with him to see the estates, and while visiting them McQueen said that Campion was more suited to be a Scotch laird than a clergyman'. On St Andrew's Day, 1891, McQueen wrote to Campion, who had been injured while playing football: 'One thing this sweet time has shown me, and that is how much fonder I am of my Ivon than even I had any idea. How the thought of you has swallowed up any other thoughts. These three days past I have been scarcely able to eat at all'. After a reference to the Scottish estates, he added: 'You are worth much more than that to me'. The report continues: 'Mr Smith added that the letters written to plaintiff by Mr McQueen were couched in a playful tone like those of opposite sexes who were deeply attached, and which usually lent themselves to ridicule. As to the sobriety and sanity of Mr McQueen there was not the slightest suggestion at all. Mr McQueen visited Admiral Campion's house, and in the presence of several members of the family and two servants he made a speech, in which he said that Ivon Campion was to live with him as his adopted son. He also set out the terms of the agreement he had made with Ivon Campion. That arrangement was a verbal one'. 'Rich Man's Friend. Alleged Promise of Legacy. Unusual Claim Settled', *Daily Telegraph*, 15 October 1913, p. 6, and 'Adopted Son Claims £50,000: Remarkable Action against Scottish Estate', *Dundee Courier*, 15 October 1913, p. 2.

[41] Just after his mother's death in 1889, René is reported to be selling the Canterbury family home, as 'he will not reside here' (*Canterbury Journal*, 23 November 1889, p. 4). According to Holland, McQueen had no affection for Canterbury or the family home ('The Last M'Queen of Braxfield', pp. 818–19).

[42] 'Death of the Revd John Mathewson', *Shetland Times*, 12 November 1887, p. 2.

[43] Letter from John Rainier McQueen to James J. Haldane Burgess, 8 November 1887, folios 1 and 2, Shetland Archive, D3/21.

[44] Clarkson entered the medical register on 6 November 1891, having commenced his studies at Cambridge on 11 October 1891. An index of the public's intolerance toward venereal disease that year may be gauged by the reviews of the single performance in London accorded Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* in March 1891. Written in 1881, it was only staged in England in 1891 by the Independent Theatre Society in William Archer's English translation in the Royalty Theatre, London. A review in the *Daily Telegraph* spluttered with indignation: 'an open drain [. . .] a loathsome sore unbandaged [. . .] a dirty act done publicly [. . .] crapulous stuff' (14 March 1891, p. 5).

[45] Clarkson was an executor of Magnus Rainier Robertson's will in January 1918; he inherited a significant sum outright, and most of Magnus junior's property on the death of Magnus's mother in 1933. The other executor of this will was a solicitor, Edmund Lawson, who also served as the sole executor of Magnus's mother's will in 1932 and as an executor of Clarkson's will in 1939. Mary Robertson's beneficiaries included Clarkson and Martindale ('in grateful acknowledgment of his kindness to me'), who were still present for her twenty years after René's death. Like Clarkson, with his son Ivon recalling Campion, and his employment of Lawson, Mary Robertson remained tied to the aura of the McQueen circle for the entirety of her life.

[46] In the 1911 census, Clarkson was with his widowed mother and sister in Dover, in a house of fourteen rooms.

[47] The first issue carried an article 'Gonororrhal Afflictions of the Eye', which notes a link between these diseases (that afflict men only) and rheumatism in the ankles and feet, and great pain in the brow, nose, and teeth.

[48] More than one account of their meeting exists. In court, it was suggested that Clarkson accompanied Campion on his journey, in order to introduce him to McQueen. In any case, the role of Clarkson throughout suggests that he is complicit in validating to Campion McQueen's unsettling combination of devout Christian, avuncular friend, and sexual lover. Clarkson was likely to have been aware of all three facets of McQueen's character before he introduced Campion to McQueen. For Clarkson's trip to Scotland, see McQueen's letter about John Mathewson and the funeral to James J. Haldane Burgess, 17 November 1887 (note 43); for his presence at John Mathewson's funeral, see 'Singleton', *West Sussex Gazette*, 17 November 1887, p. 4.

[49] 'Rich Man's Friend', p. 6.

[50] 'Rich Man's Friend', p. 6.

[51] For 'ardour', see 'Rich Man's Friend', p. 6. The exact amounts of these annual payments, and their timing vary slightly among sources; in 1897 or 1898 the amount was reduced to £100 or £120 annually.

[52] It is typical of this period that Campion, Clarkson, and René all entered university with the intention of becoming Anglican priests, but two are deflected from following this course, and the third, having become a priest, abandons it and changes his profession.

[53] 'Rich Man's Friend', p. 6.

[54] The nature and length of Magnus Rainier Robertson's education remain unknown. In the 1901 census returns, the space for his occupation is blank, and he is not described as a 'scholar', although he is thirteen at the time. René's grandfather, Captain (eventually Admiral) Rainier was one of four founders of Chailey [Primary] School, St Peter's, in 1814, but there is no record of Magnus junior's attendance at this village school. For more on Chailey School, see 'Chailey Through the Ages', ed. Revd Edwin Matthias (Chailey, Sussex: [The Rectory], 1983), pp. 35, 70–73.

[55] 'Rich Man's Friend', p. 6.

[56] This is not a small bequest; in purchasing power £100 is worth about £11,497 today. In Mary Robertson's will, Martindale is the first named beneficiary.

[57] 'Adopted Son Claims £50,000', p. 2.

[58] 'Rich Man's Friend', p. 6.

[59] See 'Chailey Butler's Tragic Death', *Sussex Express*, 7 November 1913, p. 10; and 'A Butler Shot', *Illustrated Police News*, 6 November 1913, p. 7.

[60] Although circa 1898 Magnus junior was a child of eleven, and thus unable to understand how René dealt with disencumbering himself from Campion at that time, he did mature enough to comprehend Campion's explanation and position in the ensuing years before René's death in 1912, as we can see from the 1913 trial. By contrast, we have no evidence of the arrangement between Magnus's father and René in 1882 on Yell, when the butler married his fellow servant, the cook, although Magnus junior may have been informed about it retrospectively by his mother or father.

[61] An obituary in a local paper described 'Captain Robertson' (i.e. Magnus junior) as 'one of the principal landowners of the district, he having inherited the estate of the late Mr J. R. McQueen. Magnus was a Parish Councillor, Vice-Captain of the Cricket Club, Scout-master, Secretary to the Parish Room, Secretary to the Rifle Range, and was a hon. member of the South Saxon Lodge of Oddfellows' ('Chailey Officer Killed', *Sussex Express*, 30 August 1918, p. 5).

Mackenzie Gregg

Kissing by the Book: John Gray's Manual Poetics

The minor poet John Gray has long served as the face of poetic decadence. In 1893, his debut volume *Silverpoints* situated him firmly within the poetry community associated with the 'Yellow 90s', earning him the tongue-in-cheek titles, 'the incomparable poet of the age'[1] and 'le Plus Decadent des Decadents'.[2] *Silverpoints* marked a major transformation in Gray's life, a definitive departure from his working-class origins as he ascended into the literary élite of the moment. Gray would soon become an acolyte of Oscar Wilde, for whom he was rumoured to have provided the inspiration for the fictional dandy, Dorian Gray.

Gray's involvement with Wilde, which, in fact, began *after* the publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, was not to last long. He fell out with the famous, older poet during the production of his first volume of poetry, *Silverpoints*, which Wilde had initially offered to finance. Two years later, in 1895, Wilde's high-profile trials cast a shadow over the decadent communities in which Gray remained involved. After Aubrey Beardsley's Catholic conversion and early death in 1898, Gray determined to enter the priesthood. He enrolled in Scots College, Rome, and realigned from the raucous queer sociality of his *fin-de-siècle* bohemian circles to a life of quiet contemplation in Edinburgh with his partner, the writer and sexologist Marc-André Raffalovich, where Gray lived until his death in 1934.

Gray's working-class origins were of great importance to his formation as an artist. He was born on 10 March 1866, in the London suburb Bethnal Green. When he reached the age of thirteen, his father removed him from school and secured him a position as a metal-turner at the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich. Gray's task as a metal-turner was to shape metal parts by hand, with the use of a mechanized, spinning lathe. Within the machine shop, turning was one of the more specialized roles: it required 'deftness and experience in operating the machines', and afforded 'the widest scope for inventive skill'.[3] Gray's later poem 'The Forge' (1896), inspired by his years at Woolwich, characterizes the relationship between worker and material as a sublime struggle for control: the metalworker's forge is an 'arena wherein strange stuff | With man locks strength; where elements dispute | The mastery'.[4] The metal 'complains, all bruised and scathed' from the 'violent action' of smiting (p. 70). If the metalworker leaves his mark on the materials that he moulds, the materials, in turn, reshape him. Describing the 'crooked back' of a smith who works the forge, the speaker of 'The Forge' observes: 'It bends a man to make no matter what' (p. 70). With this move from the specificity of metal to the generalizability of 'no matter what', Gray implies that any kind of 'forging'—steel, poetry, identity—wears on the body. The poem's concluding line, 'And this day is the type of many days' (p. 70), maps the writer's metaphor of print onto the repetitive nature of factory work, and the way that capitalist time, like type on a page, imprints itself upon the worker's body. Within his autobiographical poems, Gray repeatedly touches present to past, considering one trade through the symbolic language offered by the other. In an untitled poem from 1893 or 1894, reflecting upon this earlier period in his life, Gray recalls:

> Then and still being young
> Ill liking it I went among
> Whose art it was to make a useful thing.
> There many a long year I learnt
> To make a thing where living is well earned,
> Where men set up the engines of their suffering. [5]

While Gray writes that he in some ways came to love the work, he wanted the chance to make use of his analytical and expressive skills: 'Truth being vanity in me was loath | That wit like mine should cut no harder stuff than steel' (p. 2).

Becoming a writer would mean learning to manipulate language, a 'harder' material than steel.

Gray's extraordinary career shift from metal-turner at the Woolwich Arsenal to a librarian in the Foreign Office was emblematic of the middle-class ascension that was newly possible within the later Victorian period. Simultaneously, Gray, in pursuing his career as a poet, entered into London's literary milieu. As Gray's biographer Jerusha Hull McCormack has discussed, his early literary output was the result of a dogged determination to 'write well', an ingrained practice of 'scrupulous craftsmanship', derived from his years at Woolwich.[6] Gray's poetic projects indicate an important continuity between manual labour and the labours of the *fin-de-siècle* poet, evincing a set of formal preoccupations and practices with the rote, the prescriptive, and the circumscribed that I call his *manual poetics*. Throughout his career, I will argue, Gray—who meticulously crafted both his poetry and his persona—shaped himself as if according to an instructional handbook, and that this by-the-book approach to self-making was endemic to Gray's status as both a parvenu and a decadent dandy. Gray's artisanship suggests just one of the ways in which decadence, typically attached to a certain notion of the declining aristocracy, also relied upon the creative energy generated by working-class people and perspectives. Beginning with *Silverpoints*, Gray's best-known volume, I will then turn to two unpublished poems, 'The Lover's Manual' and 'The Wheel'. In these works, Gray self-consciously adopts and reworks the instructional manual, committing to didactic form as a structural convention from which convention's others—difference, excess, and failure—inevitably emerge.

While the refined artificialities and stylistic experimentations of decadence are typically linked to an aristocratic sensibility, the formal refinement of English decadence equally derives from an aestheticist notion of workmanship. In his 1893 essay 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', Arthur Symons observes the artisanal nature of English decadence in his brief commentary on Walter Pater, whose prose he differentiates from the 'violence to language' and 'vivid effects' of the French writers.[7] Pater's restrained composition, marked by its 'reticence', is instead comparable for Symons to the work of a skilled craftsman: 'in its minute elaboration it can be compared only with goldsmith's work—so fine, so delicate is the handling of so delicate, so precious a material'.[8] As Linda Dowling has commented, the aestheticism of the mid-century had taught Pater 'that language ought to be treated with the same respect and technical knowledge as sculptors

treated marble, a Ruskinian and Pre-Raphaelite idea of craftsmanship'.[9] Following Morris's and Ruskin's socialist interventions in aestheticism, artists and writers affiliated with the movement sought to democratize art and to instil aesthetic appreciation,[10] while restoring the labourer to a preindustrial position of agency. In conceptually ennobling the labourer, aestheticist poets also came to understand themselves as workers in a new way. In 'Song of a Fellow Worker' (1881), the Pre-Raphaelite poet Arthur O'Shaughnessy imagined poets and labourers, 'the worker with the chisel and the worker with the pen', as sharing the common project of building 'a city that Man owns': a city both material and intellectual.[11] In a speech delivered on his 1882 American lecture tour, Oscar Wilde inculcated himself in this aestheticist project of cross-class unity: 'Ours has been the first movement which has brought the handicraftsman and the artist together'.[12] Wilde declared that the artist and the worker must be united, for to separate the two is to separate the spirit from the body: 'you rob the one of all spiritual motive and all imaginative joy, [and] you isolate the other from all real technical perfection'.[13] Wilde, inspired both by Ruskin's socialism and Pater's devotion to craft, would help to evolve the concept of aestheticist craftsmanship into the decadent refinement of form that characterized the style of the *fin de siècle*. This was the scene into which Gray would emerge as a new voice in the final years of the 1880s.

Gray made his entrée into literary London in 1888, when he managed to secure as his first mentors the young artistic couple Charles Ricketts and Charles Haslewood Shannon. Ricketts and Shannon's literary magazine *The Dial* debuted in August 1889, and featured Gray's first two published pieces of writing. Inspired by William Morris's experiments in small press printing, Ricketts was readying himself to undertake a series of book design projects. He would go on to found Vale Press in 1896, with the financial backing of William Llewellyn Hacon; in 1893, prior to founding Vale, Ricketts experimented in the craft of bookmaking with his design for Gray's *Silverpoints*.

In forging his artisanal approach to poetry, Gray interspersed the aestheticist tradition expounded by his predecessors with the craft perspective that he had gained from his earlier experience as a manual worker and draughtsman. Gray's maxim was 'Poetry is an art and art is skill'.[14] With this pragmatic approach, Gray suggests that artistic skill is not the result of an inborn, rarefied, and implicitly classed sensibility, but rather, that it is a proficiency developed through instruction and practice. He described his practical approach to craft in straightforward terms:

he would write poems by 'getting 2 ideas (often incongruous) & clapping them to bake in his brain'.[15] Gray thus imagined poetic creation as a bringing together of incongruities and contradictions to create something, like his own persona, altogether original. The poem is forged under heat: a metalworker's image for the creative process.

That Gray's poetry was informed by the visual arts suggests a further connection between his origins and his poetic practice. As a teenager employed at the Royal Arsenal, Gray had taught himself to draw and paint, and, after passing an examination, had been promoted to a position in the drawing office. His mentors Shannon and Ricketts were well-respected visual artists: Shannon made his name as a painter and lithographer, whereas Ricketts was best known as an illustrator and woodblock printer. Shannon and Ricketts were also avid collectors of early Renaissance drawings. Gray established his own set of interests regarding visual art, which revealed different preoccupations from those of his mentors. In a November, 1890 letter to the French writer and editor Félix Fénéon, Gray enclosed four issues of *The Whirlwind*, the weekly Jacobite newspaper published by Herbert Vivian. Vivian, an associate of Oscar Wilde's and James McNeill Whistler's whom Gray knew personally, had recently begun to publish a series of Whistler's original lithographs, titled 'Songs on Stone', which depicted scenes of modern London life. Vivian emphasized that the prints were not reproductions but originals, and he marketed them as collectibles; at the price of a penny per issue, this made Whistler's work more widely accessible to people like Gray. Gray commented in his letter upon Whistler's drawing *The Tyresmith* (Figure 1), which appeared in the 15 November issue:

> Le dessin de Whistler représente une forge anglaise où les ouvriers fabriquent des bandes de roue. Si j'ai droit—j'étais petit, ils sont en train d'agrandir un peu la circonférence de la roue qu'ils manient.[16]

The Tyresmith depicts two workers in the right foreground shaping a wheel, while two children look on from the doorway at the centre of the composition. The wall to the left of the children is hung with horseshoes, and through the doorway where they stand, women appear to be performing domestic labour. In his interpretation of Whistler's scene of the wheelwright, Gray does not comment

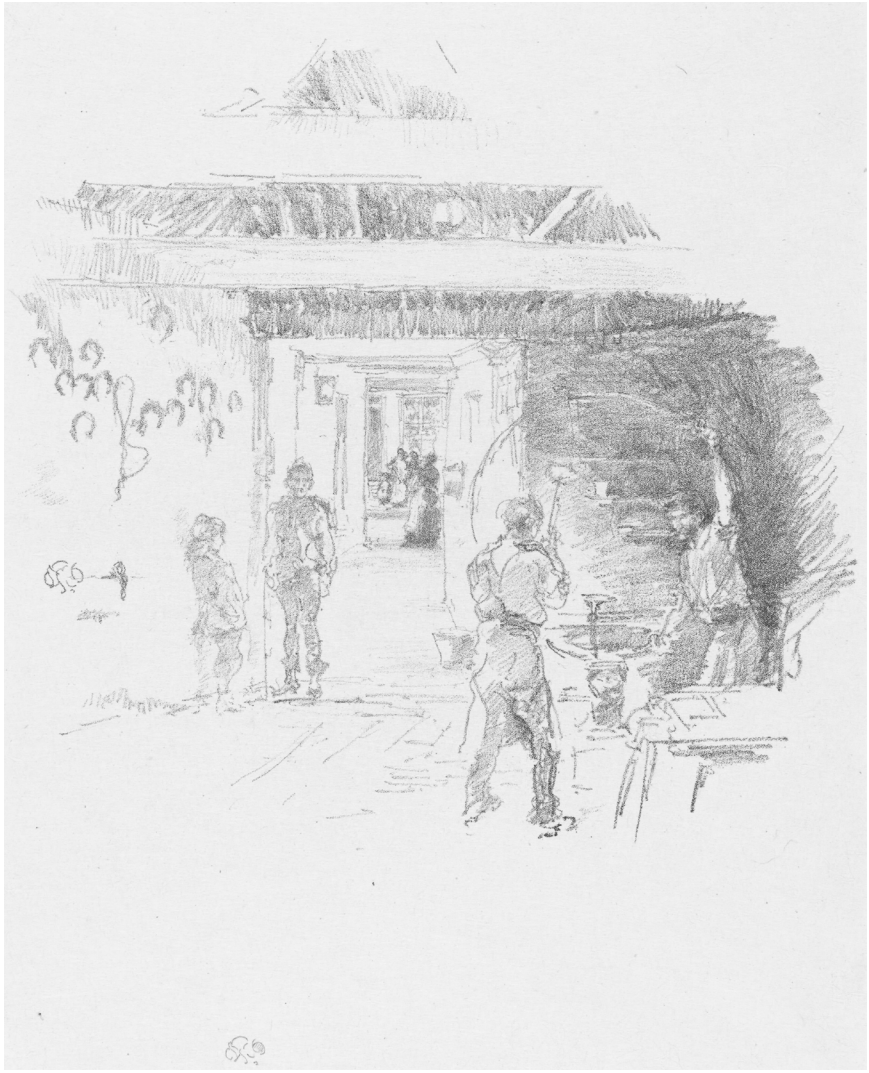


Figure 1: James McNeill Whistler, *The Tyresmith* (1890). Lithograph in black on wove paper. Image 17 cm x 17.5 cm; sheet: 28.8 cm x 22.1 cm. Rosenwald Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1943.3.8687.

on the picturesqueness of preindustrial English labour, as one might expect of an upper-class viewer; rather, he enters into the drawing, elucidating for Fénéon the specific process that the workers are undertaking, and relying upon his own

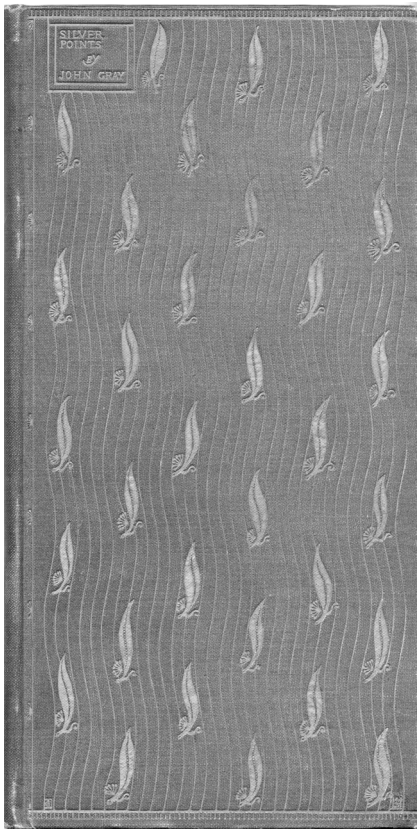
experience watching and participating in this kind of labour when he was young (*'j'etais petit'*). Through recourse to his working-class background, Gray asserts his authority over the sphere of visual representation, and takes an active role in the circulation and discussion of modern prints. In the same letter, Gray mentions that Vivian has promised that he will also publish a Whistler lithograph depicting a fish market (*Maunder's Fish Shop Chelsea*, 1890). Gray's commentary on these prints indicates his burgeoning interest in realist representations of modern English life, a subject that Ricketts and Shannon, his mentors at the time, markedly avoided in their own collection of prints and drawings. Gray's interest in *The Tyresmith*'s subject matter would continue into his poetic work, where the wheelwright and the wheel would come to stand in for the relationship between the artist and his medium. Through his reception of these drawings, Gray sutured together his past as a technical illustrator with his present as a poet and aesthete. As he produced his first book of poems under Ricketts's, Shannon's, and Wilde's mentorship, he titled it in such a way as to suggest the continuity between the draughtsman's and the poet's craft.

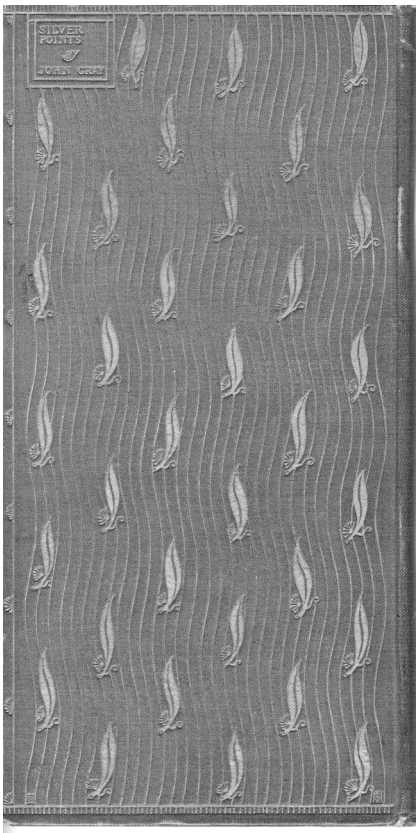
The title *Silverpoints* references the silverpoint drawing technique, in which the artist renders detailed, fine lines with silver wire on a prepared surface. The lines appear at first as a faint grey, but patina into a mahogany tone as the drawing ages. Silverpoint was a popular form of metal point with early Renaissance artists, because of its appropriateness for rendering fine detail. The silver wire, held within a small wooden rod, required great precision and skill in its application to the gesso. Silver was largely eclipsed by graphite lead, which had the benefit of being erasable; however, the artists associated with the Pre-Raphaelite school had begun to occasionally adopt silverpoint as a part of their characteristic commitment to the revival of historic forms. Ricketts and Shannon included silverpoints in their collection of drawings. Between 1896 and 1897, both men sat for silverpoint portraits with Alphonse Legros. Shannon illustrated in silverpoint, and printed a drawing using the technique, titled *A Study of Mice,* in the fourth volume of *The Dial*. Shannon would have introduced Gray to his collections and his drawing process during Gray's informal apprenticeship with himself and Ricketts during the early years of the 1890s.

Moreover, the title *Silverpoints* suggests an intention to create a collection of poems that, like silverpoint drawings, are finely detailed, studied, precise rather than gestural, and meticulously rendered. They would also be self-consciously archaic in

style, and devoted to the rarity of their materials. The poems of *Silverpoints* are all of these things. McCormack observes that Gray's poems, while they lack 'lyrical grace', they always have 'a firm clear outline', evincing his devotion to craft.[17] She points to the exemplary line, 'How very pale your pallor is' (p. 127)[18] as an example of Gray's fastidious use of patterning, sometimes at the expense of the poem's liveliness. Ian Fletcher, by comparison, emphasizes the 'virtuosity' of the poems, which he calls 'dandiacal', noting that Gray 'seems to have tried every type of brief poetry: lyric, translation, dramatic curtain raiser, dramatic monologue, iconic verse'.[19] He emphasizes that Gray's strained versification must be seen as an example of decadent parody, interpreting the same line, 'How very pale your pallor is', as an example of 'the decadent poet's habit of self-mockery through exaggeration'.[20] Petra Clark has commented that with *The Dial* Ricketts and Shannon had created 'a specific ideal of the male aesthete' while 'simultaneously undercutting that figure through tongue-in-cheek commentary'.[21] Gray's poetry performed a similar function, but with higher stakes for his own early identity formation as a poet and as a public figure. He approached the movement to which he was a newcomer with the affectation of weary knowingness, and forged a self through the parodic performance of the identities to which he also aspired.

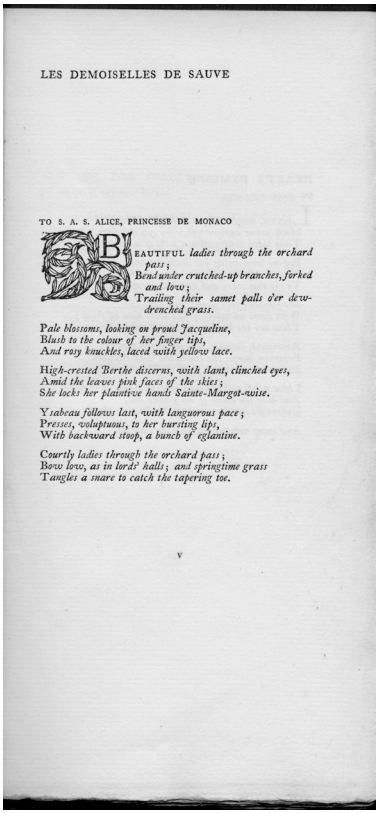
Silverpoints emerged in 1893, becoming, through its unusual design, an emblematic example of the aesthetic book. Ricketts's and Gray's shared devotion to aestheticist craftsmanship inspired the visual and haptic qualities that made the book so distinctive. *Silverpoints* is small and very narrow in size (11 cm x 22 cm), with italic type and a wavy, gold-embossed binding designed by Ricketts (Figure 2). The poems are printed in an 'exquisitely unreadable' italic type, with large margins (Figure 3).[22] The design, which Ricketts explained in his manifesto of the aesthetic book, *A Defence of the Revival of Printing*, mimicked 'one of those rare Aldus italic volumes with its margins uncut', an Italian 'saddle book' originally designed such that it could 'be placed in the pocket of a saddle on journeys that preclude other larger and more usual shapes'.[23] Ricketts took his guidelines for proportioning margins from William Morris, who dictated a precept, inspired by medieval books, that the bottom margin should be twenty percent wider than the outside margin. This 'beautiful' convention, like the narrowness of the saddle book, derives from practical usefulness: that 'the hand clasps the book from below'.[24] The particularly generous margins in *Silverpoints* accounted for the reader's body by inviting the hand to interact with, to 'clasp', the paper and binding. The book's





Figures 2a and 2b: Front and back cover design by Charles Ricketts for John Gray, *Silverpoints* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1893). 11 cm x 22 cm. William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles, PR6013.R26 S5*.

size and shape were extrapolated from an original form of usefulness to a new one, from convenience to pleasure. The pleasure of reading was crucial to Ricketts's philosophy. Literature, he suggests, primarily serves the function of pleasure: 'escape [from the] actual, or stimulus, or refreshment'.[25] He observes that 'while the man of past ages provided the utmost conditions of beauty or elaboration' for 'books of piety or admonition' in the form of illuminations, modern printers neglected to attend to the 'shaping of work inconceivably more stimulating and precious to us'.[26] Ricketts alternates in and out of the instructional mode, offering his principles of type making, margins, and ornament. He addresses, in the first



LES DEMOISELLES DE SAUVE

TO S. A. S. ALICE, PRINCESSE DE MONACO

Beautiful ladies through the orchard pass;
Bend under crutched-up branches, forked and low;
Trailing their samet palls o'er dew-drenched grass.

Pale blossoms, looking au proud Jacqueline,
Blush to the colour of her finger tips,
And rosy knuckles, laced with yellow lace.

High-crested Berthe discerns, with slant, clinched eyes,
Amid the leaves pink faces of the skies;
She locks her plaintive hands Sainte-Margot-wise.

Ysabeau follows last, with languorous pace;
Presses, voluptuous, to her bursting lips,
With backward stoop, a bunch of eglantine.

Courtly ladies through the orchard pass;
Bow low, as in lords' halls; and springtime grass
Tangles a snare to catch the tapering toe.

v

Figure 3: John Gray, 'Les Demoiselles de Sauve', *Silverpoints* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1893). This page features Charles Ricketts's capacious margins and a decorative initial with an interlocking tendril motif. The opening poem of *Silverpoints*, 'Les Demoiselles de Sauve' addresses the decadent preoccupation with the relationship between nature and artifice through its conceit of the cultivated orchard.

person, a novice printer, who might be learning the first principles of bookmaking; his use of the instructional form suggests that he intended this text to be both conceptual and practical, and to inspire other printers to take up his principles of aestheticist craftsmanship.

Many recipients of *Silverpoints* from within Gray's circle praised it as a curiosity. Lionel Johnson called both Gray's volume and Gray himself 'a somewhat beautiful oddity',[27] while Robert Harborough Sherard wrote to the author after receiving his copy, thanking him for his 'very kind *dédicace*' and observing that although he had only skimmed the verses, 'they seem very rare, new, and the whole book is one which must attract attention, as it marks as I think a departure in English poetry'.[28] The design of *Silverpoints*, however, received more memorable

commentary than did its content. In her reminiscences of her friendship with Oscar Wilde, Ada Leverson recalls the impact of the volume:

> There was more margin; margin in every sense of the word was in demand, and I remember, looking at the poems of John Gray (then considered the incomparable poet of the age), when I saw the tiniest rivulet of text meandering through the very large meadow of margin, I suggested to Oscar Wilde that he should go a step further than these minor poets and publish a book all margin; full of beautiful, unwritten thoughts.[29]

Leverson's campy commentary implies that Gray's book was most significant not for the words on its pages, but for the lack thereof. For Leverson, the formal conceit of extended margins correlated to the valorization of social marginality, and the possibilities that lay therein. At the *fin de siècle*, as Leverson notes, 'margin in every sense of the word was in demand': there was a vogue for unusual tastes, proclivities, and tendencies. If the marginal were to be allowed to extend to fill the centre, Leverson playfully suggests, it would create a textless space which would be in itself evocative. The blankness of the page in Wilde's speculative book would be full of 'beautiful, unwritten thoughts', the 'unwritten' implying both that which cannot be directly represented ('the love that dare not speak its name') and the infinite imaginative possibilities of gendered and sexual openness.[30] The openness of the all-margin book might gesture towards what José Esteban Muñoz has called queer potentiality.[31] Inspired by and inspiring queer sociality, *Silverpoints*, presenting itself conspicuously as a material object, became not only an object that was pleasurable to hold but also an open text for Gray's circle to play with—one that invited annotations, parodies, and conceptual extrapolation.

As Ian Fletcher notes, Gray's persona at the time when *Silverpoints* appeared was 'that of the accomplished dandy'.[32] In *The Painter of Modern Life*, Charles Baudelaire presents dandyism as an 'unofficial institution', a set of personal aspirations that differ from normative desires.[33] Rather than engaging in the pursuit of love, money, or fashion, the dandy is defined instead by the desire for self-making: 'it is first and foremost the burning need to create for oneself a personal originality'.[34] Within the dandiacal tradition, particular literary works

were, for better or for worse, taken up as instructional manuals, guides through which to develop the self as a work of art along a particular trajectory. The most iconic decadent manual was Joris-Karl Huysmans's *À Rebours* (1884), the detailed portrait of an iconic aristocratic recluse that inspired self-styled decadents to ever-greater heights of artificiality, sensuality, and depravity. In spite of the way in which dandyism dictated personal originality, then, it was also, as Baudelaire noted, an 'institution', one productive of its own set of norms, affectations, and values. Gray's decadent circle was fascinated with this internal contradiction, and its members explored the ironies implicit within the prescriptive approach to self-invention. Wilde's dandyish Dorian Gray constructs his persona on the basis of the protagonist in the 'poisonous book' given to him by the charismatic Lord Henry Wotton.[35] This yellow book from France, which 'seem[s] to him to contain the story of his own life, written before he had lived it',[36] comes to exert a powerful deterministic influence over Dorian's life, leading him down the path of decadent decline. Like his literary doppelganger Dorian, John Gray looked to books as a source of materials with which to construct a self. For a period of time in 1891, he liked, for example, to appear publicly in Oscar Wilde's company as 'Dorian' Gray.[37] He would also, as we shall see, thematize the influence of books on social identity in his poem 'The Lovers' Manual'. McCormack has suggested that 'his real achievement was of a self, in its own terms as perfect and laboriously constructed as a work of art'.[38] Gray enacted his constructed persona through social, literary, and epistolary performance.

Gray's most overt technique of decadent self-making in *Silverpoints* is in his performance of a dizzying array of social and literary intimacies. The book, released in a limited run to a semi-public readership, was meant as a token of friendship, one meant both to express sentiment and to show off his impressive connections. Included are several translations of French poets, including Verlaine, Rimbaud, and Baudelaire. Most of the original poems are dedicated to people in his circle, such as Oscar Wilde, Arthur Symons, Pierre Louÿs, Ellen Terry, and Princess Alice of Monaco. One imagines Gray in a virtual room filled with his esteemed friends, kissing each one quickly on the cheek by way of verse. Through these dedications, many of which were attached to poems that contained private jokes, expressions of admiration, and treatments of shared interests, the once-obscure, working-class Gray, in a tour de force of dandyish self-making, established himself within the decadent elite.

In his rise to decadent notoriety, Gray—a perpetual autodidact—had much to teach himself. The education of a gentleman was both formal and informal. Not only did he need to acquire the requisite languages for a man of letters (Latin, Greek, French, and German); he also had to learn the proper performance of taste, dress, and comportment. During the high Victorian period, etiquette advice proliferated in cheap, often anonymously published instructional manuals for the benefit of those, like Gray, intent on climbing the social ladder. These manuals, designed to aid in the crafting of the middle-class self, were not of a completely different order from that of the handicraftsman's guide. The two genres of manual shared a careful prescriptiveness, a fixation on detail, and often, a publisher. The 1866 catalogue of Dick and Fitzgerald Publishing House, a New York manual publisher, juxtaposes how-to manuals for trade, manufacturing, and domestic cleaning with books of dialogue designed to teach witty repartee.[39] Securing an advantageous marriage was a particularly important step in the creation and presentation of an upwardly mobile self. In a special subsection of etiquette manuals titled 'Love, Courtship, and Matrimony', the Dick and Fitzgerald catalogue lists a series of courtship manuals, including *The Art and Etiquette of Making Love, Courtship Made Easy; or The Art of Making Love Fully Explained,* and *How to Win and How to Woo.* By the end of the century, however, the new generation had less use for courtship guides. Whereas their predecessors had been able to rely on intergenerational wisdom, the modern lover, impacted by social and technological change, could not rely on advice. An 1887 column in an American newspaper, looking back at a Dick and Fitzgerald manual of thirty years earlier, observed that telegraphy and rapid travel had since rendered courtship fast and unpredictable: they were now experiencing '400 revolutions-a-minute in matrimony'.[40] Navigating first the new class system and then the accelerated pace of life under modern communications technology, each generation of courtship writers attempted to differentiate the new from the old, and to make sense of what it meant to seek stability in a dramatically changing world.

Gray's early unpublished and undated poem, 'The Lover's Manual', likely written in 1895, mimics the didactic voice of the Victorian courtship manual in the form of a libretto. With his camp reproduction of the mid-Victorian courtship book—a tired genre that was usually, as Jennifer Phegley suggests, looked down upon as 'feminized and morally preachy'[41]—Gray gleefully plumbs the strange depths of a slightly démodé bourgeois sexual politics. As McCormack observes,

Gray—who, she speculates, was likely asexual[42]—'analyzes sexual politics with a ruthless, neutral precision'.[43] He often does so through the use of temporal displacement and ironic juxtaposition. His depiction of prehistoric courtship, 'The Loves of The Age of Stone', published in *The Butterfly* in 1893, concludes a romance with the unhappy suitor's unromantic death in a scene of brutal and unheroic bludgeoning. In his short story, Gray plucks love from a context in which it might appear natural, and, through surprise and incongruity, renders it ridiculous. Similarly, 'The Lover's Manual' revives a lost art of love within a scenario of mid-Victorian courtship, to an equally parodic effect.

Fletcher speculates in his accompanying notes for 'The Lover's Manual' that it may have been written during a period when he was trying for popular success;[44] however, given its difficulty and intertextuality, it is more likely that it was written as a coterie poem, intended for private circulation within Gray's circle. Although the poem was never published, Gray did send it to Aubrey Beardsley. In a letter from May of 1895, Beardsley thanked Gray 'for the little bundle of verses—they are quite delicious—particularly the charming interludes from the *Lovers' Manual*' (*sic*).[45] With its dense web of references, 'The Lover's Manual' is a chef d'oeuvre of decadent parody, a dizzying pastiche of poetic set pieces and canonical references, and a pleasurable curio for the consumption of a select few.

The poem's title indicates the important literary precedent of Ovid's parodic conduct manual, *Ars Amatoria*, which was often referenced in English as 'The Lover's Manual'. With *Ars Amatoria*, the Latin poet adapted the didactic poem—a subset of the Roman epic, which was designed to teach either philosophy or, as in Virgil's *Georgics*, technical skills—to instruct his readers parodically in matters of love. While Ovid's exemplary lovers were Augustan aristocrats who exemplified the excesses of their decadent age, Gray's lovers, also of their time, strive to perform a respectable, middle-class Victorian script.

The lovers of 'The Lover's Manual', Hubert and Clara, are marked as modern nineteenth-century types by their contemporary names, and by Hubert's cigarette habit. Interspersing their words and gestures of courtship are excerpts from a book called 'The Lover's Manual'. The excerpts (each beginning with 'The Lover's Manual says:') purport to advise the reader about '*Love*, | The aims, the course, the treacheries thereof' (p. 46), through the narrative of Hubert and Clara's courtship. The Manual's interjections help the reader to evaluate how well Hubert and Clara are enacting their mutual, collaborative performance. As the poem's night-time

setting indicates, however, the Manual's rules hardly pertain to the upper classes of the late nineteenth century. The Manual in Gray's poem encourages its readers to meet, like Hubert and Clara, at night: 'When thickest is night's cloak, the Lovers ought | To walk in a garden', because 'Deepest darkness now is fit | For those that cleave to love and follow it' (p. 48). The Manual's pointed suggestions hearken back to premodern rituals of love, to the garden dalliances of the Mediaeval romance. The setting, although romantic, presents ample opportunities to stumble, literally or figuratively, as is suggested by the 'bushes, quaintly scattered for collision' (p. 47) that line the garden path upon which the lovers walk. The darkness also creates the occasion for illusion and deception: Hubert muses that 'Cupid thus | To Psyche's chamber came in adoration' (p. 47), evoking the disastrous consequences of obfuscation in the Classical myth. Amid the Manual's commentary, the couple, self-consciously evaluating the success of their courtship, nervously oscillates between assessing danger and restoring emotional equilibrium.

Formally, 'The Lover's Manual' engenders a dialectic between convention and play, order and disorder. While the Manual reliably interjects in reliable iambic pentameter, the lovers' script begins in a distinctive arrangement of two lines of variable cretic dimeter, followed by a line of iambic pentameter with a feminine ending: 'So we pass | Down the grass, | And step upon the pathway with precision | Glide with ease | Through the trees | And bushes, quaintly scattered for collision' (p. 47). This singsong structure also appears, slightly altered, in Gray's poetic treatment of Leda and the Swan, published in the fifth instalment of *The Dial* (1897), when the Swan attempts to court Leda: 'Thine arm let deck | My Willing neck, | Naught let trouble or afear thee; So on the tide | Against his side | Haughtily thy swan shall bear thee' (p. 84). Gray's seducing metre evokes the light-hearted ribaldry of the pastoral poetry of the Renaissance period, a genre with which Gray was very familiar: he edited collections of works by several poets from this period for the Vale Press, including the work of Thomas Campion, with which 'The Lover's Manual' invites comparison.

A didactic poet in his own right, Campion, a translator and devotee of Ovid, first garnered fame for his poems in Latin before he became known for his playful love lyrics in English. Gray mimics Campion's turn of phrase in the clever rhymes of 'The Lover's Manual', where he reproduces the seventeenth-century poet's feminine endings. The added syllable allows Gray to imitate Campion's lightness of foot—Campion' rhymes, for example, 'sweet is' and 'kisses', in the lines 'What

harvest halfe so sweet is | As still to reape the kisses',[46] while Gray rhymes 'beckoned' with 'fecund' and 'moss is' with 'crosses' (pp. 49, 47). In Campion's song that begins 'Now let her change and spare not', a spurned lover expresses bitterness towards a woman who has turned 'strange', asking himself, rhetorically rather than earnestly, 'When did I erre in blindnesse? | Or vexe her with unkindnesse?'[47] Gray imitates this rhyme in 'The Lover's Manual' when Clara chides Hubert for bringing up Cupid and Psyche: 'Sir, let be | Even he, | To hide me from your bluntness doubles blindness. | Where did you, | Learn to woo? | To know the art to ravish with unkindness' (p. 47)? In Gray's adaptation of the rhyme, Clara, more aware than she wishes to be, wants to deepen the darkness (a 'double[d] blindness') so that she will not have to witness Hubert's indelicacy. Gray implies that male incompetence (the 'blindnesse' and 'unkindnesse' of Campion's poem) is the primary threat to a successful courtship. With Clara's question, 'Where did you | Learn to woo?' Gray slyly alludes to a particularly racy Campion poem in which a suitor named Jamy kisses and fondles a sleeping woman, Bessie: 'First a soft kisse he doth take | She lay still and would not wake; | Then his hands learn'd to woo, | She dreampt not what he would doo'.[48] What appears at first to be sexual assault turns out to be consensual, albeit, not to Jamy's knowledge: Bessie, secretly enjoying herself, is only pretending to sleep. With 'Then his hands he learn'd to woo', Campion uses 'woo' as a euphemism for manual sex. With this context for 'learn[ing] to woo', Clara's criticism of Hubert's courtship is not only an indictment of his misguided words but also a sly joke at the expense of his manual prowess. Straightforward in her desire for physical closeness, Clara begs her lover to place his hands on her body, asking him to 'enfold' her and 'touch' her 'aching waist' (p. 53).

Hubert, timid and anxious, has little in common with Campion's virile lovers. Whereas Campion's male speakers often seek sexual fulfilment through extramarital dalliances, Hubert seems to dream, instead, of marriage without sex. His proposal to Clara is couched in a statement of trepidation about the destabilizing potential of desire:

> If I found you
> If I love you,
> If above you
> And around you
> I should set a wall and bound you;

Did I scatter
In your bosom
Snows of blossom,
Would you batter
All my love's walls down, and shatter
All the vases
Of devotion?
Spill the portion
Of your praises?
Crave the drug that blinds and crazes? (p. 48)

Bounded by a series of conditional 'ifs', Hubert's proposition represents the full matrix of heterosexual union: commitment (his 'vases of devotion'), marriage (the 'wall' that binds), and sex (the 'snows of blossom' on the bosom). Hubert fears consummating the relationship because he predicts the eventual misdirection of Clara's 'praises' towards others, and the threat to the stability of their bond that this infidelity poses. Underlying his fear of infidelity, however, is a deeper fear of sex itself, which he calls the 'drug that blinds and crazes'. Given that Hubert imagines marriage as a 'wall' meant to enclose Clara, it is possible to read this as a fairly conventional expression of patriarchal masculinity, one which desires to possess and control. Yet rather than reproducing a normative idea of female virginity over which he can eventually assert exclusive sexual ownership, Hubert does not so much wish to possess her as he wishes to sustain their mutual chastity:

But what a hope to live, the world effaced,
Serene and chaste,
And tent by tent.

Twin rivers creeping to the sea
Twain lovers living with a sword between,
Seen or unseen,
If such could be. (p. 51)

Idealizing abstinence, Hubert fantasizes about how he might be able to maintain it, and he dreams of a future in which the courtship will never end. In his fantasy,

their two bodies remain forever separate. Drawing from the Romantic tradition of chivalric abstinence, represented in *Tristan and Isolde* by the sword placed between lovers, he imagines himself and Clara in a parallel and equal orientation to one another, both 'twain' and 'twin'. Hubert's 'hope' to 'efface' the world suggests that his ideal partnership is not currently acceptable: he indicates that his wish for sustained and unconsummated love is in contradiction to social expectations, and therefore can only be sustained as the object of his utopian dreaming—'if such could be'. By extending normative Victorian purity discourse to the point at which it is no longer acceptable, Gray places a queerly asexual fantasy at the centre of heterosexual courtship.

When Clara asks Hubert, 'Where did you | Learn to Woo?', she points to the truth of social relations as dictated by the rules of etiquette: that even the simplest and most natural interactions must be governed by learned behaviours and gestures. The Victorian courtship manual lays bare the structuring dialectic at the centre of bourgeois courtship, between the ideal of genuine feeling, on the one hand, and the rules of propriety that must govern it, on the other hand. The writer of the 1865 edition of *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook for Ladies and Gentlemen* observed that modern English courtship had recently diverged from the French tradition of the contractual *mariage de convenance*, and had become more attached to sentiment: 'we English are jealous of the delicacy of that sacred bond, which we presume to hope is to spring out of mutual affection'.[49] The English love marriage, in contrast to the traditionalism of the Continent, was the product of a modern, liberal concept of the individual: 'We are so tenacious of the freedom of choice, that even persuasion is thought criminal'.[50] Marriage and courtship were no longer familial affairs, but had become matters of the heart. Manual writers were aware that their rote rules of propriety could not be fully reconciled with this modern premise of romance: the writer of the 1883 American courtship manual *The Marriage Guide for Young Men* predicts that the reader 'may call this a cold, formal way of lovemaking; indeed, it may seem like taking all the poetry and romance out of courtship'.[51] He asserts, 'nevertheless, it is the only right way'.[52] Manuals expressed the new primacy of individual sentiment and choice, while also encouraging readers to responsibly constrain their choices to fit within the bounds of social rectitude.

The carefully tended orchard in which the couple's courtship unfolds in 'The Lover's Manual' allows Gray to tug at this nineteenth-century tension between

nature and artifice, spontaneity and convention, by allowing the flora and fauna to break out from its cultivated constraint and overtake the poem. Dowling has observed that Gray articulated his decadence through a reinvention of poetry's relationship to nature: she writes, 'natural objects (in Gray's *Silverpoints*) possess an extraordinary degree of will and consciousness'.[53] The natural world that his poetry conjures, in other words, does not allow itself to be taken up as an object of Romantic contemplation, but rather, remains 'alien and unknowable' to art'.[54] In 'The Lover's Manual', alien nature asserts its presence when Clara's and Hubert's voices are superseded by commentary on their courtship from the voices of the surrounding flora and fauna, including characters by the names of 'A Squirrel', 'A Bee', and 'An Apple', who dourly threatens to drop upon Hubert's head, should he pass underneath. This bizarre conclusion is reminiscent of an earlier libretto by Charles Ricketts, 'The Cup of Happiness', published in the 1889 volume of *The Dial*. 'The Cup of Happiness', a burlesque of French symbolist drama, begins with a fairly normal scenario of a prince taking a nap, and devolves into a whirlwind dialogue between such nonhuman characters as 'Fantasy', 'Lightning', 'A Palm-tree' and 'A Worm', before it ends abruptly, supposedly 'to be continued'. 'The Lover's Manual' follows 'The Cup of Happiness' in allowing the background to grow over into the foreground, presenting human characters whose self-important meaningfulness is drowned out, overtaken by the sung voices of a more-than-human world. After the poem crescendos into this chaotic mélange of voices, the Manual re-enters at the end, re-establishes metrical stability with its last words of folksy advice for the successful lovers, and reinstitutes convention's hold on that which has occurred within the poem.

Courtship manuals, in teaching their readers how to exercise their freedoms responsibly, helped them to construct not only their relationships but also their performances of gender, according to the dictates of classed expectation. The Manual, in the spirit of the Victorian courtship book, clarifies that in order to be a lover, one must adhere to the decorum proper to the upper classes. 'It holds that none but those of rare | And upright sensibility should dare | Utter love's name' (p. 48). When Clara plays a minuet on the piano, the Lover's Manual suggests that only 'courteous maidens' (marked by their 'white throat' and 'angels' tongue') should put their feelings to song; the 'maid', on the other hand, with only 'that dole precise of wit to stew a mess of rice', that is, with a dull sensibility associated with

domestic labour, should avoid such musical endeavours, lest the couple's serenades prove more comedic than angelic—'a gay parrot mutter[ing] saws of love' (p. 50).

The bathos of the imitative and mawkish singer, the 'gay parrot', could be the unintended effect of the would-be lover, but such a danger is one that could equally befall the parvenu poet. Courtship manuals suggest a co-constitutive relationship between courtship and the literary arts. Often, the manuals guide their readers in the art of epistolary courtship. The Dick and Fitzgerald catalogue contains a number of poetry manuals, advising would-be poets on the 'allowable rhymes' in English and promising to 'enable you to ascertain to a certainty whether any word can be mated'. These manuals attempted, with their absolute confidence and sense of propriety, to ameliorate the uncertainty associated with the individuated and individualizing practices of love and of poetic composition. Victorian conduct manuals provide much of their instruction via the cautionary tale, while poetry manuals offer plentiful examples of bad verse and warnings against common pitfalls. Designed to guarantee success, the manual is always haunted by the spectre of failure that produced it. The Lover's Manual, a critic who has become internal to the poem's structure, dictates the classed delineations of love and of poetry to which Gray himself was subject. The reader is left to determine from the Manual how well Hubert and Clara perform their song, and how well Gray performs his. Gray engages his sophisticated reader in mock judgment, exposing the arbitrariness of the standards by which we evaluate one another and ourselves.

In another unpublished poem, 'The Wheel', also drafted in the 1890s, Gray adopted the didactic form for a different purpose. 'The Wheel', which presents itself as a how-to guide, explains the process of building a wheel on a lathe, beginning with the tree that will supply the wood ('Elm, ash, and oak' (p.74)) and ending with the finished wheel as it spins down the road. In 'The Wheel', as in 'The Lover's Manual', the manual form serves a rhetorical rather than a truly instructional function: in this case, however, Gray draws on the step-by-step guide in order to direct our attention to the hands of the labourer.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Peter Capuano has argued, the hand became increasingly visible as a literary motif because of the sense of its decreasing significance in society at large. As Capuano shows, while the hand had long represented a concept of the human as a spiritual, unique entity with a privileged relationship to God, Darwinian theories and the mechanization of labour threatened the sense of man as superior to machine and animal. The

disruption of these hierarchies, in fact, becomes the 'condition of [the hand's] new visibility'.[55] Between the late-Victorian era and the early decades of the twentieth century, Gray would come to witness a number of technological changes that both excited and concerned him, while also undergoing a series of personal, spiritual changes marked by his conversion to Catholicism and his eventual ecclesiastical training. One of Gray's tasks as a witness of technological change was to create a theology of the handmade: a spiritual argument for the human hand's continued importance in an increasingly mechanized world.

As Gray indicated to Fénéon in his explication of Whistler's *The Tyresmith*, the crafting of the wheel was a process that he had witnessed as a child. Drawing on this familiarity, the knowledgeable speaker of 'The Wheel' instructs the untutored, likely aristocratic reader in technical vocabulary and basic processes along the way, 'Life not giving everyone | Knowledge of what turning means' (p. 74). Making a wheel, Gray indicates, is incredibly precise: at each step, the wheelwright must both use the correct materials, and demonstrate skill with them, in order to 'make the wheel | The perfect whole it surely is' (p. 73). The poem's first five sections detail these practices, before turning to praise the completed wheel in the sixth and final section. The wheels become, in this section, alive, turning from the inanimate 'silly carcases' that 'lean sheepishly against the wall' (p. 75) into something imbued with life, motion, and spirit. Gray compares the wheelwright's finished creation to the chariot wheels of the Book of Ezekiel. In Ezekiel 1, God appears to the prophet in a chariot that descends from the sky, drawn by four cherubim. The wheels in Ezekiel are perfectly shaped, wrought of precious materials. Gray's poem reflects upon the meaning of this vision:

> '*Being a captive,* saw I', wrote the priest
> Ezekiel, certain vision, which he writ
> Into a book, that men might wot of it;
> Where purposes are full, 'because
> The spirit of the living creature was
> Within the wheels'. (p. 77)

In Gray's poem, the wheels, like poetic language, 'fashion the perfect symbol which conceals' (p. 76). In other words, their rotations across the earth represent the constant change and motion which we experience as human time; this change

conceals, Gray suggests, the hidden logic, or direction, of God's plan, which, like a wheel properly fitted, provides both 'freedom and safety' (p. 77). The poem's final section links the wheelwright's creation with Ezekiel's wheels in order to make a theological claim about God's imperceptible yet all-powerful will. In so doing, it suggests the spiritual perfection inherent within perfect workmanship. As the speaker sings to the wheel, 'A double rectitude lies in your curve' (p. 77): the wheel's material perfection engenders spiritual perfection.

Gray continued to reflect on the spiritual possibilities of the handmade object throughout his writing career. In 1924, Gray, who was by this point a lay brother in the English Dominican Order, published the short essay 'God-made and Machine-Made' in *Blackfriars,* on behalf of the Order. In it, he attempts to locate the worker's spiritual role within a rapidly mechanizing world. He finds that the fulness of preindustrial life, its 'texture and taste', is irrevocably lost, and that only the nostalgist, the 'inconsolable yearner knows what is gone'.[56] To dream up an alternative to capitalist life-ways, the 'yearner' must conjure the sensorium of the lost past through reading books. Gray identifies *The Wheelwright's Shop*, the 1923 memoir of the rural wheelwright and novelist George Sturt (1863–1927), as an archival repository of this otherwise-lost 'texture and taste' of an earlier way of life. Sturt, a writer and schoolteacher who published under the name Bourne, was inspired to reopen his family's shop after he read John Ruskin's *Fors Clavigera* (1871–1884). 'Under the influence of Ruskin's book', he writes, 'I felt that man's only decent occupation was in handicraft'.[57] By his engagement with Sturt, Gray nostalgically turns to a nineteenth-century revival of Ruskinism—an idealistic attempt which, as Sturt himself notes in retrospect, was not fully tenable. Regardless of its material outcomes, the spirit of revivalism was, both to Sturt and to Gray, energizing in itself. Sturt's workshop proved that aestheticism, for all its limitations, had in the end inspired working people to reclaim their bodies and their experience.

The natural outgrowth of a free community of artisans, as Ruskin commented in 'The Nature of the Gothic', was aesthetic variation, the accumulation of distinctive flaws and flourishes left by individual hands: 'If, as in Gothic work, there is perpetual change both in design and execution', Ruskin speculates, that 'the workman must have been altogether set free'.[58] In 'God-made and Machine-made', Gray takes up this Ruskinian concept of variation in order to render it theological. He creates a distinction between the touch of the human hand, which

is part of the natural order of God's creation, and that of the machine, which, while itself a 'divine gift' from God, is secondary to human intelligence: 'Machine the servant should be servile, and man its master magisterial'.[59] Gray observes that in recent years, however, the machine-made object, the 'standard article', has come to exert an unearned aesthetic 'tyranny', such that 'he who perforce must make with his fingers and thumbs is tempted (and yields) to emulate the machine-made'.[60] Standardization, the new ideal for all production, erases the trace of the worker's touch, reducing every object we handle into something homogenous and godless; in turn, workers are now in the position to aspire to the condition of the machine, that is, to strive for the identical copy, 'that total likeness which can never really come about'.[61] Although Gray accepts mechanization on the basis of its convenience and practicality, he expresses his desire for the handmade as a *craving*. 'O God', he writes, 'how I crave for the artistic touch, by which I mean the touch of the maker's hand; for art is skill, just that'.[62] Gray's exclamation is marked by a spiritual yearning that borders on the erotic. While we may value convenience and predictability, he suggests, we *long* for variation and imperfection. The maker in this passage suggests the artist, but also, through the artist, God, the original Maker. Gray's image of the maker's touch brings to mind Michelangelo's rendering of God's finger, outstretched, imbuing Adam with life, and suggests a nearly divine power in the life-giving possibilities of artistic creation.

Throughout Gray's heterogenous career, writing was a way of reaching out, an attempt to stretch himself across spatial and temporal boundaries in search of affiliation and connection. In order to forge these links between past and present, he experimented with older forms, engaging in a revivalist practice articulated often through layers of literary-historical referentiality. In his poetic and prose writings, Ovid's and Campion's art of love is rejuvenated in a middle-class Victorian context, and Sturt's Ruskinian workshop superimposes itself over modern mechanization. Gray's folding of time serves to estrange convention from itself, to pry open a space for difference, for flaws and strangeness, in an increasingly prescriptive and mechanized age, in which labour and desire have become standardized, and in which making space for the hand remains a rebellious act.

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NOTES

[1] Ada Leverson, *Letters to the Sphinx from Oscar Wilde, with Reminiscences of the Author* (London: Duckworth, 1930), p. 7.

[2] Anonymous, 'Le Plus Decadent des Decadents', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 May 1893, p. 3.

[3] Joseph G. Horner, *Practical Metal Turning: A Handbook for Engineers, Students, and Amateurs* (London: Crosby, Lockwood, and Son, 1906), p. 1.

[4] John Gray, 'The Forge', in *The Poems of John Gray*, ed. by Ian Fletcher (Greensboro, N.C.: ELT Press, 1988), pp. 69–70 (p. 70); subsequent references to poems in this edition appear in parentheses. 'The Forge' originally appeared in *The Savoy*, 2 (April 1896), 96–97.

[5] Ian Fletcher, 'John Henry Gray: His Life, His Poetry', in *The Poems of John Gray*, pp. 1–19 (p. 2).

[6] Jerusha Hull McCormack, *John Gray: Poet, Dandy, Priest* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1991), pp. 1, 128.

[7] Arthur Symons, 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', *Harper's Magazine*, 87 (1893), 858–67 (p. 866).

[8] Ibid., p. 867.

[9] Linda Dowling, *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 115–16.

[10] For more on aestheticism and the working classes, see Diana Maltz, *British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Classes, 1870–1900: Beauty for the People* (2006) and Kristin Mahoney, 'Work, Lack, and Longing: D.G. Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel" and the Working Men's College', *Victorian Studies* 52 (2010), 219–48.

[11] Arthur O'Shaughnessy, 'Song of a Fellow Worker', in *Songs of a Worker* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1881), pp. 5, 8.

[12] Oscar Wilde, 'Art and the Handicraftsman', in *Miscellanies* (London: Methuen, 1908), p. 301.

[13] Ibid., p. 301. Ruskin expressed a very similar idea during an 1858 lecture at Tunbridge Wells: 'All art worthy the name is energy—neither of the human body alone, nor of the human soul alone, but of both united, one guiding the other: good craftsmanship and work of the fingers joined with good emotion and work of the heart'. *The Two Paths: Being Lectures on Art and Its Application to Decoration and Manufacture* (New York: J. Wiley, 1859), p. 99.

[14] This maxim appears in a letter to Edmund Blunden from 21 July 1929, quoted in McCormack, *John Gray*, p. 126, and in 'God-made and Machine-made' (1923), in *The Selected Prose of John Gray*, ed. by Jerusha Hull McCormack (Greensboro, NC: ELT Press, 1992), pp. 131–37 (p. 133).

[15] McCormack, *John Gray*, p. 120.

[16] Whistler's design represents an English forge where the workers make the rim of a wheel. If I am correct—I was young, they are in the process of slightly enlarging the circumference of the wheel that they manipulate. Félix Fénéon and John Gray, *Correspondance: Avec les contributions de John Gray à La Revue blanche* (Tusson, Charente: Du Lerot, 2010), p. 34.

[17] McCormack, *John Gray*, pp. 127.

[18] See also John Gray, *Silverpoints* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1893), p. 18.

[19] Fletcher, 'John Henry Gray: His Life, His Poetry', p. 17.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Petra Clark, 'Bitextuality, Sexuality, and the Male Aesthete in *The Dial*: "Not through an orthodox channel"', *ELT*, 56 (2013), 33–50 (p. 33).

[22] Ian Fletcher, 'The Poetry of John Gray', in *Two Friends: John Gray and André Raffalovich*, ed. by Father Brocard Sewell (Aylesford: Saint Albert's Press, 1963), pp. 50–69 (p. 51).

[23] Charles Ricketts, *A Defence of the Revival of Printing* (London, Hacon and Ricketts, 1899), pp. 20–21.

[24] Ibid., p. 24.
[25] Ibid., p. 18.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Quoted in Fletcher, 'The Poetry of John Gray', p. 50
[28] London, British Library, MS 81732.
[29] Leverson, *Letters to the Sphinx*, p. 7.
[30] The phrase 'the love that dare not speak its name' comes from Alfred Douglas's poem, "Two Loves', which first appeared in the *Chameleon*, 1 (1894), 26–28, and subsequently became a topic of discussion during the trials of Oscar Wilde during April and May 1895.
[31] José Estéban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2009).
[32] Fletcher, 'The Poetry of John Gray', p. 51
[33] Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1970), p. 27.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: The 1890 and 1891 Texts*, ed. by Joseph Bristow, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, 10 vols to date (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000–continuing), III (2005), p. 274.
[36] Ibid., III, p. 276.
[37] McCormack discusses this at length in chapter 2 of *John Gray* (pp. 53–102).
[38] Ibid., p. 10.
[39] The Dick and Fitzgerald Catalog is located in the back of each manual, and can be found, for example, in Arthur Martine, *Martine's Hand-Book of Etiquette and Guide to True Politeness* (New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, 1866).
[40] 'The Art of Courtship', *Des Moines Register*, 20 February 1887, p. 2.
[41] Jennifer Phegley, *Courtship and Marriage in Victorian England* (Oxford: Praeger, 2012), p. 53.
[42] For further discussion of Gray's asexuality, see McCormack, *John Gray*, p. 50.
[43] McCormack, *John Gray*, p. 13.
[44] Fletcher, in *The Poems of John Gray*, ed. Fletcher, p. 307.
[45] Aubrey Beardsley, *The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley*, ed. by Henry Maas, J.L. Duncan and W.G. Good (London: Cassell, 1970), p. 87.
[46] Thomas Campion, 'What harvest halfe so sweet is', in *Fifty Songs by Thomas Campion*, ed. by John Gray (London: Hacon and Ricketts, 1896), p. 21.
[47] Thomas Campion, 'Now let her change and spare not', ibid., p. 27.
[48] Campion, 'It fell on a sommer's day', ibid., p. 10.
[49] Anonymous, *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook for Ladies and Gentlemen* (New York: Carlton, 1865), p. 418.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Revd George W. Hudson, *The Marriage Guide for Young Men: A Manual of Courtship and Marriage* (Self-published, 1883), p. 62.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Linda Dowling, 'Nature and Decadence: John Gray's *Silverpoints*', *Victorian Poetry*, 15 (1977), 159–69 (p. 164).
[54] Ibid.
[55] Peter Capuano, *Changing Hands: Industry, Evolution, and the Reconfiguration of the Victorian Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), p. 2.
[56] Gray, 'God-made and Machine-made', p. 134.

[57] George Sturt, *The Wheelwright's Shop* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), II, p. 12.
John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1851–1853), p. 172.
[58] Gray, 'God-made and Machine-made', pp. 131, 137.
[59] Ibid., p. 137.
[60] Ibid., p. 135.
[61] Ibid., p. 133.

Tara Thomas

Queer Decadent Historiography: Michael Field, Victoria Cross, and Theodora

During the fin de siècle, the sixth-century Byzantine Roman co-emperor Theodora (*c.* 497–548 AD) became an iconic historical character in decadent literature. Both Michael Field (the name of co-authors Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper) and Annie Sophie Cory (the Indian-born sensational author who wrote as Victoria Cross) depicted this figure, whose history included her career as a concubine and an actress. Michael Field's *Equal Love* (1896), published in *The Pageant,* is a closet drama that implicitly explores resonances between Byzantine and British sexually dissonant characters. Cross, by contrast, in her short story 'Theodora: A Fragment' (1895), published in the *Yellow Book*, and in her elaboration of it in the single-volume novel, *Six Chapters of a Man's Life* (1903), more overtly compares Theodora to *fin-de-siècle* decadents through her modernized adaptation set in Victorian Britain. Where Michael Field maintains Theodora's femme fatale persona, Cross recuperates her character as both misunderstood and wrongly persecuted for her nonconformity. All of these writers, however, share a fascination with Theodora as an icon who

prefigures modern models of queerness, including but not limited to female homosexuality.

Choosing to fictionalize their histories of Theodora allows both Michael Field and Cross strategically to revise Edward Gibbon's and Procopius's respective historical accounts of her life so that they can forge a genealogy between ancient and modern queer women. Canonized by the Eastern Orthodox Church, Theodora is a saint in the eastern imaginary, yet ever since Niccolo Alemanni's 1623 publication of the Byzantine historian Procopius's *Anekdota* (written in the early 500s), Theodora has symbolized the femme fatale to the western world. Filippo Carlà writes that 'Theodora—Saint, rebel or prostitute—was an exceptional woman, whose reception was and is always closely connected to the role of women in contemporary society, but also to the social and public role of sex and sexuality'.[1] Here I explore how women writers insert themselves into decadent historiographical writing by revising our understanding of Theodora in order to express queer womanhood.

Classical reception scholars such as Stefano Evangelista have discussed Michael Field's 'Bacchic aestheticism' regarding the co-authors' unique experience as classically educated women writers as well as aunt-and-niece lovers.[2] Cross, by contrast, has received less scholarly attention, most of which observes her progressive attitudes towards sexuality and acknowledges her classical allusions only in passing. Michael Field's and Cross's respective methodologies for writing queer history certainly diverge. Michael Field adopts a nuanced comparison between past and present. The poets' approach to queering history echoes Carolyn Dinshaw's description of the queer historian who desires 'not a full identification' but rather a 'partial, affective connection, for community, for even a touch across time'.[3] *Equal Love* presents an objective exploration of decadent sexual dissonance that elaborates Theodora's queer desires while maintaining historical distance.

By comparison, Cross's Theodora appears in what Elizabeth Freeman calls 'temporal drag'.[4] Theodora is a modern woman whose historicity is palimpsestic, appearing only through fragmented traces. This approach to Theodora is more reminiscent of the method that Freeman terms 'erotohistoriography'.[5] Freeman distinguishes this method from those that 'desire [. . .] a fully present past'; erotohistoriography does not conjure the lost past into the present but rather elucidates how the past is 'already in the present'.[6] Throughout *Six Chapters of a Man's Life,* Cross recuperates slanderous anecdotes and pejorative remarks to

historicize queer non-cis-women. Incorporating fragments of history as opposed to compiling a cohesive history of Theodora's life calls attention to the ways in which, as Freeman has argued, 'close reading is a way into history, not a way out of it, and itself a form of historiography and historical analysis'.[7] Through this method, Cross effectively deconstructs the modern consolidation of gender nonconformity and sex acts into the figure of the homosexual, anticipating the anti-identitarian politics of queerness. Cross represents queerness beyond homosexuality and cis-gender identities to be alive and well in Victorian Britain.

Historiography

The most widely disseminated history of Theodora's life comes from Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1789), where he draws from histories of the premodern historians Procopius, John of Ephesus, John Malalas, and Zonaras. Procopius's *Anecdota,* also called the *Secret History* (550), is the only extensive contemporaneous history of Theodora's life, and it characterizes her as a domineering harlot queen. According to Procopius, Theodora rose to fame for her beauty, pantomime dancing, and prostitution, a fact John of Ephesus corroborates.[8] Theodora soon abandoned this lifestyle, eloping to northern Africa with the governor of the Pentapolis, Hecebolus. In Procopius's narrative, the unmarried couple allegedly had an illegitimate child named John whose father (left unnamed) retained custody after abandoning Theodora. Upon the father's death, the child visited Theodora and was never seen again.[9]

After returning to Constantinople, Theodora met Justinian, the successor of Emperor Justin (518–527), and together they convinced Justin to amend a law preventing high-ranking officials from marrying prostitutes and actresses around 521–522.[10] Theodora and Justinian married the following year and became co-emperors in 527. Historians credit Theodora with the laws furthering women's and children's rights enacted around 529 and for violently suppressing the Nika Riots of 532. Eight years before her death of cancer in 548, her illegitimate child fathered by Hecebolus disappeared after visiting her in Constantinople.[11]

Other Byzantine writers, however, celebrate Theodora as a devout saintly presence in the Byzantine court. John of Ephesus's celebratory *Lives of the Eastern Saints* (565–567) shows her to be a reverent advocate of the church, while John Malalas's *Chronographia* (*c.* 565) focuses on 'pious Theodora['s . . .] good works', including her social reformation that furthered women's rights.[12] Still, as I

mention above, Theodora predominantly appears in western history as a vindictive concubine. '[T]his image of Theodora, the harlot queen', the Byzantine historian C. Foss writes, 'is basic to all later writing'.[13] After Procopius's *Secret History* was rediscovered by Alamanni in 1623, subsequent historians took it to be the authority on the Justinian era.

From the eighteenth century onwards, historians perpetuated Procopius's view that Theodora's rise to power symbolized the culmination of decadence in Roman society. In *Considerations on the Causes of Grandeur and Decadence of the Romans* (1734), Montesquieu critiques Justinian for elevating Theodora to the role of co-emperor:

> Justinian had elevated to the throne a woman who had long prostituted herself upon the stage. She governed him with an authority that has no example in history; and, mixing incessantly the passions and the fancies of her sex with the affairs of the state, she marred the most fortunate victories and successes.[14]

Montesquieu paradoxically characterizes Theodora as a gender stereotype ('the fancies of her sex') and as a gender-inverted woman who 'governed' Justinian; he focuses on her faults without acknowledging her primary role in the Justinian era's 'victories and successes'. Moreover, Montesquieu's accusation that Theodora 'mix[ed]' women's 'passions' with 'the affairs of the state' suggests that he objects to Theodora's enactment of laws furthering women's rights. Gibbon aligns himself with Montesquieu, whom he acknowledges as having given 'credit' to Procopius's slanderous anecdotal history. In the *Decline and Fall* Gibbon includes a lengthy defamatory passage paraphrasing Procopius's biographical sketch of Theodora. Both Michael Field and Victoria Cross use Gibbon as their main source, and they likely returned to Procopius in order to access the erotic passages that Gibbon admitted to censoring.

Recent historians such as Leonora Neville have accused Gibbon, and, to a lesser extent, Montesquieu as misrepresenting Byzantine Rome, 'activat[ing] ancient associations of the east with excessive luxury, sexual indulgence, and softness'.[15] A revival of interest in Byzantine history in the twenty-first century has led to several new publications focused on Justinian and Theodora. David Potter's *Theodora: Actress, Empress, Saint* (2015) and *Prokopius: The Secret History* (2010), a

biography and new translation of Procopius's *Anecdota* by Anthony Kaldellis, and 'The Empress Theodora' (2002) by C. Foss are significant examples. This shift in historiography assists us in understanding how and why both Michael Field and Victoria Cross went against the grain of the literature that stemmed from the rediscovery of Procopius, Montesquieu, and Gibbon.

Theodora in the Nineteenth-Century Literature

By the 1870s, writers were beginning to feature Theodora as a popular figure through which to critique or celebrate decadence. Felix Dahn's 'A Struggle in Rome' (1878), Henry Pottinger's 'Blue and Green' (1879), and Kleon Rizos Rhankavis's Θεοδώρα (*Theodora*, 1884) are a few such examples. Two paradigms for representing Theodora emerge from these works. The first, like Dahn's story, 'depicted the Empress Theodora as a Messalina of the worst type', figuring Theodora as a decadent femme fatale, an unfaithful, promiscuous, plotting empress.[16] The second, of which Pottinger's 'Blue and Green' is paradigmatic, depicted Theodora as a reformed saint in the zenith of her imperial reign, showing her to be a victim of circumstance. Pottinger provides a recuperative understanding of her life: 'in her [past] misfortunes, she was a victim of circumstance, and that it was the nobler side of her nature which triumphed in the end'.[17] By the 1880s, a third narrative emerged featuring Theodora as a more complex, paradoxical character. *Fin-de-siècle* writers began fusing the tropes of Theodora as a femme fatale and successful empress, and they redirected her legend to prefigure the coalescence of late-Victorian decadence and queer womanhood.

The most notable of these portrayals was the French dramatist Victorien Sardou's *Theodora* (1884), which self-consciously compares premodern with modern women. One of the most popular dramas staged in the nineteenth-century, the first production of Sardou's *Theodora* had the great tragedienne Sarah Bernhardt in the leading role. Sardou fictionalizes Theodora as a scheming, sexually licentious figure who accidently kills her lover and whom Justinian executes. Bernhardt's portrayal of Theodora captivated nineteenth-century audiences, particularly because of the similarities between Theodora's life and Bernhardt's own: '[t]he character of the courtesan-empress was quite close to Sarah Bernhardt's own humble origins (as a daughter of a prostitute, and a kept woman herself earlier in life), and a triumphant rise to thespian power'.[18] The Bernhardt/Theodora union made Theodora, like Bernhardt herself, a byname for the decadent and sexually

transgressive woman in the late-Victorian imaginary. Unlike previous renderings of Theodora that maintained a cis-heteronormative identity, in spite of her sexual dissonance, Michael Field and Cross break from convention by depicting her as a decidedly queer character.

Michael Field's *Equal Love*

Michael Field's *Equal Love* depicts Theodora as a dynamic character, one who is aware of the competing historical paradigms representing her as a Byzantine saint and a courtesan. By weaving together these opposing depictions, Michael Field recuperates Theodora as a sexually subversive woman who rejects the conventional gender roles of ancient Rome. The poets present a reformed prostitute who lapses into decadence over the grief of her daughter's death and whose jealous husband drives her, like Medea, to murder her illegitimate son.[19] *Equal Love* draws implicit comparisons between the ancient past and the 1890s present without eradicating historical discontinuities. Through this historical closet drama, Michael Field takes up the role of a queer historian who desires (in Dinshaw's words) to 'make new relations, new identifications, new communities with past figures who elude resemblance to us but with whom we can be connected partially by virtue of shared marginality, queer positionality'.[20] Michael Field maintains the implicitness of this connection through the temporal distance of historical closet drama. Since they never staged the drama, audiences could not, as they did with Bernhardt's Theodora, equalize the premodern empress with the modern actress.

Closet drama, which was the genre in which Michael Field wrote much of their work, afforded the co-authors a safe distance for exploring transgressive sexuality and gender role reversals. Heavily intextualizing the drama with historical facts further removed their writing from the Decadent Movement's focus on modern themes and it assisted in validating their interest in Theodora's nonconformity. Since *Equal Love* first appeared without the kind of preface that they furnished for *Attila, My Attila!* (1896), another of their works that draws on Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, the audience is left to their own devices to recognize the continuities between Theodora's implicit queerness and sexually dissident decadents.[21]

The drama, which is set in around 540, opens with Theodora grieving over her infant daughter who has just died, a vision evoking the Madonna Dolorosa. Theodora's grief catalyzes her disillusionment: she suddenly realizes the image of her as a repentant saint is a 'dream'.[22] In the first scene, Michael Field rejects

Procopius's account of Theodora's imperial years, turning instead to John of Ephesus's account of Theodora as a saintly figure, a reformed courtesan, and a devout, mournful mother. The death of the daughter, however, induces her regression from saint to sinner. In this clarifying moment, Theodora proleptically understands her life in terms of the two historical paradigms of Procopius's depiction of her as femme fatale, on the one hand, and John of Ephesus, Malalas, and others' depiction of her as St Theodora, on the other hand. Theodora expresses her self-conscious awareness about the paradoxical historical depictions of her as saint and sinner when she recollects her early courtship with Justinian and her current desire to regain her former sexual autonomy:

> From the hour he sought
> My love, and laid that awful hand on me
> God lays upon the sinner that he dooms
> To suffer his redemption, I have sinned
> No carnal sin.
> And now I fall away,
> And now I feel a riot in my blood (pp. 194–95)

She promptly rejects 'the dream that [Justinian] possesses | Of a pure consort brought him from the gods, | Herself a deity' (p. 194), deciding to embrace the sexual autonomy she had once experienced as courtesan to amplify her power as empress:

> I [. . .] asked for kisses. Oh, to be caressed
> By very strangers, to be found so sweet
> Just in myself! I never had an art
> To sing or dance; but this pure mimicry,
> This daring to become ridiculous,
> Putting the charms that other women guard
> So jealously to any monstrous use—
> Oh, it worked spells with men! (pp. 193–94)

Michael Field paints a complex picture of Theodora who longs for her former sexual autonomy: the polyamory and free love her life as a courtesan and actress afforded her.

Theodora's epiphany is interrupted when her illegitimate son Zuhair visits her. Crucially, at this moment Michael Field abandons Eastern historiography's representation of her as saint and adopts Western historiography's narrative of her as a sinner. Michael Field's drama revises Gibbon's version of Procopius's fictitious tale about Theodora's illegitimate son. Certainly, the co-authors maintain the basic narrative of Gibbon's retelling. But, more important, they rename both the son and his father Zuhair:

> Zuhair,
> That Eastern youth I met in Africa,
> Abandoned me [. . .] He drove me from his house
> In a mad pang of jealousy. My child
> Remained with him. (192)

This story, taken as truth by Gibbon and thus his Victorian audience, provides the basis for Michael Field's exploration of non-heteroreproductivity, gender role reversal, and queer heterosexual desire. Michael Field rewrites the story about the mother and son's reunion and alleged murder, and thus the poets create an erotic triangle between Theodora, the Emperor Justinian, and Zuhair. Michael Field generates a dynamic of jealousy between the two men, the childless Justinian, and his potential successor, Zuhair, and eroticizes the mother-son relationship between Theodora and her long-lost child.

Michael Field depicts this family drama in terms of a power struggle not only between Zuhair and Justinian, but also between Justinian and Theodora, thus figuring the empress's transformation in terms of gender role reversal. 'I thought you were a woman | So tempered', Justinian accuses Theodora, in a line whose enjambment emphasizes that her dominant temperament calls her gender assignment as 'woman' into question (p. 215). Theodora becomes increasingly involved in imperial politics at this point in the play. In her role as empress, Theodora attends to the 'great laws together' with Emperor Justinian. Still, Michael Field makes it clear that it is Theodora who is the decisive ruler and dominant partner. When Justinian throws a childish temper tantrum, for instance, Theodora asserts her overriding authority:

> Leave us, Justinian; you are grown impatient.
> Those laws! I will be with you in an hour.
> We left off at a knotty point concerning
> The marriage-contract. There must be more freedom
> For women, as I urged. (p. 204)

The scene inverts the traditional gender dynamic in both domestic and imperial matters, and thus illustrates the dynamic of the imperial couple Michael Field portrays throughout the drama. 'I am the general [. . .] He is architect', Theodora elsewhere declares. 'I will not', she insists, 'be a fool and let mere nature | hold me in slavery' (p. 205). Theodora describes Justinian as an aesthete whose timidity enables her to rule the empire singlehandedly. These lines also notably illustrate the alliance between the Victorian figures of the New Woman and the decadent respectively with Theodora and Justinian, whose complementary gender role reversals make them the perfect partnership. Linda Dowling writes that Victorians viewed these figures 'as twin apostles of social apocalypse'.[23] This gesture towards making connections between past and present queer figures is accompanied by the allegorical rendering of Justinian and Theodora into opposing nineteenth-century theories explaining Rome's decadence and decline. On the one hand, historians such as Montesquieu identify external influences and diversity as the root of decadence, while, on the other hand, Gibbon argues that internal influences such as overspending and martial and moral passivity were also symptoms of decadence that led to imperial decline. By dismissing 'opulence' as a cause, Montesquieu ascertains the 'loss of citizen spirit' caused by rapid expansion and diversity to have catalyzed Rome's fall.[24] Gibbon amended Montesquieu's remark, arguing that internal factors—martial lethargy, the Christian 'doctrines of patience and pusillanimity', as well as decadence—were other contributors to decline.[25]

Theodora catalogues the successes of Justinian and her reign, showing that Justinian is designated only the role of 'architect', while she herself is a 'general' and a 'theolog[ian]', and is also in the process of becoming the principal legislator. In *Equal Love*, Theodora views Justinian as a decadent aesthete representative of the internal decadence, the lethargy and luxury, that was beginning to weaken Byzantine Rome. Theodora and Zuhair are symbolic of external decadence, the discourse that understood the diversification and expansion of empire as a symptom of decadence, yet Michael Field significantly revises the narrative to

show the necessity of inclusion. Without Theodora and Zuhair, all the 'kingdoms' in Rome 'would grow dark | One day about my borders with the pressure | Of alien tribes and a usurper's sword' (p. 217). Michael Field's characterization of Theodora as the reason their co-reign was a restorative epoch in Roman history offers a counter-history to western historiography that perpetuated Procopius's slanderous depiction of the empress as a femme fatale whose meddling in politics precipitated Rome's decline. Michael Field represents Theodora as a capable ruler whose almost prescient knowledge enables her to make calculated moves to secure the continuation of her rule, including the clause to the Codex Iustinianus 4.23 granting a woman's illegitimate children legitimacy and inheritance.

The arrival of Theodora's son incites a power struggle between Zuhair and Justinian, who become rivals for Theodora's affections and imperial rule. Because the co-emperors had failed to produce an heir to the throne, Zuhair becomes their potential successor. He is, as Theodora describes him, 'the very prince | The kingdom craves for, fashioned line by line' (p. 208). The metonymic 'kingdom' suggests that the co-emperors are a united front; however, as we shall see, the 'crav[ing]' they direct toward Zuhair creates a dynamic of jealousy between father and stepchild and a dynamic of lust between mother and son. Jealous that the empress showers her attention upon her son, Justinian threatens Theodora with divorce unless she murders Zuhair. Motivated by a desire to bring Theodora 'back to nature', redeeming her saint persona and restoring her 'woman[hood]', Justinian adamantly refuses to elevate Zuhair (pp. 203, 215).

In this way, Michael Field eroticizes the dynamic between Theodora, Justinian, and Zuhair. Justinian becomes increasingly jealous of Zuhair, who symbolizes Theodora's former transgressive eroticism. The co-authors explore Greco-Roman sexual transgression throughout their oeuvre, drawing from the classical sources they read in the original. [26] Scholars have written extensively on Michael Field's incorporation of Bacchic Hellenism in their classically themed drama and poetry, especially their preference for sexually transgressive themes they adapted from classical literature.[27] Their works, as Ana Parejo Vadillo has noted, were 'full of that dusty research which gave decadence the odour of the antique', frequently alluding to and adapting the ancient literature they studied in the original.[28] Their closet dramas rewrite less well-known characters from antiquity, drawing comparison between them and more iconic classical characters as they do in *Equal Love*.

The narrative of *Equal Love* echoes that of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*: the story of a prince destined to murder his father and marry his mother.[29] It was notably written five years before *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), where Freud adopts Sophocles's tale as the basis for his theory that 'our first sexual impulse [is] towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father'.[30] Whereas Freud emphasizes the child's unconscious jealousy of the father and desire for the mother, in Michael Field's configuration they emphasize the father's initial heteropatriarchal violence and jealousy (Laius pins Oedipus's feet together, intending to let him die of exposure to avoid regicide and maintain possession of his wife) and the mother's as well as the son's unconscious desire.

As a child, Zuhair heard amorous tales from Theodora's former lovers, including his father, leading him to romanticize his desire for her: 'I only thought | Of seeing you. What mystery of rose | Flushes across your cheek! | [. . .] | I heard | Of a sweet woman with a silver laugh, | Like Venus's laughter' (p. 206). Zuhair describes the melancholic longing for his absent mother using the language and symbolism of desire, including Venus, goddess of erotic love. Zuhair elides the distinction between romantic and familial love, adopting the erotic desire that his father, also named Zuhair, once felt for his mother. Once these amorous words have flattered Theodora, Zuhair entreats her to show him physical affection:

> Give me some comfort,
> Some strength, as if I were your very son.
> I have no mother: I have stood and watched
> How mothers kiss their sons, stood by the tent
> And sobbed and turned away. (p. 206)

Theodora responds to Zuhair's declaration that 'I have no mother' with 'I have no son' (p. 207), a double negation denying their familial bond. Linguistically repressing kinship enables them to enter into physical desire under the pretence that they are unrelated: 'Yes, you may put your arms quite round my neck' (p. 207). The embrace is a revelation. 'You are my son', she exclaims to an elated Zuhair, who responds: 'I am yours, | Your Child, O mother!' (p. 207). Initially repressing familial ties enabled Theodora and Zuhair to explore the transgressive physical intimacy they come to fully embrace through the affirmation of their mother-son relationship. The abrupt entrance of Justinian disrupts their intimacy, and Theodora guiltily, 'violently flings Zuhair from her' embrace (p. 207).

In the culminating scene of the drama, Michael Field continues to eroticize Theodora's violence, depicting her relationship to Zuhair through a sadomasochistic dynamic. Zuhair deferentially entreats Theodora to strangle him to death (evoking Sardou's Theodora's execution by hanging):

> [*Passing her hand over the boy's body, and speaking to him in a low, excited voice*]
> THEODORA: You mean—
> You dare this?
> ZUHAIR: Oh, be great!
> THEODORA: With my own hands?
> They tingle—what, to handle you myself!
> [*The boy is borne off: she looks after him, a covetous frenzy in her face*]
> O Mother Ida! I am shaken through
> As by the clash of cymbals!
> Ecstasy!
> Ay, so to mutilate myself. (p. 214)

Theodora runs her hands over Zuhair's body as they negotiate his death. Michael Field describes Zuhair's desire for Theodora to kill him in terms of a shared fantasy of erotic asphyxiation. The language of excitation, 'ecstasy', and 'frenzy', evokes the Bacchic Hellenism, to use Evangelista's term, which they explore elsewhere in their works.[31] Evangelista reads Michael Field's embrace of the Bacchic, 'with its glorification of sexuality and intoxication', as a vehicle for exploring 'unconscious desires' and 'the ultimate taboo of a literally suicidal ecstasy'.[32] The twin taboos of death and desire converge in this scene that, like the bacchanalia, enabled people temporarily to manifest their otherwise repressed impulses.

Ultimately, Theodora resolves the tension of the family drama by killing Zuhair, thereby settling Justinian's anxiety. When Theodora takes Zuhair away to murder him, she first releases him from his bondage: 'I fondle you and you are helpless. There! [*Loosening his chains*] | Now you can give me free caresses, cling | Close, close' (p. 217). Theodora 'kissed him | [. . .] | And kissed him after' (p. 219). After this 'open, frank farewell', Theodora stabs Zuhair to death, and Justinian at last declares his victory: 'O my strength, | My empire's strength—ours

is an equal love' (pp. 221, 224). Michael Field underlines the irony of Justinian's statement through the parallel repetitive construction of 'my strength, | My empire's strength', since Justinian's order to have Zuhair killed actually weakened the empire. Justinian repeatedly insists that he desires Theodora and himself to 'rule on as they cannot rule who put | Their hope in offspring', and he consistently shows himself to be against heteroreproductivity (p. 203). For Michael Field, the heteropatriarchal future on which imperialism relies forecloses the possibility of egalitarian love between heterosexual partners. The 'equal love' between Theodora and Justinian is thus queer in the anti-relational sense that Lee Edelman puts forth in his discussion of queer negativity, for only their defiance of imperial heteroreproduction ensures their egalitarian relationship.[33]

By eliminating evidence of Theodora's former decadence, including her son, Michael Field challenges Roman historiography's assumption that decadence is a symptom of imperial decline. Shushma Malik stipulates in her recent work on the subject of Roman historiography and decadence:

> [N]ot all decline is related to decadence. Decline can be caused by a wide range of factors that have nothing whatsoever to do with morality or its lack. What's more, the reverse is also true. Decadence can exist in a society without causing its deterioration on a wide scale.[34]

Unlike Gibbon and Montesquieu, Michael Field challenges the assumption that Justinian's reign was spoiled on account of Theodora's decadence. Their revisionist history faults Justinian for having catalysed imperial decline. Michael Field disentangles decadence from decline, showing Justinian's fragile masculinity rather than Theodora's non-normative desires to be the cause of decline. Threatened and jealous, Justinian orders Zuhair's death, thus setting into motion what modern historians have viewed as Rome's final decline. The erotic undertones of Michael Field's drama would have been especially clear to the *fin-de-siècle* audience of *The Pageant,* who perhaps recognized their own non-conformativity in these late-antique characters. Two years after its publication, Victoria Cross adapted her own version of Theodora's life. Cross's Theodora diverges from more historically faithful late-Victorian narratives like *Equal Love,* representing Theodora's exploration of same-sex free love and gender fluidity.

Victoria Cross's 'Theodora' and *Six Chapters of a Man's Life*

In both the short story, 'Theodora: A Fragment' and *Six Chapters of a Man's Life* (1903), Cross adapts and modernizes Theodora's journey to North Africa where she eloped with Hecebolus, the father of the illegitimate child that Michael Field features in *Equal Love*. Cross's Theodora, like her historical counterpart, elopes with her lover Cecil and is forced into prostitution. Cross's narrative diverges from history with the modern Theodora's suicide.

The plot of the short story features an erotic encounter: the protagonist and narrator Cecil meets Theodora at a ball and she later visits his home. While there, Theodora cross-dresses as a boy in orientalist clothing and the two share a steamy kiss. By 1903, when Cross expanded the story into *Six Chapters in a Man's Life*, the transition from 'Theodora' to 'Man' in the respective titles hints at the gender fluidity that Cross elaborated in the novel form. *Six Chapters* continues where the erotic meeting between the lovers leaves off. In the novel, Theodora joins Cecil on an archaeological dig in Mesopotamia. She proposes that she accompany him not as a wife but rather disguised as his male-identified companion. The duo, however, never arrive at their destination.

Previous scholarship has observed Theodora's queerness by reading her gender transformation in terms of a performativity that signifies sexual dissonance. On this view, her cross-dressing flouts gender norms and expresses sexual inversion. Both Sally Ledger and Deborah Cohler have read Theodora in Cross's short story as a radically sexually transgressive New Woman. Meanwhile, Petra Dierkes-Thrun similarly argues that Theodora is a queer character whose cross-dressing further shows her sexual dissidence and gender role reversal.[36] I see something else. By situating the modern Theodora Dudley in comparison to her historical Byzantine counterpart, I argue, Cross inscribes within the novel a queer, feminist critique. The comparison between the Byzantine and British treatment of Theodora interrogates *fin-de-siècle* homosocial subculture's attitude toward gender nonconformity and subversive femininity.

At first glance, the narrative has little in common with history. Nevertheless, Cross interweaves historical fragments and commentary throughout. This approach resembles Freeman's description of queer historians who 'min[e] the present for signs' of queer potentiality and 'undetonated energy from [the] past' in the method she terms erotohistoriography.[37] Cross's deconstructive style embraces anachronisms, fragmentation, and interstitiality between past and present

Theodoras, and it demonstrates erotohistoriography's capacity to take place 'between and across the bodies of lusting women'.[38] In this regard, Cross's novel is similar to Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), whose protagonist, as Freeman observes, 'experiences historical change as a set of directly corporeal and often sexual sensations'.[39]

Cross presents her protagonist's life as predestined, as if Theodora is a modern reincarnation. She thus inscribes the genealogical connection that she forges between premodern and modern Theodoras upon her body. Close reading the physical and textual body of Cross's Theodora unveils her adaptation to echo Gibbon's historical account in ways that explore her non-normativity and inscribe her difference on her physical body. Crucial moments within the narrative literalize homophobic anecdotes from Gibbon via Procopius, adapting them to a modern setting. Cross elaborates fragments from history to embrace Theodora as a queer woman while exploring how past and present male-dominated homoerotic subculture forecloses the possibility of queer femininity.

The analogy between the Byzantine and British Theodora are made explicit in the first scene when Cecil tells his friend about her:

> 'Do you mean she is like Gibbon's Theodora?'
> 'Bother Gibbon! you know I never read him. Well, it's difficult to say what she is like'.[40]

Cecil's comment encompasses Cross's practice of rejecting Gibbon's empiricist approach to writing history (and also to writing historical drama as Michael Field had done) in favour of embedding the past inside the fictional present. Just as Cecil resists comparing the modern Theodora with her namesake, so too does Cross prefer implicit engagement with slanderous historical anecdotes, the fragments of which she weaves into the novel. These intertextual fragments contain historical traces of Theodora's queerness that Cross interweaves and embellishes. Cross stylizes the novel in a manner that encourages close reading and whose close subject matter—past and present Theodoras—intimately touch in the temporal collapse intended to highlight the continuities between premodern and modern gender and sexual queerness.

Cross modernizes Theodora most explicitly in her antiphrastic description, which revises Gibbon's. Gibbon describes a discrepancy between Theodora's traditional beauty and her unconventional behaviour:

> Her features were delicate and regular [.. .] every sensation was instantly expressed by the vivacity of her eyes; her easy motions displayed the graces of a small but elegant figure [. . .] But this form was degraded by the facility with which it was exposed to the public eye, and prostituted to licentious desire.[41]

Gibbon's Theodora therefore embodies the paradoxical femme fatale whose beauty masks her sinister deviancy. Cross echoes Gibbon's blazon, but she inverts Gibbon's language to characterize Theodora as queer:

> 'She is tall, and with a bent-about sort of figure [. . .] I don't know what you call it. Features straight as a billiard cue, and the most thundering eyes you ever saw; and then her eyebrows, they start from her nose, go up to the middle of her forehead nearly, and then come down to her ear! [. . .] She's so queer. I am not asking you to fall in love with her. I want you to see her. She's got a moustache'. (pp. 1–2)

Whereas Gibbon's Theodora's figure is described as 'delicate', 'regular', and 'natural', Cross's Theodora has an indescribable 'queer' figure and features. Cross strategically removes cis-heteronormative romance from the equation, so that the entirety of the novel can explore queer alternatives.

Cecil and Theodora embrace free love, eloping to northern Africa, like the Theodora and her lover Hecebolus before them, and neither has any interest in heterosexual marriage. Theodora resists marriage to retain her wealth, while Cecil divulges his predilection for men. When a friend asks why he never married, Cecil responds suggestively: 'I think I have heard of men remaining celibates before now, especially men with my tastes', insinuating his same-sex attraction (p. 35). Later in the novel, the lovers reaffirm their rejection of heteronormativity in favour of non-cis homosexuality; they playfully figure their relationship in terms of premodern Greek love between men (*pederastia*). These passages revise Procopius's pejorative comparison of Theodora to the *cinaedi*, the passive homoerotic lover of a same-sex partnership, portraying same-sex love in a positive light. Theodora dresses like 'a young fellow of nineteen', figuring herself as the *eromenos*, the passive younger lover of Cecil, the dominant *erastes* (p. 52). Theo encourages Cecil's attentions:

'somehow, as I looked at my own reflection, I felt certain that you would not mind this in place of the orthodox white satin!' (p. 132). However, another passage reinterprets their homoerotic relationship in terms of another premodern model of homoerotic companionship distinct from that of pederasty: the martial comrades-in-arms who shared a more egalitarian companionship. Cecil describes the relationship as follows:

> We met on equal, easy, broad, pleasant grounds, where the companionship and comradeship and friendship of a man to a man joined and met with and merged easily into passionate desire and the pleasures of sense; and I felt—I don't say other men would feel—but I felt an infinitely stronger, more violent passion grow in me for this associate, this fellow-being, this co-thinker, and constant companion than I could possibly have done for any womanly wife. (p. 153)

Theodora and Cecil reject conventionality, instead turning to more egalitarian models of homoerotic companionship between men.[42] Cecil emphasizes that this is a companionship between 'a man [and] a man'; the levelling of power dynamics afforded by the model of homoerotic comradeship is conveyed through the gender-neutral roles, 'this fellow-being, this co-thinker', he ascribes to Theodora.

Cross significantly maps Theodora and Cecil's queer experimentation onto the homoerotic orientalized space of Northern Africa, territory colonized by both the Byzantine Justinian and Theodora and Queen Victoria. The orientalized space, Edward W. Said famously writes, provided Western tourists with 'sexual experience[s] unobtainable in Europe'.[43] Only once the lovers leave England do they transition from a cis-heterosexual understanding of their relationship to a non-cis-homoerotic one. Upon leaving England, Theodore identifies predominantly as a man, and goes by the nickname 'Theo'. Although at times, Theo playfully transforms into the feminine Theodora to flirt with pretty women, inciting Cecil's jealousy, Cross makes it clear that her protagonist has fully embraced gender fluidity, assuming primarily a masculine identity. Theo and Cecil's erotic relationship exists solely when Theodore identifies as such, an early example of a same-sex non-cis-gendered couple represented in English literature. Although Cecil as narrator refers to Theodora using feminine pronouns, within

the discourse of the story Cecil adapts the name Theodore or Theo, using the masculine pronouns to refer to his beloved.[44] Cross's exploration of gender fluidity resonates more with modern representations of transgender and genderqueer identities than gender performativity:

> You won't forget and call me Theodora by mistake before people, will you? It is quite easy to drop the *a* and put an *e* instead. When I was christened, I suppose my parents noticed I was very like a boy, and so with admirable forethought gave me a name that would do for either! (p. 136)

Ultimately, however, Cross shows that *fin-de-siècle* nonconforming women must still perform their queerness by using homoerotic discourse developed by men. Cross repeatedly explores transphobia and the aversion to queerness in women within late-Victorian homoerotic masculine subculture. Cecil betrays his transphobia when, each time his Theo makes a gesture he reads as feminine, he barely contains his murderous desire. Whereas elsewhere in the Victorian canon Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick noticed men behaving violently as a reaction to 'homosexual panic', here Cross explores what could be termed the transphobic panic of homosexual men behaving violently towards trans men. Cecil's reaction is incendiary when 'Theodora [. . .] act[s] in the most feminine way [. . .] displaying the most aggravating trait in women' (p. 128).[45] Cross contrasts Cecil's transphobic anxiety with Theo's inclusive attitude, suggesting that queers need to look beyond cis-masculine homoerotic subculture for a model of queerness that will accommodate more than same-sex desiring cis-men.

Theo's demise comes when a homosocial audience watching a nude dancing man detains and brutally rapes Theo for his overt homoeroticism and gender non-conformity. Cecil describes the dancer as a young 'Levantine, white skinned, and of the true, supple, slender type', a description reminiscent of the *cinaedi*, the effeminate pantomime dancer (p. 238).[46] The homosocial space permits controlled homoeroticism that, unbeknownst to Cecil and Theo, is highly regulated by social codes forbidding physical contact and the presence of women. The voyeuristic scene of 'men pressed round [. . .] as they closed in nearer' to the ostensibly same-sex couple Theo and Cecil arouses them (p. 238). Forgetting their surroundings, they impulsively embrace: 'I put my arm round her and leaned over her and

kissed her. It was a foolish, incautious thing to do in our position, and at such a time and place' (p. 241). Cecil immediately backpedals. He insistently uses feminine pronouns to narrate his erotic encounter with Theo, as if proleptically justifying his behaviour not, as it seems, to be a same-sex kiss, but actually to be a heteronormative kiss between a man and his cross-dressing mistress. The brothel owner demands that Theo be detained: 'You may go if you please, but your companion remains with us' (p. 243). The context is clear to both Theo and Cecil, who recognize that the men will detain Theo (whom they recognize as a cis-man) as a sex slave: '"They have seen you kiss me. We have betrayed ourselves. Nothing now will satisfy them but—" and she shrugged her shoulders' (p. 246). They thus arrest Theo who will suffer a week of brutal sexual violence.

Cross's interrogation of the heteropatriarchal violence against women and non-gender-conforming subjects within homosocial subculture intensifies as the penultimate chapter continues. Once again, Cecil expresses 'only one instinct, one thought, the murderous desire to kill her'; the narrator expounds his 'brutal lust to kill' with disturbing detail (pp. 247–48). Cross draws comparison between Cecil and the brothel-goers whose violent transphobia leads to Theo's tragic death.

In this crucial moment, Theodora convinces Cecil, who is seriously considering a murder-suicide, to allow her to serve time: 'Το χρῆν, Cecil, το χρῆν' (p. 251). Evoking her Roman namesake by speaking ancient Greek, the imperial language of Byzantium, Theodora desperately pleads with Cecil to realize that this is her fate.[47] By aligning Theo's destiny to serve as an enslaved prostitute with her namesake, Cross incorporates the historical Theodora's brief period as a prostitute when, as Gibbon had written, 'every city of the East admired and enjoyed [her]' within her adaptation.[48] Cross's revision aligns with earlier historians and historical fiction writers who recuperated Theodora as a repentant victim of her circumstances.

Cross concludes the narrative with an extensive dreamlike sequence detailing Theodora's post-traumatic stress after having been enslaved, raped, and consequently 'disfigured and degraded' (p. 265). In this final chapter, Cross seemingly resolves the queerness that she explores throughout the novel by refocusing the emphasis from the protagonists as a non-cis homoerotic couple to a heterosexual one; here Cecil resumes referring to Theodora, using the feminine ending and pronouns. Cross echoes Victorian literature's fallen woman trope, yet she significantly complicates it with the elements of homoeroticism, proto-trans identity, and transphobia. Devoting twenty-six pages to an empathetic

portrayal of Theodora, whose physical body is 'blotted and covered in sores' and whose psychological state had deteriorated 'into a frenzy of delirious[ness]', Cross imprints upon the modern Theodora's body the suffering of past and present queer characters (pp. 264, 269). The description bears a striking resemblance to the physicality of erotohistoriography that Freeman describes: 'Over and over, the novel codes contact with the past as a meeting of sensate body, historical understanding, and representation. In the erotohistoriographic mode, [the novel] stages the very queer possibility that encounters with history are bodily encounters'.[49] By contrast to Freeman, whose interest is primarily the positive, 'pleasurable effect' of encountering erotic history as itself a sexual encounter, Cross's Theodora experiences negative as well as positive erotic interactions with history. [50]

Cross employs modern techniques such as stream-of-consciousness, fragmentation, and dream-like states to emphasize the experience of queer trauma, while the temporal confusion caused by interstitial incorporation of historical anecdotes weaves itself upon Theodora's body. On the one hand, Cross inscribes on Theodora's body positive renderings of Procopius's homophobic remarks, reclaiming queerness by embracing her masculinity as gender identity and depicts her enjoyment of 'intercourse of a masculine type of lewdness'.[51] The possibility of gender and sexually queer representation alone demonstrates teleological progress. On the other hand, the fatal cis-heteropatriarchal violence incited by homosexual and transphobic violence against Theodora as a homoerotic non-cis person challenges the nostalgic impulse for a glorified past and the illusion of the present's teleological superiority. By concluding the novel with Theodora's ambiguous drowning, Cross affiliates her with Antinous, the beloved of Emperor Hadrian. The allusion significantly situates Theodora alongside Antinous, whose history attracted several 1890s writers including Oscar Wilde, as a queer icon of the late-Victorian decadent imagination.

Both Michael Field's and Cross's representations of Theodora significantly explore gender nonconformity and sexual deviancy beyond the confines of Victorian sexology and historiography. Revising the lacklustre empiricist historical writing in favour of historical fictionalized genres provided both authors the space to reinterpret Theodora's life to queer ends. These authors expand and literalize Theodora's erotic history to depict her as an excessively queer character whose non-normative desires and gender identities go beyond late-Victorian

understandings of sexual inversion or homosexuality. Although their methods of writing queer history diverge, Michael Field and Cross together engage in a version of erotohistoriography that accounts for sexual dissidence beyond male homosexuality and explores queer configurations of opposite-sex desire.

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NOTES

[1] Filippo Carlà, 'Prostitute, Saint, Pin-Up, Revolutionary: The Reception of Theodora in Twentieth-Century Italy', in *Seduction and Power: Antiquity in the Visual and Performing Arts* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Publishing, 2013), pp. 243–62 (p. 256).

[2] Stefano Evangelista, *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece: Hellenism, Reception, Gods in Exile,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 96. See also Yopie Prins, 'Sappho Doubled: Michael Field', in *Victorian Sappho* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 74–111.

[3] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 21.

[4] Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 95.

[5] Ibid., p.105.

[6] Ibid., p. 95.

[7] Ibid., p. xvii.

[8] John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, trans. E.W. Brooks (Paris, 1932), p. 189.

[9] Ibid., p. 203.

[10] S.P. Scott, *The Civil Law,* vols 5–6. (Cincinnati: The Central Trust Company, 1932), p. 47.

[11] Ibid, 17.16–23, pp. 203–05.

[12] John Malalas, *The Chronicle,* trans. Elizabeth Jeffreys (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2007), 18.23, p. 255.

[13] C. Foss, 'The Empress Theodora', *Byzantion*, 72.1 (2002), 141–76 (p. 155).

[14] Montesquieu, *Considerations on the Causes of Grandeur and Decadence of the Romans*, trans. Jehu Baker (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1894), pp. 419–20.

[15] Leonora Neville, *Byzantine Gender* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), p. 6.

[16] Henry Pottinger, *Blue and Green, or, The Gift of God: A Romance in Old Constantinople*, 3 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1879), I, p. ix. Pottinger's preface critiques Dahn and other earlier nineteenth-century depictions of Theodora for characterizing her as promiscuous empress, like the first-century AD empress Messalina, while overlooking her successes as a ruler.

[17] Ibid., I, pp. viii–ix.

[18] Elena Boeck, 'Archaeology of Decadence: Uncovering Byzantium in Victorien Sardou's Theodora', *Byzantium/Modernism*, ed. by Roland Betancourt and Maria Taroutina (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 2015), pp. 102–32 (p. 112).

[19] Sarah Bernhardt, who played Theodora in Sardou's drama, was also famously cast as Medea in an 1898 Parisian production.

[20] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, p. 39.

[21] On Michael Field's interest in linking Justa Grata Honoria with the New Woman of their own time, see Joseph Bristow, 'Michael Field's "Unwomanly Audacities": *Attila, My Attila!* Sexual Modernity, and the London Stage', *Michael Field: Decadent Moderns*, ed. by Sarah Parker and Ana Parejo Vadillo (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2019), pp. 123–50.

[22] Michael Field, *Equal Love, The Pageant* (London: Henry and Company, 1896), pp. 189–228 (p. 194); subsequent references appear in parentheses. *The Pageant,* which was edited by the queer artistic partners Charles Shannon and Charles Haslewood Shannon, appeared once in 1896 and again 1897.

[23] Linda Dowling, 'The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 33.4 (1979), 434–53 (p. 447).

[24] See Montesquieu, *Considerations,* pp. 98, 91.

[25] Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 6 vols (London: J.F. Dove, 1825), VI, p. 514.

[26] Bradley studied at Newnham College, Cambridge and at the Collège de France; both attended University College Bristol. See Evangelista, *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece*, p. 96.

[27] See especially Yopie Prins, 'Greek Maenads, Victorian Spinsters, in *Victorian Sexual Dissidence*, ed. by Richard Dellamora (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 43–82; Evangelista, *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece*, pp. 93–124.

[28] Ana Parejo Vadillo, '"This Hot-house of Decadent Chronicle": Michael Field, Nietzsche and the Dance of Modern Poetic Drama', *Women: A Cultural Review* 26:3 (2015), 195–220 (p. 204).

[29] See Sophocles, *Ajax, Electra, Oedipus Tyrranus*, trans. by Hugh Lloyd-Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 323–471.

[30] Sigmund Freud, 'The Interpretation of Dreams', *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: Norton, 2010), pp. 814–24 (p. 816).

[31] Evangelista, *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece*, p. 118.

[32] Ibid., pp. 123, 118.

[33] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

[34] Shushma Malik, 'Decadence and Roman Historiography', in *Decadence and Literature*, ed. by Jane Desmarais and David Weir (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 30–46 (p. 30).

[35] See Sally Ledger, 'The New Woman and Feminist Fictions', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, ed. by Gail Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 22; and Deborah Cohler, *Citizen, Invert, Queer: Lesbianism and War in Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

[36] See Petra Dierkes-Thrun, 'Victoria Cross's *Six Chapters of a Man's Life*: Queering Middlebrow Feminism', in *Middlebrow and Gender, 1890–1945*, ed. by Christoph Ehland and Cornelia Wächter (Leiden: Brill Press, 2016), pp. 202–27.

[37] Freeman, *Time Binds*, p. xvi.

[38] Ibid., p. 106.

[39] Ibid., p. 107.

[40] Victoria Cross, *Six Chapters of a Man's Life* (London: Walter Scott, 1903), p. 1; subsequent references appear in parentheses.

[41] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, IV, p. 564.

[42] See Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), and David M. Halperin. *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[43] Edward W. Said. *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1879), p. 190.

[44] I have chosen to use the masculine pronoun when it is used in the discourse of the story.

[45] See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[46] Ibid., p. 215. See Craig Williams, *Roman Sexuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 215.
[47] Theodora cleverly alludes to Euripides's Hecuba's use of 'χρῆν' (time) as she pleads Odysseus not to sacrifice her daughter. *Hecuba*, trans. by Diane Arnson Svarlien (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2012), pp. 57–114 (p.69, line 260); my thanks to Christian Lehmann for help with the Greek.
[48] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, IV, p. 565.
[49] Freeman, *Time Binds*, p. 105.
[50] Ibid., p. 105.
[51] Procopius, *Secret History,* p. 105.

Małgorzata Łuczyńska-Hołdys

'Spring's brief bloom': Responses to Botticelli's *Primavera* in British Aestheticism

People have begun to find out the charm of Botticelli's work, and his name, little known in the last century, is quietly becoming important', proclaims Walter Pater in the opening paragraph of his 1870 essay on the Renaissance painter Sandro Botticelli.[1] It might seem strange to the present-day reader to discover, as Michael Levey puts it, that Botticelli was 'a painter specifically re-discovered by the nineteenth century itself', since references to the artist's works are hardly to be found between Botticelli's death in 1510 and the year 1800.[2] Pater's essay thus marks 'the beginning of the literary cult of Botticelli'.[3] It was reprinted in his famous volume *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) and its subsequent editions. Together with John Ruskin's remarks in 'The Æsthetic and Mathematic Schools of Florence' (1874) and John Addington Symonds's observations in *Renaissance in Italy* (1877), Pater's commentary counts among the first important discussions of Botticelli during the nineteenth century. The interest in the art of the Italian painter dramatically increased in the later decades of the Victorian era, changing into the 'Botticelli craze' that infiltrated not only English art criticism

and painting but also literature. In this period, the references to the famous quattrocento artist changed from scarce and sporadic into abundant both in the poetry and other cultural writings of the period. The present essay examines the responses to Botticelli's *Primavera* (Figure 1) in the poetry of Michael Field, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Algernon Charles Swinburne, and it shows how aestheticist ideas become incorporated in poetic explications of one of the most famous Renaissance paintings. I argue that these subjective views of the *Primavera* were entirely informed by dominant cultural ideas during the epoch and that the painting became an excuse for the rehearsal of the poets' and critics' respective views on beauty, temporality, change, and modernity. At the same time, I demonstrate that while these interpretations have ultimately been eclipsed by the twentieth-century analyses inspired by methodical practices of art criticism, they still merit further attention because—from the perspective of our own time—they perform a profound defamiliarization of Botticelli's painting, revealing it to be much more emotionally charged and poignant than current art historical narratives allow.

In 'Fragment on Sandro Botticelli', Pater establishes the way in which Botticelli would be later read and reconstituted in aesthetic poetry. He asks: 'What

Figure 1: Sandro Botticelli, *Primavera* (*c.* late 1470s–early 1480s). Tempera grassa on wood. 207 cm x 319 cm. Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, 1890 no. 8360.

is the peculiar sensation, what is the peculiar quality of pleasure, which his work has the property of exciting in us, and which we cannot get elsewhere?' (p. 155). He finds the answer in the distinctive, poetic quality of Botticelli's art. For Pater, Botticelli 'is before all things a poetical painter, blending the charm of story and sentiment, the medium of the art of poetry, with the charm of line and colour, the medium of abstract painting' (pp. 155–56). Botticelli's paintings are 'new readings of his own of classical stories' (p. 155). '[I]f he painted religious incidents', Pater observes, he did that 'with an under-current of original sentiment, which touches you as the real matter of the picture through the veil of its ostensible subject' (p. 155). Crucially for my argument, Pater claims that Botticelli's sympathies are 'with men and women, in their mixed and uncertain condition, always attractive, clothed sometimes by passion with a character of loveliness and energy, but saddened perpetually by the shadow upon them of the great things from which they shrink' (p. 157). Similarly, Symonds stresses the peculiar poetic quality of Botticelli's art, calling him 'a true poet within the limits of a certain sphere' and asserting that '[w]e have to seek his parallel among the verse-writers rather than the artists of his day'.[4] In turn, Ruskin, who generally attempts to reinvest art with moral meaning, informed his students at Oxford in 1874 that Botticelli 'is the only painter of all the religious schools who unites every bodily with every spiritual power and knowledge', even though he finds restlessness, weariness, and gloom in some of the artist's figures.[5]

These critical comments are pertinent to my discussion in several ways. First, in their emphasis on a picture as an interpretation of a story/text, both Pater and Symonds stress the interrelation between word and image, which is so important in nineteenth-century discussions of art. Secondly, Ruskin finds in Botticelli what the poets also explore: an attempt to reconcile the corporeal and the spiritual, the ephemeral and the tangible. Thirdly, Pater suggests that the ostensible subject of a painting should be seen only as a vehicle or 'the veil' (p. 155) of a much more important latent theme, which in the *Primavera* seems to be what we may loftily call the human condition: the awareness of history and change, living with the perpetual consciousness of the transience of things. These statements from three influential critical thinkers acquire exceptionally persuasive invoicing in the verse of Michael Field, Rossetti, and Swinburne, whose poetry about Botticelli's *Primavera* elaborates these leading ideas.

Still, it is important to consider established twenty- and twenty-first-century views on the *Primavera* because they make such a sharp contrast with late-Victorian interpretations. They are also pertinent here because they frame our own response to Botticelli's art. Thus, as historians tell us, the picture was painted between 1482 and 1483 as a present for a marriage chamber intended for Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de Medici. A description of the painting on the website of the Uffizi Gallery, where it has hung since 1919, informs us that

> it shows nine figures from classic mythology advancing over a flowery lawn in a grove of orange and laurel trees. In the foreground, to the right, Zephyrus embraces a nymph named Chloris before taking her; she is then portrayed after her transformation into Flora, the spring goddess. The centre of the painting is dominated by the goddess of love and beauty, Venus, chastely dressed and set slightly back from the others, and by a blindfolded Cupid, firing his arrow of love.
>
> On the left, the three Graces, minor goddesses with virtues like those of Venus, are shown dancing in a circle. The composition is closed by Mercury, messenger of the Gods, recognisable from his helmet and winged sandals, as he touches a cloud with his staff.[6]

Hence, modern readers wanting to explore meanings behind the symbolism of the painting will find a radically different narrative from that offered by the aesthetes. They will probably learn that the *Primavera* is a celebration of love, peace and prosperity, and that its complex allegorical meaning offers a visual narrative to be read from right to left, starting from the figure of Zephyrus, the West Wind, who chases the nymph Chloris. In looking for Botticelli's sources, the critics point to Ovid's calendar poem *Fasti*, where Chloris is transformed into the deity of spring known as Flora after they are married: '(dum loquitur, vernas efflat ab ore rosas): | "Chloris eram, quae Flora vocor")' (and while she spoke, her lips breathed vernal roses: | 'I who now am called Flora was formerly Chloris').[7]

Modern scholars generally agree that metamorphosis is one of the most important ideas suggested in the picture. The signs of the upcoming transformation can be detected in the flowers flowing forth from the nymph's mouth, and also

in the figure of Flora, coming next into view, who represents Chloris after her transformation.[8] Venus, however, is the central focus of the picture: slightly withdrawn, observant, femininity in full bloom. Lilian Zirpolo, among others, comments that Venus's swelled abdomen suggests fertility and procreative potential.[9] Venus's lifted hand has been read by Federico Zeri according to the code of social behaviour of the time as a gesture of invitation and welcome, urging the viewer to enter into her kingdom of beauty.[10] With equal frequency, critics resort to the classic Neoplatonic reading proposed by Ernst Gombrich in 1945 and endorsed by Erwin Panofsky and Edgar Wind.[11] This interpretation traces the influences of Marsilio Ficino's philosophical programme. From this vantage point, Venus stands for the virtue of Humanitas, which—in Gombrich's view—'was to arouse in the spectator a feeling akin to religious enthusiasm, a divine furor kindled by beauty'.[12] In a similar vein, Paul Barolsky claims that—if read allegorically–the *Primavera* is seen as a story of '"the life" of Everyman, who journeys from his earthly existence to a final resting place in heaven'.[13] Meanwhile, Umberto Baldini argues that the painting may be interpreted as 'the passage from the active to the elevated, more contemplative life, from the temporal to the eternal plane'.[14]

These twentieth-century accounts of the *Primavera*, which try to establish the objective meaning of the painting and refer to the cultural context of fifteenth-century Italy, were initiated by Herbert Horne and Aby Warburg: the turn-of-the-century scholars whom Frank Kermode identifies as father figures of modern criticism on Botticelli.[15] Crucially for the point that I am making, their accounts were a reaction against the aestheticist perspectives on the Italian master. Jeremy Melius suggests that 'the achievements of [Horne's and Warburg's] scholarly reconstruction of Botticelli can best be understood as reaction-formations against the artist's late nineteenth-century cult'.[16] Both Horne and Warburg endorsed almost scientific objectivity in approaching art and subsequently warned against subjective aesthetic impressions. Warburg, as Melius notes, even advocated the 'science of art', as opposed to the aesthetic appreciation of the late nineteenth century, seeking 'to reconstruct the court culture of the Florentine quattrocento as the earliest moment in which modernity defines itself self-consciously in terms of its past—its likeness to and difference from antiquity'.[17] Horne, in turn, comes back to the work of his predecessors by trying 'to modify what had become the stock responses of modernity' to Botticelli.[18] For instance, Kermode states that Horne identifies the strangeness and gloom which Ruskin and Pater found in Botticelli

as the traits of '*aria virile*': the distinctive quality attributed to him already by his Florentine contemporaries, which the aestheticist critics did not understand.[19] Horne repeatedly described Botticelli's artistic mode as 'virile' which, as Rececca N. Mitchell demonstrates, denotes the rigorous learning that stands behind his painting as well as the author's draughtsmanship, the control of line and the clarity of expression.[20]

What was it, then, in the late-Victorian writings on Botticelli that twentieth-century art criticism so vehemently attacked and ultimately rejected? Instead of finding in the *Primavera* an allegorical lesson of moral refinement and the sublimation of earthly desires, the interpretations from the late Victorian period herald it simultaneously as an expression of deeply human anxieties, as a call for the celebration of the fleeting moment, and as an elegy on the passage of life. Poetry inspired by the *Primavera* explores these concerns with exceptional emotional and aesthetic force. The four late nineteenth-century poems that refer to the painting concentrate on the idea of temporality, history, and transformation, and at their centre they have the main characteristics of what Pater famously called 'æsthetic poetry'.[21]

It is generally acknowledged that British aestheticism mandated poetry's suspension of religious and moral purpose in favour of form and beauty as ends in themselves. Aestheticist ideas also include the emphasis on the brevity of life, the intense preoccupation with momentary impression of beauty, and the fusion of pain and pleasure which seem inseparable. The manifesto of British aestheticism, not surprisingly, is also by the author of the Botticelli essay. In 'Æsthetic Poetry' (1889), Pater proclaims:

> One characteristic of the pagan spirit the aesthetic poetry has, which is on its surface—the continual suggestion, pensive or passionate, of the shortness of life. This is contrasted with the bloom of the world, and gives new seduction to it—the sense of death and the desire of beauty: the desire of beauty quickened by the sense of death.[22]

In his essay, Pater advocates the attitude of alertness, heightened sensitivity to the fleeting moment, and the intense sensory engagement with lovely things and with art, which provides us with the essence of beauty. These words compare with his

famous 'Conclusion' to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, where he postulates that '[n]ot the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses?'.[23]

Pater's remarks proved as influential as they were shocking. As Carolyn Burdett writes:

> Pater advises that the wisest people will seek to concentrate all their energies and efforts on the pleasure of these moments. For some, this seemed a recipe for self-indulgence through the hedonistic pursuit of pleasure. For others, though, it was a breathtakingly radical call to cast off the heavy weight of Victorian moralism and Christian doctrine in the name of art.[24]

Crucially, despite the intense concentration on the ephemeral moment, the awareness of the past is central to the spirit of aestheticism, since—as Rachel Teukolsky observes—'the culture's present is infinitely permeable and infiltrated by its past'.[25] Marion Thain notes that Pater 'believes aestheticist poetry . . . is distinguished by its formal historicism: its engagement with the questions raised by the act of representing the past within the present, and its concerns with differentiating as well as including the past'.[26] The poems' rendering Botticelli's *Primavera* as an ekphrastic representation engage with such a historicist vision as much as they strive to represent the three temporal planes simultaneously: the past in the present with a foray into the future. Moreover, just as Botticelli looked towards antiquity for inspiration, so do the aestheticist poets redraft and redefine the Renaissance painting, infusing their interpretations with the spirit of their own time.

Writing under the name of Michael Field, the co-authors Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper published a collection of ekphrastic poetry entitled *Sight and Song* (1892). As Thain reminds us, ekphrasis is 'an attempt to have mutually incompatible things simultaneously: to allow the poem to claim the static aspects of representation unique to the visual arts, but to do this through the dynamic nature of language'.[27] The main concern of *Sight and Song* is the rhetorical act of interpreting visual images. Within their collection, Bradley and Cooper devote two poems to the *Primavera.*

The poets begin the 'Preface' to their collection with two important points that form their theoretical framework. First, they see the poems from the volume not as descriptions or interpretations of paintings in question, but as translations into verse of 'what the lines and colours of certain chosen pictures sing in themselves'.[28] Secondly, they aspire to universality and objectivity of their renderings—their aim is to 'express not so much what these pictures are to the poet, but rather what poetry they objectively incarnate' (p. v). This aim is followed by a statement about the process of looking at art, which is an effort 'to see things from their own centre, by supressing the habitual centralisation of the visible in ourselves' (p. vi), an idea that strongly resembles Rossetti's concept of an inner standing point.[29] We can therefore see *Sight and Song* as an expression of a struggle between objective vision and subjective response to painting, a perspective also proposed by both Ana Parejo Vadillo and Julia F. Saville.[30] Yet, in contrast to their interpretations, I intend to argue that despite the poets' attempts to mitigate the power of the spectator's gaze and to grant the work of art far-reaching autonomy, the subjectivity of their vision still prevails over their dispassionate, objective gaze. Bradley and Cooper end the preface with a meaningful verse couplet: 'When your eyes have done their part | Thought must length it in the heart' (p. vi).

Michael Field's first poem about the *Primavera*, 'Spring', starts in an unexpected way. Despite the title, which suggests (as much as the picture does) that the emphasis will fall on the figure of Spring/Flora and its traditional associations with youth, frivolity, and rejuvenation, the poem projects an atmosphere of sadness and melancholy, undeniably the testimony to how 'thought' has processed sensory data after sight has 'done its part'. 'Venus is sad among the wanton powers' (p. 22) reads the first line, in tune with Pater's statement that Botticelli clothes 'all his varied work with a sentiment of ineffable melancholy' (p. 157). The co-authors construct a poetic space within which they both differentiate Venus from the scene of the festive celebration and immediately make her—not Flora, despite the title—the focal figure of the painting.

The challenge of ekphrastic translation concerns the question of impersonality in art, the autonomy of the art object, and the subjective relation to it on the side of the spectator. Thain suggests that in 'Spring' this conflict, clearly implicated by the 'Preface' to Bradley and Cooper's collection, is resolved through an identification of the speaker/viewer with Venus. The scene is presented as if it were from Venus's viewpoint—and, in this way, Thain argues, the agency of the viewer's

gaze is partially dismantled, substituted instead by an intimate personal encounter with Venus's mindscape. Although the poets do not speak as Venus, they 'try to understand the picture from her perspective'.[31] From this vantage point, the cool, dark shades of the painting can be explained by sad, melancholy thoughts troubling the goddess of love. Still, the claim to objectivity remains debatable; in poetry, even the employment of the trope of a mask or a dramatic mode does not decisively rule out the subjective authorial stance. Michael Field invites the viewer to consider the scene from Venus's perspective—but this manoeuvre results in the illusion of detachment on the side of the poets, who hope to elide personal engagement, making the reader believe that Venus's mood is objectively implicated in Botticelli's exquisite painting. Yet, Bradley and Cooper implicitly endorse Venus's standpoint, and their emphasis on the painting's sadness and gloom is a result of their own distinctively aestheticist vision. The struggle between objectivity and subjectivity in their poem is enacted in the urge to describe the details of the painting in a truthful, distanced way, as we can see in the following lines: 'Through umbrageous orange-trees | Sweeps, mid azure swirl, the Breeze' (p. 22); 'Before her [Venus's] face another group is seen' (p. 23); 'Three maidens circle o'er the turf' (p. 23); and '[Hermes] plucks a ripened orange with his hand' (p. 25). At the same time, there is their emotive language, which betrays their personal engagement in the interpretation: 'Curst she [Flora] is, uncertain-lipped' (p. 23); and 'Is this the grief and forethought of her heart? | For she [Venus] is sad' (p. 24).

Furthermore, one of the most interesting aspects of the poem is its presentation of the temporal dimension of the picture. Although (as the art critics tell us) the *Primavera* signals the idea of metamorphosis, we can also see how it arrests a single moment in time stressing the 'almost there, but not yet' concept. It does so by freezing the coming of spring halfway, by making Venus hesitate in her blessing, by pausing Zephyrus's passionate grasping of Chloris, and not letting Cupid shoot his arrow. The painting suggests both being-in-time and being-out-of-time simultaneously. In these half-accomplished actions, it achieves a troubled dynamic: what can be frozen in the realm of art must in reality follow its natural course. The sequence of events is activated in the viewer's imagination, suggesting the change from spring through summer till autumn and finally winter, the withering of nature, the fading of love affairs, and inevitable death. Bradley and Cooper attempt a translation of these implied transformations in their poem, as they concentrate not upon the mirth and the whirling dance of youth and desire,

but on Venus's premonition, or knowledge, of what is inevitably to come. Venus's sadness, they suggest, comes from the awareness of the transitory nature of youth and the exquisite blossom of spring. Just as Chloris transforms into Flora, so too will spring inevitably change into summer, autumn, and winter.[32] Michael Field's ekphrasis is fully congruent with aestheticist (patently not Renaissance) ideas of beauty inherent in the awareness of its ephemerality and inescapable corruption. Venus, we read,

> is tender with some dread,
> As she turns a musing head
> Sideways mid her veil demure;
> Her wide eyes have no allure,
> Dark and heavy with their pain. (p. 24)

Amid the frivolity and festivity of spring, only Venus knows the unavoidable future. The goddess of love senses that the beauty and youth of the three dancing Graces 'must fade when Eros speeds his dart' (p. 24), although they are now 'Yet unspent and cold with peace' (p. 25). Looking at Mercury, Venus sees how 'The triumph of the year without avail | Is blown to Hades by blue Zephyr's gale' (p. 26). Finally, she senses that the day's carefree and happy celebration, its heat and energy will eventually turn to nothingness: 'Venus, looking on, | Beholds the mead with all the dancers gone' (p. 26). These lines read as an elegy for the moment that must ineluctably die, with gloom and melancholy prevailing over festive celebration. The 'being-in-time' perspective clearly predominates.

In *Sight and Song*, there is a further ekphrasis of the *Primavera*—'The Figure of Venus in "Spring"'. This second poem upholds the mood of the previous one—Venus is 'full of heavy thought' (p. 85), as she stands, pausing at her blessing. Yet, the synchronic quality, so characteristic in 'Spring', gives way here to a much more static description. This change, however, is compensated for by the emphatically pronounced emphasis on incompletion and arrested development, distinct characteristics of ekphrastic poetry.

'The Figure of Venus in "Spring"', first of all, presents a meditation on the nature of love and the relation between the idealized vision of love and its dark, more pessimistic side. Acute sensual pleasure and intense delight may be experienced by Flora and the dancing Graces, but Venus, with her melancholy

insights, is bracketed out of the scene of wild festivity. The usual associations of Venus with beauty and fulfilment in love are reversed. Instead, the goddess is presented as herself unfulfilled—she is surrounded by cold myrtle-bowers, with white robes and 'unfilled breasts' (p. 85). Her coming, instead of celebration, brings an end to the 'yet unstrickened gladness of the year' (p. 85), and it engenders sorrow and bitterness instead of delight, enslavement instead of freedom. Initially, her halted blessing is an expression of the conflict between her will and that which is inevitable. Suspending her lifted hand, she tries to freeze the moment of bliss and carefree joy. However, as the second stanza informs us, destiny can be halted only for a while: though Venus defers her blessing, the course of life cannot be forever arrested. The three young Graces perform their dance spellbound while Hermes 'lifts his wand to smite | An orange from the bough' (p. 86), severing 'the golden fruit for hell' (p. 86), and Flora, Zephyrus, and the nymph progress towards their imminent fate. They travel 'wanton toward the infernal powers' (p. 86), here imagined as the 'stern Moirai' (p. 86), who, although invisible, themselves observe the scene beneath the trees. In an ultimate act of imposing subjective perspective on Botticelli's exquisite painting, Venus metamorphoses in the last line of the poem from the goddess of love into 'a harbinger of death' (p. 86), whose hand will eventually set the process of transformation in motion.

It may be concluded that Bradley and Cooper's poems on the *Primavera* perform two important tasks at the same time. First, they successfully subvert Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's hesitations about ekphrasis in *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766), succeeding in overcoming the temporal/spatial limitations claimed to be unresolvable by the German theorist.[33] Moreover, with their emphasis on the sense of suspension and the fleeting nature of the present experience they successfully impose their own subjective translation onto the painting's narrative, which fits into the central concerns of aestheticist poetry: the unresolved tension between pain and pleasure, beauty and corruption, time and timelessness, love and death.

The *Primavera* also inspired one of the chief figures of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Rossetti, an avid admirer of Italian art, bought Botticelli's early portrait of Smeralda Bandinelli (now in the Victoria and Albert Museum) in 1867 (Figure 2). Although Rossetti never travelled to Italy, he knew most of the masterpieces through photographs.[34] Interestingly, he was able to identify an almost direct quotation from the *Primavera* in Edward Burne-

Figure 2: Sandro Botticelli, *Portrait of Smeralda Bandinelli* (*c.* 1470–1480). Tempera on panel. 65.7 cm x 41 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, CAI. 100.

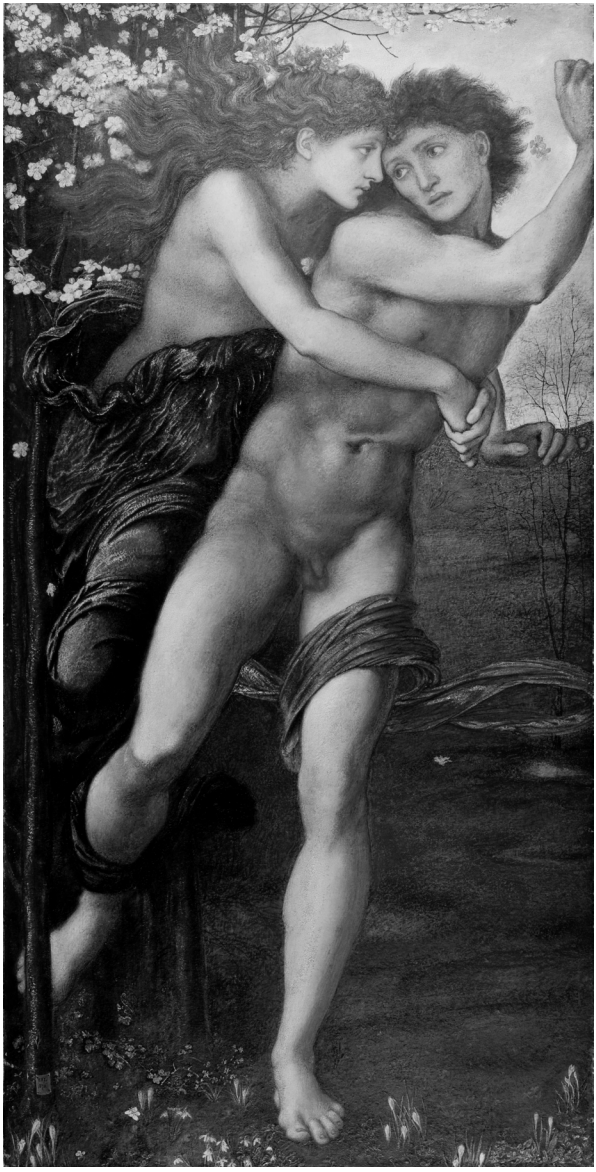

Figure 3: Edward Burne-Jones, *Phyllis and Demophoön* (1870). Body colour and watercolour with gold medium and gum arabic on composit layers. 93.8 cm x 47.5 cm. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 1916P37.

Jones's watercolour *Phyllis and Demophoön* (1870) (Figure 3) at the time when such an interpretation of this picture was not established.[35] In an August 1879 letter to Jane Morris, he commented upon the *Primavera*: 'The principal head in the *Spring* and several in other pictures—are obviously the woman represented in that portrait I have got'.[36] In his ekphrastic collection *Ballads and Sonnets* (1881), he includes 'For Spring, by Sandro Botticelli'. Thain compares Michael Field's 'Spring' with Rossetti's sonnet, and she maintains that unlike the former, the latter presents the scene in the painting as 'the perfectly stilled moment' without temporal perspective.[37] In contrast, I claim that Rossetti's sonnet is even more a temporal palimpsest than Bradley and Cooper's lyric, since it encodes the past in the present, and the present in the future.

Rossetti complies with the strategy of reading the painting from right to left, as he lists the figures surrounding Venus: Flora, who is 'wanton-eyed' with her flowers 'prankt and pied'; the embracing couple of Zephyrus and Chloris; and the Graces with their linked arms and finally Hermes, hovering over 'Spring's brief bloom'.[38] The octave gives only a slight premonition that this cheer, glory, and dance among flowers is more than a carefree celebration of the beginning of the festive season. The ending of the octave, which introduces 'Hermes the harbinger', makes us wonder what it is that Hermes heralds. Is it the coming of spring or the darker tones of the sestet?

The sestet starts with the description of the surroundings. In the picture, Venus is depicted against the background of the foliage of the trees, and the visual oval shape, which encloses her, resembles a halo. In the sonnet, Rossetti projects the inevitable future decay onto the blossoming and ripening of spring, as he mentions the young stems, 'Birth-bare, not death-bare yet'. He imagines the scene in the painting as a lively performance in honour of Venus, with the figures described as actors in the pantomime. Hence the question posed in the first line, 'What masque of what old wind-withered New-Year | Honours this Lady?'. Thus, the present moment is depicted as both ephemeral and illusory, the idea even strengthened by the concept of theatrical entertainment. The poem encodes the future in the present as much as it implicates the past—the 'old wind-withered New Year' is a paradox of freshness in decay, fatigue and sickness in youth and energy, thus both pointing towards the unfolding months and implying the already finished old season. The unknown future is implicated by the query in the sestet, a logical follow-up to the one in the octave: 'What mystery here is read | Of

homage or of hope?'. While the meaning of the performance can be—more or less efficiently—explained, the mystery of what the future brings cannot be answered by the living; only those who experienced the inevitable process of decline and demise would know what dissolution is like. This is suggested by the two final questions of the sestet: 'But how command | Dead Springs to answer? And how question here | These mummers of that wind-withered New-Year?'.

Still, Rossetti's sonnet is not primarily a lament for the spring that is eventually going to die. More than Bradley and Cooper's lyrics, his poem eulogizes the present moment. With its antithetical imagery of wild festivity set against the background of the budding life of the new season and simultaneously projected awareness of its inevitable end, the sonnet is an emphatically aestheticist meditation upon the intensity and beauty of the moment, the processes of cyclicity and change, loss and revival, rather than a celebration of the absolute finality of death. Yet, the implication is similar to the conclusion of 'The Figure of Venus in "Spring"': it suggests that the ultimate meaning of the painting lies not in mourning the season that is still alive, but in the sense of the suspended gesture of Venus's hand, creating the space for the sensual enjoyment of the Paterian fleeting moment—of pleasure despite pain, beauty despite its corruption.

Audible echoes of Botticelli's *Primavera* reverberate in one more poem written in the second half of the nineteenth century—Algernon Charles Swinburne's 'A Vision of Spring in Winter', first published in the *Fortnightly Review* in April 1875 and collected in *Poems and Ballads: Second Series* (1878). Although Swinburne's poem is chronologically the earliest of the works discussed here, I have decided to postpone its discussion until the very end. This decision is prompted by the fact that of the four poems inspired by Botticelli's painting, Swinburne's is the only one that does not openly evoke or elucidate the picture in detail. Instead, it concentrates on the poet's personal response. Still, despite the fact that the painting is not explicitly described in the poem, the sentiment and the dynamics that inform it leave no doubt that Botticelli's spirit presides over Swinburne's verses. This quality has been noted in the Rossetti Archive, which compares Rossetti's 'For Spring by Sandro Botticelli' with 'A Vision of Spring in Winter', and sees Swinburne's rendering as another version of the same theme.[39] Interestingly, in his essay 'Notes on Designs of the Old Masters of Florence' (1868), which is based on notes that he took while studying paintings in several locations—including the Uffizi, the Galleria dell'Accademia, and the Palazzo Pitti—Swinburne devotes several

passages to Botticelli. He remarks that Botticellian beauty is 'somewhat lean and fleshless beauty, worn down, it seems by some sickness or natural trouble rather than by any ascetic or artificial sorrow' and that the *Primavera* is 'beautiful and battered'—'beautiful for all its quaintness, pallor, and deformities'.[40] Levey claims that 'Swinburne is probably the first English person to set down at any length an appreciation of Botticelli'.[41]

'A Vision of Spring in Winter' is dominated by nostalgia and the sense of irretrievable loss, but its tone is both peaceful and reconciled, which sets it apart from the previously discussed poems. The opening invokes the 'tender time' of the 'mother-month' of April, as the speaker reaches forward from a moment in winter, just before the spring comes.[42] Looking at snowdrops—'Late snowlike flowery leavings of the snows' (p. 505)—he senses the first signs that this time is not far. The poem, however, subverts the traditional associations of spring with hope and renewal from the start, and directs readers' attention to the future and the past simultaneously. As the speaker tries to embrace 'the ghostly growths of flowers' (p. 505), we become conscious that the major concern of the text is going to be the memory of the past *and* anticipation of the time to come concurrently. The ghosts of flowers indicate the yet-unrealized potential of spring as well as the memory of the already-dead plants. The lyric possesses the same paradoxical temporal quality which governed Rossetti's and Bradley and Cooper's poems, whose images splendidly communicated the idea of both the suspension of time and its mutability. As Catherine Maxwell remarks, 'memory crosses the boundary into the past, but, simultaneously, desire disrupts futurity, taking the season to come out-of-time'.[43] Waiting for the new season, Swinburne's speaker thinks of the past dead springs and their withered blooms, and longs to 'send [his] love back to the lovely time' (p. 505). The emphasis here moves from the impatient anticipation of '[b]e not too long irresolute to be' (p. 505) to the recollection of the past and the sense of loss resounding in the last line of the first stanza. Even this anticipation, though, is tinged with strongly pessimistic echoes. Although the speaker presages the time still to come that promises new life, the tones of disappointment, thwarted possibilities, and unfulfillment are clearly audible in the diction, resounding in the imagery of 'footless ghost on some unfooted lawn' (p. 505), 'unrisen sunbeams' (p. 505), 'a ghost's life of daylong dawn and eve' (p. 505), 'an ungrown moon' (p. 506), 'her unawakened way' (p. 506), 'little unblown breasts'

(p. 506), and 'the plumeless boughs' (p. 506). Thus, the poem works through a systematic and sustained use of paradoxes and antitheses whose primary aim is to communicate the tensions between hope and loss, between the present, the future, and the past, and between love and its imminent death. In doing so, Swinburne's lines bring to mind John Keats's image of the two lovers from the Grecian urn, preserved in a moment of the highest intensity of passion yet unable to consume it, but negates it altogether by conveying the sense of irrevocable mutability rather than the promise of permanence.

For Swinburne, however, Botticelli's *Primavera* is first of all a painting of love, beauty, and erotic rapture. Despite its emphasis on memory, preservation, and loss, McGann calls 'A Vision of Spring in Winter' 'one of Swinburne's truly erotic works'.[44] Understandably, the poem's exquisite sensual images of the 'flowerless rose' (p. 505), 'the purplest of the prime' (p. 505), 'As sweet desire of day before the day | As dreams of love before the true love born' (p. 506), and 'No leaf once plucked or once-fulfilled desire' (p. 507) leave little doubt to the fact that the speaker, wanting to 'send [his] love back to the lovely time', yearns for his past fulfilled and unfulfilled passions, the prime of his own life, and that the poem's strength lies in its tension between erotic and emotional longing, on the one hand, and a passionate sense of regret, on the other hand. Antony H. Harrison proposes that love for Swinburne 'is a term whose evocative power depends very largely upon the fact of mutability. It ultimately comprehends not only all torturous erotic impulses, but also all abstract spiritual yearnings, which are inevitably disappointed and generate a profound sense of loss that is, nonetheless, charged with renewed desire'.[45] In this way, 'A Vision of Spring in Winter' goes back to Botticelli's figures standing on a leaf-scattered ground, enjoying the intense and splendid moment of life's celebration, not aware of what is to come.

Swinburne depicts a similar scene in *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865), in a passage from the great chorus which is explicitly about the coming of spring:

> And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,
> Fleeter of foot than the feet-foot kid,
> Follows with dancing and fills with delight
> The Mænad and Bassarid;
> And soft as lips that laugh and hide
> The laughing waves of the trees divide,

And screen from seeing and leave in sight
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.[46]

The passage, of course, is not a direct citation of Botticelli's painting, since it substitutes Pan and Bacchus chasing Maenads and Bassarids for Zephyrus and Chloris. Still, the image invokes the same ideas that are present in the *Primavera.* Likewise, the vision of the past indirectly invoked in 'A Vision of Spring in Winter' creates a natural link with the Bacchic description of the coming of spring, the scene of passion and wild abandon in *Atalanta in Calydon*.

Finally, the end of the poem envisages that the past is not to be recaptured, but neither does the speaker wish for its return. Here Swinburne's tones are audibly different from the elegiac quality of Bradley and Cooper's poems or the vigorous, tension-sustaining images in Rossetti's 'For Spring by Sandro Botticelli'. Instead, the ending sings a praise for what life still has in store, the coming April's bloom and ease and sense of joy. The speaker is aware that his youth—the yearnings, experiences, and desires of his prime—is not to be renewed with the new natural cycle, but the new cycle brings with it the fresh sensuous delights of colour, scent and growth. If the speaker started on the note that recalled Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' (1819), he ends with a statement that resembles 'Ode on Melancholy' (1820): the passionate invocation to burst the grape of joy upon one's palate, despite the awareness of the transience of time and joy. As McGann puts it, Swinburne 'has found his own way of showing us that, in the continuous process of death which is the human world, an endless fullness of life is for ever born; but that, as well, such a fullness never for a moment cancels the reality and pain of that same world's unending entropic processes'.[47]

To conclude, these four late nineteenth-century poetic interpretations of Botticelli's *Primavera* rely on the painting's dynamic and antithetical qualities, and they interpret them in congruence with a sensibility associated with the later Victorian period. Michael Field, Rossetti, and Swinburne construct pictorial and poetic spaces as counter-movements of loss and rebirth, emphasizing the brevity of the present moment and its unavoidable end. However, despite the fact that these poets share the same aestheticist perspective, there are considerable differences in their approaches to the painting. To Michael Field, the *Primavera* communicates the idea of transience of the present moment, which the co-authors simultaneously mourn and suspend, stressing the incompletion of Venus's gesture. At the same time, they struggle to present their vision as an objective, detached

reading suggested by the painting itself. In turn, Rossetti infuses his ekphrasis with energy and erotic tension; he emphasizes the sense of mystery and the impossibility to answer the questions posed by the work of art, which teases us out of thought, as does eternity. Finally, Swinburne's poem is the most successful in achieving the balance between festivity and sadness, memory and hope, all at once assuming the openly subjective, personal perspective. Swinburne expresses the painful awareness of the fact that the past can never be recaptured and that both the present and the future will inevitably become this unrecoverable past, but he also expresses the desire for the new things to come. In 'Vision of Spring in Winter', the presentiment of irrevocable mutability and finality is exactly what sanctifies the present moment and gives it its aesthetic and emotional intensity.

Thus, in line with the premises of aestheticist poetry that Pater advocated, it is the desire for beauty and love—particularly when such desire is threatened by an awareness of decay and death—which makes the artists' lives worth living. If Botticelli's painting, as Pater sees it, provides one of his 'new readings' of the 'old classical stories' (p. 155), the same can be said about the aestheticist poems that relate to it. Through 'the veil of its ostensible subject', these poets glimpsed the *Primavera's* specifically late nineteenth-century message: the call for the celebration of sensuality and life with its inherent contradictions, despite—or perhaps because of—its ineffable melancholy and unavoidable change.

In later decades, the *Primavera* continued as a rich source of artistic inspiration in different contexts. In Aubrey Beardsley's famous *The Mysterious Rose Garden* (1895) (Figure 4), the drawing published in the fourth volume of *The Yellow Book*, we can, as Susan Owens observes, see how the artist 'quotes from *Primavera* with its flower-strewn ground, elongated figure-types and the right-hand figure's sprigged and lace-hemmed garment and the placing of his feet; moreover, it has a similarly pagan theme and enigmatic, highly charged atmosphere'.[48] Some years afterwards, the painting also haunts Salvador Dali's surrealist visions. Finally, the sadness of Venus acquires an exceptionally poignant and historicist relevance in Wilhelm Lachnit's *The Sad Venus* (1933), whose withered flowers 'seem threatened by the *Sturmalarm* (call to arms), the popular anthem of the Nazi Party'.[49]

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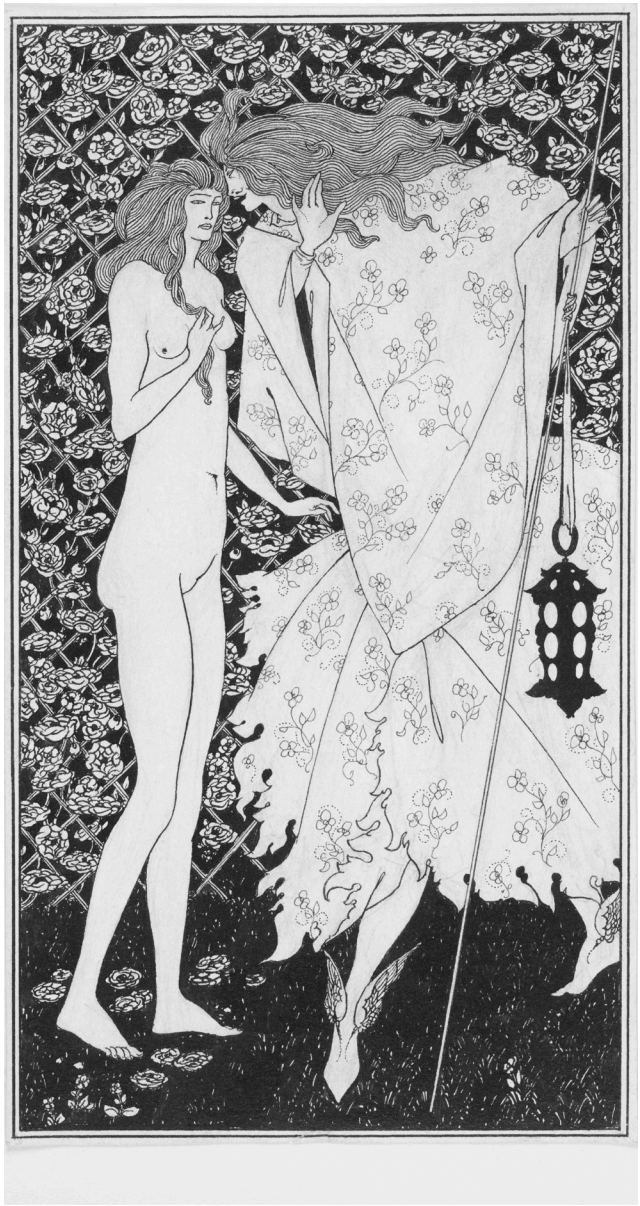

Figure 4: Aubrey Beardsley, *The Mysterious Rose Garden* (1894). Black ink and graphite on white wove paper. 22.4 cm x 12.5 cm. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop, 1943.633.

NOTES

[1] Walter H. Pater, 'A Fragment on Sandro Botticelli', *Fortnightly Review*, 8 (1870), 155–60 (p. 155); subsequent references to this essay appear in parentheses. Pater saw Botticelli's paintings at the Uffizi and Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, in 1865.

[2] Michael Levey, 'Botticelli and Nineteenth-Century England', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 23 (1960), 291–306 (p. 291).

[3] Levey, 'Botticelli and Nineteenth-Century England', p. 304.

[4] John Addington Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy, Volume III, The Fine Arts* (London: Smith, Elder, 1877), p. 255.

[5] John Ruskin, The Æsthetic and Mathematic Schools of Art in Florence', in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London: G. Allen, 1903–1912), XXIII, p. 271. For instance, when he discusses Botticelli's figure of Fortitude, Ruskin describes her as '[w]orn somewhat; and not a little weary, instead of standing ready for all comers, she is sitting,—apparently in reverie, her fingers playing restlessly and idly—nay, I think—even nervously, about the hilt of her sword' (*Works*, XXIII, 334). Cf. Jeremy Melius, 'Art History and the Invention of Botticelli' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Berkekey, 2010), pp. 78–79.

[6] Note on Sandro Botticelli, 'Spring', Le Gallerie degli Uffizi, https://www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/botticelli-spring [accessed 15 July 2020]. The *Primavera* was exhibited at the Uffizi until 1864, when it was moved to the Galleria dell'Accademia. The painting returned to the Uffizi in 1919.

[7] Ovid, *Fasti*, trans. by J. G. Frazer and G. P. Goold (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931), V, 274–75. Cf. Lilian Zirpolo, 'Botticelli's "Primavera": A Lesson for the Bride', *Woman's Art Journal*, 12.2 (1992), 24–28 (p.27); Melius, 'Art History and the Invention of Botticelli', pp. 137, 155; and Paul Barolsky, 'Botticelli's Primavera and the Poetic Imagination of Italian Renaissance Art', *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*, 3rd series, 8.2 (2000), 5–35 (p. 11).

[8] Cf. Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, 2nd edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), p. 116; Charles Dempsey, 'Mercurius Ver: The Sources of Botticelli's Primavera', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 31 (1968), 251–73 (p. 255); Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love: Botticelli's Primavera and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1992), pp. 30-31; and Barolsky 'Botticelli's Primavera', p. 6.

[9] See Zirpolo, 'Botticelli's "Primavera"', p. 27.

[10] Federico Zeri, *Botticelli: Allegory of Spring*, trans. by Susan B. Scott (Richmond Hill, Ont.: NDE Pub., 2000), p. 12.

[11] See Ernst Gombrich, 'Botticelli's Mythologies: A Study in the Neoplatonic Symbolism of His Circle', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 8 (1945), 7–60; Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 193–200; and Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries*, pp. 113–27.

[12] Gombrich, 'Botticelli's Mythologies', p. 41.

[13] Paul Barolsky, *The Faun in the Garden: Michelangelo and the Poetic Origins of Italian Renaissance Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), p. 25.

[14] Umberto Baldini, *Primavera: The Restoration of Botticelli's Masterpiece*, trans. by Mary Fitton (New York Harry N. Abrams, 1986), p. 90.

[15] See Frank Kermode, 'Botticelli Recovered', in *Forms of Attention* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 1–32.

[16] Melius, 'Art History and the Invention of Botticelli', p. 9.

[17] Ibid., pp. 135–36.

[18] Kermode, *Forms of Attention*, p. 17.

[19] Ibid., pp. 15–16.

[20] See Rebecca N. Mitchell, 'Herbert Horne's Scholarly Air', *Studies in Walter Pater and Aestheticism*, 3 (2018), 95–112 (pp. 97–103).

[21] See Pater, 'Æsthetic Poetry', in *Appreciations* (London: Macmillan, 1889), pp. 213–27. This essay is based on Pater, 'Poems by William Morris', *Westminster Review*, 34 (1868), 300–12, in which the term 'æsthetic poetry' does not appear.

[22] Pater, 'Æsthetic Poetry', p. 227.

[23] Walter H. Pater, *Studies in the History of the Reniassance* (London: Macmillan, 1873), p. 210. Pater's phrasing first appeared in 'Poems by William Morris', p. 311.

[24] Carolyn Burdett, 'Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians', 15 March 2014, British Library, https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/aestheticism-and-decadence [accessed 15 July 2020].

[25] Rachel Teukolsky, 'Walter Pater's Renaissance (1873) and the British Aesthetic Movement', *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*, ed. by Dino Franco Felluga. Extension of Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net, http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=rachel-teukolsky-walter-paters-renaissance-1873-and-the-british-aesthetic-movement [accessed 15 July 2020].

[26] Marion Thain, *'Michael Field': Art, Aestheticism and the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 86.

[27] Thain, *'Michael Field'*, p. 66.

[28] Michael Field, *Sight and Song* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1892), p. v; subsequent references to this volume appear in parentheses.

[29] In 1869, Rossetti had introduced the theory of the 'inner standing-point' in an unpublished note to his pastiche poem 'Ave', one of his early 'Songs of the Art Catholic'. (http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/51-1869.raw.html [accessed 15 July 2020]). He repeated this idea in 'The Stealthy School of Criticism' (1871), a response to Robert W. Buchanan's attack upon his and Swinburne's works, 'The Fleshly School of Poetry: Mr D.G. Rossetti', which Buchanan published pseudonymously as Thomas Maitland (*Contemporary Review*, 18 (1871), 334–50). In his response, Rossetti states that in his interior monologue 'Jenny', which records a young man's encounter with a female sex worker, 'the motive powers of art reverse the requirement of science, and demand first of all an inner standing-point' (*Athenæum*, 16 December 1891, 792–94 (p. 793). Rossetti's concept of an 'inner standing-point' is a theoretical reflection on the dramatic monologue, but Rossetti extends it to denote the condition of art in general. He argues that an 'inner standing-point' is related to an imaginatively constructed position of the speaker within the monologue, who cannot be identified with the poet.

[30] See Julia F. Saville, 'The Poetic Imaging of Michael Field', in *The Fin-de-Siècle Poem: English Literary Culture and the 1890s*, ed. by Joseph Bristow (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), pp. 178–206; and Ana I. Parejo Vadillo, '*Sight and Song*: Transparent Translations and a Manifesto for the Observer', *Victorian Poetry*, 38.1 (2000), 15–34.

[31] Thain, 'Michael Field', p. 76.

[32] In their poems, both Michael Field and Dante Gabriel Rossetti substitute the figure of Chloris by Eos/Aurora. I, similar to other critics writing on the poems relating to the *Primavera*, discuss the figure from the painting as Chloris, particularly as the poems' narratives preserve the symbolism of this figure.

[33] Lessing makes this point clear at the end of the fifteenth chapter of *Laocoön*: 'if painting, by virtue by virtue of its symbols or means of imitation, which it can combine in space only, must renounce the element of time entirely, progressive actions, by the very fact that they are progressive, cannot be considered to belong among its subjects. Painting must be content with coexistent actions or with mere bodes which, by their position, permit us to conjecture an action. Poetry, on the other hand . . .' (*Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, ed. and trans. by Edward

Allen McCormick (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 77)). Lessing's study constitutes a critique of the positions held in Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (1755–1756).

[34] See Wolfgang Lottes, 'Appropriating Botticelli: English Approaches 1860–1890', in *Icons–Texts–Iconotexts. Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, ed. by Peter Wagner (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), pp. 236–61 (p. 254).

[35] This point is made in Elizabeth Prettejohn, 'Botticelli and the Pre-Raphaelites', in *Botticelli Reimagined*, ed. by Mark Evans and Stefan Weppelmann (London: V&A Publishing, 2016), pp. 76–81 (p. 81).

[36] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'To Jane Morris', [August 1879,] *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Jane Morris: Their Correspondence*, ed. by John Bryson and Janet Camp Troxell (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1976), p. 110.

[37] Thain, 'Michael Field', p. 83.

[38] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'For Spring, by Sandro Botticelli', in *Ballads and Sonnets* (London: Ellis and White, 1881), p. 312; subsequent references to this poem appear on this page.

[39] See http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/9-1880.raw.html [accessed 15 July 2020].

[40] Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'Note on Designs of the Old Masters at Florence', *Fortnightly Review*, 4 (1868), 16–40 (pp. 24 and 23). The essay is reprinted in *Swinburne, Essays and Studies* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1875), pp. 314–57.

[41] Levey, 'Botticelli and Nineteenth-Century England', p. 302.

[42] Algernon Charles Swinburne, 'A Vision of Spring in Winter', *Fortnightly Review*, 17 (1875), 505–07 (p. 505); subsequent references to this poem appear on this page. The poem is reprinted in *Swinburne, Poems and Ballads: Second Series* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1878), pp. 135–40.

[43] Catherine Maxwell, *Swinburne* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2006), p. 77.

[44] Jerome J. McGann, *Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 280.

[45] Antony H. Harrison, 'Swinburne's Losses: The Poetics of Passion', *ELH* 49 (1982), 689–706 (p. 699).

[46] Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Atalanta in Calydon: A Tragedy* (London: Edward Moxon, 1865), p. 5. I am grateful to Catherine Maxwell for pointing out the similarity of this passage.

[47] McGann, *Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 235.

[48] Susan Owens, 'Beardsley and Botticelli', in *Botticelli Reimagined*, pp. 82–85 (p. 85).

[49] Gabriel Montua, 'Botticelli's Path to Modernity: Continental Reception 1850–1930', in *Botticelli Reimagined*, pp. 86–91 (p. 90).

Elizabeth Adams

Walter Edwin Ledger, Christopher Sclater Millard, and the Bibliography of Oscar Wilde

In his recent biography of the 1890s poet Theodore Wratislaw, D. J. Sheppard begins with the suggestion that his subject's 'story is worth piecing together precisely because he is a minor figure'.[1] Sheppard argues that the lives of minor figures help form a more complete picture of an era than can be painted by focussing on the celebrities alone. Such individuals who occupy the margins of literary culture can throw special light on the ways in which this period of literary history, particularly in relation to the rise of the Aesthetic Movement and the emergence of decadence, developed a deep bibliographical understanding of a publishing landscape that underwent extraordinary transformations. Christopher Sclater Millard (1872–1927) and Walter Edwin Ledger (1862–1931) were certainly marginal figures of the *fin de siècle*. Still, as expert collectors and bibliographers they played a major role in the posthumous resurrection of Oscar Wilde's literary reputation. Although Robert Ross and, to a lesser extent, Millard are credited with strengthening Wilde's rehabilitation during the years following the author's death on 30 November 1900,[2] Ledger has yet to take his rightful place in our understanding of the recovery of Wilde's reputation. This essay examines archival evidence to elucidate Ledger's central contribution.

Millard is known as Wilde's first bibliographer, as one of the great twentieth-century book collectors, and as an antiquarian bookseller.[3] Aged just twenty-three, he first showed support for Wilde when the Irish writer was sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour. *Reynolds's Newspaper* published Millard's letter to the editor, which criticized the law for prosecuting an act that he did not consider immoral:

> Sir,
> Mr Oscar Wilde has been sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour. What for? For being immoral? No. […] It is because this man has dared to choose another form of satisfying his natural passions the law steps in. Yet he has not injured the state or anybody else against their will. […]
> Yours, &c.,
> C.S.M.[4]

Expressing such views was risky in the climate following the Labouchere Amendment of 1885, the act that allowed for the prosecution of homosexual misdemeanours when the felony of sodomy, under the Offences against the Person Act 1861, could not be proven. Millard was probably wise to include only his initials with the letter, and there is no evidence of any fallout following its publication. Towards the end of 1895, Millard accepted a position as headmaster at a boys' school in North London. He continued in that role until around 1900, when he began to focus more intently on his collection and his bibliographical study of Wilde's career.

Ledger is a much more elusive figure than Millard, and most of the details we know about his life come from his executor Donald Cree. Ledger was born in 1862 in Lille, France. Ten years later, his family had moved to England, where Ledger attended University College School in Hampstead.[5] He was then articled to the architect William Henry Crossland, although fragile health meant that he did not practice in his own right. Sometime around 1886, Ledger joined the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve. He was a keen sailor and wore, rather theatrically, a seaman's uniform for the last twenty years of his life. One of the two pamphlets that Ledger wrote about the cruises on his boat, the *Blue Bird*, contains the only confirmed photograph of him as its frontispiece (Figure 1).[6]

Figure 1: Walter Ledger: 'In the garden that I love.' Walter Edwin Ledger, *The 'Blue Bird' in the South* (London: [privately printed], 1913), frontispiece. Robert Ross Memorial Collection, University College, Oxford, Ross d.209.

In the late 1890s, Ledger began collecting and compiling a bibliography of the works of Wilde, whom he had never met.[7] Ledger cannot have been unaware that, as a queer man, it was precarious for him to express such strong interest in Wilde so soon after the widely publicized trial and imprisonment. Ledger's desire to see Wilde's work returned to the literary canon meant that he continued adding to both his collection and his bibliography until his death. Ledger called his collection The Robert Ross Memorial Collection, in appreciation of Ross's 'chivalrous and selfless devotion to, and friendship in adversity for Oscar Wilde'.[8] Having not found a home for the collection, it fell to Cree to carry out Ledger's wishes. After Magdalen College, Oxford declined his offer, Cree approached University College, Oxford, whose Governing Body, after some deliberation,

accepted the bequest. In 1932, the College deposited the collection in the Bodleian Library, Oxford so that the books would be available to researchers. In 2013, the collection was returned by mutual agreement to University College.

Over a period of around thirty-five years, Ledger put together an almost complete back catalogue of Wilde's works, with over 1,000 publications. Completeness was important to him, and the collection includes international publications, translations, periodical articles, piracies, and books by other authors with reference to Wilde. In addition to the published works (in all their variants), he kept prospectuses, bookseller's catalogues, newspaper cuttings, photographs, and other ephemera. Ledger also corresponded with people all over the world in an attempt to find the more obscure Wilde titles.

In 1902, a few years after beginning his work on Wilde, Ledger wrote to Wilde's former lover Alfred Douglas about his bibliography and growing collection. Douglas, in his reply on the 3 June, suggested that Ledger contact Ross who as Wilde's literary executor would be better able to assist with his queries. At that time, Ledger's bibliography was, in Douglas's opinion, 'the most complete in existence'.[9] Ledger duly wrote to Ross, who replied the following week. Their correspondence continued until Ross's death in 1918. Ledger pasted all of Ross's letters onto hand-made paper, which he then bound in green leather.[10] In early 1904, Ross introduced Ledger to Millard. With only brief gaps, Ledger and Millard corresponded regularly until Millard's demise.

The legacy of Millard and Ledger's friendship can in part be reconstructed from the collections at not only University College but also the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles. As he had done with his letters from Ross, Ledger meticulously pasted the letters and postcards he received from Millard into five scrapbooks dating from November 1904 until Millard's death.[11] Although many of Ledger's letters to Millard have not yet been located, those dating from January 1922 to November 1927 are preserved at the Clark Library.[12] Connected by their mutual interest in Wilde, the men exchanged 182 letters during this period, and from the outset they shared information about their collections and discoveries.

From the start of their friendship, Millard and Ledger planned to work together to produce Wilde's bibliography. By that point, Millard accepted that Ledger's project was further advanced than his own. Ledger was insistent that they should not publish until they had finished identifying all of Wilde's journalistic

works, the many translations, and the foreign publications. From early 1905, however, Millard remained keen to publish his findings. He expressed concerns to Ledger that an individual known only by the initials 'W.R.' would issue Wilde's bibliography before them. He wrote to both the *Evening Standard* and the *St James Gazette* to put on record the errors that 'W.R.' had made, including the erroneous inclusion of two pirated and misattributed works, 'The Priest and the Acolyte' and *Ce qui*.[13] In September 1905, Millard published his translation of André Gide's memoir of Wilde.[14] At the end of the edition, he included a fifteen-page bibliography of Wilde's works, as well as the promise that a full bibliography was in progress. The advertisement names both Ledger and 'Stuart Mason' (the pseudonym under which Millard published) as joint compilers.

The letters between Millard and Ledger during February, March, and April 1906 demonstrate that their joint work on Wilde's bibliography was gathering pace. Ross was lending his assistance to the project and had persuaded the London publisher Methuen that the bibliography should form a separate volume of the de luxe edition of Wilde's *Collected Works* that Ross was editing. In order to improve on the format that the elusive 'W. R.' was proposing,[15] Ledger and Millard had decided to expand their project to include English editions, American editions, magazine contributions, books containing any of Wilde's works, English and American pirated editions, and translations.

The project came to an abrupt halt, however, when Millard was arrested and detained in the Oxford Cowley police station on 24 April 1906. After being transferred to H.M. Oxford Prison, he pleaded guilty to committing acts of gross indecency, thus avoiding the more serious charge of sodomy, and was sentenced to three months imprisonment.[16] In his letters to Ledger, Ross notes that he visited Millard in prison and attended part of the trial. Ledger, although sympathetic, felt it necessary to withdraw from his previous associations with Millard, and publication of their bibliography was postponed. Although most of Ledger's correspondence from this time has not been located, he kept a copy of the letter he wrote to Millard on 26 September 1906:

> We are none of us able to act with perfect freedom and situated as I am I fear it will not be possible to renew our former collaboration. Indeed I believe I was rather a drag on you in the matter

> of the Bibliography, not being at all anxious or in any hurry to see it in print and shirking the worry of publication.[17]

Millard, in his reply dated 1 November 1906, expresses sympathy with Ledger's reluctance to continue with the collaboration, but also states that it would not be fair for the bibliography to appear with only his own name on the title page. His expression of hope that they might continue to share information with each other is followed immediately by more bibliographical data: he brings to Ledger's attention a new two-volume American edition of Wilde's *Poems* and a pirated reprint of *De Profundis*—the prison document, which Ross first edited in 1905, that did much to bring Wilde's standing as a writer back into the public eye.

The following April, while in exile in Dieppe, Millard expressed his hope that Ledger might still publish the bibliography as they had agreed, as a volume of Methuen's *Collected Works*. The implication is that only Ledger's name would appear on the publication, but in a later letter, from 7 May 1907, Millard goes further, suggesting that he 'is quite willing that [his] name should not appear'.[18] Once again, Ledger's reply has not been located, but Millard's next letter leads to the conclusion that Ledger replied in the negative, holding out for completeness over the lure of publication.

The years 1907 and 1908 were productive for both Millard and Ledger. Both men had not only been working with Ross towards the publication of Wilde's *Collected Works*, the first volume of which appeared in June 1908, but had also been continuing their bibliographical investigations. Millard published *A Bibliography of the Poems of Oscar Wilde* (1907) and a very limited edition of the *Bibliography of Oscar Wilde* (1908). The contents of these publications also appear in *Miscellanies,* the fourteenth volume of the *Collected Works*. Curiously, Ross dedicated this volume to Ledger, noting his 'unrivalled knowledge of the various edition of Wilde' and looking forward to his bibliography of the author.[19] In 1909, Ledger's seventeen-page bibliography of *Salomé* appeared as part of the second edition of the *Collected Works*, also published by Methuen.[20] True to form, Ledger lists forty-five editions of the play, including translations.

Millard and Ledger continued their correspondence over the next few years and kept adding to their bibliography, albeit without any mention of publication. In November 1911, however, Millard tells Ledger that he has three publishers wanting him to produce the full bibliography. In January 1912, when the publisher

T. Werner Laurie asked Millard to reconsider publication of the bibliography, he duly wrote to Ledger:

> Werner Laurie wants me to do a Bibliography of Oscar Wilde for him. Will you collaborate with me (or rather let me collaborate with you) and publish our joint work through him? If I do it alone I know it cannot be complete; but if you are unwilling to publish your work yet, I must make the most of what I have got together and leave to you the credit of doing the only possible definitive bibliography in the future. In any case I should not like to be going on with it without letting you know.[21]

It is interesting to see here that, even in discussing publication of the larger bibliography, Millard states that Ledger is the only possible author of the 'definitive' work. Ledger, once again, gave his excuses, although this time it was seemingly more through fatigue than any reticence as to his name being associated with Millard's:

> As to a Bibliography for Werner Laurie - I don't want to disappoint you very much, but I don't see my way to joining in it. I have been working a bit at my own ponderous opus lately […] but I find that when I try to put on steam my old machinery creaks and warns me I can't do it. So I've no idea when I shall get through with it. There is so much yet undone. […] Please do what you think right in fairness to yourself and to the public, and if you undertake a Bibliography off your own bat for Werner Laurie remember that you have in me, not a jealous rival, but a friend who will be pleased to help you if he can.[22]

Millard continued requesting Ledger's help as he slowly put the bibliography together for the publisher. It was issued in July 1914, just before the outbreak of war, with only 'Stuart Mason' listed on the title page. At more than 600 pages, it was a huge leap from anything previously published about Wilde's works. Millard acknowledges Ledger's input in the introduction, following on from his recognition of Ross:

> Scarcely less gratitude is due to Mr. Walter Ledger who, at one time, it was hoped would have collaborated in the work. Mr. Ledger's collection of Wilde is almost without an omission and certainly unrivalled and he has ungrudgingly shared the results of his own researches and lent his own volumes for inspection.[23]

The *Bibliography* was well received. Ledger collected a cutting from the *Church Times*, which is disparaging of Wilde's character if not his works but has nothing but praise for Millard's comprehensive bibliography.[24] Similarly, the *Library Association Record* dubbed the *Bibliography* 'the most comprehensive [...] that exists in English'.[25]

After the *Bibliography* appeared, one might have expected a cessation of Ledger and Millard's bibliographical investigations. This was not to be the case, and, despite the war going on, they continued to correspond about their various discoveries as well as corrections and additions to the project. The evidence suggests that the intention was a further edition. Even the introduction to the *Bibliography* hints at the possibility of this future work by listing the kinds of materials that have been left out (i.e. foreign publications, pirated works, and translations).[26]

The correspondence between Millard and Ledger backs up this theory, but the evidence suggests that they intended for Ledger's, rather than Millard's, name to appear on the title page. In a letter dated 1 July 1917, Millard sent Ledger the bibliographical details of four translations 'within your period',[27] implying that the information would be added to another bibliography. This continues into the 1920s, and is accentuated by the early letters from Ledger to Millard that are held in the Clark Library. In January 1922, Ledger refers to his 'MS. Bibliography', and in November 1923 he comments that he has been busy with 'my Bibliography'.[28] Although it has been assumed that Millard was responsible for the continuation of the 1914 bibliography, the evidence suggests that it was in fact Ledger's project.

Although there is plenty of material that points to Ledger's deep involvement with the *Bibliography of Oscar Wilde*, it has been Millard, with his pseudonym on the title page, who has received the credit. Scholars such as Daniel A. Novak, Nicholas Frankel, and John Stratford have agreed with Hyde's biography in identifying Millard as 'Wilde's first bibliographer'.[29] Ledger is sometimes credited with some involvement, but is always on the backseat. More recently, scholars, including Gregory Mackie have placed more emphasis on the collaboration between

Ledger, Ross, and Millard. These three men, according to Mackie, 'supervised a collaborative enterprise of preserving and listing books and writing others, correcting historical misperceptions, and above all deriving cultural respectability for Wilde from textual order (an established canon of texts) and writerly authenticity (verified authorship)'.[30]

John Stratford, in his 1995 discussion of the Wilde bibliographies, suggests that Millard worked on the 'second edition until his untimely death in 1927' and identifies a three-volume interleaved copy of the 1914 *Bibliography,* now in the Clark Library, as Millard's working notes.[31] A more likely proposition, however, lies largely unexplored in the Robert Ross Memorial Collection, and it was Ledger, not Millard, who was responsible for assembling this archive.

Ledger's continuation of the *Bibliography* takes the form of twenty spring-back folders bursting with thousands of sheets of manuscript notes as well as prospectuses, correspondence, news-cuttings, and bookseller's catalogues. Several bundles of pages in a similar format, having become dislodged from their folder, are contained in boxes of other miscellaneous material. The first of the folders has a manuscript title page in Ledger's hand: 'An endeavour towards a bibliography of the works of Oscar Wilde. By Walter Ledger. 1875–1908'. Ledger's choice of dates encompasses the period from the first appearance of one of Wilde's works in the *Dublin University Magazine* until the publication by Methuen of the *Collected Works*. The folders have spine labels that read 'O.W. Bibliography' followed by the region it contains or identifying an appendix or index (Figure 2). As well as all of the information contained in the 1914 *Bibliography,* Ledger includes translations, foreign publications, piracies, and works by other authors that either mention Wilde or include his publications. Although Ledger's folders have not yet been fully examined, it appears that he revised and added to the project over many years. The spring-back folders allow sheets to be added and removed very easily.

Only one reference to Ledger's bibliographical folders can be found in the scholarly record. In the 1970s, Paul Morgan examined the contents of all of the college libraries in Oxford. In the section on the manuscripts owned by University College, he notes that in the 'Robert Ross Memorial Collection, made by Walter Ledger and presented by Donald Cree […] there are some letters and notes concerned with Oscar Wilde, as well as the manuscript of Stuart Mason's *Bibliography* of that writer'.[32] Although the misattribution is understandable given that only

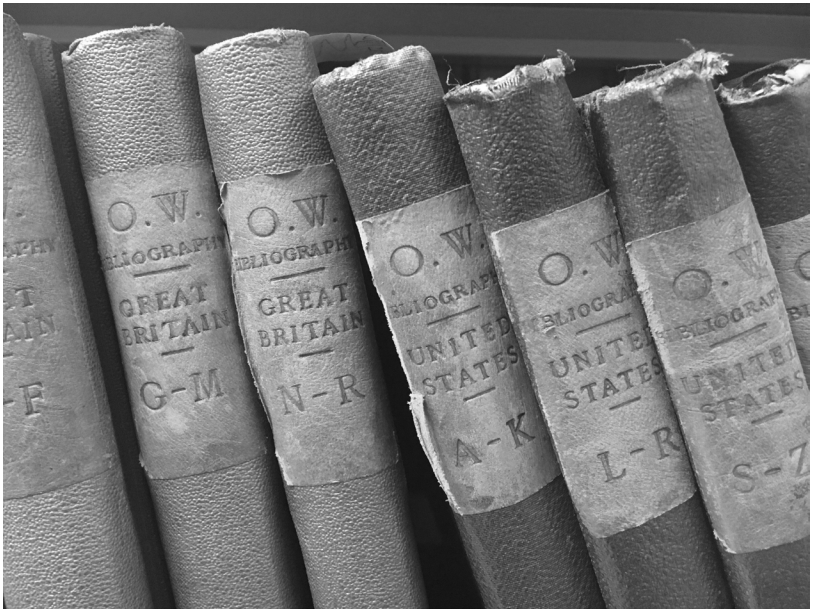

Figure 2: Walter Ledger's bibliographical folders. Robert Ross Memorial Collection, University College, Oxford.

Mason's name appears on the title page of the *Bibliography,* a closer examination would have revealed that the folders were Ledger's handiwork. Morgan appears to have been given privileged access to these folders, and there is no evidence to suggest that until recently they have been examined by other researchers.

Just as Ledger has not yet been adequately credited for his contribution to the *Bibliography of Oscar Wilde,* he has also been somewhat overlooked as a collector. Having begun work in the late 1890s, Ledger added to his magnum opus until his death, and it is remarkable for both its breadth and completeness. In a 1930 letter to C.W. Stewart, the manager of Faber & Faber, Ledger responds to Stewart's request for a list of its contents by noting that 'it would be easier for me to state what it does not' contain.[33] He goes on to list (of the English editions published before 1908) just three items he lacks: the first version of *Vera or: the Nihilists* and the Japanese vellum editions of *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *An Ideal Husband*.

The correspondence suggests that Ross and Millard saw Ledger's collection, to use Frankel's observation, as 'the foundation on which Wilde's literary redemption would be (re)built'.[34] Although Millard's own Wilde collection had been

substantial, when he was released from prison in 1907 it was dispersed. Cash-strapped, Millard was forced to offer his collection to Puttick & Simpson, who put it up for auction in May that year. Ledger was among the buyers. In October 1907, Millard wrote to Ledger: 'I like to think that your collection is getting more and more towards completion. You really must leave it to Oxford when you depart this life, on some such condition that a library is erected for it, In Memoriam O.W. After all, why not? Shelley has been reinstated'.[35] Ross, in December 1907, writes to Ledger that 'it is most important that [his] collection should be complete'.[36]

As we have seen, Millard noted in his introduction to the *Bibliography* that Ledger's collection of Wilde's works was unrivalled, and in August 1915, with the support of More Adey, he dissuaded Vyvyan Holland from acquiring a couple of books because it would be 'much better for them to be preserved in [Ledger's] collection'.[37] The fact that Ledger's collection had priority over that of Wilde's own grandson was a compliment indeed. This desire for the creation of a complete and lasting collection anticipates a time when Wilde's works would be widely studied. Cree, in his introduction to Ledger's collection, expresses the same belief in 1931: 'In future, the student of certain phases of the literary and social life of England will find indispensable the Collection which Mr. Ledger made and dedicated in memory of Oscar Wilde's faithful friend, Robert Ross'.[38]

This essay has examined archival evidence in an attempt to demonstrate that Ledger was one of the major collectors and bibliographers of the twentieth century. It is also worth looking at the reasons he has not been centred in the history of research on Wilde. To begin with, it is likely that the outrage directed by Victorian society at non-normative sexual identities in the late 1890s hindered open appreciation of Wilde's works. Ledger, as a retiring queer man, created a community in which his interest in Wilde was an acceptable activity, but this did not translate into society more widely or threaten his respectability. Millard's arrest was a stark reminder of the risks.

In choosing the name of his collection, Ledger was also partly responsible, whether intentionally or not, for positioning himself as marginal in a project where his labours were nonetheless central. In the memorandum relating to the collection which formed part of his will, Ledger writes: 'It is my desire that my name shall not appear more than can possibly be avoided in the matter of this gift'.[39] By honouring Ross in the collection's title rather than including either

Wilde's or his own name, Ledger left open the possibility that researchers would misidentify the contents or the creator or, indeed, both.

Finally, the complex nature of Ledger's collection means that there is no complete finding-aid to the Robert Ross Memorial Collection. The collection contains more than 1,000 printed books and periodicals, and these mostly have short-title entries in Oxford's union catalogue, SOLO (solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk). Fuller catalogue records, however, would be revealing. Most of Ledger's books contain pencilled notes: he was meticulous about recording the price that he paid for books and where he bought them. He noted textual variations between different editions and had many signed or presentation copies. Very often, he either pasted into his books prospectuses, bookseller's advertisements, and news-cuttings, or left them loose between the pages. It is hard to do justice to Ledger's bibliographic sleuthing in a catalogue, but the work is underway. In recent years, scholars from around the world have consulted Ledger's collection and their research will continue to expose Ledger's role as a bibliographer and collector of Wilde's works. Perhaps Ledger had some inkling of the importance of his own life's work when, towards the end of his life, he wrote to Wilde's dear friend Ada Leverson in praise of Ross's 'splendid and successful fight to restore [Wilde's] prestige as a literary man'.[40]

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NOTES

[1] D.J. Sheppard, *Theodore Wratislaw: Fragments of a Life* (High Wycombe: Rivendale Press, 2017), p. 21.
[2] See, for example, Matthew Sturgis, *Oscar: A Life* (London: Head of Zeus, 2018), pp. 717–18.
[3] See H. Montgomery Hyde, *Christopher Millard: Bibliographer and Antiquarian Book Dealer* (New York: Global Academic Publishers, 1989) and Maria Roberts, *Yours Loyally: A Life of Christopher Millard* (N.p.: FeedARead, 2014).
[4] [C.S.M.], 'To the Editor of Reynolds's Newspaper', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 2 June 1895, p. 3.
[5] *Alphabetical and Chronological Register of University College School, London, for 1831–1891*, ed. by T. E. Orme (London: University College School, 1892) p. 177.
[6] Walter Edwin Ledger, *The 'Blue Bird' in the South* (London: [n. pub.], 1913).
[7] Papers relating to the bequest of the Robert Ross Memorial Collection (RRMC) in the Archives of University College Oxford: UC:MA44/7/C1/1.

[8] Archives of University College Oxford: UC:MA44/7/C1/1.
[9] See MS Ross 4 in RRMC, University College Oxford.
[10] See ibid.
[11] See MS Ross 13.1-5 in RRMC, University College Oxford.
[12] See L473L M645, Box 37, Folder 46 (Finzi 1265–1359), William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles.
[13] See MS Ross 13.1-5 in RRMC, University College, Oxford (articles not sighted).
[14] See André Gide, *Oscar Wilde, a Study, from the French*, trans. by Stuart Mason [Christopher Sclater Millard] (Oxford: Holywell Press, 1905).
[15] 'W.R.''s 'Notes for a Bibliography of Oscar Wilde' was published in *Books and Bookplates: The Book-Lover's Magazine*, 5 (1905), pp. 170–83.
[16] See Hyde, *Christopher Sclater Millard*, pp. 18–19.
[17] See MS Ross 13.1-5 in RRMC, University College Oxford.
[18] Ibid.
[19] See Oscar Wilde, *Miscellanies* (London: Methuen 1908), p. [v].
[20] See Oscar Wilde, *Salomé, La Sainte Courtisane, A Florentine Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1909), pp. 93–109.
[21] See MS Ross 13.1-5 in RRMC, University College Oxford.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Stuart Mason [Christopher Sclater Millard], *Bibliography of Oscar Wilde* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1914), p. viii.
[24] [Anon], 'Books and Writers: Books Received', *Church Times*, 24 July 1914, p. 117.
[25] Nicholas Frankel, 'Gathering the Fragments: The Role of the Collector in Remembering Oscar Wilde', *The Wildean*, 22 (2003), 2–16 (p. 9).
[26] Stuart Mason [Christopher Sclater Millard], *Bibliography of Oscar Wilde* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1914), p. vii.
[27] See MS Ross 13.1-5 in RRMC, University College Oxford.
[28] See L473L M645, Box 37, folder 46 (Finzi 1265–1359) at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles.
[29] Daniel A. Novak, 'Picturing Wilde: Christopher Millard's "Iconography of Oscar Wilde"', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 31.3 (2010), 305–35 (p. 306); Frankel, 'Gathering the Fragments', p. 6; and John Stratford, 'The Bibliographies of Oscar Wilde', *The Wildean*, 7 (1995), 21–26.
[30] Gregory Mackie, *Beautiful Untrue Things: Forging Oscar Wilde's Extraordinary Afterlife* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), p. 35.
[31] Stratford, 'The Bibliographies of Oscar Wilde', p. 23.
[32] Paul Morgan, *Oxford Libraries outside the Bodleian: A Guide* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1980), p. 146.
[33] See Ross Box 1.23.iii in RRMC, University College Oxford.
[34] Frankel, 'Gathering the Fragments', p. 4.
[35] See MS Ross 13.1-5 in RRMC, University College Oxford.
[36] See MS Ross 4 in RRMC, University College Oxford.
[37] See MS Ross 13.1-5 in RRMC, University College Oxford.
[38] Papers relating to the bequest of the RRMC in the Archives of University College, Oxford: UC:MA44/7/C1/1.
[39] Ibid.
[40] See Ross Env. e.28, a letter from Walter Ledger to Mrs Ada Leverson, 9 July 1930, in RRMC, University College Oxford.

REVIEWS

Pater, Walter. *Imaginary Portraits*, Ed. Lene Østermark-Johansen. *The Collected Works of Walter Pater*, Vol. iii. Oxford University Press. 2019. 416 pp. £115.

In 2019, Pater specialists and enthusiasts welcomed *Imaginary Portraits*, edited by Lene Østermark-Johansen, the third volume (though, in fact, the first to be issued) of *The Collected Works of Walter Pater*. As Lesley Higgins and David Latham, the General Editors of *The Collected Works*, point out, the objective of this long-awaited, impressive *opera omnia* is to serve 'scholars as the definitive edition for at least as long as the unscholarly "Library Edition" of 1910 has served' (p. xi). There is no doubt that Østermark-Johansen's *Imaginary Portraits* fulfils this ambitious goal.

The book presents the four canonical stories first published in Pater's *Imaginary Portraits* (1887)—'A Prince of Court Painters', 'Denys L'Auxerrois', 'Sebastian van Storck', and 'Duke Carl of Rosenmold'—along with five other texts —'An Imaginary Portrait: The Child in the House', 'Imaginary Portraits 2: An English Poet', 'Hippolytus Veiled: A Study from Euripides', 'Emerald Uthwart', and 'Apollo in Picardy'—that have come to be accepted as imaginary portraits over the years, mainly on the basis of Pater's more or less oblique remarks.

Østermark-Johansen's preference for a larger corpus of tales than the original collection does have notable antecedents. In 1964, Eugene J. Brzenk complemented his *Imaginary Portraits by Walter Pater: A New Collection* with 'The Child in the House', 'An English Poet', 'Emerald Uthwart', and 'Apollo

in Picardy', but also with the juvenile essay 'Diaphaneitè' (1864), thus recognizing an underlying critical essence in Pater's idea of portraiture. In 1986, William E. Buckler added 'The Child in the House', 'Hippolytus Veiled', 'Emerald Uthwart', and 'Apollo in Picardy' to the 1887 portraits in his *Walter Pater: Three Major Texts*. Before Brzenk and Buckley, Mario Praz had chosen to include 'Apollo in Picardy' and 'The Child in the House' in *Ritratti immaginari*, his 1944 Italian translation of *Imaginary Portraits*. Following this, Østermark-Johansen herself originally proposed all the texts reprinted in this new Oxford edition in her 2014 *Imaginary Portraits* for the MHRA Jewelled Tortoise series, along with 'Diaphaneitè'. Although she excludes 'Diaphaneitè' from this latest and definitive collection, where the essay's non-fictional nature might have seemed slightly misplaced, she still sees it as 'the "Ur-portrait", from which so many of the Imaginary Portraits of the 1880s evolved' (p. 16).

These and many other points are developed in the 'Critical Introduction', a substantial piece of some fifty pages discussing the features, genesis, intra- and inter-textual relations, reception, and afterlife of the imaginary portrait. Of special interest in Østermark-Johansen's essay are her reflections on the possible antecedents of the genre that are drawn from both earlier Pater criticism and her own analysis of the Victorian episteme. She amasses numerous examples of the expression 'imaginary portrait' as used in English literature and culture since the end of the eighteenth century and through the Romantic and Victorian ages. Most of these usages were related to visual representation and to ideal figurative portraits. In or around Pater's time, then, the locution 'imaginary portrait' began to indicate the uncertain identity of the sitter of a pictorial portrait—a meaning that comes closer to Pater's conception of the genre, especially when considering the well-known query 'what came of him?' that he hoped his readers would ask about his protagonists (qtd, p. 2).

Nevertheless, the imaginary portrait remains a blurred and elusive literary form for present-day scholars, as it did in fact for Pater himself, who seemed short of words—a paradoxical condition for such a master of *le mot juste*—when trying to describe his most distinctive genre. Østermark-Johansen cites an annotation that shows he was unable to provide a definition for the adjective 'imaginary'. The nature of the Paterian imaginary portrait has consequently also appeared elusive to critics, who argue not only over its prevailing verbal or visual component, but also over its baffling combination of the 'cerebral and the material, the unreal and the

real' which, for Østermark-Johansen, does nothing but confirm its fundamental 'oxymoronic quality' (p. 8).

Much wider agreement has been reached on the imaginary portrait as an experimental and hybrid form adopted and manipulated by Modernist authors specifically because of its fluid in-betweenness. The point is made by Østermark-Johansen near the beginning of her 'Critical Introduction', when she refers to Max Saunders's theory of Modernist 'autobiografiction' as stemming from Pater in *Self-Impression: Life Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (2010). She takes up again the topic of the imaginary portrait's generic cross-identity when pointing to its conflation of 'elements of the essayistic, of travelogues and historical narratives, imperceptibly interwoven with myth, Gothic fiction, and the autobiographical' (p. 12). In the end, though, Østermark-Johansen lays special emphasis on the narrative quality of Pater's portraits, as well as on their psychological and dramatic insight, thus declaredly diverging (and *pour cause*) from Harold Bloom's judgement that 'Pater had no gifts for narrative, or drama, or psychological portrayal' (qtd, p. 26). Apart from Bloom, however, Østermark-Johansen shows an inclusive attitude towards previous assessments of the imaginary portrait, which she re-elaborates into a personal vision that construes the genre both within and against the tradition of Western pictorial portraiture. In her view, Pater's imaginary portraits problematized such a tradition, and more specifically its progressive lack of referentiality, as the twentieth century approached.

The 'Critical Introduction' is followed by a 'Textual Introduction' concerned with the compositional and publishing history of the portraits and containing essential information on the unfinished ones (housed at Harvard's Houghton Library) which will be published in Volume 10 of the *Collected Works*, a volume devoted to manuscripts. Here it is, above all, Pater's famous obsessive-compulsive behaviour towards textual revisions that emerges—which leads Østermark-Johansen to embrace the golden rule formulated by Gerald Monsman for his editions of 'Gaudioso the Second' (2008) and 'Tibalt the Albigense' (2009), namely the '"last is best" approach' (qtd, p. 55), when selecting the most eligible versions of Paterian texts for publication.

The single imaginary portraits are cleverly glossed in the 'Explanatory Notes' and Østermark-Johansen's work for the MHRA edition has admittedly been of help here. Readers can perceive her command of the subject, while also

appreciating her 'marvellous tact of omission' in concentrating only on the details that are really relevant to the volume's likely sophisticated readership. The 'Textual Variants' section has been compiled with painstaking precision and opens up further philological research on Pater's work. In the case of 'The Child in the House', moreover, the 'Explanatory Notes' are supplemented by an 'Appendix' on the portrait's 1894 'Daniel Press Edition'—Pater's last publication before his death. Østermark-Johansen's focus on this small book allows her to highlight the intricate web of relations among Oxford dons, their families, publishers, and other intellectuals that were part of Pater's circle and had an impact on his writing and publishing practices in the early 1890s. In addition to the 'Appendix', the volume comprises a 'Chronology' of Pater's life, work, and times, and a 'Biographical Register' of personalities who influenced the composition of the various portraits.

Such an outstanding publishing venture as the present Oxford edition might still, perhaps, raise a question as to whether the inclusion of the unfinished portraits —and, in particular, the less fragmentary ones— 'Gaudioso the Second' and 'Tibalt the Albigense'—would have offered a more comprehensive perspective on Pater's unique fictional form. However, readers can easily admit that this unfulfilled desire (a Paterian condition par excellence) is amply compensated by the many pleasures the volume supplies. It represents a landmark statement on Pater's legacy to genre creation and experimentation, intermedial studies, and literary culture, and will certainly achieve authoritative status within and beyond Pater scholarship.

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Pater, Walter. *Gaston de Latour*, Ed. Gerald Monsman. *The Collected Works of Walter Pater.* Vol. iv. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. xxxviii + 399 pp. £115.00.

More than Pater's other writings, *Gaston de Latour* piques a particular kind of curiosity as it is his only unfinished novel as well as a rare text for which manuscripts still exist. *Gaston* is also a long-

neglected text in Pater studies, firstly because of its incompleteness, and secondly because of its shorter length when compared with *Marius the Epicurean*. In 1896, *Gaston de Latour: An Unfinished Romance* appeared when Pater's reputation was carefully being monitored by his sisters Clara and Hester Pater, his literary executor Charles Lancelot Shadwell, and other close acquaintances such as Edmund Gosse. Shadwell published the six chapters previously printed in *Macmillan's Magazine* and the *Fortnightly Review* in 1888 and 1889, which Pater had begun revising, along with an additional one (chapter vi). His 'Preface' explained that these 'for the most part unfinished' chapters could not be published without 'that careful revision which [Pater] would have been careful to give them before he allowed them to appear among his published writings' (Shadwell, 1896, p. v). Insisting that no further material could be published, he therefore foreclosed all inquiries while framing the reception of Pater's second novel in close relation to *Marius*.

The reception of the story of a young man in the France of the wars of religion, in 'another age of transition' (Shadwell, 1896 p. vi), was lukewarm as the plot appeared light on action, while the text concluded with a weighty question about discerning 'the distinction, namely, between the precious and the base, æsthetically; between what was right and wrong in the matter of art?' (Pater 1896, p. 206). Critics read this short volume along with *Marius* as part of a larger scheme destined to remain unfinished. It was also the final Paterian work before *Essays from the 'Guardian'* appeared in 1897. Unlike the latter, *Gaston* was included in the 1901 de luxe edition of Pater's works and the 1910 New Library Edition, but subsequently attracted little attention. In his fine 1961 doctoral thesis, the French scholar Germain d'Hangest was the first to mention the existence of those chapters in manuscript (viii to xiii) discarded by Shadwell in 1896 to comply with the wishes of Pater's sisters. (These were at that time to be found *sub rosa* in John Sparrow's rooms in Oxford.) But, at a time when formalism and structuralism predominated, critics were less interested in archival issues, and the significance of Pater's 'missing' manuscripts was, for most part, neglected.

It was not until Gerald Monsman's 'pioneering' 1995 ELT Press edition (Pater 2019, p. xv) that scholars had access to the first augmented text of Pater's second novel. Monsman did an excellent scholarly job in collating typescript and manuscripts from both sides of the Atlantic (Brasenose College, New York's Berg Library, and the Houghton Library) so as to offer an annotated text all the more fascinating for its incompletion. Far from being Mallarmé's 'prosateur

ouvragé', Pater appears as an author at work, revising, rewriting, completing already published texts so as to integrate them in the larger structure of a work that explores the conditions of individual and collective beliefs and 'deal[s] [like *Marius*] with the same problems, under altered historical conditions'. Readers encounter an author struggling with his own relationship to language in order to find the *mot juste*, the appropriate phrase and sentence through a fascinating '"incremental" compositional style' (p. 22). Pater also appears not so much as an iconoclast than an attentive writer steeped in an early 1890s culture alive to issues such as women's place, erotic and sexual desire, politics (especially acceptable forms of government), and state violence. He also abandons his hero en route towards a South of France he will never reach, under 'the genial spell of Italian art' of the Renaissance (p. 182), thus leaving tantalized readers to guess at the missing trajectory of *Gaston* for themselves.

Monsman's 1995 edition allowed scholars to comment upon a text that still remains neglected, but can no longer be ignored, and emphasizes how intriguing the Pater of the 1890s remains: 'certainly wearier, but also more candid, consummately polished artistically, self-consciously aware of a dawning Modernism' (Pater 2019, p. 3). However, like its predecessors, that (limited) edition soon went out of print, a regrettable absence at a time when Pater scholarship was experiencing a dramatic upsurge with conferences, monographs, and articles, not to mention the development of *The Pater Newsletter* under the successive editorships of Laurel Brake and Lene Østermark-Johansen. This new edition should have more longevity being part of the new Oxford University Press *Collected Works of Walter Pater* which 'brings together, for the first time, all of his literary journalism and academic studies, his extant correspondence, and transcriptions of his manuscripts' (Higgins and Latham, p. xiv). Readers of the 1995 edition will recognize a substantial part of its introduction in this new OUP edition, along with the notes, and a scholarly discussion and explanation of guiding editorial principles.

To open this beautiful and beautifully printed volume, reminiscent of the first edition of *The Renaissance*, is to be reminded of the editorial principles of *The Collected Works* which envisage Pater's texts and textuality both in their evolution—highly appropriate for Pater who incessantly revised his published essays if only to make minor corrections—and in their complex relationships to the literary and publishing culture of their times. (This includes other texts Pater was composing while working on *Gaston* such as 'Tibalt the Albigense'

and 'Gaudioso the Second'). Arguably, such an approach enables readers to draw connections between, for instance, Pater's 'poison-daisy', Queen Marguerite, and Oscar Wilde's Salome.

Monsman's edition comes with a detailed, updated Chronology, an intriguingly restricted Biographical Register (Emilia Strong Pattison Dilke, Edmund Gosse, Mary K. Ottley, Clara Pater, and Charles Lancelot Shadwell), two Introductions, an Appendix (Clara Pater's transcription of chapter xiii), Textual Variants, Explanatory Notes, Bibliography, and Index. Therefore, it is interesting to examine the principles of the *Collected Works*' editorial policy as regards Pater's various texts for *Gaston* as they are explained in Monsman's Critical Introduction —'The Abandoned Text'—and in his 'Textual Introduction'

'The Abandoned Text' provides the history of the first publication of *Gaston* and raises hypotheses about the text Pater was still working on in 1893 but never completed, possibly because, Monsman argues, of the structural quandary of a static portrait gallery within a broad historical scope, and the exploration of sado-masochistic eroticism. It then vindicates the publication of the missing chapters viii to xiii: post-structuralist critics have more tolerance for the unfinished and for '"the fragment" as an aesthetic category' (p. 3); the perfect 'fair' copy proves to be impossible for Pater; and his current reputation demands that all material be printed, including his study of Queen Marguerite, which is a fascinating and 'significant contribution to gender studies of the Victorian period' (p. 3), although it is not certain that he could have published it as it now stands. Monsman's sober Introduction does not attempt to fill Pater's gaps but, 'bring[ing] to life the possibilities of what can be, between the truly needless limitations of what had been in the 1896 text and the never-to-be-realized excellencies of what might have been' (p. 4), enables readers experience the power of his novel.

Scholars will be especially interested in Monsman's Textual Introduction explaining his 'Choice of Copy-Text and Principles of Editing'. Pater's final text is composed of a 276-leaf manuscript (Berg collection, 1958) and the Brasenose/Houghton holographs. Pater copied anew his 1888 periodical pieces so that Monsman combines the Berg as the base text for chapters i–v and vii with the Brasenose/Houghton holographs for chapters viii–xiii, chapter vi being reliant on the text printed by Shadwell in 1896. Such material reveals that Shadwell tried to arrange the text as he thought Pater would have done, therefore attempting to interpret Pater's desire, whereas, with his editing of manuscripts influenced more

by a post-structuralist ethos, Monsman treats published and unpublished texts as 'empirically similar' (p. 25) as he compiles the Berg and Brasenose/Houghton holographs. Along with a large body of fine annotations, Monsman explains his editorial choices, and supplies missing data and punctuation when necessary. He also proceeds to orthographic correction (explained in footnotes), expands Pater's abbreviations, and incorporates slips of Pater's well-known first jotting of ideas and phrases when relevant. (Manuscript slips pertaining but not integral to the edition text are cited as variants.) His conjectured readings are marked as emendations by brackets directly in the edition text with rationales for doing so where appropriate. Monsman follows his editorial principles of 1995: when treating the Brasenose College and Houghton manuscripts, the chronologically last inserted alternative with or without a caret has been chosen for the copy-text. In this edition, however, *all* interlineations in the Berg manuscript are treated as edition text with the effect of potentially turning *Gaston* into 'an adventitious precursor to contemporary texts using fragments, layers, and lacunae to free language and intentions from the fetters of some ideal classical wholeness' (p. 32). Where it is impossible to decide which phrasal interlineation is the last written, Monsman's choice and 'judgment' (p. 33) leave readers faced with a Derridean *indécidable* meaning.

With its careful annotations, this edition addresses two possibly overlapping readerships: one interested primarily in a scholarly reading text, and another more interested in textuality, wishing to achieve 'insight into Pater's compositional process' (p. 28). For this second group, Pater's lacunae, alternate wordings, cancellations, and other features are also noted while Plates I–IV provide a visual illustration of his painstaking writing process. (They do not show, although Monsman alludes to it, that Pater wrote some pages of *Gaston* on the verso of his manuscript of *Plato and Platonism*.) The first group of readers will discover an extended version of Pater's fascinating and enigmatical novel as complete as it can be, and the second group will discover Pater writing, choosing, discarding, polishing, or leaving his editor with the task of making decisions, all of which are carefully explained so that, as Monsman argues, this edition, or rather 'this revised *Gaston* may come to be seen as his high-water mark intellectually, if not artistically' (p. 3). It is also to be hoped that another group of readers will in time be provided with a paperback edition, now that Monsman's fine work has produced such an

intriguing reading text. Assuredly, *Gaston* deserves to find its appreciative twenty-first-century readers.

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NOTES

[1] Walter Pater, *Gaston de Latour: The Revised Text*, ed. Gerald Monsman (Greensboro: ELT Press, 1995).

[2] Walter Pater, Letter to Carl Wilhem Canton, 28 January 1886, quoted in Pater, *Gaston de Latour*, ed. by Gerald Monsman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 11.

Miri-Wolf, Andreea. *Walter Paters Ästhetik im Kontext der Deutschen Kulturgeschichte. Munich: Iudicium.* 2018. 177 pp. €23.

Walter Pater's attachment to German culture forms an integral part of his thinking and upbringing. During his student days at Oxford in the late 1850s, he spent time in Heidelberg and Dresden where he visited his aunt and sister. By the end of his degree, he was able to read Hegel's *Phenomenology* in the original. In 1864, Pater's affinity with eighteenth-century German culture—and not least his knowledge of the language—helped him to secure a Fellowship at Brasenose College, Oxford. These stepping stones in his biography help document the importance of his engagement with German culture, an area of study that provides a rich topic for enquiry and that has by no means been exhausted.

Andreea Miri-Wolf's survey of German culture's influence on Pater's work claims to be the first of its kind, at least in the German-speaking field of Pater studies, and is interested in identifying the aesthetic concepts he adopted from German writers. In three chapters, each devoted to a key concept in Paterian thinking—the progression of culture, the definition of beauty, the relationship between art and religion—Miri-Wolf traces the German roots of his thinking. She sees his aesthetics influenced by works of Kant, Winckelmann, Novalis,

Goethe, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Heine, and Schleiermacher. In itself, the idea of tracing these wide-ranging influences in the Paterian canon is a promising and worthwhile project.

However, the volume suffers from a lack of clarity in approach and organization as well as intellectual rigour. At times, Miri-Wolf reads texts in parallel without establishing a historical link between Pater and the German authors cited. The passages from which she quotes are only minimally contextualized so that the parallel readings of German text and Pater's aesthetics seem rather arbitrary. Also unsubstantiated or unsupported are the claims that Pater had read Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) which, according to Miri-Wolf, influenced his 'The School of Giorgione' (1877), or that Jacob Burckhardt's description of the Italian Renaissance was the source for Pater's concept of the Renaissance. Often Pater's actual engagement with certain texts remains speculative. While helpfully introducing Pater to a German readership and bringing into conversation different thinkers from different periods, juxtapositions of Pater with, for example, Kant or Hegel, regarding terms such as 'Genuss' (pleasure), 'Leidenschaft' (passion), and 'imaginative reason', are merely presented as a genealogy of thought and acknowledged, but not questioned, complicated, or developed further.

The study provides an interesting section on Pater's interest in Asiatic philosophies which holds much promise but is kept short. Pater was at the centre of a nineteenth-century rediscovery of a 'syncretism of Plato, Homer and Moses, ancient Greece and Christianity, […] the Kabbala and the Bible which enabled a new perspective on man and the universe' (p. 31; my translation). Miri-Wolf identifies potential areas of interest but does not cover much new ground in comparison to already existing, well-known studies of Pater's work and life. At times her analyses conclude with commonplace insights: 'In fact one finds in [Pater's] work, especially in his aesthetics and most prominently presented in the *Renaissance*, a symptom, which can be attributed to historicism; this symptom is called Eclecticism ' (pp. 50–51); 'Pater introduced the concept of art for art's sake into English culture' (p. 135); Pater's own writing style could be considered an artistic form of writing (p. 169); subjectivity is key in considering art in modernism and accordingly shapes Pater's formulations of beauty (p. 169); the Renaissance was a period of fundamental cultural change (p. 170).

Miri-Wolf makes it explicit that her focus is exclusively on what Pater adopted from German sources and how he integrated these ideas into his own work.

Nonetheless, the volume would have benefited from engaging more closely with previous non-German scholarship on Pater in order to avoid familiar conclusions, such as his replacement of religion by art. Home-grown German critical work on Pater may be thin, but existing scholarship on Pater's German connections has already resulted in important works, such as Patrick Bridgewater's *Anglo-German Interactions in the Literature of the 1890s* (1999), which devotes a whole chapter to Pater and Nietzsche, and Stefano Evangelista's *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece: Hellenism, Reception, Gods in Exile* (2009). Evangelista draws extensively and succinctly on the influence of German Romanticism on Pater's concept of Hellenic culture, reassessing Pater's 'definition of Goethe's concept of "life in the whole"' (*Ganzheit*), which entails a 'secular epistemology of sensation'. Lene Østermark-Johansen's *Walter Pater and the Language of Sculpture* (2011) devotes a whole chapter to Pater's response to German aesthetic theory, with specific reference to Lessing's discussion of the *Laocoön*, Winckelmann's writings on Greek sculpture, and Hegel's polarity between poetry and painting as the arts of modernity, and architecture and sculpture as the arts of antiquity. This work should have deserved closer attention than a mere mention in passing.

In an international context, the volume, which concludes with the observation that 'German thinking had a decisive influence on Walter Pater' (p. 169), yields few new insights for Paterian scholars. Miri-Wolf sees the relevance of Pater's aesthetics for contemporary readerships in his critical attitude towards dogmatic systems that restrain spiritual—and thus cultural—development. Criticism and the promotion of individualism modelled on the ideal of the Renaissance man, are, in a nutshell, Pater's major concerns. Overall, Miri-Wolf's study is useful as a means to introduce German readers to Pater's thinking. As its title suggests, the volume is a helpful compendium of associative influences on Pater's aesthetics and contextualizes him as a writer for a German-speaking readership.

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NOTE

[1] Stefano Evangelista, *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece: Hellenism, Reception, Gods in Exile* (London: Palgrave, 2009), pp. 46–47.

Selected Essays of Walter Pater. Ed. Alex Wong. Carcanet Classics. Manchester: Carcanet Press. 2018. 445 pp. £18.99.

The success or otherwise of an anthology like this one must depend heavily on the quality of the introduction. The bulk of the text, approximately 175,000 words, dwarfs the 14,000 words of the introduction, but any reader who is curious to know about Pater comes to that vast bulk of textual material through the introduction. In this, Alex Wong has performed a fine balancing act between information and opinion, between offering just enough of Pater's life to contextualize his thoughts while avoiding the knotty problems of textual authenticity or scholarly dispute. Wong's prose is light, elegant, and above all economical. A sentence right at the start of the introduction establishes the mode. 'Pater's literary manner,' writes Wong, 'with its urbane and diffident charm characteristically controlled by evident care and effort, and with touches of lyricism rising provocatively out of a background of discursive calm, was the indispensable medium in which he was able to propose and exemplify a subtly worked-out aesthetic sensibility, as well as a critical method' (p. 9). So much special information is packed into that beautifully constructed statement. Its subtle nuances and concentrated manner promises well and Wong does not disappoint. His opening section deals with 'Pater's Oeuvre' where he naturally gives prominence to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, though the reader is soon moved on, perhaps a little too hurriedly, to *Marius the Epicurean, Imaginary Portraits*, and *Appreciations*. Here Wong confesses to holding to 'a distinction between "essays" and "fiction" that is starker than it otherwise ought to be' (p. 13), but this admission is one that later yields interesting fruit. After outlining the trajectory of Pater's literary career, Wong moves onto 'Theory and Doubt' stressing the presence of scepticism, relativity, and individualism in Pater's thought, where he is forever testing new impressions and new ideas and refusing to take up a closed or concluded position. Wong interestingly contrasts Pater's acceptance of indirect even periphrastic methodologies with Ruskin's tortured attempts at systemization. Ruskin had the most sensitive and discriminating visual sense of any writer in the nineteenth century, but he always felt obliged to subordinate that passionate discrimination to ethical proprieties. He could never leave judgements unresolved or unrelated to some higher abstract principal. As a result, his changes

of mind, attitude, or shifts in value look like inconsistency or even weakness. Pater, as Wong suggests, develops a style that 'attempts to see its matter from various points of view […], so that judgements may be effectively kept suspended, or at least confessed to be questionable' (p. 16). Matthew Arnold offers a third perspective, so while Ruskin looked upwards, wishing to refer his judgements to a higher authority, Arnold wished to achieve a cool, level, and objective realism, 'to see the object as in itself it really is'. In contrast, Pater prioritized the self and the individual sensibility as the locus of judgement, and this was a position that created in many of his contemporaries a frightening and vertiginous moral uncertainty. Here again Wong encapsulates this in an elegant and terse sentence. 'To some of his more censorious readers', he writes, 'and those who knew of Pater only by swelling repute, he had become a sort of marauding hedonistic radical, a dandy evangelist among the impressionable youth of Oxford University, who were thought all too ready, in their precarious innocence, to catch this dubious fire' (p. 18). However, the use of the word 'youth' here considerably diminishes the impact of Pater's solipsistic epicureanism. The Oxford world to which Wong refers was one which was composed exclusively of young men bereft of tempering female influence, and it was a world, like that of the public schools that nurtured it, charged with latent homosexual sentiment.

In the section entitled 'Pater's Developing Thought', Wong takes the interesting, fruitful, if slightly oversimplified view that Pater's career after the publication of *The Renaissance* took the form of an on-going struggle with the terms of the notorious 'Conclusion'. Written, reviled, removed, revised and replaced, it certainly marked geological shifts in Pater's delicate intellectual life. In that piece, Pater had exposed himself in a remarkable and audacious way and Wong is surely right to trace many of his subsequent ideas back to the turbulent months of 1873, as he re-examined, revised, and explained his earlier position. If his way of doing this was often tentative or even hesitant, Wong offers the explanation that what 'looks like imprecision is, from another point of view, only a way of intimating the desire for yet more precision, or the appeal to a precise *sense* of something which nevertheless eludes adequate articulation' (p. 20). This leads Wong to one of his most valuable observations. 'This is why,' he says, 'Pater sometimes sounds as though he were talking to himself, or seems to speak to the reader as if it were taken for granted that one understood what he meant' (p. 20). Elsewhere Wong speaks of Pater's 'gently wayward table talk' (p. 21) that fits so well with

the anecdote registered in Robert Ross's collection of essays, *Masques and Phases* (1909). As a young man, Wilde attended Pater's lectures and at the end of one of these Pater 'expressed a hope that the audience was able to hear what he said. "We overheard you," said Oscar Wilde', to which Ross added that in his writing Pater 'thinks aloud. We overhear him, and feel almost the shame of the eavesdropper'.[1] The intensely private, almost confessional, mode of Pater's writing reaches deep down to the roots of his personality. In terms of his subject matter, he may give the impression that he is addressing large historical events, cultural periods, or refined philosophical traditions, but in fact he tends always to anthropomorphize them or see them refracted through the mind of prominent individuals. In one sense all his writing is essentially biographical. Take, for example, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance.* One of the principal objections of Pater's early critics, but one which, incidentally Wong does not address, is that this collection of essays is not in any conventional way, 'history'. It is a series of observations, usually biographical, often narrative in form, dealing with a certain 'spirit' that appeals personally to Pater. And so much of Pater's writing takes this form. Though he rarely approaches anything like autobiography, through the narratives of eminent or striking personalities he is always revealing something of himself. In this way, *Marius the Epicurean* or *Imaginary Portraits* sees Pater working in his most congenial mode. Ventriloquizing, adopting the voices and personalities of others, we overhear him as he speaks to himself and about himself. Though Wong hints at this tendency in Pater's writing, he does not go quite this far. But in his remarks about the arbitrary necessity of separating essays from fiction in this anthology Wong is suggesting indirectly the closeness that exists between them. Even in Pater's essays on Greek material, figures like Plato and Socrates are possessed of shadowy but defined personalities. To regard all of his writing as a form of biography or autobiography might seem counter-intuitive in one who shied away from personal exposure, but the idea throws his work into a new and rather unusual perspective.

In this way, Wong's introduction is enormously stimulating and suggestive, elegantly written, and thoughtfully organized and it takes the reader to the shore of the vast sea of Pater's work anthologized in the main body of the text. The 175,000 words that make up this section are made accessible by means of ingenious page design and a font that, though very small, remains quite readable. The choice of this extract or that could be argued over, but is beyond the scope of a review.

Suffice to say this is a portable Pater that provides enough stimulus, raw text, and admirable, thoughtful annotation to act as an outstanding guide to a great writer.

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NOTE

[1] Robert Ross, *Masques and Phases* (London: Arthur L. Humphreys, 1909), pp. 131, 132.

Sturgis, Matthew. *Oscar: A Life*. London: Head of Zeus, 2018. xxii + 890 pp. £17.99.

Oscar Wilde currently enjoys some serious attention in the academic and cultural spheres. Rupert Everett's biopic *The Happy Prince* (2018), Nicholas Frankel's *Oscar Wilde: The Unrepentant Years* (2017), and Joseph Donohue's definitive edition of *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2019)—part of the on-going *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* by Oxford University Press—revisit and re-examine the Wilde phenomenon. Matthew Sturgis's *Oscar: A Life* comes as a long-anticipated biography that at nearly 900 pages yields new insights into Wilde's life and work. It is significantly longer than Richard Ellmann's flawed but iconic 1987 biography of Wilde, but how exactly does it differ?

Sturgis benefits from fascinating new discoveries including letters and documents, such as the full transcript of the libel trials and one of Wilde's early notebooks, recently unearthed by Margaret D. Stetz and Mark Samuels Lasner at the Free Library of Philadelphia (p. xii). But in addition to this new material, his book also has a different set of emphases. In the preface, he points out that in Ellmann's biography '[t]he Life is seen largely through the prism of the Work' (p. xiv), while his *Oscar* corrects Ellmann's errors and, instead, refracts the Work through the Life. After all, '[i]t was through conversation that Wilde formed his ideas and mapped out his plans' (p. 345). In Ellmann, Wilde's life is intertwined with his own mythmaking; the prose is heavily allusive and signposts its sources in situ. Sturgis's narrative has the modern historian's touch; it is much less bookish.

It is sequential, fact-based, pruned of literary references and connections, and, by comparison, does not parade its sources so much in the main text, confining them instead to the substantial endnotes.

Sturgis expands Ellmann's account by injecting swathes of fresh detail. Sections on Wilde's childhood at the Portora Royal School, his American tour, or his post-prison years are at least twice as long than Ellmann's. Fuller and more accurate descriptions of key moments and incidents punctuate Sturgis's hefty volume throughout, one example being the break-up of Wilde's friendship with Frank Miles on account of the condemnation of *Poems* by Miles's father, a Church canon; this 'rift gave Wilde a first bracing taste of British hypocrisy' (p. 191). Elsewhere, a tangle of playful advertising slogans attests to how Wilde as a young apostle of Aestheticism became literally a household name (pp. 230–31). Closer attention is paid to the critical response elicited by the *Lippincott's* version of 'The Picture of Dorian Gray'—'over 200 reviews' (p. 399)—with particular notice of the negative verdicts. Furthermore, when Wilde fell ill with influenza in Brighton in 1894, Sturgis paints a more sinister, shocking picture of Lord Alfred Douglas's ungenerous behaviour and petulant tantrums (p. 523). The extent to which Wilde was actively involved in the Dreyfus Affair (see pp. 676–79) is another notable instance where Sturgis builds on Ellmann's narrative. Such valuable additions are supplemented by the requisite assembly of original delicious anecdotes and obscure trivia that shed light on Wilde's remarkable personality, such as his quip about '*potential skeletons*' made to T. H. Huxley's daughter, much to her father's chagrin (p. 130), his winning-over Hawthorne's inimical son with his spellbinding conversation (p. 139), and his cordial encounter with Thomas Edison (p. 296).

In the course of his vast, exhaustive telling of Wilde's life, Sturgis has managed to showcase key experiences that shaped Wilde's ideas, and allow for pivotal moments to stand out. We come to understand that in his formative years at Trinity College Dublin, the 'gift for dramatic overstatement' and 'delight in shocking bourgeois sensibilities' (p. 51) bequeathed him by his mother, and the inspiration instilled by his Classics tutors John Mahaffy and Robert Tyrrell (see pp. 39–42), were as influential as J. A. Symonds, Swinburne, and Plato's *Symposium*. And, after the protracted, frustrated effort to have his dramas produced, we learn that the 'stir' (p. 405) caused by *Dorian Gray* turned the tide, resulting in requests for him to write plays. Another major turning point is his rejection of 'prudence' (p. 536) when faced with Lord Queensberry's campaign against him. Sturgis

is circumspect about the reason why Wilde, like an obdurate Socrates, resisted temptations to avoid arrest: 'There was perhaps a touch of defiance in his refusal, but inertia probably played a greater part' (p. 560).

One focal moment in Wilde's life concerns his sexuality, when he transitions from the luxurious, unreciprocated pining for Harry Marillier to consummation with Robbie Ross. This sexual awakening shows that 'Wilde was slow to recognize that his own emotional and physical needs lay with men rather than women' (p. 339). Wilde's awareness of his homosexuality is not clear-cut in the book but a sort of figure in the carpet. Although Wilde is a cultural icon of queer sexuality, the biography hints at a complex psychological journey of self-discovery, one that shifts from his Keatsian fixations with elegant women—the actress Lillie Langtry, Florence Balcombe (subsequently married to Bram Stoker), or the American Hattie Crocker (Sturgis's discovery)—to the perilous, seedy experiences with Alfred Douglas and his acquaintances, Walter Grainger, Maurice Schwabe, and others. What is more, Sturgis does not gloss over explicit sexual details like Ellmann, nor are references to private parts omitted from the narrative.

In its maximalist, panoramic approach, *Oscar* unfolds in smoothly interwoven patterns, weaving in Wilde's debts and balance sheets, his legendary dinners and meetings, telegrams and letters, discussions about his works and domestic predicaments, his falling-outs followed by new devotees, his tactics of self-promotion in the theatre world, networking with the decadents of Paris and London, and the underworld of rent boys. Sturgis animates the biography with a satisfying number of images, and by wittily selecting quotations and titles from Wilde's works for his apparatus of section and chapter headings and epigraphs. Some pleasurable distraction is provided by the abundant asterisk footnotes scattered across the book. Wilde's witticism about the then neologism of 'spoof' (p. 448), or Henry James attending a performance of *An Ideal Husband* while his own play *Guy Domville* flopped at St James Theatre (p. 532), occupy only two of the many asterisked footnotes that constitute what we might call the book's spice.

For all of Sturgis's dispassionate detachment, his factual, chronological narrative is governed by a serendipitous irony in which Wilde's life is allowed to reveal itself as having the appearance of a designed work of art. An uncanny sense of symmetry contributes to this view: two Paris *Expositions Universelles*—in 1867 and 1900—bookend Wilde's life (pp. 26, 704); his education during his Magdalen College demyship mirrors his new wisdom acquired in Pentonville and Reading

prisons; his extravagances in his American tour contrast his destitution in his absinthe-fuelled final years on the Continent; and in 1895 both his lionization and scapegoating by English society reach their peak. By paring Wilde's myth down to the bare facts, *Oscar* invites us to consider the peculiar tension between Paterian moments of sensation and the crafting of one's life as a work of art, thus reconfiguring the Wilde myth. Moreover, Sturgis concludes that 'Wilde's shimmering wit creates an open-ended discourse that encourages all heresies' (p. 719). This monumental biography is an expertly arranged treasure-house of information, offering new, enriching perspectives on its subject, and demonstrating that Wilde is an ever-unfolding enigma in plain sight.

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Friedman, Dustin, *Before Queer Theory: Victorian Aestheticism and the Self*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019. 248 pp. $34.95 / £26.00.

Before Queer Theory is a deeply impressive, scholarly contribution to understandings of the relationship between art, desire, and the self in the writings of Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, Vernon Lee, and Michael Field. It encourages us to think carefully about how aesthetic experience, by affirming a sense of autonomous selfhood, offered queer subjects a mode of resistance. The book's central argument relates to the role in aestheticism of what Friedman calls 'erotic negativity', a concept he develops from an astute reading of G.W.F. Hegel's influence on the writers under examination. In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), 'negativity' broadly describes the dynamic process through which consciousness is formed and re-formed in response to the difficulties and obstacles the self is forced to overcome. Friedman convincingly demonstrates parallels in the works of queer writers of the period, whose works trace how the 'painful recognition of one's queer desire' facilitates a 'profoundly consciousness-transforming experience' (p. 4). In this respect, Friedman makes a

welcome contribution to debates in queer theory about the productive significance of experiences of marginalization. The insights of theorists such as Didier Eribon, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Heather Love are (in different ways) the product of post-structuralist assumptions about the relationship between art, agency, and the self—whether psychoanalytic, Foucauldian, or affective. Friedman's approach reassesses these assumptions. His Hegel-inflected queer reading foregrounds writers' commitment to active self-determined aesthetic transformation, in which the aesthetic becomes a realm where one's autonomy can be most fully realized.

The first chapter focuses on Pater's early essays. Friedman emphasizes the connection between aesthetic experience and the erotic, charting how these works trace art's role in the emergence of modes of self-consciousness that are viscerally alert to queer sexual desire. His reading of 'Diaphaneitè' (1864/95) rejects queer readings that understand this essay as positing an 'anti-social' aestheticism which refuses the possibility of effecting political change. Rather, he argues that Pater evokes a radical new form of consciousness—an 'active passivity' (p. 39). This is enacted in the essay, Friedman suggests, through a generative Hegelian dynamic that 'push[es] against dialectical stalemates' by 'holding two apparently opposed ideas together at the same time' (p. 40). This 'diaphanous type' is further developed in Pater's 'Winckelmann' (1867). Here, desiring encounters with the aesthetic reconfigure the self, rendering it 'open to relativity, immanence and conditionality' (p. 31).

Friedman advances his argument about productive Hegelian negativity in the following chapter by demonstrating how the structure of Pater's later essays requires readers to hold in their minds two opposing conceptions of the subject. 'A Study of Dionysus' (1876), for example, presents the deity as a figure of creativity and fecundity and, simultaneously, of destructive sexual violence. This analysis is situated adeptly alongside Pater's interest in the work of Oxford anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917), whose theory of 'survivals' suggests that primitive, atavistic beliefs return to disturb the veneer of ostensibly civilized Victorian culture. An interest in form also underpins the subsequent section on 'euphuism' (decorative style) in *Marius the Epicurean* (1885). This includes an insightful discussion of the relationship between prose style and masculinity in mid-Victorian culture. The chapter concludes by considering the 'Manly Amusements' chapter in *Marius*. Here Friedman connects the 'shock of [Marius's] sexual awakening' (p. 79)—another transformative moment of 'erotic negativity'—to his

growing resistance to imperialistic and hyper-masculinist forms of domination. Significantly, Marius's change in outlook is also the product of his new aesthetic self-consciousness. For Friedman, Pater seeks to elicit a similar transformation in his readers through the novel's distinctive structure and language.

The third chapter offers a close reading of Oscar Wilde's 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.' (1889/1921), which links Wilde's 'radical subjectivism' (p. 24) with Hegel's theory of lyric. Here, Friedman offers a Hegelian refinement of Judith Butler's concept of performativity. Queer critics, he observes, have tended to ascribe a degree of subversive agency to creative speech acts of citation and iteration. Hegel's 'lyric performativity', in contrast, is more circumspect about the relationship between linguistic self-expression and the self from which such an utterance originates: rather than subverting or de-essentializing one's concept of self, lyric expression might prompt a more destructive 'loss of self-relatedness' (p. 100). Wilde's 'Portrait', Friedman suggests, presents a disturbing portrayal of queer individuals whose scepticism about language's ability to articulate their sense of selfhood leads to a belief that their subjectivity is fundamentally and irredeemably damaged. Wilde's ultimate message is that 'one must hold on to a core sense of selfhood, even if one's possession of it can never be definitively articulated or proven within language' (p. 91). For Friedman, the text cautions against both the 'sentimental humanism of gay studies' and the 'sceptical anti-humanism of queer theory' (p. 115). It reveals the dangers of over-investment in the aesthetic object (Shakespeare's sonnets, the portrait) and of doubting language's ability to sustain the coherence of self (the underlying cause of Cyril's suicide).

Vernon Lee's project of articulating a 'spectral' lesbian history is the focus of the subsequent chapter. Friedman's starting point is Lee's concept of the supernatural in 'Faustus and Helena' (1880), 'a characteristically feminine formlessness' (p. 122) which allows for an engagement with the past that extends beyond empirical historicism. This informs his perceptive reading of 'Oke of Okehurst' (1886). Here, Alice's frustrated desire for transhistorical affective intimacy is seen to mirror the experience of *fin-de-siècle* lesbians who wish to feel 'a subjective sense of historicity that cannot be objectively confirmed through recourse to historical evidence' (p. 122). Significantly, Alice turns to portraiture—and the freedom of aesthetic response—to explore a sense of identity unrestrained by coldly objective historical fact. In doing so, Friedman suggests, Lee implicitly draws a parallel with the pathologizing scientific assumptions of late nineteenth-century sexological

discourses. Likewise, in Friedman's reading of 'Prince Alberic and the Snake Lady' (1896), the text's preoccupation with fluidity and formlessness suggests that productive forms of queer self-knowledge might emerge through embracing the indefinite and the vague.

The final chapter considers Michael Field's *Sight and Song* (1892), analyzing poems about paintings by Watteau and da Vinci, and on paintings of Saint Sebastian. Friedman persuasively argues that ekphrastic description sustains an aesthetic disinterestedness which allows an observer to occupy new desiring subject positions. The Michael Fields' commitment to aesthetic formalism is understood in the context of Hegel's idea of '*Schein*' ('appearance' or 'semblance'). This relates to a painting's capacity to displace the material world in favour of a surface of formal pattern which in turn allows a viewer to experience a sense of freedom. What is significant here, Friedman suggests, is Michael Field's repudiation of erotically subversive modes of aesthetic response. Rather their demand that appreciation of aesthetic *form* must take precedence over response to *content* facilitates modes of self-reflection that enable a viewer to enter into another's sexual perspective.

Friedman combines keen attention to intellectual history with a fine-grained grasp of debates in contemporary queer theory, and brings each to bear on his chosen texts in illuminating and thought-provoking ways. He retains a refreshing scepticism about some of the well-established shibboleths of queer theory, which allows him to articulate more sensitively the ethical and humanistic principles that underpin these writers' faith in aesthetic self-discovery. Occasionally, *Before Queer Theory* sets up some overly stark oppositions. For example, it contrasts lesbian women's self-reflexive relationship to the historical past with 'queer men like Pater' who engaged in 'an untheorized historical positivism' (p. 141). This seems ungenerous to a writer whose resistance in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) to 'mere technical or antiquarian criticism' underpins much of his work. Elsewhere, pitting 'aesthetes' against 'sexologists' occludes careful consideration of figures who straddled both categories, such as John Addington Symonds (another sometime Hegelian). More generally, I would have been fascinated to learn more about points of tension between Hegel's philosophy and the queer aestheticism that Friedman explores. The book's argument unfolds elegantly through a focussed exploration of Hegel's concept of 'negativity', yet this leaves some broader questions unexplored. What place does a non-normative queer subject have in Hegel's 'organic community' of mutually shared customs? What is the relationship

between Hegel's teleological theory of history and the queer temporalities in these texts? To what extent is Hegel's rather schematic hierarchy of the arts useful to writers intent on articulating the intensity of their own subjective aesthetic-erotic experience? Such concerns are insignificant, though, in the context of the book's remarkable achievements. This is a conceptually rich study that offers a great deal for scholars of the *fin de siècle*, Victorian sexuality and, most impressively, contemporary queer theory.

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Arthur Symons: Poet, Critic, Vagabond. Elisa Bizzotto and Stefano Evangelista, eds. Legenda Studies in Comparative Literature 44. Cambridge: Legenda/mhra. 2018. 208 pp. £75 (hbk) £9.99 (pbk).

Arthur Symons: Poet, Critic, Vagabond is the latest offering in a series of publications by or about Arthur Symons from the Modern Humanities Research Association, following their publication in 2017 of a selection of his early poetry (edited by Jane Desmarais and Chris Baldick) and a critical edition of his *Spiritual Adventures* (edited by Nick Freeman). Not only are the essays assembled here among the first to have benefited from the new MHRA editions, but taken together—as the editors, Stefano Evangelista and Elisa Bizzotto, point out—they constitute 'the first collection […] entirely dedicated to Symons'. Accordingly, the book aims to give a fuller account of Symons's range as an author than has hitherto been possible by tracing his 'engagement with multiple literary genres', 'his journalistic activity', 'his interest in aesthetics and the arts', as well as his 'incessant work of cultural mediation of material from Italy, France, and Belgium' through 'reviews, translations [and] an impressive literary network' (p. 6).

Such a comprehensive approach is also an indication of the editors' larger ambition, which is 'to focus on a networked Symons', where 'vagabondage'—a term used with considerable latitude here, to mean an inclination to range

across artforms, cultures and period boundaries—becomes Symons's defining characteristic (p. 6). In his prose self-portrait, 'A Prelude to Life', Symons depicts himself with a similar emphasis:

> If I have been a vagabond, and have never been able to root myself in any one place in the world, it is because I have no early memories of any one sky or soil. It has freed me from many prejudices in giving me its own unresting kind of freedom; but it has cut me off from whatever is stable, of long growth in the world.

This 'rootlessness', the editors argue, is 'inextricably bound with the creative and social freedom' at the heart of Symons's poetry and criticism, and is part of its value; but it can also 'produce a feeling of dislocation [which] lends a precarious quality to his social relations', and indeed to his work (p. 1). The same risks—of rootlessness and dislocation—inhere to writing about Symons, such is the range of his interests, and the collection occasionally struggles to manage the eclecticism that is its subject. So, for example, crucial links between Symons's self-identification as a vagabond and the kinds of 'vagabondage' manifested by his criticism, fiction and poetry are hinted at in the Introduction, but fade from view in the essays that follow, which become increasingly diverse—even divergent—and bring into view a possible contradiction latent in the idea of 'focusing on networks'. Perhaps conscious of this tension, the editors have chosen to split the essays into three sections ('Artistic Connections', 'International Mediations', and 'Places and Connections', in that order) which each suggest a different type of 'network', and help to keep the book in sight of the aims outlined at its outset, even if the essays themselves do not always coalesce around their allotted theme.

Of these three groupings, the second is the most meaningful *as a grouping*, each of its short essays focusing on specific instances of Symons's transactions with artists on the Continent. Evangelista's essay on Symons's 'mediation' of the writings of Gabriele D'Annunzio is particularly good, as is Matthew Creasy's essay on his translations of Villiers de l'Isle Adam. Both are sensitive to the liberties that Symons took in his 'translations', in which he would often redesign narratives and interpolate previously published material of his own. Evangelista suggests

that Symons's rewritings of D'Annunzio were part of a covert revivification of a Paterian 'sexual radicalism' muted by the trials of Oscar Wilde; Creasy is more doubtful about the motives behind Symons's 'slippage between translation and free adaptation', but suggests we might, 'if we could be confident of Symons's intentions', see his 'collage of quotation' as 'Modernist in technique' (pp. 60, 81). The third essay is by Clément Dessy, who documents the evolution of Symons's relationships with Maurice Maeterlinck, Charles Van Leberghe, and Émile Verhaeren, as well as his interest in the artist and engraver, Félicien Rops. The final 'international mediation' comes from Bénédicte Coste, who gives a helpful account of Symons's reception in France.

The first section is more wide-ranging, being loosely connected by Symons's 'unresting freedom' in writing about different artforms. Lene Østermark-Johansen's essay is excellent. She discusses Symons's admiration of Rodin in the context of his interest in dance. This approach sets up a two-pronged discussion which considers the gender politics of Symons's verse and criticism alongside his theories of 'rhythm', before evolving into an homage to the performers Loïe Fuller and Isadora Duncan. Jane Desmarais then discusses Symons's use of musical terminology, especially his proto-'formalist' application of 'musical metaphors' to the art of Aubrey Beardsley (p. 31), before John Stokes explores Symons's influence on the dramatic theories of Edward Gordon Craig. The concluding section is more varied still. Nicholas Freeman's remarkable essay on Symons and Venice suggests that the city itself may have been 'partially responsible for' Symons's mental collapse there in 1908. He draws links between Symons's recollections of his breakdown and the story of 'Henry Luxulyan', who suffers a nervous collapse while visiting the city. Bizzotto examines Symons's 'Aesthetic travel writings', which are said to be influenced by the idea of the 'genius loci' in the writings of Vernon Lee, and to display, variously, 'Symbolist principles', 'Symbolist and Impressionist influences', and an 'adherence to Aestheticism' (p. 131). The essay's coordination of these concepts can be puzzling, however, and it does not become clear what the distinguishing features of 'Aesthetic travel writing' were, or how they differed from, or accommodated, those of Impressionism or Symbolism. (And other questions are begged. For instance, does not the idea of the 'genius loci', even if we confine ourselves to Symons's favourite English writers

about Italy, appear further back than Lee? In Byron, for example? If so, how do these earlier versions of the concept relate to its later 'Aesthetic' iterations? And what *is* the 'Aesthetic'?) In the essay that follows, Katharina Herold suggests that Symons's 'gypsylorism' is an example of his 'politicised Aestheticism' (pp. 145, 146). She marshals an impressive range of archival materials, but the notion that Symons's writings about Romani culture formed part of a 'radically politicised Aestheticism'—a concept which, again, required more definition—is difficult to reconcile with the infrequency of his comments about politics, and the reactionary tenor of those he did make. (His hysterical opposition to universal suffrage comes to mind.) The book concludes with Laura Giovanelli's exploration of 'Symons's assessments of Oscar Wilde' (p. 160). The essay is an outlier, having little to do with the geographies explored elsewhere in this section, but Giovanelli offers an interesting and detailed account of the relationship between the two men.

The book's increasingly miscellaneous array of subjects may, then, represent a slight flaw in its design, but this kind of variety is not so unusual for a collection of its type, and the essays themselves are all valuable. There is one significant omission, however, which strikes me as more of a problem. As the editors note, the recent (and only) critical anthology of Symons's poetry 'has made available a wider selection of his verse than ever before' (p. 6). It is strange, therefore, that the poems are largely absent from the collection, because the publication of a first critical edition would seem the perfect occasion for a serious appraisal. This exclusion is intended as a rebalancing: 'although he has mostly been known as a Decadent poet', the Introduction notes, 'Symons was also the author of influential critical essays and volumes' (p. 2). The emphasis here is not quite right, however. Symons has most often been discussed in relation to poetry, but precisely because of his critical essays; he is less commonly discussed as a poet in his own right. The editors point to Frank Kermode, who rightly claimed in *Romantic Image* (1957) that Symons 'wrote the book out of which the important poets of the early twentieth century learnt the elements of French Symbolist poetic' (qtd, p. 4). But the book in question is *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1900), not the volumes of poetry Symons wrote himself. In recent years attention has been paid to his poems—in Kostas Boyiopoulos's *Decadent Image: The Poetry of Wilde, Symons, and Dowson* (2015), and in a limited way in Vincent Sherry's *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* (2014)—but it is a shame that the first collection dedicated to Symons chooses not to address them. This decision notwithstanding, the book is clearly

a timely contribution to our knowledge of Symons and represents a significant milestone in his ongoing critical retrieval.

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NOTES

[1] Arthur Symons, 'A Prelude to Life', in *Spiritual Adventures* (1905), ed. by Nicholas Freeman (Cambridge: MHRA, 2017), pp. 119–39 (pp. 119–20).

[2] Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (London: Routledge, 2004 [1957]), p. 127.

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