EXQUISITE AMATEURS: QUEER DILETTANTISM AND VICTORIAN AESTHETICS

by

BENJAMIN HUDSON

(Under the Direction of Tricia Lootens)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation considers how a discourse of queer dilettantism developed in England over the second half of the nineteenth-century. Scholars of sexuality and gender have examined this period for its vibrant and shifting discourses of gender; however, they have overlooked the importance of amateurism to this discourse. This is most surprising because dilettantism is enshrined in Pater's Preface, a text deeply involved in critical evaluations of masculinity in the 1870s, with a quote from Saint-Beuve that upholds "*exquis amateurs*" as a new ideal. Dilettantism, moreover, not only offers a rubric for understanding a fledgling discourse of sexual identity but also suggests how an appreciation of art was historically constructed as an essential aspect of it. With focused readings of central texts the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, The Renaissance*, "The Critic as Artist," and *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.*, *Exquisite Amateurs* describes how these works propound an ethos of amateurism to unsteady both the orthodoxies of religion and the growing standards of professionalism, while carving a space to explore new sexual possibility. Finally, it recuperates amateurism as a valid intellectual project that has room to maneuver felicitously through the disciplines and identifies a new figure for historical inquiry—the "dilettante faggot"—who both troubles and supports constructivist accounts of homosexuality.

INDEX WORDS: Amateur, Amateurism, Dilettante, Dilettantism, Sexuality, Homosexuality, Masculinity, Gender, Queer, England, Fin-de-siècle, Aestheticism, Nineteenth Century, Victorian, Poetry, Novel, Criticism, Edward FitzGerald, Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, *The Renaissance*, *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.*

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DEDICATION

For my mother, who taught me how to love art,

and for my father, who taught me how to love language.

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I have been profoundly lucky to study under some of the most gifted and intellectually generous minds in my field. This project would have never taken shape without the tutelage and guidance of my committee and especially Dr. Tricia Lootens. It's difficult to put into words how grateful I am to the committee's encouragement and advocacy for this project. In my mind, this dissertation is of course a final project for my degree but also an early draft of a manuscript that is yet to be written, and it is so much better because I knew that I was writing for such discriminating readers. Dr. Lootens in particular has been so generous with her time and her criticism of my work that I know I have earned a debt that I will never be able to repay. From graciously receiving my panicked, last-minute requests for meetings, to helping me work out theoretical problems and contradictions (or, rather, to helping me understand how to embrace them), to offering me suggestions on how I might salvage my third chapter from the point of no return, and to demonstrating to me that this was a project worth pursuing through her incisive appraisals of each draft, Dr. Lootens has modeled for me how to be a better teacher and scholar, while preserving, in her critique and her conversation, a spirit of enthusiasm for scholarship that resonates, for me, with the most attractive aspects of the amateur hermeneutics that I try to define herein. Dr. Lootens, I truly cannot thank you enough.

I have one very great regret of my time in graduate school. It is still painful to me that I was out of the country during the semester that Dr. Eberle and Dr. Menke offered their Austen and Dickens seminars. I came to graduate school for those seminars, and it was a sick twist of fate that I was in England while they were offered. Because I have had the pleasure of taking

some of their other courses, the pain is especially acute. Perhaps it's appropriate that I'll remain an Austen and Dickens amateur without the benefit of the manifold intellectual delights that those courses and conversations undoubtedly offered.

Both Dr. Menke and Dr. Eberle have shepherded this project immeasurably. Over the past several months, after receiving my Pater and Wilde chapters, Dr. Menke and I have had an indispensable electronic discussion about amateurism and Victorian professionalism. Dr. Menke helped me refine my ideas about what the authors I examine have accomplished and pushed me to refine my methodological approach and to cement my ideological foundation, and this project would not have been possible without that exchange. Dr. Eberle's notes on my FitzGerald chapter helped me to refine my close readings and prepare a manuscript that *Victorian Poetry* will be publishing in July 2016. Because she shaped the way I went about my close readings in subsequent drafts and piloted my first chapter into an acceptance from a scholarly journal, her guidance has been crucial. Thank you both. I could not have dreamed a more supportive and insightful committee, and, if this dissertation succeeds, it does so because I knew I was writing for all of you.

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It's bittersweet to finish this project without having read the example of Caroline Daniel Ramsey's completed work. Caroline was a great friend, an insatiable reader, and a fine young scholar. One of my favorite memories of Caroline takes place on the night of the closing of the 283 Bar, a bacchanalia not soon forgotten among many others like it in downtown Athens. Dan had been working intermittently at sea, and we were both ready for him to take a more permanent place in Athens. We had barely gotten this out of our mouths, when Caroline bellowed over the raucous din, "Chuck, give Daniel a job!" And it was pretty much done. Caroline was a great mentor to me as I started my coursework and a really wonderful friend: dinners at her house were occasions to remember not only for their manifold gustatory pleasures but more importantly for the delight of engaging a sharp-witted mind as it led a swiftly moving conversation, and I'll always miss talking over and learning about Victorian letters and women's writing with her. We miss you so much, C.

Finally, thanks to Daniel, Bounce, and Poakchop for letting me work or working with me, distracting me when I needed distraction, and always sharing with me with your love and support. I love you too.

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INTRODUCTION

"AMATEURS OF IMPERFECT DEVELOPMENT"

"The Sin of this age is Dilettantism."

—Thomas Carlyle[1]

I. The Queer Dilettante at the Fin de Siècle

In a March 1890 column penned by the "Cambridge wit" and frequent contributor R.C. Lehmann, *Punch* defined a new "Modern Type"—"The Dilettante."[2] The "Modern Type" series of columns, which ran from 1890-91, identified what *Punch*, the periodical Sally Ledger has named the "most misogynist of Victorian journals," deemed particularly unsavory contemporary characters for ridicule in the early 1890s; a sample of columns include "The Political Woman" (29 Mar. 1890), "The Undomestic Daughter" (6 Sept. 1890), "The Manly Maiden" (6 Dec. 1890), the effete "Adulated Clergyman" (25 Apr. 1891), and "The Tolerated Husband" (14 Feb. 1891).[3] This short selection surely establishes how the column policed gender expressions at the fin de siècle and thus participated in a larger pattern of *Punch*'s conservative reactionism that has

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[1] Thomas Carlyle, *Two Note Books of Thomas Carlyle,* ed. Charles Eliot Norton (New York: The Grolier Club, 1898), 172.
[2] [R.C. Lehmann], "Modern Types: No. V—The Dilettante," *Punch*, 22 March 1890, 136.
[3] Sally Ledger, "The New Woman and Feminist Fictions," *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, ed. Gail Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), 153-168, 167.

long been observed by scholars of Victorian gender,[4] though many other items that ran under the heading of "Modern Types" were less socio-politically charged and examined recurrent figures like "The Young Guardsman" (10 May 1890), "The Average Undergraduate" (1 Nov. 1890), and "The Giver of Parties" (18 Apr. 1891).[5] All of these characters are ridiculed; one of the magazine's early historians deemed the column a "comprehensive series" of figures of "contempt."[6] Marion Spielmann, who authored a history of the periodical in 1895, recalled the column as one "all *Punch* readers will remember."[7] To literary scholars today, "Modern Types" demonstrates *Punch*'s capacity for "viperous" social critique.[8] The *Punch* that E.M. Forster would later characterize as "the snigger of a suburban householder who can understand nothing that does not resemble himself" was already under formation by Lehmann and his Cambridge

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[4] See, for example, Elaine Showalter on Punch's "battle against the New Woman" and the contemporaneous fears, in the wake of the sexual scandals of the 1880s, that England suffered from "certain signs of the immorality that had toppled Greece and Rome." *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Penguin, 1990), 3, 41. Similarly, Tracy J.R. Collins asserts that the New Woman was a discursive formation directly attributable to the magazine: "Before *Punch*'s attention, a body for the New Woman did not exist." "Athletic Fashion, *Punch*, and the Creation of the New Woman," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 43, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 309-335, 310. For the journal's policing of fin-de-siècle masculinity, see Dennis Denisoff, who examines Du Maurier's cartoons in the *Punch* of the '70s which depicted the aesthetes as "shams" who "enacted an elitist, bachelor lifestyle that threatened to supersede an emergent heterosexual identity." "'Men of My Own Sex': Genius, Sexuality, and George Du Maurier's Artists," *Victorian Sexual Dissidence*, ed. Richard Dellamora (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1999), 147-169, 149.

[5] R.G.G. Price observes that the column was resurrected in the mid-twentieth century by the social anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer "to satirise all kinds of opinion and character" though he was "far shriller dealing with the left than with the right." *A History of Punch* (London: Collins, 1957), 332.

[6] Charles L. Graves, *Mr. Punch's History of Modern England*, vol. 3 (London: Cassell and Co., 1922), 279, 175.

[7] M.H. Spielmann, *The History of "Punch,"* (London: Cassell and Company, 1895), 401.

[8] Philip Waller, *Writers, Readers, and Reputations: Literary Life in Britain 1870-1918* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), 79.

clique in the '90s.[9] According to *Punch,* the dilettante, like the New Woman, was a new and identifiable cultural formation of queer and present danger.

The "Dilettante" that *Punch* lambasts as a peculiarly modern species is an effeminate, immature, and unnatural creature out of step with the protocols of Victorian adult masculinity represented by "ordinary young men." He is absolutely in step, however, with what Denisoff considers *Punch*'s creation of the dandy-aesthete "as sporting signs of sexual deviancy."[10] Lehmann telegraphs this deviance by cataloging a long list of the figure's failures. *Punch*'s dilettante is a figure of "special refinement" with "distaste for serious effort," and the column follows him from boyhood—"a shorn lamb, for whom it was necessary to temper the wind of an English education"—to his advanced years, when he tries "to disguise the ravages of time upon his cheeks by the aid of *rouge*"—and finally to his "evening," when "a rival Dilettante [will have] written a limp and limping sonnet to his memory." Too weak to weather English schools and too false to age gracefully, *Punch*'s dilettante collapses misogynist discourses of both backbone and ageism. The column goes on to describe his quarters and his society:

> [H]e will gather round him a little band of boneless enthusiasts, who after paying due devotion to themselves, and to one another, will join him in worshipping the dead or living nonentities whose laurelled photographs adorn his rooms. He will cover his couches with soft silks, his walls will be hung with impressionist etchings and engravings of undraped ladies of French origin, *terra-cotta* statuettes principally of the young Apollo, will be placed in every corner, and a marble bust of the young AUGUSTUS will occupy the place of honour next to the grand piano,

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[9] E.M Foster, "Notes on the English Character," *Abinger Harvest* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1945), 3-14, 9.
[10] Denisoff, "'Men of My Own Sex,'" 163.

> on which, will be ranged the framed cabinet photographs of interesting young men. Each photograph will bear upon it an appropriate inscription, announcing it to be, for instance, a gift "From BOBBY to TODDLEKINS." Nothing more is necessary for the perfect life of dilettantism, except to settle an afternoon for tea, and an evening for music. When this is done the Dilettante is complete.

Punch's invective emasculates the dilettante's society as "boneless" and infantilizes him with the colloquialism "Toddlekins." The nickname hints that even the dilettante's friendships might be under-developed and immature. His excessive aesthetic decoration shows that even the home is an insufficient buttress against his subversion, as it adopts foreign styles and un-English figures, like French nudes and figures of Apollo. *Punch*'s dilettantes are effectively aliens to England and express "a pitying contempt for everything that is characteristically English, and for the unfortunate English who are imbued with the prejudices of their land." Their exoticism affects even their attempts at verse, in which both "English Grammar" and "English metre are defied." According to *Punch*, the dilettante contaminates what should otherwise be normalizing patterns of space, time, sociability, and even art, and, in effect, this amateurism perverts a healthy, mature English masculinity with foreign tastes and classical effects.

Punch even adopts a scientific language that diagnoses the dilettante as a being "of imperfect development," signified especially, according to Lehmann, by his preference for "the society of ladies." The column signals what one anonymous author averred forthrightly in the monthly magazine *Progress* five years earlier: "Amateurity means immaturity."[11] Though *Punch*'s dilettantes may espouse a rakish doctrine for "a sense of rest and security," "none of

[11] Ignotus, "Literary Rejections," *Progress*, ed. G.W. Foote, vol. 5 (London: Progressive Publishing Co., 1885), 133-36, 135.

them [actually] holds" it, and gossipmongers, usually eager "to make sad havoc of unwilling reputations," are challenged to believe them. In other words, he constructs a façade of rapacious heterosexuality—a defensive pose for peace of mind—that is entirely unconvincing to not only the world at large but very likely himself as well. Instead, his affections are more ethereal. The amateur's poetry "breathes the passionate desire of a great soul for Love that is not of the earth." By including the dilettante's heterosexual failures in the same paragraph as his bad art, Lehmann implies a relationship between the two. It almost seems as though, because he unconvincingly mimics heterosexual courtship, the dilettante turns instead to the poetic adumbration of an idealized, Platonic same-sex love. In any case, it's clear that Lehmann believes the dilettante retreats into art and "contempt for everything that is characteristically English" because of his heterosexual failures.

When they are not falsely courting ladies, the dilettantes convene to "[persuade] one another without much difficulty, that they are the flower of created beings." They even have their own patois: "There is amongst the inner circle of the Dilettanti a jargon, both of voice and of gesture, which passes muster as humour, but is unintelligible to the outer world of burly Philistines […]. Their phrases are distinguished by a plaintive cadence which is particularly to be remarked in their pronunciation of the word 'dear.'" And their own gestures: "They dangle hands rather than shake them, and emphasize their meaning by delicate finger-taps. […] In gait and manner he affects a mincing delicacy." More tellingly, *Punch* hints at the need for a new vocabulary to properly define them: "He sometimes smokes cigarettelets (a word must be coined to express their size and strength), but he never attempts cigars, and loathes the homely pipe." "Homely" is a revealing adjective, as it distances the dilettante from masculine standards of not

only taste but also domesticity. Lehmann ridicules the dilettante's style of living and laughs at his overweening effeminacy and mannerisms.

Punch's illustration for the dilettante pictures a corpulent figure turning away from the viewer to his artistic collection (FIG. 1). Although it was not uncommon for *Punch* to illustrate their modern types with their backs to the reader, often the choice reflects the figure's turn away from acceptable society. Gazing at his statuette of the *Venus de Milo*, the dilettante commits himself to the love of art at the expense of decent sociability. It's even tempting to wonder if this particular statue wasn't selected as a visual pun on Greek love, embodied by the goddess Aphrodite. Surrounded otherwise by "photographs of interesting young men," this dilettante is surely a sexual curiosity. Notably, the photographs suggest that his aesthetic is not simply antiquarian; there is a piquancy added to his collection with the suggestion that it is not entirely a thing of the past. Photographs of interesting young men then complement the statue to create an artistic collection that bridges from the men of today to a fantasy of a classical past. The trail of smoke from his cigarette coupled with his absorption in his small aesthetic collection suggest that the dilettante is a sensual creature, absorbed by the stimulations of art and tobacco. In effect, aesthetic appreciation is a vortex that consumes the dilettante at the expense of his usefulness to society.

Punch's notice of the aesthetic arrangement of the dilettante's home corresponds with histories of queer Victorian domesticity that reveal how careful attention to domestic decoration could provide sexually dissident Victorians with comfort and refuge.[12] Though twentieth- and

[12] See, for example, Sharon Marcus, "At Home with the Other Victorians," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 108, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 119-145; John Potvin, *Bachelors of a Different Sort: Queer Aesthetics, Material Culture and the Modern Interior in Britain* (New York: Manchester Univ. Press, 2014).

FIG. 1. The Dilettante (*Punch*, April 22, 1890)

twenty-first-century historians of Victorian sexuality have been more interested in exploring, in Sharon Marcus's phrase, "men whose lives were more public," *Punch*'s dilettante suggests that reactionary late Victorians were concerned about even private arrangements among aesthetes.[13] Although the column details the modern type about town at "first nights of certain theatres" and "charitable concerts," its attention to his private compartments and interior decoration suggests that *Punch* ridicules even a style of private life, in addition to a specific kind of public behavior. Indeed, Lehmann's column confirms Foucault's assertion, from an interview with the magazine *Gai Pied* in April 1981, that "the homosexual mode of life, much more than the sexual act itself" is what qualifies homosexuality as 'disturbing' to heteronormative cultures.[14] To the extent that *Punch* ridicules the dilettante's comportment, speech, society, and interior decoration, it is precisely a "mode of life" that seems most objectionable. Of course, this is completely of a piece with Foucault's critical truism in *The History of Sexuality* that the late Victorian period saw the

[13] Marcus, "At Home," 139.
[14] Michel Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault*, *Volume One,* ed. Peter Rabinow (New York: New York Press, 1997), 135-140, 136.

discursive emergence of the homosexual as "a species" and created a binary logic of sexuality which continues to influence us today.[15]

The dilettante's inclusion in Lehmann's series suggests that he was indeed a recognizable modern figure and points to how dilettantism was understood as a queer practice of being and a catastrophe of modern masculinity. Indeed, Lehmann's satire circles around the idea of the dilettante's many failures. He fails at school, at work, in self presentation, in society, and in his amateur pursuits; he also conspicuously fails to marry and build a family. In this way, dilettantism, as it is ridiculed in *Punch*, points toward conceptualizations of queerness in our own time. Taking his cue from Quentin Crisp's quip, "If at first you don't succeed, failure may be your style," queer theorist Jack Halberstam interrogates how failure carries a particularly queer affect and may offer a queer strategy of resistance to heteronormativity as it has arisen from modern enterprise culture—what he calls "the logics of success that have emerged from the triumphs of global capitalism."[16] For Halberstam, "Heteronormative common sense leads to the equation of success with advancement, capital accumulation, family, ethical conduct, and hope," and queers are left out of this rubric: "Capitalist logic casts the homosexual as inauthentic and unreal, as incapable of proper love and unable to make the appropriate connections between sociality, relationality, family, sex, desire, and consumption" (89, 95). Lehmann's dilettante certainly fits this bill; he is "an amateur of imperfect development," a wrench in the gears of mature, Victorian masculinity. Even his participation in a modern consumer society telegraphs his deviance through his aesthetic acquisitions and inscribed photographs from young men. For

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[15] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 43.
[16] [Jack] Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2011), 87, 19. Subsequent citations appear parenthetically within the text.

many Victorians, amateurism likely carried a stench of failure, for the very word connotes a lack of professional success. In Lehmann's column, the professional elite condescend to dilettante society, or what he terms the "strange medley of second-rate incompetencies." Here, the amateur's failures eclipse his person; they are a synecdoche for the man himself.

If failure might indeed constitute a style, a dedicated amateurism may offer a strategy of resistance to normalizing hegemonies. For Halberstam, "an ethos of resignation to failure, to lack of progress" can combine to form a strategic "queer aesthetic" (96). And certainly, despite the laugh that Lehmann and his readers have at the dilettante's expense, part of the uneasiness of this column might be the comfort the dilettante takes in the society of his friends. There's a kind of self-sufficiency to the life of amateurism as he describes it. Dilettantism appears as a defined subculture with its own clear aesthetic practices and procedures. But how did this come to be in an age so enamored of progress and achievement? Why did Lehmann feel the need to heckle the dilettante off the social stage? Why was he so troubling?

I believe that dilettantism was a subversive practice of modernity which was born from a concerted effort by writers and artists looking for alternatives to the ideologies of modern capitalism and the norms of gender and sexuality that they propagated. This dissertation traces the history of the fin-de-siècle dilettante through three central works of Victorian aestheticism: Edward FitzGerald's translation of the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (1859), Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), and Oscar Wilde's *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.* (1889). Each text showcases how the practice of amateurism was constructed as a queer critical program. FitzGerald's poem laments the pointlessness of professional endeavor in a world of uncertainty and imagines instead a queer, eroticized network of textual and material union created from poetic fragments and material remains. Pater's studies celebrate artistic affection

and attack the stultifying influence of professional education which had the potential, he demonstrates, to corrupt his intellectual ideal; he creates, through evaluations of his pedagogical heroes Winckelmann, Abelard, Héloïse, and Plato, a program of amorous education out of step with a quickly professionalizing Oxford. And Wilde follows a small community of dilettante sleuths reworking literary history through the prism of same-sexuality, while rebuking the claims of a newly professionalizing literary discourse for an amateur interpretive provisionality. Together these texts reveal how FitzGerald, Pater, and Wilde constructed dilettantism as an intellectual and social counter-discourse to the Victorian sacramentalization of labor and progress, using it to open up a critical space for considerations of queer desire.

In the Preface to *The Renaissance*, Pater upholds "the exquisite amateur" as an intellectual ideal.[17] The phrase, borrowed from the French of Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve, is almost a paradox. For Lehmann, certainly, amateurism implies a lack of development; it corresponds with the ardent young artist Naumann's critique of Will Ladislaw as "dilettantish and amateurish" in the early pages of *Middlemarch* before the latter finds his calling as first an editor and eventually a parliamentary reformer.[18] For Pater, however, "exquisite" connotes not only a quality of excellence but also one of workmanship. It additionally suggests, appropriately for the author of *The Renaissance*, a susceptibility of feeling, a quality of being "keenly sensitive to impressions," and has a connotation of accuracy or exactness. In the nineteenth century, moreover, "an exquisite" was a dandy, or "a person (usually a man) who is over-nice in dress."[19] Pater's appropriation of this phrase suggests how an amateur ideal might not be a rejection of

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[17] Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry: The 1893 Text*, ed. Donald Hill (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980), xxi. Subsequent citations appear parenthetically.
[18] George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000), 122.
[19] "exquisite, adj. and n.". *OED Online*. March 2016. Oxford University Press.

labor altogether, but a call to another kind of work—one directed by pleasure and desire, one uncommitted to professional mastery and instead open to the permeability of the subject. It is a kind of work that doesn't require the professional eschewal of sensuality, and it's one perhaps created by and for the dandy, a sometime figure of sexual deviance. The exquisite, or in Wilde's half-serious sacralization, "the divine amateur" was an ideal formed and interrogated by FitzGerald, Pater, and Wilde, among others, and this dissertation reveals the heretofore under-theorized practice of queer dilettantism in the second half of the nineteenth century.[20]

And yet, a body of criticism has indeed pointed me in this direction. Laurel Brake has shown, for example, that art magazines of the 1880s curated by figures like Gleeson White and Charles Kains-Jackson developed "a visible gay discourse" that linked homosexuality with the artistic concerns of their niche audience.[21] At the pinnacle of this discourse in the '90s, Alfred Douglas would publish the short poem "Prince Charming" in *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture*, where his speaker proclaims "I am King of love for him" above Kains-Jackson's "The New Chivalry," a slightly satirical defense of homosexuality that avers "The advanced – the more spiritual types of English manhood already look to beauty first" in an argument that privileged the superiority of same-sex bonds over procreative marriage.[22] Here, "beauty" was of course a masculine one. Why, Brake asks, was nineteenth-century artistic discourse capable of creating this queer public forum?

Indeed, if we tune our ears to what the Victorians themselves tell us about art and sexuality, we will hear John Addington Symonds explain to us how "Venus and Adonis" "gave

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[20] Oscar Wilde, "English Poetesses," *Miscellanies* (London: Methuen, 1908), 110-120, 116.
[21] Laure Brake, *Print in Transition: 1850-1910* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 110.
[22] Lord Alfred Douglas, "Prince Charming," *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture*, 2 April 1894, 102; [Charles Kains-Jackson], "The New Chivalry," *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture*, 2 April 1894, 102-104.

form, ideality and beauty to my previous erotic visions. […] I dreamed of falling back like her upon the grass, and folding the quick-panting lad in my embrace."[23] Or we may learn how the Platonic *"*myth of the soul and the speeches of Pausanias Agathon and Diotima" gave him "the sanction of the love which had been ruling [him] from childhood." Plato delivered "the poetry, the philosophy of my own enthusiasm for male beauty, expressed with all the magic of unrivalled style."[24] Artistic consumption was intimately wrapped up, for Symonds, with his conceptualization and experience of same-sex desire. Two years before his death, Symonds would remark to Edmund Gosse his surprise at the number of queer representations in late-century fiction: "What a number of Urnings are being portrayed in novels now!"[25] Art provided a space for the articulation of desire that challenged conventional sexual morality. We Foucauldians today might think of the discursive construction of homosexuality as a scientific project of sexology, or as a legal project of prohibition, but Victorians themselves turned to art to "give form," in Symonds's language, to same-sexuality. According to Christopher Reed, "artists not only reflected but also contributed creatively and substantially to conceptions of homosexuality, often in ways that subverted the scientists' ideas."[26]

In his fascinating study of the sexual politics of Romanticism, Andrew Elfenbein directs our attention to "the unexpected importance of aesthetics to lesbian and gay history."[27] And, certainly, some nineteenth-century sexologists were keen to note, as Havelock Ellis did in 1897,

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[23] John Addingtom Symonds, *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, ed. Phyllis Grosskurth (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984), 62-3.
[24] Symonds, 99.
[25] John Addington Symonds to Edmund Gosse, 22 July 1891, in *The Letters of John Addington Symonds*, ed. Herbert M. Schueller and Robert L. Peters (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. press, 1969), 3: 586.
[26] Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011), 2.
[27] Andrew Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1999), 6.

"an artistic aptitude" in the invert.[28] Further back still in 1852, the German sexologist Johann Ludwig Casper discussed how artistic collections might offer a window into sexual identity in one case study:

> One would have to be extremely naïve not to know immediately upon entering his room what was what when one saw the decoration with its reproduction Greek statues of hermaphrodites, and its strange collection of pictures, each boasting a posterior, mixed with pictures of pretty young men from the local garrison which the talented dilettante has made himself and continues to make.[29]

Dilettantism was an early trope for inchoate understandings of homosexuality. For Casper, and indeed for Lehmann too, the consumption of specific forms of art offered a clear window into the private desires of the dilettante. One of Ellis's case studies even wondered if a "sympathetic artistic temperament," under the right conditions, might generate inversion.[30] But the sexologists also noted the invert's attraction to art as a profession. Perhaps with a figure like Pater in mind, Ellis found, especially, that "literature is the avocation to which inverts seem to feel chiefly called, and that, moreover, in which they find the highest degree of success and reputation. […] They especially cultivate those regions of *belles-lettres* which lie on the border-land between prose and verse."[31] Ellis encodes some versions of belletrism as a queer practice precisely because they blur what should be evident generic conventions.

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[28] Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Vol. II: Sexual Inversion* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1901), 173-79.
[29] Qtd in. Christopher Reed, *Art and Homosexuality: A History of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011), 70.
[30] Ellis, *Sexual Inversion*, 175.
[31] Ellis, *Sexual Inversion*, 173.

But Victorians we might now call queer did not only consume and produce art; they also put it to other uses in their sexual lives. In her biography of Edward Carpenter, Sheila Rowbotham recounts how the writer and socialist was, two years after the publication of *The Story of an African Farm* and shortly before he befriended its author Olive Schreiner, gifting copies of the novel to young men as an heuristic for same-sex desire. A reader's receptivity to the text marked, for Carpenter, his potential as a lover. When, in 1885, the Sheffield razor grinder George Hukin—the love, in Rowbotham's estimation, of Carpenter's life—received the novel not quite with excitement but with curiosity, Carpenter felt assured enough to pursue a more intimate connection with the young man.[32] The fin-de-siecle myth of the dangerous book was very much alive before its articulation in *Dorian Gray*, and this brief history illustrates how the transmission of an artistic commodity could be a conduit for desire—how sharing a work of art might be a seduction.

And as *Punch* intimates, this nascent sexual culture extended out of the dilettante's private sphere into the parks, theatres, and music halls of public society. Houses of art, especially, took in sexual refugees from the cold streets. Surveying the geography of queer London in the late nineteenth century, Matt Cook has demonstrated the importance of West End theaters, picture shops, music halls, and bookstores to the city's underground sexual economy.[33] After Ernest Boulton and Frederick Park, also known as Fanny and Stella, were arrested in women's clothing at the Strand Theatre in 1870, their legal defense argued that the two, who had a performance history of appearing as women in amateur theatricals, were "merely over-

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[32] Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love* (New York: Verso, 2008), 108.

[33] Matt Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885-1914* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003), 25-29.

enthusiastic in their passion for the theatre."[34] According to Cook, "the theatre had long-standing associations with homosexuality and offered an additional space for men to cruise and socialize with each other."[35] Art not only offered queer Victorians opportunities for consumption and representation, but it also housed and enabled their sexual adventurism.

In the twenty-first century, being "artsy" has not yet lost the valences of queerness that the Victorians enshrined in the practice of aestheticism. *Exquisite Amateurs* interrogates Pater's ideal of amateurism as both a commitment to the practice and study of art and a rebuke to a quickly professionalizing world that degraded catholic approaches to knowledge in favor of specialization and disciplinarity and sought to police Victorian morality. For as social historians of Victorian professionalism have pointed out, its ideologies not only directed certain kinds of intellectual labor but also cemented bourgeois moral values across Victorian society. Embracing the amateur was not only a professional but also an ethical compromise. Thus, to understand the importance of queer amateurism fully, we must first grasp the rise of Victorian professionalism and the prehistory of the Victorian dilettante.

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[34] Cook, *London,* 17.
[35] Cook, *London*, 28.

II. Amateurism and Professionalism in the Nineteenth Century

"Dilettante" was imported into the English language from Italian with the foundation of the Society of Dilettanti in the early 1730s.[36] Inspired by their Grand Tour exploits in Italy and Greece, the founders—an aristocratic group of elite young men—took their name from *dilettare* and emphasized their focus on delight with bacchanalian revels in early meetings at a Covent Garden tavern. According to an early member, the Society was formed in "a *f*erious Plan for the Promotion of the Arts" but "Friendly and Social Intercour*f*e was, undoubtedly, the fir*f*t great Object in view."[37] One late Victorian historian noted wryly that these initial meetings were characterized "by a vivacity which would be hardly in tune with the soberer ideas prevailing at the close of the nineteenth century."[38] Art historian Bruce Redford situates the early Society against more serious gatherings like the Virtuosi of St. Luke (founded approx. 1689) and the

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[36] Coincidentally, according to the *OED*, "amateur" also seems to have been an eighteenth-century appropriation; however, it never seemed to enjoy a period of positive connotation. The *OED*'s first-listed reference points to a Royal Society debate in 1784 after the controversial dismissal of James Hutton from a secretaryship of £20 per year. Incensed at the Society president Joseph Banks, the mathematician Samuel Horsley threatened secession from "the *f*cientific part of this *f*ociety" which would leave the President "with his train of feeble *Amateurs*." In its consideration of the resulting pamphlet distributed by Paul Maty as *An Authentic Narrative of the Diffenfions and Debates in the Royal Society,* the *New Review* was so elated with the phrase, upon which "the *f*trength of all modern languages united" couldn't have improved, and prophesized that "the word *amateur* will henceforward be in every Engli*f*h dictionary." Horsley's slur defined amateurism against the experience and knowledgeability of a true scientist (a neologism itself not coined until the 1830s); in his formulation, it signified an inept and inadequate intellectual position. Henry Maty, *The New Review* Vol. V (London: J. Davis, 1784), 214. For a full account of the Royal Society debates, see Christa Jungnickel and Russell McCormmach, *Cavendish* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1996), 247-256, esp. 255.

[37] Robert Wood, Preface, in R. Chandler, *Ionaian Antiquities* (London: T. Spilsbury and W. Haskell, 1769), ii.

[38] Lionel Cust, *History of the Society of Dilettanti*, ed. Sidney Colvin (London: Macmillan, 1914), 5.

Society of Antiquaries (approx. 1707), which "were dominated by working professionals who lacked the resources for the Grand Tour."[39] According to Redford, the Dilettanti were hardly mere profligates, despite the libertinism they came to represent in the press and perhaps even courted by ushering Richard Payne Knight's *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* (1786) into print. As the society matured over several decades, it became a powerful force in British neoclassicism, antiquarianism, and archaeology. By midcentury, the Dilettanti were "sponsoring studies of the ancient art of Greece, […] supporting new academic institutions such as the Royal Academy and the British Museum, [… and counting among their members those] who had influential positions at Westminster and abroad."[40] Their chosen motto "Grecian Taste and Roman Spirit" clearly delineates the Society's aesthetic preferences and classical devotion.

For these art historians, eighteenth-century dilettantism, as the Society conceived it, reflects an Enlightenment intellectualism with a generous breadth of interests; it created an amateur "cultural ideal" with an approach to knowledge opposed to the limitations of disciplinarity and specialization.[41] Despite the current survival of the Dilettanti, Redford suggests that the Society lost its late eighteenth-century influence through its involvement with the scandal of the Elgin Marbles which showcased its members as "fractious, fallible, and—in the newly pejorative sense—amateurish."[42] In his study of the group, Jason Kelly strips away "the derogatory connotations" that words like *dilettante* and *amateur* acquired in the nineteenth century to reveal an Enlightenment "dilettante culture" of inquiry, sociability, and curiosity.[43]

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[39] Bruce Redford, *Dilettanti: The Antic and the Antique in Eighteenth-Century England* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008), 3.
[40] Jason Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti: Archaeology and Identity in the British Enlightenment* (New Haven: YaleUniversity Press, 2009), xii.
[41] Redford, *Dilettanti*, 1.
[42] Redford, *Dilettanti*, 173.
[43] Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti*, xiii.

Kelly reveals that, over the course of the eighteenth century, satirists and the composers of conduct books—the mouthpieces of the moral concerns of the emergent middling classes—seized the aristocratic excess of dilettantism to critique its effect on gender and sexuality: "Without the mediation of polite society, the dilettante might even become a sexual monster."[44] As the century wore on, the press lambasted the dilettante for his contributions to "the de-masculinization of British society."[45] The Dilettanti are thus relevant to this study as a reminder that, over the course of the eighteenth century, dilettantism carried associations of intellectual inquisitiveness but also libertinism, sexual deviance, and aristocratic hedonism.

Kelly and Redford seek to reclaim dilettantism from the connotations of incompetence that it acquired over the turn of the nineteenth century. But by May 1840, when Carlyle first delivered the lectures he would publish as *On Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History*, dilettantism was a clear pejorative. In "The Hero as Prophet," Carlyle paints a portrait of Mahomet's strength of mind and "bursting earnestness."[46] Mahomet is heroic for his "candid ferocity" and "total freedom from cant" (72-3). Carlyle lauds his heroic devotion and commitment to action by declaring, "No *Dilettantism* in this Mahomet":

> Dilettantism, hypothesis, speculation, a kind of amateur-search for Truth, toying and coquetting with Truth: this is the sorest sin. The root of all other imaginable sins. It consists in the heart and soul of the man never having been *open* to Truth;—'living in a vain show.' Such a man not only utters and produces

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[44] Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti*, 26.
[45] Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti*, 29. The dilettante was, moreover, almost always gendered male, though Kelly does point to "the exceptional case" of a "female dilettante" identified by Frances Burney in her 1775 diary (8).
[46] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History*, ed. David Sorensen and Brent Kinser (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2013), 75. Subsequent citations appear parenthetically.

> falsehoods, but is himself a falsehood. The rational moral principle, spark of the Divinity, is sunk deep in him, in quiet paralysis of life-death. The very falsehoods of Mahomet are truer than the truths of such a man. He is the insincere man: smooth-polished, respectable in some times and places; inoffensive, says nothing harsh to anybody; most *cleanly*,—just as carbonic acid is, which is death and poison. (73)

Dilettantism, as Carlyle describes it, is unmanly, coquettish, and capable of perverting a healthy masculine soul. It flirts with knowledge but doesn't command it and thereby renders its practitioner himself false. An "insincere man," the dilettante lacks morality and becomes a symbol of a false and hardly lived existence. Dilettantism, as Carlyle conceives it, is the gravest sin a man might commit.

Carlyle demands our attention because social historians of Victorian professionalism such as Harold Perkin and Daniel Duman have discerned how the very concept of the modern professional was born as a result and critique of industrial society and entrepreneurialism.[47] As professionalism came to prominence at midcentury, its ideologies had a central role in the consolidation of middle-class morals; as one Victorian writer put it in 1857, "The importance of the professions, and the professional classes can scarcely be over-rated, they form the head of the great English middle class, maintain its tone of independence, keep up to the mark its standard of morality, and direct its intelligence."[48] Thomson's tract was intended to be a guide to the

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[47] Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (London: Routledge, 1989), xii. Subsequent citations appear parenthetically in the text.

[48] Henry Byerley Thomson, *The Choice of a Profession: A Concise Account and Comparative Review of the English Professions* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1857), 5.

professions for the parents of young men,[49] who might have struggled to outfit their child for the perfect livelihood as the nineteenth century added more and more vocations to the category of professional, which had traditionally applied only to the clergy and practitioners of the law and medicine.[50] Thomson, for example, outlines the classical "liberal professions" and those of science, art, education, acting, writing, and teaching as worthy of the consideration of concerned parents.

The flourishing of the professions created, according to Perkin, "an enormous expansion" of professional societies through the end of the century that revealed, in his famous phrase, "a maverick fourth class" of British citizen (20, 166). The denigration of dilettantism by Victorian writers like Lehmann reveals the extent to which the popular press participated in consolidating a middle-class "standard of morality," which Victorian professionalism helped to inculcate.[51] Professional morality, according to Daniel Duman, was "a unique ideology based on the concept of service as a moral imperative."[52] For Perkin, the services rendered extended to nearly all of the Victorian public: "With the coming of industrial society […], the professions proliferated, their clients multiplied and, in certain cases […] the client became in effect the whole

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[49] Professionals were mostly men at midcentury, though Nightingale opened her School for Nurses in 1860 as medicine continued to professionalize.

[50] William Joseph Reader, *Professional Men: The Rise of the Professional Classes in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Basic Books, 1966), 23.

[51] In what is perhaps one of the most influential reading of Dickens and professional ideology, Mary Poovey shows how *David Copperfield* fashions David as a meritorious professional only at the expense of others; though professionalism seemed to be a moral alternative to the self-interest of enterprise, represented for Poovey by Uriah's cupidity, it is, of course, fundamentally still a technology of the market. See "*David Copperfield* and the Professional Writer," in *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988), 89-125.

[52] Daniel Duman, "The Creation and Diffusion of Professional Ideology in Nineteenth Century England," *The Sociological Review* 27, no. 1 (Feb. 1979): 113-38, 114.

community" (117). Through this expansiveness, professionalism instituted a Procrustean moral system buttressed by the Victorian sacralization of work.

For these social historians, the Victorian period witnesses the eclipse of the Industrial Revolution's entrepreneurial ideal of the self-made man driven by capital and competition by a novel, "professional ideal": "The professional ideal was based on trained experience and selection by merit, a selection made not by the open market but by the judgment of similarly educated experts" (Perkin xiii). The rise of the Civil Service exam testifies, for Reader, how the professional ideal democratized Victorian vocations: "Between 1855 and 1875 the old official world of patronage, purchase, nepotism, and interest was turned upside down" by university reform.[53] Part of the promise of professionalism was its standardization of achievement: a professional proves his worth not only by adopting and mimicking the protocols of his chosen field but also through formal training. In this scheme, standardization leaves little room for idiosyncrasy; professionalism promised to be a costume of practices and procedures that could adorn any Victorian man. According to the social historians, the professional ideal was so successfully suffused throughout Victorian society that Perkin even attributes the late-century appeal of Fabianism and Marxism as the "logical extension of the professional critique to the abolition of capitalist society altogether" (123). The new professional ideal merged, according to Duman, "the concept of the gentleman with the necessity to work for a living" and thus elided the double-bind of an industrialist like John Thornton who struggles to appear gentlemanly in

[53] Reader, *Professional Men*, 98. Recently, Albert Pionke has followed this train of thought to uncover the importance of rituals and ceremonies like examinations to Victorian professionalism. Where other scholars have traced professionalism ascendancy ideologically, Pionke remains focused on actual lived nineteenth-century practice. See *The Ritual Culture of Victorian Professionals: Competing for Ceremonial Status, 1838-1877* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013).

North and South.[54] In effect, the professional ideal collapsed both masculinity and morality into a single Victorian ideology, and it was, in this triumphal account, astoundingly successful. According to Susan Colón, by 1880, "the growing hegemony of professionals had become readily observable in most if not all areas of social leadership."[55]

Over the last ten years, however, literary critics like Colón have questioned the reliability of Perkin's account by exploring the complications of professional ideology in midcentury fiction. Colón, for example, interrogates Perkin's triumphal account of the professional ideal by showing how the Victorian novel participates in "a nascent culture of professional self-critique" (4). She illustrates how midcentury professionalism was a contest between "idealist notions of service and character" and an almost Benthamite material efficiency (14). Jennifer Ruth also seeks to reveal a more complex Victorian professionalism than the social historians allow; unconvinced by critical readings that consider professionalism a ruse of capitalism that promises freedom but instead circumscribes the subject under greater ideological surveillance, Ruth argues that professionalism might rather be "a dialectic—that is, a position that works both ways, enabling but also destabilizing the system in which it functions."[56] More recently, Mariaconcetta Costantini has shown how the sensation novel similarly participated in the deconstruction and reconceptualization of professionals as figures of modernization.[57] Together these critics reveal professionalism to be a category very much under construction and debate in Victorian fiction; it

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[54] Duman, "Creation and Diffusion," 114.
[55] Susan E. Colón, *The Professional Ideal in the Victorian Novel: The Works of Disraeli, Trollope, Gaskell, and Eliot* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 1. Subsequent references appear parenthetically.
[56] Jennifer Ruth, *Novel Professions: Interested Disinterest and the Making of the Professional in the Victorian Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 2006), 22.
[57] Mariaconcetta Costantini, *Sensation and Professionalism in the Victorian Novel* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015), 14.

is an unstable ideological formation. To an extent then, *Exquisite Amateurs* certainly follows their lead to discover Victorian ways of theorizing against the professional ideal.

Though she does not share Carlyle's *Sturm und Drang,* George Eliot too interrogates amateurism as a practice of life. In *Middlemarch* (1871-2)*,* though his earnest dilettantism is a source of unwitting attraction for the just-married Dorothea in Italy, Will must earn his independence from her husband by settling into the editorship of the *Pioneer*. After a favorable comparison of Will's work to that of Edmund Burke, Mr. Brooke inspires the young man to take stock of his position: "he was beginning thoroughly to like the work […] and studied the political situation with as ardent an interest as he had ever given to poetic metres or mediævalism." Eliot notes that but for his desire to be near Dorothea, Will would otherwise be rambling through Italy, experimenting noncommittally with his art, and "observing that, after all, self-culture was the principal point." Eliot's narrator seizes the moment to rhapsodize on the benefits of a profession: "Our sense of duty must often wait for some work which shall take the place of dilettantism and make us feel that the quality of our action is not a matter of indifference."[58] For Eliot, amateurism signals a lack of development; it results from a purposelessness that might be corrected by work which awakens a responsibility for others—a kind of labor Will assumes at the close of the novel as a parliamentarian for reform. Because dilettantism is a practice of individual and not social development, Eliot shows that it is always "a matter of indifference" to the larger community.

Yet, as Ruth and Colón lead us to understand, it's difficult to square *Middlemarch*'s ideology with a triumphant professionalism, for the novel surveys many failures of vocation. Casaubon's "persevering devoted labour" does not lead to success (and is certainly also "a matter

[58] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 286.

of indifference" to nearly everyone but the young Dorothea), and Lydgate's aspirations as a medical researcher are only imperfectly fulfilled before his early death.[59] Thus, the professional ideal enumerated by the social historians has an ambiguous relationship with the midcentury novel. *Bleak House* (1852-3) too is hardly an unrepentant celebration of professionalism; Chancery is a glut of professional malfeasance. Yet Esther reserves a special contempt for the "mere amateur" Harold Skimpole, the unrepentant parasite of John Jarndyce and Richard Carstone. When Jarndyce first introduces Skimpole to his wards, he calls him "the finest creature upon earth—a child" and goes on to tell Richard, "He is a musical man, an amateur, but might have been a professional. He is an artist too, an amateur, but might have been a professional. He is a man of attainments and of captivating manners. He has been unfortunate in his affairs, and unfortunate in his pursuits, and unfortunate in his family; but he don't care—he's a child!"[60] Jarndyce cannot see Skimpole's feigned ignorance as a scam for patronage. He feeds Richard to Vholes for £5, sells out Jo to Bucket, and lets his family live in ruin while his own apartments are "a palace to the rest of the house" (529). In *Bleak House*, Skimpole's amateurism is a camouflage for idleness and self-interest.

To be sure, the midcentury novel is not univocally an engine of professional ideology, but the development of characters like Will Ladslaw or Robert Audley reveals dilettantism as a phase that must be outgrown before the young men become successfully mature adults. At the beginning of *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), Braddon introduces her protagonist as a "man who would never get on in the world":

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[59] Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 132.
[60] Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), 64. Subsequent references appear parenthetically.

> Robert Audley was supposed to be a barrister. As a barrister was his name inscribed in the law-list; as a barrister he had chambers in Figtree Court, Temple; as a barrister he had eaten the allotted number of dinners, which form the sublime ordeal through which the forensic aspirant wades on to fame and fortune. If these things can make a man a barrister, Robert Audley decidedly was one. But he had never either had a brief, or tried to get a brief, or even wished to have a brief in all those five years, during which his name had been painted upon one of the doors in Figtree Court. He was a handsome, lazy, care-for-nothing fellow, of about seven-and-twenty.[61]

Robert reads French novels, smokes from finely-wrought foreign pipes, and only feigns an interest in his work; he is a perfect dilettante. But, once the mystery of his friend's disappearance leads him to ferret out the truth of his aunt's former marriage, he eventually assumes the roles of not only detective but also "her judge" and "her gaoler" (382). At the end of the novel, having followed Clara's advice to "read hard and think seriously of his profession," Robert becomes "a rising man" in the legal world and "has distinguished himself in the great breach of promise case of *Hobbs v. Nobbs*" (437, 445). More importantly, he relinquishes his books and pipes to assume the role of successful husband and professional man. Notably, literary critics have examined the novel too as Robert's evolution from homosocial or even queer bonds to heterosexual maturity. [62] The *Bildung* of sensation and midcentury fiction largely collapses

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[61] Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), 32; hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

[62] See Ann Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings: Feminism, Mass Culture, and Victorian Sensationalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1992); Jennifer S. Kushnier, "Educating Boys To Be Queer: Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 30, no. 1 (2002): 61-75; and Richard Nemesvari, "Robert Audley's Secret: Male Homosocial Desire in *Lady Audley's Secret*," *Studies in the Novel* 27, no 4 (Winter 1995): 515-28.

both sexual and professional development simultaneously. In each of these cases, amateurism is a kind of immaturity—one that Will and Robert evolve out of and Skimpole tries to maintain for patronage. Dilettantism is either embryonic or duplicitous.

By privileging the amateur ideal in aestheticism, I'm offering a theory that creates some friction with significant critical accounts. Jonathan Freedman, for example, posits that aestheticism may be "the highest form of professionalism" in its desire to define and share "an esoteric form of knowledge … [with] an awed but appreciative public."[63] For Freedman, the aesthete's critique of capitalism and enterprise dovetails neatly with the professional's polite reaction against entrepreneurialism. Similarly, Regenia Gagnier has shown how a sympathy between aestheticism and the marginal revolution in economics, which created a relative theory of value based on personal utility and desire, implicates the aesthete in a broader cultural shift of consumerism, buttressed doubtlessly by middle-class economic power enabled by the rise of the professions.[64] More locally, Amanda Anderson has theorized Wilde and dandyism as the epitome of "certain distancing effects of modernity, including the overvaluing and misapplication of scientific method as well as the forms of alienation and rootlessness that accompanied modern disenchantment, industrialization, and the globalization of commerce."[65] For Anderson, the Wildean epigram, detachable from its position in a Society Comedy and translatable to a multitude of other contexts, symbolizes Wilde's overall socially withdrawn cosmopolitanism.

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[63] Jonathan Freedman, *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990), 55.
[64] Regenia Gagnier, *The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000).
[65] Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), 4. Subsequent references appear parenthetically.

These critics historicize the aesthete as the epitome of late-century professional and consumer culture. Still, even Freedman does acknowledge aestheticism's "contradictory responses to professionalism."[66] And Anderson deftly acknowledges how many Victorians themselves were "wary of the distancing effects of modernity."[67] For me, it's important to recognize these contradictions because it seems unfair to reduce the aesthetic critique of Victorian culture to a savvy professional, capitalist move. We cannot fail to remember that professionalism itself was an ideological site for the construction and regulation of Victorian genders, normalizing categories that FitzGerald, Pater, and Wilde all variously struggled against.[68] If we allow ourselves to take Victorians at their own words rather than commit ourselves to a "hermeneutics of suspicion" that presumes we know them better than they know themselves, we can follow Eve Sedgwick's axiomatic call to avoid a paranoid interpretive practice that, in the service of demystification, instead ends up "[growing] like a crystal in a hypersaturated solution, blotting out any sense of the possibility of alternative ways of understanding."[69] Tuning in to what Victorians themselves tell us can allow us to build a reparative practice that attends, in Sedgwick's famous words, to "the many ways selves and

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[66] Freedman, *Professions of Taste*, 58.
[67] Anderson, *Powers of Distance*, 4.
[68] Freedman contends that Pater's pedagogical position confirms his professionalism, but, as I illustrate in Chapter 2, this is not so simply the case. Pater had a very vexed relationship with Oxford over his career. Perkin, for one, believes that the most influential figure in the professionalization of Victorian culture was "a new type of don, secular, career-oriented, married and in close contact with the world outside the ivory tower" (124), but Pater doesn't so clearly fit into this model.
[69] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2003), 131. To be sure, Anderson also positions her argument against a hermeneutics of suspicion and acknowledges the "incoherences" of nineteenth-century critical examinations of "ideal forms of detachment" (4), and in her discussion of Wilde, she reveals a more nuanced "alternative movement" against critical objectivity: "Wilde's ideal of detachment may pretend to be the view from nowhere but is clearly invested in specific social sites nonetheless" (159).

communities succeed in extracting sustenance from the objects of a culture—even of a culture whose avowed desire has often been not to sustain them."[70] Certainly, we may understand amateurism as both a technology of the market *and* a strategy of resistance. Ideology is never simple and rarely unidirectional, and, though aestheticism certainly has tendencies of professional and capitalist elitism, we cannot afford to overlook its critique of professionalism and the vectors through which it attempted to police Victorian gender and sexuality.

Queer amateurism as I define it models a hermeneutics of absorption completely at odds with the professional pose of disinterestedness, interrogated most insightfully by Anderson. As Symonds's belief that art "gave form" to his innermost desires testifies, aestheticism could be a practice of self-discovery and surrender to the power of a work of art. In the Conclusion to *The Renaissance*, Pater calls for a radical subjectivism completely opposed to the professional requirements of abstract, objectified knowledge, for it is indeed the practice of professionalism which creates a "stereotyped world" where knowledge has been objectified into a commodity that any lawyer, teacher, or literary historian might acquire with the proper training. In response, Pater tells us that "meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike" (189). Pater indicts professionalism, in its attempt to create a standard of similarity, as a failure of imaginative vision and discrimination. To the extent that it inhibits a radical individualism by turning its practitioners into similar agents of a systematized professional practice, professionalism perverts the radical promise of aesthetic subjectivity. If we take Pater at his word that "failure is to form habits," it becomes inordinately difficult to consider his project as one in step with professionalization, and we can see how an amateur ideal unleashes imaginative spaces for abnormal practices and epistemologies that today we call queer.

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[70] Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 150-51.

III. "Lodgers in Queer Street": Victorian Dilettantism and Queer Theory

Contemporary developments in queer theory have helped me understand the critical implications of amateurism. This is hardly surprising, since, as professionalism gained traction over the course of the century, amateurism seemed to look more and more like a process out-of-synch with nineteenth-century modernity. As a critical project, queer theory has worked to unpack hegemonies and interrogate the category of normal, even in the critical profession. Because, as *Punch*'s column makes clear, the dilettante was a figure of abnormality that betrayed normalizing processes of sociability, professionalization, and mature heterosexuality, queer theory has been a useful theoretical foundation for this project. To the extent that FitzGerald, Pater, and Wilde also interrogate the hegemony of the normal, we might even consider them queer theorists *avant la lettre*. Of course, nineteenth-century literature has been a central site where some of the most influential texts in what would become queer theory staked their claims, and Sedgwick's foundational work in *Between Men* and *Epistemology of the Closet* has licensed a body of scholarship to which I hope, in these pages, to testify my intellectual debt and gratefulness.

Tellingly, this dissertation was originally about queer temporalities, and, although I changed course to trace the queer figure of the dilettante, temporality remains an underlying concern throughout the chapters. Most centrally, *Exquisite Amateurs* has been crucially inspired by medievalist Carolyn Dinshaw's recent work on nineteenth-century amateurs. In *How Soon Is Now?,* Dinshaw follows the temporal turn in twenty-first-century queer studies that she helped to instantiate and critiques the temporal regimes of modernity to theorize a chaotic, dense, and multiple *now* that's glimpsed in amateur readings of medieval texts. Along the way, she offers a

convincing reading of amateurism's queerness in relation to modern programs of professionalization and their normative temporal orders, what she calls "regimes of detachment governed by uniform, measured temporality." For Dinshaw, queer and amateur "are mutually reinforcing terms."[71] Dinshaw's dilettantes offer a paradigm of epistemologies that "are derived not only from positions of detachment but also—remembering the etymology of *ama*teur—from positions of affect and attachment, from desires to build another kind of world" (6). Citing Bruno Latour and Max Weber, Dinshaw reveals professionalism as a foundational technology of the modern; buttressed by claims of scientism and regulated by strict adherence to clock-time and career milestones, professionalism became "the engine of modernity—a vehicle of the modernist settlement—with time as its linchpin, and 'beautiful humanity' as its cost" (21). Attuned to the ways in which her argument might seem "purely idealizing," Dinshaw stresses that amateurs are "not miraculously free of the shaping institutions of modernity" but distinguishes nonetheless how they "can help us to contemplate different ways of being, knowing, and world making" (24-5). Dinshaw's work provides the foundation for this project, and it's easy to suppose how an amateur medievalist like FitzGerald would fit neatly into her study. Her focus on temporality, moreover, and amateurism's ability to make the present resonate with a past certainly inform the way I understand the historical projects of FitzGerald, Pater, and Wilde.

Each of the texts examined in this project is deeply involved in temporal critique, which may be illuminated by current queer thinking. The *Rubáiyát*, *The Renaissance*, and *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.* all return to the past to enliven the present. Linda Dowling writes convincingly of

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[71] Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2012), 5. Subsequent references appear parenthetically.

Pater and Wilde's participation in "the liberal spirit of Victorian culture," a spirit which, she illustrates, mines models of the past for contemporary rejuvenation.[72] For Dowling, Pater and Wilde participate in a Victorian aestheticism that attempts the revitalization of a stagnant culture through the socially redemptive power of art. By linking them with earlier aesthetes like Arnold, Ruskin and Morris, Dowling identifies a cultural ideal of "aesthetic democracy" though she fails to account for the queerness of this project in the later authors' hands.[73] For Pater and Wilde, the Renaissance is not only a vital cultural awakening but also a period that licensed intense homoerotic friendships, and, by deploying it critically, they follow a pattern of thought that in a queer critical rubric might be considered utopian: "queerness [is] a temporal arrangement in which the past is a field of possibility in which subjects can act in the present in the service of a new futurity."[74] Jose Muñoz's theorization of the utopianism of queer thinking aligns with Pater and Wilde's attempts to carve a space for sexual permissiveness and acknowledge the intellectual seriousness of sensuality. Because Muñoz theorizes queerness as a horizon to which we might orient ourselves but to which we may never actually arrive, it's easy to apply his theory to the past. If "we have never been queer," in Muñoz's words, but might still deploy queer thinking, then why, one wonders, couldn't FitzGerald, Pater, or Wilde?[75]

Similarly, as I've already hinted, Halberstam's thinking about the queer valences and affects of failure certainly informs my own conceptualization of these texts. The *Rubáiyát* is a catalog of multiple failings and a bibulous, anarchic resignation of worldly success as a style of

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[72] Linda Dowling, *The Vulgarization of Art* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1996), xi.
[73] Dowling's earlier work on homosocial classicism at Oxford, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 2, provides a much more nuanced account of the sexual politics of this project.
[74] Jose Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The There and Then of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 16.
[75] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.

life, and *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.* highlights a series of failed intellectual transmissions. Moreover, Heather Love has traced Pater's thematization of retreat, what he terms "the moment" of "delicious recoil" in the Conclusion, as his refusal to adapt to an emergent social model of same-sexuality (Pater 186).[76] Failure, retreat, and tentativeness are essential amateur tropes for the writers and texts I examine here. If we wanted to pursue their correspondence to contemporary queer theory even further, we might see how these nineteenth-century authors' various handlings of failure, and fatalism, similarly correspond with Lee Edelman's call to reject "reproductive futurism" in *No Future*; Edelman theorizes a radical queer resistance to a Symbolic order of capitalist and heteronormative futurity.[77] FitzGerald, certainly, who rebukes the promises of the future for the immediate pleasures of the moment, articulates a materialist philosophy of immediacy not unlike Edelman's.

It's worth acknowledging these similarities to recognize that the interrogation of the normal, particularly through the study of art, was not an invention of late twentieth- and early twenty-first century ingenuity. The Victorian writers I examine in *Exquisite Amateurs* also positioned their critical thinking against the moralizing and normalizing pull of professionalized modernity. Queer theory has been an invaluable foundation for the conceptualization of this project, but it's been important for me to recognize that many of its central axioms, if indeed we allow it to have them, are not unique to their own cultural moment but bespeak a combativeness against normality, or Philistinism in Victorian parlance, that history has forced many to recognize. For this reason, my chapters do not linger on these theories, or try to compare

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[76] Heather Love, "Forced Exile: Walter Pater's Backward Modernism," in *Touching Feeling*: *Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2007), 53-71.
[77] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2004), 2.

Victorian writers' ideas exactingly to our current queer critique.[78] This is perhaps my own amateur move, one that hopes my reader will see how the *Rubáiyát* might touch *The Queer Art of Failure* without an explicit comparative analysis.

Chapter One, "Dilettante Faggots" examines how FitzGerald's translation of the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* not only promulgates an anti-professional ethos but applies it even to the ends of the lover by cultivating a kind of amateur sexuality—an erotics at odds with both the professional definitions of a nascent sexological discourse and also the very terms upon which sexual orientations themselves are constructed. FitzGerald eroticizes the dust and the dirt as the material remains of antecedent lovers and imagines a sexless network of promiscuously intertwining matter; the poem turns from the protocols of worldly (and conventionally amatory) success for the amateur pleasures of "A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse—and Thou."[79] Chapter Two, "Exquis Amateurs" examines how Pater celebrates an ideal of amateurism as a knowledge practice of greater accuracy and generosity than pedagogical professionalism as it was being implemented at Oxford. Pater faced the cold moralism of professionalization as he jockeyed for position at Brasenose, and this experience led him to conceptualize a powerful, bodily epistemology represented by his intellectual heroes Abelard and Winckelmann, both of whom Pater uses to espouse, anachronistically, an ethical rejection of professionalized education. Chapter Three, "Ars Amoris, Amor Artis," turns to Wilde's short novel *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.* as a critique of literary discourse as it professionalized around the study of Shakespeare. Wilde loathed the distanced and professionally detached critical apparatus of Shakespeare studies

[78] With the obvious exception of Chapter 2, which explains FitzGerald in relation to queer amateurism as Dinshaw defines it.
[79] Edward FitzGerald, Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám: A Critical Edition, edited by Christopher Decker (Charlotteville, Univ. of Virginia Press, 1997), 1859, IX.

which he felt handled the *Sonnets* like "consols, or any other business investments" and offers instead a critical hermeneutics of absorption that has a power to remake and remodel the dilettante who adopts it.[80] Together, these chapters show how FitzGerald, Pater, and Wilde responded to their professionalizing world by creating and revising a queer ideal of dilettantism, and Lehmann's reactionary column in the pages of *Punch* registers their success.

[80] Charles Ricketts, *Recollections of Oscar Wilde* (London: Pallas Athene, 2011), 41.

CHAPTER 2

'DILETTANTE FAGGOTS': FITZGERALD, THE *RUBÁIYÁT*, AND QUEER AMATEURISM

> I believe I love poetry almost as much as ever: but then I have been suffered to doze all these years in the enjoyment of old childish habits and sympathies, without being called on to more active and serious duties of life. I have not put away childish things, though a man. But, at the same time, this visionary inactivity is better than the mischievous activity of so many I see about me.
>
> -E. FitzGerald to John Allen, 9 March 1850

I. The Amateur *Rubáiyát*

Promoting his own "authentic" translation of Omar Khayyám's quatrains in 1968, Robert Graves slandered Edward FitzGerald, the poem's Victorian translator and popularizer, as a "dilettante faggot" whose work shouldn't be trusted.[1] Graves believed he had access to an earlier manuscript of the quatrains, though literary scholars soon revealed he had instead been taken in by a forgery orchestrated by the Sufi mystic Omar Ali-Shah. To make matters worse for Graves, the forged manuscript was itself cultivated from a commentary published by the Persian enthusiast Edward Heron-Allen, who in 1899 had published FitzGerald's fifth edition with, on the opposite page, "the Persian script of the *ruba'i,* half-*ruba'i* or *ruba'iyat*, which he believed had inspired FitzGerald's translation."[2] Unfortunately for Graves, the forgery should have been obvious, since the Bodleian and Calcutta manuscripts of verse attributed to Khayyám presented

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[1] *The Daily Telegraph*, March 25, 1968; qtd. in John Charles Edward Bowen, *Translation or Travesty: An enquiry into Robert Graves's version of some Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (Abingdon: The Abbey Press, 1973), 15.
[2] Bowen, *Translation or Travesty,* 2.

their quatrains organized by the Persian precedent of alphabetic rhyme, which listed the quatrains alphabetically according to the last letter of each stanza's first rhyming word, but the forged document followed FitzGerald's imposed diurnal order, which begins with the cry to "Awake!" and closes with "The Moon of Heav'n."[3] Not realizing how derivative of FitzGerald's work his translation indeed was, Graves grandiloquently titled his edition, which he released with Doubleday in 1968, *The Original Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam.*

Yet, Graves's defamation of FitzGerald is revelatory, for it suggests how the perceived shortcomings of FitzGerald's rendition, if not exclusively his character, are both amateur and homoerotic. Indeed, Graves was correct to perceive the same-sex entanglements of FitzGerald's verse, for as Dick Davis has pointed out, the cast of characters in FitzGerald's poem appears to be entirely male.[4] Long before he had thought of publishing even a few of the quatrains in *Fraser'*s, FitzGerald had boasted to Tennyson that he had been reading "some curious Infidel and Epicurean Tetrastichs" by a Persian "as savage against Destiny, etc., as Manfred," an observation which obliquely codes his reading of Khayyám with the obscure sexual crimes of the Byronic hero.[5] Before attempting the poem in English, FitzGerald had translated it first into "Monkish Latin" for which he uses masculine forms to connote the speaker's cup-bearer and beloved.[6] The second-person "Thou" of FitzGerald's English versions obscures what the verses'

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[3] Edward FitzGerald, *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám: A Critical Edition*, edited by Christopher Decker (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1997), 1859, I; 1859, LXXIV. Subsequent citations appear parenthetically in the text.

[4] Dick Davis, introduction to *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), 30-31.

[5] Edward FitzGerald to Alfred Tennyson, Woodbridge, 15 July 1856, in *The Letters of Edward FitzGerald*, edited by Alfred and Annabelle Terhune, 4 vols. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980), II: 234. Cited hereafter as *Letters*.

[6] See Erik Gray, "Common and Queer: Syntax and Sexuality in the *Rubáiyát*" in *FitzGerald's* Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám: *Popularity and Neglect*, edited by Adrian Poole, Christine Van Ruymbeke, William H. Martin, and Sandra Mason (London: Anthem Press, 2011), 33 and esp. fn

1867 French translator J.B. Nicolas called "revolting sensualities which I refrain from translating," and the gender of the Persian male beloved fades into second-person, English indeterminacy.[7] In response, Graves's reconstitution of "the original rubaiyyat" straightens out the queerer, ambiguous moments of FitzGerald's verse: "some once lovely Head" (1859, XVIII) of FitzGerald's first version transforms into "some lovely girls" in Graves's hands,[8] and the "Angel Shape" of a cupbearer (1859, XLII), admittedly FitzGerald's own poetic innovation,[9] becomes a tedious "old man" and "fellow toper."[10] Graves's "original" version required a sanitization of the more homophile moments of FitzGerald's verse and rewrote its ambiguities to tally with mid-twentieth-century homophobia. The changes are regrettable, for, as Erik Gray discusses regarding popular illustrations that re-gendered the poem's cup-bearer or beloved as female, "something crucial is lost when all of the poem's erotic charge is automatically read as heterosexual—a sense of radical questioning of the world and its assumptions."[11]

Yet, of course, FitzGerald didn't print his Latin quatrains (though he very coyly shared them with Edward Cowell, his young married friend and Persian tutor), and he instead selected the ambiguity of a second-person address. The text's uncertainty is productive, for it opens up the poem to enjoyment from readers of multiple erotic investments. Certainly, early critics like Charles Eliot Norton, who celebrated the "manly independence" of Omar in a review which

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29. The Latin quatrains themselves are included in Decker's critical edition of the poem: see, in particular, Quatrains III and XV which refer to the cup-bearer as "*Sáki mî*," and Quatrains X, XIII, XXV, and XXVI which refer to the beloved as "*dilecte mî.*" See also the first Latin quatrain, in which the speaker addresses his auditor as "*Frater*." Edward Fitzgerald, "Fitzgerald's Latin Translation," second appendix to *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, ed. Decker (Charlottesville, Univ. of Virginia Press, 1997), 234-35.

[7] Qtd. in Robert Graves, "The Cult of Fitz-Omar" in *The Original Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayaam* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), 22.

[8] Graves, *The Original Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayaam*, 53.

[9] See A. J. Arberry, *The Romance of the Rubáiyát* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 21-22.

[10] Graves, *The Original Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayaam*, 64.

[11] Gray, "Common and Queer," 36.

bequeathed the poem to the heirs of American transcendentalsim while elevating it above literal translations, might balk at the suggestion of same-sex eroticism in the verse,[12] and the turn-of-the-century Omar Khayyam Club likewise anticipated Graves by asserting the female sex of the cupbearer in numerous illustrations; indeed, the figure pictured on one early menu in particular eroticizes Omar's call to "[F]ill the Cup" by visualizing the eager, bearded face of Khayyám eclipsed by the bare breast of a female cupbearer (XXXVII, See FIG 1). Conversely, other contemporaneous readers easily grasped the poem's homoerotic engagements. For instance, Gray has demonstrated that Oscar Wilde, flirting with a young correspondent, linked the poem with Shakespeare's sonnets and his own short fiction *The Portrait of Mr W.H.*[13] Yet the tendency to heterosexualize the poem still exists today, even in queerly engaged scholarly discourse. Joseph Allen Boone's brief mention of FitzGerald's translation in his fascinating 2014 study *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*, for example, demonstrates the facility with which the poem has become shorthand for "the triad 'wine, *women,* and song.'"[14] These various appraisals point out the importance of acknowledging the ambiguities of FitzGerald's verse. The poem is both queer and not at all; it facilitates the multiple desires of its readers.

One aim of this chapter, then, is to showcase how the poem resists placement in an easily discernable sexual category. The radical nature of the poem's erotics is neither the open secret of homophilia or a scandalous heterosexuality; rather, the *Rubáiyát* presents a fantasy of an

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[12] Qtd. in Vinnie-Marie D'Ambrosio, *Eliot Possessed* (New York: NYU Press, 1989), p. 50. For a deft examination of Norton's own development from "typical 'amateur'" to professional man of letters, see Marjorie Garber, *Academic Instincts* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), 16-18.

[13] Gray, "Common and Queer," 31.

[14] Joseph Allen Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2014), p. 287.

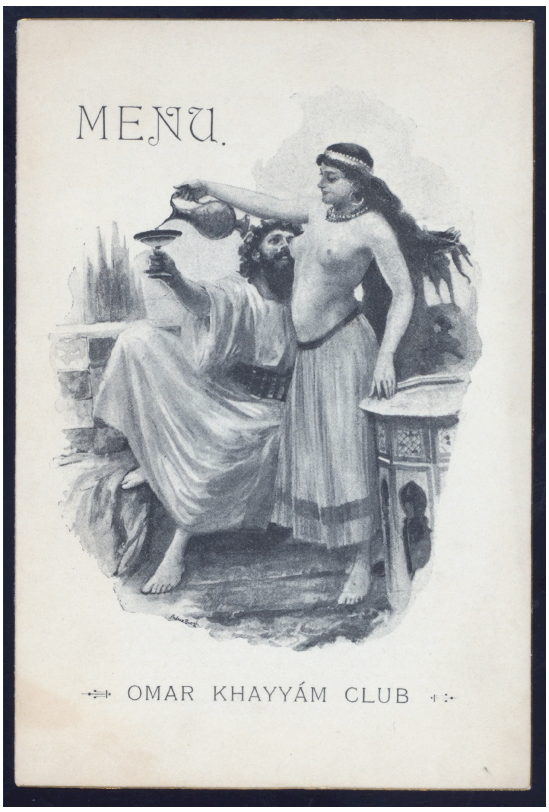

Figure 2
The Omar Khayyam Club, Menu, 27 January 1893. Reproduced in *The Book of the Omar Khayyám* Club 1892-1910. London, Printed for the members for private circulation, 1901. Many thanks to the Interlibrary Loan Staff at UGA for retrieving a copy from the special collections at Brigham Young University.

eroticism unencumbered by sexual designation. Sexual contact in the poem is nearly always mediated across the veil of death—the great equalizer of sexual difference—allowing the poem to fantasize corporeal connections without sexual classification. The poem eroticizes the dust of antecedent partners, urging readers to find delight in an impossible, phantasmic connection to the past and thereby scrambling simultaneously both gay and straight readings. As the second-person address levels the playing field semantically, the poem's uncanny erotics imagine an unknowable, sexless network of intertwining matter that rebuffs attempts to identify the poem's homo- or heterosexual structures of meaning. In the *Rubáiyát*, sex simply leaves the equation when erotic contact involves the promiscuous intermingling of material remains.

But Graves not only disparaged FitzGerald's purported sexual preferences in the *Daily Telegraph*; he also condemned the earlier author as a "dilettante." By 1967, Robert Graves was the twentieth-century equivalent of a literary lion. He was an accomplished poet, and his novel *I, Claudius* had enjoyed thirty years of success, while his celebrated "historical grammar of poetic myth," *The White Goddess* was over two decades old. In his long life, he published over 140 works. His productivity leads him to disparage FitzGerald in the opening essay of his translation as "incapable of writing first-class original work" (an absurd observation to any student of FitzGerald's letters) and to take a rather pedantic view of some of the earlier author's more figurative formations; he notes at one point that medieval Persians were not interested "in the sepulchres of Roman Caesars" and that "Nor do *buried* Caesars bleed."[15] Graves's approach to publishing characterizes him as a professional man of letters, against FitzGerald's more lackadaisical method, revealed, perhaps, by his publisher, the antiquarian bookseller Bernard Quaritch, having practically to beg for a third edition of the *Rubáiyát* in 1872 as he witnessed pirated American versions gain readers while his own second edition of 1868 sold out.[16] This difference between the two writers echoes one Anna Barton has elucidated in her consideration of FitzGerald and Tennyson's correspondence; Barton argues that in contrast to the laureate's scant private communication, FitzGerald's robust correspondence reveals his "nostalgic commitment" to an amateur literary tradition of manuscripts and personal criticism that flies in

[15] Graves, "The Cult of Fitz-Omar," 11, 12.
[16] Iran B. Hassani Jewett, "The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám" in *Edward Fitzgerald's* The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám, edited by Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), 39.

the face of the modern, professional world of print navigated so forcefully by his accomplished friend.[17]

Indeed, Fitzgerald himself acknowledged and seemed to cultivate his status as amateur. He had a comfortable income after his parents' deaths and welcomed his retired Suffolk life of reading, boating, and occasionally publishing, and his insistence on the anonymity of the four editions of Khayyám's verse—and many of his other works—suggests his ambivalence about becoming a professional writer. In his characteristically modest correspondence, he once referred forthrightly to his *Agamemnon* as "Dilettantism" in a note to Carlyle's niece,[18] and Carlyle himself, having discovered his friend's authorship of the *Rubáiyát,* wrote to Charles Eliot Norton of FitzGerald's "innocent, *far niente* life."[19] Moreover, FitzGerald frequently reported his own "idleness" to correspondents, occasionally in paradoxical turns of phrase, like the closing of one letter to his lifelong friend George Crabbe, grandson of the poet: "Adieu. These long Letters prove one's Idleness."[20] And he even admitted to his literary executor William Aldis Wright, upon the latter's request for copies of his works for the Trinity College library, that he was "a little ashamed of having made my leisure and idleness the means of putting myself forward in print." His publications were merely "small Escapades in print," "nice little things" next to the grander achievements of his friends Tennyson, Thackeray, and Carlyle.[21] Such modesty has encouraged both an early biographer to name him "essentially an amateur" and

[17] Anna Jane Barton, "Letters, Scraps of Manuscript, and Printed Poems: The Correspondence of Edward FitzGerald and Alfred Tennyson," *Victorian Poetry* 46, 1 (Spring 2008): 19.
[18] *Letters*, 3:630.
[19] *Letters*, 3:418.
[20] *Letters*, 2:403.
[21] *Letters*, 3:119.

more recent FitzGerald scholars like Dick Davis himself to christen the writer "an obscure dilettante."[22]

Yet, FitzGerald cultivated not only his own character as dilettantish but Khayyám's as well; as he elucidates in his Preface, his version of the historical Khayyám is the ideal amateur, one who didn't seek "title or office" from a visit to the Vizier but instead committed himself to the indiscriminate endeavor of "winning knowledge of every kind" (4-5). Indeed, FitzGerald suggests, "Perhaps he liked a little Farming too" and may have "at one time exercised [the tent-making] trade" (5). Even his philosophy, which FitzGerald observes earned a more robust treatment from Lucretius, seems welcomingly dilettantish in its neglect to form "any such laborious System" as that of the earlier writer (8). This catholicity renders Khayyám virtually unintelligible to a midcentury, professional ethos. Though FitzGerald does admit that Khayyám's mathematic learning may indeed have been "the Work and Event of his Life," he sabotages the seriousness of this claim by identifying, in his footnote to stanza XLI, Khayyám's "Laugh at his Mathematics perhaps" (5, 22). FitzGerald's sketch of Khayyám jibes with current historical knowledge. The Iranian writer Ali Dashti, for example, observes that "contemporary writers who knew Khayyam do not speak of him as a poet and certainly quote none of his verse" and notes, more to the point, that clearly "Omar Khayyam was not a 'professional' poet, not a poet first and foremost."[23] Moreover, the quatrains we have inherited may not be so definitively the written product of a single author as much as a collection of verses, multiply authored, in the style of one famous practitioner. According to Christopher Decker, "the earliest reference to [Khayyám's]

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[22] A.C. Benson, *Edward FitzGerald* (New York: Macmillan, 1905), p. 144; Davis, p. 2.
[23] Ali Dashti, *In Search of Omar Khayyam,* trans. L.P. Elwell-Sutton (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 14-15.

poetry" was "written about fifty-five years after [his] death."[24] He was known to his contemporaries as a learned mathematician, whose contributions to understanding polynomial equations and observational astronomy earned him a place in history.[25] Even so, Khayyám may have been "never employed but spent his life at Naishápúr as a pensioner of the Vizier and the Sultan" and passed his time in study.[26] FitzGerald's biographer Robert Martin suggests that this history "was an idealized version of what FitzGerald wanted his own life to be and perhaps also an unconscious justification of what others thought of as his indolence."[27] FitzGerald's carefully crafted preface encodes the importance of amateurism to his translation, and this emphasis on Khayyám's dilettantism foreshadows the poem's combative approach to the protocols of bourgeois Victorian life. Amateurism is not only an effect of FitzGerald's socioeconomic status or a result of the poem's Bacchic pull, but it is also a calculated political strategy that undermines professional practice, even that of the modern author.

Etymologically, dilettantes are lovers, specifically of music and painting; they draw our attention to the Latin root of "amateur." Dilettantes eschew the detached scientific method of the professional by pursuing instead a course charted by passion. In her recent study of nineteenth-century amateur medievalists, Carolyn Dinshaw demonstrates that the amateur and her uses of temporality differ rather markedly from those of her professional counterpart. The time of professionalization, of specialization, is goal-oriented, measured, and calendrical, but the

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[24] Christopher Decker, introduction to *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám: A Critical Edition,* xvii. See also W.H. Martin and Sandra Mason, *Edward FitzGerald's Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám: A Famous Poem and Its Influence* (London: Anthem Press, 2011), 94-6.
[25] See E.S. Kennedy, "The Exact Sciences in Iran under the Saljuqs and Mongols" in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, edited by J.A. Boyle, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968-1991), 5:659-79.
[26] Robert Barnard Martin, *With Friends Possessed: A Life of Edward FitzGerald* (New York: Atheneum, 1985), 207.
[27] Martin, *With Friends Possessed*, 207.

dilettante lingers, uses time less resolvedly, explores. In Dinshaw's words, "amateurism is everything the professional leaves behind on the modern train of forward progress."[28] Amateurs, she advances, "take their own sweet time, and operating outside of regimes of detachment governed by uniform, measured temporality, these uses of time are queer. In this sense, the act of taking one's own sweet time asserts a queer force" (5). "The act of taking one's own sweet time" relates to more than the publication history of the several editions of the *Rubáiyát*. For instance, Robert Martin describes the composition process of the first edition: "His method […] was to read over the relevant sections several times until their broad outlines were fixed in his mind, then to go for a long walk and work out the stanzas."[29] FitzGerald's long walks distance the translator from the letters of the original text and reveal this amateur's resignation of literal translation to the professionals. Annmarie Drury records how FitzGerald "was attracted by the idea of genuine imitation being achieved by an accidental imitator, a writer who has not set imitation as a primary goal."[30] Indeed, these long walks demonstrate that FitzGerald ironically brought the attitude of the amateur—the "accidental imitator"—to his most successful professional endeavor.

Dinshaw continues her examination of amateurism by identifying it as a process that should ring familiar to students of Fitzgerald's method: "amateurism is bricolage, bringing whatever can be found, whatever works, to the activity" (28). Surely, Fitzgerald is famous for his pastiches: he was upfront in a letter to his Persian tutor and friend Edward Cowell about

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[28] Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, Duke Univ. Press, 2012), 21. Subsequent citations appear parenthetically.
[29] Robert B. Martin, *With Friends Possessed*, 203.
[30] Annmarie Drury, "Accident, Orientalism, and Edward FitzGerald as Translator," *Victorian Poetry* 46, 1 (Spring 2008): 38.

"tesselating" Omar's "scattered quatrains" into a "very pretty *Eclogue*,"[31] and he admitted forthrightly to Cowell his lack of interest in a perfect reproduction by classifying his work as "very unliteral."[32] Additionally, the *Rubáiyát* is rife with allusions to, among others, Shakespeare, the Bible, Tennyson, Byron, Pope, and Cowper. [33] In this vein, Barbara Black has even examined the poem as a typically Victorian manifestation of "the love of collecting."[34] Moreover, FitzGerald wrote warmly of allusion in Shakespeare as "footsteps in the Books he read," and the promiscuous referentiality in his most famous poem marks Old Fitz's own well-worn paths through the pages of English literature.[35] Douglas-Fairhurst even theorizes that FitzGerald's heteroglossic approach to composition did "not differ significantly from his methods of organizing the scrapbooks and commonplace books to which he devoted so much time and attention, each of which 'dovetailed together' miscellaneous fragments" in a fashion that appealed to him.[36] If the amateur is also the *bricoleur*, FitzGerald is a dead ringer for the type. In effect, Dinshaw offers us an avenue into the queerness of FitzGerald's text, not by

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[31]FitzGerald seems adamant about using this particular verb to describe the composition of his poem in his letters; he repeats it again in a letter to Cowell in November 1858. His commitment to the tessellated, and not the literal, exhibits the amateur's enthusiasm for multiple works of art and not the professional translator's commitment to the singular text. *Letters*, 2:294.

[32] *Letters*, 2:318.

[33] Two studies in particular note these allusions. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst characterizes Old Fitz as "under the influence" of earlier texts like the King James Bible, *As You Like It*, and Tennyson's verse, and Christopher Decker, deeming the poem "an anthology of other men's flowers," charts FitzGerald's allusions to Pope, Cowper, Dryden, Donne, Burns, and Byron, among others. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives: The Shaping of Influence in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), pp. 270-420; and Christopher Decker, "Edward FitzGerald and Other Men's Flowers: Allusion in the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*," *Literary Imagination* 6, 2 (2004): 213-239.

[34] Barbara J. Black, *On Exhibit: Victorians and Their Museums* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 2000), p. 49. John Elsnor and Roger Cardinal identify collecting as an amateur's game insofar as it "shuns closure and the security of received evaluations." Indeed, the collector models his demesne after his own peculiar fascinations. John Elsnor and Roger Cardinal, introduction to *The Cultures of Collecting* (London: Reaktion, 1994), p. 5.

[35] *Letters*, 4:131.

[36] Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives*, 330.

recuperative reading practices that name a latent desire that FitzGerald himself did not, but by acknowledging the complexity of the amateur's epistemological practices. Moreover, Dinshaw's focus on temporality can help us situate FitzGerald's amateurism within the work's anti-teleological poetics. Though many deft scholars have considered this aspect of FitzGerald's translation, none has connected the poem's nonlinear temporality to its dedicated dilettantism.

In 1923, the *Spectator* even enshrined FitzGerald as "the exquisite amateur," noting that "secretly we dislike the professional even when we admire, because we suspect that he plays the game more for the prize than for the joy of it, that he has forgotten what it is to be gallant and expressive and free, [and] that he has succumbed to the activities which he should master and can only like a machine-made pedant grind an industrious axe."[37] But the twentieth century christened not only FitzGerald himself as amateur but also his poem, even as it gained new readers and as new editions flooded the market. Writing in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1899, Paul Elmer More anticipated Graves by revealing something in the poem "very fair and fragile, which we are wont to stigmatize as effeminate or dilettante," for "the love of beauty," he warned, "has always a tendency to become effeminate and inefficient."[38] Connecting the poem to "the love of beauty," More situates the *Rubáiyát* in a tradition of effete belletrism that scholars such as Francis Mulhern and Carol Atherton have pointed out began to lose favor as English rose to disciplinary maturity in the early twentieth-century. New Critics and their modernist

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[37] Hugh I'Anson Fausset, "Incomparable 'Fitz,'" *Literary Supplement to the Spectator*, 15 December 1923, p. 951. Curiously, Fausset contrasts this definition of the professional with a definition of the "dilettante" which tallies with the misogyny and homophobia of Graves's use of the term. The dilettante is, according to Fausset, "a passionless connoisseur," "daintily absorbed in the petty processes of a personal cultivation." FitzGerald, as "exquisite amateur," falls between the two poles of professional and dilettante: "neither a cog nor an exotic," in Fausset's words. This study disregards Fausset's speciations and uses the terms "amateur" and "dilettante" interchangeably.

[38] Paul Elmer More, "The Seven Seas and the Rubáiyát," *The Atlantic Monthly* 84 (1899): 807.

companions pushed for a disciplinary focus on "questions of form and method" to create a novel, systematic focus for English studies that subverted "the ideal of the scholar-gentleman," in Mulhern's turn of phrase.[39] As a result of this professional push to democratize the study of letters, literary professionals became disenchanted by FitzGerald's amateurism. In effect, even as FitzGerald's poem gained in popularity, his specific brand of belletrism contributed to his poem's neglect by disciplinary professionals. Adrian Poole writes, "For most of the twentieth century the very fact that [the *Rubáiyát*] retained its popularity with 'middlebrows' contributed forcefully to its neglect by 'intellectuals.'"[40] In a 1959 interview, T.S. Eliot recalls the poem as a formative literary influence of which he later came to be ashamed: "I began I think about the age of fourteen, under the inspiration of Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyam*, to write a number of […] quatrains in the same style, which fortunately I suppressed completely—so completely that they don't exist."[41] Eliot suggests that the *Rubáiyát* is fine fodder for an amateur to imitate but beneath the regard of the literary professional.

Though both popular and critical appraisals of his translation have been quick to point out FitzGerald's, or the poem's, amateurism, no inquiry has considered how the text itself cultivates its own anti-professional stance—how it, in other words, invites readers to "Make Game" of life (XLV). Although this point may seem to be self-evident in a poem dedicated to inebriate pleasure, it is nonetheless worth considering, and clearly establishing, in order to identify how this amateurism, vis-à-vis Dinshaw's recent work, complicates erotic readings of the poem while

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[39] Carol Atherton, *Defining Literary Criticism: Scholarship, Authority, and the Possession of Literary Knowledge, 1880-2002* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 124; Francis Mulhern, *The Moment of 'Scrutiny'* (London: Verso, 1979), 24.
[40] Poole, introduction to *Popularity and Neglect*, xviii.
[41] T.S. Eliot, "Writers at Work," in *The* Paris Review *Interviews, Second Series,* introduction by Van Wyck Brooks (New York: Viking, 1963), 92-3. For a more thorough examination of FitzGerald's influence on Eliot, see D'Ambrosio, *Eliot Possessed*.

enriching current critiques of its anti-teleological temporality and agnosticism. What happens when we investigate amateurism in the *Rubáiyát* not as an ad hominem assessment of its translator but as an intentional political affront to midcentury culture? If, as Gray has argued, the poem's setting is "a distant and mythical past that nevertheless allegorically shadows forth contemporary Britain," then surely the committed dilettantism of the *Rubáiyát* is a rejoinder to midcentury socio-political practice.[42] That is to say, amateurism is every bit a part of the speaker's angry desire to "shatter" the world "to bits" as its agnosticism and temporal experimentation (LXXIII). For FitzGerald's poem not only promulgates this anti-professional ethos but applies it even to the ends of the lover by cultivating an amateur sexuality—an erotics at odds with both the professional definitions of a nascent sexological discourse and also the very terms upon which sexual orientations themselves are constructed.

Fitzgerald's dilettantism, I argue, and his affective attachments to the writer he called "My Omar" allowed him to form a various, multiplicitous text that drowns linear, professional temporality—even that of the author and the lover—in the sweet vintage of oblivion while creating in its wake a genuinely original poem, if not in Graves's sense. I first examine the poem's dedicated amateurism which clashed angrily against the dominant ideologies of its time before considering this dilettantism's effects on the poem's erotic investments. Graves's aspersion, meant to disparage Old Fitz's literary reputation, actually redeems it, for perhaps only a dilettante faggot like FitzGerald could have created such a temporally curious and marvelous mosaic as the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, a poem so committed thematically not to the

[42] Erik Gray, "FitzGerald and the *Rubáiyát*, In and Out of Time," *Victorian Poetry* 46, 1 (Spring 2008): 9.

consummation and object choice of the professional lover but to the flirtation and ambiguity of the dilettante.[43]

II. "Gossamer Association": The *Rubáiyát* and Amateur Poetics

It should be no surprise that FitzGerald's poem takes time to task, for it is perhaps the work's most enduring theme. As the crowd standing before the unopened tavern door reminds us in the third stanza, "You know how little while we have to stay, / And, once departed, may return no more" (III). Four stanzas later: "The Bird of Time has but a little way / To fly—and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing" (VII). Human ambition, the speaker tells us shortly thereafter, "Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face / Lighting a little Hour or two—is gone" (XIV). In each of these examples, the repetition of "little" (paired with "while," "way," and "Hour") miniaturizes the timespan of mortal life into obsolescence. We cannot outpace, the poem continually reminds us, the ravenous rush of time. In response, the *Rubáiyát* does not issue the familiar call of *carpe diem*; rather, the poem urges us to seize the draught—and drown our mortal troubles in inebriate obscurity. Dick Davis has argued how the poem's insistent emphasis on human ephemerality introduces a Persian thematics of temporality into the European canon:

> There is very little sense in pre-nineteenth-century European literature of a vast abyss of unknown and inaccessible civilizations preceding our brief time on earth: this sense pervades Persian verse generally and the quatrains ascribed to

[43] To this end, this chapter references, unless noted otherwise, the first edition of 1859, of which FitzGerald planned to print only fifty copies to give to friends. Quaritch manufactured a 250-copy run which did not sell well, if at all, until the Celtic scholar Whitley Stokes happened upon it two years later. The often-retold story of how the edition made its way to Ruskin, Swinburne, and the Pre-Raphaelites after lying neglected in the penny box of Quaritch's shop connotes fortuitously the romance of the amateur in the history of FitzGerald's translation. See, for example, Decker, introduction, p. xxxiv; and Martin, *With Friends Possessed*, pp. 218-20.

> Khayyám in particular. The nineteenth-century European take on the past, that the Classical world which we know and admire led to Christianity and Christianity led to us, involved a sense of gradual amelioration and progress; the medieval Persian take on the past involved regret for what was gone, a recognition of the vanity of human endeavor in the face of inexorable and all-obliterating time, and a sense that we ourselves will all too soon join the vast anonymity of the unrecorded dead.[44]

This Persian "take on the past" no doubt stirred Victorian interest in the poem, specifically because its focus on the purposelessness of human effort clashed with, in Erik Gray's language, "the ideologies of an age dedicated to progress and self-improvement."[45] FitzGerald's interest in a Persian thematics of temporality created an intellectual space to celebrate the amateur in the face of a meaningless, driven professionalism.

Robert Douglas-Fairhurst has spearheaded critical interest in FitzGerald's representations of temporality. His densely allusive and compelling study of literary influence in Victorian letters positions the *Rubáiyát* as a centrifuge that opens up nineteenth-century debates about translation, time, and eschatology. Douglas-Fairhurst presents the poem as a series of antinomies—ancient and modern, ruptured and continuous, recursive and progressive, derivative and original—that map on to larger Victorian discourses about history, religion, and art. The poem is the occasion for FitzGerald, a figure "always poised on the brink of nostalgia," to try to reach the geographically, linguistically, and temporally alien, while syntactically experimenting

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[44] Dick Davis, "Edward FitzGerald, Omar Khayyám and the Tradition of Verse Translation into English," in *FitzGerald's* Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám: *Popularity and Neglect*, edited by Adrian Poole, et al (London: Anthem Press, 2011), 10-11.

[45] Erik Gray, *The Poetry of Indifference from the Romantics to the Rubáiyát* (Amherst: Univ. of Mass. Press, 2005), 94.

with the representations of times and tenses and considering "questions of literary endurance" and innovation.[46] One of Douglas-Fairhurst's most exciting insights is a reading of FitzGerald's admission to Cowell that he was moved to consider a second edition after having convinced himself that adding "a few more [quatrains] will, at any rate, allow for the Idea of Time passing."[47] Douglas-Fairhurst notes that the poem itself equivocates between presenting the progression of a single day while also representing "the drunkard's limited sense of time's passage as a cumulative process."[48] FitzGerald cannot make up his mind, in this reading, if indeed the poem presents "the idea of time-passing" or "the idea-of-time passing."[49] Douglas-Fairhurst grafts onto this indeterminacy the poem's anaphoric repetitions of "And" at the start of 44 of its 300 lines to suggest that an almost anarchically inebriated grasp of time structures the poem itself.[50]

This scholarship shortly preceded a new critical interest in the poem over the last decade, particularly around the time of the *Rubáiyát*'s sesquicentennial in 2009. A number of critics have since rescued the poem from virtual critical neglect and developed an interest in how the stanzaic form of the quatrains, which FitzGerald imitated from the Persian originals, complements the *Rubáiyát*'s thematics of temporality. Erik Gray and Herbert Tucker have joined Douglas-Fairhurst to explore how the four-line stanza, which seems to progress with a new rhyme in the third line but then retreats to its original rhyme in the fourth, imitates the futility of human endeavor. In Tucker's words, the "third *a* rhyme […] remands us to square one

[46] Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives*, 273, 276.
[47] *Letters*, 3:60.
[48] Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives*, 307.
[49] Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives*, 309.
[50] Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives*, 310.

and reproves our illusion of progress as just that, a metrical illusion."[51] Fitzgerald's *aaba* quatrains thus limit the third line's aspiration for change by returning to the original rhyme in the final line. What's more, these final lines perform their own ephemerality, by ushering out the ideas initiated in the earlier lines of the quatrain. For example, the earlier-quoted "Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face" stanza closes with the abrupt predicate "is gone" and thereby draws the curtain on human ambition. Yet, of course the poem does progress. Some quatrains fit together to form a brief narrative, while others follow no discernable progression but nonetheless fit into FitzGerald's larger diurnal structure. The *Rubáiyát* is both meticulously ordered and haphazard; FitzGerald embeds such contradictions into the very structure of his poem.

These recent critical appraisals have deemed the *Rubáiyát* variously a "forgetful" poem, one governed by an "aesthetic of accident" or "chaos," or even "that still rarer thing: a drunk poem."[52] FitzGerald's self-contained quatrains do not necessarily lead logically to those that follow, and instead the poem "prizes," in Drury's language, "interruption and rapid metamorphosis over continuity" even in spite of its loose narrative structure.[53] In this way, the *Rubáiyát* encourages a kind of amateur reading that doesn't require the sustained attention of a tight, linear narrative, because new and chaotic interruptions send the speaker in new directions and pull the wandering mind of any reader into the novel, immediate concerns of a new quatrain. The openings to stanzas VII-IX, for instance, demonstrate these abrupt transitions: "Come," "And look," "But come." And throughout the poem, the first words of many *rubáiyát* open with interjections that cut the current quatrain off from the thoughts of the previous one: "Lo!," "Ah,"

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[51] Herbert F. Tucker, "Metaphor, Translation, and Autoekphrasis in FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát*," *Victorian Poetry* 46, 1 (Spring 2008): 74.
[52] Gray, *The Poetry of Indifference*, 109; Drury, "Accident," 40; Ayşe Çelikkol, "Secular Pleasures and FitzGerald's Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám," *Victorian Poetry* 51, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 526; Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives*, 308.
[53] Drury, "Accident," 40.

"Now," "Oh," and "Indeed" (XXI, XXIII, IV, XXVI, and LXIX). In effect, the poem adapts itself to what FitzGerald himself referred to as his own "idle reading" or "unscholarly reading" in his correspondence.[54] In a letter to Cowell, he explains: "a book to me is what Locke says that watching the hour hand of a clock is to all; other thoughts (and those of the idlest and seemingly most irrelevant) will intrude between my vision and the written words: and then I have to read over again; often again and again till all is crossed and muddled. If Life were to be very much longer than is the usual lot of men, one would try very hard to reform this lax habit, and clear away such a system of gossamer association."[55] The *Rubáiyát* itself is a poem of gossamer association. It plants seeds of mental waywardness with its allusiveness, while simultaneously beckoning its readers back into the immediate concerns of any given quatrain with abrupt transitions that do not require a concentrated mental attachment to the stanzas that have come before. Thus, in addition to being drunk, chaotic, or forgetful, the *Rubáiyát* is also, celebratorily, amateur. At every chance, the poem rebukes professional endeavor, to marinate instead in the pleasures of leisure, companionship, and unscholarly reading. This "Book of Verse" welcomes readers to the text in anticipation of distractions like "A Flask of Wine" or a singing friend, not the concentrated cerebral commitment of a scrupulous reader (XI). Consequently, the poem recruits its readers as amateurs themselves; we're all in this together, the *Rubáiyát* reminds us, without the expertise to understand why.

Moreover, FitzGerald's many editions of the poem similarly confound the professional who dares approach this work, for a decision about which text to use is nearly impossible. Like that of an inebriate, the literary critic's vision blurs, producing not just the drunkard's diplopia, but a quadruple-vision of simultaneous versions. Modern editions exhibit, Decker observes, "the

[54] For "unscholarly" reading, see *Letters*, 4:48; and for "idle reading," see *Letters*, 3:298.
[55] *Letters*, 1:540

editor's taste" rather than an existing standard of the poem itself.[56] Penguin Classics and Dover present both the complete first and alleged fifth editions in their texts. One 1995 volume introduced by A.S. Byatt and the 2014 illustrated edition from the Bodleian library both display the second—and by far the longest—version FitzGerald and Quaritch published. The 2010 Oxford World Classics edition exhibits only the first edition, while the New York Graphic Society's illustrated edition contains only the fifth. Decker notes that this fifth edition, published posthumously based on alterations made to a copy of the fourth edition, contains alterations mistakenly attributed to FitzGerald, even though previous editors like Davis had believed this version to represent the translator's "last thoughts on the text."[57] Three textual strata result in this palimpsest: the text of the fourth edition, the changes made by FitzGerald himself, and the alterations recommended by another writer.[58] Of course, this alleged fifth edition presents a striking historical irony. Much like the medieval Persian poet whose work has been manipulated across time by multiple hands, FitzGerald's too, almost immediately following his death, was accidentally or purposefully reconfigured by another writer. FitzGerald's tenacious revising and the ambiguity of this last edition alleged to represent the translator's final edits to the work suspend readers between editions of the poem. There is no final, best, or editorially correct version of FitzGerald's work. The *Rubáiyát* is all of these versions and none of them alone; its nature is mercurial and multiplicitous. Its variability shatters romantic illusions about authorial intentions and demands to be read across versions, distending the moment of reading always into the future. Any edition of the translation is not the final one, the only one, or the correct one. The first two lines of the poem are simultaneously

[56] Decker, Introduction, xiii.
[57] Davis, Introduction, 41.
[58] Decker, Introduction, xlv. See also Appendix I.

> Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
> Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight (1859), and
>
> Wake! For the Sun behind yon Eastern height
> Has chased the Session of the Stars from Night (1868), and
>
> Wake! For the Sun who scatter'd into flight
> The Stars before him from the Field of Night
> (1872).

In this way, the poem embeds its amateurism into its multiple versions. It's a poem that's never finished, even as the day closes in one edition, for the sun rises again in another.

If, then, the poem's insistence on religious doubt and its Orientalist fascinations have rightly led scholars such as Clive Wilmer to identify the *Rubáiyát* determinedly as "A Victorian Poem,"[59] another such marker of its timeliness is surely its rebuke of Victorian ideals of professionalism. As noted, social historians such as Daniel Duman and literary critics such as Jennifer Ruth and Susan E. Colón have traced the growth of professionalism as a particularly Victorian concept: Duman writes that a "new professional ideology" "[evolved] contemporaneously with the [early Victorian] drive for efficiency and reform."[60] Ruth follows the lead of other scholars such as W.J. Reader, Harold Perkin, Nancy Armstrong, and Leonard Tennenhouse by observing that "Victorians began to conceptualize an emergent professional class" precisely at mid-century.[61] This ideology capitalized on the sacralization of work, most famously iterated by FitzGerald's friend Carlyle, who opens his 1843 chapter on "Labour" with

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[59] Clive Wilmer, "A Victorian Poem: Edward FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, in *Popularity and Neglect*, 45.
[60] Daniel Duman, "The Creation and Diffusion of a Professional Ideology in Nineteenth Century England," *Sociological Review* 27, no. 1 (February 1979): 120.
[61] Jennifer Ruth, *Novel Professions: Interested Disinterest and the Making of the Professional in the Victorian Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 2006), 3.

the forceful announcement of the "perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in Work."[62] Though the *Rubáiyát* takes its aim most exactingly at agrarian labor, artisanship, and other traditional callings like religion and scholarship, its determined amateurism nonetheless counters the ideological force that the Victorian cult of diligence and the professional ideal were beginning to assume at the moment of its first publication.

Indeed, the etymology of the word *professional* would not likely be lost on a student of languages like FitzGerald. Citing the early thirteenth century as a candidate for the first time the word appears in manuscript, the *OED* reminds us that the original meaning of "profession" was the announcement of religious faith, or "The declaration, promise, or vow made by a person entering a religious order."[63] Surely this is clear to FitzGerald, who wryly suggests, in his opening preface, that a sáki, wine, and roses were all Khayyám "*profess'd* to want of this World or to expect of Paradise" (7, my emphasis). In an etymological sleight of hand, the poem dovetails the presumptions of the professional with the poem's larger religious doubts. Even the *Rubáiyát*'s first British review in *The Literary Gazette* couldn't fail to notice the poem's "absolute [religious] skepticism,"[64] and critics have been calling attention to it ever since as a hallmark of mid-century Victorian doubt.[65] What seems to have been left out of the conversation, however, is FitzGerald's sly intermingling of religious and professional ennui as though the poem itself were aware of religion's complicity in the creation of nineteenth-century Protestant

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[62] Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, edited by Robert Altick (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1965), 196.
[63] *OED Online*, June 2015, s.v. "profession."
[64] *The Literary Gazette* no. 66, (October 1, 1859): 326, qtd. in "Appendix: Two Early Reviews of the *Rubáiyát,*" *Victorian Poetry* 46, 1 (Spring 2008): 106.
[65] See, for example, Wilmer, "A Victorian Poem," 46-7.

capitalism. Though Carlyle bellowed, "all true Work is Religion," FitzGerald refused to convert.[66]

Moreover, the poem's anti-teleological temporality supplements this reading. Max Weber writes that it was the "rational" scheme of monastic hours that birthed the timelines of Protestant labor, thereby supporting the "evolution of [the] capitalistic spirit."[67] Thus, the *Rubáiyát*'s celebration of amateurism is at once a rebuke to professional protocol and its systems of time management and a cutting reminder of their antiquated religious origins. The anti-teleological force of FitzGerald's quatrains maps onto the poem's committed disregard for the Victorian cult of diligence, professionalism, and religious orthodoxy. The *Rubáiyát*'s amateurism, then, is essentially wound up in its agnosticism; these currents are so intricately entangled that it seems nearly impossible to parse them.

FitzGerald encodes his poem's distaste for professional practice by attacking diligent labor early in his translation:

> And those who husbanded the Golden Grain,
> And those who flung it to the Winds like Rain,
> Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd
> As, buried once, Men want dug up again. (XV)

Taking FitzGerald's agricultural metaphor on its own terms, dedicated labor to the process of cultivation seems pointless in the face of an all-obliterating time—the little "Hour or two" that bookends this stanza in the final line of both quatrains XIV and XVI. In other words, if the diligent cannot hope to harvest the fruits of his labor, why would he even try? FitzGerald applies this same cynicism to other pursuits elsewhere in the poem: scholars are "foolish Prophets" (XXV), potters are carelessly incompetent, and Parliamentary procedure, which stands out from

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[66] Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 201.
[67] Max Weber, *General Economic History* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2003), 365.

these other examples as a revealing anachronism to the poem's medieval setting, is incapable to affect the haphazard will of fate. Together, these dismissals of concentrated labor amount to the poem's attack on professional presumption. Indeed, in a poem that encodes the passing of time itself as an amateur's recreation—a "Chequer-board of Nights and Days"—professional pursuits seem not only altogether undesirable but a definite waste of our precious little time (XLIX).

The fantastical narrative of the pots, or "*Kúza-Náma*," of FitzGerald's first version calls into question the practice of diligent work through the guise of artisanship. In these eight quatrains, a number of inanimate pots—a "clay Population"—thrown by a potter come alive to destabilize the relationships between artisan, product, and talent (LIX). Over the course of the section, pots voice their concerns about their origin and question the motivation and agency of the silent potter, who might have created them, they fear, without regard for their uncertain future. One pot hopes that "Surely not in vain / My substance from the common Earth was ta'en" for a prospective return "to common Earth again" (LXI). Of course, this discourse maps onto the poem's larger agnostic concerns and anxieties about human mortality, but it also destabilizes professional ideology. One "Vessel of a more ungainly Make" opines, "'They sneer at me for leaning all awry; / 'What! Did the Hand then of the Potter shake?'" (LXIII). Another vessel likens a potter who fails to care properly for his creations unfavorably to a petulant child:

> Another said—"Why, ne'er, a peevish Boy,
> "Would break the Bowl from which he drank in Joy;
> "Shall he that *made* the Vessel in pure Love
> "And Fansy, in an after Rage destroy!" (LXII)

Ayşe Çelikkol has suggested that as these pots turn into metaphysicians who question the nature of their existence, "the categories of human, object, and creator begin to dissolve."[68] The markers

[68] Çelikkol, "Secular Pleasures," 524.

of successful labor seem to disappear as well, as the potter's motivations, workmanship, and even maturity are called into question.

Importantly, the potter's wheel had formed part of a central analogy in the chapter on "Labour" from *Past and Present*. In an extended metaphor designed to illustrate the perils of idleness, Carlyle compares the industrious man to the potter's wheel, "one of the venerablest objects," assisting Destiny the Potter against the menaces of "formless Chaos": "Of an idle unrevolving man the kindest Destiny, like the most assiduous Potter without wheel, can bake and knead nothing other than a botch; let her spend on him what expensive colouring, what gilding and enameling she will, he is but a botch. Not a dish; no, a bulging, kneaded, crooked, shambling, squint-cornered, amorphous botch,—a mere enameled vessel of dishonor! Let the idle think of this."[69] Here, destiny, industry, idleness, form, and ornament converge in a screed against unshapely moral character. FitzGerald's "*Kúza-Náma*" responds to Carlyle by suggesting a vessel's "ungainly Make" to be the unreliable work of the potter's hands himself. Moreover, he upends Carlyle's polemic by showing the pots themselves neglected by the faithful, fasting for "Ramázan" (LIX). Even the perfectly formed vessels lie in disuse. Yet FitzGerald laughs at Carlyle most forcefully, perhaps, by hinting at the pots' eventual retreat from idleness at the sequence's close when the "Porter" approaches the "Cellar" where they converse (LXVI; p. 23, 22n). However, unlike the heroic "assiduousness" Carlyle celebrates in Christophers Wren and Columbus—his two paragons in the same chapter—these vessels will be employed in the creation of inebriate pleasure, not architectural and imperial watersheds.

In another brief but illustrative narrative sequence across several quatrains, FitzGerald's speaker embraces his own thinking against the grain of professionalism:

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[69] Carlyle, *Past and Present*, 197.

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same Door as in I went.

With them the Seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with my own hand labour'd it to grow:
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd—
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."

Into this Universe, and *why* not knowing,
Nor *whence*, like Water willy-nilly flowing:
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

What, without asking, hither hurried *whence*?
And, without asking, *whither* hurried hence!
Another and another Cup to drown
The Memory of this Impertinence! (XXVII-XXX)

In these stanzas, FitzGerald's speaker rebukes the fruits of professional labor, typified by the "great Argument" of the saint or scholar, for these intellectual endeavors have no capacity to fundamentally affect the speaker's way of life or resolve his ontological queries. Exiting by "the same Door as in [he] went," FitzGerald's speaker carousels through a medieval analogue to the Circumlocution Office, as the Doctor and Saint demonstrate "How not to" resolve the speaker's existential doubts. With the agricultural metaphor of the second stanza, FitzGerald emphasizes again his critique of professionalism by dwelling on the drudgery of the sowing, his labouring "hand," and his paltry harvest; intellectual labor offers a meager return for a grueling investment. The third stanza considers this yield—merely, a recognition of his ontological ignorance, while the repetition of the childlike "willy-nilly" undercuts the arrogance of the Doctor or Saint's arguments with a sarcastically juvenile reminder of the hopelessness of their plight. The last two lines of the fourth quoted stanza have most often been read as a reproach to a divinity that has

created a chaotic existence and not supplied its creation with the capacity to comprehend itself;[70] however, I'd like to suggest that another "Impertinence" here is the posturing of the professional. "Great Arguments" lead not to enlightenment but to further uncertainty and thereby reveal both religious and professional claims to the production of knowledge as a sham. FitzGerald's speaker tipples to forget his wasted time in the company of these "foolish Prophets"; his wine is an elixir that nullifies professional ambition.

In what is perhaps FitzGerald's most anachronistic quatrain, the speaker doubts the efficacy of parliamentary practice. Describing existence as a game played by Destiny with men as its pawns, he writes, "The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes" (L). Here, Destiny lays waste to parliamentary procedure, undermining the midcentury professional's claims to shape his world. L.C.B. Seaman recounts that the inauguration of new professional societies like the Law Society in 1833 and the British Medical Society in 1854 signal "a growing body of professional opinion available to influence politicians."[71] It is probably unsurprising that Graves lambasted this stanza in particular; the anachronistic assault it wages against the collected powers of civil servants, a new professional class, and others in public life proved too outrageous to bear.[72] In the poem's certainty of uncertainty, the production of knowledge, agriculture, artisanship, and legislation all appear as hopelessly vain pursuits when confronted with the unceasing onslaught of time and the haphazard will of destiny. Consequently, the *Rubáiyát* scorns professional ideology at the precise moment that it came to be a recognizable force in midcentury Britain.

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[70] See, for example, Drury who suggests that "FitzGerald here emphasizes the 'Impertinence' of a divinity who allows the world to be governed by chance. His translation (and not Khayyám, whose words FitzGerald first misunderstood and subsequently misrepresented by choice) holds God responsible for creating a world ruled by arbitrary fortune." Drury, "Accident," 42.
[71] L.C.B. Seaman, *Victorian England: Aspects of English and Imperial History, 1837-1901* (London: Methuen, 1973), 169.
[72] See Graves, "The Cult of Fitz-Omar," 13.

Though popular readers and literary scholars have long discerned the poem's committed agnosticism, we have failed to take account of how FitzGerald cleverly intermingles his religious critique with a profound antipathy for the Victorian cult of diligence. The poem's anti-professional ethos is at once a skeptical appraisal of belief and industriousness. In effect, the *Rubáiyát* takes aim simultaneously at both the religious faith of the professor and the clerical drudgery of the professional, in a series of quatrains perfectly adapted to "unscholarly" reading. In the exquisite idleness that remains in the wake of stale religion and discarded professionalism, FitzGerald carves a space for the desire of the amateur.

III. Dilettante Faggots

As the poem favors skepticism over belief, idle reading over sustained attention, and dilettantism over professional diligence, its amateurism infects even the desire of the speaker as well. FitzGerald's Khayyám is not an amorous lover engaged in a lengthy seduction of his auditor; rather he is an amateur lover, if such a phrase may be permitted, engaged in flirtation for its own sake, not as a means to a definite end, or even with any definite partner. In the *Rubáiyát*'s most famous verse, the speaker shuns the office of the professional critic to take his poetry, and his beloved, into the open air:

> Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,
> A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse—and Thou
> Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
> And Wilderness is Paradise enow. (IX)

The speaker builds his earthly utopia underneath the shade of a tree with his bread, his wine, his poetry, and his companion—an environment perfectly tailored for the necessary distractions of "unscholarly reading." Douglas-Fairhurst has pointed out that FitzGerald slyly terrestrializes the religious connotation of "Paradise" by recalling its Old Persian etymological root *pālīz* as a

"gentleman's enclosure" or "vegetable plot" and thereby triggers, in one of the speaker's more sober moments at the beginning of the poem, an early dismissal of religious afterlife.[73] The uncertainty of whom "singing in the Wilderness" modifies—the "me" directly adjacent to it or the "Thou" most frequently pictured singing in illustrations—undercuts any sense of definite plan for the day and emphasizes the poem's commitment to ambiguity. One of the company may sing, but the identity of the singer himself is obscured. Erik Gray points to the absence of any active verb and no clear subject in the first three lines which bump up against the coordinating "And" and its "faulty parallelism" in the final one.[74] In effect, "Here" seems to act like both subject and verb for the first three lines, as it collapses agent and action into the immediacy of present place. Look about you, the poem implies, for your best chance at a sight of heaven; you may even be holding it in your hands. Thus the requirements for paradise are not transcendental or comprised of any specific action by a specific actor but instead built of whatever's at hand—in the speaker's case, a pleasurable arrangement of material affections, refreshments, and the possibilities of the moment. Built of art, taste, and love, this is the terrestrial heaven of the true dilettante.

Throughout the poem, the speaker comes across as more of a coquette than a paramour, for his pleasures seem to lie more in flirting than consummation itself. Addressing his cup-bearer as "Beloved," "Love!," and "Moon of my Delight who know'st no wane" (XX, LXXIII, and LXXIV), he even entices them both into a state of relative undress, by imploring the auditor early in the poem to "fling" "the Winter Garment of Repentence," as he himself admits that he has been "Robb'd […] of my Robe of Honour" (VII, LXXI). But, couched as they are in metaphor, these enticing pronouncements remain merely suggestive. In a twinkle of the eye, the

[73] Douglas-Fairhurst, *Victorian Afterlives*, 304; *OED Online*, August 2014, s.v. "paradise."
[74] Erik Gray, "Common and Queer," 31.

speaker alludes to a nakedness that stays, it seems, always on the horizon. Even the moments of greatest erotic contact in the poem, which this section explores in depth, are notable for their conditionality. The speaker continually points to the unknowability of the couplings it imagines; "who knows," "I think," and "if" undercut the speaker's certainty of these erotic stagings.

Physically, FitzGerald's Khayyám is drawn to the kiss and the caress, but even these remain most often at a distance mediated by the vessel of wine and often across the veil of death. Lips, especially, offer an almost divine enticement to the speaker:

> And this delightful Herb whose tender Green
> Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean—
> Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
> From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen! (XIX)

Here, the poem's tender homoeroticism is diluted across time and matter, for, as several scholars have argued, this stanza seems to eroticize the traces of a youth's moustache "fledging" the mouth of the river and thus illuminating the poem's veiled exploration of same-sex desire.[75] Yet, while the speaker's metaphor may reveal his own fantasies about the source of fertilization here, the stanza's emphasis surely falls on the uncertainty of "who knows" in the unrhymed third line. The speaker may hope that the "Herb" offers access to the deceased young man—he may even believe it—but the ambiguity remains not only key but potentially a source of even more excitement. In the absence of an afterlife, Khayyám imagines instead an aestheticized network of intertwined matter, so that the decomposition of the body revitalizes the world around it. In one early stanza, for instance, "the White Hand Of Moses on the Bough / Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires" (IV). In place of the ascension, the bodies of Jesus, Moses, and the dead are incorporated into a vast, complex organic whole. For Khayyám, nature is a network through which we can touch the past, and here that past carries an erotic charge. Dendrophilia is

[75] See, for example, Davis, introduction, 30.

not an end in itself but a vehicle that offers magical proximity to a constellation of "lovely Lips" that have come before.

As the auditor leans upon lips lightly, the speaker himself presses them to his own:

> Then to this earthen Bowl did I adjourn
> My Lip the secret Well of Life to learn:
> And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While you live
> "Drink!—for once dead you never shall return."
>
> I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
> Articulation answer'd, once did live,
> And merry-make; and the cold Lip I kiss'd
> How many Kisses might it take—and give! (XXXIV-XXXV)

These stanzas are the strange apex of erotic contact in the *Rubáiyát*. Turning from the impertinent arguments of Doctor and Saint, Khayyám recalls how he sought out instead the pleasures of the vine's sweet oblivion. The strange transubstantiation that unites the speaker's lips with those of a merry-making predecessor upends Catholic ritual and unites the speaker not with the blood of Christ but the material remains of some antecedent reveler, perfectly equipped in this final line to reciprocate with kisses of his own. These innumerable kisses rob infinity from the Christian afterlife and displace it into the mortal capacity of an almost otherworldly kiss. As this speaker meets the "cold Lip" of the reveler's remains, so may his future disciples also kiss his own eventual dust. And even here the second stanza undercuts any definite knowledge of this partner; "I think" hangs over the second quatrain not with the surety of absolute knowledge but with the hopeful desire of the amateur.

This aspirant eroticism requires acts of imaginative fantasy and material transformation to press these bodies together, for this contact can occur only imaginatively, through an uncanny metonymy that links the "earthen," biodegraded remnants of the ancient reveler to a single lip (not even a set!) capable of kissing. After the single lip only, the speaker cannot bring himself to

imagine the reveler's entire body. Barbara Black has suggested that FitzGerald denuded the quatrains of Khayyám's playfulness, sensuality, "general fascination with the body," and "orgiastically [erotic] elements" because the "monogamy of FitzGerald's 'Beloved' and 'I' must prevail" (p. 56). Yet, monogamy seems to miss the mark altogether, as Old Omar imaginatively cultivates a garden which offers a magical access to untold numbers of the dead, and this speaker is surely not a possessive monogamist when he instructs his listener, "And when the Angel with his darker Draught / Draws up to Thee—take that, and do not shrink" (XLVIII). Additionally in 1868 FitzGerald added perhaps his most scandalous lines, which again nudge the beloved into the arms of another to "lose [his] fingers in the tresses of / The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine" (1868, LV). This is hardly the directive of a possessive lover. Rather, the speaker escorts the auditor not only into the sensual foliage of the dead but also into the arms of angels and ministers; of course the poem prizes promiscuous couplings, not monogamy. And yet, these pairings remain, at least in the speaker's imagination, startlingly chaste. In a later quatrain, FitzGerald even calls our attention explicitly to the idea of unconsummated desire:

> And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press
> End in the Nothing all Things end in—Yes—
> Then fancy while Thou art, Thou art but what
> Though shalt be—Nothing—Thou shalt not be less. (XLVII)

Drinking, kissing are ends in themselves—not steps to a more certain fulfillment.[76] Copulation, or more exactly the expectation that sexual knowledge can somehow resolve ontological doubts,

[76] Given FitzGerald's allusiveness, it's possible to wonder if there is in fact an echo of a Shakespearean "Nothing" here, even though it's very difficult to square a genital reading with the fourth line. It's worthwhile noting that FitzGerald himself might have been concerned about this equivocal "Nothing," since in future versions he removed the word entirely and changed the second line to "End in what All begins and ends in—Yes" which tallies with the existential reading and eradicates sexual possibility altogether. The change encourages readers to embrace the dust, as it were. As medieval Persian temporality encouraged the foresight of one's own demise, here, the speaker commands his listener against belief in exceptionalism.

is as wrong-headed as the presumptions of the Doctor or Saint. Lips and wine are salves from which to expect no certain meaning but the immediate pleasures they offer.

The act of reproduction, in one of its few oblique appearances, falls in a train of Destiny's manipulations of human will: "Destiny with Men for Pieces plays: / Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays" (XLIX). Collapsing both reproduction and a vanquishing play within his word choice, FitzGerald presents procreation as both a mechanical affair—a consequence not of human choice but an almost evolutionary inevitability—and the losing maneuver in a game of life. Although FitzGerald replaces "mates" with "checks" in later editions and thereby obscures the dual meaning of the 1858 version, the sly pun in his original translation illustrates the poem's relative distaste for the protocols of conjugality. Moreover, "marriage" as it appears in every version is merely a commitment to the pleasures of inebriation and a renunciation of the Doctor and Saint's attempts at ontological ratiocination: "For a new Marriage I did make Carouse: / Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed, / And took the Daughter of the Vine to spouse" (XL). The *Rubáiyát* discards matrimonial conventions to sing instead an epithalamion to drunkenness. Procreative possibility here is inverted, as the speaker forswears "barren Reason" to marry "the Daughter of the Vine," a bedfellow more closely associated with impotence or casual promiscuity than the reproductive promise of heterosexual marriage. Indeed, the philosophically generative effects of alcohol replace altogether a drive for biological offspring, for, as the speaker implores, "Better be merry with the fruitful Grape / Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit" (XXXIX). More graphically, coition seems altogether undesirable, if not impossible, for a speaker who admits—winking in the stanza directly following his "Marriage"—"I / Was never

deep in anything—but Wine" (XLI).[77] The *Rubáiyát* applies its amateurism then even to the ends of the lover. The uncanny kiss and the caress are the pinnacle of sexual possibility for this speaker.

Or so it seems until he's dead, at least. Near the end of the poem, FitzGerald's speaker looks forward to his own burial, after which his remains will fertilize new blossoms with which to assault the senses of the living. The stanzas suggest a metaphorical ejaculation—the release this speaker can look forward to only after liberation from this mortal world:

> Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
> And wash my Body whence the Life has died,
> And in a Windingsheet of Vine-leaf wrapt,
> So bury me by some sweet Garden-side.
>
> That ev'n my buried Ashes such a Snare
> Of Perfume shall fling up into the Air,
> As not a True Believer passing by
> But shall be overtaken unaware. (LXVII-LXVIII)

Again, the poem belies Black's suggestion of a dedicated "monogamy"; instead, the speaker commits himself to the erotic, promiscuous, perhaps even violent, mixing of the living and the dead. Consummation comes, for this amateur lover, only after death. In this way, the speaker applies the queer force of "taking one's own sweet time" to the ends of the lover, while also

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[77] As I suggested earlier, FitzGerald's own note about the first two lines of this stanza situates this quatrain as Khayyam's "Laugh at his Mathematics, perhaps," committing his speaker as, if not here a dedicated amateur, at least someone prepared to ridicule his own claims to professional knowledge. The erotic and the amateur collapse upon each other in the full stanza:

> For "IS" and "IS-NOT" though *with* Rule and Line,
> And "UP-AND-DOWN" *without*, I could define,
> I yet in all I only cared to know,
> Was never deep in anything but—Wine. (XLI)

Perhaps a sexualized reading of the final lines seems too crude for a Victorian like FitzGerald, yet its close proximity to the speaker's "new Marriage" encourages us to at least consider this possibility. In any case, we must recognize that, unlike the heterosexually rapacious Omar celebrated by later readers, FitzGerald's seems totally uninterested in the physical consummation of desire.

obliquely indicting his culture—or more exactly its religious ideologues—for foreclosing possibilities of desire. In revenge, the dead body of this speaker will assault future believers, not with the gentle kisses of the vessel or the soft touch of the herb, but with an overpowering olfactory ejaculate.

FitzGerald's biography may shine some light on the idea of the amateur lover. FitzGerald's short-lived and disastrous marriage to his friend Bernard Barton's daughter Lucy is well-known: Robert Martin records that throughout the engagement, the ceremony, and especially the honeymoon in 1856, FitzGerald was miserable: "The bitterness, even coarseness, with which he later spoke of her sounds like a thinly disguised transferal of self-loathing, and the physical terms in which he expressed his disgust suggest that what lay at the base of his unwonted lack of charity was his own physical failure as a husband."[78] FitzGerald's own surviving language suggests that he did not have particularly "sanguine" expectations for his marriage, which he admitted to one friend seemed more like "a very doubtful Experiment."[79] Shocked by his friend's manner with Lucy after the marriage, William Donne wrote to Fanny Kemble of the couple's new "dark and dismal" lodgings: "he says that 'his contemporary'—which, being interpreted, means his wife! looks in this chamber of horrors like Lucrezia Borgia. Most extraordinary of Benedicks is our friend. He talks like Bluebeard."[80] The violence underscoring this account is still relatively shocking, and for the good of all concerned the pair split relatively quickly. If Martin's hypothesis that FitzGerald was concerned with his own "physical failure as a husband" holds any credence, it is clear to see why Khayyám may have held some fascination for him, as Old Fitz drowned himself "through the latter part of his

[78] Martin, *With Friends Possessed*, 194.
[79] *Letters*, 2:239.
[80] *Letters*, 2:244.

marriage" in the quatrains that Cowell had copied.[81] Like the listener who brushes against the lips of yesterday's youth, FitzGerald himself found literature to be a similar means of transference and escape from his "Contemporary." Writing to Cowell during his early studies of the second manuscript and in the wake of his marriage, FitzGerald admits, "Omar breathes a sort of Consolation to me."[82] FitzGerald feels the soft touch of Khayyám's ancient exhalation, as his speaker outlines the beautiful bodies of the dead in the foliage surrounding him. Khayyám's gentle breath of consolation was the anesthetic for the pain of FitzGerald's failures as a husband.

Havelock Ellis, in his 1915 edition of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, choose to include FitzGerald in a catalog of famous inverts, with reservations about how well he fit into the category: "it is easy to trace an element of homosexuality [in FitzGerald], though it appears never to have reached full and conscious development."[83] In sexological terms, FitzGerald is a liminal sexual figure—a dilettante faggot—neither a "full and conscious" invert nor a successful husband. At the very moment of their medical codification, then, FitzGerald seems to scramble sexual definitions. Later twentieth-century criticism is as unsure as Ellis himself. In his 1985 biography, Martin writes, "It is hard for modern readers to understand, but FitzGerald probably never directly faced the emotions that [other men] stirred in him."[84] Yet, four years later, Davis counters in his introduction to the poem: "It is frankly incredible that a man could have so little consciousness of his own sexual instincts…. [H]e was fully cognizant of the nature of his sexuality."[85] Was he, or wasn't he? The question simply isn't fair. FitzGerald was not as

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[81] Martin, *With Friends Possessed*, 202.
[82] *Letters*, 2:273.
[83] Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex, Vol. II: Sexual Inversion* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1915), 50.
[84] Martin, *With Friends Possessed*, 113.
[85] Davis, Introduction, 22-3. Davis argues that Lucy was as well. Preserved in Ernest Betham's collection *A House of Letters*, Lucy wrote, "Touching his boyhood, the deduction may be

sexually fearless as younger men like Wilde or Symonds; nor was he a paragon of nineteenth-century marital masculinity. He is somewhere in between. If we take the twenty-three-year-old FitzGerald at his own words, he developed the most passion in his friendships: "I suppose that people who are engaged in serious ways of life, and are of well filled minds, don't think much about the interchange of letters with any anxiety: but I am an idle fellow, of a very ladylike turn of sentiment: and my friendships are more like loves, I think."[86] Here, in his characteristic candor, FitzGerald connects his idleness specifically to his capacity for romantic fulfillment; he describes himself as the amateur lover.

As the dilettante faggot, then, FitzGerald forswore conventional protocols of both heterosexual marriage and same-sex desire and created instead a poem that envisions an ambiguous, eroticized network of multiple, fragmented bodies. Compositionally, the translation linked FitzGerald to Cowell, who had sailed to India with his wife three months before FitzGerald's own marriage for an appointment at Presidency College, Calcutta. Norman Page, comparing the *Rubáiyát*'s connection to Cowell with *In Memoriam*'s reverence for Hallam, notes, "For FitzGerald, the study of Persian in general and of Omar Khayyám in particular were closely woven into the texture of his friendship with Cowell: his *Rubáiyát* might later be taken as an expression of the *Zeitgeist*, but its origins were intimately personal."[87] On one level, then, the poem was an elaborate flirtation with his young friend, whose faith, marriage, and removal to

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ventured, not without a shade of certainty, that if among his school-fellows flourished any embryo Apollo he would have temporarily constituted the youth his heart's idol." Ernest Betham, *A House of Letters: Being Excerpts from the Correspondence of Miss Charlotte Jerningham (the Honble. Lady Bedingfeld), Lady Jerningham, Coleridge, Lamb, Southey, Bernard and Lucy Barton, and others, with Matilda Betham ; and from Diaries and various sources; and a Chapter upon Landor's Quarrel with Charles Betham at Llanthony* (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1905), 260.

[86] *Letters*, 1:153.

[87] Norman Page, "Larger Hopes and the New Hedonism: Tennyson and FitzGerald," in *Tennyson: Seven Essays*, edited by Philip Collins (New York: St. Martins, 1992), 151.

India likely seemed to be barriers as insurmountable as death itself. On another, the study of Khayyám rejuvenated a FitzGerald miserable with his failures as a husband and offered the translator an intimacy across time that his marriage never could. The poem simultaneously telegraphs FitzGerald's failures as both gay and straight.

But the poem isn't merely a link to Cowell, the haunted return of Khayyám, or even a Tennysonian fantasy of togetherness with FitzGerald's deceased friend William Browne. FitzGerald's manifold allusions suggest that poetry can provide a similar kind of transference—of mediation—as the herb or vessel which revivifies a dead lip. These allusions suggest the poem is a fantasy of belonging—of union—with the amateur's literary loves. FitzGerald writes himself, his Omar, and his Cowell, into his eroticized garden of earlier texts, where the language of each, composed of the small fragments that FitzGerald allows his speaker to imagine, forms a complex, multifarious textual landscape. Moreover, the *Rubáiyát*'s determined commitment to the gendered ambiguity of the bodies in the dust, despite the possibility of FitzGerald's own latent desires—or his speaker's—imagines an erotic topography uncompromised by the designations of sex. Death returns us to dust—to nothing—where we may finally abandon biological, cultural, and religious prohibitions determined by sexual categorization. FitzGerald eroticizes the dirt; Khayyam kisses the dust; for death is the great leveler that erases sexual difference. The poem's eroticisms are not opposite or same-sex. They are both and neither. The poem offers the fantasy of an erotics unencumbered by sex and gender, and, in this way, the *Rubáiyát*'s erotics are decidedly amateur. By refusing sexual designations for its uncanny partners, emphasizing their conditionality, turning up its nose at conventions of marriage and consummation, and serving as a monument to its translator's failed marriage and unrequited

same-sex attraction, the poem commits itself to something much more queer than scholarship has previously noted, and this queerness is intimately wrapped up in the poem's amateurism.

Robert Graves intended for his slur to dismiss the "dilettante faggot" and his work, yet he unwittingly gave us a category of investigation for a man of FitzGerald's generation, whose tender passions may have never developed into the fervent curiosity or sexual adventurousness of late-century men like Symonds or Wilde, but whose friendships and literary romances remained central foundations of his personal fulfillment. In the ecology of the poem, of course, destiny remands all of us "back in the Closet" where, if sexuality determined by object choice does matter, it's clouded by unknowability (XLIX). This "Closet" is of course a grave, but importantly it doesn't function as a mechanism of prohibition. Rather, when these closet doors close, we're enlisted in a promiscuous network of circulating matter, so, like this speaker, even the perfume of our "buried Ashes" might ensnare future passersby (LXVIII). Like his speaker, FitzGerald seems totally uninterested in sexuality as a technology of knowledge, power, or fulfillment, so of course his papers reveal few declaratory statements about desire. Instead, FitzGerald, ever the exquisite amateur, shared his affections generously among his friends and interests and gilded this philosophy into his most famous translation. In the celebratory amateurism of its design, themes, and eroticism, the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* is a testament to the dilettante faggot.

CHAPTER 3

'EXQUIS AMATEURS': *THE RENAISSANCE* AND THE PROFESSION OF DILETTANTISM

> "[F]aint, pale, embarrassed exquisite Pater! He reminds me, in the disturbed midnight of our actual literature, of one of those lucent matchboxes which you place, on going to bed, near the candle, to show you, in the darkness, where you can strike a light: he shines in the uneasy gloom—vaguely, and has a phosphorescence, not a flame."
>
> - Henry James[1]

> "Why should I seek to ease intense desire?"
>
> - Michelangelo, "To Tommaso Cavalieri," from the first edition of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*[2]

I. "Exquis Amateurs"

In Walter Pater's short fiction "Hippolytus Veiled," published posthumously in 1895, young Hippolytus finds his way to the adoration of Artemis through his reading; entering the temple of the goddess of the chase, he becomes captivated by "a series of crowded imageries" that portray "all the varied incidents of her story, in all the detail of a written book": "A book," Pater goes on to write, "for the delighted reading of a scholar, willing to ponder at leisure, to

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[1] To Edmund Gosse, 13 Dec. 1894, in *The Letters of Henry James*, ed. Percy Lubbock, 2 vols (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 1:222.

[2] Michelangelo, "To Tommaso Cavalieri," trans. John A. Symonds, in "Textual Notes," *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry: The 1893 Text*, ed. Donald Hill (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980), 225.

make his way surely, and understand."[3] Pondering at leisure, this scholar is "delighted" by his labor as he ambles forward to a greater comprehension. In Pater's hands, the work of the scholar is delightful and leisurely; it appears, not surprisingly, like little work at all.

It's difficult to think of Pater as an amateur like FitzGerald. Pater was a working Oxford fellow and essayist for all his adult life. His novel *Marius the Epicurean* was a moderate success, and *The Renaissance* had a profound influence on aesthetic culture from its first publication in 1873. He is an eminent Victorian scholar. Yet "amateur" not only encapsulates the critical stance of his masterwork but may also offer a perspective on Pater's professional accomplishments. Harold Bloom has famously called Pater's life "only ambiguously a success," but he merely echoes earlier consensus.[4] For example, Pater's status as an Oxonian was gently challenged by his first biographer A.C. Benson, who reported Humphrey Ward's comment that Pater was "no scholar, as the universities understand the word."[5] Laurel Brake has classified Benson's work as a "misleading, widow biography" and even contemporary reviewers, like one from the *Daily Mail*, discerned that the volume's ambitions were not to reveal the famously elusive life but instead 'to drop a rose on Pater's grave."[6] It seems surprising, then, that Benson continues to interrogate Pater's commitment to his work: "he did not consider himself a professional educator, though he thought it a plain duty to give encouragement and sympathy in intellectual things to any students who desired or needed direction" (23). Moreover, "he seldom

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[3] Walter Pater, "Hippolytus Veiled," *Imaginary Portraits*, ed. Lene Østermark-Johansen (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2014), 215-237, 227.
[4] Harold Bloom, "The Crystal Man," introduction to *Selected Writings of Walter Pater* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1974), vii-xxxi, xxii.
[5] A.C. Benson, *Walter Pater* (London: Macmillan, 1906), 22. Subsequent citations appear parenthetically in the text.
[6] Laurel Brake, "Judas and the Widow: Thomas Wright and A.C. Benson as Biographers of Walter Pater", *Walter Pater: An Imaginative Sense of Fact*, ed. Philip Dodd (London: Frank Cass, 1981), 39-54, 40, 51.

set subjects, but required that a man should choose a subject in which he was interested" (24). Benson's pedagogical Pater emerges from this early biography as an unconventional fellow, brusquely disregarding professional precedent to allow his students the intellectual freedom he prized for himself.

Ward's contention that Pater was "no scholar" suggests a dissonance between his professional life as a Classical scholar and his published work on modern and renaissance subjects. Laurel Brake has suggested that in fact, for much of his life, Pater had two careers: "one in the university and one as a journalist, writer, and eventually 'author.'"[7] After Pater's death in 1894, friends fought to enshrine a more professionally scholarly Pater in the public sphere. Stefano Evangelista has shown that in 1895, his literary executor and friend Charles Shadwell issued a series of essays as *Greek Studies* that sought to exculpate Pater from criticisms as a father of aestheticism and emphasize instead his seriousness as a classical scholar.[8] In effect, Shadwell seeks to enamber Pater's value precisely in the "depth and seriousness of his [professional] studies" and elide the influence of his earlier works.[9] Here, Shadwell demonstrates how Pater's legacy in the early twentieth-century was being cultivated to appear more forthrightly professional, against the grain of the impressionist criticism Pater had himself advocated in the Preface to *The Renaissance*. Pater would indeed require such recuperative projects to stave off later criticism from the likes of T.S. Eliot, who highlighted Pater's

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[7] Laurel Brake, *Print in Transition*, *1850-1910: Studies in Media and Book History* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 185.
[8] Stefano Evangelista, "*Greek Studies* and Pater's Delayed Meaning," *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* 57, no. 2 (2014): 170-183, 173.
[9] C.L. Shadwell, "Preface" to *Greek Studies*, in *The New Library Edition of the Works of Walter Pater,* 10 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1910), 6:9.

amateurism and queerness with claims that he was "incapable of sustained reasoning" and, obliquely, "not wholly irresponsible for some untidy lives."[10]

Early reviewers of the 1873 text noted Pater's amateurism suspiciously. R.V. Johnson writes that critical dismissals of Pater often characterized his work "as a classic instance of uncontrolled sensibility," "[lacking] the discipline necessary for a true apprehension of works of literature and graphic art."[11] Undisciplined and uncontrolled, *The Renaissance* fails to live up to dispassionate standards of scholarship. Writing in October 1873 in the *Nation*, W.J. Stillman considered Pater "too much of an artist to be a good critic" and deemed him a "'diletto' rather than 'cognosco.'"[12] Stillman suggests that Pater's affection for his subjects corrupts, or even forestalls, his criticism, as though desire has supplanted all reasoned discourse or revelation: Stillman identifies "his creed, which is that of most dilettanti, viz., that there is no standard, that there are no fundamental principles in art, but simply recognitions of personal sympathies and expressions of personal delights" (82). In effect, the *Nation*'s reviewer paves the way for Margaret Oliphant's more famous and less forgiving riposte in the pages of *Blackwood's* the following month. Oliphant rebukes the work as mere ornament, "a purely decorative piece of work," while excoriating Pater's navel-gazing as damningly amateurish: "Thus it is in furtherance of the grand pursuit of self-culture that he writes, treating all the great art and artists of the past, and all the centuries of men, as chiefly important and attractive in their relations to

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[10] T.S. Eliot, "Arnold and Pater," in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932), 346-358, 354, 356.

[11] R.V. Johnson, *Walter Pater: A Study of his Critical Outlook and Achievement* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1961), v.

[12] W.J. Stillman, "unsigned review in the *Nation*," in *Walter Pater, The Critical Heritage*, ed. R.M. Seiler (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, 81-85, 82, cited hereafter as *The Critical Heritage.* One historical irony resulting from this review might be that Stephen L. Dyson's new critical biography of Stillman is titled *The Last Amateur*. Stephen L. Dyson, *The Last Amateur: The Life of William J. Stillman* (Albany: Excelsior Editions, 2014).

that Me who is the centre of the *dilettante's* world."[13] A dangerous, perhaps even onanistic, Pater emerges from Oliphant's review, as the private cultivation of the self eclipses the civic virtue of art.[14]

However, these critics only repeated an idea Pater himself enshrined in his work. The introductory paragraph of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* famously dismisses attempts to define beauty in the abstract to make room for, instead, its essential relativity. The movement of the paragraph tracks a humble retreat from professionalism to apprenticeship; thus Pater begins with a gentle critique of "writers on art and poetry" and ends with the hopeful "aim of the true student of æsthetics." The reverse development from writer to student is typical of Pater's humility, and, of course, the two categories aren't mutually exclusive. Yet, the movement of the paragraph nonetheless stages a retreat from professional endeavor. While "writers" engage in tasks of designation, their definitions are "unmeaning and useless in proportion to [their] abstractness." Pater begins his book with the fact of their "Many attempts," a reminder of their many professional failures. "The true student" however disregards the pursuit of abstract definitions to alight upon "the most concrete terms possible."[15] In Pater, of course, self-reflection is the means to this concrete knowledge, and amateur subjectivity outshines abstract

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[13] Margaret Oliphant, "unsigned review in *Blackwood's Magazine*," in *The Critical Heritage*, 85-91, 87.

[14] Oddly, no scholar has considered how Oliphant's review recapitulates Pater's own thinking about evolution in the famous passage from the "Leonardo" essay about the figure of *La Giaconda* who symbolizes a "humanity […] wrought upon by and summing up in itself all modes of thought and life" (99). Both Pater in Oliphant's review and the Giaconda herself are vampires gorging themselves on an enormous appetite for art and history. In effect, Oliphant's review testifies to the success of Pater's aesthetic criticism, for the author himself is inseparable from the object of critique.

[15] Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry: The 1893 Text*, ed. Donald Hill (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1980), xix. Subsequent citations cited parenthetically in the text.

objectivity. Pater's equivocal use of "true" to describe the "student of aesthetics" connotes both a dedicated learner and a correct one. In this latter sense, amateurism emerges as a more accurate practice of knowledge than professionalism. The first paragraph of *The Renaissance* then stages the eclipse of the professional by the amateur.

By far Pater's more direct praise of amateurism occurs later in the Preface with a quote from the French critic Sainte-Beuve:

> [The aesthetic critic's] end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others; and the rule for those who would reach this end is stated with great exactness in the words of a recent critique of Sainte-Beuve: — *De se borner à connaître de près les belles choses, et à s'en nourrir en exquis amateurs, en humanistes accomplis*. (xxi)

Amateurism here is a means to an end, a methodology, and a rule to be followed in the pursuit of aesthetic criticism. T.W. Heyck has traced how Victorian sciences exhibited an authoritative and dispassionate professionalism that led to the reform of the universities and the general intellectual climate of the nation after 1859.[16] In the quote above, Pater capitalizes on this idea by referring to the practice of the chemist, yet, though science may provide the objective of criticism, it does not suggest the means. The critic "notes" *as* a chemist, but "the rule for those who would reach this end" is a process of self-nourishment inspired by the appetites of the amateur and the humanist. Science may model a future ambition, but the work of thought is clearly an amateur's game.

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[16] See T.W. Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England* (New York: St. Martin's, 1982), 81-119.

Sainte-Beuve had been discussing, according to Donald Hill, a "moment when the first literary labors of Renaissance erudition had been completed and the great authors of ancient times were available in printed books":

> Let us allow ourselves to imagine what it was like to be a friend of Racine or Fénelon, a M. de Tréville, a M. de Valincour, one of those well-bred people who did not aim at being authors, but who confined themselves to reading, to knowing beautiful things at first hand, and to nourishing themselves on these things as discriminating amateurs, as accomplished humanists. For one was humanist then, something almost no longer permitted today. (trans. Hill, 298-99)

This chapter discusses how Pater likely felt a similar threat to humanism in the Oxford of the 1870s. As he watched university reform eclipse an older model of intellectual inquiry with a commitment to professionalization, Pater enthroned amateur intellectualism as a golden ideal in his Preface, which reverberates across two significantly queer essays in the book. I begin by discussing the figures of Abelard and Héloïse in both the first and second editions of *The Renaissance* as models of a queer pagan pedagogy in medieval Europe. Not only does Pater's Héloïse challenge the practice of Victorian classicism at Oxford, but Abelard represents for Pater a kind of humanist intellectual at odds with the "professional ministers" of his time and boasts a triumph of anti-professional sensibility. Next, I consider the provenance of "professional" education in the history of Oxford and trace Pater's intellectual debt to Newman's *Idea of a University*, which celebrates learning for its own sake, a luxury out of synch with Oxford's modernization. In the final section, I return to *The Renaissance* to show how Pater positions Johann Winckelmann as a queer intellectual hero, who represents the triumph of the amateur sensibility over the proscriptions of an intellectually stagnant professional education in the

contemporary world. Together, these sections build on the work of scholars such as William Shuter and Stefano Evangelista who have re-evaluated Ward's early claims about Pater's scholarship and uncover heretofore unrecognized ways in which Pater was deeply committed to revolutionizing Oxonian pedagogy. In effect, this chapter demonstrates how *The Renaissance* develops the sensibility of the exquisite amateur as a program for sexual iconoclasm and intellectual radicalism in the stale professionalizing environment of modern Oxford. Together, these sections tell a story about Pater's reluctant embrace of professing professionally and show the depth of his thought about his teaching practice and its place in the modern university.

II. Professional Scandal: Pater's Abelard

Upon its publication in 1873, the early history of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*'s reception ranges from the national stage where Margaret Oliphant condemns Pater as a self-obsessed dilettante in *Blackwood's,* to the private sphere where George Eliot rebukes the study in her correspondence as "quite poisonous," and more locally for Walter Pater in his environs at Oxford, where the then Bishop of Oxford John Fielder Mackarnass lamented its atheism and Pater's own former pupil, current colleague, and Brasenose chaplain John Wordsworth worried whether Pater "could indeed have known the dangers in which [he] was likely to lead minds weaker than [his] own."[17] Wordsworth's letter rebuked Pater especially for the title page of *Studies* which listed Pater's position "Fellow of Brasenose College" under his name. Wordsworth wrote: "I am aware that the concluding pages are, with small exceptions,

[17] Margaret Oliphant, "unsigned review in *Blackwood's Magazine*," in *The Critical Heritage*, 85-91, 87. George Eliot, in *The Critical Heritage*, 92.

taken from a review of Morris's poems published in 1868 in the *Westminster Review*. But that article was anonymous, whereas this appears under your own name as a Fellow of Brasenose and as the mature result of your studies in an important period of history."[18] Wordsworth identifies how *Studies*, and in particular its atheism, seemed to many of Pater's Oxford colleagues to breach university decorum, even after the repeal of the Test Acts allowing instruction from nonclerical fellows. In sum, Wordsworth denounces Pater's first book as a *professional* scandal.

The stigma of *Studies* had barely begun to ebb when Pater was thrust into yet another professional embarrassment that put him at odds with Balliol master and Regius Professor of Greek Benjamin Jowett the following year. In 1874, Pater had become involved with nineteen-year-old student William Money Hardinge, infamous in some quarters of Oxford as "the Balliol bugger" and the author of some homoerotic verse. Although the details of this relationship are lost to history, we may be fairly sure based on the academic investigations of Billie Inman that when some amorous correspondence between the pair was placed before Jowett, he sent the boy down from Oxford for a year in an anxious attempt to keep both Balliol and the university unsullied by associations of homosexuality.[19] Inman, building on Benson's biography that details a professional antipathy between the pair, suggests that perhaps Jowett interfered at Brasenose as well and interceded in the college's selection of University Proctor, a position generally elected on seniority and thus due to Pater, so that his candidacy was blocked and

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[18] John Wordsworth to Walter Pater, 17 March 1873, in *Letters of Walter Pater*, edited by Lawrence Evans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 12-14, 13.

[19] Inman records that Hardinge was sent down from Oxford by Jowett the very day Brasenose formally nominated Wordsworth for the proctorship. See, for a fulsome review of the scandal, Billie Andrew Inman, "Estrangement and Connection: Walter Pater, Benjamin Jowett, and William M. Hardinge," *Pater in the 1990s*, ed. Laurel Brake and Ian Small (Greensboro: ELT Press, 1991), 1-20, 13. William Shuter muddies the waters in "The 'Outing' of Walter Pater" *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 48, no. 4 (1994): 480-506.

Wordsworth instead selected for the position. Regardless of what may or may not have passed between Pater and Hardinge, the scandals surrounding the affair demonstrate that, a year after he published his first volume, sexual perversion was added to Pater's established reputation for atheism, both of which were used to impede his Oxford career. Not just the texts themselves but the man had become, in the eyes of his colleagues, a poisonous influence.

Stefano Evangelista has argued that this history informs Pater's resignation from his tutorship in the early 1880s, for he was undoubtedly beleaguered by "a long process of alienation and bullying to which he had been subjected at Oxford, produced by the conjoint influences of religious intolerance, homophobia, and continued ideological opposition."[20] Evangelista suggests that Pater's rejoinders to the scandal surface most clearly in his last book *Plato and Platonism*, composed of a series of lectures he delivered in 1891 and 1892. Though this book has traditionally been read as Pater's reconciliation of aestheticism with dominant, nineteenth-century "moral imperatives," it in fact carves room for aestheticism within a Platonic tradition; Pater writes, for instance, that Plato "anticipates the modern notion that art as such has no end but its own perfection."[21] In this way, Pater stakes claim for aesthetic principles in the very ground of Jowett's renown, and perhaps offers his final rebuke to the man who dampened Pater's professional ambitions two decades earlier. But this more confrontational Pater has emerged in recent criticism only; mid-twentieth century scholars promoted what Laurel Brake has called the "retrospective retrenchment theory" of Pater's oeuvre.[22] In critical histories put forward in the

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[20] Stefano Evangelista, "Walter Pater's Teaching at Oxford: Classics and Aestheticism," in *Oxford Classics: Teaching and Learning 1800-2000*, edited by Christopher Stray (London: Duckworth, 2007), 64-77, 68.
[21] Evangelista, "Walter Pater's Teaching at Oxford," 69; Walter Pater, *Plato and Platonism: A Series of Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1895), 268. Subsequent references cited parenthetically.
[22] Laurel Brake, *Print in Transition*, 213.

mid-twentieth century, the retrenchment theory gains traction from, most famously, the withdrawn Conclusion of the second edition of *The Renaissance* and a canceled plan for another book in late 1878.[23]

Scholars such as Brake, Evangelista, and Richard Dellamora argue persuasively against the retrenchment theory and suggest how we might read Pater's earlier works to be just as combative against Oxonian traditionalism as Evangelista reveals *Plato and Platonism* to be. Brake examines Pater's journalism in the *Fortnightly* and *Macmillan's* throughout the seventies as texts that "persist in exploring the possibilities of what may be called 'gay' discourse" under the rubric of classical subjects.[24] Similarly, Dellamora considers the removal of the Conclusion a cautious safeguard from scandal as Pater found himself "embroiled in the contest to elect a new Professor of Poetry" in May 1877 but shows how other revisions to the remaining text balance this loss and even increase the volume's homoerotic content.[25] Dellamora considers the changes that revolutionized the first chapter "Aucassin and Nicolette" into "Two Early French Stories" in 1877 particularly noteworthy as Pater added a discussion of "a thirteenth-century French romance centered on male friendship," *The Friendship of Amis and Amile* (148). For Dellamora, Amis and Amile allow Pater to "connect medieval Christian culture with the tradition of sexual friendship between men in Greek culture" (153). Dellamora paints a fiercely independent portrait of Pater, untempered by harsh reviews and collegial disputes though moderately cautious in the hopes of a promotion.

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[23] See Geoffrey Tillotson, *Criticism and the Nineteenth Century* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1967), 124-126. And U.C. Knoepflmacher, *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel: George Eliot, Walter Pater, and Samuel Butler* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), 7-8, 153-55.
[24] Brake, *Print in Transition*, 214.
[25] Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1990), 147.

However, in his excitement over Amis and Amile, Dellamora nearly skips over entirely the other modifications Pater made to the chapter, notably in the history of Abelard and Héloïse. This chapter builds on the framework he has established to interrogate Abelard and Héloïse as symbols of a queer pagan pedagogy and scholarly practice. The medieval pair assumes a greater significance in the version of 1877 as Pater doubles his attention to them, and two paragraphs from the original version expand into five. Dellamora does mention that their story allows Pater to associate the earliest beginnings of the Renaissance with "aberrant sexual behavior," but he doesn't consider the history in any depth (149). This is surprising, especially, because in the very first pages of the first chapter of the first book he published after the first volume and the Hardinge affair, Pater examines one of the most famous sexual and religious scandals in the history of Western education.

Inman concludes her research into the Hardinge scandal with a brief look at Pater's Abelard as a representation of Pater's "anger, pain, and recognition of the circumscribed boundaries within which he would be constrained to live if he were to remain acceptable to polite society."[26] For Inman, the Abelard of 1877 represents the first instance in Pater's oeuvre of the martyred hero, and she traces the influence of the scandal in later works like *Marius the Epicurean*, the fictional histories of *Imaginary Portraits,* and the essays of *Appreciations*. Because the majority of her argument unearths the details of the Hardinge affair, she doesn't examine Pater's Abelard in detail. This chapter develops her suggestion that the revisions to the Abelard section represent Pater's response to the Hardinge scandal and considers how he uses this history as a context to critique Oxonian pedagogy practiced and celebrated by the likes of Jowett.

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[26] Inman, "Estrangement," 19.

For Pater, Abelard "prefigures the character of the Renaissance" in medieval France, and the affair with Héloïse remains central to Pater's retelling (5). If the Renaissance represents for Pater the return of Hellenic temper into the modern world, Abelard stands out as a hero of Platonic pedagogy in combining both intellectual rigor and a Greek delight in physicality. In *Plato and Platonism*, Pater categorizes Plato's genius as simultaneously "transcendental" and "richly sensuous" (113). He is, in fact, at pains to make the sensual side of Plato legible to his audience: Plato is "unalterably a lover," who knew "all the ways of lovers, in the literal sense" (120-1). More clearly, the ancient philosopher "himself had not been always a mere Platonic lover; was rather, naturally, […] subject to the influence of fair persons" (121). For Pater, there is a "natural" (homoerotic) sensuousness to intellectual practice from its founding moments in the cultural history of the West, and true genius unites this physicality with a radical intellectualism. Surprisingly, as an opposite sex pair, Abelard and Héloïse emerge in *The Renaissance* as the first early modern figures to implement this classical practice. In the essay on Winckelmann, Pater makes an idiosyncratic translation from an idea in the *Phaedrus* about "the privileges granted to the souls of those who combine the love of boys with the pursuit of wisdom"—he calls this soul "lover and philosopher at once."[27] Abelard, whom Pater introduces in his first essay as "the great scholar and the great lover" represents this Platonic idea by conjoining, in Pater's language, "the liberty of the heart" with the "liberty of the intellect" (3). He inaugurates Pater's volume with a commitment to both wisdom and physicality and offers a promise of a dormant Hellenic temperament in a blighted modern world.

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[27] Trans. Stefano Evangelista, "'Lovers and Philosophers in One': Aesthetic Platonism in the Victorian Fin de Siècle," *Yearbook of English Studies* 36 (2006), 230-44, 240; Pater, *The Renaissance* 155.

It's tempting to read even the original sections on Abelard from 1873 anachronistically, so easily do they seem to comment on what we now know about the Hardinge affair. Indeed, they may register Pater's ambivalence about moral and legal proscriptions against same-sex love at Oxford, but more importantly they contain a critique of the classical pedagogy of Jowett whose reserved English translation of the *Dialogues of Plato* had appeared two years previously:

> Every one knows the legend of Abelard, a legend hardly less passionate, certainly not less characteristic of the middle age, than the legend of Tannhäuser; how the famous and comely clerk, in whom Wisdom herself, self- possessed, pleasant, and discreet, seemed to sit enthroned, came to live in the house of a canon of the church of Notre-Dame where dwelt a girl Héloïse, believed to be the old priest's orphan niece, his love for whom he had testified by giving her an education then unrivalled, so that rumour even asserted that, through the knowledge of languages, enabling her to penetrate into the mysteries of the older World, she had become a sorceress, like the Celtic druidesses; and how as Abelard and Héloïse sat together at home there, to refine a little further on the nature of abstract ideas, "Love made himself of the party with them." (3)

Pater's focus on "the knowledge of languages" as a gateway to the past reflects the ethos of literary study at Victorian Oxford, but this passage points to Héloïse's mastery of languages as a singularity which opens up to her "the mysteries of the older World." For this comprehension of antiquity, "rumour" condemns her as otherworldly, "a sorceress, like the Celtic druidessess." In other words, gossip polices the study of "the older World" with suspicious accusations, inspired, Pater suggests, by perceptions of religious iconoclasm and the gendered irregularity of Héloïse's learned ability "to penetrate." In effect, Héloïse's skillful scholarship risks social ostracism in the

pursuit of truth. Part of Héloïse's heroism, here, is her eschewal of social convention; she refuses to compromise her own enlightenment for the sake of her reputation or the comfort of her neighbors.

"Love made himself of the party with them" is actually a misquotation, and a stunning rewriting of history. Donald Hill speculates that Pater confused Abelard's autobiography with an editorial comment from a 1781 French edition of the letters.[28] Nonetheless, it is a striking editorializing of the *Historia*, which compares Abelard's pursuit of Héloïse to that of a "ravening wolf" for "a tender lamb" and admits his willingness "to bend her to my will by threats and blows" should she refuse his advances.[29] Pater obscures any hint of this sexual violence with the misquotation which suggests a rather benignant mutual attraction by removing any agency from either party and placing it instead on eros personified. He rewrites the lurid beginnings of their affair to tally with his Platonic ideal: mutual desire is here an integral part of intellectualism. His sentence meanders to its ahistorical romantic climax, because he means to emphasize first the great percipience of each party and show that the physical nature of their relationship was intimately involved with their intellectual pursuits. The end of the sentence encapsulates this notion perfectly; "as" creates a simultaneity between the practices of philosophy and love that refashions Abelard and Héloïse in the image of Plato.

I believe that Pater's original emphasis on Héloïse's perspicacity and ability to divine the secrets of the past is an oblique commentary on Jowett's English translation of Plato that had appeared two years before the first edition of *The Renaissance*. Jowett had struggled to write

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[28] Donald Hill, "Critical and Explanatory Notes," in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry: The 1893 Text*, 306.
[29] Peter Abelard, *Historia Calamitum* in *The Letters of Abelard and Héloïse,* trans. Betty Radice (London: Penguin, 2003), 10.

about Greek *paiderastia* since describing "The State of the Heathen World" in his edition of the Pauline epistles in 1859. He wrote of "A great gulf fixed between us and them which no willingness to make allowance for the differences of ages or countries would enable us to pass."[30] This tactic was at odds with Jowett's larger mission of reform. Jowett's central role in changes to classical study at Oxford had eschewed "the narrowly grammatical and rhetorical focus" of earlier iterations of the discipline, unseated the primacy of Aristotle's *Ethics* with the Platonic dialogues, emphasized the historical context of the ancient world, and made clear the value of classical scholarship to contemporary life.[31] But to preserve the usefulness of Plato for Victorian England, he was forced to police the dialogues' investments in same-sex love. When Jowett's *Dialogues of Plato* appeared in 1871, male love is "the greatest evil of Greek life" in the introduction to *The Symposium*, and Alcibiades's affections are both "perverted" and, more importantly, "unintelligible."[32] This last word suggests a limit to Jowett's historicism; Greek *paiderastia* clashes against the limits of Victorian understanding.

For Pater, however, the medieval Héloïse is a better student of ancient languages than Jowett. The verb "penetrate" shows that Héloïse's understanding is not rote, or memorized; she's able to engage with the records of the past actively. She reads through the letter of the text to unfurl its meaning. In this way, Héloïse's acumen in Greek and Latin reflects some of Jowett's reforms to classical scholarship. However, her ability "to penetrate into the mysteries of the older World" suggests that she lacks Jowett's professionally decorous habit of rendering

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[30] Qtd. in Frank Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1984), 425.
[31] Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality at Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1994), 73-77. Subsequent citations appear parenthetically within the text.
[32] Benjamin Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871) 1st ed., 1:486. The second edition of 1875 will instruct Jowett's readers to substitute the love of woman for love between men.

some aspects of ancient life as "unintelligible." Jowett's introduction to the translated *Symposium* circumscribes some historical truths, but Héloïse pursues them steadfastly. Hers is an historical curiosity that doesn't shrink before the past; rather she lays it fully open to her understanding. Here, Héloïse represents not only Pater's preferred method of classical scholarship but also his rejoinder to the neutered *Dialogues* published by Jowett.

Pater's next statement after the lengthy introductory sentence is a defense of Abelard's sexual transgressions, directed in the second-person to his reader: "You conceive the temptations of the scholar, who, in such dreamy tranquility, amid the bright and busy spectacle of the 'Island,' lived in a world of something like shadows; and that for one who knew so well how to assign its exact value to every abstract thought, those restraints which lie on the consciences of other men had been relaxed" (3-4). In Pater's hands, Abelard's cloistered solitude engenders temptation, and his intelligence enables him to escape the restrictions of conventional morality. That Abelard knows "so well how to assign its exact value to every abstract thought" suggests that he has a more discriminating morality than others who lack his capacity to discern the difference between just and unjust "restraints"; for Pater, Abelard's is a higher morality. This sentence marks Pater's first second-person address of the volume, and it offers a program in sympathy for a sexual iconoclast in a seclusion more akin to Pater's own than Abelard's. Again, Pater's defense differs remarkably from Abelard's own account in the *Historia,* in which he admits, "success always puffs up fools with pride, and worldly security weakens the spirit's resolution and easily destroys it through carnal temptations" (9). Where Pater identifies a profound intelligence and isolation at the root of Abelard's temptation, the autobiography locates pride bloated by worldly success. The prism of Pater's prose reflects more accurately his own conditions than those of his subject.

Pater's Abelard is one of many mirrors for himself in his writings, as Inman and Gerald Monsman have suggested.[33] Read autobiographically, the Abelard of '73 suggests a Pater struggling with feelings of prohibited desire and loneliness in his early career at Oxford. It also offers a commentary on the current state of classicism practiced at Oxford. The revisions Pater makes to the '77 edition do not change this initial description, though he does enhance the similarity between himself and Abelard by introducing the historical figure not as a "clerk" but a "scholar," downplaying in turn Abelard's official status with the new title. Congruently, Pater's focus shifts to Abelard's persecutors and registers a profound antipathy for the intrusions of what he calls "professional" ministers. Inman has identified this as the second edition's most "subjective" alteration, one that initiates a larger pattern in Pater's oeuvre of a soul being torn to shreds—an image which reverberates across the *Imaginary Portraits* and in *Marius the Epicurean*.[34] It's also, I would add, an instructive moment in Pater's thinking about pedagogy: refashioned from the facts of history, Abelard appears in *Studies* as an ideal Platonic lover and teacher—the kind of humanist, or "exquisite amateur" that Pater lauds in the Preface. In his revisions to the second edition, Pater shows the fate of the true humanist in the Oxford of the 1870s:

> The opposition into which Abelard is thrown, which gives its colour to his career, which breaks his soul to pieces, is a no less subtle opposition than that between the merely professional, official, hireling ministers of that system, with their ignorant worship of system for its own sake, and the true child of light, the humanist, with

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[33] See Gerald Monsman, *Walter Pater's Art of Autobiography* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1980).

[34] Billie Inman, *Walter Pater and His Reading, 1874-87* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), xxi.

> reason and heart and senses quick, while theirs were almost dead. He reaches out towards, he attains, modes of ideal living, beyond the prescribed limits of that system, though in essential germ, it may be, contained within it. As always happens, the adherents of the poorer and narrower culture had no sympathy with, because no understanding of, a culture richer and more ample than their own. After the discovery of wheat they would still live upon acorns […] and would hear of no service to the higher needs of humanity with instruments not of their forging. (5-6)

Stylistically, Pater contrasts the attenuated prose that he uses to introduce the couple with a more direct condemnation of their detractors. Of course, Pater never performs staccato, but here the probing, clausal extensions of his introduction to the famous couple retreat into something more direct. Professional ministers enervate not only "the true child of light" but also the languid style of Pater's prose. Because professionalism demands an uncritical adoption of a system, it endangers both the ministers, whose enfeebled reason, heart, and senses barely cling to life, and also Abelard, of course, whose shattered soul (and body) is the price here of "professional" temperament. The contrast Pater elaborates here develops the opposition he alluded to in the Preface of '73. The "humanist," earlier the "amateur exquis[e]," conceives and promotes a richer culture than the professional. In this passage, Pater reacts to the homophobia and ideological opposition he faced at Oxford, while additionally claiming the superiority of his Hellenic vision to Jowett's.

Abelard and Héloïse are iconoclasts willing to pursue knowledge outside the delimitations of professional education and, importantly for Pater, that knowledge is corporeal. Unlike the eighteenth-century considerations of the pair by Rousseau and Pope, which rely on epistolarity to separate the lovers, Pater paints them in an embrace. In his earlier essay on the

poems of William Morris, he had lauded "the great romantic loves of rebellious flesh, of Lancelot and Abelard,"[35] and in the 1877 *Renaissance* he identifies the qualities of the spirit that Abelard unleashes on Italy: "its languid sweetness, its rebellion, its subtle skill in dividing the elements of human passion, its care for physical beauty, [and] its worship of the body" (4). In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold had praised Abelard as a "great [man] of culture" who had a passion for diffusing knowledge and was thus a source of "sweetness and light" even "in spite of his imperfections."[36] Pater brings those imperfections to the fore and presents Abelard and Héloïse's physicality as an essential element of their genius. They represent Pater's amateur ideal precisely because they are lovers.

In his last revision to the 1877 treatment of Abelard, Pater explains how the light of humanism "was too strong" for "the adherents of the poorer and narrower culture," and Abelard and Héloïse's textual legacy outlasts their attempts at containment. Abelard writes "as one bent on trying all things by their congruity with human experience, who had felt the hand of Héloïse, and looked into her eyes, and tested the resources of humanity in her great and energetic nature" (6). For Pater, the writings remain a testament to knowledge practiced through the tactile experience of romance. The retrenchment theory of Pater's oeuvre proposes an apologetic and retiring view of the man after the early events of the 1870s, but in his revisions to the first essay of *The Renaissance* Pater insists that scholarship engaged in the wake of sexual scandal might nonetheless carry the light of humanism despite the efforts of "professional ministers" to silence and condemn its practitioners. Thus, intellectual labor as Pater imagined it is intimately tied up with the body. Abelard and Héloïse are heroes of an anti-professional intellectual tradition, one

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[35] Walter Pater, "Poems of William Morris," *Westminster Review* 78, Oct. 1868, 144.
[36] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. Samuel Lipman (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1994), 48.

that pursues humanism for its own sake and commits itself to physical delight. Though we've lost the details of the Hardinge affair, we seem to have a record of Pater's defense of it in *The Renaissance* of 1877 and a homily of thought born from the scandalous pleasure of the body.

III. Amateur Pedagogy: Newman, Diaphaneitè and the Professionalization of Oxford

"Professional" was a charged word in British education after Newman had published *The Idea of a University* in 1852, and the phrase "merely professional," which Pater appropriates from the earlier writer, perhaps even more so. Newman's distaste for the professional was not just an elite riposte to an encroaching middle-class culture; more intricately, he feared that the sociocultural ideologies of industrialism, in this case academic specialization and the division of labor, were enfeebling intellectual potential and habits of mind which he called "liberal." Like so many Victorians after him, including Pater, he looked to the past for cultural renewal in the present. In Dowling's turn of phrase, Newman was "contemptuously aware of the ignobly deforming powers exerted by social and commercial modernity."[37] Victorian intelligences were "contracted" by these forces, and a liberal knowledge, divorced from purposiveness, was his proposed solution.[38] "What is merely professional," Newman wrote, is not "called liberal" (184). More to the point, liberal knowledge is, for Newman, distinctly "non-professional" (213). Truly "liberal knowledge," he writes, "stands on its own pretensions, which is independent of sequel, expects no complement, refuses to be *informed* (as it is called) by any end, or absorbed into any art" (184). It is knowledge for its own sake; in turn, Newman even critiques examinations as

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[37] Dowling, *Hellenism,* 40.
[38] Newman, *Idea of a University,* in *Prose of the Victorian Period*, ed. William Buckler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), 180. Subsequent citations appear parenthetically.

corruptions of pedagogy. Newman enlists Aristotle's thought on property generally to help him parse the difference between useful, or professional, and liberal knowledge: "'Of possessions,' he says, 'those rather are useful, which bear fruit; those *liberal, which tend to enjoyment*. By fruitful, I mean, which yield revenue; by enjoyable, where *nothing accrues of consequence beyond the using*'" (185, emphasis in original). Aristotle helps Newman divorce education from productivity and elevate it above influence from the commercial interests of his time.

Newman's contempt for the professional mirrors a sentiment Pater explored in the earliest manuscript of his adult work available to us today. Although the provenance of "Diaphaneitè" is not entirely clear, critical consensus suggests that it is likely a paper that the freshly-minted, probationary fellow Pater delivered to the undergraduate essay club The Old Mortality Society in July 1864.[39] The work describes a "basement type" of personality who "crosses rather than follows the main current of the world's life."[40] The essay is at once an artistic "manifesto," a yearning for a return to "the forgotten culture of the Greeks," and a prophecy that aspires to "the regeneration of the world" (82).[41] In the context of Newman, the essay is worth considering for two reasons. First, the diaphanous type forms a system of value opposed, Pater writes, to "that which regards life as a game of skill, and values things and persons as marks or counters of something to be gained, or achieved, beyond them" (78). Although Pater does not employ the discourse of pleasure here that Newman suggests, he articulates a type and a practice at odds with the calculations of a modern capitalist society. Diaphaneitè eschews care for progress, gamesmanship, and results for an alternative system of

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[39] Østermark-Johansen, "Introduction" to *Imaginary Portraits*, 13.
[40] Walter Pater, "Diaphaneitè," in *Imaginary Portraits*, ed. Lene Østermark-Johansen, 77. Subsequent citations appear parenthetically in the text.
[41] Anne Varty, "The Crystal Man: A Study of 'Diaphaneitè," in *Pater in the 1990s*, eds. Laurel Brake and Ian Small, 205; Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, 60.

appraisal, one which "seeks to value everything at its eternal worth" (78). Like the advocates of Newman's "liberal" knowledge, the diaphanous divorce value from the corruption of worldly influence. Second, Pater then connects this characteristic with the pursuit of knowledge and then subtly with Oxford itself. The diaphanous type, he writes, bears within it "a magnificent intellectual force":

> a habit that may be described as wistfulness of mind, the feeling that there is 'so much to know,' rather as a longing after what is unattainable, than as a hope to apprehend it. Its ethical result is an intellectual guilelessness, or integrity, that instinctively prefers what is direct and clear, lest one's own confusion and intransparency should hinder the transmission from without of light that is not yet inward. He who is ever looking for the breaking of a light he knows not whence about him, notes with a strange heedfulness the faintest paleness in the sky. That truthfulness of temper, that receptivity, which professors often strive in vain to form, is engendered here less by wisdom than by innocence. (79-80)

That professors "*often* strive in vain" to cultivate this intellectual guilelessness is a subtle critique of Oxonian pedagogy, one that very likely indicts the young fellow himself.[42] Diaphaneitè is, after all, an ideal, not necessarily an achievable quotidian practice. Together, Pater's early passages in "Diaphaneitè" illustrate a sympathy with Newman's ideas of a liberal education as its

[42] Moreover, it also critiques the instruction of Platonic philosophy by teachers who do not feel the light of Hellenism within themselves. Though "Diaphaneitè" precedes the break with Jowett by several years, it may nonetheless lay the foundation for a scholarly disagreement about the instruction of the classical past, for this passage implies that only an educator with an "inward" grasp of male-male desire ought to bother with the instruction of Greek philosophy. This line of thought certainly points to the mental acrobatics that Pater may have used to "relax" in the affair with Hardinge "those restraints which lie on the consciences of other men," as he writes of Abelard.

own justification, not a means to an end. As Pater writes that the diaphanous habit of mind is to "long" after knowledge rather than "apprehend" it, he disentangles the profits of intellectualism from specific, real-world dividends.[43]

When Pater borrowed Newman's lectures on the university three years later, after formally winning his fellowship in 1867, he would find a paean to liberal education that was being quickly outpaced by the secular, commercial demands on Oxford students. Over the course of the century, Oxford was forced to adapt to a professional model of education. Jowett, for example, fought for a medical school and enshrined the Greats curriculum as a stepping stone to the civil service, rather than humanistic enlightenment.[44] In Evangelista's turn of phrase, his "vision of the university was of a professionalized institution in which the best young men should be selected through competition based on examinations."[45] Newman's fears had been well-founded; the cultivation of a liberal mind was giving way to a mercenary view of education that corrupted the pursuit of knowledge generally by specialization and examination.[46] Pater agreed with Newman that the ends of education should be a radical intellectualism, but he no doubt found his ideas becoming more and more out of step with the reality of life in Oxford, whose college walls were an imperfect barricade against the encroachments of commercial reality. To be sure, criticism of Oxford's modernization might indeed record socially conservative, classist, xenophobic, and sexist anxieties, as working-class male and women

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[43] Moreover, the long scholarly debate over the etymology implied by Pater's diacritics commits "Diaphaneité" the word to an amateur sensibility. John Conlon details the debate over the grave accent as evidence for Pater's bad French or unusual Greek in "Walter Pater's 'Diaphaneitè,'" *English Language Notes* 17, no. 3 (1980): 195-97.
[44] See Dowling, *Hellenism*, 72-77; Curthoys, "Careers," 487.
[45] Evangelista, "Walter Pater's teaching in Oxford," 73.
[46] Even though Jowett's tutorials may indeed have "channeled a saving new secular gospel of intellectual self-development and diversity into the souls of the civic elite who would guide Britain" as Dowling points out, this is hardly liberal education for its own sake. *Hellenism*, 75.

students frequently outperformed their aristocratic peers on examinations.[47] However, we must be careful to disentangle Pater's critiques from these. Pater was of course the orphaned son of an East-End physician who felt economic pressures keenly throughout his adult life; that he upholds poor and women figures like Winckelmann and Héloïse as intellectual models suggests that he'd hardly be the man to shut the college gate in Jude Fawley's face or run Mary Beton, Mary Seton, and Mary Carmichael off the college lawn.[48]

Indeed, matriculations since 1800 had nearly trebled by 1870, and the percentages of landed students or those seeking clerical office had been steadily declining since the beginning of the century. Careers in the lay professions and business were starting to outpace those of the church at midcentury and accounted for nearly seventy percent of graduates by 1900.[49] This was a profound reversal, and it was accomplished by secular reforms in university governance. Seventy percent of students coming up to Oxford in 1819 either pursued careers in the clergy (49.7%) or none at all (18.8%). By 1897, clerical careers were down to under twenty percent, and the majority of students was instead pursuing livelihoods in law, school teaching,

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[47] See G.R. Evans, *The University of Oxford: A New History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 291-98.

[48] Although his friendships with women seem to suggest that Pater was fairly enlightened about the intellectual parity of the sexes, his work does not always reflect this, to be sure. Michael Field records in their journals that they found Pater's admission in "Style" "in wh. he speaks of the scholarly conscience as male" if not unforgivable than at least a cause of great suffering. Perhaps Pater considers the penetrative Héloïse to possess a male "scholarly conscience"; this might indeed shed some more light on how Pater conceived of the medieval heterosexual pair as symbols of the Hellenic spirit of education. Qtd. in Ana Parejo Vadillo, "Walter Pater and Michael Field: The Correspondence, with Other Unpublished Manuscript Materials," *The Pater Newsletter* 65 (Spring 2014): 27-86, 52.

[49] See M.C. Curthoys, "The Careers of Oxford Men," in *Nineteenth-Century Oxford,* vol. 6 of *The History of the University of Oxford*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 477-509, especially Figs. 14.2, "Oxford and Cambridge matriculations (men), 1800-1913," and 14.3, "Principal careers of men matriculating at Oxford and Cambridge, 1818-1898."

government service, and commerce.[50] The percentage of landed students taking degrees had dropped to less than five percent. But there were signs of this change sooner. As early as 1839, one University College tutor worried that public opinion tended "to regard an Academical education as an uncertain venture of time and money" and highly questionable in its ability to prepare students for "scenes of active life."[51] Thus, changes at Oxford sought to revitalize the university's links with the professions; the school was producing journalists and lay schoolteachers—one in every eight students by the end of the century—and enlarging overall the pool of potential careers for its undergraduates. In its fight for relevance over the course of the century, the ancient university was forced to bend to the secular pull of the middle-class professions.

As Oxford was becoming more and more inhospitable to Newman's educational ideal, Brasenose itself must have seemed like an even more difficult place to pursue it. Founded in 1509, Brasenose was one of the last medieval colleges, formed as a "scholastic buttress against the humanistic teaching of the Renaissance;" it offered no tutelage in classics at all for its first thirty years.[52] It was a bastion of religious conservatism. In the nineteenth century, it was "an Anglican monopoly" with a "narrow" curriculum and "the basis of recruitment narrower still."[53] Moreover, under the tenure of Principal Edward Craddock from 1853-1886, Brasenose's academic reputation waned while its students instead enjoyed renown for their athletic skill. Cricket and rowing eclipsed Classics and theology. If Plato was Pater's greatest pedagogical

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[50] See Curthoys, Table 14 A.1, "Principal Careers of Oxford Men Matriculating In Four Academic Years," 503.
[51] [T. Twiss], *Considerations of a Plan for Combining the Professorial System with the System of Public Examinations in Oxford* (1839), 29. Qtd. in Curthoys, 484.
[52] J. Mordaunt Crook, *Brasenose: The Biography of an Oxford College* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 14.
[53] Crook, *Brasenose*, 2.

model, athleticism certainly didn't present a necessary conflict with the philosopher's imperative of both mental and corporeal exercise, yet, still, Pater was out of place at Brasenose. He was, in the words of one college historian, "an aesthete outnumbered by athletes."[54]

Moreover, Brasenose remained a cornerstone of Anglican conservatism throughout the century. Of the "homogenous intake" of students in the '60s and '70s, there was "scarcely a scholar in the list": "Over half this group [of students matriculating at Brasenose in the early 1860s] have directly clerical affiliations. That is, they are either the sons of clergymen or they are future clergymen themselves; or both. Mid-Victorian Brasenose was certainly muscular, but it was above all muscularly Christian."[55] Though it was not churning out as many clerics as the new religious stronghold of Keble by the end of the century, Brasenose nonetheless shepherded over twenty percent of its graduates into careers in the clergy after 1875, by far the largest percentage of any one group of graduates.[56] Though Pater earned his probationary position in 1864 and was appointed tutor in 1867, he entered the college on a non-clerical fellowship, after being barred from ordination "as a sceptic."[57] But this was his primary value to the college; having tested in philosophy, he was prepared to help students pass exams which newly emphasized secular, classical philosophy.[58] Pater was in a double bind; his livelihood depended upon the professionalization of the university even though it contradicted his educational ideals. The problem was only compounded by ideological separation from his colleagues and students at Brasenose. From the start of his career there, Pater was the odd man out, isolated from both the

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[54] Crook, *Brasenose*, 246.
[55] Crook, *Brasenose*, 265.
[56] See Table 14.A6, "Principal Careers of Men Admitted to Four Oxford Colleges, 1870-1909," in Curthoys, 506.
[57] Crook, *Brasenose*, 246.
[58] William Shuter, "Pater as Don," *Prose Studies* 11, 1 (1988), 41-60, 44.

athletes and the faithful. One student, surprisingly the noted lyricist of "Danny Boy," Fred Weatherly, remembered Pater against the backdrop of his colleagues: "I had seen all the other Fellows before I saw him. They were rough, kind, genial men, untidily clad, of the type of one's masters at school. But Pater was beautifully dressed, he was a dandy with a dash of the eccentric, spoke with a gentle voice, was as polite as a woman, [and] arranged lectures and subjects with a quiet deferential air."[59] Weatherly remembers Pater in his difference from his colleagues; at Brasenose College, he was a man out of place.[60]

As his career progressed, Pater couldn't help but notice that Oxford's professionalization endangered the value of humanist enquiry for its own sake. Pater's turn to Newman the year he won his tutorship belies an erroneous consensus that he was not interested in pedagogy—an historical mistake Shuter and Evangelista have done much to correct. Taking up the *Discourses* reveals an eagerness to contemplate his post that is consistent with his otherwise searching intelligence. When Edith Cooper remarked in a letter to John Gray, a reviewer who had secured the positive reception of *Marius the Epicurean* in England, that "to be with Pater's book [*Appreciations*...] is a 'liberal education,'" she clearly discerned Pater's pedagogical purpose.[61] Pater himself likely understood the correspondence between the Tractarian's promotion of knowledge untethered from concerns of morality or productivity and "Art for art's sake" as he was to write a year later in the final sentence of his piece on Morris's poetry in the *Westminster*

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[59] Fred Weatherly, *Piano and Gown* (London: Putnam's Sons, 1926), 44-47, qtd. in Crook, 285.
[60] To some degree, he still is. There is no portrait of Pater in the Brasenose dining hall; his likeness is alleged to be tucked away in a Senior Common Room. The College's website lists Pater on its page of famous alumni, yet a viewer must scroll down to find his name listed twenty-third of twenty-eight names, of which six of the preceding ones belong to athletes and one a highwayman. Brasenose College. "Famous Brasenose Names." University of Oxford. http://www.bnc.ox.ac.uk/about-brasenose/history/222-famous-brasenose-names (accessed 11 November 2015).
[61] Edith Cooper to John M. Gray, 7 Dec. 1889, in Ana Parejo Vadillo, 47.

Review. Indeed, vestiges of Newman's distaste for professional education inform at least one other essay of *The Renaissance* in which Pater recalls that Winckelmann, "the votary of the gravest of intellectual traditions" receives, surprisingly, "nothing but an attempt at suppression from the professional guardians of learning" at the University of Halle (143).

IV. Winckelmann and the Erotics of Dilettantism

"Winckelmann" opens with a testament to the critic's singular efficacy as an educator: "Goethe's fragments of arts-criticism contain a few pages of strange pregnancy on the character of Winckelmann. He speaks of the teacher who had made his career possible, but whom he had never seen" (141). If Pater's Abelard records the power of a corporeal pedagogy that registers the glory of a complete intellectual humanism in its physicality, "Winckelmann" wonders if that power might be sustained in the blighted modern world. Having never seen Winckelmann, Goethe has certainly never felt his touch, yet his ability to craft "a few pages of strange pregnancy" on the earlier thinker testifies to Winckelmann's intellectually (re)productive legacy which inspires even Pater's own essay in turn. With Pater's emphasis on Goethe's "never [having] seen" Winckelmann, it's hard not to hear an echo of his favorite myth of Cupid and Psyche in these lines, and, if the delight in physicality that Abelard represents must necessarily be removed from this relationship because of the historical accident of their having never met, Pater restores it metaphorically. Winckelmann emerges from the beginning of this essay as both a teacher and a lover; just as importantly, Pater notes that Goethe "classes him with certain works of art." In the deft economy of the opening sentences of "Winckelmann," then, the eponymous figure is a model teacher, the votary of "a passionate intellectual life," and the

perfect work of art (141). Pater's Winckelmann is the nexus at which pedagogy, queer sexuality, and the appreciation of art collide.

"Winckelmann" was first published in the *Westminster Review* two months before Pater returned to Newman's discourses when he accepted his tutorship in March of 1867, yet its opening especially is intimately entangled with the pedagogical concerns that Pater later develops in the section on Abelard. The essay seems out of place in *The Renaissance* not only because its eponymous subject was born in the eighteenth century but also because the essay crescendos into a defense of the finest *modern* art of Goethe and Hugo. "Winckelmann" has resonated with critics to the extent that it seems deeply personal—as a representation of an aesthetic criticism which refracts its subject through the prism of the writer's self. To this end, Kenneth Clark has noted the "sympathy" Pater felt with his subject, and Donald Hill writes that "Winckelmann" is Pater's "most deeply felt" essay.[62] Earlier commentators, like turn-of-the-century Regius Professor of Greek Ingram Bywater had already evasively discerned the sexual implications of this reverence: "You will notice [in "Winckelmann"], I think a certain sympathy with a certain aspect of Greek life."[63] "Winckelmann" was, for many writers then, Pater's step out of the closet. Yet, these criticisms seem reductive to scholars like Ellis Hanson for whom Pater is homosexual "only with numerous qualifications."[64] They also mischaracterize the essay, for the figure of Winckelmann is a centrifuge from which expands a larger discourse on not only the history of mostly Western art and religion but also the "bewildering toils" of life in the nineteenth century (185). Moreover, the 1867 version also addresses, through the guise of its titular figure, the more local, Oxonian concerns of "the religious Tests which restricted the posts

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[62] Hill, 412.
[63] Qtd. in Inman, *Pater's Reading*, 13.
[64] Ellis Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1997), 170.

and emoluments offered by the universities" according to piety.[65] Not abolished by Parliament until 1871 after a decade-long campaign, the tests are a reference "contemporary readers were unlikely to miss," according to Dellamora.[66] This insight can help us understand how "Winckelmann," which seems at first to have little to do with university life of the 1860s and '70s, actually provides direct commentary on pedagogical concerns affecting life and scholarship at Oxford.[67] The essay is, in Wilde's phrase, "a complex multiform creature"—at once a personal testament, a polemic about Oxford reform, a biographical study, and a reflection on centuries of European art.

In addition to its capaciousness, "Winckelmann" is an ideal place to investigate queer amateurism in Pater's oeuvre, not least because the essay's inclusion has consistently troubled commentators reluctant to understand the scholar as "the last fruit of the Renaissance" (xxv). R.G. Collingwood in 1946, for instance, lamented, "It was a blunder on the part of Walter Pater to include a chapter on Winckelmann in his work on the Renaissance. Winckelmann's study of Greek art was not at all like that of Renaissance scholars."[68] Collingwood highlights a familiar concern that the Winckelmann essay evoked as being out of place, mistaken, and rashly included; it appears to some as an error of scholarship. The Winckelmann study then combines both the professional shortcomings and the affect of the dilettante who might present work too "deeply felt." But not only does this essay offer critics a locus from which to question Pater's own professionalism; like the other essays examined here, it also figures amateurism as a

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[65] Christopher Harvie, *The Lights of Liberalism: University Liberals and the Challenge of Democracy, 1860-86* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), 74.
[66] Dellamora, *Masculine Desire*, 113.
[67] It may also underline, moreover, the multiple reasons for Pater's hesitance to sign his name to the essay's first appearance in the *Westminster Review*.
[68] R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, ed. Jan van der Dussen (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), 88, n. 1.

significant theme. Like Abelard, its subject staggers under the weight of a fatiguing professionalism in his early career, and then even in his success becomes an amateur critic in Pater's retelling, as Goethe's legacy overshadows Winckelmann's own and reconciles Hellenic temperament with modernity, where the earlier thinker, treading in "a few stray antiquarianisms" was decidedly out of place (166).

In this section, I first examine Pater's description of Winckelmann's intellectual development to identify how the gatekeepers of knowledge in eighteenth-century Germany attempted to stymie an intellectualism not of their own narrow mold, a recounting that allows Pater to critique a growing culture of professionalism at Oxford generally. Next, I turn to Winckelmann's knowledge of antique culture; his affinity for Greek life and art offers Pater a platform to posit the necessity of the amateur's enthusiasm in critical endeavor. Finally, I consider Pater's treatment of Winckelmann as an instructive example in the practice of experiencing art erotically—the practice, of course, of the dilettante faggot.

In the opening paragraphs of "Winckelmann," Pater ensures that his readers understand the discomfort his subject felt with the stages of a traditional development; professional education is stifling to the young man. Winckelmann is out of synch with his time: "Destined to assert and interpret the charm of the Hellenic spirit, he served first a painful apprenticeship in the tarnished intellectual world of Germany in the earlier half of the eighteenth century" (142). Here, "a painful apprenticeship" points to the incompatibility of the amateur's pleasure in an increasingly professional world. In early eighteenth-century Brandenburg, the professional was also the clerical, so Pater recounts that Winckelmann's schoolmaster, whom he apprenticed, "would have had him study theology," but the young boy instead "chooses rather to become familiar with the Greek classics." In turn, "the antique world" seemed to Winckelmann "more

real than the present" (142). Thus Winckelmann discards the professional protocols of eighteenth-century modernity to bask in the light of the Hellenic past.

As Pater charts Winckelmann's development, he devotes an entire paragraph to his university experience, where "professional" education, as Winckelmann encounters it, is an exercise in intellectual asphyxiation—a smothering of curiosity and passion. As Dellamora has shown, Pater's attack on the narrow academic culture of the University of Halle is also his response to the religious Tests at Oxford; they are a plea for the "truly liberal" knowledge of Newman's tract and a rebuke to the especially conservative religious atmosphere of Brasenose:

> At twenty-one he enters the University of Halle, to study theology, as his friends desire; instead, he becomes the enthusiastic translator of Herodotus. The condition of Greek learning in German schools and universities had fallen, and there were no professors at Halle who could satisfy his sharp, intellectual craving. Of his professional education he always speaks with scorn, claiming to have been his own teacher from first to last. His appointed teachers did not perceive that a new source of culture was within their hands. *Homo vagus et inconstans!*—one of them pedantically reports of the future pilgrim to Rome, unaware on which side his irony was whetted. When professional education confers nothing but irritation on a Schiller, no one ought to be surprised; for Schiller, and such as he, are primarily spiritual adventurers. But that Winckelmann, the votary of the gravest of intellectual traditions, should get nothing but an attempt at suppression from the professional guardians of learning, is what may well surprise us. (143)

In Pater's retelling, Winckelmann's university education is a review of an iconoclast in a stultifying atmosphere. He never reconciles with Halle, for, after leaving the university, he

"protests against Christian Wolff and the philosophers" (144). The faculty are pedants blind to the talents of their student. As Pater plays with religious connotation in this paragraph, "professional" clearly signals a strict, shallow Protestantism, while "votary" transforms the narrow connotation of religious devotion to a radical intellectualism. Here, Winckelmann is a pagan priest, carrying the light of humanism through the dark religious miasma of eighteenth-century Europe.

When Winckelmann graduates to become the master of a school in Seehausen in 1743, Pater paints a portrait of a man whose real life—whose significant internal existence—exists not in his professional endeavors but in the few midnight hours he can steal from his working schedule: "He had to shorten his nights, sleeping only four hours, to gain time for reading. And here Winckelmann made a step forward in culture" (144). The young man has disciplined the nights of frenzied fever of his youth in an ascetic cultural development: "He multiplies his intellectual force by detaching it from all flaccid interests. He renounced […] all but the literature of the arts. Nothing was to enter into his life unpenetrated by its central enthusiasm" (144). "Enthusiasm" is a central Platonic concept for Pater. In *Plato and Platonism*, reflecting on *The Republic*, Pater writes that "philosophic enthusiasm" is "an impassioned desire for true knowledge," and the enthusiasts, or truth's "impassioned lovers," make up "the cornerstone" of "the ideal state." Moreover, Pater contrasts the aims of the enthusiast with the worldly goals of less worthy minds; the enthusiast values "that which really is, and in comparison wherewith, office, wealth, honour, the love of which has rent Athens, the world, to pieces, will be of no more than secondary importance" (153-4). Intellectual enthusiasm is the antidote for corrupting worldly influences; it positions thinkers like Winckelmann outside of professional endeavor and aligns them with the amateur. Moreover, in Pater's hands, Platonic enthusiasm is also a kind of

possession, linked not only with divine inspiration but likened also to the rapture of physical love; as he puts it in *Plato and Platonism*, "the ways of earthly love are a true parallel" to intellectual enthusiasm (153). Thus, the textual legacy of "enthusiasm" in Pater's oeuvre identifies Winckelmann's Hellenic inquiry with the desire and affection of the amateur.

As Winckelmann continues to submit to the allure of Plato and Hellenic influence, this enthusiasm deepens: "The protracted longing of his youth is not a vague, romantic longing: he knows what he longs for, what he wills. Within its severe limits, his enthusiasm burns like lava" (148). Throughout this history of Winckelmann's growth, Pater interlaces the intellectual and physical. Winckelmann's intellectual development is bodily, corporeal, full of hunger, feverishness, and the deprivations of sleep. Enthusiasm is the metric which registers both the exquisite amateur's philosophy and love:

> Enthusiasm,—that in the broad Platonic sense of the *Phaedrus*, was the secret of his divinatory power over the Hellenic world. This enthusiasm, dependent as it is to a great degree on bodily temperament, has a power of reinforcing the purer emotions of the intellect with an almost physical excitement. That his affinity with Hellenism was not merely intellectual, that the subtler threads of temperament were inwoven in it, is proved by his romantic, fervent friendships with young men. (152)

Foremost, this is a story of passion breaking through the barriers of a dull professional existence to form connections outside the self—with the classical past, with these young men, and later with Goethe and Pater. By linking Winckelmann's enthusiasm with these "fervent friendships," Pater delineates the art critic's radical intellectualism in physical terms. Like Héloïse and Abelard, Winckelmann realizes the Platonic ideal of "lover and philosopher at once."

Winckelmann's enthusiasm pulls him from the worldly ambitions of professional men. Pater writes that he "desires only to devote himself to study, having never allowed himself to be dazzled by favourable prospects in the Church" (145). Later, "He had no desire for places of honour" (151). In a letter to a future patron, Winckelmann himself wonders, "Perhaps, at some future time, I shall become more useful to the public," but he has a "doubtful position 'in a metaphysical age when humane literature is trampled under foot'" (145). Pater disentangles Winckelmann from worldly ambition and even illustrates how this scholar's intellectual enthusiasm seems incompatible with conventional social utility. By resigning professional prospects, Winckelmann aligns himself with the amateur, and Pater illustrates, paradoxically, the fruitfulness of this resignation on the next page as he emphasizes again Winckelmann's importance to German letters: "Through the tumultuous richness of Goethe's culture, the influence of Winckelmann is always discernible" (147). Though profoundly influential, the amateur is always incompatible with the clerical and professional protocols of its time.

This tension comes to a head in Pater's uneasy handling of Winckelmann's conversion to Catholicism; he dedicates a lengthy paragraph to undermining the significance of the critic's profession of faith: "Unquiet still at the word 'profession,' not without a struggle, he joined the Roman Church, July the 11th, 1754" (148-9). Because conversion conveys a modernity and a worldliness on Winckelmann's career, Pater immediately enlists the assistance of Goethe who "boldly pleads that Winckelmann was a pagan, that the landmarks of Christendom meant nothing to him" (149). Although eager to admit "the insincerity" of his conversion, Pater does wonder if an undercurrent of paganism in Catholicism exculpates this move; he proposes that conversion marks Winckelmann's attempt to align with "a sense of a certain and as it were pagan grandeur in the Roman Catholic religion" (149). In Ellis Hanson's language, "Roman Catholicism appears

to be the last hope of paganism."[69] Nevertheless, Pater's own disquiet at Winckelmann's new profession is clear; it's a biographical fact he registers as "a real loss" of "absolute sincerity" yet tries to vindicate with an artistic turn:

> Yet at the bar of the highest criticism, perhaps, Winckelmann may be absolved. The insincerity of his religious profession was only one incident of a culture in which the moral instinct, like the religious or political, was merged in the artistic. But then the artistic interest was that, by desperate faithfulness to which Winckelmann was saved from a mediocrity, which, breaking through no bounds, moves ever in a bloodless routine, and misses its one chance in the life of the spirit and the intellect. (149)

Winckelmann's conversion is sublimated by a higher, "desperate faithfulness" to art, a supposition which Pater uses to undermine ecclesiasticism and elevate Winckelmann instead as an amateur—art's great proselyte.

In his attack against the professional, Pater illustrates a Winckelmann uncomfortable in the university, divorced from worldly ambition, and finally redeemed from religious hypocrisy by art, but he also undercuts Winckelmann's work as a critic. He doesn't quote from *The History of Ancient Arts among the Greeks* at length but rather from the letters, records of his "fervent friendships," and calls them "an instructive but bizarre addition to" the masterwork (154). Moreover, Pater questions Winckelmann's perspicacity by suggesting that his grasp of antiquity was intuitive rather than reasoned: "The quick, susceptible enthusiast, betraying his temperament even in appearance, by his olive complexion, his deep-seated, piercing eyes, his rapid movements, apprehended the subtlest principles of the Hellenic manner, not through the

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[69] Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism*, 198.

understanding, but by instinct or touch." His mind works through "excitement, intuition, inspiration, rather than the contemplative evolution of general principles" (154). Eschewing "general principles" and abstract definitions, Winckelmann recalls the aesthetic critic from the Preface who embraces relativity and personal investigation over abstraction. Finally, Pater subverts Winckelmann's influence by claiming the superiority of Goethe's art: "The aim of a right criticism is to place Winckelmann in an intellectual perspective, of which Goethe is the foreground" (181). Goethe, Pater writes, commands a "culture" that "ever emerged in the practical functions of art, in actual production." His art is acculturated to modernity, to the processes of the marketplace and the "bewildering toils" of contemporary life (184-5).

Pater is at pains in "Winckelmann" to illustrate his subject as amateurishly out of step with practices of modernity; he is similarly eager to illustrate Winckelmann's erotic entanglements. Returning for a moment to Winckelmann's "fervent friendships with young men," it's significant to note that these relationships are not ends in themselves. Homoeroticism is a means to identify Winckelmann's sympathy with Hellenism: "He is in touch with [the classical world]; it penetrates him, and becomes part of his temperament" (154). "Touch" here is hardly a metaphor. The erotics of "Winckelmann" are an erotics of art; the art critic "catches the thread of a whole sequence of laws in some hollowing of the hand, or dividing of the hair" (154-55). Statuary is the body of his lover. "He fingers those pagan marbles with unsinged hands, with no sense of shame or loss" writes Pater (177). In *The Renaissance*, the dilettante faggot is art's best mistress.

Some queer critics of "Winckelmann" have argued that the essay tracks Pater's sorrowful yearning for a bygone epoch of same-sex love. Kevin Ohi, for instance, in a stunning analysis of rapture and aesthetic appreciation in *The Renaissance*, traces "a melancholic experience of

disjunction" in the essays "between the erotic possibilities of a rhapsodically imagined past (most notably in ancient Greece) and an erotically repressive contemporaneity."[70] Relatedly, Heather Love identifies Pater's reluctance to be interpolated to categories of modern sexual identity: "his ambivalence about [the birth of homosexuality as a newly public and newly recognizable social identity] is palpable."[71] Love suggests instead that Pater longs for a queerer past. However, "melancholia" and "ambivalence" about modernity seem to miss the point of Pater's enthusiasm for modern art at the end of the essay. Rather, Winckelmann's sensuous contact with pagan art licenses a more fulfilling, because more complex, engagement with the art of modernity. The final sentence of "Winckelmann" questions whether or not the pleasure of modern art, typified by the romances of Goethe and Hugo in which "noble men and women" confront the complex "entanglements" of the nineteenth century, outweighs the longing for a classical past, characterized by blitheness, repose, and a mind at peace with itself: "Who, if he saw through all, would fret against the chain of circumstances which endows one at the end with those great experiences?" (185). Though Pater doesn't answer this question explicitly, the Conclusion's commitment to courting new impressions and artistic experiences suggests his answer. The implication is clear; the erotic stimulations of art surpass the physical experience of love:

> High passions give one this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, political or religious enthusiasm, or the "enthusiasm of humanity." Only, be sure it is passion, that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied

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[70] Kevin Ohi. *Innocence and Rapture: The Erotic Child in Pater, Wilde, James, and Nabokov* (New York: Palgrave, 2005) 13.
[71] Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2007), 66.

> consciousness. Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake, has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake. (1873 conclusion, 190, 274)

In the final lines of *The Renaissance*, Pater can't resist a final pun on professionalism. Here, art itself "profess[es] frankly." The Conclusion unseats the "professional ministers" from their positions of influence and enthrones art as a superior master, for it usurps the power of professing. Pater lays waste to the professional demands of the modern world by championing the suggestively unproductive wisdom of art, the value of which cannot be measured by metrics of professional productivity. Providing quality to moments "as they pass," art professes an economics of immediacy that does not forecast future dividends. Professing his faithfulness to art, Pater inaugurates an aestheticism deeply fatigued with the fortunes of the modern world but enraptured by the erotic potential of art. Abelard and Héloïse begin *The Renaissance*, and Winckelmann ends it because together they testify the erotic potential of an anti-professional ethos. They enumerate the amateur ideal to which Pater alludes in his Preface. Throughout its pages, *The Renaissance* registers Pater's antipathy for professional protocol and delivers amateurism as an aesthetic anodyne to the social and cultural effects of nineteenth-century modernity.

CHAPTER 4

"ARS AMORIS, AMOR ARTIS": QUEER EPISTEMOLOGY, CRITICAL METHODOLOGY, AND *THE PORTRAIT OF MR. W.H.*

I. "Ars Amoris": Wilde and "The Art of Love"

As Pater worried about the fate of a liberal education at a fast-professionalizing Oxford, Oscar Wilde fled the City of Dreaming Spires as "Professor of Aesthetics" to the world at large. Linda Dowling has demonstrated how Wilde explored the legacy of his education throughout his oeuvre; according to Dowling, an Oxford education was proof for Wilde of a commitment to intellect and "a disposition to play with ideas."[1] Dowling shows how Wilde's endorsement of Hegelian dialectic and Oxonian Hellenism demonstrates the influence of his education across his later works, and certainly Oxford networks are a consequential architecture of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in which Basil Hallward introduces the eponymous young man to "an old Oxford friend" Lord Henry Wotton.[2] Oxford casts a long shadow over Wilde's work, and he grapples with its influence in the short fiction *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.*, a work "visibly shaped," according to Dowling, by "the conventions of Greek paiderastia as mediated through the Oxford Greats school."[3] Wilde's story pits the Oxonian "disposition to play with ideas" against a Cambridge scientific skepticism and an amateur formalism to determine which of these might

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[1] Linda Dowling, "Introduction," *The Soul of Man Under Socialism & Selected Critical Prose* ed. Linda Dowling (London: Penguin, 2001), vii-xxvii, xv.
[2] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in *Oscar Wilde: The Major Works,* ed. Isobel Murray (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), 47-214, 59.
[3] Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1994), 124.

accommodate a queer epistemology at the fin-de-siècle. As Rita Felski has argued, "Education is not just about acquiring knowledge and skills but about being initiated into a certain sensibility," and Wilde's story showcases a contest of critical methods and institutional sensibilities to interrogate the possibility of queer knowledge.[4]

Recently, Josephine Guy and Ian Small have cast doubt on critical interpretations of Wilde that privilege psychological, queer, and anti-imperialist readings of his later works. They argue that Wilde's career instead testifies to his complex navigation of the fin-de-siècle "culture industry," a complex of "material constraints" that structure and limit the institutional dissemination of any printed or theatrical text. In their introduction, Guy and Small suggest that "the expressive qualities which the 'gay' and 'Irish' [critical] paradigms attribute to Wilde's works are not always compatible with the material details of their textual histories—of the histories of their composition and publication."[5] Guy and Small reveal a commercially astute Wilde, whose financial realities required a deft negotiation of bourgeois values in much of his work, most convincingly his journalism and Society Comedies, and thereby complicate critical narratives of anti-imperialist or gay triumphalism in Wilde studies. Yet, their contention that queer readings of Wilde's work have little bearing on the material circumstances of the texts themselves couldn't be further from the truth with *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.*[6]

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[4] Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2015), 22.
[5] Josephine M. Guy and Ian Small, *Oscar Wilde's Profession: Writing and the Culture Industry in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 7.
[6] To this end, *Portrait* has attracted significant queer scholarship over the last two decades, much of which celebrates the text's indeterminacy regarding sexual questions. Lawrence Danson believes "the story's structure of self-subverting narratives and its deferral of determinate meaning" may be "an act of resistance" in the repressive sexual atmosphere of Victorian England. Lawrence Danson, *Wilde's Intentions: The Artist in His Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 125, first published in *ELH* 58 (1991), 979-1000. Joseph Bristow agrees that "To fix, to name, and to classify 'homosexuality', as the sexologists were attempting to do in the 1890s, was for Wilde to sign its death warrant." Joseph Bristow, *Effeminate England:*

In fact, the material history of Wilde's text, both its germination and Wilde's attempts to see an expanded version in print, showcases the extent to which he conceived of the text as a queer collaborative project. To be sure, Wilde's eager solicitation of a "convenient" £25 honorarium from William Blackwood for the story a month before it first came to light in July 1889 suggests the impossibility of divorcing it entirely from the concerns of the marketplace, but the fact of the text's marketability should not blind us to other culturally significant interpretations.[7] Famously, "Portrait" was conceived with Robert Ross over dinner; in his correspondence, Wilde reminds Ross, "the story is half yours" and solicits a new theory from the younger man: "Write to me a letter. Now that Willie Hughes has been revealed to the world, we must have another secret."[8] Wilde's letter is somewhat disingenuous, for commentary on Shakespeare's male addressee had been in print for over a century, since at least Edmond Malone's 1790 endorsement of Thomas Tyrwhitt's 1766 theory in the former's edition of the

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Homoerotic Writing after 1885 (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995), 45. And, Richard Halpern emphasizes the "silences" of Wilde's text to show how "Wilde's fictions often seem less concerned with lending voice to homosexual acts or desires than they do with nurturing a space of the unspeakable, as if Wilde had already seen through the traps of the 'repressive hypothesis' that Michel Foucault would elaborate almost a century later." Richard Halpern, *Shakespeare's Perfume: Sodomy and Sublimity in the Sonnets, Wilde, Freud, and Lacan* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 2002), 52. More recently, James Campbell has examined a pattern of "homoerotic spiritual procreation" in Wilde's text that discards the question of Shakespeare's sexual practices as immaterial to the creative fecundity of his love for Willie Hughes; in effect, Wilde brushes aside questions of physicality—coyly, not confirming or denying them—to show how a classical model of male intellectual procreancy answers to the higher calling of art, not the authority of the law. James Campbell, "Sexual Gnosticim: The Procreative Code of 'The Portrait of Mr. W.H.'" in *Wilde Discoveries: Traditions, Histories, Archives,* ed. Joseph Bristow (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2013), 169-189, 176.

[7] Wilde, "To William Blackwood," 30 May 1889, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, eds. Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 401; hereafter cited as *Letters*.

[8] Wilde, "To Robert Ross," July 1889, *Letters*, 407-8.

sonnets.[9] Yet, by proposing the story as the public revelation of a secret shared between the two men, the letter suggests how the story's interest in queer epistemologies extends outside its frame to the society of Wilde's own life.

"The Portrait of Mr. W.H." appeared in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in July 1889.[10] It had pride of place in the issue as the first item. Richard Ellman notes that Wilde had been mulling over the story—what was "the best, the dearest to him"—since at least October 1887 and knew by May 1889 that he wanted to expand it into something more substantial.[11] As Wilde developed plans to see the enlarged story in volume form, he enlisted the assistance of fellow aesthetes and romantic partners Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon. Although they had solicited Wilde's acquaintance by sending him a copy of the first issue of their small magazine *The Dial*, Wilde took it upon himself to recruit them into his publishing plans for the extended *Portrait* on his first visit. Ricketts recalls the older man's lengthy recapitulation of Neoplatonism on this occasion and Wilde's request for Ricketts's own portrait of Willie Hughes to use as a frontispiece in the publication of his expanded novel. When Ricketts had completed his request and Shannon outfitted the painting in a "worm-eaten" antique frame, Wilde wrote to them both of their phenomenal success: "It is not a forgery at all—it is an authentic Clouet of the highest artistic value."[12] A professional partnership blossomed, and Wilde would later tap

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[9] Kate Chedgzoy, *Shakespeare's Queer Children: Sexual Politics and Contemporary Culture* (New York: Manchester Univ. Press, 1995), 152. For a succinct reception history of the sonnets in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Peter Stallybrass, "Editing as Cultural Formation: The Sexing of Shakespeare's Sonnets" in *The Uses of Literary History*, ed. Marshall Brown (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1995), 129-41, 131.

[10] I use quotation marks to distinguish the *Blackwood's* version of the story from the extended text, which I punctuate like a short novel.

[11] Richard Ellman, *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 296.

[12] Qtd. in Charles Ricketts, *Recollections of Oscar Wilde* (London: Pallas Athene, 2011), 36. See also *Letters*, 412. Wilde's characteristic fixation on forgery and authenticity has attracted numerous critics of the last decade. Yvonne Ivory, for example, suggests that Wilde's reverence

Ricketts to design and illustrate *The Sphinx* (1894) and the title-pages and bindings of *Dorian Gray* (1891), *Intentions* (1891), *Lord Arthur Saville's Crime* (1891), and *Poems* (1892), while Shannon prepared bindings for his published plays. The germination of the story with Ross and Wilde's solicitation of Ricketts and Shannon's involvement suggest how we may perceive *Portrait* as a queer collaborative project, and it's easy to see why scholars such as Kate Chedgzoy have linked it with "homosexual coterie publications" like the magazine *The Spirit Lamp* and *Teleny*, a *fin-de-siècle* work of same-sex pornography supposed to have been written collaboratively by Wilde and his circle.[13]

Though remarkably chaste in comparison to a work of pornography, the extended *Portrait* was no less combative of traditional Victorian mores than the other work, and it was unsurprisingly unpublished in Wilde's lifetime.[14] Ricketts recalls how Wilde positioned his story against nineteenth-century domesticity; it was, his recollection suggests, Wilde's attack on Victorian morality and its seat in the home: "'Our English homes will totter to their base when my book appears […]. By-the-bye, on the title-page I intend placing this aphorism, ARS AMORIS,

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of forgery in his aesthetics corresponds to his dissident sexual politics. Yvonne Ivory, *The Homosexual Revival of Renaissance Style, 1850-1930* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 108.

[13] Chedgzoy, *Shakespeare's Queer Children*, 144.

[14] Wilde had hoped to bring out the extended edition with the Bodley Head, which had issued advertisements for the forthcoming book, but when the publishing partnership between Elkin Matthews and John Lane dissolved in 1894, Wilde's efforts seem to have failed. The extended text and Ricketts's portrait were both lost in the 1895 sale of Wilde's effects, and the novel was not published until Mitchell Kennerley's edition of 1921. Although some critics point to the trials as the reason it languished in manuscript form, Ricketts remembers that Wilde himself, upon his release from Reading Gaol, had still not given up on seeing *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.* in print. This history of the text and the institutional pressures that Wilde encountered have an uncanny similarity to Cyril's attempt to see his own theory elaborated in print. See Horst Schroeder, *Oscar Wilde, The Portrait of Mr W.H.: Its Composition, Publication, and Reception*. (Braunschweig: Technische Universität Carolo-Wilhelmina zu Braunschweig, Seminar für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1984), 30-34; and Ricketts, 48.

AMOR ARTIS. It contains an entire philosophy, does it not? You might inscribe this somewhere on your picture.'"[15] Wilde's aphorism crystallizes the connection between amateurism and queerness at the *fin de siècle*. The art of love parallels the love of art; indeed, Wilde places them in an almost constitutive or synonymic relationship. And it's a dangerous relationship in a story that charts how, "in the case of [some] rare temperaments," "the use of certain phrases and modes of expression […] can transform in to a strange sensuous energy what in its origin had been mere aesthetic impulse, and desire of art."[16] *Portrait* suggests how art might remake reality—how its influence can create and ignite passions previously unearthed or even unthought. In the Preface to *Dorian Gray*, Wilde remarks, "All art is surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril."[17] *Portrait* examines such a process of subterranean criticism—what we might call "paranoid reading"—and it suggests that such a critical enterprise might remake the student who undertakes it.

Wilde's aphorism enters his novella explicitly as the narrator explores the Neoplatonism of the Renaissance that he believes the *Sonnets* themselves give witness to: "I felt as if I had been initiated into the secret of that passionate friendship, that love of beauty and beauty of love, of which Marsilio Ficino tells us, and of which the Sonnets, in their noblest and purest significance, may be held to be the perfect expression" (91-2). If queer amateurism could be said to have an axiom in the nineteenth century, Wilde's phrase might be the best candidate. Rendering love an art, Wilde divorces it from nature; love is artful, unnatural. Whereas Ovid's wryly erotodidactic *Ars Amatoria*, according to one famous reading, "seeks to raise the status of the lover to that of

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[15] Ricketts, 33. See also Richard Ellman, *Oscar Wilde*, 298.
[16] Oscar Wilde, *The Portrait of Mr W.H.*, in *The Soul of Man under Socialism and Selected Critical Prose*, ed. Linda Dowling (London: Penguin, 2001), 31-101, 81. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.
[17] Wilde, *Dorian Gray,* 48.

[the soldier, farmer, orator, and philosopher]," Wilde disentangles love from the professions; it is an amateur's game.[18] Coupled with Wilde's earlier statement it is also an armament against the English home, its supposed sexual normality, and its position as the keystone in a Victorian architecture of morality. That an "entire philosophy" might be contained within the equivocal phrase suggests the extent to which it might be a program for aesthetic life. Moreover, "the art of love" that the story develops is certainly a queer one: in the narrator's hands, the *Sonnets* form a connection to Ficino's translations of the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, the sonnets of Michelangelo, and a queer literary tradition that extends from Plato and Virgil to Shakespeare, and from Winckelmann to Victorian Oxford. Loving art or beauty in *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.* requires the admiration of its queer European history, and Wilde's phrase identifies the centrality of art to queer epistemology at the *fin de siècle*. By elevating the love of art over fidelity to nature, or history, Wilde suggests how the amateur might escape the disinterested responsibilities of scholarship by performing the aesthete's "one duty" to history, as Gilbert describes it in "The Critic as Artist," that is "to rewrite it."[19]

Regenia Gagnier has written that Wilde's adoption of the title "Professor of Aesthetics" when he left Oxford for London reflects his awareness of late Victorian social conditions and thereby suggests the difficulty of conceptualizing Wilde—the editor after all of *The Woman's*

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[18] Steven J. Green summarizes J.B. Solodow's 1976 argument from "*Ars Amatoria*: The Lover as Cultural Ideal." "Lessons in Love: Fifty Years of Scholarship on the *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*," in *The Art of Love: Bimillenial Essays on Ovid's* Ars Amatoria *and* Remedia Amoris, eds. Roy Gibson, Steven Green, and Alison Sharrock (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), 1-20, 6.

[19] Oscar Wilde, "The Critic as Artist" in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism,* ed. Dowling, 213-279, 231. Cyril shares more than an ideological proximity to Gilbert; they share a similar geographic orientation in London as well. Both live on Piccadilly with a view of Green Park: Cyril "had charming chambers in Piccadilly overlooking the Green Park" (37), and Gilbert stages his dialogue in "the library of a house in Piccadilly, overlooking the Green Park" (213).

World from November 1887 to October 1889—as an amateur. Though he was "temperamentally a traditional man of letters" in the vein of Carlyle or Mill, "he understood his time well enough to know that he needed a profession and a specialty."[20] Wilde's adopted title crystallizes for Gagnier how late-century aestheticism collided with the ideologies of the Victorian marketplace, even as it positioned itself against a false ethic of labor. Wilde's Professorship, however, didn't keep him from examining non-professionals in his work; "Pen, Pencil, and Poison," for instance, describes Thomas Griffiths Wainewright as "not merely a poet and a painter, an art-critic, an antiquarian, and a writer of prose, an amateur of beautiful things, and a dilettante of things delightful, but also a forger of no mean or ordinary capabilities, and as a subtle and secret poisoner almost without rival in this or any age."[21] Moreover, the heroes of his dialogues, like Cyril and Vivian in "The Decay of Lying," exist in the comfort of sitting rooms and libraries where they are almost completely divorced from professional affairs. In fact, one would be hard-pressed to find any professional characters in Wilde's prose; like the solicitor Mr. Grisby from the fourth act of *Earnest*, they are erased from the worlds he builds, though perhaps Alan Campbell, the chemist whom Dorian Gray blackmails to destroy the body of Basil Hallward in the extended version of the novel, might fit the bill. Yet Wilde encodes even Campbell with the language of dilettantism: "He was an excellent musician […] and played both the violin and the piano better than most amateurs" before a mysterious interaction with Dorian made him retreat from music to be "absorbed in science."[22] In a gloss on the Wainewright essay, Dowling notes

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[20] Regenia Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1986), 14.
[21] Oscar Wilde, "Pen, Pencil, and Poision" in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism and Selected Critical Prose,* ed. Linda Dowling (London: Penguin, 2001), 193-212, 193.
[22] Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 171.

that "as always with Wilde, 'amateur' is used in a positive sense, meaning someone who cultivates a study or art or other activity for personal pleasure and delight."[23]

Throughout his oeuvre, then, Wilde shows an attraction to the amateur, and perhaps his greatest attack on the professions appears in "The Critic as Artist." Gilbert condemns the Philistine practicality of modern England: "With us," he tells Ernest, "Thought is degraded by its constant association with practice." Following Pater and Arnold, Gilbert argues for a criticism whose ideal catholicity engenders an intellectual repose opposed to "the stress and turmoil of actual existence," a modern condition which restricts the intellect:

> Each of the professions means a prejudice. The necessity for a career forces every one to take sides. We live in the age of the overworked, and the under-educated; the age in which people are so industrious that they become absolutely stupid. And, harsh though it may sound, I cannot help saying that such people deserve their doom. The sure way of knowing nothing about life is to try to make oneself useful. [24]

Gilbert contrasts professionalism, utility and industriousness, with an ideal criticism, which appeals, across the dialogue, to the language of amateurism. The professional's narrow purview perverts the exercise of intellect and thus restricts radical possibilities of life and knowledge. Later, in a Wordsworthian echo, Gilbert adjusts his critique to the problem of art itself: "Art does not address herself to the specialist."[25] *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.* puts this dilettante theory to the test and illustrates why Wilde believed the professionalization of literary studies corrupted the queer appreciation of art.

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[23] Linda Dowling, "Notes," in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, 305-377, 350, n35.
[24] Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," 257.
[25] Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," 271.

Portrait is a short novel about a group of men who try to determine the identity of Mr. W.H., the dedicatee of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. It is a fictional staging of an aesthetic criticism that creates literary truth out of personal impressions, taking its cue of course from Pater's *Renaissance*, which knocked the objectivity implied in Arnold's critical mission "To see the object as in itself it really is" off its pedestal.[26] In brief, the novel is a *mise en abyme* at the center of which is the mystery of the addressee of Shakespeare's poems; the young actor Cyril Graham develops the theory that Shakespeare's addressee was a beautiful young man like himself named Willie Hughes. The story charts the development of Cyril's theory, which he imagines perfect from close reading alone, to Cyril's attempt to convince his skeptical older friend Erskine by soliciting a forged portrait of the Renaissance actor from a starving artist in Holborn (37). When Erskine detects the forgery, Cyril martyrs himself in protest to his friend's skepticism. The novel's outer frame plots the attempts of an unnamed narrator to verify Cyril's hypothesis when he hears the story of the portrait from Erskine. The narrator himself becomes "converted" to the Willie Hughes theory, contemplates it for several months, and finally puts "all of his enthusiasm" into a letter to Erskine that attempts to re-recruit the older man into a plan of publication (35, 94). This letter drains belief in Cyril's theory from the narrator but succeeds in Erskine's reconversion. After an impassioned disagreement, Erskine leaves England to try and verify the theory in the archives of the Continent. Several years later, the narrator receives a letter from Erskine announcing that he too will martyr himself for the theory, so he rushes to the Côte d'Azur to rescue his friend. In Cannes, he discovers that Erskine has died of consumption, and the letter, like the portrait, was another forgery. Erskine's mother delivers the fatal portrait

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[26] Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*: *Studies in Art and Poetry. The 1983 Text*, ed. Donald Hill (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980), xix.

to the narrator, noting that her son had "begged" her to turn it over to the younger man (100). As the novel ends, the portrait sits in the narrator's library where "it is very much admired by [his] artistic friends," and he concludes his tale, noting that "sometimes, when I look at it, I think there is really a great deal to be said for the Willie Hughes theory of Shakespeare's Sonnets" (100-1).

This chapter examines how the extended version of *Portrait* questions the possibility of queer epistemology through an elaborate staging of institutional bias.[27] Erskine is a Cambridge man: desperate for proof and independent evidence, he represents a skeptical historicism that came to be associated with Cambridge through Shakespeare scholarship in the second half of the century. Cyril, who also has a Cambridge degree though he's hardly been a model student, is a formalist who seems to require no extra-diegetic confirmation of Willie Hughes's identity: he wants to be satisfied with the theory from his knowledge of the poems alone. The narrator, however, took his degree from Oxford and represents an institutional knowledge informed by the "play" of discourses there; his analysis moves felicitously through both historicist and formalist critique, though his historicism is of a different order than Erskine's. If Cambridge knowledge requires archaeological evidence, Oxford epistemology filters the theory through a philosophical

[27] To be sure, critics have revealed the contest of epistemologies in the novel before. William Cohen, for instance, contrasts Cyril's method of "deciphering written language" with Erskine's of "discovering homoerotic desire." For Cohen, Wilde's text vacillates between these ways of knowing to show "the demonstrable inadequacy of either interpretation." Finally, Cohen suggests, "the relationship between literariness and sexuality is not simply unidirectional, as if a prior, secret sexual meaning takes refuge beneath the guise of literature…. Neither the literary nor the sexual can be considered primary. As a result, the imperative to interpret—and to sustain interpretability—becomes paramount in both endeavors, which perpetually require each other." Cohen's trenchant reading positions Erskine as a Victorian thinker not unlike John Addington Symonds, whose desperate letters to Walt Whitman hoped to confirm without doubt the homoerotics of *Leaves of Grass*. My reading departs from Cohen's in that I argue Erskine represents less of a Symonds approach to queer epistemology than one informed by the scientific skepticism he inherited from his Cambridge education. William Cohen, *Sex Scandal: The Private Parts of Victorian Fiction* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1996), 205, 211-213.

apparatus deeply indebted to Hellenism as it was realized at Oxford through Jowett, Pater, and Symonds—intellectual debts the narrator registers through his many citations of their work. As his several chapters of inquiry draw to a close, the narrator transitions from historicist inquiry to formalist analysis, which enables a striking personal investment in Cyril's theory. Wilde shows how Cambridge historicism engenders a critical distance from the object of study, while an attention to form presupposes a psychological proximity to the work of art.

The narrator's equivocation between the two methodologies eventually reveals that both critical strategies operate under a Romantic supposition of accessibility to Shakespeare's heart that Wilde eventually rejects. The *Sonnets* are not a point of direct access to their author; they remain a site of inscrutability. The belief in a definitive solution to the question of the *Sonnets*—notably, the presumption of a newly professionalizing discourse in Shakespeare scholarship—negates the affordances of an ambiguity that is a far more productive vehicle for the kinds of social, intellectual, and erotic exchange that the novel foregrounds in the relationships of Cyril and Erskine and Erskine and the narrator. This chapter proves that the Willie Hughes theory will not be published as formal scholarship because it would wrest from the narrator countless future opportunities to engage in homoerotic debate about a foundational text of English literature. In effect, Wilde rejects the aspirations of professional literary discourse to celebrate amateur practices of provisional epistemology and erotic exchange.

II. Victorian Shakespeare and Cambridge Scientism: Erskine's Search for "Independent Evidence"

The most exciting recent critical examination of the novella appears in Joseph Bristow and Rebecca Mitchell's *Oscar Wilde's Chatterton*, a text which succeeds in revealing the

significance of literary forgery and the centrality of Chatterton—Wordsworth's "marvellous boy"—to the later artist's aesthetics.[28] Bristow and Mitchell show how "'The Portrait' challenges the very notion of empirical, historical truths by exposing the intense desire and psychical investment that underscores our apperception of works of art" by lionizing the fictions of forgery (246). Undoubtedly, forgery is a central preoccupation of Wilde's novella, but it is of a piece with the story's larger mission of satirizing multiple Victorian approaches to Shakespearean study. Bristow and Mitchell point out that one of Wilde's narrator's most influential sources for information about the Renaissance stage was John Payne Collier, who had famously become embroiled in his own forgery scandal in the 1850s (269-270). For Wilde, forgery was an identifiable part of the Victorian appropriation of Shakespeare, but it was not the entire legacy. *Portrait* satirizes not only the fakeries of scholars like Collier but also the wider critical apparatus of Victorian Shakespeare, his reverence for which Wilde intimated in an unwritten piece he described to Robert Ross: "My next Shakespeare book will be a discussion as to whether the commentators on *Hamlet* are mad or only pretending to be."[29]

In 1889 alone, there were at least nine other articles about the *Sonnets* in the British periodical press. Shortly after Wilde's piece, the *Academy* and *Athenaeum* each featured articles that identified Mary Fitton as the Dark Lady, both of which came out in the fall after *Portrait*.[30] The Fitton theory was, according to Hyder Edward Rollins, "fathered" by Thomas Tyler, whose 1890 edition of the *Sonnets* laid out the theory in full that he'd developed over a series of articles

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[28] Joseph Bristow and Rebecca Mitchell, *Oscar Wilde's Chatterton: Literary History, Romanticism, and the Art of Forgery* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2015), 246. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.
[29] Qtd. in Richard Ellman, *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 299.
[30] "Shakespeare's Sonnets and Mary Fitton"*, Academy*, Oct. 5 1889, 220; T.W. Norwood, "Mary Fitton," *Athenaeum*, Nov. 9 1889, 643.

in the *Academy* in 1888.[31] Because the Fitton theory required William Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke to be the Fair Youth, it's unsurprising that the *Academy*, moreover, had at least three articles attempting to prove Pembroke as the W.H. of the title page in 1884 and 1885. The 1880s were, then, a period when, Schoenbaum writes, "the literature produced by the fantastic quest for identities achieved a volume out of all proportion to its significance."[32] Wilde's narrator reveals the currency of these debates when he tells his friend Erskine, "Pembroke, Shakespeare, and Mrs. Mary Fitton are the three personages of the Sonnets; there is no doubt at all about it" (35). Later in the novel, he alludes to the work of "Professor Minto," "Mr. Gerald Massey," and "Professor Dowden," each of whom developed their own theories in the Victorian press (78-9).[33]

Cyril's principal intervention in the two predominate theories of the identity of Mr. W.H.—that he was either the Earl of Pembroke or the Earl of Southampton—is to divorce the sonnets from the mercenary concerns of literary patronage to refashion them as an autonomous paean to art. As Wilde put it to Ricketts, the contention that the sonnets were commissions for a wealthy patron was an "assertion [that] has been made by a literary shopman in compliment to a nation of shopkeepers."[34] By removing the *Sonnets* from the context of patronage, Wilde rebukes

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[31] *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Sonnets*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1944), II: 262 (hereafter cited as *Variorum Sonnets*, followed by volume and page number).

[32] S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 317.

[33] The poet Gerald Massey is the closest to an amateur scholar here; William Minto, Aberdeen University's Chair of Logic and English, excoriated Massey's reading of the *Sonnets* for "taking [his] own feelings as the measure of the poet's" by developing criteria to determine which of *Sonnets 1-126* were addressed to a man and which to a woman. Massey's attempts to make a living by his verse and his journalism were supplemented by a lecture circuit at Edinburgh literary societies in the '60s. This brief list of the narrator's sources suggests how the influence of the amateur critic was being outpaced by the professional scholar over the second half of the century. See, William Minto, *Characteristics of English Poets from Chaucer to Shirley* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1889), 214. And Sidney Lee, "Massey, (Thomas) Gerald (1828–1907)", rev. Sayoni Basu, *ODNB*, Oxford Univ. Press, 2004; online ed.

[34] Ricketts, *Recollections*, 31.

the interventions of a burgeoning national industry of Shakespeare studies that was well-established by 1889 and lampoons their flourishing professional and commercial discourse. He dismisses literary shop-keeping with an elaborate fiction that eulogizes the sonnets as a testament to Shakespeare's dramatic art and the performances of his adolescent actors.

As Rollins points out, a majority of critical attention to the *Sonnets* in the nineteenth century questioned the viability of an autobiographical reading. When Wordsworth classified them as the "Key" with which "Shakespeare unlocked his heart,"[35] he inaugurated a national discourse of autobiographical reading that *Blackwood's* itself took up in 1818 in an unsigned article that posited the sonnets offered "little notices, and occasional glimpses of [Shakespeare's] own kindred feelings."[36] Autobiographical readings of the *Sonnets* gained support from the likes of Carlyle who believed that they "testify expressly in what deep waters [Shakespeare] had waded, and swum struggling for his life." For Carlyle, the *Sonnets* are a record of the suffering of Shakespeare's "heroic heart" that offers a greater appreciation of the tragedies and a point of contrast to his "mirthfulness" which in turn is more meaningful because harder won.[37] Later, the question was taken up by Browning, who scorned the idea of autobiographical revelation in the *Sonnets*, and Swinburne, who mocked him in turn for remaking the Bard in the image of a celebrated composer of dramatic monologues. In the year before Wilde's publication of "Portrait," Massey released his edition of the sonnets with a critical introduction that lampooned autobiographical readings. Schoenbaum suggests that the Victorian question of the possibility of

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[35] William Wordsworth, "Scorn Not the Sonnet," in *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 356-57.
[36] *Variorum Sonnets*, II: 134. A decade later, notably, *Blackwood's* hosted an anti-autobiographical argument by Hartley Coleridge. *Variorum Sonnets*, II: 136.
[37] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, ed. David R. Sorensen and Brent E. Kinser (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2013), 99.

an autobiographical interpretation of the sonnets created a "critical battleground" where war still rages to this day.[38]

This autobiographical question created a cultural anxiety about the character of the nation's foremost poet, and commentators like the historian Henry Hallam, Wilde's narrator notes, "regretted that the Sonnets had ever been written" (68). Could Carlyle's King Shakespeare really have been guilty of the crimes of adultery and pederasty? As Robert Sawyer has demonstrated, studies in Shakespeare thus became a site where Victorian masculinity was under construction. In his consideration of Swinburne's 1880 *A Study of Shakespeare*, Sawyer identifies how Swinburne's attention to Falstaff and *King Lear* offered the poet an opportunity to celebrate homoeroticism and aesthetic Hellenism over Christian orthodoxy in Shakespeare's oeuvre.[39] Although Swinburne doesn't focus on the sonnets specifically in his work, he does note the "preposterous pyramid of presumptuous commentary [that] has long since been reared by the Cimmerian speculation and Bœotian 'brain-sweat' of sciolists and scholiasts, that no modest man will hope and no wise man will desire to add to the structure or subtract from it one single brick of proof or disproof, theorem or theory."[40] However, in his dinner conversation, Swinburne wasn't quite as reticent, and A.J. Munby recalls how the subject of the sonnets sent Swinburne into a scandalous discourse on same-sexuality: "This […] led to worse talk; he expressed a horror of sodomy, yet *would* go on talking about it; and an actual admiration of Lesbianism, being unable, as he confessed, to see that that is equally loathsome."[41] Though

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[38] Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, 314.
[39] See Robert Sawyer, *Victorian Appropriations of Shakespeare* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 2003), 49-83.
[40] Algernon Charles Swinburne, *A Study in Shakespeare* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1880), 62.
[41] Qtd. in Derek Hudson, *Munby, Man of Two Worlds: The Life and Diaries of Arthur J. Munby, 1828-1910*. (London: John Murray, 1972), 283. See also, Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire:*

Swinburne refrains from the un-wise and immodest discussion of the sonnets in print, he was an able conversationalist on the subject and, more specifically, understood them as a colloquial conduit for discussing homosexuality.[42] Swinburne's hesitancy to publish a theory of *Sonnets* foretells that of Wilde's narrator, another Oxford man, who seems to relinquish the idea of publication for the amateur pleasures of conversation and contemplation.

If the study of the sonnets was already an underground discourse for same-sex desire by 1889, Shakespeare studies writ large was a principal site where professional literary criticism itself evolved. Mark Hollingsworth notes that "over a thousand critical books were written about Shakespeare in the nineteenth century" and suggests how the period witnesses the outpacing of the "amateur editor" by the professionalized scholar who "began to be defined by affiliation to an institution."[43] The growing discipline of nineteenth-century Shakespeare studies alone might have produced the century's "monstrous multitudinous books" that, Gilbert laments, must be navigated like "a wearisome labyrinth" in "The Critic as Artist."[44]

Though nineteenth-century Shakespearian scholarship attracted voices from all over the Anglophone world—and beyond—Cambridge became a privileged site of Shakespearian inquiry at midcentury. Gary Taylor has suggested that the Cambridge editions of Shakespeare, which appeared from 1863 to 1866 edited by William George Clark and William Aldis Wright, were a critical watershed that sealed "the professorial appropriation of Shakespeare" in the wake of the

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The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1990), 203.

[42] The only other time Swinburne engaged with the question of the sonnets was a brief riposte in the *Fortnightly Review* to a postulation by Browning, then president of the New Shakespeare Society, that they offered no autobiographical information about Shakespeare himself. See Rollins, Vol. II, 142.

[43] Mark Hollingsworth, "Shakespeare criticism," in *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012), 39-59, 54.

[44] Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," 275.

editorial scandal of Collier's forgeries in the 50s.[45] The official license of the ancient university eclipsed the names of the editors and distinguished their work with the sociocultural, academic cachet of Cambridge. Sidestepping an editorial introduction and "conspicuous creativity," Clark and Wright effected a "collection and interpretation of [a] mass of data [that] would have done credit to any Victorian scientist": "[They] were not practitioners of imaginative literature; they were just experts. Their academic credentials and unequaled command of the Facts qualified them to establish the truth, impersonally."[46] In effect, Shakespeare studies became ground zero for the disinterested, scientific study of letters in the nineteenth century, borrowing significantly from the academic norms established by the Higher Criticism of classical and Biblical texts.[47] The career of Edward Dowden, from whose 1881 introduction to the *Sonnets* Wilde pilfered liberally, suggests the importance of Shakespeare to the institutionalization of literary study through the recently established chair of English literature at Trinity College, Dublin, which Dowden assumed in 1867.[48]

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[45] Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), 187.
[46] Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*, 188-89.
[47] Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare*, 187. As the career of Edward Dowden illustrates the significance of Shakespeare to the formation of the discipline, that of Thomas Tyler demonstrates it reliance on the practices of the Higher Criticism. Tyler's career began with a contribution to the *Journal of Sacred Literature* in 1854 and developed through the 70s with the Higher Criticism of *Ecclesiastes* but produced, in 1886, a facsimile edition of the *Sonnets*, which Wilde himself owned and his narrator also consults. Christy Desmet has demonstrated how, across the Atlantic, American Shakespeare societies of the 1880s and 90s generally shared "a scholarly interest in the plays," that welcomed a convergence of "the amateur and professional Shakespeariana" under the rubric of professional scholarly discourse, or a "Critical Method" that privileged historical information-gathering. See Christy Desmet, "Shakespeariana and Shakespeare Societies in North America, 1883-1893," *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation* 2, no. 2 (2006), http://www.borrowers.uga.edu/781464/show.
[48] Though Dowden was trained in Ireland, he would eventually assume a lectureship at Trinity College, Cambridge in the 1890s. See Horst Schroeder, *Annotations to Oscar Wilde, THE PORTRAIT OF MR W.H.* (Braunschweig, 1986), 7 and *passim*. And, E. J. Gwynn, "Dowden, Edward (1843–1913)," rev. Arthur Sherbo, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.

The ideological formation of the Cambridge ideal of scientific scholarship was not, however, without its discontents. When John Churton Collins excoriated Edmund Gosse's critical treatise on "the rise of Classical poetry in England" *From Shakespeare to Pope* (1885) in the *Quarterly Review* of October 1886, he opened, opining "That such a book as this should have been permitted to go forth to the world with the *imprimatur* of the University of Cambridge, affords matter for very grave reflection."[49] The title page of Gosse's volume identifies him as "Clark Lecturer in English at the University of Cambridge," and Collins doesn't hold back, over the forty pages of his tirade, from "very grave reflection" on how Gosse fails to meet the standards enacted by Clark and Wright's Shakespearean scholarship. Collins disapproved of Gosse's scholarship based on his lack of a university education in Latin particularly and gleefully displayed Gosse's abuse of dates, small facts, and other miscellanies. In one of his screed's most vituperative attacks, he accuses Gosse of amateurism: "Of all the pests that beset and impede culture, dilettantism is by far the most mischievous." Collins believes dilettantism to be "a mockery and a fraud" and elaborates how it "is not simply an intellectual, but a moral evil":

> It encourages those lazy and desultory habits into which young students are especially prone to fall. It tends to render them indifferent to the distinction between accuracy and inaccuracy, between truth and falsehood. It emasculates, it corrupts, it strikes at the very root of that conscientiousness and honesty, that

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C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, September 2013.

[49] [John Churton Collins], "English Literature at the Universities," *Quarterly Review,* clxiii (October 1886), 289-329, 289. For a more complete account of the events, see Ann Thwaite, *Edmund Gosse: A Literary Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), 276-97.

> absolute sincerity, which is, or ought to be, the first article in the creed of every scholar and of every teacher.[50]

Collins not only demonstrates the moral implications of dilettantism at the *fin de siècle*, which of course Wilde was eager to exploit, but also the extremes to which a public university man (Collins had, unsurprisingly, matriculated at Oxford) attempted to police intellectual practice by appealing to the reputations of the ancient universities. Gosse's many failures formed, for Collins, a call to arms that signaled the need to identify and discipline the kind of intellectual work that might receive "the *imprimatur*" of the schools, and it is in this atmosphere that an objectivist historical practice came to be associated with Cambridge scholarship.

The Cambridge method of fact-finding, described by Taylor, trades in what Felski calls "professional skepticism," an intellectual pose which demands a "detached, dispassionate, and skeptical demeanor."[51] Intellectual historians Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison have considered the ideological rise of "professional skepticism" as a result of the consolidation of a system of beliefs and practices that inculcated objectivity as a critical and scientific nineteenth-century paradigm; "Scientific objectivity has a history," they write—one deeply influenced by the scientific practices of the mid-nineteenth century. Daston and Galison's history of objectivity identifies how completely out-of-synch this practice was with the protocols of aestheticism: "To be objective is to aspire to knowledge that bears no trace of the knower—knowledge unmarked by prejudice or skill, fantasy or judgment, wishing or striving. Objectivity is blind sight, seeing without inference, interpretation, or intelligence."[52] Wilde's commitment to Paterian philosophy

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[50] Collins, "English Literature," 314.
[51] Felski, *Limits*, 46.
[52] Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 17.

surely taught him the fantasy of such a position, and *Portrait* goes to great lengths to undermine it.

The impersonal and scientific idea of literary scholarship received a definite endorsement from critics like Frederick Fleay, a grammar school headmaster who co-founded the New Shakspere Society with Frederick Furnivall in 1874. "The industrious flea," as he was dubbed by his Cambridge comrades, hoped to adopt a scientific approach to literary study, though his success, Schoenbaum contends, was plagued by "demons of eccentricity and error."[53] According to Hollingsworth, "the New Shakspere Society sought to bring the certainty and riguour of the new sciences to bear on its literary criticism" with "tabulated statistical analysis" to establish, for example, the chronology of the plays.[54] In the introduction to his 1876 *Shakespeare Manual*, dedicated to the Laureate "who had he not elected to become the greatest poet of his time, might have become its greatest critic," Fleay forswore all "aesthetic criticism" and enlisted the support of Wright's edition of *King Lear* which laments "aesthetic notes" as "too personal and subjective, and [which] turn the commentator into a show-man."[55] Instead, a literary critic needed "a thorough training in the Natural Sciences, especially in Mineralogy, classificatory Botany, and above all, in Chemical Analysis" to interpret metrical developments and eliminate "shallow notions taken up to please individual eccentricities."[56] Fleay's suggestions for proper literary training demonstrate how the development of professional skepticism was predicated on

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[53] Sidney Lee, "Fleay, Frederick Gard (1831–1909)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford Univ. Press, 2004; Schoenbaum, 351.
[54] Hollingsworth, "Shakespeare criticism," 39.
[55] Frederick Fleay, *Shakspeare Manual*, (London: R. Clay, Sons, and Taylor, 1876), xx.
[56] Fleay, *Manual*, 108, 244; qtd. also in Hollingsworth, 39, and, partly, in Schoenbaum, *Lives*, 351.

a fantasy of disinterestedness that cloaked the personality of the scholar behind a veil of scientism.

Fleay's 1875 article on the *Sonnets* in *Macmillan's* uses a similar scientific vocabulary and attempts to rescue the Bard from "a dark story of adultery mingled with unwholesome jealousy and disgusting flattery."[57] Fleay rebukes the theory that *Sonnets* 1-126 record a "history of an adulterous or infamous transaction" to argue that they serve instead as a record of the poet's guilt about not producing more poems for the patron of his earlier work, the Earl of Southampton.[58] In effect, Fleay unveils a Shakespeare overcome with "shame" about his "idleness" and attempts to impart his own Victorian work-ethic on the early modern author. Fleay hopes that his essay will exonerate "our Poet of poets" from "the charge of writing some worthless rubbish that has too long gone under his name": "still more it is high time that his moral character should be freed from the shameful stigma that has been branded on it by his critics."[59] Kathryn Prince has demonstrated how Victorian periodicals marketed to children presented Shakespeare as, in Gail Marshall's words, "an exemplar in his own life, a self-made figure highly appropriate to the ethos of personal progress of the mid and late nineteenth century."[60] Fleay extends this ideological construction of Shakespeare as "an exemplary Englishman" by making the *Sonnets* a mouthpiece for the Victorian cult of industriousness,

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[57] Frederick Fleay, "On the Motive of Shakspere's Sonnets (1-127): A Defense of His Morality," *Macmillan's Magazine*, March 1875, 433-445, 433.
[58] Fleay, "Shakspere's Sonnets," 445.
[59] Fleay, "Shakspere's Sonnets," 445.
[60] Gail Marshall, "Introduction," *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012), 1-15, 9.

surely no merely objective concern for the Industrious Flea.[61] Moreover, it is hardly surprising that in his later work Fleay "emphasizes Shakespeare's professional life."[62]

Wilde's *Portrait* mocks the methodology employed by Fleay and his Cambridge colleagues. When the narrator loses his faith in the Willie Hughes theory toward the end of the text, Erskine responds, "I feel quite sure that my theory is the true one. Of course it is a hypothesis, but then it is a hypothesis that explains everything, and if you had been sent to Cambridge to study science, instead of to Oxford to dawdle over literature, you would know that a hypothesis that explains everything is a certainty" (97). Erskine employs the scientific language of Fleay and his technical cohort with a conviction that the narrator immediately undermines: "'Yes, I am aware that Cambridge is a sort of educational institute,' I murmured. 'I am glad I was not there'" (97). The narrator is unmoved by Erskine's appeal to scientific language and immediately recasts the theory in aesthetic terms: "It is a sort of moonbeam theory, very lovely, very fascinating, but intangible. […]. We shall never know the true secret of the passion of his life" (98). For the narrator, scientific professionalism is an unsuccessful buttress against the inscrutability of the past.

Erskine embodies a skepticism he inherits from the Cambridge practice of evidentiary historicism. When Cyril first outlines his theory, Erskine counters "that the name of Willie Hughes does not occur in the list of the actors of Shakespeare's company as it is printed in the first folio" (42). "It was necessary to get some independent evidence about the existence of this young actor," he objects (43). He hopes to construct a theory fully "beyond the reach of doubt or cavil" (44). And his incredulity, he later comes to believe, leads to Cyril's martyrdom: "I drove

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[61] Kathryn Prince, "Shakespeare in the periodicals," in *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century,* ed. Gail Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012), 60-75, 64.
[62] Schoenbaum, *Lives*, 352.

[Cyril] to his death by my shallow skepticism and ignorant lack of faith" (98). When the narrator is converted, Erskine pleads against "the pathetic fallacy of martyrdom": "You are carried away by the sentiment of the whole story" (47), and when their positions are switched, Cyril excuses the lack of an archive on the supposition of a pseudonym that Hughes must have adopted for the stage, and takes off for Germany to "[try] in every way to verify the Willie Hughes theory" (98). Throughout the story and even in different positions of belief, Erskine's search for a historical record of Willie Hughes aligns him with the fact-finding archaeological method of objective Cambridge scholarship.

Wilde's oblique reference to the professional scientism of Victorian Shakespeare studies suggests the degree to which he wanted his story to be remarkably different, even if critics hoped for something more familiar.[63] Charles Ricketts recalls his interview with Wilde about future publishing plans on the afternoon of the very day the older man was later to receive the "insulting postcard" from Queensbury which initiated the three infamous trials. After his plans to publish the extended version of the novel faded with the dissolution of the Lane and Matthews partnership at the Bodley Head, Wilde hoped he might entice the painter of the frontispiece to issue it himself through his newly established fine press, the Vale. Ricketts was guarded but suggested that it was a distant possibility if the "classics only" that Vale issued first met with some success. Beforehand, however, Wilde had also suggested to Ricketts that he issue an edition of the *Sonnets*; the need was great, he implied, because the books of the critical

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[63] The *Illustrated London News*, for example, wished that the narrative frame had been "spared" and in this sense anticipated Lord Alfred Douglas's lamentation in his own monograph "that it is a thousand pities that [Wilde] did not write it and put it forth as a theory and nothing else." Douglas misread so forcefully, in fact, that he immediately enlists the commendation of "a good Shakespearian scholar" Richard Garnett, "of the British Museum" as his aid. See "Magazines for July," *Illustrated London News,* 6 July 1889, p. 16; and Lord Alfred Douglas, *The True History of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1933), 33-35.

establishment stripped the work of its beauty: "Naturally, you will publish the Sonnets; one has to find them in hideous editions edited by men who handle Shakespeare as they would consols, or any other business investments."[64] Vale would eventually print the *Sonnets*, twice, before the press folded in 1904, but it never did issue *Portrait*. Wilde's remarks about contemporaneous editions of the *Sonnets* suggest the scorn he felt for a newly instituted critical establishment, despite the fact that he relied upon its insights in the formation of his own theory.[65] That they are handled like "business investments" is a telling denigration by Wilde, whose story divorces the sonnets from the economic implications of patronage and the scholarly imperative to publish historical theories. By discarding the implied futurism of investing, *Portrait* paints an escape from literary scholarship in the clerical manner of financial transactions and reveals a criticism that doesn't promise any further reward than the immediate pleasures of intellectualism. Investments, especially secure government bonds like consols, expect future returns, but Wilde develops instead an immediate economics of the moment, which takes its cue from Pater's famous concluding words: "art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake."[66]

III. Queer Formalism: Cyril's Amateurism and the Practice of Subtlety

If Erskine's historicism represents a spirit of skeptical detachment, Cyril models a hermeneutics of absorption and attachment. Wilde paints Cyril as a dilettante figure, more committed to art than professionalizing. At Eton, Cyril and Erskine enjoyed "a good deal more play than work," of which Erskine wryly remarks that, "It is always an advantage not to have

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[64] Ricketts, *Recollections*, 41.
[65] Schroeder traces Wilde's paths through Dowden, Tyler, and others in *Annotations*, *passim*.
[66] Pater, *The Renaissance*, 190.

received a sound commercial education" (35). At Cambridge, Cyril was scorned by "college tutors" and became a member of the "Amateur Dramatic Company" where he "was always cast for the girls' parts" and performed, for Erskine, "the only perfect Rosalind I have ever seen" (36-7). He espoused axiomatic doctrines of aestheticism, when he "once read a paper before our Debating Society to prove that it was better to be good-looking than good" (36). And, although he was positioned to join the civil service like his deceased father in deference to his cold, aristocratic "guardian" Lord Crediton, Cyril showed no interest in professionalization: "he took his degree, and came to London to read for the Diplomatic. But he never did any work. He spent his days in reading Shakespeare's Sonnets, and his evenings at the theatre" (37). Cyril is an amateur, practicing "the love of art" and neglecting the professional pull of government bureaucracy. Certainly, Crediton is a telling pun for Wilde, for it collapses a quality of truthfulness, confidence, and honorability with the financial implications of solvency and economic responsibility. That "Cyril had very little affection for [Crediton]" highlights not only his association with forgery but also an apathy for financial responsibility (and thus also for criticism in the manner of accounting) and the protocols of respectable Victorian masculinity (36). Cyril's antipathy for his guardian is of a piece with his desire to uncouple the dedication from mercenary patronage and to overthrow the practice of detached, scientific criticism; it also hints at the conventional immorality of the amateur, a notion Wilde elaborates further in "Pen, Pencil, and Poison."

But perhaps the surest signal of Cyril's proficiency at aesthetic criticism as Pater had outlined it is the ease with which he discovers in the sonnets a reflection of himself. Mr. W.H. is the "boy-actor for whom [Shakespeare] created Viola and Imogen, Juliet and Rosalind, Portia and Desdemona, and Cleopatra herself" (41). Like Cyril, Willie Hughes is "without […] noble

birth or even […] noble nature" (40). Even the forged portrait presents a figure not unlike Erskine's physical description of Cyril. The narrator notes the portrait shows "a young man" "about seventeen years of age, [who] was of quite extraordinary personal beauty, though evidently somewhat effeminate. Indeed, had it not been for the dress and the closely cropped hair, one would have said that the face, with its dreamy, wistful eyes and its delicate scarlet lips, was the face of a girl" (34). The narrator recalls "looking at the wonderful portrait, which had already begun to have a wonderful fascination for me" (35). Erskine remembers his friend as "effeminate" and "wonderfully handsome" with "a great deal more in his face than mere prettiness. I think he was the most splendid creature I ever saw, and nothing could exceed the grace of his movements, the charm of his manner" (36). Both the portrait and Cyril himself have a power to entrance these older men, and their effeminacy, beauty, and talent playing female roles suggest their interchangeability.

Cyril is sure, he tells Erskine, "that all the scholars and critics had been entirely on the wrong track," and "to turn the key that unlocks the mysteries of the poet's heart" he developed a theory "evolved as you see purely from the sonnets themselves" (37, 41). It depended "not so much on demonstrable proof of formal evidence, but on a kind of spiritual and artistic sense, by which alone he claimed could the true meaning of the poems be discerned" (40-1). Cyril breaks from the professional historicism of critical practice and engages in a project of impressionistic narcissism that allows him to see his own ideal in the *Sonnets*. He then offers this to his older friend as a mutual project marked by the love of art: as Erskine fondly recalls, "It was a wonderful evening, and we sat up almost till dawn reading and re-reading the Sonnets" (43). Erskine, however, is too indebted to the scientific discourses of Cambridge to believe him without proof: "I began to see that before the theory could be placed before the world in a really

perfected form, it was necessary to get some independent evidence about the existence of this young actor," he tells the narrator (43). When the narrator himself seems to be converted, Erskine excoriates the theory as "a thing no Shakespearean scholar would accept for a moment" (47). By aligning Erskine with a scholarly historicism and a tradition of Cambridge scientism, Wilde in turn gives Cyril a formalist perspective—the original point of access, in this story, to queer history and one beyond the purview of the professional "Shakespearean scholars."

Wilde develops his idea of aesthetic formalism in "The Critic as Artist," where Gilbert emphasizes its primacy: "Form is everything. It is the secret of life," he tells Ernest (270). Unsurprisingly, the sonnet is Gilbert's first example: "[The real artist] does not first conceive an idea, and then say to himself, 'I will put my idea into a complex metre of fourteen lines,' but realizing the beauty of the sonnet-scheme, he conceives certain modes of music and methods of rhyme, and the mere form suggests what is to fill it and make it intellectually and emotionally complete" (269). As Gilbert phrases it shortly thereafter, "Form is the beginning of things":

> [It] is Form that creates not merely the critical temperament, but also the aesthetic instinct, that unerring instinct that reveals to one all things under their conditions of beauty. Start with the worship of form, and there is no secret in art that will not be revealed to you, and remember that in criticism, as in creation, temperament is everything, and that it is, not by the time of their production, but by the temperaments to which they appeal, that the schools of art should be historically grouped. (270)

Because "the time of their production" is an insufficient critical rubric for the historical classification of art, Gilbert uncouples the aims of criticism from a disinterested historicism; instead, such categorizations depend upon the "temperament" of the critic who will organize

genres by their addresses to particular personalities. In Wilde's contradictory formulation, formalism licenses subjectivism. To our ears, queer formalism might sound like an anachronistic paradox, because formalism presumes an adherence to prescribed structures and the critical category of "queer" has been weaponized to assault universal categories.[67] Yet, by positioning literary classification as a result of a particular personality, Wilde uncouples form from a context of weak objectivity and suggests how Cyril can refashion the sonnets as a homoerotic ideal: "[Cyril] felt, as indeed I think we all must feel, that the Sonnets are addressed to an individual—to a particular young man whose personality for some reason seems to have filled the soul of Shakespeare with terrible joy and no less terrible despair" (40). Because, as Gilbert points out, criticism "is concerned simply with oneself" and "is never trammeled by any shackles of verisimilitude," Cyril discards the evidentiary requirements of historicism to promote a formalist theory of homoeroticism (237). Cyril maps his formalist reading of the sonnets on a theory of "feeling"—of "internal evidence," a deceptive pun that suggests not only his practice of close reading but also his temperament, a sensibility "internal" to himself (37). Formalism is a queer critical strategy in "The Critic as Artist" and *Portrait* because it yields the capacity to remake history in the subjective image of the observer.

Robert Sulcer has traced a critical practice of Victorian "strategic queer formalism" that academics like the Oxford classicist John Conington and Pater developed and which bequeathed paranoid reading practices to modernists and the twentieth-century New Critics. According to Sulcer, formalism was a strategy of interpretation that collided with the discursive formation of

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[67] See, for example, David Halperin who writes, "Queer is by *definition* whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers*. It is an identity without an essence." *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), 62, emphasis in original.

the homosexual as a personality to be interpreted by medical and legal discourses; these critics' "experience of secrecy [enabled] the search for buried meaning so common in formalistic criticism."[68] Yet, in turn, this formalism "vacated the text of identity in its aggrandizement of sheer form" and thus provided a closet of refuge to the queer academic who couldn't speak his desires under nineteenth-century proscriptions.[69] For Sulcer, close reading became both the critical practice of the queer literary professor and a metaphor that ensured his closeted survival. Yet, Cyril's formalism is of an entirely different order, for he hopes to use close reading as a tool to excavate identity, not disavow it. Without the professional protocols of the university to restrict him, Cyril hopes that his formalist reading will give him a language and a precedent to reveal his own desire.

Upon first hearing Cyril's theory, Wilde's narrator understands him to be "the most subtle Shakespeare critic of our day" and inaugurates a pattern in his thought that reverberates across the queerest moments of the text (48). "Subtle" is an apt epithet for Cyril, whose theory collapses many of the word's disparate meanings: it is at once perceptive, complex, indirect, fine, and skillful.[70] Wilde enfolds a multitude of implications on the overdetermined adjective. "Subtle" refers to the precision of Cyril's theory as well as the intricacy of its architecture. Recalling Richard III's admission that he is "subtle false and treacherous," it is also a pun on Cyril's deceptiveness and the falsehoods he propagates (1.1.37).[71] Similarly, the speaker of *Sonnet 138* suggests "subtlety" is an art of deception that he pretends not to understand so that his mistress might think him youthful:

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[68] Robert Sulcer, "Ungentlemanly Scholars," *Victorians Institute Journa*l 35 (Jan. 2007): 137-170, 152.
[69] Sulcer, "Ungentlemanly Scholars," 139.
[70] "subtle, adj. and n.," *OED Online*, March 2016, Oxford University Press.
[71] William Shakespeare, *King Richard III*, ed. Gillian Day (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001).

When my love swears that she is made of truth,

I do believe her though I know she lies,

That she might think me some untutored youth,

Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.[72]

Shakespearean subtlety is mendacious. Yet the word may also be an historical pun on Renaissance subtleties, the sculptural, ornamental entremets made from sugar in early-modern table settings, by referencing, obliquely, Francis Meres's 1598 *Palladis Tamia*, which contains the first published reference to Shakespeare's sequence: "As the soule of *Euphorbus* was thought to live in *Pythagoras*: so the sweete wittie soule of *Ouid* liues in mellifluous & hony-tongued *Shakespeare*, witness his *Venus* and *Adonis*, his *Lucrece*, his sugred Sonnets among his private friends, &c."[73] Wilde was certainly familiar with Meres's reference, for Cyril defends his argument against the Pembroke theory with the date of Meres's text (38-39). Cyril's subtlety then may be an indirect reference to not only Meres's metaphor of "sugred Sonnets" but also the speaker's address to the "sweet boy" in *Sonnet 108*.[74] Naming Cyril "subtle," the narrator assumes the Shakespearean speaker's stance of fascination with the Fair Youth. Thus, "the most subtle critic" reads subtly by extricating the finest points from a complicated group of texts, engenders a deceptive interpretation by crafting an elaborate forgery, and creates a seductive and toothsome theory that circulates, like the sonnets to which Meres alludes, privately among a few friends.

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[72] William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets,* ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones, The Arden Shakespeare, 3rd series (London: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 391.
[73] Qtd. in Katherine Duncan-Jones, "Introduction," *Shakespeare's Sonnets,* 1. For an exploration of sugar and subtleties as metaphors for Elizabethan poetry in George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1588), see Miriam Jacobson, *Barbarous Antiquity: Reorienting the Past in the Poetry of Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 2014), 54-85.
[74] *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 327.

"Subtle" had been a favorite word of Pater's, and it's worthwhile examining why the narrator might allude to the famous Oxonian in his estimation of Cyril. Wilde signals his explicit debt to Pater, as he appropriates his teacher's characterization of music as "subtle and vague" in "Leonardo" by positioning his narrator to note "the subtle art of music" (Pater 93, Wilde 73). But, perhaps Wilde had another meaning in mind. At one moment in the Leonardo essay, Pater connects "subtlety" to a kind of interpretation that resonates with Cyril's formalist method of explication: "[Leonardo] learned here the art of going deep, of tracking the sources of expression to their subtlest retreats, the power of an intimate presence in the things he handled."[75] Here, "subtlest retreats" suggests a chthonic complexity waiting to be extricated and elucidated by the artist or critic: it requires a proximate "intimate presence" to be unearthed. What Pater elsewhere terms Leonardo's "[penetration] into the most secret parts of nature" models, according to James Eli Adams, a kind of "symptomatic reading" for buried truths, and Wilde shows how Cyril initiates this subtle practice in *Portrait*.[76]

But Wilde's narrator may have yet another Paterian meaning in mind for Cyril's subtlety. Undoubtedly the most homophile passage in "Winckelmann" had been Pater's suggestion that the scholar's romantic friendships with young Italian men informed his grasp of Greek art: "That [Winckelmann's] affinity with Hellenism was not merely intellectual, that the subtler threads of temperament were inwoven in it, is proved by his romantic, fervent friendships with young men" (152).[77] Pater describes queer desire as a collection of many strands which unspool into

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[75] Pater, *The Renaissance*, 81.
[76] Pater, *The Renaissance*, 86; James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1995), 203.
[77] Clearly, Wilde had this passage in mind as he worked at the extended text, for the narrator recalls, "A romantic friendship with a young Roman of his day initiated Winckelmann into the secret of Greek art" (69).

intellectual enterprise, a process that would be impossible to divorce from subjectivity. Later, Winckelmann "apprehended the subtlest principles of the Hellenic manner, not through the understanding, but by instinct or touch" (154). In both of these examples, Pater links "subtlety" to an interiority of "temperament" or "instinct," and he thus encodes Winckelmann's intelligence with a kind of internal homophilia.[78] Moreover, subtlety suggests secrecy and discretion, and the need for subtlety about the Willie Hughes theory certainly affects Cyril and Erskine, who are "almost afraid to turn the key that unlocks the mystery of the poet's heart" (40). First written only four years after the Labouchère Amendment criminalized "gross indecency" between men and created a blackmailer's market for sexual secrets, the need for subtlety was certainly paramount. The narrator's classification of Cyril as "the most subtle Shakespeare critic of our day" relies upon a Paterian discourse that encodes subtlety as queer and hints at the need for discretion.

Wilde's narrator appropriates this Paterian sense of queer intellectual subtlety. He believes that there was "more in [Shakespeare's] friendship" than a professional delight: "this was indeed a subtle element of pleasure, if not of passion, and a noble basis for an artistic comradeship" (64-5).[79] When he describes the "strange influence over men" of Ficino's 1492 translation of the *Symposium*, the narrator notes "its subtle suggestion of sex in soul" that

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[78] To be sure, "subtle" was undoubtedly a key word of aestheticism, but Wilde gives it a distinctly queer connotation in certain moments throughout his oeuvre as when Dorian forswears "those subtle poisonous theories that in Basil Hallward's garden had first stirred within him the passion for impossible things" (116). As Bristow has noted, "The phrase '*l'amour de l'impossible'* was Symonds's phrase in both his poetry and his memoirs for what Symond's called "the congenital aberration of [his] passions." Bristow, *Effeminate England*, 54, 59n. See also, John Addington Symonds, *Memoirs*, ed. Phyllis Grosskurth (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago press, 1984), 190.

[79] Notably, Wilde repeats this phrase almost exactly in *Dorian Gray* when Lord Henry "watche[s] [Dorian] with a subtle sense of pleasure" (89). In both instances, "subtle" is a calculatedly evasive description of same-sex desire.

"fascinated the poets and scholars of the sixteenth century" (65). Reflecting on "the motives of dramatic curiosity," he notes "there is none more subtle or more fascinating than the ambiguity of the sexes" (72). And, finally, in the pinnacle of his belief, he admits, "As from opal dawns to sunsets of withered rose I read and re-read them in garden or chamber, it seemed to me that I was deciphering the story of a life that had once been mine, unrolling the record of a romance that, without my knowing it, had coloured the very texture of my nature, had dyed it with strange and subtle dyes" (91). This last example especially capitalizes on Pater's metaphor of the queer thinker as a textile composed of many different strands of thought and experience. And just as Pater foretells a "strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves" in his Conclusion (188), so too will the narrator lose his faith in Cyril's queer theory. The subtlety of Cyril's interpretation also suggests its effervescence. Unlike criticism of the sonnets that "handle them like consols," a subtle theory does not securely guarantee future returns.

Cyril's subtlety is a multi-faceted trait constructed by his intelligence, his formalist ingenuity, his deceitfulness, his allure, and his queerness, but it also captures his difference from the professional critics who offer their theories in the finalized print of published tracts. A subtle theory is an ethereal and elusive one; it is amateur. Cyril's exists as hearsay mediated through Erskine's memory and remorse over his friend's death. For the narrator, it is twice removed and threatens to disappear completely without his involvement. Thus, precisely because Cyril's queer theory is amateur does the intellectual action of the novella commence. Dilettantism calls the narrator on his critical quest, and like Cyril he too will fail to offer a lasting literary theory that outlives (queer) aestheticism's economy of the moment.

IV. "From fairest creatures we desire increase": Oxford and the Allure of the Amateur

Portrait's narrator journeys from certainty in the identities of Pembroke and Mary Fitton to absolute "[belief] in Cyril's theory," to skepticism, and a final state of equipoise. He proves capable in both critical methodologies employed by Erskine and Cyril and thus illustrates Wilde's faith in an Oxford education's ability to "play" and adapt to multiple intellectual viewpoints. If *Portrait* presents a dialectic of critical method, the narrator offers a synthesis of two styles. Like Erskine, the narrator reveals his historicist leanings, by researching adolescent Renaissance actors and situating the sonnets in a larger Neoplatonic context. He even mimics the aspirations of the New Shakspere Society to "fix with greater certainty the date of the Sonnets" (85). He's conversant in popular theories and understands the weight of the scholarly apparatus of "Mr Tyler's facsimile edition of the Quarto" at his hand (49). Yet, like Cyril, he also models a hermeneutics of absorption that, through "internal evidence," allows him to "[see] the perfect unity and completeness of the whole" formalist scheme of the sonnets (87).

As my aesthetic etymology of "subtle" above illustrates, the narrator's historicism is a program in philosophical positioning that's deeply indebted to the work of Oxford men like Jowett, Pater, and Symonds. Wilde signals his intellectual debt to Pater most clearly when the narrator muses on the distinctiveness of artistic media: "all Art has its medium […], and as one of the most fascinating critics of our day has pointed out, it is to the qualities inherent in each material, and special to it, that we owe the sensuous element in Art" (64). But Pater's influence runs throughout the novel; the narrator borrows liberally from Pater's thoughts on figures like Michelangelo, Pico della Mirandola, and Winckelmann (66-69). He transmits the narrator's intellectual debt to Symonds by appropriating liberally from the history of Michelangelo in the third volume of *Renaissance in Italy* (1877), quoting Symonds's own translation of a

Michelangelo sonnet about the love of Luigi del Riccio for Cecchino, "a lad who died at the age of seventeen" (67), and borrowing the history of the early modern stage from *Shakespeare's Predecessors in the English Drama* (1883).[80] And, like Jowett, he describes models of romantic friendship as "removed from gross bodily appetite" and paraphrases the Balliol master's translations of Plato.[81] At the pinnacle of his belief in Cyril's theory, he draws from Plato directly, as Pater had, and quotes in Greek Pater's rewriting from the passage in the *Symposium* about "lovers and philosophers at once"[82]: "How that phrase had stirred me in my Oxford days!" (92). The narrator is as deeply, intellectually indebted to Oxford as Erskine is to Cambridge.

Yet he comes closest to Erskine's method of inquiry as he begins to research the "boy actors" of the Renaissance stage; desperate to find a record of Will Hughes, he laments, "it seemed to me that I was always on the brink of absolute verification but that I could never really attain to it" (70). He even fancies publishing on them: "I thought it strange that no one had ever written a history of the English boy-actors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and determined to undertake the task myself" (70).[83] In his historical research, the narrator approaches Erskine's method of inquiry most closely, though he cannot fully adopt a stance of

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[80] See Schroeder, *Annotations*, 34-43 for Wilde's paraphrases and appropriations from *Predecessors*.

[81] Wilde, *Portrait*, 66; and Schroeder, *Annotations*, 21-3, for Wilde's debt to Jowett's translation of the *Symposium*.

[82] Schroeder notes that Jowett's translation had been "love is also a philosopher," but the phrase is not "anywhere else to be found in Plato" and instead comes directly from the "Winckelmann" essay. This is a shrewd move by Wilde which highlights Pater's own amateur historicism. Schroeder, *Annotations*, 65.

[83] Wilde, Schroeder points out, is just as disingenuous here as he is when he suggests that "It was at least something to have discovered that Will Hews was an Elizabethan name" (69), for Furnivall had published "the wills of ten Elizabethans named William Hewes" in *Notes and Queries* in 1876. See Schroeder, 29. The narrator's contention that no one had written a history of the actors of the Renaissance stage is controverted by Wilde's own experience as editor of *The Women's World*, for which he oversaw Amy Strachey's article titled "The Child-Players of the Elizabethan Age" in 1888.

disinterested skepticism: “there is something in the scanty record of their lives, in the mere mention of their names, that attracts me” (70). The narrator collects the details of their histories “in a little book with fine vellum leaves and damask silk cover” but cleverly conceals in his narrative what exactly he wrote down. Bristow and Mitchell have a good deal of fun with this section, for it depended, as Schroeder has illustrated, on the 1879 edition of Collier’s *History of English Dramatic Poetry to the Time of Shakespeare: and Annals of the Stage to the Restoration*. Bristow and Mitchell show that the narrator “has a habit of occasionally tampering with the information Collier presents” and “here and there, he simply conjures something fanciful” (278). For them, the narrator’s history of the young actors instantiates Wilde’s commitment to the legacy of forgery, but I’m interested in pointing out how this section shows the narrator fail to commit totally to a model of Erskinian skepticism. Despite the mass of historical information, Will Hughes cannot be found in the archives, and the narrator compensates by switching from historicist inquiry into historical fantasy: “I began to think of him not as the delicate chorister of a Royal Chapel, not as a petted minion trained to sing and dance in Leicester’s stately masque, but as some fair-haired English lad whom in one of London’s hurrying streets, or on Windsor’s green silent meadows, Shakespeare had seen and followed” (76). Through his various fabrications and his daydreams, the narrator proves that though he can mimic Erskine’s methods he cannot stick to them. The pursuit of historical confirmation indelibly returns the narrator to creative fiction, and Wilde suggests that historical objectivity itself is the fantasy: “I could almost fancy that I saw him standing in the shadow of my room, so well had Shakespeare drawn him, with his golden hair, his tender flower-like grace, his dreamy deep-sunken eyes, his delicate mobile limbs, and his white lily hands. His very name fascinated me. Willie Hughes! Willie

Hughes!" (58). Same-sex fantasy eclipses the narrator's flirtation with historicist inquiry; he cannot achieve the critical distance required of professional skepticism.

When he turns to the question of the Dark Lady sonnets, the narrator most closely follows Cyril's method: "My whole scheme of the Sonnets was now complete, and, by placing those that refer to the dark lady in their proper order and position, I saw the perfect unity and completeness of the whole" (87). By fashioning his formalist reading, which requires a readjustment of the sonnets' order, the narrator believes he has landed upon a perfect interpretation, and his absorption into the work of art reaches its pinnacle: "A book of Sonnets, published nearly three hundred years ago, written by a dead hand and in honour of a dead youth, had suddenly explained to me the whole story of my soul's romance" (91-2). By resigning the critical distance assumed by historicist inquiry, the narrator models Cyril's hermeneutics of absorption to find nothing but a revelation of his own desire in the group of texts. Cyril's theory has recreated him in its own image.

In the end, however, neither methodology satisfies the narrator, and he loses his faith in the theory. After writing his defense of Cyril's theory with "a strong appeal to Erskine to do justice to the memory of Cyril Graham, and to give to the world his marvelous interpretation of the Sonnets," he becomes "perfectly indifferent to the whole subject" and wonders if he has "exhausted the passion itself" by putting it into language (93-94). The Willie Hughes theory is, he now thinks, an "idle dream, the boyish fancy of a young man who like most ardent young spirits, was more anxious to convince others than to be himself convinced" (94). He wonders if he had been "at the mercy" of ephemeral artistic "impressions," "charmed by that Shelley-like face" of the portrait, or seduced by "the pathetic tragedy of Cyril Graham's death" (94-5). He cannot determine why he had exerted so much energy on the poems: "To the present day I

cannot understand the beginning or the end of this strange passage in my life" (95). Wilde encodes the dalliance with Cyril's theory of art as an almost sexual affair; the love of art betokens an art of love. It effects an illicit passion that he cannot explain.

The narrator's reversal initiates Wilde's own volte-face in his story. As the narrator had first left Erskine's "pretty little house" at the end of the first chapter, "the dawn was just breaking over London" (48). Now, the sun has set, for the narrator, on Cyril's theory as it is "at night-time that this feeling [of disbelief] first came over me" (95). The narrator returns to Erskine's home, where he discovers that the elder gentleman now believes 'Cyril Graham's theory is perfectly sound" (95). Earlier, he had declared it "false," "a thing that was unsound" (47). The narrator parrots Erskine's earlier warning not to be "carried away by the sentiment of the whole story" in his imperative, "Don't be carried away by mere sentiment in this matter" (47, 96). The narrator also echoes Erskine's earlier critique that the theory "[assumes] the existence of the very person whose existence is the thing to be proved": "The one flaw in the theory is that it presupposes the existence of the person whose existence is the subject of dispute" (47, 96). These reversals characterize the scheme of the entire work as one of inversion, rhetorically one of Shakespeare's most well-known strategies. From a sequence that begins with the famous anastrophe "From fairest creatures we desire increase," Wilde draws the structural design of his own work.[84] If we take Vivian's word on the significance of form to Wilde's aesthetics and apply Cyril's methodology to Wilde's own text, the structural reversal of Erskine and the narrator's positions suggests how the novel telegraphs inversion, the word, of course, which

[84] *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 113.

Symonds used in 1891 to describe homosexuality in his privately-printed pamphlet *A Problem in Modern Ethics*, through its formal scheme.[85]

One great paradox of Wilde's novel then is how it assumes the stance of inversion formally at the very moment that the narrator relinquishes the desire to see Cyril's interpretation put forward in print. Yet Erskine's final conversion may shed some light on this. The narrator's letter, a personal exchange hidden from the eyes of Wilde's reader, has succeeded where Cyril's forged portrait failed, for Erskine was successfully re-recruited into believing in Willie Hughes. The power to proselytize a queer reading does not reside in a deceptive proof of an ever-elusive history but in the present critical moment of exchange between friends. Cyril's mistake was an appeal to Erskine's skepticism; the narrator's success is an amateur critical effort. Having lost his faith in the theory, the narrator crafts a story—the printed text Wilde intended to place before his reader—that retreats from the professional protocols of scholarship (though it certainly has some fun parodying them) and presents itself as a personal narrative, an amateur's particular recollections of a failed theory. In effect, the narrator adopts a casual, conversational tone; for example, he opens the story familiarly: "I had been dining with Erskine in his pretty little house in Birdcage Walk, and we were sitting in the library over our coffee and cigarettes, when the question of literary forgeries happened to turn up in conversation" (33). In the world of Wilde's *Portrait*, the amateur's theory packs a heftier punch than the scholar's, and, even though the narrator has tried to follow some protocols of an objective criticism, the Willie Hughes theory as finally presented may be even more seductive, more transmissible, in its provisionality than it would be if it were presented as historical fact.

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[85] See John Addington Symonds, "A Problem in Modern Ethics," in *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality: A Sourcebook*, ed. Chris White (London: Routledge, 1999), 71-90, 72.

In the story's conclusion, Wilde emphasizes again how amateur exchanges about art might enliven self-knowledge. The significant truth Wilde reveals in the story is that the search for a queer history in the art of the past was a crucial process for homophiles at the *fin de siècle* eager for a vocabulary and a history with which to explain their desire. Though Wilde suggests that rendering a single queer meaning from the *Sonnets* is a hopeless quest, the portrait's queer influence remains a possibility in the final paragraph:

> This curious work of art hangs now in my library, where it is very much admired by my artistic friends, one of whom has etched it for me. They have decided that it is not a Clouet, but an Ouvry. I have never cared to tell them its true history, but sometimes, when I look at it, I think there is really a great deal to be said for the Willie Hughes theory of Shakespeare's Sonnets. (100-1)

The narrator has relinquished his former desire to find the one, true meaning of the *Sonnets* and instead allows the portrait to facilitate a broader communion with his "artistic friends." Though he dares not enlist them in the dangerous and futile quest for proof of the theory, he admits that "there is really a great deal to be said" for a queer reading of the *Sonnets.* In the end, it seems as though the Oxford man exchanges the desire to publish a theory of Shakespeare to commit instead to amateur exchange and aesthetic debate among friends.

Willie Hughes remains a possibility only by relinquishing the demands of a professional skepticism, and the narrator abandons his desire to publish a formal theory in order to relate instead a personal narrative. Thus, the frame of the novel suggests Wilde's polemic that queer history is thinkable only in amateur hermeneutics divorced from the biases and protocols of institutionalized scholarship: the narrator "[has] never cared to tell [his artistic friends]" about the portrait's forged provenance, and only "sometimes" does he "think there is really a great deal

to be said for the Willie Hughes theory." He renounces historical fact for the occasional affordances of amateur inquiry, and the narrator's lie of omission suggests that he chooses not to foreclose the subtle interpretations of his friends, who seem to believe in the portrait's authenticity and may thus take up their own project of queer reading. In effect, *Portrait* witnesses the plural potentialities of amateur epistemology rather than the constraining historical certainties purported by professional scholarship.

Jonathan Freedman has written of Victorian aestheticism as "the highest form of professionalism," particularly in its desire to both create "an esoteric form of knowledge" about art and then "impart that knowledge to an awed but appreciative public."[86] Yet Wilde's story thematizes the failures of epistemological transmission; in this way, *Portrait* demonstrates how the subtle theories of queer art and history must remain outside contemporaneous, professional discourses. It's not difficult then to apply this same anti-professional ethos to Wilde's thoughts about an emergent sexological practice. Writing to Leonard Smithers from Italy in December 1897, Wilde opined, "the fact that [he was] a pathological problem in the eyes of German scientists is only interesting to German scientists: and even in their works I am tabulated and come under the law of *averages*!"[87] Because, vis-à-vis Pater, "failure is to form habits," Wilde turns from the "stereotyped world" of professional sexological designations and in his fiction offers something much more fluid and porous. Art has the power to unleash queer desire in *Portrait*, but perhaps the most radical part of this power is its lack of permanence. The narrator exhausts his passion; he turns away from belief. But because he leaves the portrait hanging in his library, he doesn't foreclose the queer readings of others or promise not to return himself to

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[86] Jonathan Freedman, *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990), 55.
[87] *Letters* 1006.

belief in Cyril's seductive theory. His amateur retelling, like his letter to Erskine, may even ignite the passion he himself felt when he first heard of Willie Hughes in his readers. In yet another deft consideration of *Portrait* that traces the problems of anachronistically reading its gay sexual politics triumphally, Bristow writes that Wilde presents "male friendship" as "unfulfillable, dystopic, [and] tragic" through the deaths of Cyril and Erskine.[88] But if we open our eyes to the hints and whispers about the narrator's "artistic friends," we might see that the fantasy of Willie Hughes may continue revealing the desires of these amateurs to themselves, may license a kind of desire that doesn't seem possible, and, may even create an erotic practice that, though impermanent, false, and anachronistic, seems no less sublime according to Wilde's economics of the moment. "My artistic friends" are a collective force not embowered in an ivory tower, and as they filter in and out of the narrator's library they may, like certain readers of Wilde's story, proselytize a love of art that cannot be constrained by historical objectivity—that delights in the anachronisms of desire. As the novel closes, the portrait hangs like a fake religious relic, an ersatz holy site to worship the love of art and artifice.

[88] Joseph Bristow, "'A complex multiform creature': Wilde's sexual identities," in *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*, ed. Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), 195-218, 210.

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