The School of Pater: Register, Reception, and the Gay Phase

EMMA CHARLOTTE EISENBERG

> One thing was certain; the potentially homosexual boy was the one who benefitted, whose love of beauty was stimulated, whose appreciation was widened and whose critical powers were developed; the normal boy, free from adolescent fevers, missed both the perils and prizes; he was apt to find himself left out.
>
> —Cyril Connolly, "A Georgian Boyhood" (1938)

WHEN art historian Kenneth Clark observes that "aestheticism is usually a passing phase," he makes a more compelling point than perhaps he knew.[1] He introduces a famous work on an artistic period—Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873)—by linking it to the shorter periods, or "phases," of an individual life. In the following, I argue that certain readers used Pater's school of art to periodize their lives in this manner: specifically, as a model for conditional group membership in a homoerotic culture. Throughout his career, Pater (1839–1894) wrote about collectives who reinterpret the past—usually the Renaissance or Ancient Greece and Rome—in order to establish common orientations in the present. However, it is his school concept that comes closest to centering a group's self-conception in this mediation. Examining how Pater's reception realized this potential, I will make two claims. My conceptual claim is that a linguistic term, "register," would strengthen how we study a particular function of group identity: style as a shared persona that can be put on and off in particular contexts.[2] My historical claim is that a kind of Paterian register, in excess of Pater's personal style and occasionally in opposition to his intentions, enabled a particular sexual culture—the gay phase—at Eton and Oxford in subsequent generations.

To substantiate these claims, I examine the school of art as a malleable, contextual group identity in "The School of Giorgione," a section of

Emma Charlotte Eisenberg is a lecturer at UC Berkeley, where her research and teaching focus on narrative theory, sociology, and composition. Her current book project examines how Victorian literature theorizes the group as a middle scale producing new modes of distributed agency, identity, and intention.

Victorian Literature and Culture, Vol. 51, No. 2, pp. 261–292.

© The Author(s), 2023. Published by Cambridge University Press. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution and reproduction, provided the original article is properly cited.

doi:10.1017/S1060150322000109

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Renaissance where Pater almost theorizes his own reception. Then, I turn to that reception, examining how the Paterian school of art became a model of provisional group affiliation in two later examples. By claiming that a Renaissance school's criteria are open to continual, collaborative redefinition, even by nineteenth-century artists and critics, Pater suggests that contemporary members of a school could be as important to its definition as its founders. For a particular literary circle in Edwardian Eton, this logic transformed a hierarchical public school into a horizontal social world. Examining school memoirs by writers like Cyril Connolly and Harold Acton, in which schooldays are playfully described in art historical terms, I show how Paterian affectations were associated not just with student culture in general but a popular Eton persona: the "potentia[l] homosexual."[3] In my final section, I analyze earlier Oxfordian assessments of Pater that questioned whether such associations should be attached to a late colleague's legacy. These anxious reflections indicate how the school of art, as a social form, can be both liberating and compromising by offering individuals a group identity to which they are not bound but whose significance they cannot fully control.

I will use the linguistic term "register" to describe this social function of the school of art and to parse what it meant to temporarily or conditionally affiliate with the school of Pater—to be someone who participates in interactions that repeat, revise, and even resignify certain stylistic gestures associated with his writing. Register describes how a given speaking style becomes linked not to one person but to "stereotypic social personae" with whom a user identifies in order to establish footing in an interaction.[4] Many Pater studies understandably focus on how his style influenced others or promoted a particular subjectivity (queer or otherwise).[5] However, register has resonances with how Pater himself approaches style in "Giorgione": as a collective object beyond any originator's control. By prioritizing context and connotation, his essay anticipates aspects of more recent linguistic anthropology, which studies how cultural categories arise immanently and cumulatively from the interactions that they underwrite. Of course, this subdiscipline asks different questions and deploys different methods than the Victorian anthropology available to Pater.[6] In my argument, I examine moments when Pater almost asks those questions, and then I use those methods to study Pater in a way he would not have been able to have studied himself.

Like other recent scholars across fields of literary study, I see linguistic anthropological terms as providing a more precise account of some literary phenomena.[7] The sociology of aestheticism, for instance could

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

benefit from register as a way to decenter the queer-coded male aesthete from aestheticism in general while describing more richly this figure's centrality in particular contexts: for instance, at Eton and Oxford, where a Paterian register allowed students to have a gay phase, or affiliate with a homoerotic group culture that described a time and place rather than the sexuality of any individual.[8] It may not be surprising that Pater's legacy includes men who are difficult to recuperate as queer subjects but who had gay schooldays, yet their position has not been directly articulated. Linda Dowling's work on Oxford discusses how Pater and others deployed the classics to queer ends but offers only a brief, tantalizing allusion to the "cultural inverts" who could then deploy queer culture to *their* own ends.[9] One way to make this type of person more discussable, I argue, would be the idea of the school of art as a model for "nonsubjective" and "situational" group identity, in this case "a homosexuality not of persons, but of place."[10]

It is often assumed that Pater's later, more conservative work is in part a reaction to his personal difficulty with *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*'s scandalous reception, and concurrent events at Oxford, in the 1870s. And indeed, these texts explicitly or implicitly deprecate the school in comparison to other elite collectives, such as the cult. In my conclusion, I suggest that Pater's late critique of the school of art is in fact about its assimilability to schools of a different sort, like Oxford. If "aestheticism is usually [and only] a passing phase," or a gay phase, then its potential use for cultural transformation is limited: it may sometimes only serve as a bonding ritual for privileged young men who then throw it off. As Dustin Friedman writes, Pater was part of an aesthetic network that "one might *want* to be queer, when being so provides the opportunity to be part of an emancipated artistic vanguard."[11] In this article, I take that instrumentality seriously by focusing on a milieu and moment in which the Paterian register was taken up as much for its social cachet as for its association with theories of art and culture. These speakers of Pater might be bad readers of him, in that they turned the 1873 *Renaissance* into a guidebook, but their repurposing arises from a real focus in Pater's writing: the connection between how individuals experience time in their life trajectories and how they experience history through inherited cultural resources available for their use.

School of Art

"The school notion," Renato Poggioli has suggested, "does not take account of history, only of time."[12] It deals with what is necessary for

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

transmission, or what must necessarily be transmitted, for a particular method to continue in use, according to Poggioli, but it doesn't deal with the active movements, motives, and causes that are properly historical. Pater's Oxford neighbor Emilia Pattison might have agreed. Reviewing *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, she claimed that "the historical element is precisely that which is wanting," as Pater attends to a "sentiment" but not "the conditions of the actual world" from which it arose.[13] Pater might have felt this critique, given that he removed "history" from the title of subsequent editions. But maybe he didn't need to. In Pater's defense, one could reply to Pattison that, for him, the relevant "historical element" is a heuristic that makes history easier to tell: the school of art.

Renaissance appeared at a particular moment in art history when new authentication techniques discredited works of art previously assigned to great masters—masters whose names were part of what gave those works value. Initially, schools were used to shore up the old system of evaluation based around great artists, now extended through minor artists and works whose value derived from their contact (however indirect) with a master. In his essay "Leonardo da Vinci," Pater discusses the school of art in this way, taking a more literal model of education and turning it into a mode by which an artist can extend his style and spirit through future generations. However, "Giorgione" participates in a more emergent sense of the school as a critical tool and even creation. As Jonah Siegel writes, putting Pater alongside contemporaries Anna Jameson and Charles Clément, when art historians began to reevaluate works' provenance, they also opened up their terms of evaluation to reassessment. At this crucial moment in the discipline, the point of schools became not about proving influence but about generating the best descriptive conventions for grouping art.

I want to emphasize this point as premise: that after Pater, when art critics reach for the school, they no longer set themselves up to make an argument about influence; or rather, they no longer have the evidentiary burden of proving influence to the same extent. Throughout *Renaissance*, but in "The School of Giorgione" in particular, Pater implicitly argues that history is not just an issue of denotation (facts, names, locations) but an issue of connotation. The school of art contextualizes one work by putting it alongside others, looking for implicit associations as much as explicit debts and citations: it could be intertextual as well as or instead of being interpersonal. One might conceive this descriptive approach as a critical complement to Pater's typical composition strategy: using

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

passages from other writers' work as formal models but then passing through rounds of revision in order to control language's "intertextual resonance."[14] (For a specific example, see the next section.) The resonance works both ways, with the latter writer responding to the earlier writer's forms but also modifying them and thereby shifting their meaning. This point is important for my larger argument, because it might appear that in discussing "the school of Pater" I am making an argument about direct influence. Although Pater's individual style was influential, the group style to which he contributed acquired other associations and variations during its use by latter writers and speakers. "Giorgione" posits such a sense of group style by focusing on a school where apparent masterworks have been either lost or found to be inauthentic, compelling critics to extrapolate the "Giorgionesque" from works not produced by the man Giorgione: "for, in what is connected with a great name, much that is not real is often very stimulating."[15]

Before getting into Giorgione, here is a little more context on context. As Michael Podro has observed, early art history grappled with how to navigate the fact that art is "both context-bound and yet irreducible to its contextual conditions."[16] To understand art involved not only observing how form relates to extraformal historical conditions but being self-aware about how art criticism constructed a relevant context through its own analysis. For instance, Gottfried Semper and Adolf Göller, in their work on motifs across media and periods, also theorized their process of association: each time they perceived a motif in an object, they knew they created "a new fusion of past and present," drawing on previously observed patterns and extending them.[17] How justifiable was it to apply a concept of art derived from one set of works, or one period, as an interpretive key for another set? This question is also raised by *Studies in the History of the Renaissance,* which transfers the "consummate type" of fifteenth-century Italy to contexts as disparate as French Romanticism (6).

In linguistic anthropology, these issues would be called the issue of "entextualizing" context: speaking or writing context into the text. To describe an object, Michael Silverstein writes, you need a "schema of cultural knowledge" that makes some qualities in the object salient and others not.[18] In "Giorgione," Pater points out that paintings recently discredited as Giorgione's have lost not only institutional value but just such a schema: the artist's *legend,* which Pater elsewhere defines as "the anecdotes which every one knows" such as those from Giorgio Vasari's history (57). This "every one" indicates the way in which such schemas not only describe an object but their describer; as Silverstein notes,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

only a certain kind of person will speak about a particular object in a particular way. In this case, the art historians share a common education; the artist biographies that legitimate a painting also legitimate them as experts. This is true in any conversation as well as in the "conversations" that take place in fields like art history, as communicating people try to arrive at common interpretations for the sake of their relations as well as for the sake of whatever they discuss. Context is not a mere frame or envelope but a common ground that must be rendered explicit ("entextualized") even as it is assumed—an issue recognized by Victorians during the rise of mass print publication, when common knowledge was not guaranteed.[19]

Pater's critical sleight of hand is to reveal the creative potential in this dynamic, turning the problem of Giorgione's legend into an opportunity. Identities, Silverstein alleges, may be "*presupposed* by social acts," but they are "*created* by such social acts as well."[20] Pater seeks to entextualize a new context for discredited Giorgiones by explicitly emphasizing context's importance, shifting art history's onus from denotation to connotation. Now, scholars who had "reduced [Giorgione] almost to a name," or to a biographical person, must return to the more proper question of what art means: to "those liberal and durable impressions which . . . lie beyond, and must supplement, the narrower range of the strictly ascertained facts" (135). The discredited Giorgiones have all the same formal qualities they did before, and these qualities, rather than a factual connection to the man or his direct students, should be "a pledge authenticating the connexion of the school, the spirit of the school, with the master" (132).

In shifting from author to author function, Pater changes Giorgione's "legend," which initially signified biography, into a different sense of legend just emerging: legend as key or code.[21] A set of formal criteria, often used to prove individual authorship, could also be itself the stuff of identity (identity as a meaningful pattern): a "spirit or type in art, active in men so different as those to whom many of his supposed works are really assignable" (132). Inventing "the Giorgionesque," he draws attention to values, urging art appreciators to notice the qualities they attach to the name Giorgione, rather than treating the name as a self-evident category. Consider, in the following passage, how the word "veritable" signifies not just something "true" but something *verifiable* ("denoting possession of all the distinctive qualities of the thing specified").[22] "A veritable school, in fact, grew together out of all those fascinating works rightly or wrongly attributed to him," Pater writes; "out of

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

many copies from, or variations on him, by unknown or uncertain workmen, whose drawings and designs were, for various reasons, prized as his; out of the immediate impression he made upon his contemporaries, and with which he continued in men's minds; out of many traditions of subject and treatment, which really descend from him to our own time, and by retracing which we fill out the original image" (132). Here, critics are particularly important because they "retrace" the original "image" of Giorgione by looking at this growing group of paintings. The act of perceiving resemblance creates identity where it may not previously have been recognized, with the implication that successive generations of critics might arrive at slightly different identities as they notice new resemblances. The school as a hermeneutic has replaced the school as a historical fact—or rather, what counts as a historical fact has now been defined more connotatively. If one were to accept Pater's assessment, the historical "Giorgione" would no longer denote one man but would instead name a set of quality-bearing characteristics.

By emphasizing a history of connotation rather than denotation, Pater anticipates what twentieth-century art historians say more directly: that to write the history of a group, we need a school concept. Conventions that survive transmission are the premise to narrating history, as the historian must select key events, key figures, and key tendencies to emphasize. When rigorously defined, the school is a useful "fiction, an attempt to create order, a construction that enables us to interpret the change," a way to reduce an unwieldy amount of information to salient patterns and trends.[23] What Pater does explicitly anticipate is how subsequent historians would also treat schools as self-portraits, in their consideration of how (beginning in the nineteenth century) artists historicized *themselves* through school-thinking. As "a visible portrait of a collective identity," a school can serve as a "point of reference to the group for the future" as well as a "portrait given to posterity."[24] Part of the art historian's aim in describing schools of art is to arrive at an image that can plausibly describe the self-image that contemporary artists possessed.

In the remainder of this essay, I apply this slightly anachronistic interest to Pater's school by examining how it became a mode of self-portraiture for later generations. However, seeing Pater's art writing as a concept of group identity is not as anachronistic as it may appear. *Renaissance* begins with a meditation on how artists can "illustrate each other" and how artists from this period in particular "do not live in isolation, but catch light and heat from each other's thoughts," in mutual

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

influence that gives their age its unified character (6). Rachel Teukolsky has also made a persuasive case that "Giorgione" is the closest Pater comes to articulating a "social program" and is arguably responding to contemporary events in the Victorian art world like the opening of the intimate and avant-garde Grosvenor Gallery.[25] Pater connects Giorgione to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, of the Pre-Raphaelite School, and calls the school of Giorgione a school of genre: these works depict "little groups of real men and women" often listening to music and are "movable pictures" that can be hung in private interiors, "used, at will," and "like persons, live with us, for a day or a lifetime" (128). Pater's essay, which is primarily about paintings' distinctive qualities and secondarily about critical methods, also gestures toward the sociability that can be found within and through art.

"Giorgione" suggests how the school could be transformed from a hierarchical studio structure to a nonhierarchical group identity. By claiming that a Renaissance school's criteria are open to continuous, collaborative redefinition, even by nineteenth-century artists and critics, Pater suggests that contemporary members of a school could be as important to its definition as its founders. In the next section, I will analyze how the school of art logic allowed schoolboys to transform a hierarchical public school into their own social world. I will focus on Cyril Connolly's "Georgian Boyhood," one of several memoirs that turn art history's connotative approach into a mode of self-periodization. By aligning semesters with historical periods (such as "Dark Ages" and "the Renaissance"), a person like Connolly could portray his identity as experimental, fluctuating, and more indicative of group membership than individual subjectivity. I will also offer a more extensive account of the idea of register and introduce how register may be used to historicize this milieu's particular sexual culture.

School of Pater

On Pater's passing in 1894, Richard Le Gallienne wrote that the late critic was "one of those writer's writers who reach what we call the general public second or perhaps tenth hand," an assessment echoed by other posthumous reviews that either celebrated his significance to "the choice minds of his age" who mediated his reception or rued how less deserving members of the "aesthetic cult" turned him into a mere "pioneer of a socio-intellectual fashion" (Seiler 281, 308, 8–9). Like Giorgione, Pater became for many more of a "figure" (to quote Henry James) than a

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

person, and like a rhetorical figure his image was often repeated and resignified, meaning different things to different people. (*Pace* Carolyn Williams: "The critical voice that we in turn recognize as Paterian is just such a composite creation.")[26] There are arguably many schools of Pater, from art historians of various nationalities who took up and critiqued his methods to women aesthetes who responded to his style and ideas without ever having attended Eton or Oxford.[27]

This section, however, focuses on a group of men who did: Evelyn Waugh, Harold Acton, Peter Quennell, Cyril Connolly, and others. I am focusing on this group, with Connolly's memoirs as my central example, because they indicate how register can be a discursive function of schools of art, as Pater began to define them and as future scholars articulated more fully. As a self-reflexive way of speaking, register can allow people to engage in collective self-description, agreeing upon their group style's shared significance. At Eton, one pertinent register was Paterian. Boys inspired by Pater's way of reinterpreting the past came to decorate their speech with a particular kind of verbal gesture—the transhistorical conceit. Like the schoolboys in "Emerald Uthwart," these young men found that Eton's official school culture was "rooted in the past, divorced from reality" and would only come alive when historical materials were reclaimed in order to portray a current student coterie (Connolly 226).[28] I will analyze this gesture in relation to register and the school before considering how Connolly navigates its potential queerness by making full use of register's impersonality: if you sound like Pater, you may just be partaking in a gay phase that says nothing about you individually.

In suggesting that register might be a function of the school of art, I acknowledge that the two terms are not synonymous. Assif Agha defines register as a style of speaking that, over time, becomes recognizable through its association with a typical speaker. He promotes it as a measure of how cultural values solidify, even at higher-scale institutional levels, through particular interactions as well as the secondary representations and contexts that inform and enforce them.[29] Unlike a voice, which implies an individual person, a register "index[es] stereotypic social personae (viz., that the speaker is male, lower-class, a doctor, a lawyer, an aristocrat, etc.)" (39). To speak in a register is in a sense to quote it, to imitate the people with whom one is raised, educated, or otherwise associated. Imitative repetition gradually builds up into what Agha calls "speech chains," the length and continuity of which give registers their durable though never fixed association with classes of people.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The chain is, importantly, a lateral rather than a hierarchical form. It invokes not a higher authority but a previous one—or even a future one, as the speaker appeals to the person he addresses. Furthermore, a register's formal features signify differently depending on context—the typical speaker can evolve, be "troped upon to yield hybrid personae of various kinds."

In this way, register resembles an aspect of the school of art as I have framed it. Like the school, which uses style to assign diverse artworks to a hypothetical category, register uses style to assign various speech acts to a typical class of person. Both terms also allow for membership criteria to change in form and significance over time: a speaker both steps into an available register and potentially modifies it for future speakers, much as subsequent artists can adopt and evolve available styles in works that subsequent critics can use to reinterpret what the style signifies. School and register differ in the school's division between the artistic and the critical. Because register is linguistic, it allows for metacommentary upon its meaning even as one uses it, whereas visual art must be translated into language for critics to agree on its social significance.[30] However, school assignments are not entirely lacking in social significance. When commenting on or coining a contemporary school in particular, the critic can imply something about the artist's social, political, or even moral commitments. (The nineteenth century furnishes various examples, from charges against the Lake School to the Fleshly School.) The artist can find themselves, based on a particular work, at least temporarily associated with a type of person, much as register can invite others to view you as a type when you may not embody that type all the time. Register is thus not simply an analogue to the school but a part of the metadiscourse that takes place in the social lives of artists and critics.

Situating Pater as one step in an emergent register allows us to track his influence without giving him implied (and inaccurate) control over that influence: a Pateresque flourish does not just refer to Pater but raises the question of what sounding like Pater says about you in a given situation. Also, much like how the school of art's attention to transmission makes it possible to narrate a larger history, by examining a section of "chain" we can grasp how a much longer or more widely distributed movement (like aestheticism) registered in a particular place—for instance, a public school.[31] Eton schoolboys were not yet artists, but Connolly frames their schooldays as key to his critical education and depicts schoolboys as artists whose only art is life: to be "schoolminded" is partly to have an "enthusiasm for personalities and gossip about them,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for a schoolboy is a novelist too busy to write" (234). Instead, he speaks in mutually characterizing interactions that have a corollary and example in Pater's own descriptive mode.

Particularly important in this context, I would suggest, is the kind of "symbolical language" that Pater discusses in *Renaissance*'s "Leonardo da Vinci" essay. According to Pater, Leonardo represented "the polished society he loved" in portraits that transformed living women into mythic avatars. He wasn't interested, the essay suggests, in the women or the myths independently. It is specifically the combinatory act of elevating society women into "Leda or Pomona" that he values, because it furnished him with a "symbolical language for fancies all his own" (69). Pater demonstrates this technique's potential by doing it himself, in language, when he comments on the Mona Lisa. In a move that Williams calls characteristic of his aesthetic historicism, he begins by asking questions about the work's historical context—who was Lady Lisa? was her smile inspired by a flute-player in the studio?—before taking off on a riff that exceeds that original context, transforming one woman into avatar many more times:

> The presence that thus so strangely rose beside the waters is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years man had come to desire. . . . All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the reverie of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; . . . and as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary. (70)

In this passage, Pater both underscores the Mona Lisa as a single figure (*the* presence, *her* head) and attaches this figure to multiple other contexts. Just as Leonardo "mak[es] an aesthetic figure of a particular historical person, Pater performs the second transfiguration, establishing a figure of aesthetic history which is based upon a prior figure: *Pater's* Mona Lisa."[32] However, Pater would not describe this iterative resignification as simply serving "fancies all his own." Although the Mona Lisa paragraph is often cited as a Paterian stylistic feat, it owes much to its imitation of a description by Flaubert of another female figure (Euonia, in *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*).[33] By silently using Flaubert to describe da Vinci, and by actively elaborating on Flaubert's syntax and da Vinci's content, Pater activates but also controls his description's potential connotations. He emphasizes aspects of Flaubert's *femme fatale*

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that he cares about (her immortality, that "modern idea") and deemphasizes other aspects (for instance, as Camlot notes, her sexuality). This connotative sensitivity indicates how to use style as a means of orientation but not necessarily self-avowal. Whereas later theorists of style, in the 1890s, would read writing style in particular as an almost unconscious, individual signature, here and elsewhere Pater gives style a limited agency: although language immediately puts one in relation with others, style allows one to invoke that collective culture selectively.[34] In reading Pater's reworking of Flaubert and da Vinci, we gain access to no single artist's position but rather come to share a complex focalization that all three make possible. We get a particular view onto an idea.

It is this writing practice, potentially, that makes Pater so key to register formation. In handling language already handled by others, he anticipates or inadvertently invites that language's continued handling in the future: readers and speakers who step into his style not simply for his sake, or their own, but to access a collective position only possible through language so mediated it cannot definitively be assigned to anyone. Like the genre paintings that Pater imagines viewers taking home to use for their own purposes (in "Giorgione"), future readers could add their own meanings to the Mona Lisa in Pater's iterative manner but in excess of Pater's actual list. They could do so by joining the Flaubert–Pater chain—as, for instance, Wilde does in his own riff on the reincarnation passages in *Dorian Gray* (1891)—or they could do so in more colloquial dialogues. In "The Critic as Artist" (1891), Wilde imagines how Paterian tropes could sustain a new sociality by turning the passage into a dialogue between two Pater readers. What matters to such speakers is not Pater's accuracy—"who . . . cares" whether Pater's interpretation exceeds da Vinci's intentions—but that when a speaker encounters the painting, at the Louvre, he can quote Pater to his "friend," who will then answer by completing the quotation.[35] Such quotation does not just look backward to Pater but forward to a new interaction ritual in which Pater's work has become related to a register shared by a certain group.

The way in which Wilde and others recirculated the Mona Lisa passage (and others, like the "gem-like flame") is an explicit act of citation, but it can help us think through more implicit ones that cite Pater's manner or method but not his actual words. At Eton, I suggest, boys gave themselves the "Mona Lisa treatment" as a kind of interaction ritual. Their reciprocal mutual portraits are the Mona Lisa passage in reverse, as they refer to artistic and historical examples in order to turn

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

themselves into people like Lady Lisa—figures that can be continually resignified and thereby sum up a culture. For instance, Connolly remembers how classmate Walter Le Strange gave his friends aliases in his Eton diary, transforming Connolly, George Orwell, and boys named Clutton-Brock, Farlow, and Gibson to avatars Apollo, Cynicus, Satyr, Cato, and Rome. In a similar vein, Harold Acton remembers how his "gemlike" friend Peter Quennell was so well versed in Romantic literature that he was always making comparisons between his friends and Shelley's circle: "one [friend] resembled Leigh Hunt, another Byron, another Thomas Love Peacock. . . . Once I had the key, it was easy to understand his relations to the outer world."[36] These personalized "codes" are remarkable because even as each boy could deploy his own, all codes suggested both a common cultural inheritance and a common opportunism in relation to that inheritance. In Agha's terms, such language use belonged to a register, as peers established "alignment with figures performed through speech, and hence with each other" (40).

Thus, when Connolly writes that school taught him to "live entirely in the past," he doesn't just mean that he lives through his personal memories or through the historical past but through a coded connection between the two: "permanent symbols which would confront me fortunately for many years afterwards, unlike the old red-brick box and elmy landscape which contained them" (266). We might call this "symbolical language" (to refer again to Pater's da Vinci), which operated through a shared verbal style, as the discursive effect of the school of art. Boys not only historicized themselves but art-historicized themselves, a process to which their memoirs also contribute. As Agha notes, although register users may not always be able to give correct glosses on their own register, such a description's social importance "may well lie not in its degree of correctness, but in its efficacy, its capacity to bring more and more of the group's future discursive history into conformity with itself" (56). The way in which memoirists quote each other, even each other's diaries—Connolly calls Walter Le Strange's diary a "valuable contemporary document"—give their social scene a palpable coherence, at least in its remembered significance (213).

We might better understand this practice by locating it in a longer history of literary coteries. For instance, Le Strange's aliases might operate like early modern or Romantic pseudonyms, which often *managed* identities rather than concealed them.[37] For coteries with linked pseudonyms, interactions between avatars could shape not only collaborative writing but the co-created "life of the group," "announc[ing] the values

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and characteristics [it] upheld."[38] And when published in an attribution, this emphasis on shared identity could helpfully separate the individual author from his affiliations or emphasize one affiliation over another (e.g., a pseudonym could simply be: "a graduate of Oxford"). As Tom Mole suggests in relation to nineteenth-century print culture, because pseudonymity does not necessarily operate on a "one-to-one relationship," one person could have various authorial alter-egos or multiple people could share one.[39] Thus, even if the owner of a pseudonym is known to some or all of his audience, his private self could be distinct from the public lives of his personae, each created to serve a particular text, purpose, or venue. This tradition might appeal to a reader of Pater, who theorized style as a means of orientation within a shared culture, rather than as personal biography. It certainly appealed to the budding writers of Eton, not yet published but already cultivating the kind of metadiscourse by which a school defines itself (and, in the case of Acton's friend, inviting comparison with preexisting coteries).

Such self-troping not only proposed (or posed) artistic orientations but social and sexual orientations as well. Connolly's memoir suggests that strategically referencing Pater was a particularly useful way to relate but also to separate the aesthetic, social, and sexual aspects of being an aesthete. For him, the exemplars of Eton aestheticism are men who were already or would come to be marked as definitively homosexual. It was Brian Howard and Harold Acton's "literary and artistic circle" who "gained the most from Eton," and Connolly's desire to be popular brought him asymptotically closer to them even as "moral cowardice" prevented his complete identification (225). (Waugh similarly makes Howard and Acton central in the fictionalized Anthony Blanche, whose lisping flirtations govern the Eton clique in *Brideshead Revisited* [1945], both attracting and repulsing Waugh's alter ego.)[40] In "A Georgian Boyhood" and the larger essay collection to which it belongs, Connolly differentiates between explicit citations of Pater, where identification must be carefully qualified and controlled as a reflection on particular writers, and implicit citations of his manner, which can be identified safely with a more collective, often youthful and flamboyant, aestheticism. This editorial work by the later Connolly appears, at least in his account, as consistent with the young Connolly's negotiation of Eton's contradictory culture, in which homoeroticism was cool but homosexuality a punishable offense. Together, both Connollys help conceive of what could arguably be called a gay phase.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

"Boyhood" is a kind of textual gay phase, reproducing the younger Connolly's less critical relationship to aestheticism. In another essay in the volume, for instance, Connolly assesses Pater directly, in referencing the "gem-like flame" passage that Oxford students were said to chant ritualistically during the 1870s. The passage is quoted at length, with one crucial deletion: "the face of one's friend" is removed from a catalog of what might stir the aesthete's passions. Ambiguously, Connolly calls the phrase "affected" in an otherwise "great passage," but it does not take much to read the problematic affectation as homoerotic. In another essay from the collection, Connolly is not shy about calling Ronald Firbank a homosexual before condemning his "permanent giggle" as an aesthetic flaw that both "looks back to the nineties" and "betrays the author, his inhibitions and his longings." In analyzing style through individual writers' slips, Connolly anticipates certain queer theoretical approaches to style as what both conceals and reveals a writer's sexuality.

It is not a reading he wants applied to his young self, who may have "smouldered with the 'hard gem-like flame,'" but only because it was "in the air" of Eton, whose "lime-covered evenings undermined [him]" only for a particular period of his life (251). Here, Pater influenced a style that was pointedly not individual, a culture in which homoeroticism was "inherent in all education, lurking—in our seats of learning as, in the preaching of the careful Pater, beckon the practices of Wilde" (225). In a not unfamiliar binary, Connolly uses Wilde to shelter Pater from association with sexuality and to protect Pater's readers from that association. Though his young self may have loved *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), he would not accept George Orwell's gift of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which he "could not swallow. . . . It was not necessary" (251). Such qualification about reading echoes Connolly's stylistic criticism elsewhere in *Enemies of Promise* (1938), in which style and stylistic influence operate through individual writers. It also situates Pater as the ideal mediator between a young man who was not homosexual but wanted to not be "left out" of a culture that rewarded the "potentially homosexual boy" over all others (225). Connolly represents himself as someone who could successfully "walk the tight rope" (a metaphor that, incidentally, was used ten years before by Yeats, also to describe Paterian aestheticism's proximity to but technical separation from moral iniquity).[41] He can gleefully describe the idiosyncratic "romantic theory" by which his younger self chose peers to receive his love letters, because he can also confirm that when one tried to kiss him he flinched away: in fact, he was so unsexual that he "never masturbated" during his teenage years (179, 251).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Public school's homoerotic culture, of course, has more antecedents and rituals than Pater and reading Pater. I have begun to show here, however, that Pater was a definitive reference point both for a style of speaking and for attempts to control what the social performance meant. I will continue this line of thought in the next section, which examines how Pater's own contemporaries initiated such equivocation around talking like Pater, which might just be about a relation to art but sometimes had sexual implications. Connolly's memoir indicates how this equivocation yielded a social category that was ironically stable: the gay phase, or a period of permissible identity experimentation that was mediated through "schools" of two kinds. This orientation suggests that there be an overlap between two typical constructions of Pater that Friedman, for instance, addresses separately: a Pater who shows queer subjects how art can help them come to terms with their sexuality and another Pater who gives a "broad, not necessarily queer audience" an anthropological encounter with the past that has a "structural homology" with the queer encounter, but no direct connection (54, 59). Figures like Connolly show how, in practice, these two hypothetical readerships could converge in people who "might *want* to be queer, when being so provides the opportunity to be part of an emancipated artistic vanguard" (7).

The School of Oxford

> 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.
>
> —Walter Pater, *Renaissance*

> I have always disliked myself at any given moment; the total of such moments is my life.
>
> —Cyril Connolly, "A Georgian Boyhood"

The story of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* in Oxford is a familiar one. When it first appeared, it received the most press for its final pages, a conclusion that urged readers to avoid habit, to pursue intense sensations, and to allow art to teach them how to experience beauty in life. Many viewed this injunction as a dangerous seduction, from a colleague who wrote to Pater about his students' "weaker minds" to the bishop of Oxford, whose anti-aestheticist sermon appeared in local papers (Seiler 62). It has been suggested that this controversy, along with charges that Pater had an affair with an undergraduate, prevented the writer of *Renaissance* from being promoted within the university. It definitely

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

motivated him to cut the conclusion from the book's second edition and only restore it in the third with a regretful preface that "it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall" (177). But despite Pater's insistence that he had been misinterpreted, twenty years later his obituaries would memorialize how "the mannerism of his writings possessed much fascination for youthful minds of a particular caste," for those "fine young men who dedicated themselves, simply on the strength of a chance encounter, to the vain pursuit of a deceptive ideal!" (Seiler 279, 298).[42]

This word—"ideal"—implies that the "Pater effect" did have something to do with Pater's ideas as well as his style. Here, the obituary may refer to the conclusion's injunction to live a life of intense sensation. Throughout this article, however, I have emphasized *Renaissance*'s other message: that art can give order to the past, the present, and their connection, enabling individual creators and appreciators to form a shared orientation. This Paterian ideal can be found not only in *Renaissance* but across Pater's work (one could look to essays on Wordsworth and style in *Appreciations* [1889], the bildung of *Marius the Epicurean,* for instance). One challenge posed by Pater's oeuvre is its dual theorization of individual subjectivity and historical development, crystalized in concepts that seek to reconcile or put them in relation (e.g., "sense of fact") and descriptions of artworks that achieve an exemplary grasp and revitalization of precedent. As critics like Camlot and Friedman discuss, it fell to later readers to decide (and perhaps extend) what these ideas might mean to an individual and at what scale and in what manner they could be pursued. Pater's early Oxford readers are interesting not because the Paterian ideal deceived them but rather because they lived it out in perhaps unanticipated ways. By talking like *Studies in the History of the Renaissance,* rather than just studying it, their experiences give outsize significance to one of the text's more minor implications: that group constructs mediate our understanding of individuals, times, and places.

Which includes Pater, his time, and his place. These young men are the reason that Pater's "name is always linked with that of Oxford," due to their and their critics' collective negotiation over what such a link might mean: what performing Paterian aestheticism meant in Oxford and what Oxford meant to outsiders due to Pater (Seiler 298). Although some people in Oxford read *Renaissance* more measuredly and completely (see Pattison's review in the first section), those who overemphasized the conclusion, even to the point of misreading it, were the ones who arguably

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

institutionalized aestheticism as a student phase. By institutionalized, I mean they gave more official recognition to this phase as a social practice that was not only recognizable, but *customary*, within the university. In this section, I focus on a few documents written by Oxfordians for Oxfordians that discuss Pater's diffuse but palpable impact on their social encounters, in negotiations that resemble Connolly's grappling with explicit versus implicit citation but on a higher scale. Even as some tried to shield Pater from the morally suspect parts of his legacy, everyone recognized his implicit presence in the social type of the queer-coded Oxford aesthete.

And in this reception, I would suggest, there remains the thread of "School of Giorgione," which was written at the same time as the first edition, though it only appeared in the third (1888). Although those most scandalized by the conclusion focused on its statement about "burn[ing] always with this hard gem-like flame," the more radical sentences may have been ones that Pater intended to be epistemological premises: that identity, even personal identity, is a malleable fallacy. He reveals that the reader's body and mind have unstable boundaries, that the self's "clear perpetual outline . . . is but an *image* of ours under which we group [elements]" (118, emphasis added). In the passage's original draft, he speculates that such thinking might make one feel as if one is "losing even his personality, as the elements of which he is composed pass into new combinations" (178). To see this suggestion's social potential, we must remember that the word "image" is also used in "Giorgione," when Pater theorizes how the artist's identity is continually retraced and reinterpreted by subsequent generations. With this essay as a paratext, the conclusion can appear to be a nascent theory of self-making, of how a person can continuously "weav[e] and unweav[e]" his own personality, generating momentarily stable outlines for a self that is never fully limited to its past conception (118).

Though Pater may not have intended for the conclusion to be taken in this manner, his regard for both the image and its decomposable elements has a sociological implication to which his reception testifies. As Michael Lucey has argued in *Someone*, if we track the circulation of texts over time, their role in constructing sexualities is paradoxical: they both proliferate various, unstable identities *and*, when abstracted, stabilize a particular identity for certain interpretive communities. A certain Pater reader knew from experience that it was possible to have a legible social identity without being essentially or permanently tied to it. In a milieu like Connolly's, for instance, continuous self- and other-

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

description was a familiar form of interaction, and reading aestheticism a key part of the self-exploration that began and ended with schooldays. We have already begun to see the risk here: that the queer logic of Pater's teaching—that a person's visible qualities do not necessarily mean any one thing, in particular, or correspond to a fixed image—could, in the hands of its users, become a marker for typical social performance with a gay connotation.

Evidence for this gay phase's institutionalization at Oxford can be found in two paired articles from the *Undergraduate's Journal,* both published in 1877 (the same year as the second edition of *Renaissance* and the *New Republic*'s vicious satire of Pater and other Oxford figures). In both, the writer investigates aestheticism, an "intellectual atmosphere perfectly within the knowledge and experience of every University Man."[43] This assumption of shared recognition, underscored by the journal's official "we," goes on to mark the aesthete type as a university touchstone. In the first article, the writer deconstructs the connotations of aesthetic dress: a fondness for certain colors *might* mean the writer has committed to the aesthetic lifestyle, but it also might not. Yellow is just "an adjective caught up at random," and any other color could just as easily be an index for aesthetic proclivities.[44] This arbitrary tie between a stylistic feature (say, an "element") and a social identity (say, an "image") is a reason for tolerance and generosity toward the potential aesthete. Despite his yellow walls, or tie, his "manliness" need not suffer; in fact, "for those of us who aspire to be leaders," aestheticism can be a path to self-refinement, a "motive-power" as good as any.

We might compare this effort to assimilate aestheticism to Oxford's acculturation of the ruling class to Connolly's felt belief that aesthetes were those who succeeded at Eton the most. The aesthete student is excused not only as an individual whose stylistic choices should be viewed as arbitrary rather than as damning; the article also excuses the student by finding him an institutional precedent in the aesthete tutor, who occupies a respected position and can dispense valuable mentorship from within a William Morris-patterned room just as well as if he had chosen a pulpit. (See Dowling on Oxford's reputation for "intense tutor worship" and the cultural struggle between generations of tutors with different orientations toward manliness and nationalism.)[45] The second journal article, however, entirely backpedals. It appears that some readers had charged the journal with endorsing "the aesthetic school in art," and the entrance of the word "school" was enough to kick up a mild panic over queer connotations, which then had to be offloaded

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

through the kind of implicit and explicit citation strategy common to the gay phase.[46]

In an effort to control the terms of his own personal identification with aestheticism as well as its gendered and sexualized connotations, the writer refers to a stereotypical "voice" and interprets it through citing Pater:

> [W]hen the boy's mind has been trained at school to an ideal love of the beautiful, . . . with every sense awakened except one (and that the moral), what wonder if when he comes up here he yields a ready ear to the voice of the charmer, who may tell him (we quote the words of a most influential Dean of a celebrated Oxford College), "failure—this is to form habits, for habit is relative to a stereotyped existence," and again, "to burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, this is success in life"; or who may lead him to imagine that the *summum bonum* of man's life is to lie on a yellow sofa in a certain kind of room (we will not describe it) with charming people about him, sipping rare and exquisite wines, talking daintily and—*it may be* doing no harm, but most certainly doing no good. That is the point: we have to learn that we have something else to do with our "moments" than to enjoy them (as Mr. Pater would apparently have us do) "simply for those moments' sake."[47]

In this passage, who does "the voice of the charmer" belong to? We might say that the voice is an enregistered voice, such as I discussed in the last section: in part inspired by Pater but available for any undergraduate to take on. If the writer hadn't inserted his parenthetical and citation, we might have assumed that it was literally, directly Pater. The boy could have read *Renaissance* or spoken to its author in the flesh. But this article's writer is considering what the voice "may" tell the boy, the language that he "may" draw on. Pater is denoted as an individual but described as an institutional figure, putting the focus on Oxford as a place where such language is in circulation. It is this register and its stereotypical user that carries the connotative burden of queerness suggested by "daintily," that "and—," as well as a closing note about how such behavior prevented one from doing proper "man's work." By objectifying this potential homosexual—"potential" due to the correlation with aestheticism as well as the writer's obliqueness—the writer can personally disaffiliate from the type even while performing his in-group knowledge about its presence and significance in Oxford.

Such individual efforts to qualify group membership have an institutional corollary in efforts to qualify the university's identification with this particular homoerotic culture. Upon Pater's death, while the *Times* and others discussed his influence on modern Oxford, actual Oxford dons

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

attempted to control this association between man and institution through their own interpretations. We might call this a conflict between two schools of Pater: the aesthetic school and the school of Oxford. In contrast to those who credited Pater with influencing a "popular school" of criticism (see my opening remarks in the last section), there were those who insisted that he was "the creation of his own college," "among the chief Oxford masters of English prose, "a pattern of student life," and a "teacher" (Seiler 402, 8, 9, 284, 179). The problem was that, for some Oxford students, the schools were the same: their experience of the university was their experience of the aesthetic school.

A. C. Benson, who wrote the first Pater biography, grapples with two conflicting purposes: to distinguish Pater from the suspect "*epigoni* of his school" and yet to give an accurate account of Pater's significance, which would include how others interpreted him (in the "School of Giorgione" manner).[48] Importantly, his strategy is to separate Pater's written language from his spoken language, taking the literature as Pater's true opinions and his off-the-page social performance as promoting that literature's misreading. Once again, as in the *Journal,* spoken language is a common property in the community and thus a useful way to dodge individual identification (even while raising the possibility of it). Benson describes how the young Pater in particular was a flippant conversationalist who would often "dwell upon the unessential attributes of a scene, a personality, a book, when a serious judgment was desired," a practice that made it difficult to know his "real" personality (191, 192). Unfortunately, Pater's social mask proved "contagious" and inspired imitation at Oxford: "those affected by it, . . . acquired the superficial conversational method, which consisted in speaking of serious things on social occasions as if they had no seriousness" (193).

There is much to unpack here. First, there is the line of reasoning that Benson wants to undermine: Pater began a fashion for clever, trivial observation that would ultimately be associated with an infamously gay man—Wilde, one of the "*epigoni* of his school . . . [who] ended in complete moral and social shipwreck"—which might make you think that Pater himself was gay, because he spoke in this way (195). Then, there is the line of reasoning Benson takes up, which is that such arbitrary gestures can tell you nothing reliable about the person who makes them, an idea offered by the more generous of the two *Journal* articles and implied by school memoirs that characterize an aesthetic pose as mere fashion. From a certain point of view, even this defense doesn't obviate the speech style's queer potential because, again, we can look backward and see the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

playful listing of extraneous detail as eventually characteristic of queer theoretical syntax.[49] But even without this suggestion, Benson undermines his own distinction by including examples of the very remarks from which he wants to disassociate Pater.[50] In a version of the "legend" that Pater extended in "Giorgione," Benson includes these remembered sallies because, though "coloured by the legendary element . . . they are contemporary stories which have survived, and are therefore worth repeating" (193). Although Benson finds the written and the spoken Pater so different, he must include them both in the biographical image of Pater that he re-creates, inadvertently confirming what he wants to deemphasize: the role of the Pateresque in the school of Pater, those connotations that depend not on the originator's qualities but on how subsequent contributors have resignified those qualities.

Conclusion

Pater's reception at Oxford and as Oxford indicates the way in which the school of art, used academically to posit connections between artists and writers, can also have a kind of shadow life as a social formation: a generic style of self-presentation that enables a group culture and yet mediates each participant's connection to that culture. The "culture" in question was not necessarily the culture most valued by Pater. By way of conclusion, I would like to briefly consider why Pater himself did not espouse the school to the extent that I have claimed his followers did. In his late anthropological writing on classical rhetoric and ancient religion, he offers his own oblique critique of the ways in which schools of art collude with educational institutions in a way that lessens their power to transform the culture that those institutions are designed to enforce.

This shift between early and late Pater is particularly evident due to what remains the same: a belief in the transformative power that a select group can have over a larger culture. In "A Study of Dionysus" (1876), Pater reworks key aspects of "The School of Giorgione," including the iconic quality of a name, which still, in the later essay, serves as an "outline" for pluralistic, mutually enriching interpretation.[51] Pater traces how the Dionysus myth developed through the god's worship by various groups, from rural vinegrowers to urbane Athenians: each created through their worship a "little Olympus" or a system of religious meaning that drew on their particular experiences and, in turn, transformed the larger religion. Specifically writing about the Orphic cult of Dionysus, Pater theorizes how "the finer, mystical sentiment of the few" can

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

transform a larger culture through "their new readings of old legends . . . refin[ing] upon themes grown too familiar, and link[ing], in a sophisticated age, the new to the old."[52] Evoking Giorgione's sense of the verifiable legend, this religious reworking reaffirms Pater's interest in how generational reinterpretation can revitalize connections between the past and present, enriching a given cultural whole.

Why replace the aesthetic-philosophical cult with the religious one, the school of art with the religious sect? One answer may be in *Plato and Platonism* (1893), in which Pater suggests that, contrary to Plato's wishful thinking, Socrates was not that different from the Sophists who taught at "large, fashionable schools, so triumphantly well, the arts one needed most in so busy an age."[53] This age was a "victim of its own gifts," encouraging sophism as an "art of life" that secured material success for people who could rhetorically influence others. Rather than be this culture's opposite, Pater claims, "Socrates in truth was a Sophist; but more than a Sophist."[54] Although he valued self-examination over social influence, Socrates used the same rhetorical tools to teach the same rich young men—often with the same result. Despite telling students to "love not the world," Socrates taught many merely "a more circuitous but surer way to possess themselves of it."[55] It is not difficult to project Pater's own career onto this description. Pater was, if you will, "an Oxford aesthete, but more than an Oxford aesthete," and had to watch his own teaching be banalized first as a college fashion and then as a broader "art of life." At Oxford in particular, readers of *Renaissance* imitated Pater not to transform a larger culture but to revel in what could have been the means of its transformation: "a little Olympus," or rather a "little Oxford."

Waugh describes this compromised relation to the school well in *Brideshead Revisited,* a memoir pastiche that he "infused with a kind of gluttony . . . for the splendours of the recent past, and for rhetorical and ornamental language, which now with a full stomach I find distasteful" (preface). In it, Charles's admission into the Eton clique is also admission to a "enchanted garden" behind an Oxford wall (31). The novel narrates his failure to turn this encounter with aesthetes to any great artistic end, as he becomes absorbed in the charms of the clique itself as an object. It is arguably the gay phase that structures this error. In the eyes of outsiders, like Charles's straightlaced cousin, all the Etonites appear to be "sodomites with unpleasant accents," identified with their central figure: Blanche, the actual homosexual and stereotypical Oxford aesthete who sheds "a false, vivid light of eccentricity on

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

everyone" (32). But only Blanche continues to be queer after school is over. Years later, when Charles is a married and mediocre painter, Blanche will take him to a password-protected gay bar and criticize him for failing to live up to his artistic potential. Listening to Blanche's voice, Charles no longer sees the gay bar, which makes him uncomfortable, and instead finds himself "back in Oxford looking out over Christ Church meadow" (271).

Oxford and the gay bar can't exist simultaneously, but the same voice belongs to both. Its range as a register speaks to how Pater not only transformed what Oxford means with his *Renaissance*. He also provided generations of men with a periodizing logic for their lives, as they formed group identities based on a creative relation to a larger past. "Gay phase" has a dismissive, idiomatic flavor, but Pater's work and reception suggest it has done real work. On one hand, it is a deserving object of ideological critique, given its role in acculturating men at centers of British sociopolitical power. On the other hand, its neglect speaks to a philosophical issue: our "failure to naturalize the periodicity of desire."[56] As Valerie Traub has commented, discussing queerness and time together often relies on specious analogies between sex, time, and history—especially when scholars dismiss periodization. Studying Pater's art history through its popular (mis)applications might reveal how this Victorian writer provides a way to discuss inconsistent sexual histories as well as the collaborative semiotics of the gay phase.

Notes

1. Clark, "Introduction," 11. He goes on to say, "Prime Ministers, Archbishops, and Colonial Administrators have often been 'aesthetes' when at Oxford."
2. See Jeff Dolven on group style as a shareable persona ("Reading Wyatt"). Style's difficulty and utility as a literary-critical term is that it works on so many scales. Register, in addition to bringing literature in conjunction with spoken interactions, also isolates a particular scale for style. Register is closer to Bakhtin's account of styles as collective voices ("speech genres") than Barthes's take on style as an individual, biographical, and even unconscious self-expression.
3. Connolly, *Enemies of Promise,* 225. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

4. Agha, "Voice, Footing, Enregisterment," 39. All subsequent references to this essay are noted parenthetically in the text.
5. See work by Jacques Khalip, Matthew Sussman, Ellis Hanson, Michael F. Davis, and David Russell. Of these, Russell's and Sussman's essays are the most relevant to my approach. Russell argues that Pater's style implicitly supports interactions that avoid explicitly identifying people ("Relief Work"). Sussman's analysis of stylistic virtue shows how Pater's vocabulary for describing style evokes moral categories shared with other contemporary stylistic critics, providing evidence of a register but not calling it by that name ("Stylistic Virtue").
6. As has been well documented, Pater's work contains many allusions to Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871), which often situated material artifacts within a higher-scale, evolutionary schema that saw cultural development as "collective rather than individual, deterministic rather than voluntary," to quote Sebastian Lecourt (*Cultivating Belief*). Linguistic anthropology, to paraphrase Michael Silverstein's article on the "No-thing-ness of Culture," focuses less on *what* culture is and more on *where* it is, on how culture "presents itself" in interactions where meaning is immanent and in patterns of circulation between interactions that reinforce or modify such meaning.
7. The Winter 2017 issue of *Representations* is devoted to linguistic anthropological methods; the May 2019 issue of *Narrative* examines dialogue and speech, with Alex Benson's article specifically using linguistic anthropology.
8. In other words, I take this register as a gay sociolect (emphasis on the *social*) rather than as a Barthesian queer style that is biographical and even antisocial. Taken up by critics like D. A. Miller, the latter style is both an individual effort to conceal nonnormative sexuality and the means by which that individual sexuality is exposed. For Connolly and others, the pertinent mode of self-protection was not (doomed) individual illegibility but group legibility. I realize queer and gay are anachronistic to Pater and perhaps even his interwar readers, but the terms help me make a distinction between sexuality as a facet of subjectivity (queer) and as a contextually stable social category (in this case, gay).
9. Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality*, 133. Although Dowling puts "cultural inverts" in quotation marks, I've been able to find few uses of this term with this connotation. Two are Sharon Kehl Califano's dissertation (408) and "Too Wilde for Comfort" by Sylvia Molloy.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

10. Kahan, *Book of Minor Perverts,* 22. Kahan studies the multiple etiologies of sexuality available before medical consolidation around a singular homosexuality. Situational homosexuality is particularly associated with the interwar period, with schools (not artistic) as a popular thematic site.
11. Friedman, *Before Queer Theory,* 7. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
12. Poggioli, *Theory of the Avant-Garde,* 20.
13. Seiler, *Walter Pater,* 71, 72. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
14. Camlot, *Style,* 124. Camlot glosses this method with Pater's "Style" essay, in which the individual writer is charged with managing a cultural inheritance: language comes loaded with, in Pater's terms, "obscure and minute association," which the writer must assimilate but also selectively present, evoking the right resonance for a given occasion (126).
15. Pater, *Renaissance,* 132. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
16. Podro, *Critical Historians,* xx. Podro notes that this tradition follows, though modifies, the art writer Winckelmann, who also inspired Pater. "Giorgione" sounds like Winckelmann when the latter describes trying to sketch the "shadowy outline" of a prior period: "by deductions from many particulars we arrive at least at a probable certainty capable of becoming a source of more instruction than the details bequeathed to us by the ancients" (*The History of Ancient Art,* 364–65). Podro also notes similarities with British impressionist criticism, citing Pater (xxi).
17. Podro, *Critical Historians,* xxiii.
18. Silverstein, "No-thing-ness of Culture," 331.
19. Camlot discusses how nineteenth-century pragmatic rhetoric grappled with this concern, citing in particular Benjamin Smart's "instrumental theory of contextual meaning," in which establishing shared knowledge compensates for writing's lack of vocal emphasis—emphasis being one way to guide a listener's interpretation of speech (Smart qtd. in Camlot 32).
20. Silverstein, "The Voice of Jacob," 485.
21. *Oxford English Dictionary* (online), "legend, n.," (accessed June 2021).
22. *Oxford English Dictionary* (online), "veritable, adj. (and adv.)," (accessed June 2021).
23. Rosen, *The Classical Style,* 22.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

24. Kubler, *The Shape of Time,* 9.
25. Teukolsky, "Pater's New Republics," 147, 124.
26. Williams, *Transfigured World,* 2.
27. For example, Tanya Schaffer identifies Vernon Lee as "the only pupil Pater acknowledged" (*The Forgotten Female Aesthetes,* 62). Lee and Pater conversed not only in scholarship but in person, developing an association closer to the older sense of the artistic school (as studio). Schaffer also finds Paterian ideas and style in popular fiction by women aesthetes, thereby expanding the aesthetic "school" in the sense that I discuss more fully (reassessing descriptive conventions through new examples, comparisons, and interpretations). Teukolsky also implies that it was the broader popularization of aestheticism that finally realized Pater's implied social program in "Giorgione" ("Pater's New Republics").
28. In "Emerald Ethwart," Latin is uninspiring until it is used in a poem about a recent cricket victory.
29. For example, in his article "The Social Life of Cultural Value," Agha tracks how the British RP accent became a sign of prestige over several centuries, initially through its dominance in an expanding school system and later in media representations that satirized the type of person who could and could not use the accent. For Agha, RP is a register more than an accent because it enables people who put it on to have an array of social interactions they would not otherwise have.
30. Also, moving between the visual and the linguistic is not unusual for Pater. In order to capture how context develops meaning, Pater uses linguistic metaphors to discuss nonlinguistic cultural phenomena and vice versa, both elsewhere in *Renaissance* and in later work like *Greek Studies,* where the "Giorgione" naming logic recurs in relation to the Dionysus myth, and *Appreciations,* where the writer works in collective, inherited material like a sculptor's marble.
31. Which might be different from how it registers somewhere else. For example, the aesthetic man's sexuality was not always queer-coded: in Robert Buchanan's "fleshly school" essay (1872) and George Du Maurier's caricatures, for instance, the aesthete's effeminacy is what makes him dangerously seductive for women. For the role of parody in assimilating aesthetic sexuality to the mainstream, see Dennishoff, *Aestheticism and Sexual Parody.* For more sociology of aestheticism, see for example Prettejohn on Pre-Raphaelite intertextuality and the professionalization of art criticism ("Aesthetic

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Value"), or Cohn on imitation in and of Wilde ("Oscar Wilde's Ghost").

32. Williams, *Transfigured World,* 124.
33. "Elle a été l'Hélène des Troyens, dont le poëte Stesichore a maudit la mémoire. Elle a été Lucrèce, la patricienne violée par les rois. Ella a été Dalila, qui coupait les cheveux de Samson. Elle a été cette fille d'Israël qui s'abandonnait aux boucs. Elle a aimé l'adultère, l'idolâtrie, le mensonge et la sottise. Elle s'est prostituée à tous les peuples. Elle a chanté dans tous les carrefours. Elle a baisé tous les visages. A Tyr, la Syrienne, elle était la maîtresse des voleurs. Elle buvait avec eux pendent les nuits, et elle cachait les assassins dans la vermine de son lit tiède" (Gould, "Pater's Mona Lisa," 501).
34. Camlot, *Style,* 137. Camlot discusses Pater's style theory through the "Style" essay, which discusses how the individual writer handles a historically rich and mixed language that continues to acquire new resources and implications as it is used.
35. Wilde, "The Critic as Artist," 262.
36. Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete,* 133.
37. Scholars have established that the post-Victorian tendency to read pseudonyms as protective and/or deceptive disguises fails to capture pseudonymity's diverse precedents. Pseudonymous attributions could assign the text to a particular genre (e.g., pastoral), align the author with a particular subculture (e.g., Della Cruscan), invoke the author's oeuvre as intertext ("by the author of"), or highlight one aspect of the author's social identity as pertinent (e.g., "by a graduate of Oxford"). By paratextually evoking earlier cultures of manuscript circulation, writers could seek to manage the expectations of a large, more diverse print audience. See Tonra on how Thomas Moore used the "Thomas Little" persona to insulate his erotic verse from critique ("Masks of Refinement"); see Camlot on how Mill theorized pseudonymity within mass periodicals (*Style*).
38. Ezell, "Reading Pseudonyms," 22, 23.
39. Mole, "Celebrity and Anonymity," 9.
40. Like the memoirs quoted earlier, *Brideshead Revisited* has transhistorical conceits, such as this one by Blanche: "He has the face as though an Aztec sculptor had attempted a portrait of Sebastian; he's a learned bigot, a ceremonious barbarian, a snowbound lama. . . . Well, anything you like" (54). That "anything you like" implies that new descriptions could always be generated and that the point is less to fix someone's identity than to produce a particular relationship with one's audience.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.

41. Yeats writes that by looking “consciously to Pater for our philosophy,” he and his friends were ironically driven to disordered lives through love of his restrained prose: “It taught us to walk upon a rope, tightly stretched through serene air, and we were left to keep out feet upon a swaying rope in a storm. . . . We knew nothing of one another, but the poems that we read and criticized” (*Autobiography*, 201).
42. Quotations by anonymous in the *Times* and by Theodore de Wyzewa in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*.
43. Inman, *Walter Pater’s Reading,* 372.
44. Inman, *Walter Pater’s Reading,* 373.
45. Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality,* 33. Dowling sets out how Benjamin Jowett and others centered Greek Studies at Oxford in order to produce “a new civic elite to lead Britain out of sociocultural stagnation and into a triumphal age of imperial responsibility” (xiv). The next generation, including Pater, would draw on a different aspect of classical culture: “the language of male love could be triumphantly proclaimed as the very fountain of civic health” (xv).
46. Inman, *Walter Pater’s Reading,* 376.
47. Inman, *Walter Pater’s Reading,* 376.
48. Benson, *Walter Pater,* 195. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
49. A claim David Kurnick has made in a conference paper, putting Pater’s “face of one’s friend” passage alongside later writings that hint at the homoerotic by dropping it into the catalog (“Quantity, Quality, Aestheticism”).
50. For example, this critique of George Eliot’s characterization: “What is Maggie Tulliver but Tito in petticoats?” (Benson, *Walter Pater,* 192).
51. Pater, *Greek Studies,* 31. Pater suggests that “the mythical conception . . . is the *name,* the instrument of the identification, of the given matter,—of its unity in variety, its outline or definition in mystery; its *spiritual form.*”
52. Pater, *Plato and Platonism,* 104. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
53. Pater, *Plato and Platonism,* 94.
54. Pater, *Plato and Platonism,* 90.
55. Pater, *Plato and Platonism,* 89. Though in a different historical setting, Pater represents such an ironic reincorporation in *Marius the Epicurean,* where the charismatic student Flavian aims to found a literary school of art

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that will revivify his culture—but his interest in manipulating others ultimately makes him conform to the dominant masculinist culture of imperial Rome. Marius finds his ideal in a Christian cult instead.

56. Kahan, *Book of Minor Perverts,* 27.

Works Cited

Acton, Harold. *Memoirs of an Aesthete*. London: Methuen, 1948.

Agha, Assif. "The Social Life of Cultural Value." *Language and Communication* 23 (2003): 231–73.

———. "Voice, Footing, Enregisterment." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15, no. 1 (2005): 38–59.

Bakhtin, M. M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

Benson, A. C. *Walter Pater*. New York: Macmillan, 1906.

Brake, Laurel. "Vernon Lee and the Pater Circle." In *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, edited by Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham, 40–57. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006.

Camlot, Jason. *Style and the Nineteenth-Century British Critic: Sincere Mannerisms*. London: Taylor & Francis, 2008.

Clark, Kenneth. "Introduction." In *The Renaissance*, by Walter Pater, 11–26. New York: Meridian, 1961.

Cohn, Elisha. "Oscar Wilde's Ghost: The Play of Imitation." *Victorian Studies* 54, no. 3 (2021): 474–85.

Connolly, Cyril. *Enemies of Promise and Other Essays: An Autobiography of Ideas*. 1938. Garden City: Anchor Books, 1960.

Davis, Michael F. "Walter Pater's 'Latent Intelligence' and the Conception of Queer 'Theory.'" In *Walter Pater: Transparencies of Desire*, edited by Laurel Brake, Lesley Higgins, and Carolyn Williams, 261–85. Greensboro: ELT Press, 2002.

Dennishoff, Dennis. *Aestheticism and Sexual Parody, 1840–1940*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Dolven, Jeff. "Reading Wyatt for the Style." *Modern Philology* 105, no. 1 (2007): 65–86.

Dowling, Linda. *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Evangelista, Stefano. "Vernon Lee and the Gender of Aestheticism." In *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, edited by Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham, 91–111. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006.

Ezell, Margaret J. M. "Reading Pseudonyms in Seventeenth-Century English Coterie Literature." *Essays in Literature* 21, no. 1 (1994): 279–89.

Friedman, Dustin. *Before Queer Theory: Victorian Aestheticism and the Self*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019.

Gould, Warwick. "Pater's Mona Lisa and Flaubert's *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*." *Notes and Queries* 31, no. 4 (1984): 500–501.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Hanson, Ellis. "The Languorous Critic." *New Literary History* 43, no. 3 (2012): 547–64.
Inman, Billie Andrew. *Walter Pater's Reading: A Bibliography of His Library Borrowings and Literary References, 1858–1873*. New York: Garland, 1981.
Kahan, Benjamin. *The Book of Minor Perverts: Sexology, Etiology, and the Emergences of Sexuality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019.
Kehl Califano, Sharon. *"The Comradeship of the 'Happy Few': Henry James, Edith Wharton, and the Pederastic Tradition."* PhD diss., University of New Hampshire, 2007.
Khalip, Jacques. "Pater's Sadness." *Raritan* 20, no. 2 (2000): 136–58.
Kubler, George. *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962.
Kurnick, David. "Quantity, Quality, Aestheticism." Paper presented at NAVSA, October 17, 2019, Ohio State University.
Lecourt, Sebastian. *Cultivating Belief: Victorian Anthropology, Liberal Aesthetics, and the Secular Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
Lucey, Michael. *Someone: The Pragmatics of Misfit Sexualities, from Colette to Hervé Guibert*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019.
Mole, Tom. "Celebrity and Anonymity." In *The Oxford Handbook of British Romanticism*. Edited by David Duff. Oxford Academic, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199660896.001.0001.
Molloy, Sylvia. "Too Wilde for Comfort: Desire and Ideology in Fin-de-Siecle Spanish America." *Social Text* no. 31/32 (1992): 35–52.
Pater, Walter. *Appreciations*. 1889. In *Selected Writings of Walter Pater*. Edited by Harold Bloom. New York: Columbia University Press, 1974.
———. "Emerald Ethwart." *New Review* 7, no. 38 (July 1892): 42–54.
———. *Greek Studies*. Edited by Charles Shadwell. London: Macmillan, 1895.
———. *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas*. London: Macmillan, 1885.
———. *Plato and Platonism: A Series of Lectures*. New York: Macmillan, 1893.
———. *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
Podro, Michael. *The Critical Historians of Art*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.
Poggioli, Renato. *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Translated by Gerald Fitzgerald. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968.
Prettejohn, Elizabeth. "Aesthetic Value and the Professionalization of Victorian Art Criticism, 1837–78." *Journal of Victorian Culture* 2, no. 1 (1997): 71–94.
Rosen, Charles. *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven*. New York: Norton, 1972.
Russell, David. "Relief Work: Walter Pater's Tact." In *Tact: Aesthetic Liberalism and the Essay Form in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 111–41. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.
Schaffer, Talia. *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000.
Schapiro, Meyer. *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society*. New York: Braziller, 1994.
Seiler, R. M., ed. *Walter Pater, the Critical Heritage*. Abington-on-Thames: Routledge, 1980.
Siegel, Jonah. "Schooling Leonardo: Collaboration, Desire, and the Challenge of Attribution in Pater." In *Walter Pater: Transparencies of Desire*, edited by Laurel Brake, Lesley Higgins, and Carolyn Williams, 133–50. Greensboro: ELT Press, 2002.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Silverstein, Michael. "Discourse and the No-thing-ness of Culture." *Signs and Society* 1, no. 2 (2013): 327–66.

———. "The Voice of Jacob: Entextualization, Contextualization, and Identity." *ELH* 18, no. 2 (2014): 483–520.

Sussman, Matthew. "Stylistic Virtue in Nineteenth-Century Criticism." *Victorian Studies* 56, no. 2 (2014): 225–49.

Teukolsky, Rachel. "Pater's New Republics: Aesthetic Criticism and the Victorian Avant-Garde." In *The Literate Eye: Victorian Art Writing and Modernist Aesthetics*, 101–48. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Tonra, Justin. "Masks of Refinement: Pseudonym, Paratext, and Authorship in the Early Poetry of Thomas Moore." *European Romantic Review* 25, no. 5 (2014): 551–73.

Traub, Valerie. "The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies." *PMLA* 128, no. 1, (2013): 21–39.

Waugh, Evelyn. *Brideshead Revisited*. 1944. New York: Back Bay Books, 1999.

Wilde, Oscar. "The Critic as Artist Part I." In *Oscar Wilde: The Major Works*, edited by Isobel Murray, 241–66. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Williams, Carolyn. *Transfigured World: Walter Pater's Aesthetic Historicism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Winckelmann, Johann Joachim, and Giles Henry Lodge. *The History of Ancient Art*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1881.

Yeats, William Butler. *The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats*. 1938. New York: Collier Books, 1974.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1060150322000109 Published online by Cambridge University Press