A Genealogy of Queer Detachment

MATTHEW BURROUGHS PRICE

WHILE OSCAR WILDE HAS LONG REMAINED THE FORMATIVE hero of public homosexuality, Wilde's own hero, Walter Pater, has become a model to many contemporary critics for a more withdrawn queer identity. The author of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873 [*The Renaissance*]), the reserved, tentative Pater figures in several histories of sexuality as an indirect facilitator of the public debate on same-sex desire; his essays offer "discreetly coded" sexual references (Dellamora 58) and "constantly beckoning and receding suggestiveness" in place of "outright statement" about male-male desire, laying the groundwork for Wilde and 1890s decadence (Dowling, *Hellenism* 94). More recently, Heather Love has argued that Pater's world of "indecisive, shrinking, transparent" characters epitomizes queer modernism's politicized repudiation of politics, a stance "forged in the image of exile, of refusal, even of failure" (60, 71). These accounts collectively represent Pater—the aesthete whose conclusion to *The Renaissance* was widely condemned as a seductive corrupter of young men—as striving for emotional and psychological detachment from his sociohistorical environment, shrinking from a homophobic world.

Tracking this dynamic of distance across Pater's work, this essay argues that what Love calls his "politics of refusal" promotes a politicized aesthetic based in a particular form of semidetachment (58). This semidetached aesthetic has broader implications for studies of Victorian and modernist sexuality.[1] In her analysis of Victorian fascination with critical disinterestedness, Amanda Anderson has demonstrated that other writers of Pater's era—Wilde and Matthew Arnold among them—promote detachment less as a reified stance than as "an ongoing aspiration and incomplete achievement," whereby cosmopolitan or ironic "withdrawals" generate concepts

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PMLA 130.3 (2015), published by the Modern Language Association of America

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.648 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of objectivity that are more fluid and self-conscious (*Powers* 33). Anderson discerns a similar model of disinterestedness in contemporary queer theory, locating it at the center of debates over critical engagement. Where queer theorists claim to valorize anti-essentialist forms of detachment over residual modes like critical reason, Anderson suggests that "both critical and queer theory are interested in postures of cultivated detachment" (*Way* 13).[2] Building on Anderson's work, this essay asks why queer theory has remained, in a word, Victorian. Identifying Pater's *Renaissance* as the key convergence point between fin-de-siècle decadence and contemporary theory, I argue that Paterian detachment forms the basis of a queer history (and a queer theory of history) that we have yet to fully appreciate. Instead of asocially withdrawing or "break[ing] with the future" completely, as Love suggests, the works of Pater and other queer modernists create a balancing act between engagement with and withdrawal from history that characterizes queer theory today (58). Pater's decadence thus makes him the de facto theorist of what I call queer detachment.

Imitating Pater's shift from critic to novelist, I proceed from *The Renaissance* through his and others' decadent modernist novels as they expand queer detachment from a critical-social position into a narrative strategy. These novels routinely foreground brief instances of semidetached worlds, spaces from which a queer history can be recorded—novelistic worlds that return us, I argue, to the sociopolitical one. *Goodbye to Berlin*, Christopher Isherwood's novelistic chronicle of Weimar decadence in pre-Nazi Germany, demonstrates how decadence becomes an operative force for aesthetic explorations of homosexuality's status in the political maelstrom of the 1930s. As he revives *The Renaissance*'s theoretical musings through a representative type of fictional world—one we will first see in Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*—Isherwood crafts Pater's aesthetic into a queer politics for the late modernist world. Rather than a decadent disengagement from or refusal of history—a world-forsaking exercise—in *Goodbye to Berlin* queer detachment is a world-making act.[3] Channeling its narrator, who suggests that "some day all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed," I reposition Isherwood's famed camera as an archetypal image of modernist queer detachment (*Goodbye* 1). An echo of Pater's impressionism, *Goodbye to Berlin*'s most famous line—"I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking"—captures Isherwood's desire to self-consciously preserve queer history, to leave it for posterity to "develop." Though passive, the mute camera remains an engaged device, recording for the future at the same time that it preserves history's victims in a past present. How and why that perspective is viable for Pater and Isherwood—and why it persists unremarked in contemporary queer theory—are the questions that concern us here.

[I]

In the theory of aesthetic impressionism Pater expounds in his preface to *The Renaissance*, we can already recognize his fascination with critical positionality:

> To define beauty not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible . . . is the aim of the true student of aesthetics. . . . What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to *me*? What effect does it produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence? (xix–xx)

Revising Arnold's call "to see the object as in itself it really is," Pater promotes subjective perception—what pleasure the image gives to "me"—over disinterested interpretation, establishing the basis of what is commonly acknowledged as his critical perspective. Instead

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of observing culture without personal investment like Arnold, Pater's aesthetic critic actively experiences the world, encountering and immersing himself in pleasurable sensations.[4]

But Pater's and Arnold's critical positions feature some similarities. Pater's subjectivism radiates beyond private experiences of the active mind, combining detached evaluation with engaged sensory experience. The impression may depend on "me," but art object becomes actor in these sentences, modifying my nature and producing an observed effect *on* me. Recent critics have scrutinized this ambivalent structure of impressionism in *The Renaissance*, describing it as a method that "implies active as well as passive receptivity: it suggests a constructive, or reconstructive, faculty in one's relation to the objects to whose impact one makes oneself susceptible" (Parkes 53; see also Matz; Williams; Dellamora). In fact, this aspect of Pater's impressionism links his critical perspective to that of the Renaissance artists he admires. Those artists are "almost impassive spectators of the action before them," even as they restructure the phenomena they encounter, "rejecting some and isolating others, and always combining them anew" (*Renaissance* 42). Pater's aestheticist manifesto, once viewed as a testament to the primacy of subjective appreciation of art, actually questions and complicates the subject's autonomy and agency in its encounters with aesthetic objects.

Not surprisingly, recent critics have associated the dialectics of Pater's impressionism with his sexuality. Where Adam Parkes aligns this conflict between "active and passive forms of reception" with fin-de-siècle England's discourse on public and private forms of queer identity (65), Jesse Matz argues that Paterian impressionism "figures the aesthetic union of intellect and sense as a homosexual relationship" (54). Matz describes Pater's erotics of attachment and disengagement as a middle road between Arnold and Wilde, where a union of objective and subjective is fleeting and never fully attainable. These queer readings of Pater's enigmatic impressionism not only give voice to *The Renaissance*'s disguised sexual resonances in an era when queer identity (and queer vocabularies) were being formulated; they also shed light on Pater's status as a fin-de-siècle decadent. Against the residual tendency to dismiss decadence as an "epithet" or to focus exclusively on its referents—its decay obsession or its flagrant hedonism, its artifice or its misogyny—theorists have come to recognize its political efficacy and to dissect what Charles Bernheimer calls "the dynamics of paradox and ambivalence that sets it in motion" (5).[5] Pater, traditionally designated an aesthete because of his "art for art's sake" platform, has become an integral figure in the decadent canon since he proposes an aesthetic "in which failure and decay are regarded as seductive, mystical, or beautiful" (Hanson 3). As David Weir explains, Pater's aesthetic generates "an odd fusion of the delicious and the disciplined, of decadence and ascesis," which Wilde and his followers deprioritize in their unambiguous hedonism (67–68). Collectively, these readings reveal Pater's impressionism to be a decadent, intellectually self-conscious aesthetic as well as an emergent concept of queer subject formation in the modernist era.

The Renaissance thus raises a larger question: what is the relation between queer sexuality and decadence? Despite the conflation of queer and decadent that began in the late nineteenth century, there have been very few studies of their underlying structural or theoretical similarities. Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*, one of the rare exceptions, outlines the "peculiarly close, though never precisely defined, affinity" between decadence and queer desire that permeates nearly every modern theoretical discourse (128). Deconstructing what she calls the fin de siècle's "wholeness/decadence" binary, Sedgwick concludes that this homophobic conflation has perpetuated the association of both terms with genocidal violence. Focused as she is on

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.648 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Wilde and Nietzsche, though, Sedgwick concentrates less on the potentially positive aspects of this pairing—aspects that structure *The Renaissance*. Against these homophobic implications, Pater's impressionism enacts an alternative view of the nexus of queerness and decadence, revaluing their apposition as tangibly beneficial to the aesthetic critic.

Pater's critical and aesthetic works connect queerness and decadence through their homologous forms of detachment. Pater's queer subject, neither public nor private, neither embedded in nor distanced from homophobic social landscapes, embraces the decadent's perspective: he is less asocial than semiwithdrawn, experiencing aesthetic impressions yet shrinking into himself to analyze them. Pater remains perched thus, between distance and desire, because that liminal position allows the decadent artist-critic to produce, preserve, and gain pleasure from works while acknowledging their susceptibility to historical decay. As he composes a secret history of queer aesthetes—and a secret vocabulary of queer aesthetics—in *The Renaissance*, Pater revives their aesthetic as a method for historical analysis, the basis of a decadent criticism.

The shared historiographic value of decadence and queerness materializes through Pater's repeated juxtaposition of the words *strength* and *sweetness*. In the preface and first essay, "Two Early French Stories," he introduces the qualities that compose the "whole complex movement" of the Renaissance, including "the love of things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake" and "the desire for a more liberal and comely way of conceiving life" (1). More than an aesthetic, the Renaissance represents a unique way of being—fifteenth-century Italy is the Renaissance's primary site, Pater suggests, because of its "general spirit and character, for the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type" (6). This "general spirit" develops through the uneven drive of history:

> Here and there . . . the rude strength of the middle age turns to sweetness; and the taste for sweetness generated there becomes the seed of the classical revival in it, prompting it constantly to seek after the springs of perfect sweetness in the Hellenic world. And coming after a long period in which this instinct had been crushed, that true 'dark age,' . . . this outbreak is rightly called a Renaissance, a revival. (2)

Pater presents strength and sweetness as temporal terms. Linked elsewhere to a "refined and comely decadence," Renaissance sweetness rises variably amid ascetic middle-age strength to effect ethical and aesthetic revival (xxiii). This revival, centered on the Hellenic world's "perfect sweetness," becomes a prime example of *The Renaissance*'s use of "a lexicon of homosexual secrecy" (Love 60). When Pater associates the Renaissance with "decadence" and "perfect" Greek sweetness, he queers his aesthetic history. He recalls Hellenism's Victorian-era role in "legitimating 'homosexuality' as an identity," transposing that connotation onto the Renaissance (Dowling, *Hellenism* 31).[6] The Renaissance, the epitome of revival, is actually a queer, decadent moment like the Victorian fin de siècle, only in both cases queerness and decadence are not destructive but aesthetically and ethically productive. Detached from the crush of the Middle Ages yet attached transtemporally to the seeds of Hellenism, Renaissance artists—like Pater himself—undermine any uniform, progressive notion of history, highlighting the queer union of sweetness and strength, past and present, in moments of decadent hybridity. In short, Pater's description of Hellenic sweetness historicizes queer subjectivities as it queers historical change.

Instead of affirming decadence's negativity or asociality, then, Pater's alternative model of history affirms its liberatory potential. Fin-de-siècle decadence, Neville Morley explains, conceptualizes time in a "cyclical" structure, representing "societies and cultures . . . as natural objects following the diurnal

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and seasonal rhythms of nature" (573). Rather than limit history to a determined narrative, critics, artists, and historians who adopt this model perceive a unique, double-edged possibility in each present: a decadent moment may mark "a penultimate stage before a range of possible endings, or even . . . a beginning . . . the point where the present weakens enough to make an alternative conceivable" (574). Trading teleology for indeterminacy and variability, this theory of history articulates Pater's method in *The Renaissance*—a method Carolyn Williams calls "a rhythm of identification and detachment" interfusing historicism with aestheticism (31). Moreover, through its challenge to normative—we might say heteronormative—history, through its precarious balance of historical immersion and aesthetic disengagement, Paterian queer decadence introduces the challenge to progress-oriented paradigms that queer theory takes up today.[7]

Pater privileges queer theory's preferred tools—anachrony, inaccuracy, indeterminacy—in implementing his historical method. Though his contemporaries criticized *The Renaissance*'s historical inaccuracies, those errors have since been recognized as part of Pater's technique, making it "*not* exactly historical" but rather "historicist" (Williams 47; see also Bullen; Dale; Wallen). For Pater, Bullen explains, "historiography is not a matter of recording facts; for him it is an integral act of self-expression" (156). Pater's notion of the Renaissance canon alone indicates the kind of self expressed. The collection ends with a study of Johann Joachim Winckelmann—the eighteenth-century writer who, according to Whitney Davis, "imagined a *past* cultural formation, the world of Classical Greece, in which sexualized eroticism in sociability sustained aesthetic judgment on art, as well as vice versa" (8). A theorist of sexualized aesthetics, Winckelmann thus appears temporally but not ideologically misplaced among studies of the Renaissance. Pater proclaims him "not incongruous" with the others "by his Hellenism" (*Renaissance* xxiv–xxv), the subtle shibboleth that helps create what Potolsky calls "a transnational community of spirit and taste" (80). Viewed through the decadent lens, such details become more than mere anachronisms or errors: they represent Pater's affirmation of a queer community unfazed by historical difference. The Renaissance aesthetic can be historically specific to fifteenth-century Italy, or to Winckelmann's era, or to Pater's present, because each is a decadent moment, teeming with potential growth through the queer attachment of its artists to a transhistorical community. Probing the heteronormative, antidecadent implications of progress narratives, the decadent perspective allows the queer artist-critic to observe and engage his and other historical contexts, to draw from Hellenic sweetness amid rude strength (or vice versa).

This queer theory of Hellenic decadence takes its most articulate form in the conclusion. Throughout *The Renaissance*, Pater's suggestive vocabulary and anecdotes indicate how the Renaissance artists he singles out form a queer subculture, but the conclusion marks what Dowling calls "a turning point in the history of Oxford Hellenism and homosociality," situating modern criticism (and thus Pater himself) as heir to that aesthetic community (*Hellenism* 99). Originally published separately as an anonymous review entitled "Poems by William Morris," the conclusion caused an uproar in its revised form, in which Pater openly lauds the "exquisite passion" of seeing "the face of one's friend" (189). This controversial document's publication is also an important moment in queer theory, part of what makes Pater, in Michael Davis's words, "a first-rate, if not the first, queer theorist" (262). Pater reflects on the value of "theories" in modernity, an era when we "hardly have time to make" them:

> What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impres-

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.648 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> sions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy, of Comte, or of Hegel, or of our own. Philosophical theories or ideas, as points of view, instruments of criticism, may help us to gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded by us. "Philosophy is the microscope of thought." The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience . . . has no real claim upon us. (189)

Never acquiescing—not even to our own theories. The first sentence seems to confirm Pater's philosophy as purely relativist, unbridled by social or normative systems. In a brilliant paratactic turn, the second sentence reaffirms theory's value as a critical instrument that anchors our perception of the world. Like the impressionism proposed in the preface or the Renaissance's balance of "sweetness" and "strength," Pater's "theory" pairs relativistic disinterest with affective attachment. Fleeting indeterminacy is necessary to the formation of transhistorical queer communities, but we cannot retreat into total indeterminacy, dissolving existing systems, communities, and narratives under a futureless banner. We need, rather, to make our theories *perpetually* decadent—that is, we must queerly detach ourselves from our situatedness in present history without shrinking before history's indeterminate openness; we must sensuously embrace each moment, then leave its husk behind. In the end, we are left with the image of the microscope, a device that captures a concentrated view of a world while remaining within it. Written at the dawn of modernism's public struggles with homophobia and homosexual identity, *The Renaissance* proves decadence's positive value, inaugurating a queer theory for a new world that refuses to acquiesce to residual historical narratives and philosophical systems—without, for all that, refusing their value entirely.

[II]

Reflecting on this emergent era, *The Renaissance* yokes decadent artists to a new perspective on the world. Take a passage from "Pico della Mirandola":

> For Pico the world is a limited place, bounded by actual crystal walls, and a material firmament; it is like a painted toy, like that map or system of the world. . . . How different from this childish dream is our own conception of nature, with its unlimited space, its innumerable suns, and the earth but a mote in the beam; how different the strange new awe, or superstition, with which it fills our minds! "The silence of those infinite spaces," says Pascal, contemplating a starlight night, "the silence of those infinite spaces terrifies me:"—*Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie.* (32)

Pater differentiates Pico, with his archaic perception of a closed world, from other Renaissance artists by recalling the divide between present fragmentation and classical wholeness. As Matz explains in a discussion of *Marius the Epicurean*'s similar sense of modern worldedness, Pater seems to yearn for "the totality of 'lost epic'"—a backward-looking worldview associated with German idealism and advocated famously by another modernist-era reader of Hegel, the young Georg Lukács (218). "Our world has become infinitely large," Lukács declares in *The Theory of the Novel*, "and each of its corners is richer in gifts and dangers than the world of the Greeks, but such wealth cancels out the positive meaning—the totality—upon which their life was based" (34). Tracking this tragic fall from the totality of epic to the fragmented modern novel, the notoriously antidecadent Lukács suggests that, while we may lament the lost Greek world, we cannot regain its unified completeness or its literary forms. But look again at the passage from Pater. Unlike Lukács after him and Hegel before, Pater seems to feel differently about this "loss"—in fact, he finds his world's infinite openness tentatively exhilarating. Refusing a "childish" premodern worldview, Pater embraces the silence of infinite spaces by making Pascal's

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.648 Published online by Cambridge University Press

terror a mesmerizing chant, invoking the silence thrice, in two languages, as he marvels at the "awe" this world induces.[8] For Pater the modern world may be decadent and unmappable, new and terrifying, but its novelty harbors latent promise.

These possibilities of (and in) a new world come to play a more significant role in Pater's fiction. Calling to mind recent interest in the "fictional world" created by a text—"a unique system separate from, although dependent on cultural-historical reality in which it is created and with which it holds more or less obvious affinities," according to Ruth Ronen (15)—Pater's diverse corpus stages questions of aesthetic and social worldedness in both theory and practice. Specifically, the critical positions of *The Renaissance* place in relief many formal qualities of his fictional worlds, the aspects of "worldedness" Eric Hayot has identified as nodes of generic and historical comparison between texts and their contexts. Among the various elements Hayot identifies, two concern us here—"amplitude" and "connectedness." Amplitude, he writes, is "the relative spread of narrative attention across the diegesis," the differentiation between foreground and background material and the spread (or lack thereof) of significance between them (*On Literary Worlds* 56). Connectedness, "the degree to which the major symbolic or narrative features of the literary text . . . can be said to relate to an exterior context—whether geographic or temporal," describes the text's references to the world beyond its focal frame, both diegetically and extradiegetically ("On Literary Worlds" 154). Together, these and other formal features of literary worlds not only distinguish between genres but also elucidate their sociohistorical perspectives: through analysis of a world form, we discern its worldview, its implicit notions of subjectivity, history, and agency.

The divergent levels of amplitude and connectedness in Pater's work elucidate the historical agency structuring his decadent queer detachment. Amplitude sheds light on his hermetic yet strangely diffuse, fluid style of writing. Throughout his career, Pater cultivated a characteristic style of "studied delays and delicate hesitations" that Dowling identifies as a crowning example of decadence's experiments in language (*Language* 5; see also Weir; Love). Dynamic yet muted, Pater's style gives the feel of high relief, of revealing some emotions while concealing others, but it does so while cultivating a subtle equilibrium, a limited spectrum of attention that does not plumb its affective depths or accentuate its limitedness. It is this "impersonal intimacy," Stephen Arata notes, that allows *Marius* to remain inside the title character's consciousness and still "block all avenues to readerly identification" (131). Against hints of high amplitude—like those in the passage from the conclusion quoted above, for example—Pater's work checks interest in its incompleteness, its inattention to emotions, people, or places outside its restricted perspective: his subdued style forges a remarkably low amplitude.

In *Marius*'s fictional world, however, this style is complicated by the novel's peculiar variety of connectedness. As a nearly plotless novel limited to the "sensations and ideas" of its title character and an apparent apology for the conclusion to *The Renaissance*, we might expect *Marius* to disregard geographic and temporal connection to its world and to the historical world beyond it—especially in the light of the social and emotional disengagement implied by Pater's stylistic low amplitude.[9] Just the opposite happens: instead of persisting in muted philosophical subjectivism, the novel connects Marius's movements to spaces and characters in a historical world. Where *The Renaissance*'s critical pose strikes a precarious balance between attachment and disinterest, Pater's fictional world balances de-amplification—withdrawal into mental equipoise—against connectedness to the "real" historical environment of Marcus Aurelius's Rome. The formal construction

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.648 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of *Marius* thus reaffirms the sociohistorical embeddedness of Pater's work by realizing a semiexternal decadent world.

This strange counterbalance of contractive amplitude and broadening connectedness culminates in the novel's deployment of diegetic space. Love has called *The Renaissance*'s use of "liminal, semipublic" spaces an "epistemology of the vestibule," explaining that Pater's queer figures do not occupy "freely chosen" spaces because they are forcibly relegated to locales "outside time, suspended in an endless present of indecision" (64). As section 1 demonstrated, however, Pater finds self-directed agency in his figures' apparent passivity; his vestibular spaces embody these same ethical imperatives of queer detachment. If Pater's essays affirm the value of decadent, nonnormative approaches to living history, these novelistic spaces, compressed yet expansive, affirm the need for alternative vantages where history can be observed and recorded from the side.

At a key moment in the novel, Marius is brought by a friend to a large house on the outskirts of Rome. The friend shows Marius around, reviving memories of the dead and his "old native susceptibility to the spirit, the special sympathies, of places" (2: 96). As Marius approaches the church altar deep in the house, this liminal site suddenly blossoms:

> In truth, one of his [Marius's] most characteristic and constant traits had ever been a certain longing for escape. . . . It was like the necessity under which the painter finds himself, to set a window or open doorway in the background of his picture. . . . To some such effect had this visit occurred to him, and through so slight an accident. Rome and Roman life, just then, were come to seem like some stifling forest of bronze-work, transformed, as if by malign enchantment, out of the generations of living trees, yet with roots in a deep, down-trodden soil of poignant human susceptibilities. In the midst of its suffocation, that old longing for escape had been satisfied by this vision of the church in Cecilia's house as never before. (2: 106)

The church becomes a queer world, a "window" of "escape" from the world at large. It stands outside Rome's "stifling forest of bronze-work" but looks back to it, disrupting the novel's muted self-reflectiveness by registering the broader landscape. In turning to a Christian worldview, a "vision" from the periphery, the novel illuminates why the decadent text balances the historical embeddedness of high connectedness against a low amplitude that belies environmental and historical determinism. Putting *The Renaissance*'s queer theory into aesthetic practice, *Marius* offers Christianity and its place in the Antonine world as an affirmation of the queer witness-observer's role in history. Unlike the other philosophies explored throughout the novel, Christianity is unique in its revision of Paterian impressionism as "a mode of 'sympathy'" (Matz 218). The Christian stands between the worlds of earth and heaven, witnessing (and witnessing to) the earthly world to promote its transfiguration; the modern queer historian, caught between the homophobic world and the world of queer subcultures, gazes at the world from the side, recording present pain for a future beyond its decadent decay. Both philosophies require their own space, a vestibule in the fragmented modern world's interstices where a community can survive, so Pater's novel has them meet in the home of vestibules: the church. To capture queer history's unremarked experiences, *Marius* suggests, one must map out covert spaces for recording self-consciously from within the greater world.

These observation decks, closet spaces of queerly detached narrative, permeate other decadent novels. Joris-Karl Huysmans's *À rebours* (*Against Nature*), the breviary of French decadence, matches *Marius* in its supposed apathy toward sociohistorical connectedness. Similar to Pater's in its near plotlessness,

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Huysmans's novel follows the aristocrat Des Esseintes as he gives up Parisian debauchery to pursue sensuous pleasures privately in his closed-up suburban home. His famous adventures in decadent contemplation—he incrusts a turtle's shell with so many jewels that it suffocates; he constructs a "mouth organ" to combine liquors into a musical harmony of tastes (58)—have led some critics to declare the novel "apolitical" (Gagnier 170), its psychological hermeticism an example of what Weir calls the formalist "artifice for artifice's sake" that inspires Wilde's hedonistic decadence (68).

But the novel's low amplitude, foregrounding particular sensations and experiences without interest in the unrepresented, is also counteracted by geographic connectedness, bringing social context to bear once more on decadence's apparent autonomy. Where, as Andrew Goldstone observes, Des Esseintes's servants recall the outside world, providing "a realistic perspective external to that of the delusional aesthete," the house's spatial embeddedness affirms the productive peripherality of the decadent vestibule (627). At first, Des Esseintes finds it easy to imagine himself "far removed from the world of men": his house is "too far out for the tidal wave of Parisian life to reach him, and yet near enough for the proximity of the capital to strengthen him in his solitude" (Huysmans 76, 24). But terrifying memories and dreams eventually negate this distance. What begins with "drumming on the window-panes and casting anxious glances at the sky" culminates in his going outside to seek "refuge" in his garden—an outward glance at the world that elicits a new worldview (130, 168). Observing his neighbors for the first time, Des Esseintes sees them as literal figurae, damnable emblems of an "entire generation" and a "synthesis of the age" (160). Though less sympathetic than disgusted, Des Esseintes shares Marius's ability to record and critique the great world from a particular type of diegetic space, one that generates a community of decadent novels. Like their protagonists, who are never at home in an enclosed environment, these texts require peripheral spaces to complete their worlds, places from which queer decadents can see and record the condensed images that make their secret history. The dance of connectedness and amplitude illuminates these cached vestibules, the impressions they capture and the queer worlds they seek.

[III]

This narrative strategy—part refusal, part acquiescence, reaching toward secreted alcoves that might protect and cultivate it—abounds in queer modernism. (No surprise, in an era defined variably by, through, and against the idea of impersonality.) In the wake of fin-de-siècle decadence, E. M. Forster's *Maurice* (1913–14), for example, adopts queer detachment as a representational method for modernist homosexual writing. Where Pater and Huysmans present the queerly detached decadent as a character, Forster raises the stakes by grafting that quality onto his narrator. Showing the young Maurice variably engaged with and detached from his own budding sexuality—and pairing that confusion with a narrator who, through free indirect discourse, is intermittently more and less aware of Maurice's deepest feelings than he is—Forster makes queer detachment his method of portraying the phenomenology of queer being.[10]

One of *Maurice*'s early private readers—the novel was not published until 1971—takes this reversal of the Paterian gambit to its political limits. Christopher Isherwood—with whom Forster shared his manuscript in 1932—presents narratological queer detachment as a politically viable and vital strategy for queer historians amid decadence. Consider the opening of *Goodbye to Berlin*:

> From my window, the deep solemn massive street. Cellar-shops where the lamps burn

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.648 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> all day, under the shadow of top-heavy balconied façades, dirty plaster frontages embossed with scrollwork and heraldic devices. The whole district is like this: street leading into street of houses like shabby monumental safes crammed with the tarnished valuables and second-hand furniture of a bankrupt middle class.
>
> I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking. (1)

We see a crucial shift here from earlier decadent fictions. Instead of presenting a queerly detached protagonist (Pater and Huysmans) or protagonist and narrator (Forster), Isherwood offers both in one figure. His protagonist-narrator exemplifies the queer approach of a camera to recording history before he claims to be one himself. Observing the street, its dated objects and broken architecture, he records in fragmented, incomplete sentences. The first sentence lacks a verb and the second fails to make an independent clause before the third finally forms a complete (albeit disconnected) sentence. It is as though the camera-perceiver etches images into denarrativized text rather than photographic negatives.

Nearly every discussion of the novel fixates on the ensuing "camera" line, but such readings typically underestimate the nature of Isherwood's photographic style. For most critics, the camera can be dismissed because its "objectivity" is eventually falsified one way or another: Isherwood maintains ironic distance from his detached, asocial narrator, or the narrator eventually recognizes his own amoral passivity.[11] Such readings of the camera as failing or disavowed metaphor fall short, I would argue, because their implied theories of photographic "objectivity" overlook Isherwood's conscious self-positioning. The photographic perspective, Anthony Shuttleworth observes, is always a "false," situated objectivity, and it is this "cultural role that cameras can fulfill" that Isherwood accentuates (157). Disengaged observation does not fail because Isherwood never forgets the narrator's foundational in-betweenness.[12] The passage may mimic objectivity, but the focal point is still "*my* window," just as Pater's impression depends on the art object's effect "on *me*." For both writers, the line separating active and passive, private subject and public world, remains productively tentative and ever in flux.

But there's something decidedly more political about the queer protagonist-narrator's situation in Isherwood's novel. In the story "Sally Bowles," the sexually ambiguous narrator and Sally befriend Clive, a rich American who offers to take them on his travels among the wealthy and their exclusive circles. Christopher, the narrator, wonders about the "ill-defined position" he will occupy alongside Sally and Clive in the pair's economically driven sexual relations, but he consents to their plans.[13] Before departing, the three observe the "most elegant funeral" of the former German chancellor Hermann Müller from Clive's balcony:

> We had nothing to do with those Germans down there, marching, or with the dead man in the coffin, or with the words on the banners. In a few days, I thought, we shall have forfeited all kinship with ninety-nine per cent of the population of the world. . . . Perhaps in the Middle Ages people felt like this, when they believed themselves to have sold their souls to the Devil. It was a curious, exhilarating, not unpleasant sensation: but, at the same time, I felt slightly scared. Yes, I said to myself, I've done it, now. I am lost. (48–49)

Having "nothing to do" with the world and finding it an "exhilarating, not unpleasant sensation," the narrator assumes the position of decadent, self-conscious recorder from his semidetached vantage. We have entered another psychologically subdued, highly connected novelistic world. In Christopher's case, however, a contracted psyche does not shield him; it exacerbates his fears,

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his failing attempts to stifle any connection to the historical event that portends the violent spectacles of Nazi Germany. Christopher demarcates a gap between himself and the world, but his doubtful reaction complicates what Norman Page calls this scene's portrait of "soul-destroying" detachment (196). Christopher ambivalently acquiesces to peripheral surveillance because he can stomach neither immersing himself in the spectacle nor turning away to let it go unseen.

These events indicate the dilemma of being queer in Weimar Berlin. Days after the funeral, Christopher and Sally arrive at Clive's flat and find the porter eyeing them "rather queerly": tired of Berlin (and perhaps of their odd threesome), Clive has left without them (49). Christopher and Sally laugh it off, but the sequence points to Christopher's uneasy status in this world. On the balcony, he may find the idea of complete exodus "exhilarating," but that prospect is no more available to him than the less appealing one of being subsumed in the political spectacle. Marginalized on account of his sexuality, his foreignness, and his decadent attitude, Christopher seeks out peripheral spaces because he cannot yet say goodbye to Berlin—something keeps him there, hiding in plain sight to watch the "ninety-nine percent" below. In effect, Christopher becomes the camera—neither freed by amoral, fantasized externality nor swallowed up in the totalizing allure of proto-Nazi Germany—because it is the only "ill-defined position" left to the ill-defined man: the camera's mount provides not just a vantage but a refuge for the queer writer recording history.

Isherwood thus reappropriates the conflation of decadence and queer sexuality as a politically useful pairing in an increasingly homophobic environment. Extending fin-de-siècle stereotypes, Isherwood's generation routinely associated both decadence and homosexuality with fascism. Walter Benjamin, for instance, famously concludes that fascism, "the introduction of aesthetics into political life," represents the "consummation of *l'art pour l'art*," the culmination of decadent aestheticism (241–42). Despite the Nazi Party's antidecadent homophobia expressed in events like "degenerate" modern art exhibits, a complementary tradition of homosexualizing fascism emerged, interpreting its utopian masculine misogyny as a sort of violently repressed homosexuality. As Richard Plant's study of Third Reich sexual politics demonstrates, such generalizations produced and have perpetuated "widespread silence" on Nazi persecution of homosexuals, which changed them from tolerated curiosities into "contragenics" (18). Fueled by the longstanding conflation of *homosexual* and *decadent*—which Isherwood himself criticized directly—these terms devolved into a tautology of vices, the decadent and queer lifestyles made stops on the road to fascist depravity.[14]

However, this late modernist understanding of queerness and decadence rests on a misinterpretation of fascism's parts-whole structure—a misreading Isherwood's novel implicitly condemns through its literary world making. Regenia Gagnier has recently demonstrated how decadents and fascists perceive parts-whole relations inversely. Where decadence typically embraces the fragmentary parts created by the disintegration of a whole—whether that whole is a society, art object, or psyche—fascism not only subordinates individual parts to social wholes but does so through spectacles that make "dependent peoples become part of the mass" (49). Like *The Renaissance*'s decadent critique of normative history, decadence's parts-whole valuations anticipate contemporary queer theory, forecasting its disavowal of essentialized, holistic identity in favor of contingency, performance, and self-shattering (e.g., Edelman, *Homographesis*; Bersani, "Is"). We might conjecture, then, that queerness and decadence so often find one another—that they form the basis of a heretofore unremarked genealogy of queer detachment—be-

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cause they share uneasiness toward totalizing modes of thought like fascism. Isherwood's later postwar writings, Jamie Carr has shown, articulate the same "self-reflexivity and, often, self-production" driving queer theory, but *Goodbye to Berlin* uniquely binds a particular queer identity to a decadent perspective, representing their shared efficacy in the counterfascist figure of the queerly detached narrator (24). Withdrawn into vantages like the balcony rather than immersed in the spectacle, Christopher realizes subordination to the social whole would mean relinquishing psychological and sexual freedom. Instead, he seeks to be an autonomous part within that whole, witnessing and recording the world he inhabits before its interstices disappear.

Isherwood's novel thus transposes the literary world-making practices of fin-de-siècle decadence onto modernist Berlin's queer and politically contentious world.[15] Referring to Michael Warner's description of the "queer counterpublic," Potolsky has argued that fin-de-siècle writers like Pater composed a community that shared the counterpublic's "key influences . . . and a foundational association of nonnormative sexuality with sociopolitical critique" (133). Potolsky locates this decadent counterpublic in a print culture of common canons and styles, but in Isherwood's novel we glimpse an analogous subculture, anchored to real places.[16] *Goodbye to Berlin* condemns proto-Nazi Germany's predominating spatial order, situating its "public" and detotalizing queer "counterpublic" in competing, colliding spaces. After all, one of the Nazis' first acts of homophobic aggression—which Isherwood refers to in the novel—was spatial (Tamagne 356). By closing gay bars and other meeting places, the Nazis quashed the sexual freedom that originally brought Isherwood's circle to Berlin, eliminating what Andrew Thacker calls the alternative spatial order of Weimar "homotopias" (150). In his search for these homotopic vestibules, Isherwood's narrator realizes their inescapable connectedness to the novel's other important type of space, the institutional spaces of hospitals and sanatoriums that embody the state's disciplinary order. Where Pater journeys to the fault lines in *Marius*'s world to find observatory spaces outside historical determinism, Isherwood faces greater political ramifications: his narrator seeks out fragmentary homotopias because connectedness now threatens to erase sexual and social difference—to swallow up queer history and queer identity completely. As the narrator captures glimpses of spaces that will disappear under the Nazis, the novel becomes his struggle to remain semidetached from both worlds, to preserve these traces without succumbing to self-erasure within the connected whole.

"Sally Bowles" introduces the heteronormalizing pull of institutional spaces, undermining Christopher's efforts to remain emotionally and sexually disengaged. The story, Linda Mizejewski observes, places the promiscuous Sally in an "uneasy parallel with Nazi strategy," linking her campy, anti-Semitic self-styling to Nazism's aura of violence (84). As Sally undergoes an abortion to end an unplanned pregnancy, the sexually ambiguous Christopher becomes increasingly absorbed in her performances. He insists her "demi-mondaine" act rings hollow—she will always be the bourgeois "daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jackson-Bowles" to him—but their relationship renders her licentiousness more than just theater (*Goodbye* 33). Sally's decadence threatens his asceticism, exposing him to an oppressive, totalizing force that comes to a head during her abortion. Arriving at the hospital, Christopher notices its sterility, the "clean and cheerful" room, and Sally looking "years younger, like a little girl" (53). Shorn of her immoderate stylings, Sally has been whitewashed into a "natural," medicalized purity. She has even told nurses that Christopher is her husband and the baby's father—a lie, she explains, that "makes everything so much simpler" (53). The "demi-mondaine"

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.648 Published online by Cambridge University Press

has become "Sally Jackson-Bowles": this time, she performs as married bourgeois girl, reducing decadence to a precursor of assimilation and pushing Christopher to the brink of submission to heterosexual performance.[17] Barely able to sustain his outsider status, he flees, the only decadent left. Decadence, the scene suggests, is not homogenizing or fascist but queer: only the homo- can maintain heterogeneity; only the sexually undefined subject can dodge normalizing medical labels and retreat into his contracted self.[18]

By revealing how prone Sally is in this space to absorption in heteronormativity's "purer" whole, Isherwood reaffirms queer detachment's value as a means of coupling decadence to queerness. Faced with a more aggressively homophobic environment than the writers discussed above, Christopher stays semidetached because that stance is the only way to counteract the late modernist world—the institutional spaces that will soon medicalize queers as "contragenics"—without either acquiescing or marking oneself as its next victim. Christopher must enter these spaces to record the secret histories that will disappear beneath Nazism's triumphal narrative, but he must also remain a disengaged, autonomous fragment in these spaces through his unexpressed sexuality. Decadence, it seems, can only steel one against the world if one makes it less a sensuous performance than a self-conscious attitude about one's own historicity. For Isherwood and his narrator, the camera's decadent position suits one who does not fit the norm, who passively records homophobic landscapes while seeking fragmentary images of alternative queer worlds. Decadence and queerness are no longer simply the valued apposition of Pater's *Renaissance*: for Isherwood, they are *only* valuable in apposition.

So where are those alternative worlds? How can queer historians dodge the antidecadent, antihomosexual order that heralds the Nazis? Even as Christopher faces assimilation into a medical space, the abortion scene illuminates a homotopic periphery. Having reached a crisis as Sally's "husband," Christopher decides to give himself and Sally "a change" by vacationing alone outside Berlin, telling her only that he will go "some place on the Baltic" (56). It is a moment so brief it might be missed: and yet, we discover later, this excursion, unrepresented in "Sally Bowles," is the focus of the ensuing story, "On Ruegen Island." Unlike the novel's other sections, set within Berlin, "Ruegen" images the vestibular space Christopher seeks: a place where queer subcultures can flourish, a place from which the decadent can record fleeting impressions. This fragmentary reference, scrawled parenthetically in "Sally Bowles" like graffiti along the walls of a heteronormalizing institution, harbors a nascent world.

"Ruegen" records the misadventures of Peter and Otto, a gay couple captured by Christopher's observant eye, but the narrative intrigues less for its content and more for its contented, matter-of-fact depiction of the queer world they make. Neither idealizing Ruegen as pastoral utopia nor lamenting its subjection to the "other" world, the story resumes the camera passage's subdued style, creating what Mia Spiro calls a "silent counter-discourse" of queer candor (216): "A cock crows. The creak of the bicycle, going past. The dew on the white table and chairs in the garden arbour, and dripping from the heavy lilac. Another cock crows, much louder and nearer. And I think I can hear the sea, or very distant bells" (77). Like the novel's opening paragraph, this passage situates the narrator's passivity in an extensive environment (the bells are "distant")—affective stillness does not obfuscate the world's connectedness or the decadent fecundity of heavy lilac (not to mention the echoing cocks). In this case, though, the frank queer portraits that follow do more than differentiate Ruegen's social order from Berlin's; they underscore both worlds' constructedness. The decadent, queer

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.648 Published online by Cambridge University Press

world—supposedly inverted, "against nature"—is fragmentary, but it is as natural to a queerly detached observer as the Berlin scene that opens the novel. Both the "authentic" heteronormative world and the queer world, the story suggests, are equally constructed, equally artificial: the homotopic vestibule composes a world in which queerness is artificed *and normal*.

Even as Ruegen falters, collapsing back into the totalizing enclosure of Berlin, the novel affirms its value as a decadent fragment of queer history. Queer worlds, Sarah Ahmed writes, are always "fleeting," but their collapse in Isherwood's novel literalizes heteronormativity's fascist associations (106). Ruegen's tranquility begins to crumble with Otto and Peter's relationship, but Christopher's image capturing is disturbed by the intrusion of another "observer." On the beach, Peter, Otto, and Christopher meet a Berlin surgeon who revels in its atmosphere of swastikas and "real Nordic types" (86). He confides to Christopher the qualities he observes in Otto's "criminal head": "This type of boy always reverts," and such types "ought to be put into labour-camps" (89). Born of the medical spaces discussed above, the doctor illuminates the unbroken contact between these worlds, articulating the heteronormative perspective on queer spaces and subjects. In Ruegen and its inhabitants, the doctor sees only "degeneration," decadence that must be disciplined back into the natural order. With that world vision coming to fruition—more Nazis arrive daily on the island, dreaming of war "like the ancient Greeks"—Christopher's tertiary position becomes indispensable (95). Queer detachment allows him to observe both straight and queer worlds, inside and out, without being swallowed up as another victim of violent reassimilation. Recalling the "theory" of Pater's conclusion, Isherwood's novel affirms that in this ephemeral environment the queer writer must passively record unregarded experiences of queer history and then withdraw before they disappear beneath history's violence. In effect, *Goodbye to Berlin* offers decadence's artificed worlds as covert artifacts, fragments of a queer community that must be preserved for posterity.

And so the novel attempts to capture these artifacts before they vanish. After Christopher leaves Ruegen, the novel's queer worlds become increasingly short-lived, their appearances devolving into momentary deviations from the dominant order. By the novel's final section, Weimar Berlin's death knell has sounded: gay bars are closing, violence against non-Aryans is everywhere, and "Hitler is master of this city" (207). This concluding segment, the novel's most politically observant one, prompts Heather Marcovitch to suggest that decadence has become "less appealing" to Christopher as he collapses beneath the "moral guilt" of being a passive photographer (335, 339). But, as we have seen, the failure of these worlds does not discount the camera. The section offers a series of disconnected images of queer and Nazi Berlin—some only a paragraph long, recalling the reference in "Sally Bowles" to "some place" named Ruegen—all "impressions" that the detached Christopher must covertly capture before the footage is confiscated. Queer worlds may not topple the totalizing whole, but they retain political efficacy as momentary vantages. And if these homotopias are to promote glimpses of alternative historical models and queer communities, they can only do so, the novel suggests, through the camera's lens. The (re)making of queer worlds begins with the salvaging of these literary worlds, artifacts to be taken up in another queer time and place like seeds of a Hellenic revival.

That renaissance is under way; its artifacts are what contemporary queer theorists have been excavating these past decades. Among what Foucault calls the "plurality of resistances" that arise in modern social relations, "the points, knots, or focuses of resistance . . . spread over time and space at varying

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.648 Published online by Cambridge University Press

densities," queer detachment represents a uniquely photographic strategy, a stance that, like Pater's *Renaissance*, unites past and present writers through decadence's less heralded productive valences (96). Barthes reminds us in *Camera Lucida* that early cameras "were clocks for seeing": that mechanism inhabits Isherwood's camera, Pater's impressionistic microscope, even Wilde's changing portrait (15). These recording devices live and observe history's perpetual decadence; they present each moment in its incommensurable uniqueness. Several such instances in a genealogy of this time-marking, semidetached perspective appear here. But if we are to recognize how queer detachment has influenced and continues to structure our queer theories—how it positions us like a photographer, one foot in the past, one in the present—we must seek other work that constitutes this transhistorical community.[19] These authors have left us impressions, photographic artifacts, and literary worlds as emblems of their peculiar position as queer historians; let them develop.

Notes

I am grateful to the many people who enriched this essay through their generous comments on various drafts and ideas. My special thanks go to Eric Hayot, Robert Caserio, Janet Lyon, Daniel Purdy, and Jacob Hughes.

1. Recently, Plotz has convincingly demonstrated the significance of semidetachment across Victorian literature by distinguishing different modes through which semidetachment signifies—mental dislocation, provinciality, the interplay between novelistic and real worlds, the act of reading itself ("Henry James's Rat-tat-tat-ah," "Mediated Involvement," "Provincial Novel"). To clarify how these valences factor into my analysis, I use terms like *distance*, *embeddedness*, and *immersion* when describing physical-spatial forms of detachment and terms like *(dis)engagement*, *(dis)interest*, and *attachment* for affective and psychological forms. Both categories, though, are related and relatable—they are two sides of a semidetached or semiwithdrawn concept of sexuality. For other interpretations of Pater's semidetachment, see Arata; Levine.

2. Anderson addresses early queer theory, but her analysis still accurately describes the field. Waters, for instance, argues that "new British queer history" valorizes "a queer past over a gay present even while celebrating . . . present-day practice" (141), creating a dialectic of engagement and detachment: "by rendering the past *other*, by distancing it radically from our own understandings and categories of identity . . . [these historians] have created a world they render desirable" (150). Similarly, Halperin proposes a "dialectical" analytic method to extend and enhance "the play of identity and difference in queer historiography" (92).

3. I have in mind Berlant and Warner's discussion of the "world-making" strategies of queer counterpublics, which influences my final section: "By queer culture we mean a world-making project. . . . The queer world is a space of entrances, exits, unsystematized lines of acquaintance, projected horizons, typifying examples, alternate routes, blockages, incommensurate geographies" (558).

4. Anderson proves that Arnold's disinterestedness is actually quite dynamic, balancing subjective and objective (*Powers*). Pater, I believe, does not recognize Arnold's ambivalence but rather refutes his disinterestedness (see note 6). However, Anderson's description of Pater's elevating "stance itself as a value" seems to downplay his importance to these discussions (*Powers* 116). On the relation between Arnold's and Pater's critical self-positioning, see Bromwich; Dale; Williams.

5. The notion of decadence as "epithet, neither more nor less" is Gilman's (158). Terser than Bernheimer, Weir argues "decadence is transition" (xvi). Similarly, Gagnier concludes that "decadence is not a fixed state but a relation of part to whole within systems that change" (5). Potolsky calls decadence "a characteristic mode of reception" (1).

6. Pater's sweetness-strength dialectic affirms his critique of Arnoldian detachment, recalling Arnold's descriptions of "sweetness and light" in *Culture and Anarchy* (9). Pater, Dellamora observes, gives "sweetness" a "sexual charge" absent from Arnold (153). Moreover, Pater's terminology recalls the philosopher Henry Sidgwick's critique of Arnold: "the world wants fire and strength even more than sweetness and light" (274). Pater, meanwhile, identifies a balance between these qualities as the impetus for the homoerotic cultural growth he finds in the Renaissance.

7. In a review of queer historiography, Traub argues that rejections of heteronormative history (e.g., Edelman, *No Future*; Halberstam; Love) have produced a "new unhistoricism," a stance opposed to categorization, periodization, and historical narrativization (27). Alternatively, some historians of sexuality (e.g., Halperin) manage to use genealogical approaches without "straightjacketing" history (Traub 23). Pater's decadence—a theory that demands balancing antinormative thought with conscious, historical self-situating—features elements of both approaches: Pater interrogates normative historical narratives without refusing history.

8. Cf. Lucien Goldmann's *The Hidden God*, which describes a proto-Marxist "tragic vision" in early Lukács and Pascal's *Pensées* using concepts remarkably similar

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.648 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to Paterian queer detachment: "The situation of tragic man is paradoxical, and can be explained only by paradoxes: for he is in the world and conscious of it from within, but at the same time he refuses the world because of its inadequate and fragmentary nature; yet at the same time as he both refuses it and lives in it, he also goes beyond it in an immanent transcendence and a transcendent immanence" (56).

9. The second edition of *The Renaissance* omitted the conclusion. While restoring it in the third, Pater appended a footnote directing "young men" whom it might "mislead" to read *Marius*, where he had "dealt more fully" with its concepts (*Renaissance* 186n). This has often been viewed as an apology for the conclusion's homoerotic hedonism.

10. When Maurice realizes he is attracted to his classmate Clive, the two students flee Cambridge one afternoon for the countryside, where, feeling "outside humanity, and death," they "transmute everything," though all remains "ordinary": they compose a queerly detached vestibule (76–78). The most familiar vestibule in decadent fiction is probably the attic in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* where Dorian keeps his painting. Indeed, this pattern of amplitude and connectedness characterizes *Dorian*'s famous eleventh chapter—where Dorian is mesmerized by a "poisonous book," possibly *À rebours* (139).

11. Early readings of Isherwood's camera find it unapologetically detached and asocial—Friedman declares it "the final extinction of the author" (1179). David Thomas and Hynes distinguish author from narrator, troubling the camera's objectivity and the author's perception of his speaker's withdrawal. Recent critics have crafted more nuanced approaches to Isherwood's politics but continue to denounce the camera image. Feigel and Marcovitch claim the narrator changes his perspective toward camera-like detachment, becoming a self-conscious judge of its immoral, impotent passivity amid political violence. Monnickendam offers the intriguing possibility that attention to Isherwood's sexual politics has eroded critical interest in the politics of these prewar writings—a reading confirmed by Carr's argument that Isherwood's politicized queer passivity first surfaces in post-1930s works. Shuttleworth, demonstrating that Isherwood recognizes the camera's false objectivity, explores the enticing semidetached situation it shares with both aestheticism and Nazism. See also Page; Schwerdt; Spiro.

12. Isherwood's camera-narrator thus gives a late modernist twist to the flâneur's original ambivalence: "To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world" (Baudelaire 9).

13. *Goodbye to Berlin* is narrated by "Christopher Isherwood." I will call him "Christopher" and the author "Isherwood" to avoid confusion.

14. Isherwood once remarked, "People always say about Berlin in the 1920s, 'Oh, it must have been so decadent!' All they mean is homosexual" ("To Help" 137).

15. On Isherwood's relation to fin-de-siècle aestheticism, see Denisoff; Marcovitch; P. Thomas. None of these authors explore Pater's relevance to Isherwood, focusing rather on Wilde and camp sexuality.

16. Isherwood also participated in an analogous print culture. The joint publications, coauthorships, and personalized dedications of W. H. Auden and Isherwood's circle of friends formed a kind of queer literary counterpublic—one of shared interests in decadence's historical implications and literature's world-making possibilities. According to Hynes, Auden "was asking for alternative worlds, worlds of the imagination which would consist in new, significant forms, and through which literature could play a moral role in a time of crisis" (13).

17. These heteronormalizing spaces become increasingly suffocating. In the story "The Nowaks," the "nauseating" sterility of a women's sanatorium is the backdrop for Christopher's explicit sexual encounter—the novel's only one—with a female patient (135). Peter Thomas calls the sanatorium a "homosexual nightmare" (129).

18. Put differently, Christopher cultivates the "anti-identitarian identity" Bersani identifies as "intrinsic to the homo-ness in homosexuality" (*Homos* 101).

19. A provisional list of queerly detached works might include Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*; H.D.'s *Trilogy*; all of Marcel Proust; moments in Herman Melville, Henry James (Plotz, "Henry James's Rat-tat-tat-ah"), Thomas Hardy, Mary Butts, and Radclyffe Hall; more recently, Jamie O'Neill's *At Swim, Two Boys* and Alan Hollinghurst's novels. Additionally, the structural similarities between queer detachment and "new cosmopolitanism" might facilitate discussion of authors outside this predominantly Anglo-American swath. For example, Lyon, citing Camilla Fojas's study of South American fin-de-siècle groups, explores how cosmopolitanism—"attachment at a distance," in Bruce Robbins's words (3)—offered "queer *modernistas*" alternative models of critical and aesthetic agency (Lyon 394). On cosmopolitanism and the authors discussed here, see Anderson, *Powers of Distance*; Gagnier; Lyon; and Potolsky.

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