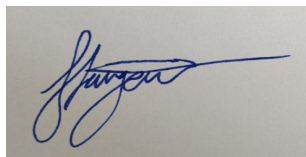


Desiring Long-Term Intimacy in Victorian to Twenty-First-Century British and American Homosexual Literature

Submitted by Jack Sargent, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English, 6 March 2020.

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Abstract

This PhD explores the long-term experience of male homosexual desire from the late-Victorian period to the twenty-first century. It demonstrates that John Addington Symonds (1840–1893), A. E. Housman (1859–1936), E. M. Forster (1879–1970), Christopher Isherwood (1904–1986) and Alan Hollinghurst (b. 1954) write poetry and prose about attractions and relationships between men spanning years and decades. Through their narratives, these writers portray a homosexual desire for long-term intimacy. The literary texts studied here challenge the prevailing critical idea that domesticated, monogamous, long-term forms of commitment are valued primarily due to Western heteronormative ideologies. These writers are not motivated by the “chrononormativity” of heteronormativity, a valuation of the home, family and marriage which, as Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner argue, “signifies belonging to culture in a deep and normal way”. Rather, each writer desires a long-term connection and commitment between sexually and romantically attracted partners who, with the passage of time, develop and deepen a feeling of being intimately, uniquely understood. They identify that the passage of time creates tensions between desire and anxiety, possession and loss, familiarity and idealisation, particularly in contexts of homosexual illegality. Long-term relationships are valued in these writers’ works as they present the possibility of sharing these tensions. This PhD demonstrates that the desire for intimacy is complicated by the emotional limitations imposed by the illegality of homosexuality. It analyses illicit fantasies of intimacy and memories of lost relationships and unrequited love that are shaped by anxieties surrounding criminality and exile from home. It also analyses clandestine sexual and romantic friendships and domestic partnerships which are both curtailed and ennobled by the need to hide same-sex love and to resist mainstream stereotypes. This thesis argues that each of these texts is motivated by the desire, the impossibility, or the chance of sharing one’s experience of illicit same-sex desire with another person. Queer theorists argue that the recent advent of marital equality threatens to normatively “sanitise” homoerotic experience. This thesis concludes that gay marriage can also be read as the result of a desire for long-term intimacy which is uniquely

formed by a contemporary context of visibility, understanding and empathy. This study reads a homosexual literary tradition that values the long term as a narrative which can produce and share an intimate understanding of same-sex desire.

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Introduction: A Desire for Long-term Intimacy

This PhD thesis exposes and analyses the long-term experience of male homosexual desire between the late nineteenth century and the twenty-first century. It studies Victorian to contemporary literature that portrays illicit and illegal sexual and romantic attractions between men that span years and decades. It asserts that John Addington Symonds, A. E. Housman, E. M. Forster, Christopher Isherwood and Alan Hollinghurst write fiction and poetry about long-term relationships, which highlights a homoerotic desire for long-term intimacy. The term 'long-term intimacy' is created by this thesis. It is defined as a long-term connection and commitment between sexually and romantically attracted partners, which develops and deepens a feeling of familiarity. This thesis defines familiarity as a feeling that one is particularly, and intimately, understood by a partner. Long-term intimacy emphasises that the passage of time creates a knowledge of another person, and one's desire for them, that is particularly subtle, cherished and inimitable. Long-term intimacy is constructed by different memories, ideas and knowledges of another person amalgamating together as time passes. Both desiring and experiencing long-term intimacy is demonstrated here by literature that deploys repeating images. As images repeat over narratives within novels and poetry, each symbolises developing emotional tensions, harmonies and intimacies between men. These literary depictions of long-term intimacy portray the increasingly subtle combinations of feelings which, over time, make another person familiar and emotionally complex, unique and particularly desirable.

This thesis analyses a *desire* for long-term intimacy. It does so in order to emphasise how Symonds, Housman, Forster, Isherwood and Hollinghurst portray illicit homoerotic desire as complicating this experience of long-term intimacy. From the Victorian period to the late twentieth century, social and legal strictures against homosexuality meant that long-term intimacy, for some of the characters studied in this thesis, could only ever be a secret desire. These illicit desires remain silent and unreciprocated. They persist in spite of the fact that those who experience them feel that these desires can never emerge in the flesh. They are often an imaginary idealisation of familiarity with another man: a

dream that one's own desires for tenderness, closeness and connection could be understood and reflected by another. These idealisations are both heightened and marred by the expectation that they can never be equated with a real-life relationship.

This PhD also reads literary portrayals of long-term relationships and experiences of long-term intimacy between men. Within experiences of reciprocating relationships, long-term intimacy is created by sharing emotional memories, knowledges and dreams of the future with another man. This project studies both unreciprocated desires and reciprocated experiences of long-term intimacy between the late-Victorian period's cultural inauguration of the figure of the male homosexual and the twentieth-century decriminalisation of homosexuality. It demonstrates that these illicit experiences produce emotional tensions between desire and anxiety, possession and loss, and idealisation and familiarity. Both enduring attractions and relationships between men took place in cultures in which same-sex love and passion is transgressive and has no legitimate long-term form. This made desire an anxious contemplation of exposure and loss of intimacy. Each of the writers studied here grapple with the ways in which the passage of time makes desire fraught with pain and anxiety. Memories of both unrequited desire and relationships that are cut short illustrate a homosexual longing for familiarity that is thwarted by social strictures.

In *Intimacy: Personal Relationships in Modern Societies* (1998), Lynn Jamieson defines this ideal of intimacy as a desire for "a very specific sort of knowing, loving and being close to another person" (1). Jamieson calls this form of intimacy "companionate intimacy" (24). This thesis uses the term 'a desire for long-term intimacy' rather than companionate intimacy. It draws on Jamieson's definition of a connection based on shared knowledge. However, long-term intimacy further emphasises that this intimate understanding is produced by the passage of time. Time amalgamates particular personal memories and knowledges into unique compounds of feeling. Referring to long-term intimacy clarifies the relationship between companionate intimacy and the long-term narrative of a relationship. Jamieson argues that the now-prevalent ideal of "companionate" long-term relationships based on "empathy, understanding and mutually working out how to [sexually and emotionally] please each other"

developed throughout the twentieth century (24). She asserts that for the Victorians, structurally unequal heterosexual marriages revolved around the emotional, intellectual and physical privileging of the middle-class white male. She states that this manipulated spousal intimacy into “traditional patterns [of] love and care” (24).¹ She argues that Victorian marriages were based on social convention and moral duty. In these relationships, intimacy was held as increasingly important but not essential. This PhD does not claim to confirm or challenge Jamieson’s history of intimacy, as far as it relates to Victorian and twentieth-century heterosexual marriages. As Jamieson makes clear, the advent of contemporary notions of companionate intimacy “floats uneasily in time” (23); it is difficult to date exactly. Jane Austen’s novels idealised it, and individuals desired it, well before intimacy as an understanding between lovers became common parlance. This convention could even be considered to have emerged as late as the 1960s (Jamieson 24). However, this PhD does highlight an important consideration of how illicit, same-sex desire is experienced by five writers as an idealisation, pursuit and experience of “a specific sort of knowing” another individual well before Jamieson, and others, argue that it filtered into common conceptions of long-term relationships and marriage.²

This claim leads on to another reason that this PhD talks about a desire for long-term intimacy. It argues that the homosexual writers studied here represent the idea of experiencing long-term relationships with one, loving

¹ For Jamieson, these traditional forms emphasise inequality and are typified by the stereotypical but conventional Victorian ideologies of female dependence within wives and working-class women’s sexual availability within extramarital affairs and prostitution (22).

² As Jamieson states, critics may agree that the idea of a companionate marriage is a relatively recent cultural phenomenon, yet ascribing an exact timeline to this is contentious, and may even be impossible. For example, in *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992), Anthony Giddens claims that “romantic love began to make its presence felt from the late eighteenth century” (40). Giddens finds the origins of companionate marriage to be much earlier than Jamieson asserts. He cites as evidence the “rise in the novel [and] the romantic form” of narrative, which revolved around a marriage plot based on love and intimacy (40). Alternatively, Jesse Wolfe credits the Bloomsbury Group with the definition of companionate intimacy. In *Bloomsbury, Modernism and the Reinvention of Intimacy* (2011), Wolfe states that while the Bloomsbury group rejected “conservative attitudes towards marriage, monogamy, and the family” (16). Wolfe claims this reinvention was created by their subjective turn inwards towards being “sexually frank [and] emotionally honest” (1). He argues that this redefined the Victorian ideal of marriage, a convention that saw marriage as a “pillar of middle-class stability and social order” (2). Intimacy between spouses within early twentieth-century literature, Wolfe’s analysis highlights, negotiates an ambivalent tension between the institution of marriage as curtailing individual freedom, and recognition that intimate frankness with particular, loved individuals offers greater emotional and intellectual complexity than does the representation of more promiscuous relationships. As the differences in these narratives show, there is no one answer to the genesis of the now-popular modern understanding of companionate intimacy.

partner as particularly and uniquely desirable. Symonds, Forster, Isherwood and Hollinghurst evoke characters who are able to experience an intimate relationship. Each writer expresses a desire to experience intimacy as an ever more nuanced understanding of a lover. For the speakers and characters in their works, a long-term relationship means sharing the emotional tensions produced by same-sex desire. Tensions between anxiety and desire, possession and loss, and idealisation and familiarity become the very compounds through which they can claim to understand someone else intimately. The passage of time signifies the poignant possibility of both revealing one's complicated, thwarted and hopeful desire for long-term intimacy, and understanding how a partner experiences persistent desire in turn. Experiencing a long-term relationship is considered valuable by these writers as it promises to turn feelings of anxiety, loss and pain into a feeling of reciprocated understanding. Equally, Symonds, Housman and Hollinghurst's accounts of unrequited, illicit and unspoken desires articulate the converse: how persistent and unrequited desire is shaped by a continuing inability to share these tensions with another. They depict an inability to build new, intimate understandings with a beloved individual.

Symonds, Housman and Forster's late-Victorian and early-twentieth-century desires for long-term intimacy are precursors of Isherwood and Hollinghurst's later accounts of experiences of intimacy within homosexual domestic homes and families. These later portrayals of long-term relationships are formed by the experience of shared homes. However, these homes, and the increasingly visible homosexual partnerships and families that inhabit them, are valued as structures and relationships that expose the idiosyncratic emotional tensions inherent in one's experience of same-sex desire. Homes are defined as valuable due to the loving relationships which take place within them. Each representation of a desire for, or experience of, a long-term relationship studied here advocates that the passage of time is able to expose and share the amalgamations of feeling which define an individual's persistent same-sex desire. Because of this, the writers studied here demonstrate that long-term relationships facilitate a particular, and particularly desirable, conception of intimacy: an emotionally subtle, tension-filled and cherished understanding, which is produced by spending a long time with one person.

The argument that long-term, potentially domesticated, forms of attachment and commitment represent a particularly intimate relationship has previously been framed as a heteronormative ideology, about as far from illicit and personal homoerotic experience as it is, critically, possible to be. Late-twentieth-century queer theorists have argued that the ideal of familiarity has been symbolised by the image of heterosexual marriage and families. They argue that engaging with these ideological institutions necessitates the loss of queer intimacy and pleasure. The idea that long-term sexual and romantic relationships between two loving partners are particularly emotionally valuable lies at the nexus of widely held and cherished ideas within the western heteronormative romance plot: boy meets girl, boy loves girl, boy and girl get married and live happily ever after. This is the fantasy of the soulmate as it exists from Victorian Bildungsromane, such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), right up to twenty-first-century Disney. Queer theorists including Leo Bersani, Michael Warner, Lauren Berlant, Lee Edelman and Jack/Judith³ Halberstam have rightly demonstrated that this idealised form of intimacy generally predicates domesticated and child-oriented heterosexual intimacies. They demonstrate that the cultural precedence of this image of intimacy often banishes the spectre of the queer, non-heterosexual, non-family-oriented sexual and romantic life to the wastelands of the supposedly non-intimate. As a result, international legalisations of gay marriage over the past two decades have prompted the critical consensus that legitimised long-term forms of monogamy represent unfortunate "queer antisepticizings of gay sex" (Caserio 819).⁴

³ Halberstam has indicated that he uses both Jack and Judith as well as the male and female pronouns. As he states in his blog post, "On Pronouns" this is because "I have not transitioned in any formal sense" and also "because the back and forth between he and she sort of captures the form that my gender takes these days" (Jack Halberstam "Pronouns"). Subsequently, either Judith or Jack Halberstam is used refer to books published under that name and he/his are used as Halberstam's pronouns. This enables clarity while also respecting Halberstam's gender fluidity, and his decision to transition.

⁴ Caserio's use of queer here is aligned with what he sees as a troubling attempt of the gay-rights movement to leave non-normative politics, sexualities and revolutions behind in favour of forms of monogamous, familial relationships. He claims that this privatises and sanitises gay sex. His use of queer should not be confused with the queer theoretical, antisocial thought he is engaged in defining.

Writing from within this critical tradition, Laura Kipnis has criticised what she sees as the propensity to regard long-term commitment as a uniquely intimate form of felicity and perfection. Kipnis frames “any form of long-term commitment based on monogamy” as a misguided chasing of “the rewards of long-term intimacies”. She claims that long-term intimacy idealises a spurious state of bliss (10–11). Kipnis’s comment is, as far as the present author can tell, the only pre-existing use of the term long-term intimacy. Kipnis defines this as a fantasy: “a ‘happy’ monogamy” [which] you don’t have to *work* at maintaining” (11; Kipnis’s emphasis). By referring to long-term intimacy, Kipnis satirises an uncritical fantasy that no complex, lived, often boring, quarrelsome or confusing form of companionship could match. This thesis intervenes within this discussion by demonstrating that forms of long-term commitment offer a challenging type of emotional “work” which has been particularly desired by homosexual men from the late-Victorian period onwards. This thesis rejects Kipnis’s unobtainable definition of long-term intimacy. It demonstrates that the writers in this thesis do not seek the secure and conventional bliss of heteronormative relationship patterns. Rather, they desire long-term intimacy as it creates an increasingly complicated and challenging conception of the self and lover. The long term represents an acknowledgement that oneself and one’s partner can be, by turns, ideal and challenging, pleasurable and hard work. This thesis unyokes long-term intimacy from the image of heteronormative monogamy and marriage in order to think about why some men who desire other men argue that commitment produces particularly meaningful intimate connections. Subsequently, long-term intimacy becomes the opposite of a disavowal of queer transgressive pleasure and experience. Desiring long-term intimacy crystalizes a longing to share the emotional ambivalences inherent in illicit homoerotic desire. Rather than recreating an image of an idealized relationship, long-term intimacy defines both lovers as an ever more particular, queer and inimitable composite of emotions.⁵

⁵ While critics warn about the sanitising pitfalls of idealising normative long-term relationships, contemporary popular culture proliferates an alternative vision of long-term commitment, one based on the ever more intimate understanding of another person. The popular, ongoing Netflix drama *The Crown* (2016) makes the marriage of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip the centre of its narrative of British social and political history since their marriage in 1947. This marriage is portrayed as complicated: fraught with the challenges of knowing another person’s idiosyncrasies and faults in ever more detail. Yet this challenging, frustrating, subtle knowledge is also called, by Philip himself, during a dramatization of the couple’s golden-anniversary party, the “treasure” of a long-term monogamous union between two individuals who love one another

This study focuses exclusively on male–male same-sex desire. The idea that developing emotional tensions and familiarities are created by a long-term relationship which transgresses heterosexual norms is, of course, not limited to writing produced by or about men. One example of female–female long-term intimacy is Michael Field. Michael Field is the penname for the long-term, cohabiting lovers Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper, who produced volumes of poetry and diaries detailing their intimacy. Upon the death of Cooper in 1913, Bradley wrote an incensed yet also intimate response to the stereotypical, inadequate words she must use to publicly express her grief, in the poem "Your Rose is Dead". Bradley states "I, her lover, knew / that myriad-coloured blackness, wrought with fire / was woman to the rage of my desire" (qtd. in White 271). Rather than the stereotypical rose which she appears to others, Cooper is indescribably complex, loved and understood within Bradley's grief. Bradley's poem defies dominant, male-centred images of feminine beauty. It would be yet another effacement of the complexity of her, and other women's, experiences of long-term intimacy to squeeze the specific challenges, stereotypes, worries and licences afforded to love between women into a 'token chapter' on long-term intimacy within female–female relationships. From the late-Victorian period to the present, women have experienced unique gender assumptions and cultural restrictions which distinguish their long-term intimacies from the more visibly dominant cultural conceptions of both conventional and illicit male sexualities. For example, women were increasingly stereotyped throughout the nineteenth century as emotional. Loving and passionate, although not sexual, intimacies between women were accepted and even encouraged, while male–male intimacies were increasingly visualized and policed as potentially transgressive. At the same time, women were, generally, afforded fewer independent opportunities to seek out erotic and sexual relationships. The male writers within this study use terminology and imagery

"Beryl" *The Crown*). Certainly, one could read this royal marriage as the epitome of heteronormative British values. One could not imagine an 'out' homosexual couple, in 1957, cosily chinking glasses with the Windsors. Neither should one assume, were such a couple present, that they would experience their long-term intimacy identically to heterosexual couples. Nevertheless, this thesis attempts to make sense of such definitions of long-term relationships as particularly intimate from a non-heteronormative perspective. The writers in this thesis, like Prince Philip in *The Crown*, treasured their long-term attachments and relationships, elaborating on their potentially painful but particularly sentimental nature.

distinctly associated with male–male spaces and relationship templates of sexual and romantic bonding, such as a university education or male–male Greek love and comradeship. Moreover, they see themselves as writing within this male tradition. It is the present author's hope that later work on long-term intimacy will elaborate a coexisting female tradition with all the space, attention and detail that it deserves.⁶

Methodology: Images, narratives and amalgamation

Desires for long-term intimacy are read in this thesis through textual images that repeat throughout narratives. These images symbolise memories of desired individuals. As memories repeat throughout narratives of long-term attractions and relationships, they depict an amalgamation of feelings relating to either a desired individual or a long-term partner. The textual image's ability to amalgamate different emotions over the passage of textual narrative is used by the writers in this thesis to portray how long-term experiences of desire develop ever more subtle emotional compounds.

This methodology builds on the work of Allan Johnson. Johnson has already illustrated that generations of homosexual literature repeat textual images which are particularly able to evoke experiences of time that concern twentieth-century gay visual culture (19). He demonstrates the repeated use of images which connote sensations such as the worship of the youthful, sun-soaked body, the sensation of lateness, the persistent pull of the impermanent and the fascination with the contingent image of the poet. Johnson's central innovation is that these textual images are composites of diverse "textual instructions".⁷ He argues that to copy the instructions of an image is to "capture the impression of the image" by grouping discrete elements which gesture to a

⁶ Such as study might also include, but would by no means be limited to, female–female long-term relationships such as that between Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West; Sylvia Townsend Warner and Valentine Ackland; and Susan Sontag and Annie Leibovitz. It could also usefully include a study of Sarah Waters's modern evocations of Victorian and early-twentieth-century intimacies between women.

⁷ Johnson develops this theory from the memeticist Susan Blackmore's distinction between "copying the product" and "copying the instructions" in *The Meme Machine* (1999); see Bibliography, "Works Consulted".

precedent, while allowing them to regroup into a new image that still carries the instructions of its predecessor “like a recessive gene” (20).⁸ This thesis follows Johnson in defining textual images as composites of instructions to feel multiple emotions. However, it shifts attention to the internal development of images within narratives. It further defines the textual image as an increasingly diverse compound of instructions: an ever-developing composite over poetic and prose narratives that gestures to an individual’s increasingly subtle and complicated emotional experience of desire.

This definition progresses Johnson’s insightful yet aesthetically focused thesis. Johnson argues that images are “a product of the narratological (that is something continually remade)” (14). That said, his focus on the replication of vital images through generations of writers connotes a sense of timelessness in which textual images might change while still being able to convey similar motifs of feeling. The writers studied here mobilise the textual image to illustrate a shared concern with how same-sex desire develops with the passage of time. As they repeat *and* develop, these images define a fundamental link between narrative and persistent same-sex desire. They articulate how same-sex desire specifically generates idiosyncratic tensions between desire and anxiety, possession and loss, idealisation and familiarity. Each of the writers in this thesis uses the textual images to demonstrate that same-sex desire is, itself, a product of the narratological, and that this narrative is, specifically, a longing for intimacy.

The writers in this thesis employ different images that each visualise how same-sex desire develops within narratives. These images gesture to the increasingly tension-filled experience of either desiring, possessing or losing long-term intimacy. Each chapter focuses on one or two images. Chapter One argues that John Addington Symonds’s *Memoirs* (1889)⁹ defined his “persistent passion for the same sex” through the image of “a secret thread of love” which amalgamates feelings of anxiety, desire, morbidity and beauty with “ever

⁸ Johnson’s chapter “Influence, Image and the Movement of Time” in *Alan Hollinghurst and the Vitality of Influence* (2014) provides a convincing reading of this genetic process throughout the works of Joris Karl Huysmans, Nancy Mitford, Evelyn Waugh and Hollinghurst.

⁹ Symonds wrote his *Memoirs* in 1889. They remained unpublished until 1986, when Phyllis Grosskurth published an abridged form of the manuscript. Amber Regis edited and published a complete edition of Symonds’s *Memoirs* in 2016. The latter edition is used by this chapter.

increasing intensity" (*Memoirs* 182). It also reads the image of "symphonies of blue" within Symonds's essay "In the Key of Blue" (1893) as an expression of how compounds of feeling are produced by, and shared with, a partner throughout a long-term relationship. Chapter Two examines A. E. Housman's image of "the long road which leads me from my love" in *A Shropshire Lad* (1896). In particular, it analyses Housman's poetic creation of temporal distance: an imagined distance that is increasingly elongated as Housman's speakers leave behind homes and lovers whom they cannot forget. Chapters One and Two analyse desires for long-term intimacy which are silenced, thwarted and made poignant by anxiety and risk due to the illegality of homosexuality.

Chapter Three reads the image of darkness in E. M. Forster's *Maurice* (1914; published 1971). It argues that Forster defines the experience of long-term intimacy as a shared, subtle understanding of increasingly unconventional meanings of darkness. Through Maurice's illicit relationships with two men, darkness transitions from a symbol of illicit, unspeakable sexuality to a symbol of a tenderness, commitment and shared sexual and emotional knowledge between men. Chapter Four reads Christopher Isherwood's evocation of the lonely single man within *A Single Man* (1964). It argues that Isherwood's novel develops George's sense of anger, alienation and queerness into a portrayal of a loss of long-term intimacy. Isherwood's novel gradually reveals that George is lonely because his grief-fuelled actions separate him from his memories of frankness, honesty and the acceptance which he had shared with his now-deceased long-term partner. Chapter Five reads Hollinghurst's portrayal of homosexual experiences of the marital home in *The Stranger's Child* (2011) and *The Sparsholt Affair* (2017). It argues that the decay of the Victorian home over the twentieth century, in the former, articulates a poignant inability to speak. This defines illicit desires for long-term intimacy as an amalgamation of desire and loss. It reads the transition from the erotic artistic sketch to the intimate portrait of men at home in the latter as Hollinghurst's evocation of the contemporary value of being able to understand, in ever greater detail, desires for long-term intimacy which previously were defined by secrecy, uncertainty and loss.

In order to read the development of these images within literary narratives, this thesis utilises two methodologies advocated by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Touching, Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003). The first is her concept of texture. Sedgwick argues that “a particular intimacy seems to subsist between texture and emotions” (*Touching* 17). For her, texture ties intimate feeling to overarching structures and narratives, a “repetition whose degree of organisation hovers just below the level of shape and structure” (16). A textured object is one that has been formed in many stages, each adding something to the complex interplay of jarring ridges, juxtapositions, smooth flows and enjambments which are made apparent by the senses. In this thesis, images of symphonies, roads, darkness, loneliness, homes and portraits are textured by the sense that they are motifs which bring forward sometimes conflicting, sometimes harmonious, past affect. Each time they repeat, they bring with them the emotional experiences which previously clung to their composition, even when they were created in different circumstances. For example, feelings of past pleasure for Symonds, Housman, Isherwood and Hollinghurst become textured by loss when they repeat long after the connection has passed. For Forster, feelings of connection are made especially poignant by their interlacing of present happiness with past anxiety. The texture of these images represent the passage of time between the consecutive instances of their repetition. Texture visualises and binds together the many successive, emotional moments which construct a long-term desire.

To experience texture, for Sedgwick, is to understand how different feelings come to exist besides each other. “Besides” is the second methodology advocated by Sedgwick and used by this thesis. Reading “besides” means prioritising the possibility of a coexisting multiplicity, rather than seeking a specific correct or incorrect answer (Sedgwick *Touching* 8). “A number of elements may lie alongside each other,” Sedgwick theorises, “though not an infinity of them” (8). To acknowledge what elements lie beside each other is not to dismiss a critical interest in specificity or significance. Rather, it is to analyse the effect of particularly resonant feelings which overlap, amalgamate and demand to be felt in conjunction with each other. Each image studied here illustrates how desires for long-term intimacy are formed through a tension

between different feelings. For example, in Symonds's "secret thread of love" and Housman's long road, transgressive sexual desire is the bedfellow of anxiety. Indeed, improper lust creates anxiety. For Forster and Symonds, anxiety precipitates feelings of isolation and hopelessness that make dreams of intimacy all the more meaningful. Part of George's loneliness is that he forgets that within a long-term relationship, anger, pain and disagreement always lie beside the meaningful possibility of frankness and honesty with one's partner. Hollinghurst's Johnny Sparsholt appreciates this. It is his ability to capture the physical sensuality and emotional commitment which comes from shared spaces and their otherwise mundane routines that makes his domestic portraits both intimate and erotic.

Both *texture* and *besides* pay attention to the vitality of coexisting ambivalence and abrasiveness, harmony and connection that springs from the experiences of same-sex desire studied in this thesis. A uniquely striking texture is created by desiring a long-term relationship in historical moments in which same-sex relationships were illicit and difficult to maintain due to social pressures to pursue heterosexual marriage. Both *texture* and *besides* are deployed here through the term *amalgamation*. In reading *amalgamation*, this thesis considers what emotions come to function "besides" each other over narratives of desires for long-term intimacy.

These images were created by men who, whether silently or openly, experienced, or still experience, same-sex desire. Several of these writers were aware of each other. Isherwood and Forster were friends for thirty years. Hollinghurst has studied, referenced and appropriated ideas from Housman, Forster and Isherwood in his criticism, academic writing and novels. Forster loved Housman's poetry and they met while teaching and living in Cambridge. Yet, as Johnson argues, "it is the persistence of textual images to continue to perform their evocative and narratological functions throughout a series of text" which generates a "common representational vocabulary" with a particular aesthetic tradition (5). A desire for long-term intimacy repeats within these works due to these authors' shared emotional investment in long-term desires, rather than any coincidental personal influence.

For the most part, this thesis does not focus on the actual relationships that were imagined, pursued or experienced by these writers. Whether or not they had a long-term relationship in real life, each writer studied here turned to literary texts and characters to narrativize how persistent feelings for other men developed over time. The only exception is the study of Symonds, which analyses his *Memoirs*. This chapter focuses on autobiography as Symonds's narrativization of his life was essential to his developing ideas about long-term intimacy. However, it pays attention to the importantly idealised nature of desire in Symonds's life and in his poetry. Indeed, each writer studied here theorised a relationship between literature and the revelation of complex, enduring emotions, which could only be expressed through the subtlety of textual images. Symonds argued that narrative offered the chance to produce the "well defined subject" as a composite of conflicting emotions ("Music" 186). Housman believed poetry could "move towards something obscure and latent in man" ("Name" 369). Forster pre-empted Sedgwick's notion of texture, when he defined the overall readerly consciousness of the progression of the novel as "repetition plus variation" (*Aspects* 149). He called images "little things" which "pass under the eye" of the reader and amalgamate new sensations each time they reappear (124).¹⁰ Isherwood saw *A Single Man* as a new form of novel, a dynamic portrait. This "begins with the writer showing you the character in a very rough sketch, like a caricature" (Isherwood "How I Write a Novel" 7). Isherwood argued that the purpose of narrative was "the revelation of this character" as a subtle, complicated "oil painting" (7). Hollinghurst described the emotional effect of narrative as "not exactly a blurring, but a resolution into complex lights and atmospheres" (Hollinghurst *The Ivory Tower* xvi). Each of these writers defined the literary text as pivotal to the project of defining subtle compounds of feeling which develop with intensity over the passage of time.

While this thesis focuses on literary texts, extensive use of previously unpublished archival material is made throughout. In chapters One, Three and Five, archival work supplements material and memoirs that have already been published by other critics. In chapters Two and Four, this thesis brings to light

¹⁰ Forster defined this concept of the novel in a series of lectures for the 1926/1927 Clark Lectures at Cambridge University. These lectures would eventually be published as Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*; see Bibliography, "Works Cited".

previously unpublished archival material. Each chapter's central analysis of textual images is therefore interwoven with how each writer thought and felt about their long-term desire.

The desires for long-term intimacy studied here are subjective. They are part of a character's memory. Another reason why literature is vital to this project is that texts are deliberately constructed by authors to give the reader access to the queer time of subjective feelings and memory. Elizabeth Freeman has emphasised the ingrained relationship between the genre of the poem and the narrative of film with non-normative desires and subjectivity. She defines memory as it is deployed in poetry and film, as "queer time" which "folds subjects into structures of belonging" (xi). Freeman argues that memory, fantasy and reverie allow escape from normative, linear-moving temporalities of heterosexual family, duty and responsibility. Literature can provide an "alternate history" of queer and homoerotic fantasies of belonging (xi). Desires for long-term intimacy equally pull individuals away from normative temporal trajectories of security, convention and stability inherent in heterosexual marriages. They emphasise the capacity for past erotic desire to haunt the individual. Equally, these subjective structures of belonging are driven by the pursuit of intimacy, familiarity and belonging with other men.

Critical accounts of intimacy have previously emphasised the long term's ability to complicate the initial, characteristic conception one has of another person. Sedgwick's memoir *A Dialogue on Love* (1999) defines intimacy as "something additive" (109). She clarifies that "if I notice something new [about a friend] I don't think 'they've changed'. Instead, I think, 'this is an additional way that 'x' is'" (109).¹¹ In *Sex, or the Unbearable* (2013) Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman argue that sexual relationships produce an encounter with otherness: "an encounter with the estrangement and intimacy of being in relation" (vii–viii). Long-term intimacy draws from these discussions an important emphasis on the

¹¹ Sedgwick's dialogue on love focuses on her recollection of her developing relationship and intimacy with her therapist. This relationship is therefore a form of intimacy distinct from that of a loving and personally intimate relationship. For example, Sedgwick's memory of her sessions does not take into account either the psychoanalytical theory of transference, in which she might imagine feelings of love that are created by the artificial closeness of therapy, or the economic incentives for her therapist's attention. Yet Sedgwick does significantly highlight both the subjective nature of dialogue and the ways in which moments of mutual understanding provide an "account of our interactions that *show me to be loved*" (116; Sedgwick's emphasis).

increasingly compounded, non-simplistic and emotionally subtle form of intimacy that is produced by memories which endure within the subjective imagination of the queer individual.

However, desires for long-term intimacy also highlight the significance of the ideal of spousal, sexual and romantic intimacy, which Sedgwick, Berlant and Edelman each seek to undermine. Sedgwick frames the increasingly complex dialogue on love as an exchange which deliberately takes place in the “queer world” of friendships. These friendships take place alongside marriages and sexual relationships (*Dialogue* 9). By contrast, the writers within this thesis testify that long-term partnerships establish a uniquely valuable intimacy which cannot be paralleled or imitated by platonic friendships. Berlant and Edelman define sexual relationships as an ever more troubling absence of familiarity. Sexual encounters, they argue, destabilise “a fantasy, and so the optimism, of a successfully realised relation” (2). They argue that sex and romantic attachment introduce an otherness that destabilises the fantasy of a complete understanding of the self. In fact, this thesis demonstrates that long-term relationships allow the emotional tensions inherent in same-sex desire to emerge and be understood. Certainly, these compounded knowledges counter the blind optimism of a blissful, heteronormative happy ever after. The knowledge gained through a long-term intimacy may not always be what one expected to feel. It will always emerge as an entanglement of different feelings that coexist beside one another. Yet the narratives of long-term attraction here articulate a form of familiarity that is based on gradually realising and sharing the tensions inherent within same-sex desire. Desires for long-term intimacy can be a form of loss and estrangement from a particularly loved partner, as well as a feeling of connection with them. However, both these experiences are defined by increasing understanding: a textual revelation of the queer and personal emotional contours inherent within persistent same-sex desire.

Literature review

The second part of this introduction provides a literature review of the arguments within homosexual cultural studies and queer theory which have

framed homosexual desire as opposed to the long-term. Critics have emphasised homosexual experience as a transgressive resistance to long-term relationships. Simultaneously, long-term relationships have been linked to the ideological image of “heteronormativity”. This dichotomy needs to be restructured. This review will demonstrate that from the late-Victorian period, both mainstream culture and homosexual individuals have defined homosexuality as a long-term experience of desire. It will also show that experiences of familiarity traditionally associated with heteronormativity can be redefined as queer intimacies, personal relationships that emphasise both emotional transgression and possibility. This review advocates the importance of shifting attention away from a generalised, and potentially outdated, focus on homophobic institutions, to looking at the complicated personal and emotional experiences of long-term desire. Doing so enables the reapplication of queer definitions of intimacy to long-term, domestic and monogamous forms of partnership. It creates a new critical perspective through which one can read long-term relationships as meeting a desire for long-term intimacy, rather than investing in a heteronormative desire for convention, stability or normalcy. This paves the way for the work of the following chapters, which look at how Symonds, Housman, Forster, Isherwood and Hollinghurst present the queerness of desires for long-term intimacy. This review moves chronologically from Victorian to late-twentieth and twenty-first-century debates and ideas. However, throughout, attention is paid to contemporary, twenty-first-century academic criticism in order to demonstrate the ways in which this thesis intervenes in and resolves ongoing and problematic bifurcations between queer, homoerotic experience and long-term intimacy.

i) The spectacle of the long-term closet

This study opens with late-nineteenth-century literature because throughout the final decades of the nineteenth century, the emerging identity-category of homosexuality was increasingly defined as a transgressive and persistent longing for emotional and sexual connection with another man. Against this developing cultural anxiety, homosexual writers — E. M. Forster is used here as an example — responded by creating literature that evoked the

spectacle of the long-term closet. This was a self-definition as homosexual based not only on a transgressive sexuality but also on an awareness of the unspeakable nature of a desire for long-term intimacy.

The term “spectacle of the long-term closet” is defined in response to Dominic Janes’s study *Picturing the Closet: Male Secrecy and Homosexual Visibility in Britain* (2015). Janes asserts that the closing decades of the nineteenth century, and particularly the well-publicised trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895, publicised the “spectacle of the closet”, a process in which previously “dislocated and incoherent” fears of “sodomy, effeminacy and male inadequacy” became “more firmly anchored to the ascription of homosexual desire”¹² within images of male effeminacy (101).¹³ Janes also identifies the important ways in which this late-nineteenth century scandalous image of male effeminacy provided a crucial form of self-identification with sexual opportunity: “a vital way of openly signalling sexual preference” (100). Yet this possibility also “operated in collusion with those eager to hide in the closet” (101). Janes’s thesis makes the significant observation that the late-Victorian period saw the creation of a new visual grammar for men who desired other men, in which the possibility of expressing desire co-existed with the anxious need to hide sexual deviancy. However, Janes’s “spectacle of the closet” emphasises an image of explicitly sexual transgression that locates homosexuality within urban queer counter publics, particularly London, which catered for sexual gratification: a tradition which dates back to the eighteenth-century molly house. H. G. Cocks also emphasises the important role that visual images of male effeminacy and sexual scandals played in “publicising the existence of homosexual subcultures”

¹³ Janes’s study is influenced by the renowned work of Michel Foucault, who argued that late-nineteenth century medical and legal discourses defined the species of homosexual as a form of life-long, transgressive identity: see Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* (originally published 1976), in the Bibliography, “Works Consulted”. Janes is also influenced by Sedgwick’s identification of the late-nineteenth-century panic centring on the attempt to see and know sexual secrets mobilised by the construction of the closet: see Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* (originally published 1990), in the Bibliography, “Work’s Cited”. Janes’s central aim is to “write a more extensive and visual history of the closet” (*Picturing* 12), arguing that anxious visualisations of same-sex desire extend back to the eighteenth century. Although, as is stated above, he reads the proliferation of the specific image of the effeminate homosexual within popular culture as a late-nineteenth century phenomenon. See, also cited in the Bibliography “Works Consulted”, Alan Sinfield’s related argument in *The Wilde Century* that the effeminate image of Oscar Wilde created the image of the camp modern homosexual.

within “mainstream politics” (134).¹⁴ Janes and Cocks are examples of a critical position within studies of homosexual cultural history that emphasises late-nineteenth-century exposure of homosexuality as an illicit, life-long pursuit of often transient forms of sexual acts.¹⁵

Janes emphasises what Elizabeth Freeman calls “erotics”, a sexual passion that “traffics less in belief than in encounter” (Freeman 2011, 13). During the late-Victorian period, individuals also began to be defined as, and self-identify as, homosexual according to illicit forms of intent and longing. Considering this, in this thesis the term ‘the spectacle of the long-term closet’ refers to a definition of an individual as homosexual based on longing for an experience of familiarity with a long-term partner. This occurs particularly as a textual image within sympathetic literature, such as the texts studied here. This draws on Freeman’s definition of “longing”, a subjective ideal of attachment which incorporates both “belonging” and “being long” (13). Freeman’s conception of longing includes erotics but emphasises erotic desires that are “long”: which predate, endure after and may exist as detached from experiences of sexual activity. Even more importantly, Freeman claims that sexual desire is enveloped within an emotional concept of belonging, a hope of achieving a state of recognition and understanding that might meet preconceived dreams or imaginings of intimacy. This thesis further contends that this experience of intimate “belonging”, importantly, promises to appropriate and flesh out an idealised dream with the particular idiosyncrasies of a partner. Freeman also emphasises that the “belief” in longing exists without a definite referent that

¹⁴ In particular, Cocks discusses the Dublin Scandal of 1883, in which “several Crown officials were accused in the Irish nationalist press of being involved with male prostitutes” (128), and the Cleveland Street Scandal in 1888, “following the discovery of a male brothel in central London which was frequented by Telegraph messengers and members of the aristocracy” (128). See Cocks’s section “Scandal and Politics in the 1880s” (128–134).

¹⁵ A focus on public cultures of transient sexual acts can be traced throughout twenty-first-century studies of homosexual culture. Matt Cook’s *London and the Culture of Homosexuality 1885–1914* (2003) and Matt Houlbrook’s *Queer London: The Perils and Pleasures of the Sexual Metropolis 1918–1957* offer comprehensive accounts of queer identities which were formed by the idealisation of urban spaces as representing “affirmation and possibility” as well as the “anxious possibility of exposure” (Houlbrook 9). More broadly, Cook’s *A Gay History of Britain* predominantly focuses on the development of urban cultures of homosexuality from the 1800s to the twentieth century, and the acts which these spaces facilitate. Les Brookes’s *Gay Male Fiction Since Stonewall* (2008) highlights “fundamental opposition between assimilation and radicalism” within late-twentieth-century gay fiction. This opposition is specifically framed as a homoerotic and queer identification with the idea of transience, “in which relationships of more than a night’s duration were condemned as showing abject deference to the heterosexual ideal of life-long partnership” (2).

could mean the end of longing (13). Subsequently, this thesis emphasises the importance of individuals feeling, at times, that the familiarity with another man that is longed for can only be experienced as an idealised fantasy seemingly impossible to translate into reality. Yet relationships do happen in the texts studied here. This thesis also emphasises that both dreamed of and experienced feelings of belonging with a partner are feelings of connection with no particular end point: they are enduring and ever-changing, rather than driving towards a specific point at which intimacy might be fulfilled.

Janes's "spectacle of the closet" needs further definition here, because his focus on the visibility of transgressive sexual desire partially eclipses the simultaneous development of the cultural awareness of illicit homosexual longing. Of course, sexual relationships and forms of longing for intense, emotional passion between men existed before the late nineteenth century. The difference between earlier forms of male intimacy and desires for long-term intimacy studied here is that before the second half of the nineteenth century, transgressive sexual intimacy between men was comfortably separate from acceptable forms of loving friendship within the popular consciousness. In his recent overview of eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century relationships between men, *Queer Friendship* (2018), George E. Haggerty demonstrates that in eighteenth-century literature, "it is the correspondence [acts] and not the person that is 'not fit to be named'" (69).¹⁶ Haggerty draws attention to the fact that illicit sexual acts did not identify a person as continually or innately deviant. By contrast, Haggerty highlights that passionate, even romanticised longing between men within eighteenth-century literature could be associated with normative masculine identity and could comfortably coexist with relationships with women (8–9; 69). Richard Dellamora also inferred this in his landmark study of mid-nineteenth-century homoerotic poetics, *Masculine Desire* (1990). Dellamora convincingly argued that Alfred Lord Tennyson was able to write about his friend Arthur Hallam in *In Memoriam* (1845) through an "intermediate

¹⁶ Haggerty reads what he labels as potentially the first "gay couple" in English literature, Captain Whipple and his surgeon in Tobias Smollet's *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748). Haggerty notes that "the captain and his surgeon together form" an effeminate and deviant sexual identify, whose demand for privacy "can be recognised" as scandalous by Whipple's crew. Yet, he claims that Smollett "does not label an identity; he labels a behaviour" (68). Haggerty claims that Smollett focuses on scandalous acts that tarnish passionate love between men which is, previously, tolerated (69).

between an idealised homosocial eroticism and the exilically sexual discourses dealing with desire” (31). Yet he importantly qualifies that such “revolutionary masculine discourses” enlarged the “capacities for male relationships” while “respecting the boundaries of [the] conventional middle-class[es] ... including marriage” (5). The important distinction here is that Tennyson’s passionate evocation of “manly love” within his memory of Hallam did not identify Tennyson, even to himself, as a sexual deviant (Dellamora 19). Passionate love between men was culturally distinguishable from immoral sexualities.

From the mid-nineteenth century, popular and legal discourses began to police criminal forms of intent to commit sexual acts. The idea of wanting sexual acts with other men become increasingly suspect. William Dugdale, author of the travel guide, *More Sprees in London!* (1850) warns his readers about “beasts” who “place their fingers in a particular manner under the tails of their coats and wag them about”, advertising their availability as male prostitutes (Dugdale 14). The anxiety perpetrated by Dugdale here is not towards the obscenity and degeneration of the sexual act itself, but towards the intent to procure immoral sex. Late-Victorian legislation against sex between men also responded to a developing anxiety about an immoral importuning for sexual acts. Early-nineteenth-century legislation had focused on the transgressive sexual act, framing sodomy as a criminal assault on the male body. The 1828 Sexual Offences Against the Person Act listed sodomy as an aggressive act, alongside murder (Cook 42). The Labouchere Amendment of 1885 further broadened what was illegal, defining “gross indecency” as “any act of gross indecency with another male person ... in public or in private” (Cook 42). What is noticeable here is a movement away from anal intercourse itself, and into a series of unspecified acts which take place before or after intercourse. This movement away from penetrative acts was further extended by the 1898 Vagrancy Act, which targeted men who “in any public place persistently solicit or importune for immoral purposes” (qtd. in Cook 43). Matt Cook argued that the Vagrancy Act, “did more to criminalise a putative homosexual identity than the Labouchere Act” (44). George Ives, a late-Victorian campaigner for the legalization of consensual sexual acts between adult men, asserted that under the Labouchere Amendment, even “an alleged smile or wink or look may cause arrest” (qtd. in Cook 43). The Labouchere Amendment emphasised the illegality

of desire itself, rather than the acts which were desired. Cocks reminds us that “by the eighteenth century, it was possible to prosecute all kinds of homosexual acts” and not just the act of anal intercourse, because, while only sodomy was criminalised, “in English law, any attempt to commit a [sexual] crime [with another man] counted as a crime itself” (110). Thus, nineteenth century legislation moving away from acts and towards gross indecency and intent did not *create* a focus on individuals who persistently desired the same sex but rather responded to the growing cultural visibility of the figure of the homosexual: an identity that was defined as having a life-long desire for the same sex.

In many ways, Oscar Wilde’s status as a famous playwright, and his infamous fall from grace in 1895, did much to publicise the idea of immoral and criminal passions and intimacies with other men. Yet one can read immoral definitions of male–male longing as emerging earlier than this. Both illicit sexual and emotional longing were foregrounded in the 1870 trial of Fredrick William Park and Earnest Boulton, who were arrested for dressing as women and attending the theatre. Suspicions that their cross-dressing expressed a desire to induce men to want to sleep with them led to their indictment for “attempting to commit the abominable crime of buggery” (“Crown Vs Boulton and Park”). Part of the evidence brought against them was letters addressed to Boulton from a male admirer. This admirer professed “I have eleven photographs wh[ic]h I look at over and over again. I have a heart full of love and longing ... my photographs, my four little notes and my memory are all I have of you”. What is most striking, and (at the time) suspect, here is the admirer’s admission that he looks at his photograph “over and over again”; it evidences, like the “four little notes” from Boulton, a continued and improper emotional longing for men (“Crown Vs Boulton and Park”).

Amid the growing cultural hostility towards illicit longing, men started to define themselves on the basis of an anxious relationship with long-term desire: a life-long sexual and emotional desire, which they feared would always remain transgressive. In *Maurice*, Forster’s protagonist, Maurice Hall, despairingly reveals himself as “an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort” to a family doctor (*Maurice* 134). Janes emphasises, in his focus on the effeminate and

transgressive “spectacle of the closet”, that Maurice is “not believed as he is not effeminate” (Janes 101). Janes is correct that Maurice identifies here with an illicit form of sexual longing for another man through the image of Wilde’s publicised criminality. However, Janes’s own admission reveals the necessity of adjusting the spectacle of the effeminate closet to fit Maurice, and other characters like him. Maurice does not define his criminal desire through a reference to the supposedly unmanly desire to commit sexual acts — “in my own rotten way, I’ve kept clean” (*Maurice* 133). Rather, he refers to his heartache following the end of a two-year, loving, intimate and chaste relationship with a man. The thing which Maurice defines as “unspeakable” is his longing, since childhood, for a friend who will “fill him with beauty” and “teach him tenderness” and from whom “neither crossness nor distance shall part him” (12). Therefore, Maurice’s admission exposes the spectacle of the long-term closet: a subjective, life-long transgressive desire for emotional and sexual intimacy with another man.

It is important to emphasise that late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth-century definitions of male–male longing were not received only from dominant institutional discourses, such as the law. Nor were they all punitive or anxiety ridden. Sean Brady highlights, like Janes, that it was “agency of individuals involved in the legislative process and in developments of medicine”, a homosexual “self-making”, which also contributed to developing discussions of same-sex desire (Brady *Masculinity* 7; 2). For example, Symonds was influenced by the poetry of Walt Whitman, which idealised passionate, although not sexual, long-term and transient relationships between middle-class and working-class men.¹⁷ Edward Carpenter advocated a form of socialism based on long-term male–male emotional and sexual intimacy between classes, which he practiced during a long-term cohabiting relationship with his lover George

¹⁷ In particular, Whitman’s “Calamus” poems focuses on loving, physically passionate and intimate relationships between men. These were typically between working-class men or between middle-class and working-class men. It is possible to trace a desire for long-term intimacy explicitly in one poem, “Among the Multitude”. In this poem, Whitman’s speaker hopes to understand, and be understood by, a lover, through “faint indirections” (Whitman 166), developing intimate knowledges over years spent together. Publicly, Whitman denied the possibility that passionate attachments could or should extend to sexual relationships between men. However, Chris White highlights that in Britain, discussions of Whitman functioned as a code for “eroticising relationships between middle-class and working-class men” (124).

Merrill.¹⁸ Carpenter and Merrill were visited by E. M. Forster while he wrote *Maurice*. Amid growing cultural hostility towards illicit longing between men, writers such as Whitman and Carpenter, like the writers studied in this thesis, responded by advocating passion between men that forms a strong, if not life-long, emotional bond across class boundaries.

The writers within this thesis also deviate from Janes's conception of the late-Victorian closet as based on the revelation of transgressive effeminacy. Symonds and Forster consciously engaged with, and contributed to, a discourse of male–male longing which is formed by a stereotypically masculine type of emotional virility and commitment. Symonds defines his persistent passion for the same sex as a form of Greek love, a virtuous type of comradeship, commitment, attachment and bravery which also animated Whitman's poetry. Forster's notion of friendship is defined through an appropriation of Carpenter's belief in the strength of male–male bonding. Of course, sexual passion is an important part of this. Both Symonds and Forster expand Greek love and comradeship to include sexual intimacies with working-class men. In desiring and portraying experiences of sex with working-class individuals, Symonds and Forster both undoubtedly evoke another stereotype: a middle-class sexual tourism, a fetishisation of the work-sculpted body. However, Symonds and Forster emphasise the working classes as particularly desirable because of a coexisting stereotype: a supposedly stronger commitment to emotional frankness and openness, a deviation from the artificial civility of society. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* also evokes a stereotypical

¹⁸ Like Symonds, Carpenter was influenced by Whitman, whose poetry, he claimed, "was part of my every day thought and experience" (qtd. in White 123). Carpenter was also influenced by the sexological writing of Symonds. He read Symonds's treatise on contemporary continental writing about the origins of sexual inversion, "A Problem in Modern Ethics" (1891), while collaborating with both Symonds and Havelock Ellis on their project *Sexual Inversion* (Brady *Masculinity* 202). Symonds's text is examined in more detail in Chapter One. Carpenter was particularly influenced by another theory of long-term same-sex attraction, proposed by the German sexologist Karl Ulrich. In 1868, Ulrich argued that same-sex desire is inborn, and therefore natural, and defined by a woman's soul inhabiting a male's body. In 1908, Carpenter wrote "The Intermediate Sex", part of *Love's Coming of Age*, in which he argued that sexual desire between men, "presence of the female [soul]" within men who desired other men. constituted "an immense educational force" as "between equals it may be turned to social and heroic uses, such as hardly can be expected from the ordinary [heterosexual] marriage" (qtd. in Brady *Masculinity* 204). Carpenter argued that sexual desire and relationships between men defined a race of men apart. By merit of possessing both masculine and feminine qualities, this intermediate sex could embody an even stronger potential for love, cohesion and unity between different classes than that which could be replicated by heterosexual marriage.

presentation of the working-class, rural home as site of uncomplicated romantic connection. Isherwood and Hollinghurst are less focused on the particular image of the working-class male. However, each text studied here shares a focus on the virility of an enduring passion and idealises partners who are more emotionally available to create intimate attachments. However, the problematic stereotypes of masculine commitment, the working-class body and frankness of working-class culture facilitates, here, an overarching desire for the particular and the idiosyncratic, not the stereotypical or general. For example, Forster's *Maurice* desires an emotional honesty, openness and intimacy in which a loved individual could become intimately known.

The images within this thesis visualise the figure of the homosexual through the spectacle of the long-term closet. Symonds, Housman and Forster each respond to the developing anxiety concerning illicit longing by creating images which express how longing persisted and enveloped both positive and negative emotions. Sexual passion is importantly included within their desire for an intimate bond. This introduces the feelings of desire and anxiety which are defined by Janes's "spectacle of the closet". However, rather than sexual encounters being an erotic goal in themselves, sex and physical contact become important as an expression of familiarity, bonding and knowledge exchange with a particular individual. In their writing about the late twentieth century and the twenty-first century, Isherwood and Hollinghurst's characters are not subject to the spectacle of the long-term closet in the same way; they do not fear jail or exposure as a form of criminality. Yet these later works also depict homosexual desire through similar tensions that come from an identification with longing. Each of the texts studied here can be said to evoke the spectacle of the long-term closet as homosexual Eros becomes part of a potentially unspeakable desire for shared intimate knowledges. *Maurice*'s definition of his long-term desire highlights important tensions between the hope of emotionally belonging to another man and the anxiety of ongoing isolation. The writers in this thesis compounded sexual desire with the temporal sensations of both anxiety of loss and the desire to belong.

ii) Redefining heteronormativity as long-term intimacy

Redefining late-Victorian visualisations of homosexuality as an engagement with longing necessitates a reconsideration of the late-twentieth-century critical fault lines drawn between heteronormativity and queer experiences of intimacy. From the late twentieth century, desiring long-term relationships has been critically considered as implicitly related to an idealised image of heterosexuality. The twenty-first century has seen international cultures demanding the right to gay marriage. Popular representations of homosexual relationships are increasingly associated with long-term commitment, the homes which couples share. In this context, one needs to think about how the institutions previously defined as heteronormative, such as monogamy, domesticity and marriage, might be uniquely desirable as an emotional experience of belonging and intimacy. The thesis demonstrates that the individual experience of long-term relationships emphasises personal tensions of feeling which resist heteronormativity. Institutions which have previously been defined as heteronormative can therefore be considered as valued because of a personal desire for long-term intimacy.

The term heteronormativity emphasises the broad, generalised impact of dominant discourse on individuals, rather than the emotional experience of long-term relationships. Michael Warner defined it in 1993 as the “privilege” that “lies in heterosexual culture’s exclusive ability to interpret itself as society” (xxii). Warner argued that the idealized image of the heterosexual couple defined the epitome of the “social union itself” (xxi).¹⁹ In 1998, Berlant and Warner further defined heteronormativity together as the particularly privileged image of intimate sexual relationships. In their now-canonical essay “Sex in Public”, they argued that privatized (domesticated), monogamous and long-term forms of sexuality are “projected as an idea or moral accomplishment ... a sense of rightness” within Western culture (“Sex in Public” 548). Berlant and Warner claimed that long-term, domesticated relationships were valued by the heteronormative belief that heterosexual forms of sex defined a particularly

¹⁹ Warner asserts that this is, literally, demonstrated by the use of a cartoon of a heterosexual couple as a representation of ‘mankind’ on NASA’s Pioneer 10 Space craft, launched in 1979 (xxiii).

powerful form of intimacy: an ideology which they argued threatened to obscure “queer zones and other worlds estranged from heterosexual culture” (547). These queer zones were defined as public and short-term forms of intimate sexual and emotional connections that take place in “tearooms, streets, sex clubs and parks” (560). This queer intimacy is based on the ever-extending erotic choices and possibilities made possible by urban queer counter publics. Berlant and Warner’s definition of heteronormativity articulates a critical bifurcation between homosexual desire and long-term forms of commitment; it conceptualises the private space of the home and the subjective idea of monogamy or commitment as a “metacultural intelligibility” which enforces the replication of a particular heterosexual image. The idea that committed, long-term relationships might form a particular feeling of “rightness”, an “accomplishment” which has an emotional value distinct from the public world of queer zones, is undervalued by their analysis.

Berlant and Warner’s claim that the long term is culturally attached to the privileged image of heterosexuality has had a lasting impact on subsequent intimacies studies. Particularly, it predicated a methodology of viewing long-term intimacies from the perspective of institutions of conventional and mainstream authority. In 2000, Berlant edited a collection of critical essays called *Intimacy*. In her introduction, she defines intimacy through the rejection of “normative ideologies [of] love, community [and] patriotism”. She frames this as an idealisation of the happy-ever-after plot which “led people to equate having a life with having an [private and monogamous] intimate life” (2; 5). Instead, Berlant focuses on “other relations, motivated, say, by the ‘appetites’ that are discredited or simply neglected” by the “purview of institutions” (2). Throughout the collection, private, monogamous and domesticated sex is aligned with an ideology that seeks to control experiences of intimacy throughout the collection. Joel Snyder’s contribution reviews the photographer Laura Letinsky’s studies of a sexually intimate couple in a bedroom. He describes Letinsky’s images of “lives lived with apparent unselfconsciousness” as “not candid” (219). Snyder here sees the image of the heterosexual couple as a form of intimacy that is structured around conventional, heteronormative values rather than individual, emotional fulfilment. Turning to queer literature, Annamarie Jagose argues, in the same collection, that “polymorphous drives and impulses which exceed

easy narrativization” need to be prioritised over the idea of a “good marriage” for homosexual subjects to live authentically (353).²⁰ Mimi Schippers draws on this tradition when she defines monogamy as a “straight line” towards the nuclear, monogamous couple which western culture teaches its citizens to see as intimate. She defines this as an obstinate foreclosing of “opportunities” and choice, and therefore a disavowal of homosexual desire and intimacy (2–3). Schippers argues, like Berlant and Warner before her, that this idealised image of heteronormative intimacy demands a disavowal of queer pleasure and intimacy.

While it has been an enduring idea within queer theory, it is important to remember that heteronormativity, like queer theory itself, was defined in response to the cultural shadow of the AIDS crisis. The critics mentioned above write within what Robert L. Caserio defines as the “antisocial thesis in Queer theory”. In 2006, Caserio summarized an MLA panel on “The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory” with contributions from Lee Edelman, Judith/Jack Halberstam, Jose Estevan Munoz and Tim Dean. The panel defined the antisocial thesis as work responding to Leo Bersani’s anti-community politics in *Homos* (1995). In this text, Bersani argued that “homo-ness ... necessitates [a] potentially revolutionary inaptitude — perhaps inherent in gay desire — for sociality as it is known” (Caserio 819; citing Bersani’s *Homos*). Bersani himself responded to the AIDS crisis, which invigorated a pre-existing mainstream phobia and panic concerning homosexuality. As Janes notes, since the late-Victorian period homosexuality has been regarded as a sexual transgression. During the nineteen-eighties, the high mortality rates among young gay men affirmed for many conservative households homosexuality’s seemingly overdetermined reliance on transient, non-intimate and tragically short-lived urban sexual cultures.²¹ Early queer theorists responded to this cultural hostility by highlighting a mainstream cultural inability to talk about same-sex experiences

²⁰ Jagose reaches this conclusion through a reading of Daphne Du Maurier’s *Rebecca* (1938), in which she argues that the haunting spectre of Max De Winter’s first wife prevents his second wife’s identification with their marriage due to disavowed homoerotic desire.

²¹ Mainstream cultural aversion to homosexual individuals, relationships and sexual acts during the AIDS crisis is detailed in a contemporary BBC documentary, *The End of Innocence* (1995). This documentary shows that, while legal in Britain, homosexuality was seen as immoral, disgusting and opposed to the stability of the family (*Fine Cut*). These attitudes were seen in people from interviewed members of the public to members of the British Parliament.

that were seen as aligned with non-domestic cultures. In her preface to the 2008 edition of *Epistemology of the Closet*,²² Sedgwick argues that the “then-enveloping [sic] pressure of the AIDS emergency” defined the “mobilizing of powerful resources of resistance” to counter institutional homophobia (xiv; xv). Queer theorists analyse normative ideologies which extend from these lingering distinctions between long-term familiarity and short-term, sexualised conceptions of homosexuality. The mainstream “pedagogies that encourage people to identify having a life with having a [private] intimate life” (Berlant *Intimacy 2*) have been subsequently seen as a normative concession to a culture that demands the end of queer jouissance.

Berlant and Warner defined heteronormativity in response to the political mainstream’s attempt to segregate homosexuality from a normative conception of familiarity. They responded to New York City Council’s banning of sexual counter publics from school zones in 1995. Following the ostracism of homosexuality from homes during the AIDS crisis, queer theory reclaimed queer modes of intimacy as a source of personal and sexual affect distinct from the necessity of existing within homes. It goes almost without saying that cultural attempts to dismiss homosexuality as non-intimate and over-predicated on illicit sexual drives still need to be highlighted and challenged. At the time of writing this thesis, several primary schools in Birmingham, UK, have been the sites of prolonged protests from parents against a programme called “No Outsiders”. This programme aims to teach students about the diversity of relationships within British culture, and includes a story book in which the main character has two mothers. Mainly on the grounds of faith, the protesters argue that the mentioning of same-sex couples would confuse children and sexualise them too early. One imam radically misinterpreted the programme and argued that children would learn about paedophilia and anal sex. Such wilfully inflammatory misreadings of same-sex partnerships highlight that, for some, homosexuality is still resolutely non-familial and associated with illicit forms of sex. The concept of heteronormativity is still vitally useful for understanding the

²² Originally published in 1990.

institutional prejudices and assumptions which produce hostility towards homosexuality.²³

While this is true, the antisocial thesis propagates a now-historical context of social ostracism. The Birmingham protests illustrate that the contours of the debate about the heteronormativity of long-term intimacy are changing fast. The Birmingham protesters seek to identify homosexual relationships with a primarily sexual and non-familial intimacy. This runs perilously close to definitions of homosexuality and queer intimacy made by the anti-social thesis, which are implied by Berlant and Warner.²⁴ Equally, their emphasis on queer counter publics shares, with Janes's "spectacle of the closet", an overdetermined focus homosexuality in spaces of transient sex. In the twenty-first century, it becomes increasingly difficult to match "Sex in Public" with the idea that homosexuality can be innately included within structures of long-term domesticity, monogamy and intimacy.

British mainstream and legal cultures are both moving away from a dichotomy between homoerotic forms of sexuality and heteronormative forms of familiarity. On 26 November 2019, the Birmingham High Court permanently banned the protests outside schools.²⁵ The judge found that the protesters' assertions were "hurtful, harmful and totally untrue" ("A High Court").²⁶ The legal calling out of homophobia highlights that, officially speaking, homosexuality is considered a normative form of romantic and sexual expression. In 2013, the Marriage Act (Same Sex Couples) legalised same-sex marriages, responding to international protests demanding marital equality. The majority of UK citizens agree that same-sex sex education should be part of mainstream education ("A High Court"). These developments present a significant redefinition of both homosexuality and concepts of monogamy and familiarity. Homosexuality is no

²³ For more information on ongoing cultural prejudices inherent within popular conceptions of homoerotic culture, see Matthew Todd's *Straight Jacket: Overcoming Society's Legacy of Gay Shame* (2016). Particularly, Todd's powerful and deeply concerning chapter on the disproportionately high rates of anxiety, depression, drug use, suicide and suicidal ideation within twenty-first-century LGBTQ+ culture makes it evident that a lingering cultural and pejorative sense of queerness still needs to be highlighted within gay culture (17–30).

²⁴ Both Lee Edelman and Judith Halberstam also advocate a primarily non-normative definition of homosexual experiences of intimacy. These are discussed in the following section.

²⁵ While the protests can continue as a right of free speech, they must take place outside an exclusion zone moving.

²⁶ This is listed as a secondary source

longer culturally defined through an image of queer sexuality. Equally, homes, families and the forms of long-term intimacy which sustain them are no longer seen as related to the image of heterosexuality. It is further significant that Berlant and Warner responded to what they highlighted to be homophobic legislative practices in 1998. Comparable legislative bodies now seek to emphasise and protect the right of homosexuality to be socially and emotionally aligned with long-term forms of commitment.

Arguing that these cultural shifts towards a more normalised, domesticated representation of homosexuality are heteronormative limits our critical capacity to read the emotional value of this transition. In reading long-term relationships through a dominant, generalised image of heteronormativity, queer theory risks missing the reasons why individuals desire the long term. The biographer and literary critic Wendy Moffat has touched on this concern. She advocates shifting the focus of queer theory away from the top-down prescription of how power subjugates individual choice. She emphasises, instead, a methodology based on reading the emotional tensions inherent in personal experience. Moffat laments that “the goal for theorists” has become to “track and expose the operations of power” rather than to “trace narratives of individual lives” (“Narrative” 213). She asserts that this emphasis on power, rather than individual negotiations of power, risks evoking the very essentialising categories that queer theory was formed to critique (213). Moffat does not underestimate the manifold ways in which dominant discourses shape individuals; rather, she proposes a more in-depth, text-oriented approach in which she asks, “what did [homosexual men] think and feel about [their] desire” (224). This thesis recognises the important effect that prohibitive and cultural ideas have had on homosexual images of long-term desire. Maurice’s admission that he is an “unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort” clearly internalises anxieties and strictures concerning homosexuality as form of criminality. Yet, following Moffat, it focuses on the idiosyncratic ways in which these worries exist in a productive tension besides other feelings of hope and longing for the possibilities of speech and recognition. The long term exists here as a unique and personal tension between multiple emotional experiences.²⁷

²⁷ Moffat particularly reads these tension filled individual negotiations of long-term desire in E. M. Forster’s own life. She argues that Forster constructed several overlapping stories about his

Through these amalgamated emotional experiences, long-term desire becomes much more closely related to Berlant and Warner's conception of queer intimacy. Berlant and Warner defined "queer intimacies" as an embracement of multiple emotional possibilities, a flirtation with dangerous, continually fluctuating and deeply personal and gratifying experiences that can be formed within urban queer counter publics. They claimed that cities such as New York and London provide "a space of entrances, exits, unsystematised lines of acquaintance, projected horizons" (558). The writers in this study portray sexual experiences which could not take place with the same visibility that is enjoyed from the late twentieth century onwards. Moreover, these writers choose to portray intimate relationships in domestic and private settings rather than in the public and urban cultures of homosexuality throughout the twentieth century, a decision that is addressed in Chapter Four. However, Berlant and Warner's definition of queer intimacy clearly evokes space as an emotional broadening of horizons. They see queer cultures grounded in shared sexual desire as a gateway to "intense, personal affect" and constitute a "public world of belonging and transformation" (558). Desires for long-term intimacy studied here similarly necessitate, at least imaginatively, stepping into "projected horizons" of intimacy which are characterised by imaginative "unsystematised lines" which draw together connections between coexisting feelings (Berlant and Warner 558). The desires for long-term intimacy within this thesis are not, therefore, related to the idealised image of heterosexual coupledness that was highlighted by Warner in his 1993 definition of heteronormativity. Their experience of the long term instead opens a series of personal tensions between desire and anxiety inherent within queer cultural identification.

As the normative is no longer considered to be innately hetero, one needs to ask in what ways desiring long-term commitment might queer traditionally normative narratives themselves. A key question becomes how long-term desire forms a queer, subjective and personal experience. This thesis, then,

life: the anti-establishment novelist, the closeted homosexual, the intimate and frank friend — and occasional lover — to generations of men (Moffat, "Narrative" 221). As has been stated, this PhD focuses on Forster's text *Maurice* rather than his personal love affairs. However, Moffat's analysis of Forster's archive and life presents an interesting reflection on how Forster successfully and productively amalgamated the same conflicts and emotions that Chapter Three reads within his novel.

reconsiders the intimate value of ideas and emotive structures, such as commitment, monogamy, home and even, latterly, marriage, which has previously been dismissed as a “metacultural intelligibility” (Berlant and Warner 553). Instead, attention is paid here to individual experiences. These are certainly influenced by dominant ideologies. However, they are also able to resist and appropriate them. Throughout, this thesis demonstrates how familiarity can be considered as a unique and queer form of intimacy.

iii) Long-term intimacy as familiarity

The writers studied in this thesis desire a particular form of familiarity. They long for familiarity as a form of shared knowledges of, and memories with, another individual, because this connotes a feeling of being particularly and intimately understood by a partner. In “Sex in Public”, Berlant and Warner defined familiarity differently. They critiqued “the love plot of intimacy and familialism that signifies belonging to a society in a deep and normal way” (554). This defined familiarity as not only an ideal of shared knowledge, but a form of intimacy that was innately part of the heterosexual family unit. They asserted that, for Western mainstream culture, this ideal of familiarity could only blossom under the protective cloak of the heterosexual family unit. Moreover, they saw this as an emperor’s new cloak, which appears intimate only because everyone agreed it was intimate.

Following Berlant and Warner, twenty-first-century queer theories have defined queer time as the individual resistance to the familiarity of the conventional family. Elizabeth Freeman focuses on ways in which same-sex desire rejects “chrononormativity”: “the logic of time-as-productive” as it underpins the “discourse of domesticity, especially, inculcated and validated [as] a set of feelings — love, security, harmony, peace, romance, sexual satisfaction, motherly instincts” (5). Freeman reads an embracement of queerness as an undermining of “the logic of sequence” which substantiates Western culture’s idealisation of family and children as an idealised form of futurity (27). Her position ties investments with the long-term couple to what Lee Edelman calls “reproductive futurism”. Edelman’s *No Future: Queer Theory and*

the Death Drive (2004) defines reproductive futurism as an investment in the image of the child as the epitome of progress. He claims that homosexual individuals possess a political opportunity, if not a duty, to exist within the temporal ideology as “sinthomosexuality” (35). For Edelman, the individual’s identification with homosexual culture raises the political possibility of rejecting mainstream cultural considerations of futurity, in favour of the exciting “jouissance” of erotic, transient experience (7). Judith Halberstam, too, reads queer time as an existence within the “here, the present, the now”: a rejection of the “family time” of the heterosexual family unit (2; 5).

Queerness becomes the pursuit of emotional experiences which take place outside the stifling remit of chrononormativity. Where chrononormativity is an ideal, queer time exposes personal, challenging and even painful emotions. Queerness has also been identified with an attachment to the illicit past. Heather Love emphasises a queer emotive involvement within negative, painful pasts. She defines queer cultural through shared memories within homosexual literature that resist optimistic narratives of gay liberation towards marital equality and cultural normalcy. These are feelings of “regret, despair and loss [and] shame of identification” (32). Love argues that the historical reality of homosexual illegality and social hostility creates “more capricious and deidealised accounts of love and friendship” than a retrospective tendency to see gay history as an endless march towards marital equality would have us believe (31). Love reminds us that individual subjective experiences of homosexual desire have been marked by a tension between desire as a form of self-affirmation and love, and an anxiety and melancholy which comes from phobic cultural mores that foreclose ongoing experiences of desire.

These capricious forms of relationship exist not only in the past. Halberstam defines queer temporality as continually seeking and forming futures based on “more hybrid possibilities for embodiment and identification” than are on offer within the heteronormative family (54).²⁸ Halberstam is particularly focused on reading transgender experiences of time. He makes an

²⁸ While Halberstam focuses on transgender and transsexual experiences of queer time, they specifically relate this definition of a present-orientated queer time to male homosexual experiences of the unpredictability of the future during the AIDS crisis (2–3).

important distinction between “realness” and “the real”. He defines the real as “that which is always elsewhere, [a] fantasy of belonging and being” (52). For a transgender woman, the real might be the fantasy of either becoming or passing as a cisgender woman. Alternatively, Halberstam notes that “realness” is a queer desire for, and appropriation of, the fantasy of “the real”: a desire that queers the iron-clad, privileged assumption of the automatic right to normative identity which heterosexual individuals may be more likely to feel. Realness charts a more ambivalent, fraught and subcultural narrative of becoming, an ongoing status of appropriating and personalising the real. Halberstam notes that queer lives particularly have been, and continue to be, “limited by risks that they are willing to take” (10). Being queer is a form of narrative which exchanges security and blind optimism for a more challenging experience of desiring what one knows cannot be. This leads to negotiating a socio-political risk that, ultimately, conditions a positive affective engagement within queer communities. While long-term intimacy is a subjective engagement with past memories, it similarly invests in anxious contemplations of futures of intimacy that are pursued and cherished in spite of, even because of, the risks involved in obtaining them.

Desires for long-term intimacy redefine familiarity through amalgamating Love’s value of a deidealised account of the painful emotions in the illegal past and Halberstam’s notion of a realness that produces a more hybrid form of queer experience as cultural norms are appropriated. Long-term desires produce a feeling of familiarity by shaping, and potentially sharing with another, enduring, ever-intensifying tensions between three sets of positive and negative emotions: desire and anxiety, possession and loss, and familiarity and idealisation. Each writer studied here is haunted by desire and the very pull of this longing complicates desire with the worry that it might never be fulfilled. Symonds depicts aches for an imaginary image of love; Housman portrays being pursued by connections that can never take place. The persistence of same-sex desire augments anxiety, melancholy and resignation that these non-normative desires will continue to define the desiring individual within a context in which their expression risks exposure and censure.

That said, desire does persist and may be pursued in spite of this censure. Both Symonds and Forster's protagonist are deeply motivated by a voice in the dark, a dream of friendship, intimacy and tenderness. The illicit, counter-cultural experience of these feelings produces moments of excitement and connections that negate anxiety; they produce a queer resistance to mainstream culture in which the pleasure of sharing a connection is heightened by the shadow of unease. Part of this unease is the continual threat of loss. Moments in which two men can connect are always potentially transient in cultures in which homosexuality possesses no legitimate claim to life-long forms of coupledness. Against the potential of loss, intimate experiences between men gain a radiance and power which can endure in memory in spite of its lack of an anchoring, conventional custom. Housman, Isherwood and Hollinghurst each focus on the idea of loss: unrequited love, grief for a deceased partner, the weight of the silence imposed on an illicit relationship by mainstream culture. Yet, even in these accounts, loss itself is often the sensation which endures for men whose experiences of desire must take place in extramarital affairs, before being resigned to pasts. These experiences of loss do not end; rather, they continue to develop emotional compounds throughout futures based on the absence of a lover. The feelings of familiarity that are desired in these works, therefore, are continually conditioned by the realisation that they must be imagined, hidden and otherwise kept separate from mainstream definitions of heterosexual intimacy. Familiarity can be frustrated by the hostile cultures in which these desires take place.

Therefore, these experiences of persistent desire capture the emotive hybridity of feeling: the need to reassess and condition dreams which heterosexual individuals might experience in a less complicated, thwarted manner. Consequently, the deidealised and capricious intimacies which Love reads in the illicit past are produced by the forward momentum of narratives and dreams of the future. Studies of queer time have focused on the affective role of past and present desires within homosexual culture. This study considers how the tensions inherent in these past memories are produced by memory's capacity to endure and continually seek out the idea of familiarity that awaits in the future.

Ben Davies and Jana Funke succinctly articulate the problem with defining queer time as a resistance of futures based on familiarity. They observe that the idea of “regeneration and futurity”, an emotional investment within an idealised future, can also be experienced by homosexual individuals. They therefore argue that “ascribing these desires to a hegemonic ‘false consciousness’”, as the concept of heteronormativity requires, “blinds us to the fact that sex can be used for future investment by all” (7). In 2012, Aleardo Zanghellini similarly highlighted the difficulty of reading these homoerotic desires for intimacy when familiarity is aligned with the heterosexual family unit. He argued that critical considerations of gay intimacies fall into either “the marital” (heteronormative) or “the hedonistic” (queer countercultural) models of intimacy (192).²⁹ Through this binary, same-sex desire is considered either as the immediate pursuit of sexual gratification or a disavowal of it.

To avoid this reductive paradigm, one needs to read familiarity as long-term intimacy: a developing sense of familiarity based on sharing knowledges of deidealised feeling. Zanghellini advocated reframing discussions of gay intimacy as based on an “ethics of care” (203). This ethics focuses on “concern for the other and positive obligations” towards a long-term partner (203). Following Zanghellini, commitment need not be idealised as a perfect form of untroubled romantic union — it is not an ideal for heteronormativity or a sense of familiarity that can take place only within the narrow parameters of domestic, child-rearing families. It is a form of emotional commitment that creates specific knowledge about a lover — their needs, their wants, their contradictions and idiosyncrasies. Emotional and physical pleasure between partners becomes a knowledge of the specific needs of another person and the actual ability of the self to understand and satisfy them. However, Zanghellini’s rejection of the heteronormative model is let down by his methodology. He reads the ethics of care as it is illustrated within the fantasy world of homoerotica.³⁰ His ethics of

²⁹ These positions were further entrenched in Berlant’s collection of essays, *Intimacy*.

³⁰ Zanghellini particularly focuses on *yaoi* erotica, a “genre of Japanese comics and animation characterized by a thematic focus on male same sex desire, but produced by heterosexual women for a heterosexual female audience” (192). His intimacy as familiarity is therefore innately related to the erotics of sexual acts. These acts, however loving, also function as an idealised escape from the ‘real world’ of sexual dissatisfaction and need for emotional succour.

care becomes an imaginative ideal that protects against “dissatisfaction with the stultifying constraints of marital heteronormativity” (204). Zanghellini indirectly emphasises the ethics of care as a fantasy that corrects lived experience of long-term intimacy as a loss of pleasure.

The concept of a desire for long-term intimacy brings together Zanghellini’s ethics of care and Heather Love’s notion of deidealised historical intimacies. It argues that commitment, monogamy and the long term are desired because they form a “deidealised” experience of long-term intimacy as familiarity. As has been stated, the subjective experience of desiring long-term relationships produces tensions between different emotions which are particularly related to queer homoerotic experience. Symonds explores how persistent desire produces feelings of anxiety and morbidity as well as sensations of commitment, beauty and hope. Housman articulates long-term attraction as an emerging realisation that intimacy has been lost but cannot be forgotten desire and connection become experiences of disconnection in his poetry. Forster, Isherwood and Hollinghurst each depict how enduring desire can emerge within reciprocated long-term relationships. These relationships are experienced as both emotionally fulfilling and shaped by feelings of loss and anxiety. Long-term relationships can even amalgamate feelings of sexual gratification and excitement with periods of boredom, jealousy and mundanity. The point is that long-term desire forms a developing awareness of the specific ways in which an individual and/or one’s partner experiences desire. The ethics of care highlighted by Zanghellini defines much more than an idealised understanding of the emotional needs of a lover. It articulates an intimate understanding of the emotional tensions, pains, pleasures and possibilities inherent in illicit same-sex desire, and particular to oneself and one’s partner.

Therefore, long-term intimacy is desired because it promises to share the deidealised, queer and personal emotional experiences which are produced by persistent same-sex desire. The idea of sharing memories, knowledges and domestic spaces between two individuals promises to resolve individual experiences of emotional tension into feelings of openness, familiarity, tenderness and love. The familiarity sought within desires for long-term intimacy does not seek to diminish the tensions inherent in unrequited, risky or painful

attractions to the same sex. Rather, long-term relationships are valued by the writers in this thesis because they enact a developing sense that one's complicated experience of desire is understood by a partner. Familiarity is desired and experienced as a form of emotional frankness between lovers: a shared commitment and care that lessens isolation, loneliness and worry. These feelings do not disappear, but through being shared they can signify their emotional opposite — a sense that one is understood, accepted and uniquely cherished by another person. Intimacy as familiarity is also the hard-won knowledge that the partners and their relationship can be informed by manifold and often conflicting emotions. Familiarity becomes the ability to share, accept and love the particular, “deidealised” amalgamations of tensions and feeling which define each individual. The familiarity that sits at the heart of desires for long-term intimacy is therefore a particularly queer appropriation of the ideal of heteronormative familialism. It is not based on an image of heterosexuality that is ideologically normative. It is based on an idiosyncratic experience of queerness. It represents that idea of sharing and understanding how men have wanted, possessed and lost long-term relationships.

When this thesis discusses the developing complexity of experiences of long-term intimacy in chapters One, Three, Four and Five, it refers to possessing this ever more subtle familiarity, connection, understanding and emotional sharing between partners. The evocations of unrequited lost and silenced desires in chapters One and Two and Four refer to the present lack of familiarity: an ever more deidealised understanding of the self who wants but cannot have, or can no longer have, familiarity. Moreover, each of the following chapters evokes different moments in which characters feel like they have, do not have, or have lost familiarity.

Structure

Each chapter represents a related, but slightly different, experience of desiring long-term intimacy. Chapter One focuses on the relationship between a desire for long-term intimacy and persistent same-sex desire in Symonds's *Memoirs* and his essay “In the Key of Blue”. For Symonds, long-term intimacy is

defined by his awareness that desire must remain imagined and unspoken. Symonds's *Memoirs* evoke his "secret thread of love" through a series of tensions. These arise from his anxiety of transgressive sensuality and social exposure as well as his coexisting longing for a physical closeness that signifies emotional commitment between men. "In the Key of Blue" demonstrates how his experience of intimacy and familiarity is shaped by the hope of sharing these emotional tensions with long-term lovers.

Chapter Two explores the relationship between unrequited desire, loss and temporal distance in Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*. The passage of time within his poetry evokes the image of "the long road" that leads his speakers from their homes and the beloved individuals who live there. Housman evokes a morbid inversion of familiarity. His speakers' memories of beloved individuals cannot develop into new, shared knowledges and understandings with the passage of time. Rather his memories of lost loves and friends develop into a tension between desire and loss: an awareness that intimacy has faded but cannot be forgotten. These poems evoke the emotional value of long-term intimacy in negative relief. They illustrate the pain of not being able to remain with a loved individual. The importance of temporal distance within Housman's poetry and his own life is highlighted by bringing to light previously unpublished archival work. From 1888 to 1891, Housman kept a diary which is empty except for brief notations of his friend Moses Jackson's emigration to India. These are coupled with notations of the passage of the seasons. Housman's love for Jackson remained unrequited, but he kept the diary until his death. Both Housman's brother, Laurence Housman, and his latest biographer, Peter Parker, have argued that this diary articulates Housman's enduring love for Jackson. This chapter demonstrates that Housman's loss of Jackson is the theme of his poetry, which amalgamates the passing of time with an enduring connection that is felt as an amalgamation of loss, melancholy and decay.

Chapter Three demonstrates how desires for long-term intimacy can be fulfilled by reciprocated loving and sexual but illicit relationships in Forster's *Maurice*. It reads Maurice Hall's desire for a form of familiarity based on tenderness and shared understanding between men. Maurice's desire is answered. His consecutive relationships with two men, Clive Durham and Alec

Scudder, form an increasingly intimate sharing of the tensions inherent in illicit same-sex desire. His erotic and loving friendships form a deidealised, vulnerable sharing of both desire and anxiety, an idealisation of commitment and a fear of loss. Forster's novel explores how reciprocated sexual relationships between men create an intimate knowledge that turns conventional prejudices and feelings of isolation into an intimate celebration of a partner's strengths and their weaknesses.

Chapter Four considers desires for long-term intimacy that take place after the death of one long-term partner. It focuses on the experience of feeling oneself to have lost long-term intimacy. Intimacy and familiarity is both lost and revealed by Isherwood's novel, *A Single Man*. Following the death of his partner, Jim, George appears even to himself as a monstrous and tragic figure. Simultaneously, George's memories of Jim, which Isherwood gradually reveals to the reader, convey a past of shared understanding and acceptance of Jim's virtues and vices. George's memory evokes his relationship with Jim as a tension between blissful love and connection, pain, anxiety and jealousy. Isherwood demonstrates that George has lost the feeling of familiarity which came from his deidealised relationship with Jim. Isherwood presents George's loneliness as caused, ultimately, by the fact that he cannot express this lost familiarity through the languages of the monstrous, tragic and even blissful stereotypes that are used by 1960s American culture to discuss homosexuality. This chapter presents Isherwood's contemplation of the broader implication of not being able to express one's experience of intimacy to people outside that relationship. Drawing on extensive research on the Christopher Isherwood Papers,³¹ this chapter uncovers the centrality of the figure of a lonely single man to a series of Isherwood's texts. It analyses Isherwood's substantive and formal understanding of images of loneliness as they develop across *The World in the Evening* (1954); what this thesis uncovers as a previously unpublished and unacknowledged first draft of *A Single Man*, "Afterwards" (1960); and the subsequent drafts of the 1964 novel *A Single Man*. The chapter argues that these texts need to be read as one developing 'Single Man Project' in order to understand the centrality of loss and loneliness to Isherwood's portrayal of long-

³¹ These are housed at the Huntington Library in San Marino, near Los Angeles in California.

term intimacy.

Chapter Five reads Hollinghurst's *The Stranger's Child* and *The Sparsholt Affair*, both of which begin in the early twentieth century and end in the twenty-first century. It examines how homosexual desires for long-term intimacy are shaped by the decriminalisation of homosexuality and the late-twentieth and twenty-first-century advent of gay marriages, families and cultural normalcy. This chapter analyses Hollinghurst's evocation of the losses and the consolations of previously illicit homosexual desires becoming associated with the visibility of the twenty-first century familial home. It reads the gradual decay of the Victorian home through modernisation, institutionalisation and eventual destruction within *The Stranger's Child*. It argues that this developing image symbolises Hollinghurst's evocation of the loss of illicit experiences of transgressive excitement, uncertainty and silence throughout the twentieth century. However, in *The Sparsholt Affair*, Hollinghurst evokes the significance of the marital home through a transition from the illicit sketch of the male body to the portrait of men at home. In Hollinghurst's most recent novel, the early-twentieth-century homosexual affair is symbolised by a frustrating lack of intimate and personal detail. Both the post-decriminalisation portrait and the contemporary homes in which it hangs become symbolic of the intimate pleasures of understanding another in ever-greater detail. Both Hollinghurst's novels ultimately assert that the twenty-first century home symbolises the value of being able to read images, objects and structures as they develop and change over the passage of time. As such, this chapter argues that Hollinghurst presents the consolation of homosexuality coming home over the twentieth century as the ability to gradually reveal and discuss the tensions inherent in both past and contemporary desires for long-term intimacy.

Chapters One, Two and Three analyse texts which focus on secretive, potentially unmentionable, feelings between two men. Chapters Four and Five depict later generations who are, increasingly, preoccupied with how long-term intimacy between men is visualised by, and engaged with, the increasingly tolerant mainstream cultures in which it takes place. The conclusion to this thesis contemplates the critical significance of this evolution from homoerotic secrecy to visibility.

Through the following chapters, this thesis proves that homosexual desires for long-term intimacy are *not* primarily motivated by the desire to become more like a heteronormative ideal — a sanitized version of intimacy based on having 2.4 kids and white picket fences. These texts do not advocate a desire to become more like anyone else, for that matter. To borrow an image used by Isherwood, long-term intimacy is desired, experienced and remembered here as a form of ever more personal, unique and significant combinations of emotions, which turn a momentary caricature of a person on first meeting into an elaborate oil painting of emotion. This is the story of writers who create such paintings of enduring attachment and love between men. Desiring long-term intimacy at a time in which homosexuality is illegal and illicit presents its own anxious, transgressive and melancholic challenges. Having said this, the texts studied in this thesis idealise the idea of remaining with one person over the long term as an ever-increasing form of familiarity. These textual portraits and narratives present long-term intimacy as all the more poignantly moving, worthwhile and loved for the pains that went into desiring it.

Chapter One: Defining and Imagining Long-term Intimacy within John Addington Symonds's *Memoirs* and "In the Key of Blue"

In *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds* (1889),³² Symonds narrated his life-long sexual and romantic passion for other men. Symonds's particular innovation within his *Memoirs*, was to define both imaginary fantasies of other men and enduring memories of affairs and relationships as a "thread of love" running throughout his life (*Memoirs* 181). The image of this thread of love symbolizes Symonds's eventual realization that his persistent desire for the same sex created tensions between anxiety, desire, morbidity and beauty over the passage of time. In his later essay "In the Key of Blue" (1893), Symonds mobilised this thread of love as a "symphony of blue" ("Key" 6). The image of the symphony symbolises an experience of long-term intimacy which Symonds desired throughout his life. It emphasises the particularly intimate and meaningful experience of sharing these conflicting tensions with a long-term lover. While Symonds never directly used the term, these two texts define his emerging awareness that his persistent passion was a desire for long-term intimacy.

Symonds defined himself in his *Memoirs* as "a type of character" that had "never yet been properly analysed" (361): a man

whose life had been perplexed from first to last by a passion — natural, instinctive, healthy in his own particular case — but morbid and abominable from the point of view of the society in which he lives — [a] persistent passion for the same sex. (361)

Symonds narrates his experience of a passion that endured from childhood to late middle age. His description was innovative on several counts. Amid a developing discourse of sexology, which defined same-sex desire as a morbid

³² This thesis uses the full publication of Symonds's *Memoirs: The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds: A Critical Edition*, edited by Amber Regis (2016). See Bibliography, "Works Cited".

deviation from health, Symonds argued that his desire was healthy and natural. Aided by his study of ancient Greece, and its acceptance, even worship, of same-sex *paiiderastia*, Symonds contended that late-Victorian cultural mores warped an instinctive passion into a morbid feeling of abomination. While Symonds eventually felt that same-sex desire was natural, an early anxiety concerning his transgressive passion produced recursive emotional and physical collapses in health throughout his life.

Particularly, this chapter reads Symonds's *Memoirs* as an amalgamation of his developing response to several late-Victorian discourses concerning homosexuality. Symonds evokes his anxiety concerning the transgressive, criminal and immoral physicality of same-sex passion. He conflates love with sensuous experiences of beauty evoking the intense, chaste, Hellenistic male bonding advocated by Plato. He experiences desire as both natural and morbid, evoking debates within contemporary sexology. He identifies with the subjective experience of time and morality that was advocated by Walter Pater's aestheticism. Symonds's autobiographical narrative evokes his life-long engagement with distinct, often conflicting emotions of anxiety and lust, morbidity and beauty, hope and hopelessness that were inspired by the co-existence of these cultural influences. He argues that this complicated "thread of love ... carried with ever increasing intensity" (*Memoirs* 181). The experience that had "never yet been properly analysed", and which Symonds set out to expose, was an awareness of how his thread of love became increasingly tension-filled throughout his life.

The overarching tension which Symonds's *Memoirs* articulate is his awareness that his thread of love needed to remain secret. In a diary entry from June 1867, one of many he copied into the later narrative of the *Memoirs*, Symonds writes, "give me love, love to taste, love, such as I imagine it at length ... in fevered visions of impossible delights" (*Memoirs* 313–314). Throughout Symonds's life, his desires for men were conditioned by his awareness that male-male love seemed an "impossible delight". His desire for long-term intimacy was shadowed by the fact that memories and dreams of love were often necessarily imaginary. The longest form of intimacy which Symonds experienced was actually with his wife, Catherine Symonds, whom he courted

and married in 1864. Symonds “loved” Catherine “ardently” and remembers their courtship as “the thrill of something wonderful and new intruding into my existence” (*Memoirs* 260). Catherine provided a life-long sense of stability and familiarity which Symonds depended on, perhaps too complacently. She knew of her husband’s desire for men and accepted it on the grounds that it remained chaste — a promise that Symonds would not be able to keep.³³ However, Symonds came to understand that his love for Catherine “missed something in the music — the coarse and hard vibrations of sex, those exquisite agonies of contact ... vibrations I had felt in dreams for male beings” (*Memoirs* 260). He desired an amalgamation of sexual and emotional closeness. In reality, Symonds did have several erotic, sexual and romantic relationships with other men. This chapter reads his memories, presented in his *Memoirs*, of two lovers: a chorister named Willie Dyer and a student called Norman Moor. Even these relationships are remembered with a sense of brevity. They were either cut short by fear of exposure or fleeting experiences that were not repeated. Symonds therefore evokes an idealised and imagined secret thread of love. His desire for long-term intimacy with men created a tension between a desire for connection and his acceptance of the likelihood of anxiety, silence, loss and fantasy. He defined his character through a persistent desire for long-term intimacy that was animated by both hope and anxiety.

Symonds’s essay “In the Key of Blue” mobilises the emotional tensions which are created in his *Memoirs* within his description of another lover, a Venetian gondolier named Augusto Zanon. Symonds conducted a relationship with Zanon during his regular intervals in Venice. Symonds’s late essay depicts how familiarity between long-term partners is created by a developing

³³ Catherine knew of her husband’s passionate desire for other men. In the chapter of the *Memoirs* dedicated to Symonds’s relationship with his student Norman Moor, Symonds copies a diary entry from 2 May 1869: “Catherine and I talked long together about Norman ... I told her how I felt adequate to living a life of passion without the flesh” (*Memoirs* 292). Symonds also records that, while his wife was at times understandably jealous of his friendship with Moor and “suffered much through him”, she also “accepted him with more than toleration” (392). It is problematic to assume that one can interpret Catherine Symonds’s views on Moor, or her husband’s desires, from Symonds’s diaries. Symonds does attempt to allow her a voice within this text, inserting two extended diary entries she made: one an idealizing and hopeful portrayal of him during their courtship; the other a heartfelt and conflicted expression of the weariness of day-to-day married life and motherhood. These accounts, along with Symonds’s occasional mentions of her, present a married life that was, ironically yet unsurprisingly, much more intimate, complicated and based on mutual support than was Symonds’s affair. Thus, while Catherine’s voice is obscured through her husband’s narrative, it is fair to state that Symonds was proud of his frank, honest and loving long-term relationship with his wife.

knowledge of the tensions which animate his illicit same-sex desire. Symonds defines Zanon as a “symphony of blue” (“Key” 4). Symonds amalgamates different colours within this symphony through a narrative of ten poems. Each hue which amalgamates within this symphony describes a different feeling that the memory of Augusto provokes for Symonds. This evokes the development of Symonds’ deidealised knowledge of his love for Zanon. Symonds claims to know his lover intimately through the recognition of the same tension between desire, anxiety, loss and sensuous beauty which define his persistent desire for the same sex. While the sadness of loss is an important factor in Symonds’s memories of other men, his final essay closes with an ambivalent hope for homosexual experiences of long-term intimacy. Symonds’s memory of Zanon is torn between possession and loss. His intimacy with Zanon is a memory. However, Symonds values long-term intimacy as a shared, detailed and deidealised knowledge of persistent and perplexing desires. His persistent desire for long-term intimacy both creates increasingly powerful emotional conflicts and longs to share them with a lover. The ability to do so, Symonds imagines, would turn isolated feelings of anxiety into an intimate and sensual release of pain: a radiant shared experience of sensual and emotional connection and understanding that would outlast the melancholy and worry of illicit longing.

The role of co-existing discourses in Symonds’s life-long definition of a desire for long-term intimacy means that he used different terms for same-sex desire interchangeably. Thus, a note on terminology is needed here. The term ‘homosexual’ was emerging in this period in scientific literature as referring to men who had either an innate or acquired propensity to desire the same sex. In his 1891 study of scientific literature on the topic, “A Problem in Modern Ethics”, Symonds provided the first usage of the word homosexual in an English publication. He notes that the “adjective *homosexual*, though ill-compounded of a Greek and a Latin word, is useful, and has been adopted by medical writers on this topic” (“Modern Ethics” 151). Symonds more frequently used “sexual inversion” to refer to these medical discussions. When discussing sexual desire as it took place in ancient Greece, Symonds used the term “pαιδεραστια”, or Greek love, meaning a sexual and intellectual relationship between an elder

man and a younger lover and student.³⁴ Different terms are used synonymously in the following chapter's discussions of different discourses. When generally discussing same-sex desire as an innate, enduring characteristic, or when referring to Symonds's overall amalgamation of different ideas, 'homosexuality' and 'homoerotics' are used, in accordance with modern critical tradition.

Symonds's desires for long-term intimacy facilitated an amalgamation of different ideas. However, criticism of Symonds highlights only a series of contradictions which characterize his engagements with homoerotic desire, in readings which often focus on discrete texts. John Pemble opens the collection of essays *John Addington Symonds: Culture and the Demon Desire* (2000) with a reading of Symonds's *Memoirs* that he believes demonstrates Symonds's "assen[t] to the medicalization of sexuality" (6). Pemble asserts that Symonds interpolated the mainstream association of sexuality with an ingrained morbidity, and thus "preserv[ed] the fabric of Victorian civilization" (6). Yet in the same collection, Bart Schultz argues that Symonds's friendship with the philosopher and Cambridge academic Henry Sedgwick facilitated "accepting and confronting" homosexuality with the support of "knowing friends" (20). For Schultz, this facilitated Symonds's hope for romantic chivalry, a chaste, passionate commitment between friends which he espouses in his "A Problem in Greek Ethics" (1873). Pemble also argues that "no one aspired more ardently to match the [chaste] Greek ideal and no one reproached themselves more bitterly for failing to do so" (6). Jonathan Kemp defines yet another problem with Symonds's expression of desire, citing his private conviction that homosexuality was pathological and "effeminizing" which made him believe that an idealized, robust and passionate love between men was impossible (60). These

³⁴ It should be noted that, as Jana Funke has demonstrated, Ancient Greek *paidierastia*, meaning a sexualised love between an elder man for a younger boy, is conceptually different from *homoerotics*, a sexualised love between age-consistent men. Throughout the late-nineteenth century, *homoerotics* were often seen as interchangeable with *paidierastia*. This was both within public condemnations of same-sex relations and immoral influence, and within homophile poetry and literature, such as in Uranian poetry that celebrated the ancient tradition of boy love, and in an Oxford University education, which imitated a non-sexual form of *paidierastia*. In "We Cannot Be Greek Now': Age Difference, The Corruption of Youth and the Making of *Sexual Inversion*", Funke argues that Symonds directly responded to such contexts of "growing anxieties concerning influence and corruption" in both illicit and institutional same-sex passion (144). Funke highlights that Symonds sought to appropriate Greek 'boy love' by advocating a form of Greek love which focused "on young men, not boys" (145). Funke demonstrates that Symonds was critically aware of the issues of consent inherent in pure *paidierastia* and that he sought to move sexualised love between men towards a more ethical, conceptual form of *homoerotics*.

arguments read separate texts, yet together they identify a series of private beliefs which, these critics argue, led Symonds to reject an ideal form of intimacy between men. In contrast, a developing interest in Symonds's late poetry and essays highlights his highly sensualised engagement with homoerotic desire in Venice. Catherine Maxwell argues that Symonds's late writings about Venice engage with Paterian expressions of sensuality: "the poignant sting of the young man's beauty that briefly lifts Symonds above the conditions and conventions that govern his life" (237).³⁵ Similarly, Howard J. Booth claims that Symonds's diary entries made in Venice use colour to "signify connection and help cross boundaries" between the illicit and the conventional, the idealized past and the repressive present (174).

A conflicting image of Symonds appears across these discussions: a man who believed that sex was morbid and impossible, yet also that it could be chivalrous. Symonds is portrayed as both denying sex and also reifying it as the epitome of individual experience. This chapter does not deny the validity of any of these observations. Each critic above expresses how Symonds felt at different moments and how he expressed himself in different texts. However, this chapter demonstrates that these different texts and emotions need to be read as simultaneously part of Symonds's long-term engagement with homoerotic desire and intimacy. One methodological issue that this chapter hopes to correct is this tendency to read Symonds's major works — his *Memoirs*, his essays "A Problem in Greek Ethics" and "A Problem in Modern Ethics", and his poetry and late essays — individually. In her introduction to her 2016 publication of Symonds's *Memoirs*, Amber Regis highlights that Symonds is attempting "to construct a socially legitimate conception of same-sex desire" which he draws from "Ancient Greece, Renaissance history and culture, the poetry of Walt Whitman and emergent sexological literatures" (Regis "Introduction" 2). Similarly, Katerina Kolářová argues that Symonds's memoirs employ a "variety of codes used in referring to illicit sexuality" (28). Variety is the key to Symonds's innovative contribution to late-Victorian discussions of homosexuality. The critics above look at his evocation of more radical ideas — Greek pederastia, sexology, Paterian aestheticism. Symonds's direct

³⁵ Maxwell reads Symonds's "In the Key of Blue" and "Venetian Melancholy" (1893). The essay discusses James McNeill Whistler's influence on British aestheticism.

engagement with these ideas makes him seem, as Alex Potts argues, “an intelligent, but not particularly original thinker” (108). This belief misses Symonds’s unique observation that his memory of intimate relationships and his dreams of future intimacies intertwined these different ideas. Symonds defines his desire for long-term intimacy as a symphony of feeling which draws strength from its harmonising of the emotions, contradictions and tensions inherent in his life-long experience of illicit desire.

The following chapter is structured in six sections. Each section focuses on memories, polemics and poetry which Symonds experienced or produced throughout his life. Each section then analyses how Symonds’s *Memoirs* amalgamate and complicate these discrete ideas and emotions into a tension-filled “thread of feeling”. In order, it analyses: Symonds’s evocation of illegality and the social abhorrence of gross indecency between men in his *Memoirs*; his presentation of academic Hellenism and Greek love in “A Problem in Greek Ethics”; his evocation of late-Victorian sexology in his poetry and “A Problem in Modern Ethics”; and his engagement with Paterian aestheticism in his *Memoirs*. A previously unpublished letter between Symonds and his daughter highlights how late-Victorian conceptions of the musical, emotional and impressionistic symphony are used to evoke long-term intimacy. A final section provides a close reading of Symonds’s essay “In the Key of Blue”. This demonstrates how Symonds amalgamates the ideas developed within each of these discourses into poetic descriptions of a desire for long-term intimacy with Zanon

This chapter does not focus on texts in the order that Symonds produced them. It is structured thematically, demonstrating how Symonds engaged with the emotions contained in these different discourses in turn, in order to depict clearly the nuances of his understanding of a desire for long-term intimacy. Each section is internally structured by: 1) a depiction of the discourse that Symonds received; 2) how his conception of persistent desire for other men in his *Memoirs* engaged with it (both in 1889 and in earlier texts that are gathered into the narrative of *Memoirs*); and 3) how he developed pre-existing ideas concerning homosexuality into a desire for long-term intimacy.

Persistent passion and anxiety in Symonds's *Memoirs*

From his earliest memories, Symonds experienced an anxious sense of transgressing moral prohibitions against same-sex desire. During the second half of the nineteenth century in Britain — when Symonds was growing up — legislation shifted attention from sexual acts between men to an inappropriate desire for such acts. As was discussed in the Introduction, the 1885 Labouchere Amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Act, and its definition of gross indecency, made it possible to police forms of illicit longing. Symonds was born in 1840 so his initial memories took place well before the Labouchere Amendment. However, by the time he wrote his *Memoirs*, Symonds was well aware of the legislation. In a letter to Havelock Ellis, he refers to gross indecency as “Labby’s inexpansible legislation” (“Correspondence with Havelock Ellis, July 1891” 217). Symonds refers here to the legislation’s seeming ability to police an endless list of emotional and physical transgressions between men. Symonds’s recollection of his childhood anxieties in the *Memoirs* undermines “Labby’s inexpansible legislation”. He emphasises the anxiety inherent in improper desires, However, he remembers his early longing for emotional and sexual intimacy with another man as a fantasy of ending the sense of anxiety that clouds illicit longing.

Symonds’s *Memoirs* demonstrate that from a young age, he internalized his culture’s increasing anxiety about and repulsion towards sexualized longing for the same sex. In this text, childhood sexual acts with other boys and fantasies of older men are remembered as amalgamations of lust and anxiety. Symonds recalls that “a handsome lad of a full-blown healthy type once masturbated in my presence”, in his Berkeley Square home. He asserted that “though the sight disturbed me not uncomfortably, I shrank in horror from his touch, and managed to escape from the room” (100). Here, desire and shame fuse into a repulsive sense of horror.

However, Symonds’s *Memoirs* also remember physical desire as the gateway to a mysterious sense of connection. In the above recollection, Symonds suggests his desire for sexual touch: desire even precedes this

anxiety within his “not uncomfortable” reaction. Symonds also recounts a dream he had some time before the age of eleven. He remembers

a half-dream, half reverie, which recurred frequently just before sleeping. I used to fancy myself crouched upon the floor amid a company of naked adult men: sailors such as I had seen about the streets of Bristol. The contact of their bodies afforded me a vivid and mysterious pleasure. (100)

This reverie was “so often repeated, so habitual” that Symonds reports “no doubt of its psychological importance” (100). This dream ennobles physical closeness with a complex emotional sensation. While the naked men are ostensibly sexualized, this physical intimacy is remembered as not only “vivid”, but also “mysterious”. Symonds’s later account understands it to relate to a habitual longing for intimacy rather than erotic excitement at the presence of naked men.

Symonds remembers his childhood need to self-police sexualised longing. He recalls “being ready to love and to be loved” but also states that he “dissembled [his] deepest feelings, and only revealed those which I knew would pass muster” (*Memoirs* 122). Symonds’s internalization of a belief that longing for sex was tantamount to crime established an early bifurcation of the sexual and emotional. Symonds clarifies that he remembers experiencing “the attractions of a dimly divined almost mystic sensuality” which persisted “side by side with a marked repugnance to lust in action” (100). Consciously, he infers that sexual acts seemed repugnant through their lack of emotional intimacy. While attending Harrow, Symonds remembers seeing, from a scandalized distance, “mutual masturbation, the sports of naked boys in bed together” during nights spent in the school’s dormitories. He remembers that these acts filled him “with disgust and loathing”. He clarifies that “there was no refinement, no sentiment, no passion, nothing but animal lust in these occurrences” (147).

Against these supposedly ‘animalistic’, ‘emotionless’ lusts, Symonds fantasised about chaste, intimate relationships with imaginary adolescents from Greek myth. Specifically, he claims that the adolescent figures of a young

Apollo and Hermes “unlocked some deeper foundations of eternal longing in my soul” (*Memoirs* 113–114). The idealizing of the adolescent youth as a companion also formed “a frequent dream of a quite new sort” for Symonds (*Memoirs* 117). Later, between the age of eleven and fourteen, Symonds remembers dreaming of

a beautiful face of a young man, with large blue eyes and waving yellow hair which emitted a halo of misty light. He bent down, gazing earnestly and tenderly, until his lips touched my forehead. Then I woke and beheld the aureole fading away into the darkness. (*Memoirs* 117)

In the dream of the youth, the “tender and earnest” affection and attachment between the young man and Symonds is sealed by a kiss. This action is significantly moderated by chasteness. An emotional attachment and connection comes to the fore as the body of the boy itself is enshrouded in a halo of misty light. The morality of the dream is also associated by Symonds’s vivid associations of colour. The golden halo which encircles Symonds’s chaste contact with the young man clearly differentiates this dream from animalistic lust and the anxiety produced by the sight of naked boys or men in Symonds’s dreams or at Harrow. As Symonds wakes, he beholds “the aureole fading away into the darkness”. The “beautiful” dream signifies a desire for an emotional, tender connection with the boy, which extends from the absence of immorality and hence anxiety. Symonds remembers feeling held in a golden light that moralizes transgressive touch.

These recollections reveal several emotional tensions. They capture an early belief that his lust for men was a repulsive, transgressive act. Symonds reveals that his own experience of desire is complicated by the context of social and legal prohibition of sex between men. The very vagueness of his attraction to the sailors makes that dream as potentially suspect as masturbating with other boys, by late-Victorian standards. Symonds states that his dream of the youth was a “new sort” of dream. However, his narration of it in the *Memoirs* makes it a significant echo of his earlier dream of sexual closeness. In both dreams, Symonds visualises a sensual pleasure that is both erotic and emotional. The sailors provided a pleasure that was not entirely physical while

the youth's kiss creates a sense of being physically, as well as emotionally, tender. Symonds remembers individual moments in which he dreamed of either sexual or emotional memory; evoking an early attempt to separate desire for the body from chaste desire for tenderness. However, his later narrative gives both dreams a mysterious pleasure, symbolising his enduring sense that together they formed an ongoing desire for an intimacy that was both erotic and emotional. Within his later narrative of a persistent passion for the same sex, both dreams therefore symbolise his early memory of anxiety and lust. Symonds demonstrates that illicit sexual lust was the beginning of his anxiety. However, the visual and sensual echoes of light, comfort and tenderness which surround both dreams ultimately undermine the vitriol and repulsion felt for sexualized longing between men within his contemporary culture. From the vantage point of 1889, Symonds infers that he desired an intimacy which could lead to the tender end of anxiety, disavowal and isolation.

Developing "A Problem in Greek Ethics" into long-term intimacy

The ideas of Plato played a vital role in entrenching Symonds's youthful bifurcation between an anxiety-inducing sexual desire, and a moralised emotional passion for men. In his *Memoirs*, Symonds recounts a night spent reading Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* in the spring of 1858, at the age of eighteen, as "one of the most important nights of my life" (152). "For the first time," he wrote in 1889, "I saw the possibility of resolving in a practical harmony the discords of my inborn instincts. I perceived that masculine love had its virtue as well as its vice" (152). Idealising the purity of chaste passion between men became a way for Symonds to conceptualize passionate, intimate relationships that were free from the anxiety of sexual vice and which could live alongside Christian morality. Symonds's study of chaste male passion within ancient Greek culture "sanction[ed] the love that had been ruling [him] from childhood" (152). Plato provided a depiction of an earnest and tender intimacy between men who shared a private knowledge of commitment, bravery and beauty which resolved into a sensuous harmony that changed both men's lives. However, while Symonds's "Greek Ethics" attempted to separate intimate virtue from

sexual vice, his later *Memoirs* ultimately amalgamated a desire for sexual experience with the intimate sharing of beauty. His later text transformed mid-Victorian conventional understandings of dispassionate, chaste Greek love into an early definition of long-term intimacy: a passionate, intimate harmony of knowledges shared with a sexual partner.

In “A Problem in Greek Ethics”,³⁶ Symonds defended passionate love between men on the grounds that it was practiced in ancient Greek “paiderastia”: a chaste, idealizing, romantic love between an elder teacher and a younger *ephebe*, a desired youth. “Greek love”, he claims in this essay, was a “passionate and enthusiastic attachment subsisting between men and youths, recognized by society and protected by opinion”. “Though it was not wholly free of sensuality”, he writes, “it did not degenerate into licentiousness” (50). However, Symonds admits that such licentiousness was part of Greek culture: “we find two separate forms of masculine passion clearly marked in early Hellas — a noble and a base, a spiritual and a sensual” (“Greek” 48). The sensual and base side of male–male passion is much more closely associated by Symonds with his own culture’s abhorrence of sodomy. He frames sex between men as the “grossest sort of boy-love”, foreshadowing the later appellation of “gross indecency”, and he says that “with this baser form [of paiderastia] I shall have little to do in this essay” (48). He further remarks that “vice of this kind does not vary to any great extent, whether we observe it in Athens or in Rome, in Florence of the sixteenth [sic] or in Paris of the nineteenth century” (48).

“Greek Ethics” foregrounds the virtue of non-sexual passion between men. It is influenced by an inability to discuss sex between men, while actively challenging a conventional idealisation of paiderastia as solely intellectual.³⁷

³⁶ Symonds produced the first draft in 1873, however the manuscript has since been lost. In 1883, he privately published a minuscule run of ten copies of the essay. One of these copies is at the British Library and another at the University of Leeds. The British Library’s copy has been published by Sean Brady in *John Addington Symonds and Homosexuality: A Critical Edition of Sources* (2012). Brady’s edition is used by this thesis.

³⁷ The conventional association of Greek culture with the dispassionate intellect is also referenced by Basil Hallward in Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Hallward tells Henry Wotton that Dorian represents “all the passion of the romantic [sic] spirit, all the perfection of the spirit that is Greek ... we in our madness have separated the two” (16–17). Here, Wilde notes both the convention of disassociating the Greek from the passionate, and the covert, homoerotic possibility of using Greek imagery to reconcile the two. Symonds’s “Greek Ethics” resolutely attempts to keep separate the converging dispassionate and passionate impulses that Wilde links.

Symonds's conception of a Greek love that was distinct from sex already informed mainstream higher education. His own university education had been based on the practices and ideals of *paiderastia*.³⁸ He attended Balliol College, where he was tutored by Benjamin Jowett. As Linda Dowling demonstrates in *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (1994), Jowett reformed the syllabus of the college during the 1850s to include "the full range of philosophical and historical implication with the Great texts" (78). Jowett's reforms imitated the ideal of conversation between men as a form of enlightenment which lies at the heart of the educational virtue of Greek love. However, as Sean Brady states, "the new interpretation of the Greats and of Greek love at Oxford, *pace* Jowett, translated [into] chaste, anglicised and idealised historiography [within the] relationship between tutors and students" ("Introduction" 14). Jowett's conception of Greek love as an intellectual attachment did not even admit to passionate love between men. Symonds wrote "Greek Ethics" expressly to argue that Greek love was not only intellectual; rather, it formed a real-life "pattern of conduct" for men to follow ("Greek Ethics" 45).

However, this real-life conduct was inescapably tied to Victorian culture's conventional association of Greek artistic genius with the appreciation of a beauty that was dispassionate and impersonal. In the eighteenth century, Hegel asserted that "true beauty is found only in works of art [that] bring before our minds what it is to be a free spirit". He therefore claimed that bodies represented in Greek sculpture present a "pure or absolute beauty" as "their

³⁸ As Seth L. Schein has noted, in the nineteenth century "the importance of the school as the site of transmission of the classical languages and classical cultures cannot be overestimated" (86). Ancient Greek philosophy concerning democracy and rhetoric was a substantial part of the curriculums of public schools throughout Great Britain, intentionally shaping the next generation of rulers by teaching what Victorians thought of as the highest standards of political and discursive thought and practice. Symonds was not alone in turning to Greek culture to advocate radical forms of intimacy between men. George E. Haggerty and Jesse Wolfe have claimed that Greek culture influenced Victorian and early-twentieth-century notions of intimacy. Haggerty comments that Plato inspired late-Victorian writers with both the ideal and practice of passionate relationships. Specifically, he argues that "Plato was perhaps not as huge an influence in the eighteenth century as in the centuries before and after — it probably took Jowett and the great nineteenth-century translations to make Plato fully accessible to undergraduates" (10). Wolfe has demonstrated that G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* (1903) creates a radical conception of ethics that includes male–male passion based on his engagement with Plato (Wolfe 34). Wolfe specifically argues that Moore's homoerotic interpretation of Plato in his 1903 text created a tension between radicalism and conservatism (42). A similar tension occupies Symonds in "Greek Ethics".

physical shape perfectly embodies their spiritual freedom” (“Hegel’s Aesthetics”). Hegel asserts that the beauty in Greek sculpture embodies a spiritual morality. Another trait associated with Greek pure art was moral health. If the individuals depicted in art were free to follow the desires of their spirit, then this was because the spirit depicted was also synonymous with healthy restraint from base passion. Bryan E. Burns has claimed that in the late-Victorian period, the conventional morality associated with the Greek male nude was strongly associated with morality and dispassion. Therefore, replicating famous “Greek art ... became a standard theme in a dialogue surrounding a potentially troubling male form in nude photography” (604). Victorian men used Greek love as both a sanction for chaste desire, and a way of disguising sexual passion under the guise of something sexless, pure and intellectual. Kate Hext has argued that the Greek statue was an important foil for moralizing 1870s aesthetic expressions of sensuality. She claims that in the works of Walter Pater, “it is the ideal of beauty that [statues] show us ... the feverish desire that might be excited by their evocations of the body is implicitly muted by the idealised quality of these bodies” (113–114). In “Greek Ethics”, Symonds similarly equates Greek love with the chaste, unresponsive statuary of Grecian art. He held that ideal “firm and constant” desire between men was captured by “the graceful Eros of Praxiteles”, an ancient Greek sculptor (110). Passionate love is repressed by the frozen ideals that these statues presented to “the eyes of his worshippers” (110). Symonds saw the statue as emphasizing that the idea of Greek virtue, as it was evoked in art, clearly removes the potential for sexual desire.

As Symonds states, Greek love was always shadowed by the other, base possibility of licentious passion. However, “Greek Ethics” attempts to claim that passion for other men, even sexualised desire, leads to an equally dispassionate appreciation of beauty as it exists in nature, literature and art. He acknowledges that some Greeks desired the same sex and, “finding [physical desire] within their hearts, they chose to regulate it rather than to root it out” (113). The virtue of Greek love is created, for Symonds, by “self-restraint rather than abstention” (133). He argues that Greeks acknowledged desire but attempted to find within the male form a harmony between sensually passionate and beautifully educative experience. Symonds clarifies that this heroic

commitment to the beauty of a lover is not eroticised or “pornographic”, but rather connotes a knowledge of the impersonal male form: “whoever may have made a study of antique sculpture will not have failed to recognise its healthy human tone, its ethical rightness” (109). This culminates in a pure depiction of the symmetry and patterns of art, which in turn mimics an ideally moral life: “harmony of proportion and melodies of art ... expressed in the terms of grace” (112). The male body, Symonds claims here, acts as a model for agreeable patterns and forms found in nature. He asserts that this awareness of the formal ideal of the male body made lovers

sensitive to every form of loveliness, unrestrained by moral or religious [Christian] prohibition [the Greeks recognised] beauty of the human form, which makes male adolescence no less triumphant than it does the male soprano voice on the point of breaking. (111–112)

He claims that Greek love developed a heightened perception of a “many-sided” sensuous beauty (“Greek” 111). In his *Studies of The Greek Poets* (1875), Symonds called this “the genius of Greek art”, in which all sensuous experience is seen as “morally right” because it is part of the “universal good”. This genius combines multiple sensuous experiences of beauty: “audacity and endurance, swift passions, and exquisite sensibilities ... love of all fair things and splendours of the world ... free merriment and melancholy well beloved” (399).

Symonds’s major, and potentially scandalous, innovation in “Greek Ethics” was his claim that this conception of beauty was created by the reality of life-long connection, intimacy and passionate contact between lovers. Symonds claims that the purity of Greek love infused actual experiences of enduring, long-term partnership with the creation of a virtuous knowledge of beauty. He cites Plato: “‘I know not,’ says Phaedrus, in the *Symposium* of Plato, ‘any greater blessing to a young man beginning life than a virtuous lover, or the lover than a beloved youth.’” This love can inspire a “sense of honour and dishonour, without which neither states nor individuals ever do any good or have great work” (51). Love makes both lovers anxious to avoid dishonouring each other on the field of battle and also inspires the creation of “great work”. What is

innovative in this evocation of virtue is Symonds's insistence that it is formed by a real-life emotional and physical intimacy between two committed partners. Symonds argues that the "pure" lover

dares to court his friend in daylight and rejoices in his love. He wrestles with him in the playground, and runs with him in the race, goes afield with him to the hunt, and in battle fights for glory at his side. In his misfortunes he suffers, and at his death he dies with him. (49)

Symonds evokes a relationship that is conducted in broad daylight, and which is filled with a variety of quotidian routines and heroic deeds. It is based on sharing passionate and mundane, emotional and physical routines. He asserts that love between men was encouraged by "gymnastics and syssitia" (meals between men and boys in religious groups) (105). "Young men", he claims, admired "boys in whom the bloom of beauty was unfolding". Similarly, "boys could not fail to admire the strength and goodliness of men displayed in the comeliness of perfected development" (105). Sensual yet chaste awareness of other men was encouraged by shared routines, which themselves created a developing and strengthening sense of commitment and attraction. It is particularly a sense of emotional commitment which Symonds credits with inspiring virtue here. Love commences at "the beginning of life" and shares this life until death (51). In contrast, an absence of long-term commitment defines Symonds's brief, almost pained, treatment of the "base" emotions between men. Symonds defines physical desire as "an involuntary sickness", "incontinent in all its acts", and "something that is brought and sold" (49). This citation emphasises not the shame of the act of sex, which was tolerated by Greek culture. Rather, a sense of shame comes from denying an attachment to a friend after the sex is over. A man who does this becomes a "thief" who takes beauty in a moment of lust and gives no lasting form of knowledge, attachment or connection in return (49).

Greek love, in other words, is significantly close to what Symonds would later term the "thread of love" that ran throughout his life (*Memoirs* 181). Emotionally, it offers an early archetype for the intimate, long-term relationships which Symonds longed for in his *Memoirs*. Passionate yet pure relationships

between men are defined by an exchange of emotional knowledge, an education about the beauty of the world. Lovers inspire “audacity and endurance, swift passions, and exquisite sensibilities ... love of all fair things and splendours of the world ... free merriment and melancholy well beloved” (*Greek Poets* 399). This joyful, exciting, uplifting passionate experience is created by ongoing contact with a lover who is carefully, consistently framed as the instigator of a dispassionate appreciation of beauty.

Sixteen years after writing the first draft of “Greek Ethics”, Symonds’s *Memoirs* threw the success of this moral balance between desire and dispassionate beauty into doubt. Symonds recounts that, at the time of reading Plato in 1858, “I understood, or thought I understood, the relation to which those dreams of childhood and the brutalities of the vulgar lust at Harrow bore to my higher aspiration after noble passion” (*Memoirs* 152). Symonds thought that “animalistic lust” and passion were distinct from tenderness and beauty between men. However, this understanding had been invalidated by memories of his sexual encounters with other men. In these experiences, sex also produced a beautiful harmony between sensuality and spirituality: a harmony that he had previously reserved for Greek love. The experiences of sex recounted in the *Memoirs* are passionate and focused on a particular intimate connection to a nineteen-year-old student called Norman Moor. In December 1869, four years before Symonds wrote “Greek Ethics”, he met Moor while lecturing on Greek literature at Clifton College in Bristol. Symonds formed an intense, emotional intimacy with Moor which lasted a year as Symonds tutored Moor privately in Greek classics before his younger friend went to Oxford. Brady comments that “Symonds’s sexual chastity with the men he loved” at this time provided him with a “dispassionate approach” aligned with “the Greek paradigm” (“Introduction” 17). Brady explicitly frames Symonds’s relationship with Moor as dispassionate Greek love, claiming that “no sexual liaison took place between the two” (12). However, Symonds’s relationship with Moor did not remain chaste. On the final night before Moor left for Oxford, he and Symonds slept together.

Symonds devotes an entire chapter of his *Memoirs* to Moor. This chapter is mainly constructed of Symonds’s personal diary entries, made during and

immediately following their relationship as teacher and student, between 1866 and 1867. Symonds notes that “neither then, nor afterwards, nor before did any one of those things take place between us which people think inseparable from love of this sort” (401). Symonds means here that he did not have anal sex with Moor, which was unspeakable in both Victorian culture and, evidently, his own private memoirs. However, his diary intimately recounts a series of other sexual acts which negate the chaste status of Greek love: “we lay covered from the cold in bed tasting the honey of softly spoken words and the blossoms of lips pressed on lips. O the strain of those delicate, slight limbs and finely moulded breast” (399). Symonds’s emphasis on their being covered in bed suggests an intimate warmth, which is compounded by the discussion and talk described as blossoms. There is a sensuality but also a private, emotional closeness with Moor which makes the mentioning of “slight limbs” and “breast” intimate and loving. His description of this shared sensuous experience even extends to the most private, sexual parts of Moor’s body:

shy and modest, tender in the beauty bloom of ladhood, his part of sex ... fragrant to the searching touch, yet shrinking ... for when the wandering hand rests there, the lad turns his head pleadingly into my arms as though he sought to be relieved of some delicious pang. (400)

What becomes significant here is Symonds’s fusion of sexualized desire, the “wandering hand”, the “delicious pang” of touch, with language and imagery designed to evoke an exchange of beautiful knowledge. Moor becomes a “shy ... lad” in Symonds’s arms, who is guided towards an experience of heightened sensuality. Sex becomes an initiation into the realms of sensual play and beauty provided by Symonds, an older lover. Moor’s body becomes part of a heightened sensual experience that Symonds also learns here. The florid images used to describe Moor’s penis, a “beauty bloom of ladhood”, enacts the poetic and aesthetic “genius” of the young Greek “who has not yet felt sin” but rejoices in the “strength of adolescence” which acts as a gateway to a “love of all fair things” (*Studies* 399). Sex creates a sharing of sensual knowledge. Therefore, both men become aligned with the idea of a “virtuous lover” as they teach the other “exquisite sensibilities” which Symonds associated with the genius of Greek spirit (*Studies* 399). In amalgamating what Symonds intellectually tried to separate, the vulgar experience of sex for sex’s sake

becomes ennobled with enduring passion, connection and intimacy. As it does so, the anxiety intertwined with lust by social prohibition is replaced with a sense of beauty, heightened sensual awareness and joy which develops from Greek Love.

Symonds's diary entry of the night spent with Moor was written days later, after Moor had left for Oxford, and was later copied into his *Memoirs*. This entry expresses an enduring attachment to Moor that negates the conception in "Greek Ethics" of sexual passion as momentary and shameful. Unlike the solely base form of sex, Symonds does not forsake his lover after the act has been committed. Rather, Symonds lingers on his memory in order to remain emotionally close to Moor. He reflects that

I find it hard to write of these things, yet I wish to dwell on them and to recall them ... will my arms cease to forget the strain of his small fragile waist ... shall I cease to hear the throb of his mysterious heart — calm and true — ringing little bells beneath my ear? (399)

Symonds further amalgamates sexual experience with a feeling of closeness and tenderness for Moor. However, his *Memoirs* recounts an enduring memory of Moor, rather than a continued relationship with him. Symonds writes that after Moor left for Oxford, they "continued to correspond" and that he "saw a great deal of him during the vacation" (*Memoirs* 402). After Moor finished his final year at Oxford, Symonds accompanied him on a tour of the continent. However, he notes that both felt "that the proper season for amorous caresses had gone by" (402). Symonds's lived relationship with Moor charts a more normative course for male–male intimacy, in which sexual passion becomes friendship with the dawn of post-university life.

Symonds's memory of Moor, and indeed his ongoing desire for long-term intimacy, takes a much less normative course. The memory itself crystallises and extends Symonds's desire for intimacy. Amid the powerful evocations of beauty, sensuality and intimacy in Symonds's recollection of his night with Moor is the awareness that the time for actual experiences of touch has passed. This realisation precipitates Symonds's anxiety that even idealised memories of

desire can fade with time. Here, Symonds is concerned with not letting feelings of closeness end with the same enervation that would define their actual relationship. Moor exists within Symonds's *Memoirs*, then, as both a romantic ideal and a grappling with the reality of loss. That said, the image of Moor reverberates in the *Memoirs* "calm and true", evoking both the Greek moral "love of all fair things" and the virtuousness of life-long passion. Symonds memorialises his affection for a youth who, while distant, is not forgotten. While Moor does move on to Oxford and, eventually, marriage, Symonds lingers on the powerful possibility of what could be shared between men: an emotional commitment that is closely related to the ideal of Greek love. What makes the memory of Moor so powerful is the way in which it continually promises to end the feelings of loneliness that echo through Symonds's retellings of it — first in his diary and then in his *Memoirs*. The image of Moor lingers as a compound of both desire and anxiety, possession and loss. It stands as a metonym for an emotional and physical desire which, even though it is idealised, persists as a fantasy of intimacy that is possible when two lovers reciprocate each other's sexual and emotional desires.

Whereas contemporary Victorian morality curtailing sex between men created an amalgamation of anxiety, lust and intimacy in memory, Symonds turned to ancient Greek culture to provide an ethical exposition of male–male passion. Greek love defined a passion through which partners developed a dispassionate, sensuous and spiritual knowledge of beauty through intimate routines and commitments. However, Symonds's *Memoirs* broke the chaste, cool image of the pure love which was propagated by late-Victorian culture. Sex came to represent, in his contemporaneous diaries and later *Memoirs*, what Symonds's "Greek Ethics" supposed only virtuous Greek love could: it created a shared commitment to a sensuous experience of beauty through a joyful, intimate knowledge of a lover, the "genius of the Greek spirit" realised by intimate touch. Moor's body, however, is not remembered with dispassionate balance. It is desired, unique, sensually evocative and spiritually and emotionally uplifting. It is a personalised memory of intimacy that cushioned the reality of loss. Symonds's recollection of his night spent with Moor asserted that sex could create a passionate harmony between sensuality and spirituality, even if only in his mind. That said, Symonds did not reject "Greek Ethics". He

attempted to publish the text throughout the 1880s and early 1890s. This highlights his ongoing anxiety about homoerotic passion and gross indecency: his need to present a public rejection of sexual passion. Therefore, the personal experience of sexual and intimate pleasure and commitment came to coexist with the tension between anxiety and lust.

Sexology, morbidity and long-term intimacy in “The Valley of Vain Desires”

Symonds’s *Memoirs* asserted that he experienced a persistent passion for the same sex. His early dreams of other men instilled in him an intuitive sense that this passion formed “inborn instincts” which “had ruled him from childhood” (152). He dedicated this text to “students of medical pathology” (361). In doing so, Symonds consciously spoke to a developing discourse of sexology. Sexology attempted to establish the causes of a predisposition to same-sex desire. Continental writers on the subject overwhelmingly argued that sexual inversion was created by an either acquired or congenital morbid deviation from heterosexual health. John Pemble states that Symonds “assented to the medicalisation of sexuality”, equating the “tubercular” with the “sexually inverted” (6). It is true that Symonds believed that his need to disavow sexual desire exacerbated his life-long ill-health, anxiety and phthisis.³⁹ However, Symonds only ever flirted with the idea of seriously curing his homosexual desire. In his *Memoirs*, Symonds remembers “thinking that by honest endeavour I could divert my passions from the burning channel in which they flowed ... to follow a normal course toward women” (*Memoirs* 216). However, his poetry, the essay on contemporary sexology “A Problem in Modern Ethics” (1883) and his *Memoirs* each reject the idea that sexuality could be altered by “honest endeavour”. Instead, they frame the morbidity of homosexual desire as developing from cultural strictures which warp otherwise natural desire. Symonds experienced sexual desire morbidly as a wasting, consumptive passion. However, the cause of morbidity was the fact that his unquenchable desire occurred in a culture that insisted one must silence it. This affected how

³⁹ Pulmonary tuberculosis.

Symonds wrote about long-term desire. The passage of time made desire feel morbid. The thought of a persistent, unobtainable desire makes the feeling of passion ever more emotionally despairing and physically wasting. Symonds's evocation of unquenchable desire expresses an augmented feeling of morbidity which extends from the contemporaneous illegality and immorality of longing for the same sex.

In early 1863, Symonds suffered a sudden failure in health, from which he would take "years" to recover. He also claimed that he "had never been a strong man since" (*Memoirs* 214). Symonds's *Memoirs* explicitly recreates the feeling of his breakdown. He remembers dreaming of "a weak old man being gradually bruised" (214). He woke up

with the certainty that something serious had happened to my brain. Nor was I mistaken. During the next three years I hardly used my head or eyes at all for intellectual work [while] I had in the interval become consumptive ... I was like a creature which had been racked and felt pain in every nerve and sinew. ... But the mental suffering was worse. If my body throbbed with dumb persistent aches ... my spirit burned in flames of shame and indignation and rebellion against my faith. (*Memoirs* 214–215)

Symonds's account here records physical suffering. He attributes this failure of the body to an ongoing sense of Christian moral shame. He claims, moreover, that this outbreak of consumption was precipitated by anxiety created by a potential scandal. While he was a Fellow at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1862, a student called Shorting had asserted to the college authorities that Symonds desired other men. Symonds insisted that there was no evidence or reason for these claims. In his *Memoirs*, he claims that Shorting was angry because Symonds had denied him "access to the college" so that he could, as Symonds said, "carry [on] flirtations with the choristers" (*Memoirs* 211). Symonds was summoned to Magdalen to defend himself. He did so, with "letters of support from some of the most distinguished men in Oxford and England" (212). However, anxiety and shame dogged Symonds and, several months later, his "health failed suddenly" (214). He specifically attributed this to

Shorting's allegations and the threat of exposure. He asserted that "Shorting had got his revenge" (214). Moreover, Symonds's evocation of his failure in health prioritised the long-term experience of both physical and emotional angst, presenting it as the effect of a long-term disavowal of homosexual desire. His dream presents a gradual sedimentation of worries and anxieties, perceived attacks, such as those which strike the elderly man, as the cause of this crisis. His recollection is also attuned to a more long-term experience, spanning an ongoing three-year consumptive interval of shame and pain. He comments that this period felt like "the labyrinth of a young soul, lost, and seeking light in the darkness" (*Memoirs* 215). This darkness represents the anxiety that had been instilled on him at an early age concerning his longing for the same sex.

A relationship between consumptive imagery and illicit sexuality is foregrounded in Symonds's poem "The Valley of Vain Desires". This poem was published as the concluding section of his poetry collection *Then and Now* (1880), which collected some of Symonds's previously unpublished poetry. Brady has commented that Symonds's emigration to Switzerland in 1877 "emboldened him" to write and publish work on more openly homoerotic themes ("Introduction" 20).⁴⁰ Sexual acts between men in private were not illegal in Switzerland, nor in France, Germany or Italy. "The Valley of Vain Desires" openly alludes to the issue of a sinful, physically wasting and unhealthy desire. Indeed, it follows a section of verses about passionate friendship between men.

The poem evokes same-sex desire as a morbid illness. It is set in a "chasm ... deep and drear" (251). The natural landscape of this chasm is typified by ill-health: "the opaque lurid air [and] landscape, unsunned [sic] and lustreless ... breeds exaltations" (251). Here Symonds evolves an image of sulphurous, poisonous gases into significant allusion to a misformed, harmful passion. The land breeds vaporous, lurid exaltations, an immoral desire that

⁴⁰ Symonds cites the reason for his move from England to Switzerland as his ongoing ill health (*Memoirs* 494). However, it may also have been that life in England was made unfavourable by accusations of sexual impropriety. In 1877, the year Symonds moved, the Reverend Richard St John Tyrwhitt, rector of St Mary's, Oxford, attacked Symonds — among others — "for 'the pretensions of Balliol Hellenism' in an article in the *Contemporary Review* in March 1877" (Brady "Introduction" 17). Tyrwhitt sought to counter what he saw as an immoral effemining of college undergraduates by the teaching, albeit in a chaste form, of the Greek ideas of pederastia.

makes the natural world ill. Symonds evokes the morbidity of the setting through an inversion of Christian morality. At the centre of this space is a “tree that glooms and grates” covered in fruit described as “sickly sweet”: the “clammy spheres in clusters, green as dates / As o’er ripe plantains blue, in the faint heart” (252). In describing the tree, Symonds employs an overt and widely understood metaphor for the acquisition of forbidden experience within Christian morality. Moreover, the “o’er ripe” nature of the fruit suggests a sexual appetite which turns fecundity to waste and loss, evoking a misplaced passion on men, rather than women. Symonds clarifies the importance of Christian imagery to the poem. In a footnote, he writes that the poem “describe[s] by allegory the attraction to vice that fascinates and is intolerable” (White 280).⁴¹ He excuses allusion to inverted or morbid sexual desire by claiming that “the sense or the presentiment of sin, when sternly realised, involves this horror” (280). His note ostensibly proposes that the expression of sexual desire forms a sense of grappling with sin which may be religiously instructive to his readers. However, the centrality of the ill, gloomy tree of knowledge subtly reverses Christian morality. It is the tree itself that is ill and causes the decaying of its own fruit. Through it, Symonds gestures to the innate morbidity of Christian morality. It is the conventional rules and mores prohibiting homoerotic desire that turn a “natural and healthy” passion into a morbid “abomination”, as he claimed society had done to his own sense of persistent passion (*Memoirs* 316).

The tree draws

men who yearned: and each
Knew what his fellow’s thin and shuddering side
Concealed of heart ache, and of fear, and fire,
Of fierce forth-stretchings after joy denied
And horrible, unquenchable desire. (“Valley” 253–254)

While this poem predates his *Memoirs*, several clear allusions argue that Symonds remembered his own morbid breakdown in composing these lines.

⁴¹ Symonds’s footnote is in the endnotes in Chris White’s compilation of Victorian texts on homosexuality. See the Bibliography, “Works Cited” for details of White’s text.

The men, like him, yearn for something which they should not touch. Moreover, their “thin shuddering sides” echo Symonds’s belief that he had become consumptive. The “heart-ache” “fear” and “fire” also parallel Symonds’s later expression of “flames of shame and indignation” (*Memoirs* 214). These allusions aside, “The Valley of Vain Desires” also rehearses the jointly physical and emotional experience of shame: pain within the body echoes an emotional anxiety concerning “horrible, unquenchable desire”.

Symonds’s poem argues that, in a culture that defines sexual desire between men as morbid, the experience of ongoing desire exacerbates a feeling of ill-health. The “horrible” desire is equally “unquenchable”; it is not transient but enduring. Like his earlier collapse in health, anxieties about the persistence of the pain deepen and worry the already shuddering and stressed bodies of the “men who yearned”. Their identification with a form of passionate yearning shifts attention away from the acts they desire themselves and towards a feeling of the passage of time. As well as the horror of their desire, they contend with the ongoing experience of desires which are “dragged [with] slow torture of plague-stricken breath / Onward through days or weeks or months or years” (254). Symonds’s laboured repetition of “or” evokes and elongates their experience of time passing. This anxious awareness of persisting desire exists even at the pulsating, enfevered moment of sensuous gratification. The men reach the tree and “with a terrible, strange longing, gained / the gangrened fruit, and ate ... yet once more / Athirst they rose and ate” (254). Symonds focuses here on the terrible strangeness of a passion which cannot be satisfied or abated. Rather than condemning the morbid existence of “pleasure that was pain”, Symonds’s poem articulates a subversive concern for the continuing existence of men who yearn under the corrosive shadow of Christian morality. Indeed, his poetic landscape of a deep chasm might be framed as an evocation of the desiring and disavowing psyche. This “deep chasm” presents an intriguingly proto-Freudian evocation of the physical and psychological issues that are created by subsuming desire, which can then only manifest itself through neurosis and malformations of the body.

Symonds’s *Memoirs* progressed this concern. He demonstrated that the persistence of a hidden, unquenchable desire creates an amalgamation of pain,

regret, anxiety and fear. Symonds devotes an entire chapter to his desire for a fellow undergraduate at Oxford University called Alfred Brooke, whom he met in 1860. This chapter of the *Memoirs* includes a poetic dithyramb written by Symonds for Brooke.⁴² Symonds recounts how

Late in the evening of a dull October day the hunger to see Alfred came upon me ... and how shall I describe the tension of the aching brain, the overwrought nerves, the blushing cheek, the burning head ... the stretching out of the arms never to be filled, the desire, despair, prostration, godlessness, the tyranny of the flesh, the aspiration of the spirit. (125)

Here, Symonds defines persistent desire as the coexistence of different emotions. His memory combines a potent mixture of what he clearly sees as unethical and immoral physical sensations. These sensations translate into a morbid and physical experience; a “hunger” expressed by Symonds’s “aching”, “overwrought” and “burning” senses. Yet, Symonds is not primarily interested in the physical moment of passion, lust or denial of contact. Rather, he is attuned to the passing of time. The experiences listed here are themselves memories. Symonds wrote this poem in 1865, five years after he last saw Brooke, “when the tyranny had been outlived but still reverberated in memory” (124). Even more specifically, Symonds emphasises that the passage of time augments the morbid complexity of this longing. As with Norman Moor, the memory of Brooke lingers with the passing of time. Symonds’s enduring attraction to Brooke is even more inevitably, unbearably imaginary; it is untethered to any previous reality of reciprocation. Therefore, unlike the memory of Moor’s reciprocating actions, the idea of Brooke connotes an enduring sense of the morbidity of desire. This poem is intended to express how long this “tyranny” outlives experience, a sentiment which is again demonstrated when Symonds copies the sequence into his 1889 text. Equally, the imagery within the poem emphasises his ongoing expectation that his arms will never be filled. It is the persona’s pained awareness that his physical urge endures which creates the consuming tension between the “aspiration of the spirit” and the “tyranny of the

⁴² In its original form, a dithyramb was a choral hymn to the ancient Greek god of sensuality and banqueting, Dionysus.

flesh". Symonds's feeling of morbidity is not an integral aspect of same-sex desire, but is created by the persistence of an emotional and physical desire for touch and reciprocation. The passage of time makes the tyrannising flesh and aspiring spirit ever more intertwined. The "blushing cheek" and the "stretching of the arms" represent an ongoing craving. This inspires feelings of "desire, despair, prostration, godlessness". Desire and prostration threaten never to stop. This reverberates back onto the body, conditioning the burning shame and stretching, strained arms. It is Symonds's existence in an ever-elongating experience of longing that is captured by this verse. Both spirit and flesh destroy and waste each other. Neither the body nor the spirit can stop desiring, and this creates the augmenting morbidities of physical malformation and emotional shame. It is the passing of time that creates this amalgamation of spirit and flesh as the body and mind reverberate in memory.

In 1891, after finishing his *Memoirs*, Symonds wrote a literature review of contemporary European writing on sexology, called "A Problem in Modern Ethics".⁴³ Symonds gives an "account [of] the most recent, most authoritative, and, as it seems to me, upon the whole most sensible studies" ("Modern Ethics" 143): among others, he writes about Paul Moreau, Veniamin Mikhailovich Tarnowski, Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Karl Ulrichs. With the exception of Ulrichs, each of these writers "attempt to refer all cases of sexual inversion to neurotic disorder inherited or acquired" (*Memoirs* 102).⁴⁴ Symonds disagreed that the cause of sexual inversion is a hereditary disposition to disease and

⁴³ Symonds privately printed this text in 1891; this edition has been published in Brady's *John Addington Symonds and Homosexuality: A Critical Edition of Sources* (2012). This thesis uses Brady's publication.

⁴⁴ Symonds focuses on continental writers because there had not yet been any publication on case studies of sexual inversion in England. In *Des Aberrations du Sens Genistique* [Aberrations of the Genital Sense — a term referring to a sixth sense that demined sexual orientation] (1887) Moreau claims that "among the most frequent causes of aberrations of the genital sense, hereditary history takes the first place". Tarnowski asserts in *Die Krankhaften Erscheinungen des Geschlechtssinnes* [The Abnormal Manifestation of the Gender Perception] (1886) that "hereditary taint and neuropathetic [sic] diathesis" create a hereditary disposition towards disease ("Modern" 149). Symonds paraphrases Krafft-Ebing's claim, in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1889), thus: "males who have been born with neuropathic ailments of the indefinite kind will masturbate, destroy their virility, and then embark upon a course of vice which offers incalculable dangers, inconceivable difficulties, and inexpressible repugnances" ("Modern" 152). Alternatively, Karl Ulrichs advocated a congenital rationale for same-sex attraction. His 1868 text, *Die Geschlechtsnatur des mannliebenden Urnings: eine Naturwissenschaftliche Darstellung* [The Sexual Nature of Man-Loving Urnings; A Scientific Presentation] claimed that certain men, Urnings, were born with an instinctive, and to them, natural, desire for the same sex. Symonds agreed with Ulrichs.

morbidity. Instead, he cited, “the evidence of ancient Greece, [modern] schools, prisons, and Sotadic [Mediterranean] races”. He claimed that the example of these populations “compels us to believe that normally healthy people are often born with these instincts or else acquire them by the way of custom” (156). Symonds claimed that the difference between a healthy and morbid sense of an inborn sexual desire for men is defined by the culture in which one lives. By referring to ancient Greece, he argued that a sense of morbidity is unique to later Christian cultures. In referring to “Sotadic races”, Symonds drew on the, then conventional, belief in Britain that sex between men is more common in southern European cultures. He also responded to Krafft-Ebing’s assertion that “self-abuse”, masturbation, was a symptom of hereditary illness which “destroy[s] virility” and deteriorates the natural passion for the opposite sex. He asks, “but whence, if not from some overwhelming appetite, do the demoralized victims of self-abuse derive the courage for facing obstacles which a career of sexual inversion carries with it in our civilization” (“Modern Ethics” 152). He claimed that desire and even so-called abusive acts persisted in spite of moral prohibition.

However, Symonds now framed this persisting desire as increasingly complicated by the passage of time. This is most directly articulated in an undated and unsigned letter written by Symonds to Krafft-Ebing before 1890. He wrote to critique Kraft-Ebing’s view that same-sex passion should be considered as either an inborn or acquired morbid deviation from health.⁴⁵ Symonds reproduced the letter in his “Modern Ethics”, while maintaining his anonymity. The enduring sexual life of the individual, Symonds argued in the letter, “began with boyhood”:

when he first becomes aware of the sexual stirrings in his nature
[a boy] wraps himself within his own thoughts ... there then begins in him
a hidden conflict, a forcible suppression of a sexual impulse; and in

⁴⁵ Havelock Ellis, who was collaborating on a project called *Sexual Inversion* with Symonds between 1889 and 1893, received a copy of this letter on Symonds’s death. It is now located at the Harry Ransom Centre at the University of Texas at Austin, listed as “Copy by Mrs Havelock Ellis of a paper by J. A. Symonds”. The letter has been published in full in Brady’s *John Addington Symonds and Homosexuality: A Critical Edition of Sources* (209). Krafft-Ebing responded by using Symonds’s letter as a case study in his 1889 version of *Psychopathia Sexualis*.

proportion as the natural satisfaction of his craving is denied, fancy works on him with still more lively efforts, conjuring up these seductive pictures which he would fain expel from his imagination. (“Modern Ethics” 166)

Here, the individual’s experience of desire is depicted as continuing across time, throughout boyhood, adolescence and adulthood in a series of thoughts, cravings and fantasies which persist in spite of denial and resistance. Moreover, Symonds suggests that the subjective experience of this natural craving forms a “hidden conflict” because desire needs to remain hidden from others, but cannot be expelled completely. As with the men in “The Valley of Vain Desire”, the very potency of this desire is tied to its unspeakable and “unquenchable” nature: the more his “craving is denied”, the greater “fancy works on him”. Ultimately, this produces the experience of morbid sensual and physical consumption: a sense of wasting anxiety, resignation and heart-ache. Symonds argued that it was the cultural necessity of hiding desire, rather than any hereditary illness, that caused the morbid deviation of an otherwise congenital, inborn desire.

At the time of his death, Symonds was planning to co-author a text with Havelock Ellis called *Sexual Inversion*. Symonds and Ellis never met face to face, and their entire process of outlining, planning and negotiating the project exists in their letters. These have been published in Sean Brady’s *John Addington Symonds and Homosexuality: A Critical Edition of Sources* (2012). In a letter written to Ellis on 20 June 1892, Symonds planned to “contribute historical analysis [on] ancient Greece” while leaving Ellis to provide a medial, empirical “critique of the modern medical” theories by “Casper-Linman, Tardieu, Carlier, Taxil, Moreau, Tarnowsky, Kraft-Ebing [sic]” (“Correspondence with Havelock Ellis” 221). Symonds had addressed all of these works himself in “Modern Ethics”. He asserted that “it is absolutely necessary to connect” his “Greek Ethics” and Ellis’s version of a “Modern Ethics” (Brady 211). He planned to debunk the belief that sexual inversion was essentially morbid by demonstrating that “scientific ‘psychiatrists’ are ludicrously in error by diagnosing as necessarily morbid what was the leading emotion of the best and noblest men in Hellas” (Brady 221). Symonds hoped that *Sexual Inversion* would highlight that the morbidity of sexual inversion was caused by the hostility

of his nineteenth century moment. Ellis eventually published *Sexual Inversion* with Symonds's "Greek Ethics" in 1897. However, following the threat of legal action from Symonds's estate, he published later editions without Symonds's contribution.

Symonds's engagement with contemporary sexology illustrates that morbidity theories discounted the importance of contemporary cultural attitudes in creating ongoing experiences of anxiety. His own experiences of long-term desires for other men reflected this morbidity, yet amalgamated desire into a complex compound of frustrated passion, overwrought anxiety and fear of a horrible, unquenchable desire. By the end of his life, he believed that the morbidity often linked with experiences of sexual inversion was due to the persistence of emotions themselves. The "slow torture of plague-stricken breath" was not created within the predisposed body, but precipitated and heightened by the persistent, long-term need to hide emotions between men "onward through days or weeks or months or years" ("Valley" 254). As we shall see, Symonds's experience of desire for other men was not always morbid, although he retained an ingrained suspicion of the law and scandal. This is evidenced by his desire to keep his authorship of the letter to Kraft-Ebbing a secret. Symonds also pursued a number of healthy, fulfilling sexual relationships with men. Yet his dismissal of continental morbidity theories allowed him to appreciate that ongoing desire developed and changed into increasingly potent, fraught and complex emotional tensions through the memory of desire. Sexual desire did not end the loss of opportunity, or its gratification, but persisted as an emotional entanglement of desire, anxiety, fear and worry.

"The face of one's friend": Symonds's development of the Paterian moment in his *Memoirs*

It was not only negative emotions which endured and amalgamated with the passing of time for Symonds. His *Memoirs* portray his brief relationship with the Bristol chorister Willie Dyer through positive feelings of intimacy, connection and beauty. This memory of connection both incorporates and transcends the

tensions between morbidity and anxiety that were created by his persistent passion for the same sex. Symonds's relationship with Dyer lasted for several months in the spring and summer of 1858, when Symonds was eighteen. He claims that his love for Dyer, like Moor, was deeply influenced by a chaste Greek love. Symonds comments that during his relationship he "devoured Greek literature", mentioning specifically Plato's *Phaedrus* (*Memoirs* 159). He recalls one moment of meeting Dyer and feeling "that I was realising the antique amorous enthusiasm, while kneeling in a cathedral stall, listening to antiphones, gazing on a beautiful friend's face emerging from the surplice" (159). This memory also calls attention to the influence of the contemporary aestheticism of Water Pater. Symonds remembers Dyer in his *Memoirs* through the liberating sensuality advocated in Pater's famous "Conclusion" to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873).⁴⁶

During the 1870s, Walter Pater's aesthetic criticism of the individual's experience of Renaissance art created a new, and radical, academic perception of the subjectivity and amorality of a purely sensuous experience.⁴⁷ Pater's text concludes with a powerful description of the necessity of living in the sensuous, subjective moment. He claims that sensual experience formed the individual's experience of reality. As the real world "melt[s] at our feet", he argues that all the individual can do is to

catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of an artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. (Pater *Renaissance* 211)

Here, Pater lists a series of powerful impressions which could imprint themselves on the individual's "inward world of thought and feeling" (208). Indeed, the poignancy of these subjective images themselves seem to overtake and blur the ever-diminishing sense of an objective reality defined by social

⁴⁶ This text was republished in 1877, retitled as *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*. This thesis cites the 1873 edition, which is available in the British Library.

⁴⁷ Essays which Pater would later group into *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* first appeared in periodicals in 1868.

convention and morality. Pater's text proposed that art, and the experiences which were represented in art, could be seen as beautiful and meaningful in their own right: art no longer needed to represent Christian morality to be considered great, but could be enjoyed for its own sensational effect on the viewer. In an essay responding to Pater's *Renaissance*, Symonds agreed that art presented a powerful "blending of animative thought or emotion" ("Music" 184).⁴⁸

Symonds's memory of Dyer in his *Memoirs*, cited above, uses the particular image of the face of one's friend that Pater mentioned in his Conclusion. Symonds remembers Dyer as a sensational amalgamation of beauty and tenderness which "sets" his spirit "free" (Pater *Renaissance* 211). Indeed, Symonds writes that Dyer "set my soul free from the Egyptian house of Harrow bondage. He enabled me to realise an ideal of a passionate yet pure love between friend and friend" (*Memoirs* 158). Symonds had recoiled from the acts he witnessed at Harrow as he believed that they possessed "no sentiment ... no passion" (147). In contrast, his relationship with Dyer is remembered as a heightened sense of what Pater calls the "exquisite passions" that are facilitated by setting the spirit free from bondage. Symonds recounts "those April mornings" following meeting Dyer through a Paterian overwhelming of the senses: "the hush of the leaved trees ... the notes of blackbirds ... the poetry of the flooding light ... the thrill of flooding love!" (156). This moment is clearly related to Paterian sensuality, if not directly inspired by the "irresistibly real and attractive" flood of sensations visualised by Pater (Pater *Renaissance* 210). Symonds's memories of Dyer take two things from the Paterian moment. Firstly, an emphasis on the subjectivity of the individual experience, Pater's belief that one can only really know "one's own impression as it really is" (*Renaissance* viii). Secondly, Pater's belief that each experience is a fusion of discrete elements: each memory symbolically holds the emotive pull of "ten thousand resultant combinations", which are continually "designing a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it" (Pater *Renaissance* 208).

⁴⁸ This essay was "Is Music the Type and Measure of All Art?", which was published in Symonds's collection *Essays Suggestive and Speculative* in 1890.

However, Symonds's evocation of Paterian sensuality in his *Memoirs* is importantly conditioned by an acceptance and celebration of same-sex intimacy. This is a key difference between the two writers, as Pater always skirted transgressive desire. Ruth Robbins argues that Pater's allusion to the sensuousness of "the face of one's friend" offered late-Victorian culture "a very evasive expression of sexual desire, one that takes place between men" (15). Brady has also commented that Pater was "at pains to subsume or ignore any suggestion of sexuality in teaching and interpreting the Greats" — the Greek material which he taught to undergraduates ("Introduction" 15). Kate Hext has highlighted that Pater's emphasis on sensuous experience does not form a "creed" for one's real-life existence but rather highlights that art must be the "theatre of the imagination to control the danger of sensuality enacted on real flesh" (85).

As has been demonstrated, Symonds also used a "theatre of the imagination" to evoke the ideal of intimate connection. However, his evocation is significantly based on real life memories and experiences of same-sex desire. Subsequently, Symonds's *Memoirs* apply Pater's sensuality to his examination of the persistent same-sex passion. Symonds critiqued Pater's insistence that art always strived to be a "matter of pure perception" (Pater, cited by Symonds, "Music" 184). Symonds disagreed that aesthetic experience requires "*a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the definite meaning almost expires*" (187; Symonds's italics). Instead, he argued that art seeks to construct the "well defined subject" (186). He believed that art could "suggest much which there is no means of directly expressing" through amalgamating "forms, colours and sounds as to stimulate the imagination" (188). Symonds contended that far from eclipsing individual consciousness, prose narratives were capable to combining sensory detail into compounds that clarified the emotional tensions which develops throughout an individual's life. This was a departure from Pater, for whom experience is "renewed from moment to moment" and each experience "forces parting soon or later on their ways" (Pater *Renaissance* 208). Particularly, Symonds's *Memoirs* define the homosexual subject. In this text, Paterian sensuality is elongated and stretched out to correspond with the long-term desire for, and ultimate resolution of, intimacy tenderness and connection.

The compound of colours through which Symonds remembers seeing Dyer emerge above, a combination of darkness and a face, foregrounds a far earlier memory. Dyer seems to emerge as *the* friend of Symonds's earlier dream. His coming into the light echoes in reverse Symonds's intimate fantasy of a beautiful young man ... disappearing into the darkness" (*Memoirs* 117). It is a reverberation of a specific mixture of colours: golden tenderness against a blackness that gestures to social prohibition of and anxiety concerning homosexuality and also to the mysterious possibility of intimacy. This leads Symonds to imbue Dyer with a sense of earnestness and tenderness. Indeed, he writes in his *Memoirs* that Dyer seemed to answer longstanding, previously unobtainable desires: he felt that he could now "take possession of the dream and clasp it" (*Memoirs* 156). For Symonds, the meeting with Dyer reverberates as a sensuous echo between childhood and adolescence. Pater had particularly emphasised the vibrant perception of a "hand or face" as crystallising the perfection of sensual connection within the moment (*Renaissance* 210). Symonds employs exactly these images. However, it is through his linking of two memories that the full significance of Dyer's sensual memory emerges. His "slender hand" that is held by Symonds and his "dark brown eyes" evoke a "quite indescribable effluence of peace and satisfaction, blent with yearning" (157). The manifold resultant combinations which form the face of Symonds' friend are heightened precisely because they evoke a duration of homoerotic longing, rather than a moment. They reverberate as an answer to his desire for intimate connection.

As Symonds grounds this sensuality within long-term homosexual desire, Dyer's memory also evokes the painful consequences of desiring men in the late nineteenth century. These memories combine both feelings of connection and loss. Symonds's father discovered his relationship with Dyer and demanded that it end. Symonds lamented that "I could not marry [Dyer]; modern society provided no bond of comradeship whereby we might have been united. So my first love turned to waste" (*Memoirs* 157). This sense of loss appears in an essay Symonds wrote about their relationship, which he published in *In the Key of Blue and Other Prose Essays*: "Clifton and a Lad's Love". This essay was written in the early 1860s, thirty years before the

collection's release and soon after Symonds and Dyer's relationship ended. It includes poems written by Symonds that similarly evoke Dyer's "deep eyes" ("Clifton" 164). This enduring memory of connection is complicated with the morbidity of unrequited enduring passion. It becomes "the thirst I may not quench" ("Clifton 158). Eventually, the poem ends with separation and loss: Symonds writes that "our paths are near yet never meet" (175). Pain and pleasure merge as Symonds depicts the ending of his experience of intimacy due to his, and his father's, fear of transgressing social mores.

However, Symonds's later evocation of Dyer in his *Memoirs* uses the image of Dyer to evoke an intense, personally moral and beautiful memory, which is strong enough to outlast sadness and loss. He remembers that on one occasion they

met together and exchanged our hearts ... absolutely free of evil ... the afternoon sunlight fell on the glossy ivy, blue bells and late anemones. We were lying side by side. The splash of paddle-wheels and the chant of sailors working a sea going-vessel down the Avon, rose up to us between the two long kisses which I took. (157)

The intense sensuality of this moment is an amalgamation of a series of emotional memories. A sense of transgression and anxiety have not gone from Symonds's mind when he writes about Dyer here. The distant chant of the sailors evokes the memory of his dream of sitting naked amid a group of men and feeling a vague and mysterious pleasure. They therefore suggest the memory of Symonds' childhood anxiety. They subsequently form the prohibitive boundaries of this sensual memory. Yet it is this lingering memory of anxiety and uncertainty that makes the enduring memory shine. Sunshine, physical closeness, the tranquil sounds of boats and the activity of the sailors enfold periods of worry and transgression into what Symonds defines in his *Memoirs* as a shared, intimate sense of "peace and satisfaction ... healing and refreshing influence" (151). This further enhances intimate connection with a sense of alleviating enduring longing. The sensual webs of past feeling within this memory create a "peace" that endures beyond his feeling of wasted passion. Symonds remembers the quotidian details of this time as "blurred" and "only

supplying to fuel the love that burned within me” (*Memoirs* 160). Love is remembered as “the one and only actuality” (160). Symonds’s sense of a shared intimacy with Dyer even supersedes the transgression intuited by his father: he remembers the passion he felt for Dyer as “free from evil”. Satisfaction, itself both a lessening of pain and a satiation of a need, becomes the lasting beauty of the memory.

Symonds articulates how the passage of time creates new, potent compounds of feeling. In the *Memoirs*, Symonds remembers his desire for Dyer. “Clifton and a Lad’s Love” demonstrates that this desire is later conditioned by loss. Yet it is the lingering shadow of loss that empowers memory of connection in his *Memoirs*. In evoking these memories, Symonds draws on Pater’s evocation of the liberating sensuality of the moment, yet he uses this sensuality to evoke memories that develop with the passage of time. Hext asserts that, for Pater, the passage of time and age threaten to reduce the individual’s grasp on the sensuous moment: “sensuality becomes inhibited forever after by the ‘thou shall not’ of a world grown grey with the breath of excessive piety” (90).⁴⁹ She suggests that for Pater, the passing of an individual’s life initiates one into discourses or morality that prevent them from living in a sensuous ideal. Art becomes only an imaginary space through which one can capture moments of sensuous relief from morality.⁵⁰ Contrarily, Symonds’s *Memoirs* see time as amalgamating different emotional threads. This reproduces the lived experience of a life spent negotiating society’s interdictions against homoerotic desire. Emboldened by the subjectivity and sensuality of the experience of memory, Symonds highlights the positivity of the long term. As Symonds recalls and reanimates the feeling of closeness to a boy with whom he once exchanged his heart, the sensuous experience of release and connection is augmented with the passage of time. Anxiety and loss endure but they make the memory of relief and connection enduringly powerful. The memory of the face of one’s friend constantly suggests the intimate value of connection, enveloping and,

⁴⁹ Hext cites his late work *Plato and Platonism*, in which Pater states that “there is always something lost in growing up” (90).

⁵⁰ This is evidenced elsewhere in Pater’s fictional work, particularly his *Imaginary Portraits*: see Bibliography, “Works Consulted”. His portrait of the young Florian in “The Child at Home” invests the child with a sensibility that is already nostalgic for the innocence of his keen impression of flowers. The revived soul of the Greek god Dionysus in “Deny l’Auxerrois” is soon diminished by the piety of a later, medieval age.

eventually, eclipsing Symonds's anxious contemplation of sin and transgression.

Symphonies of feeling within "In the Key of Blue"

In the essay "In the Key of Blue", Symonds articulates his long-term intimacy with a man called Augusto Zanon as "a symphony of blue".⁵¹ The essay presents Symonds's description of the blue uniform of Zanon, a gondolier whom Symonds met frequently while travelling to Venice. Ostensibly, Symonds attempts to "try the resources of our language" to find new, more subtle ways of describing the colour blue ("Key" 5). His decision to portray blue as it appears in the figure of Zanon is, nominally, because "it is among the working people [who wore blue in Venice] that the best opportunities are afforded for attempting symphonies and harmonies of blue" (3–4). Symonds decides to "take a single figure — a *facchino* [working class male; Zanon] with whom I have been long acquainted and to place him in a variety of hues in combination" (4). However, underneath this innocent pretence, Symonds's symphonies describe the emotional subtlety of his loving and erotic memories of Zanon. In a sequence of ten poems, Symonds portrays Zanon in different varieties and hues of "symphonies of blue", as he appears in Symonds's memory. Each hue which amalgamates within the colour blue symbolises a different feeling that his memory of Augusto provokes. The sequence of ten poems within the essay articulate an increasingly compounded portrayal of Symonds's lover.

Symonds met Zanon in 1891 (Maxwell 238). At the time of writing his essay, he was conducting a relationship with Zanon during his regular intervals in Venice. Zanon was not the only man with whom Symonds undertook a long-term relationship in Venice. Symonds had met Angelo Fausto, another gondolier, in 1881. He defined their decade-long "intimacy" as "a hundred subtle threads of feeling" (*Memoirs* 517; 514). This included "sensual enjoyment" but

⁵¹ Catherine Maxwell asserts that Augusto is based on Augusto Zanon, whom Symonds met in 1891, and that "it is the nineteen-year-old Augusto and Symonds's powerful attraction to him that is arguably the true subject of the essay, which can be read as an open love letter" (238). Amber Regis concurs that "the significance of Augusto as an object of desire is made clear" in Symonds's letters ("Late" 220).

Symonds's emphasised his loving connection with, and commitment to, Fausto (520). The important point here is not Symonds's polyamory, but that, in 1892, he also valued Zanon as a long-term partner. Symonds's focus on Zanon refocuses "In the Key of Blue" from describing colour to describing the emotional complexity of a long-term relationship. The language that he is broadening is not merely "the nomenclature of colour in literature" ("Key" 1). Rather, he is broadening the literary language available to describe a relationship which is loving, illicit and enduring.

"In the Key of Blue" was the final work which Symonds lived to see in print. It was published as the leading essay of *In the Key of Blue and Other Prose Essays* in January 1893, months before his death. Similarly to his *Memoirs*, Symonds felt the collection "representative" of the broad range of discourses which he engaged with throughout his life ("Preface" to "Key").⁵² He told his publisher, Elkin Matthews, that the leading essay "tunes the whole" of the collection (Regis "Late" 213). Amber Regis has claimed that this essay is a "blue-print" of sexual frankness, setting the tone for the collection as a whole, "describing homosexual desire with a frank and autobiographical voice" (Regis 213–214). As Regis notes, Symonds's "frank" collection describes two relationships with men — with Dyer in "Clifton and a Lad's Love", and with Zanon in "In the Key of Blue". She asserts that this forms a tension between "celebrat[ing] the body and presence" of Zanon and mourning the "absence and loss" of Dyer (214). However, Symonds's evocation of his relationship with Zanon is even more innovative than Regis credits. His desire to create his experience of "symphonies and harmonies of blue" ("Key" 4) through memories of Zanon articulates his ultimate understanding of long-term intimacy with another man. His relationship with Zanon is revealed to be an amalgamation of the multiple feelings which developed throughout his life of persistent passion. Each poem adds new layers of emotional memories to Zanon, illustrating why

⁵² He claimed that this collection was "representative of the different kinds of work in which I have been principally engaged — Greek and Renaissance Literature, Description of Places, Translation, Criticism, Original Verse [sic]" ("Key" "Preface"). Like Symonds's *Memoirs*, the entire collection contains ideas which range through the various discourses that Symonds studied throughout his life. "Clifton and A Lad's love" describes his relationship with Willie Dyer; "The Dantesque and Platonic Ideas of Love" contains moral defences of Greek love similar to his "Greek Ethics". As Howard J. Booth has demonstrated, "On the Alter-piece by Tiepolo" describes Renaissance art through the mode of male–male desire. See his 2013 essay "John Addington Symonds: Venice and the Gaze" in the Bibliography, "Works Cited".

Symonds feels he is “so loved by me” (“Key” 9). Symonds is not merely expressing homoerotic desire; he is redefining this desire for another man as an experience of sharing the tensions which defined his long-term intimacy.

This reading of the essay is strengthened by the fact that both the images of symphonies and the colour blue were regarded by Symonds as steeped in emotion. A previously unpublished letter written to his daughter Margaret in November 1892, only weeks after finishing work on *In the Key of Blue and Other Prose Essays*, clearly links the image of blue to Symonds’s ambivalence towards his persistent longing for other men.⁵³ Symonds writes that

We went outside the *porto del lido* yesterday and moored ourselves to one of the *pali*. ... The colour was indescribable — so blue, so blue ... looking on all this ... I was not happy. On the contrary, so infinitely sad, restlessly longing, for I know not what ... And indeed, I knew what I was wanting, and at the same time knew that even to want it was vanity, to possess it dust and ashes. (“Letter to Margaret Symonds”)

Symonds’s emphatic memory of blue here leads him to contemplate a tension between heart-breaking beauty and a sad, restless longing, which develops into a thinly veiled expression of his illicit, unquenchable desire. His memory ties the colourful blues of a Venetian sunset to this longing. At this time, Symonds had enjoyed a reciprocated relationship with Zanon for over a year. Yet Symonds’s attention is importantly not attuned to the present moment. He focuses on the tensions between beauty, loss, possession and mourning; enduring remnants of the ambivalences which are developed in his *Memoirs*. Longing is at once a gateway to a heightened sense of beauty, echoing both his earliest dreams and his intimate experiences with Moor and Dyer. Yet he mourns their loss. Desire is also framed as wasting and decaying, a vanity which turns the enfevered body to “dust and ashes”. This evidences Symonds’s continuing anxiety about morbidity when desire is experienced amid a culture that is hostile and prohibitive. Blue appears here as a register of the conflicting

⁵³ It is likely that Symonds’s daughters, like his wife, knew about his homosexual desires. His daughters fought the publication of his *Memoirs* for the rest of their lives.

symphony of these feelings. It encapsulates Symonds's intense ability to feel beauty and his awareness that his subjective experience of beauty and intimacy is created by conflicting emotions.

While blue is equated to intense compounds of feeling, Symonds's conception of symphonies is also tied to three related ideas. First, the amalgamation of different emotions within the impressionist visual symphony. Second, the musical symphony which builds a complex depiction of a protagonist over four movements. Third, Symonds's own conception of the sexual symphony within Walt Whitman's poetry.

Maxwell has analysed Symonds's symphonies of colour in his letters and the late essay *Venetian Melancholy* (1893) as well as in "In the Key of Blue". She claims that Symonds imitates James McNeil Whistler's synchronic, momentary, impressionist symphony to "merge opposing emotions and blur boundaries" (221).⁵⁴ Maxwell asserts that this aesthetic blurring offers a juxtaposition between Symonds's melancholy and his desire for Zanon and other men. Both desire and melancholy are certainly part of Symonds's symphonies. However, Maxwell asserts that Symonds's impressionism is fundamentally indebted only to Whistler's insistence on the "non-narrative of colour studies". She reads this blurring as equally transient: a Paterian "moment" that "briefly lifts Symonds above the inevitability of the conditions and conventions that govern his life" (237). Desire is a momentary flame for Maxwell, the dissipation of which ultimately reaffirms the "conventions" of Victorian culture.

However, Symonds's conception of the symphony is also attuned to the contemporaneous notion of the musical symphony as a developing narrative of emotional complexity. Anthony Newcombe argues that Victorian culture understood musical symphonies as a narrative which gradually constructed a psychological state. He argues that "the conception of music as composed novel, as a psychological true course of ideas, was and is an important avenue

⁵⁴ Maxwell traces a tradition of Impressionist writers from Whistler, Swinburne, Pater, Symons and Lee to Symonds. She asserts that these writers employ visual symphonies in an attempt to "bring together and show the relation or point of intersection between apparently discrepant or even antithetical things" (221).

to the understanding of much nineteenth-century music” (234). Particularly, Newcombe’s analysis of the reviews of Schumann’s 1846 Symphony No. 2 and Beethoven’s Fifth and Ninth symphonies asserts that they were understood “from the outset” as “suffering followed by healing or redemption” (234). Like the musical symphony, Symonds’s repetition of complex “tones”, “blends”, “hues” and “tints” specifies subtle amalgamations of colours which “blur boundaries” (Maxwell 211). However, they not only oppose loss and desire as much as they illustrate how an intimate relationship can be formed out of tensions between loss and desire over the passage of time. Symonds’s colourful memories suggest a far more revolutionary engagement with convention than Maxwell gives him credit for. His symphonies claim that intimacy between men is not only a momentary “lifting” of melancholy. Rather, Symonds is a developing understanding that desire and melancholy define his ongoing experience of love. Symonds’s symphonies produce a “psychological ... course of ideas” (Newcombe 234). Symonds’s symphonies not only blur boundaries between momentary impulses. They harmonise the emotions which define his desire. He articulates his need to share these tensions with Zanon.

Symonds had undergone his own narrative of developing understanding of sex’s important role within intimate relationships. In one of his final texts, *Walt Whitman: A Study* (1893), he argues that sex should be a part of loving comradeship between men. In his reading of Whitman’s poetry, Symonds argues that

sex is ... recognised [in *The Leaves of Grass*] not in the aspect of the boudoir, the alcove, the brothel, but as a base note of the world, the universal Pan, unseen yet omnipresent, felt by all, responded to by all, without which the whole vast symphony would have no value. (*Whitman* 63)

As was noted in the introduction, Whitman’s evocation of passionate male-male comradeship in his poetry is markedly chaste. However, Symonds infers that Whitman advocated sexual connection and desire as the “base note” of loving, productive and virtuous intimacy. Symonds’s earlier “Greek Ethics” had begrudgingly admitted that sex can be part of virtuous love. Yet here he

argues that sex is the centre of intimate understanding, productivity and authenticity between loving partners. Symonds believed that sexual attraction and acts facilitated a broader, complex and stimulating knowledge, which he calls a symphony. The centrality of sexual passion to this emotional symphony was resolutely felt by Symonds but denied by Whitman. In 1889, Symonds had written to the poet. As he later told Edward Carpenter, he had asked whether “semi-sexual emotions and actions which no doubt do occur between men” could be a part of Whitman’s definition of comradeship (“Symonds to Edward Carpenter” 211). Whitman responded with indignant horror, which Symonds also paraphrased. Whitman had stated “that the Calamus [section of *Leaves of Grass*] [sic] could ever have been read that way is repulsive” (213). Symonds’s letter illustrates that he considered sexual passion between men as key to “the whole vast symphony” of individual sensual experience. Whitman’s shocked, although quite possibly disingenuous, response also demonstrates how radical Symonds was to state this outright. Nevertheless, these three definitions of the impressionistic, musical and Whitmanian, sexual symphony are all part of Symonds’s “symphonies of blue” in “In the Key of Blue”. These symphonies represent to Symonds long-term intimacy between men.

Long-term intimacy within “In the Key of Blue”

“In the Key of Blue” is a narrative of ten poems written by Symonds depicting Augusto Zanon in various remembered “symphonies of blue”. Each poem mixes blue with another colour. Each visual symphony carries an emotional significance. Symonds depicts Zanon through a range of emotional images that endure from his *Memoirs*. As each poem sits beside another in the sequence, different emotional memories — morbid longing, chaste, innocent virtue and gratifying sexual passion — amalgamate into a complex synthesis of discrete feelings. As such, Symonds pre-empted Eve Sedgwick’s later imperative to consider how multiple feelings exist besides each other. His sequence of ten poems remembering Zanon narrativises the development of knowledge of an emotional amalgamation over the passage of time. He loves Zanon as he embodies these different emotions and ideas. Symonds’s essay offers an inaugural depiction of a relationship between two men which becomes more

familiar, and typified by the sharing of compounds of emotion, over the passage of time. This expresses his eventual belief that a long-term relationship offers various powerful symphonies of discrete Victorian discourses about homosexual desire.

Symonds's opening three poems amalgamate his youthful memories of longing for a Greek youth, the beauty which is gained through chaste Greek love, and the power of sexual passion to make the dispassionate intimately passionate. In his first poem, Symonds depicts his initial meeting with Augusto, who was "sitting gazing dreamily and tired across the Grand Canal" ("Key" 5):

How blue you were amid that black
[the] ivory pallor of your face ...
Gleamed from the glowing azures black ...
Against the golden gaslight [and]
Grapes of dusky curls your brows embrace. (6)

Symonds's recollection of this meeting recalls a much earlier memory, his childhood dreams of "a beautiful face of a young man, with large blue eyes and waving yellow hair" (*Memoirs* 117). The gas light rings Zanon, both recreating the physical presence of this dream and gesturing to Symonds's ideal of a virtuous lover who would be earnest and tender (117). Moreover, Augusto's tired and dreamy expression articulates a hope that he shares with Symonds this desire for a friend. This image is also redolent of Symonds's own sense of tiredness after a life spent longing, and his tentative belief that he has found a long-sought intimacy. Whether this utopic optimism will be realized is not, for the moment, Symonds's concern. Instead, through evoking the visual specificity of his dream within another, he prioritizes the idea of finding a like-minded lover.

In the second poem, Symonds remembers showing Zanon a world beyond Venice, from which the nineteen-year-old had never travelled. They visited the "Val san Zibio in the Euganean Hills ... that ancient garden of enchantment [filled with] the gush of mountain streams" (6). Symonds depicts Zanon as a "symphony of blues and whites", commenting that "his dress was

now combined with white ... pale as the marge [edge] of morning skies" (7). This evocation of whiteness, together with Symonds's delight in showing Zanon new parts of the enchanting world, evokes a Greek love in which the elder lover instils a "love of all fair things and splendours of the world" in a younger friend (Symonds *Greek Poets* 399). However, like Symonds's refutation of a firm distinction between chaste passion and sexual desire in his *Memoirs*, the third essay within "In the Key of Blue" enfolds eroticised descriptions of men into this idea of intimate beauty.

you rise and clasp a comrade,
who is clothed in triple blues like you ...
sunk in some dream voluptuously ...
languidly breathing you and he ...
[with] ivory face on swart [dark, blushing] face laid
cheek unto cheek, like man, like maid. (8)

Both calling Zanon a comrade and watching his "voluptuous" embrace with another introduces sexual desire as a central element of beauty, the "universal pan ... felt by all within the Whitmanian 'symphony'" (Symonds *Whitman* 63). This sexuality is blended into an appreciation of Zanon's emotional commitment to his friend. They become, through Symonds's ceremonious image of man and maid joined "cheek unto cheek", a symbol of intimate commitment. Zanon is desired physically, yet this desire is partly for a passionate commitment (8).⁵⁵

As Maxwell suggests, Symonds's verse is full of intense, recollected moments. Yet her conception of the Paterian moment arrests the individual in time and disassociates potentially illicit desires for men from the experience of the long term. Symonds's recollections of Zanon's striking beauty are actually associated with a private knowledge that builds over time. The fourth poem, a "symphony of pink and blue", defines Zanon as "blent assures" that are "so loved by me" (9). Over the course of these poems, Symonds has moved from

⁵⁵ Symonds also uses matrimonial imagery to suggest a long-term commitment between men in an undated, privately published pamphlet. Symonds writes: "in rapt interminglement ... both breasts in harmony ... spirits to communion ... neither change or chance nor time nor aught ... shall sunder us ... soul commingling friendship passion wrought" ("Friend" 251). While these instances may be unrelated, Symonds clearly locates an emotional significance in a ceremonial bond between men in both these texts.

the anonymity of first sight into a complex texture of layered memories and experiences which make Zanon familiar and loved. Symonds notices and loves Zanon's "sad, sweet lips, eyes glossy back / now laughing while your cheeks flush" (9). Here, Symonds presents Zanon as emotionally complex, known to be capable of both happiness and sadness. This forms a private knowledge through which Symonds claims to know his lover more intimately than others who may only see a laughing man.⁵⁶ This intimacy is constructed through a self-conscious awareness of the contrasting emotions which harmonize within Zanon's character: he is an "exquisite contrast, not of tone or tint or form or face alone" (10). Intimacy is revealed through tone, tint and form. It is seen and loved within Zanon's face. However, this face of a friend is, too, an amalgamation of different emotions.

The sixth poem interjects this intimacy with a move towards an anxious awareness of morbidity and loss, gesturing to Symonds's awareness of the inevitable melancholy at the heart of illicit, same-sex desire. He comments that "Augusto has nothing to do with the study which I place sixth on my list" (11). Instead, Symonds focuses on describing the browns and blues on the "brows, nude breasts, and arms of might" of strangers (11). However, the absence of Symonds's intimacy with Zanon is conspicuous. This poem strikes a note of loss, intertwining this virile beauty with the likelihood of physical decay: "the pride of youth and manhood white ... proclaim the doom / of labour and its life long-gloom / only the eyes emergent shine" (12). Symonds sees these men and may even desire their "arms of might". Yet they, unlike Zanon, are not touchable, they are not textured by complex emotions which make them known and loved. Their untouchable, unfamiliar status rehearses the vain longing which Symonds recounts in his letter to Margaret Symonds: his belief that the passage of time will waste youth and desire away to "dust and ashes". These fleeting figures act as a foil to his relationship with Zanon. They add an emotional texture which complicates the love between Symonds and Zanon with the persistent awareness of loss. Indeed, this loss may be at the forefront of Symonds's mind when recalling a period in which he and his lover must part.

⁵⁶ It is significant to note that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes her private intimate knowledge of her friend Michael Moon through a similar amalgamation. She describes Moon as both "hilarious" "complicated" and "saturnine" in *A Dialogue on Love* (25).

Zanon is potentially absent because he was with his family. Symonds also, willingly, returned to his own, in Switzerland. The absence of Zanon inverts their intimacy by pre-empting a sense of “gloom” as the seemingly inevitable end of their affair. The eyes of the workers even shine with a fever that borders on Symonds’s recollection of his experience of physical illness. This invests the scene with a persistent worry that enduring desire may be little more than an illness of the mind; a transient experience outside of healthy matrimony. As in his letter to his daughter, Symonds’s voice is “full of hidden want”, as he recollects the hostile discourses of medicine and law which assert that he must, even temporarily, lose his lover. Indeed, Zanon’s absence from this poem draws attention to the possibility of loss which shadows the entire essay. Throughout, Zanon is silent is does not give any sign other than his presence that he returns Symonds’s intimacy. Symonds evokes here the worry that his ideal might still prove “dust and ashes” (Symonds, “Letter to Margaret Symonds”).

Symonds’s penultimate poem of the collection is his final symphony of Zanon. As if to counteract the doubts of the previous poem, Symonds emphasises the mute but tangible intimacy and familiarity which comes from sharing tensions between desire and the anxiety of loss. Symonds states that this poem deals “at last with more actual and kindly human sympathies” (“Key” 13). This final symphony is both physically intimate and emotionally frank. Both Symonds and Zanon react powerfully yet mutely to the “dim, primeval pastoral scene” of the “sleepy town,” Castelfranco (14). Symonds notes that Zanon shares his appreciation of the scenic beauty: he knows that “there throbbed a man’s heart ‘neath the shirt” of his lover. “The sash, the hose, a life alert / veiled by that dominating hurt” (14). Symonds purports to read Zanon’s emotional reaction to the “mute loveliness”, which describes the sleepy town. Yet, this “dominating hurt” here stands also for the enduring, tension-filled feelings of love which Symonds has just described throughout the collection. Symonds’s identifies a comparable secret “thread of love” within Zanon. He emphasises both men’s shared desire for an intimacy that is transgressive, sexual, defined by a heightened awareness of beauty, and by a knowledge that this beauty is strengthened by its enduring resistance to the darkness of loss and absence. Importantly, Symonds pauses on the anticipation of speech. Zanon may speak and share his feelings with Symonds and yet he also does not need to speak.

Symonds invests Zanon's "blouse [of] triple blues", which both hides and reveals his throbbing heart, with the power to share both men's silent desire for long-term intimacy.

It is through an evocation several competing discourses, anxieties and celebrations that Symonds closes his final evocation of Zanon:

Hushed was the night for friendly talk
Under the dark arcades we walk
Pace the wet pavement, where light steals
And swoons amid the huge abeles;
Then seek our chamber, all the blues
Dissolve, the symphony of hues
Fades out of sight and leaves at length
A flawless form of simple strength
Sleep-seeking, breathing, ivory-white
Upon the couch in candle-light. ("Key" 15)

Symonds's evocation of reciprocated "friendly talk" suggests both the continuation of his "long-acquaintance" with Zanon and the enduring presence of his own acquaintance with his past of the "perplexing", "ever-increasingly" intense thread of love for other men (*Memoirs* 182). His evocation of his and Zanon's "hushed" tones, amid the "dark" walks recalls an ongoing presence of anxiety of exposure by a hostile culture. Amid this darkness, light must steal and swoon, linking lust with transgression. However, their intimate "friendly talk" enacts a powerful countering of this external threat as both men share these desires and fear. The unspoken "dominating hurt" symbolises the tensions inherent in Symonds's life-long desire for long-term intimacy. The "hushed tones" of their "friendly talk" both evoke their shared awareness of the need for secrecy, and an ability to confide their desires for long-term intimacy.

This emotional and erotic understanding is consolidated as they "seek our chamber". The night is left behind. The vastness of the dark develops into the shining, loved body of Augusto, "sleep-seeking, breathing, ivory-white". The intensity of the ivory colour certainly suggests desire here, yet this physical lust

is importantly conditioned by the emphasis on the emotional feeling inspired by the body which is “sleep-seeking, breathing”. Symonds prioritises the sense of familiarity evoked by the relaxation and soporific vulnerability of Augusto. This implies his lover’s trust in him. The warmth and closeness of a lover before sleep is far from the erotic potency inherent within sexual acts. Yet it is this subtle emotional situation which Symonds lingers upon. The moment that makes the lovers’ “couch” so suggestive is not centred upon the acts which may take place there. Nor, indeed, is it the present moment of physical contact with which the poem climaxes. Rather, it ends on the beautiful possibility of Symonds and Zanon’s intimacy, sustained by memory and continuing into the future.

In her reading of this moment, Maxwell argues that the “personal element” of Symonds’s desire is prioritized over his impressionist, present-focused aesthetic. She claims that “the union of opposites characteristic of impressionistic writing deliberately undoes itself, tilting towards imbalance as Symonds strategically decides to make the personal and sexual ‘out’ themselves” (Maxwell 241). Yet this intimate end is more appropriately understood as the realisation, not the unbalancing, of Symonds’s visual symphonies of hues and tones of blue. Symonds’s recording of the dissolving blues on Zanon offers an answer to his desire for love, both within this essay and his *Memoirs*. As they “dissolve”, the colours that represent Symonds’s tensions simultaneously amalgamate together and fade. As these feelings are shared, their poignant, abrasive antagonism resolves into a lessening of tension. Enduring memories of anxiety and loss “leaves at length” Zanon and Symonds’s intimacy. Within Symonds’s memory, the ideas that form these tensions still remain, an aesthetic echo of feelings of anxiety, loss and a desire for a tenderness that might end isolation. This visual echo conditions a feeling familiarity between two men. Both Symonds and Zanon share and understand the unspoken, intimate value of the tender secrecy of their couch. It symbolises a trust that mingles with an emotional and physical release of years of isolation. Moreover, Symonds idealises the ability of intimacy to persist. Like the candlelight upon which Symonds closes, this evocation of long-term intimacy both illuminates a present situation in its detail of emotions and colours, and shines out beyond the final lines, promising to endure.

“In the Key of Blue” ends with an evocation of the intimacy and familiarity that Symonds imagined and desired throughout his life. In the final poem of the essay, he ruminates on the aesthetic medium which is most able to depict his relationship with Zanon. He states that “an artist in language must feel the mockery of word-painting” (“Key” 15). He envisages a critical voice crying, “pictures or poems? Dithyramb or prose? / What are they?” He imagines a “more cautious voice murmur[ing] put them by ... time will try” (15). Symonds acknowledges here that his writing is an attempt to capture and explicate an emotional knowledge of a lover which only the passage of time can fully elucidate. Words, ultimately, are only partially able to reveal the intimate compounds of emotion which his long-term relationship with Zanon has constructed. Still, combinations of words are the only things which Symonds feels can attempt to depict his long-term intimacy. He closes the essay by affirming that “something may still be pleaded in favour of verbal description”. He suggests that if words are sufficiently penetrated with emotion, they have “by [their] very vagueness a power of suggestion which the more direct art of the painter often misses” (16). For Symonds, words are able to blend and amalgamate different images. They can suggest a sensation which is more subtle than their constituent descriptive elements. “In the Key of Blue” is Symonds’s ultimate evocation of long-term intimacy as an amalgamation of different feelings which are constructed by the passage of time. Symonds’s late essay captures his intimate perception of the beautiful possibility of sharing a tension-filled past and frank and understanding future. Such a future would leave the darkness of loss and sadness behind. The final poem in Symonds’s collection is, ultimately, aware of the ever-present reality of loss that which is symbolised by the darkness outside of their chamber. Symonds’s ensuing death, of which he was well aware, was approaching. However the weight of this reality is temporarily lightened at this close of the essay. His melancholy is superseded, not by the erotic and emotional moment itself, but by the words he uses to share his desire for, and experience of, long-term intimacy: the painful, mysterious, yet beautiful secret thread of love which persisted with ever-increasing intensity throughout his life.

Chapter Two: Temporal Distance and a Desire for Long-term Intimacy within A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*

But ere the circle homeward hies
Far, far must it remove:
White in the moon the long road lies
That leads me from my love.

A. E. Housman, *A Shropshire Lad* "XXXVI"

This chapter reads a desire for long-term intimacy that is warped by loss and distance within A. E. Housman's first and most famous poetry collection, *A Shropshire Lad* (1896).⁵⁷ Housman's poetry presents a desire for long-term relationships that is complicated by feeling oneself to be exiled irreparably from a lover. Each poem constructs a form of the image that is defined directly in "XXXVI": "the long road ... that leads me from my love" ("Shropshire" 60). Housman's speakers remember lost lovers in homes that cannot be forgotten. Each poem in this collection depicts the speaker's movement forward in time, away from homes that symbolise the ideal of a romantic connection with a beloved individual. Yet each speaker repeatedly imagines these lost homes. Each poem therefore creates a temporal distance, a poetic space that is opened up by the narrative of the poem between the speaker who looks back and their lost home. Across this distance, images of past connections reach the speaker who moves forward in time. Repeated images of home become increasingly complicated with the morbid and enduring realisation of disconnection, as lovers must be left behind but cannot be forgotten.

⁵⁷ Housman's poetry collections, *A Shropshire Lad* (1896), *Last Poems* (1922), *More Poems* (1936) and *Additional Poems* (1937) were published as standalone editions. Subsequently, each collection is referred to here using italicisation appropriate for separate works. However, this thesis uses the single edition, *A. E. Housman Collected Poems and Selected Prose*. Ed. Christopher Ricks. Subsequently, in-text citations referencing these works are upright, in line with MLA guidelines on referencing works within a collection.

Housman's poetry reflects longing as a morbid inversion of long-term intimacy. As the narratives of Housman's individual poems progress, "the road that leads me from my love" redefines home, loving connection and familiarity as an enduring, and ever more painful, experience of disconnection. Homes are initially evoked through floral imagery, familiar landscapes and domestic objects. These images are symbolic of intimate connections between lovers. As images of home repeat throughout a poem, Housman layers this connection with feelings of transgression, loss and death. By the end, images of home are seen across the temporal distance opened out by the passage of time. Filtered through this poetic distance, homes come to represent connection, transgression that ends connection and also the capacity of the memory to endure beyond the loss of physical closeness or emotional reciprocation with a loved individual. Through these gradual, accumulative displacements within imagery of home, different sensations — lust, transgression, loss, morbidity and achingly beautiful melancholy — come to coexist for Housman's speakers. Their lost homes symbolise an increasingly melancholic realisation that they cannot form new intimate knowledges with their partners. They develop feelings of faded intimacy and enforced stillness. His developing images of home chronicle the experience of feeling oneself to know a loved individual less intimately as time passes. The repetitions of images of home in his poetry do not portray new, developing ideas and feelings which can be shared with a lover. They do not constitute a developing familiarity that is facilitated by long-term relationships. Instead, they form an echo chamber in which the forward-moving speaker is plagued by desires for long-term intimacy while realising that they cannot be fulfilled.

It is particularly the rural home that is lost in *A Shropshire Lad*. This image is especially vital for Housman's morbid desire for long-term intimacy on two counts. First, it is tied to a simplified pastoral image of romantic connection and innocence: an unending connection with the natural world in which love and emotional connection appears naturalised. Second, Housman inverts this imagery. The springtime idealisation of growth initially represents the promise of long-term intimacy blossoming. However, this becomes endlessly entangled in autumnal feelings of melancholy. Images of youthful connection gesture to an untimely demise as temporal distance grows. The rural home self-consciously

evokes an idyll of belonging, only to gesture, repeatedly, to its loss. This is also symbolised in the broader significance of Shropshire to Housman's collection. The natural world of *A Shropshire Lad* is imaginary and not real. The geographical topography of Shropshire was only dimly known to Housman, who was born in the neighbouring county of Worcestershire. "I was born in Worcestershire, not Shropshire, where I have never spent much time," Housman admitted in 1933. However, he also professed to have "had a sentimental feeling for Shropshire" from a young age "because its hills were our western horizon" ("To Maurice Pollet" 468). Shropshire was always viewed from a sentimental distance by the poet, and so was ideally placed as a motif through which to represent the loss of an idealised home. The intimate homes imagined by Housman's speakers are sentimental fantasies. The significant thing is that they assume transgressive homosexual desire exiles them from this fantasy.

Housman's poetry is defined by his experience of unreciprocated desire. Symonds defined his desire for long-term intimacy as the complex amalgamation of anxiety, pleasure, morbidity and passion, which was inspired by both unreciprocated and reciprocated attachments. He recorded the sensual feeling of intimacy that develops through the memory of ongoing sexual relationships between men. Housman's desire for long-term intimacy was defined by his unrequited and unspoken desire for a friend called Moses Jackson. Even more specifically, it was defined by the physical loss of Jackson who emigrated to India in 1888. Housman's desire for long-term intimacy never had a physical manifestation. Moses Jackson married in 1889, a year after moving to India, and spent his later life farming in Canada.

In spite of this geographical distance, Housman's longing for emotional intimacy with Jackson persisted. As time passed, his awareness of Jackson developed into a morbid tension which stemmed from the continuation of unrequited desire after loss. In his Lesley Stephen Lecture of 1933 at Trinity College Cambridge, "The Name and Nature of Poetry", Housman described the process through which he wrote *A Shropshire Lad* as a "passive and involuntary ... morbid secretion" (370). He clarified that "I have seldom written poetry unless I was rather out of health, and the experience, though pleasurable, was

generally agitating and exhausting” (370). Housman’s literary expression of long-term intimacy is closely tied to the complex fusion of pleasure, agitation and morbid exhaustion which stemmed from experiencing an unspeakable desire. He did not choose to pursue active love affairs with other men. Rather, he wrote poetry that attempted to articulate the passive and involuntary nature of being exiled from home and from a lover.

Housman deserves a place in a study of long-term intimacy because his experience represents an extreme version of a conundrum that would have been felt by many men who desired men: a knowledge that loving connection and enduring familiarity within a domestic home was realistically unobtainable. Like Symonds, he presents a feeling of desire that is made ever more complicated with the passage of time. Repeating memories makes them textual compounds that reflect this tension between desire and anxiety, possession and loss, idealisation and familiarity. However, his poetry imagines relationships in which the possibility of touch, which animates even Symonds’s most painfully silent urges, is continually replaced by distance. Housman takes Symonds’s idealisation of long-term intimacy between men one step further into a historical reality which often meant that desires were more painful than they were pleasurable. Housman examines what happens to a desire for long-term intimacy when one can never again be intimate with the object of one’s affections.

In his introduction to a publication of Housman’s poetry for the series *Poet to Poet*, Alan Hollinghurst asserts that *A Shropshire Lad* “aches and sighs with loneliness” (5). The enduring, seemingly inevitable tie between homosexual literature, loss and loneliness has been articulated by Gregory Woods in his *A History of Gay Literature* (1998). Woods states that “sadness, loneliness and a tendency to end [in] suicide have been regarded by many — and not only by hostile heterosexuals — as being inherent” in experiences of homosexuality throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (217). This concept of homosexuality as tantamount to the eventual death of love was exacerbated by the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and 1990s. Yet, as Monica Pearl highlights, “the appearance of AIDS among gay men ... was not the first time that

homosexuality in men had been associated with loss, mourning, or death” (8). Pearl’s analysis clarifies a particularly homosexual experience of loss by relating it to a distinction that Freud makes between grief, and melancholia in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917). Pearl states that an inability to let go of what is lost is crucial to both Freud’s melancholia and homosexual experiences of loss. She distinguishes this from Freud’s conception of mourning as a process that ends or at least lessens with the passage of time. She defines homosexual love through Freud’s conception of melancholia, which is an ongoing experience of painful loss (17). She “question[s] the possibility of a ‘return to normalcy’” for homosexual individuals living in prejudicial contexts (17). If same-sex desire is a state that “cannot ... need not or should not, be worked through” (81), then homosexual experiences of loss necessitate an ongoing existence in past relationships that possess no future. This is a formation of loss which invests Housman’s temporal distance with its melancholic, aching power in *A Shropshire Lad*. It is an inability to work through loss, the inability of Housman’s speakers to let go.

Trevor Hold has highlighted the important gender ambiguity of the loves who are left behind in Housman’s poetry, some of whom “could be male, could be female” (109). Others are evidently “lasses”. In 1967, Housman’s brother Laurence published “De Amicitia” [Of Friendship],⁵⁸ his account of Housman’s friendship with Jackson; since then, critics and biographers have overwhelmingly read the appearance of lasses in *A Shropshire Lad* as Housman’s attempt to fit his sexuality to a conventional heterosexual template.⁵⁹ Housman’s need to obscure homosexual desire within the collection is, for Keith Jebb and Carol Efrati, the significant point about his sexuality. As Jebb states: “we know that Housman was a homosexual. We don’t know for sure if he

⁵⁸ This thesis cites from Laurence Housman’s draft of his essay on the diaries and Housman’s friendship with Jackson, “De Amicitia”, which was published in *Encounter* in 1967. The draft is housed at the British Library in London, ref Add. Ms. 45861.

⁵⁹ Carol Efrati lists the following Housman biographies which acknowledge his homosexuality: in George L. Watson’s *A. E. Housman: A Divided Life* (1957), Watson “suspected that Housman was homosexual and aired his suspicions in his book” (Efrati 15); Maude M. Hawkins’s *A. E. Housman, Man Behind the Mask* (1958) “was written with the active input of Laurence Housman” (Efrati 15). She also mentions Richard Percival Graves’s *A. E. Housman: The Scholar-Poet* (originally published 1979), Norman Page’s *A. E. Housman: The Critical Biography* (1985) and Keith Jebb’s *A. E. Housman* (1992) (Efrati 15–16). See Bibliography, “Works Consulted”. Since Efrati’s work, two new biographies, by Peter Parker and Edgar Vincent, have been published; these are discussed below.

practiced homosexuality, although we don't know for sure that he never did. And it doesn't matter" ("Land" 37). Jebb argues that what matters is Housman's poetic production of "a latent guilt which shadows" *A Shropshire Lad* (38): Housman's sense that desire is inevitably followed by transgression and exile.

Efrati also argues that "the spectre of the [Housman's] tormented, forbidden, and dangerous, sexuality ... must be hidden from society" (42). She claims that within his poetry this secrecy creates "tensions between the mode of expression" and "underlying" homoerotic urges (33).⁶⁰ Efrati highlights that Housman evokes a tension between desire and loss, which is caused by the unmentionable status of homosexuality. Jebb argues that homosexuality becomes the "lost content" of Housman's verse: "something whose [sic] expression is made impossible from the outset," and which changes "the nature of expression itself" ("Land" 42). Both critics emphasise that Housman's secret homosexual desires warps the idea of expression into an evocation of being unable to express desire openly. This chapter develops this line of thought, arguing that the unspeakable spectre of homosexuality turns images of connection — rural and romanticised imagery of loves and homes — into an evocation of the impossibility of familiarity.

Efrati and Jebb highlight images which are complicated by Housman's homosexuality — soldiers, flowers, suicide and death, and pastoralism are all complicated by guilt in their analyses. If he had not published shortly before Efrati and Jebb, Clarence Lindsay could have had their works in mind when he argued that "in varying ways, [Housman's] critics all subscribe to what [Christopher] Ricks called 'the tug of contraries,' [but they] don't tell us exactly what is tugging" (334). Lindsay specifies that Housman uses the narrative of individual poems to create a juxtaposition of feelings. He suggests specifically that Housman's speakers are conflicted by a developing awareness of the collapse of romanticism. Lindsay defines romanticism as a "Wordsworthian" individual self expressing its "hunger for perfection and its dissatisfaction with

⁶⁰ One example given by Efrati is Housman's repeated evocation of a psychical "trouble". "Trouble", Efrati claims, "initially appears as a general, all-encompassing [sic] term" yet its subsequent specifications as "cursed trouble" (Housman "More" 21), "the ancient evil" (Housman "Additional Poems" 12) that the "stars have dealt me" ("Additional" 17) defines a homoerotic trouble that cannot be directly alluded to (Efrati 48).

imperfect life" (334). Not to be confused with the school of Romanticism, Lindsay's definition captures a broader, melancholic yearning for art as a corrective to life's "imperfections" (336). Rather than rehearsing this tradition, he asserts that Housman's poetry captures the "revolutionary moment" of the collapse of this ideal: "a divided consciousness" between a "rational self that has made the discovery" of romantic longing and "a sort of empathy, perhaps even compassion, but not a trace of nostalgia" for what is lost (336). Lindsay dismisses here what Svetlana Boym has called "restorative nostalgia", the desire to return to and "rebuild" the past (Boym 41). As Lindsay demonstrates in his reading of *A Shropshire Lad* "XX", Housman's "silly lad" who looks into a lake initially desiring "death's perfection" knows he cannot return to a state of pre-realisation. Lindsay states that he learns to think of his own idealising of Narcissus as "silly", naïve, far less interesting in itself than the speaker's contemplation of why his reality leads him to long for a romantic ideal. As such, Lindsay highlights that Housman's imagery develops through this "moment" of self-reflection; the reflected images of a world that appears "fairer far" are replaced by the "azure mires" which form the mirror of the speaker's melancholy. It is the reflection of this lost ideal that Lindsay argues is the "engine for many of Housman's individual poems" (337).

However, Lindsay's description of "revolutionary moment" achieves what Boym calls "reflexive nostalgia", which demonstrates that the "act of being nostalgic ... shatter[s] fragments of memory and temporalizes space"; this nostalgia is "enamoured by distance not [the] time [which is yearned for] itself" (49). This chapter develops Lindsay's "revolutionary moment" into a temporal distance by applying Boym's concept of "reflexive nostalgia" to Housman's verse. Lindsay does not acknowledge, as Boym's reflexive nostalgia requires, the importance of the emotional distance between memory and present. Housman's speakers' feel themselves to be continually, permanently exiled from a romantic ideal. For Lindsay, Housman's rejected romanticism is the ideal of artistic perfection. However, as Efrati and Jebb state, the presence of personal loss, homoerotic guilt and personal desires for intimacy should not be overlooked in any account of Housman's romanticism. Therefore, this chapter asserts, instead, that Housman's speakers are personally conflicted with the

loss of, and nostalgic desire for, an idealised long-term intimacy with loved individuals. They symbolise a homoerotic and transgressive desire. This means that ongoing attachment to this ideal leads to reflexive shattering. As speakers move along the “road that leads me from my love” (“Shropshire” 60), the homes remembered by each speaker increasingly highlight disconnection. Housman’s narratives warp the image of the idealised home. As they repeat in the reflected, initially ideal, poetic surface, homes and lovers become increasingly shattered by loss, then rebuild into amalgamation of continued connection and painful disconnection. Housman’s poetry develops a distance which initially creates these compounds and then allows them to exacerbate this particular “tug of contraries” which stems from lost love (Ricks, qtd. in Lindsay 334).

Housman’s poetic output consists of four small volumes: *A Shropshire Lad*, *Last Poems*, *More Poems* and *Additional Poems*.⁶¹ *More Poems* and *Additional Poems* were published after his death. Housman attributed the genesis of *A Shropshire Lad* and *Last Poems* to Moses Jackson: the former was precipitated by Jackson’s emigration to India, and the latter by his death. The poems that were published in Housman’s lifetime made him famous.⁶² They were far less directly homoerotic than the collections published after his death. *More Poems* and *Additional Poems* were edited and published by his brother and literary executor, Laurence Housman — himself a member of the Order of Chaeronea, a group of homosexuals dedicated to legal reform. As Jebb states, “making his homosexual brother literary executor virtually guaranteed the posthumous publication” of poetry which Housman thought too directly incriminating to publish in his lifetime (49). “XVIII” in *Additional Poems* references a “men being sent to jail” for something as arbitrary as the “colour of their hair”: or indeed their sexual preference, as the poem presents the conviction of a sinner for something he cannot help. Keith Jebb asserts that this poem is “clearly about the Wilde Trials” (39). *Additional Poems* also identifies the speaker’s beloved with a male pronoun. “VII” is only a fragment, but is startlingly revealing:

⁶¹ The twenty-three poems in Housman’s “Additional Poems” were originally published in Laurence Housman’s biography of his brother, *A. E. H.* (1937).

⁶² Housman was not a poet by profession. He was a professor of Classics at University College London from 1892, and at Cambridge’s Trinity College from 1911. One could say that he occasionally moonlighted as a poet. As such, his poetic output is slight, but startlingly enduring considering its infrequency.

He would not stay for me, and who can wonder?
He would not stay for me to stand and gaze
I shook his hand, and tore my heart in sunder,
And went with half my life about his ways. (205)

This evocation of a handshake followed by a parting that tears the speaker's heart, effectively leaving half with a lover who will move away forever, is deeply evocative of the enduring sense of disconnection which forms temporal distance. Yet, because of its indirectness, *A Shropshire Lad* offers a much more fruitful and faithful evocation of Housman's personal experience of long-term intimacy. As the following discussion of Housman's diaries will show, the specific imagery through which Housman evokes the Shropshire of his poetry is intimately tied to his own, enduring, hidden and morbid experience of desire. This experience is a grappling with a melancholic memory of connection which is articulated through compounded imagery of lost homes, rather than directly stated. Where *A Shropshire Lad* loses directness of homoerotic content in comparison to his later poems and fragments, it gains an unrivalled expression of his passive acceptance of his unspeakable unrequited desire, amalgamated with his inability to forget.

The following chapter explores the creation of temporal distance within Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* and the diaries that influenced that poetry. There is not enough space here to analyse temporal distance as it appears in each of Housman's richly symbolic poems. Therefore, the chapter focuses on analysing a repeated structure that Housman uses to make the narrative of each poem symbolise an emotionally complex distance: an evocation of an idealised, loving home that is complicated by distance and longing. It opens by demonstrating how Housman's own experience of a home shared with Jackson, his exile from this home and his distance from Jackson develops his evocation of temporal distance within his diaries, kept between 1888 and 1891. Particularly, it demonstrates that these diaries intertwine three images: faded flowers and trees, the loss of a lover, and the wind. These images are then read within *A Shropshire Lad*. The close readings of *A Shropshire Lad* open with an analysis of Housman's use of springtime imagery to evoke the ideal of home. The

dominant tropes through which Housman creates temporal distance then complicate this home. First, it analyses his use of meter to evoke a movement away from home that accents images of desire and home while also moving speakers forward to unavoidably melancholic distortions of this imagery. Second, it analyses Housman's repeated evocation of the death of the speaker as an enforced continuation of longing for home when touch is no longer possible. Across the temporal distance that is created by these two tropes, Housman's image of the wind is, third, presented as a metaphor for his speakers' complicated, long-term connections to homes that have been left behind. In these connections, different emotions are presented as existing besides each other within Housman's morbid longing for home.

Housman's exile from home

Housman's poetic evocations of an exile from a home and from a loved individual comes from personal experience. In 1883, at the age of twenty-three, Housman moved into 82 Talbot Street, London, with his "oldest friend" Moses Jackson, while both men worked at the Patent Office as civil servants. However, Housman and Jackson's cohabitation was short-lived. Following what is generally supposed to be a sudden quarrel, Housman disappeared from Talbot Street for almost a week, before finding new lodgings in Byron Cottage, 17 North Road, Highgate, in the autumn of 1884. As Parker recounts, Housman's brother and first biographer, Laurence, claimed that Housman had revealed his homoerotic feelings for Jackson, and that his heterosexual friend had "*shied away from the full implication, knowing that he could not share it in kind*" (Parker 63; LH's italics).⁶³ Later, in 1958, Laurence claimed, "I still think that there was more mutual attraction between [Jackson and Housman] than [is given] credit for" (qtd. in Vincent 49). Edgar Vincent, however, rejects Laurence Housman's belief that Housman told Jackson directly about his feelings. He states:

⁶³ Peter Parker quotes from Laurence Housman's "De Amicitia", which was published in *Encounter* in October 1967.

Housman was in the grip of something he shrank from admitting and could not pursue further. Whatever the nature or the genesis of the event, Housman's declaration [to Jackson that precipitated a disagreement] could not have been of an open or frank, let alone passionate or suggestive, nature, because Moses himself was puzzled as to what Housman's departure was all about. (51)

Such puzzlement was recorded in Jackson's letter to Housman's father, informing him that his son was missing from Talbot Street. While it is impossible to know the extent of the altercation or discussion which led to Housman absenting himself from his home, the documentary evidence, or rather the lack of any written admission of Housman's feeling validates Vincent's interpretation. Parker writes that "If Housman provided any explanation when he returned a week later, none was ever recorded" (63). The lack of evidence suggests Housman could not tell Jackson about his feelings and left because, for either moral or personal reasons, his desire was unactionable. While the two men remained friends, this separation was lasting. As Vincent writes, "after two or three years" at the Patent Office, "Jackson [had] become sufficiently discontented with his work and prospects to think of seeking a new life and career abroad" (48). He would soon leave Housman, and England, behind.

Housman asserted that his relationship with Jackson was the inspiration behind *A Shropshire Lad*. A. C. Benson, Housman's contemporary at Cambridge, where Housman was a Fellow at Trinity, reported that in March 1925, some twenty-nine years after *A Shropshire Lad* was first published, Housman stated that "his first poems [*A Shropshire Lad*] was caused by a deep personal attachment which lasted 15 years and left a deep mark on him" (Naiditch 142). Housman himself concurred: in 1933, he wrote to Maurice Pollet, following the latter's "flattering enquiry" about Housman's earlier adolescent years. Housman told Pollet that "I did not begin to write poetry in earnest until the really emotional part of my life was over" ("To Maurice Pollet" 469). Jackson emigrated to India in October 1888. The majority of the poems in *The Shropshire Lad* were written in 1895, fifteen years after Housman had met Jackson. Indeed, while Housman went on to become a classicist at University College London and later at Cambridge, he would recall his education in the

classics at Oxford as far less significant than the university's role in introducing him to Jackson. In the same letter to Pollet, Housman stated that "Oxford had not much effect on me, except that I met there my greatest friend" (469). As Jebb comments, "so much does seem to depend on [the] one crystallising event" of Housman's friendship with Jackson (48), a friendship which endured beyond their separation.

Housman's relationship with Jackson stands as the model for the home's continuing emotional significance to the speakers in *A Shropshire Lad*. While Housman moved out of Talbot Street, he did not forget Jackson. Housman and Jackson continued their friendship until the year of Jackson's death, 1922. Housman's ongoing attachment to Jackson proved significant and beyond the remit of standard international correspondences between old university friends. It inspired a friend of Housman's from the Patent Office days, John Maycock, to write a letter which Housman kept for the rest of his life; it was discovered by Laurence Housman in his brother's personal effects after his death. In the letter, dated 15 June 1892, four years after Jackson emigrated to India, Maycock wrote: "no one would ever hope for a better friend ... I have seen how you have stuck to Jackson. I mean stick to him in the sentimental sense of not forgetting about him even though he is out of your reach" (qtd. in Parker 142). Indeed, this loving sentimentality endured beyond Jackson's death. Laurence Housman claimed to have seen "proof" of Housman's decades-long love for Jackson in 1931–32, four years before Housman's death in 1936. "In Alfred's room in Trinity College, Cambridge," he wrote in "De Amicitia", the essay on their friendship published in *Encounter* in 1967, a "portrait of Jackson hung [over] the fireplace". He asked Housman who the picture represented and "in a strangely moved voice [Housman] answered, 'that was my friend Jackson, the man who had more influence on my life than anyone else'" ("Autograph" 18–19).⁶⁴

The fact that Housman momentarily shared a home with another man whom he desired is not especially unique. As Matt Cook demonstrates in *Queer Domesticities: Homosexuality and Home Life in Twentieth-Century London*

⁶⁴ Housman's draft of *De Amicitia*, cited by this thesis, is referenced in the Bibliography under the title given to it by the British Library: "Autograph draft of the article by Laurence Housman, written between 1939 and 1942".

(2014), middle-to-upper-class men in the late-Victorian period could share homes with men either in bachelor apartments in London, like those on Talbot Street, or in the undergraduate apartments at Oxford or Cambridge University.⁶⁵ Neither was an association between homosexual desire and exile from home unique to Housman. As was mentioned in the Introduction, H. G. Cocks reminds us that images of homosexual scandal, while infrequent, were scandalous enough to consolidate an image of homosexual desire as deviant and opposed to home life. The Cleveland Street Scandal in 1888 and the Wilde trials in 1895 both framed homosexual acts as taking place in semi-public meeting houses and hotels. As Matt Cook asserts, homosexual men

had a deeply equivocal relationship with the home and the family. They could not quite be fully admitted to a place and an ideal which went right to the heart of the ideas of home, Englishness and good citizenship with their undomesticated passions, they were often considered as a threat to these things. (*Queer* 3)

Homosexual desire often led to feelings of exile and homelessness, which were further substantiated by the fact that most men had to seek sexual relationships in public settings. The criminal acts of sodomy and gross indecency were often associated in the popular culture of this period with the experience of vagrancy and homelessness. The 1898 Vagrancy Act, legislated two years after the publication of *A Shropshire Lad*, responded to the perceived need for “new measures against male importuning in public” (Cook *Queer* 24).⁶⁶ Homosexual desire was seen as taking place outside homes defined by stability and familial love. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Housman’s desire internalised both anxiety about exposure and the assumption that homosexual desire meant being exiled from home.

What is particular about Housman’s portrayal of this exile in his poetry is the way in which the lost home continually looms large on the past horizon.

⁶⁵ Housman and Jackson met because their rooms shared the same staircase at St John’s College, Oxford.

⁶⁶ Cook demonstrates that, as late as 1967, during a speech in defence of the decriminalisation of homosexuality, Sir Anthony Grey attempted to convince the House of Commons that “it isn’t only the homeless, the wanderer or the drop out who [experiences] sexual deviancy” (25).

Housman's poetry directly responded to contemporary scandals, and the anxiety that they posed, by emphasising the endless nature of unmentionable desire. Poem "XLIV" in *A Shropshire Lad* is entitled "Shot? So Quick an Ending". The poem depicts a young man who commits suicide due to "an ill that's not for mending", a fear of exposure of homosexual desire. As Housman's narrative voice comments, he "saw your road and where it led" ("Shropshire" 70). While homosexuality is not definitively mentioned in the poem, the reference to same-sex attraction is more than conjecture: Housman kept the place of the poem in his copy of *A Shropshire Lad* with a newspaper cutting depicting the death of a Woolwich cadet who feared exposure in the months following the Wilde trials (Jebb 39). The poem satirizes a conventional Victorian morality that would advocate suicide rather than the pursuit of homosexual urges: "that was right, lad, that was brave" ("Shropshire" 70). Yet Housman questions whether even suicide could end illicit, unwanted desire. While he advises the departed lad to turn "safe to rest, no dreams, no waking" he ends by bequeathing his own poem of illicit desire to the cadet and promises that it "will not fade". His own exile from home implies that Housman gave credit to the route of disavowal and abstention that he openly satirizes in his poem, yet he also frames physical loss of love with a much longer transgressive afterlife. While the prevalence of scandals made homosexual actions seemingly impossible, Housman was well aware that transgressive desire does not have "so quick an ending". One could leave homes behind far more easily than one could forget them.

Housman remains, then, caught in a tension between a desire for familiarity with another man, an anxiety about exposure and an endless experience of loss. Housman's life-long attachment to Jackson suggests an enduring longing for a stable, continuous home with the person he loved. Yet his experience of unrequited, illicit love located him outside the possibility of actually maintaining a domestic relationship. The image of Jackson, hung on Housman's wall, represents a longing that cannot be forgotten or acted upon. It is repeatedly lost as fear of transgression and exposure makes touch and contact impossible. The ideal to which Housman remained attached was experienced as a past that could only be longed for: a form of loss and distance. This in turn transforms desire into a prolonged mediation on the failure

of distance to end transgressive desire. This realisation is the core of the experience of temporal distance which he went on to create in his diaries between 1888 and 1891.

“The parting of their ways”: Housman’s diaries and temporal distance

There is an archival source that is vital for understanding how Housman specifically negotiated unrequited desire for Jackson through an amalgamation of time and distance. This relationship is illustrated in a diary that Housman kept between 1888 and 1891, which remained with him until his death in 1936. Housman’s brother and literary executor, Laurence, found them in Housman’s Cambridge rooms following his death. These diaries have no more than thirty-one entries of a few lines each.⁶⁷ All the entries are recorded in Appendix A. (Laurence Housman noted that “in these diaries, nothing whatsoever was entered of a personal character [i.e. concerning Housman’s daily actions] except what had to do with Alfred’s association with his friend Jackson” (“Autograph” 11). Housman used the diaries to mark the ever-increasing geographical distance between himself and Jackson, noting the progress of the ships bearing Jackson to the other side of the world in 1888. Once Jackson’s journey was completed, Housman used the 1889–91 diaries to record the scant news he heard of Jackson at infrequent intervals — “His son was born”, “He was married”, “Wrote to him by today’s mail”, “Nightingale has not heard from him” all appear. While the diaries have been available to researchers since 1967 at the British Library, their absence is conspicuous in the critical studies mentioned above. But for Housman’s two most recent biographers, the diaries

⁶⁷ Calling for Add. Ms. 45861 in the Manuscripts reading room at the British Library brings three documents, listed separately as: “A. E. Housman’s Diary for 1888”; “Pages extracted from A. E. Housman’s Diaries by Laurence Housman” and “Autograph draft of an article by A. E. Housman”. Together, these three documents are also listed as “Dairies of A. E. Housman” by the British Library and this title is used in the Bibliography. “A. E. Housman’s Diary for 1888” is a single A5-sized ‘week-per-view’ diary for 1888. “Pages extracted from A. E. Housman’s Diaries by Laurence Housman” is an A4 bound collection of the fragments remaining of the 1889–91 diaries. The contents of four diaries are placed together in Appendix A. As Parker notes, the 1889–91 diaries were “presumably torn from their bindings by Laurence Housman” (66). Because the 1888 diary is the only complete diary, it is only possible to say that “most of the pages of these pocket books”, those measuring the time passing between significant dates concerning Jackson, “appear to have been left blank” (Parker 66). Yet the 1888 diary stands as an evocative example suggesting that Housman probably used all these diaries for the solitary purpose of recording Jackson’s movements and his correspondence with him. This is even more likely given that Housman is not known to have kept other diaries (Parker 66).

form a key text in their definition of his long-term, unrequited and unspoken desire for Jackson. In *Housman: Hero of the Hidden Life* (2018), Vincent emphasises the increasing distance which the diaries evoke:

[Housman's] meticulous recordings of Moses Jackson's voyage in the steamships *Bokhara* and *Mongolia*, reinforced by his lunches with [Jackson's brother] Adelbert [which are also noted] represented a poignant imaginative stalking of Moses through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, through the Gulf of Aden and then north-east across the Arabian sea to Karachi. (51)

Housman is portrayed here as imaginatively stalking Jackson. Vincent frames his 1888 diary's evocation of geographical distance as a pained, almost health-threatening fixation. In *Housman Country: Into the Heart of England* (2016) Parker claims that "the cumulative effect of many blank pages is desolating" (67). He comments that "the occasional tiny proof of a life continuing elsewhere" which the diaries record in a "compressed, uninflected, almost unspoken way [is] as eloquent as the poems Housman would later write" (67). Parker claims that Housman's compression of so much feeling into such small extracts testifies to a powerful connection which he felt with a life elsewhere. Parker's highlighting of Housman's eloquent compression of feeling into words also suggests that it was only through the diary that Housman could articulate the desolating force of a loss that could not be voiced. In "De Amicitia" Laurence Housman also noted the striking, emotional effect of reading the singular-minded diaries. He said that they record "with strange brevity ... not the breaking of a friendship (for that never happened) but the parting of their ways when from daily intercourse they passed to the separation of the years" (11).

Laurence Housman, Parker and Vincent all use these diaries to construct a picture of a desolated intimacy experienced as a mixture of a desire to connect and an awareness that the chance for connection has passed. They construct Housman's life-long attachment to Jackson as an eloquent portrayal of the feeling of continually being unable to speak to a lover yet being unable to stem the flow of these feelings as they persist through years and reach across a distance that is ever increasing. Yet they do not fully explicate the vital role that

these diaries play in constructing the melancholic imagery of flowers, trees and homes which fill *A Shropshire Lad*. This chapter will provide such an analysis, firmly linking Housman's diaries with his poetry. The sparse diaries record the apex of Housman's contemplation of distance, loss of a loved individual, and the ways in which remembering this loss inverts images and memories of connection into a morbid desire for long-term intimacy. The diaries record both Housman's loss of connection and his enduring "imaginative stalking" of Jackson, which only serves to highlight the distance between himself and his beloved. This provides a manifesto for the manipulation of images of home within his poetry: the shattering of the romantic ideal of home and its rebuilding as a compound of enduring, unreciprocated attachment.

The first thing one realises when looking at the diaries recorded in Appendix A is that they depict a loss of intimacy with Jackson. The diary entries of 1888 concerning Jackson's voyage articulate a transition from Housman's certain knowledge of Jackson's movements to hearsay. They begin with the factual movements of the ships carrying Jackson to India in January 1888: the *Bokhara* as far as Port Said and the *Mongolia* to Bombay. Housman recorded the exact times of the movements of these ships on 13 and 25 January 1888. This suggests that he verified this information independently rather than relying on information from Jackson. During the latter part of Jackson's journey and following his arrival at his new home in Karachi, Housman records a vicarious proximity to Jackson through lunch arrangements with his brother Adalbert. On 8 July 1888, Housman notes with a barely concealed jealousy that his friend Nick Nightingale receives a letter from Jackson before he does. Housman's jealousy is intimated by his noting the intimate language used: "my dear Nightingale". The two letters he writes to Jackson in this period — on 14 December 1888 and 28 June 1889 — remain painfully unanswered. In 1889, Housman records his meetings with Jackson during the latter's return to England with the intention of marrying Rosa Chambers. Housman found out about the wedding after the fact; he returned to 9 December 1890 to mark the date of the ceremony, after hearing of it on 7 January. Housman notes Jackson's repeated delay to this journey back to India: "He meant to go home today" on 20 November, "He was meant to sail" on 7 December. This records an uncertainty concerning his friend's plans. Ultimately, these notes reveal a

developing sense of disconnection from his friend. As Jackson moves into his adult life of heterosexual marriage, family and duty, he moves from certain knowledge to second-hand news, and the diaries detail Housman's sense of loss. This is a loss that, arguably, began when Housman exiled himself from their Talbot Street home.

However, the diaries also illustrate that Housman's attachment to Jackson endured beyond disconnection and geographical distance. There is evidence that Housman returned to these diaries, curating a time capsule of tidings from Jackson. He returned to past dates to note things he learnt later, as on 25 January 1888, for which he updates his note on the landing time of the *Mongolia*. His note dating Jackson's marriage on 9 December 1889 also illustrates that he reviewed its contents, adding detail to the history of his ongoing relationship with Jackson after his departure. He also uses the 1891 diary to record the final time he met Jackson in person. On the page for Friday 22 May, Housman wrote a note seven years after the textual date: "1898 10.45p.m. said goodbye" [sic]. Housman does not mention saying goodbye to Jackson on any other occasion, which could suggest that he was here marking a final event as specifically moving. The particular mentioning of the time of day, again untypical of Housman's other messages, focuses on the specific moment of departure as his friend "went with half my heart along his ways" ("Additional" 205). The presence of a seven-year gap between the final two entries suggests that Housman's last comment was written after the event and following a moment of melancholic reflection. This final entry is proof, in any case, that Housman kept the diary close to him. What is clear from Housman's revisions and later entries is that his dairies become a textual archive of emotions which marries a continual thirst for knowledge of Jackson with an increasing record of a loss of correspondence and emotional closeness. These entries become "desolating" due to their "strange brevity" (Parker 67; Laurence Housman 11). The vast blank gaps between the entries emphasise a temporalisation of space (Boym 48). The diaries construct what Boym calls a reflexive nostalgia, a growing awareness of the gap between a past defined by connection and a present defined by loss. This gap reflects the prolonged agony of Jackson's distance. This temporal distance is not merely geographical. It is a loss of emotional connection and an awareness that such connection cannot take

place again. Housman's tendency to review these pages articulates the author's continuing to look back at entries which come to record a loss of intimate proximity and closeness.

Housman's diaries also record the bloom, decay and weathering of trees in his diary (see Appendix A). This floral and arboreal imagery provides a bridge between Housman's loss of Jackson and his poetry within *A Shropshire Lad*. Housman's notions of the natural world are intimately tied to the notes Housman makes about Jackson. They appear either on or in close proximity to the few mentions of Jackson which Housman records in the diary. The absence of arboreal notes in the months that Housman was not in contact with Jackson suggests that they must be read as related to Housman's thoughts concerning his friend. The first mention appears in the opening excerpt of the 1889 diary, on 28 June. Housman notes "elder fadings mostly" on the same day that he "posted letters to him [Jackson]". Housman's use of "fadings mostly" evokes a sense of loss. It reverses the notion of summer bloom into a deterioration of life. This weariness reflects on the sent letter too, making it emphasise the fading of his intimacy with Jackson. On 23 October 1889, the day after meeting Jackson for lunch during his return visit, Housman notes that the "Hawthorne and Lilac" are "by no means bare". Again, his wording is suggestive. He records a surprising absence of bareness. This connotes an ironic surprise at the bloom of life, despite it being autumn. The comment recreates the momentary euphoria of Housman being reunited with his friend. However, his emphasis on floral and arboreal fullness is attuned to checking his own emotional effervescence, preparing him for the coming bareness of Jackson's departure. He also reflects a sense of loss through the image of leaves thinning amidst turbulent winds on 6 and 7 November. This comes a week after hearing of the birth of Jackson's son and a day before writing to him. The thinning of the trees suggests a renewed depletion of spirits.

As has been noted, Parker and Vincent have joined Laurence Housman in labelling these diaries as significant in determining Housman's ongoing attachment to Jackson. Yet these writers did not acknowledge Housman's notes on flowers and trees. This is a significant oversight, one that is corrected by this chapter. Housman's arboreal images correspond with either contact with

Jackson or a stark awareness of the geographical and emotional distance which separates him from Jackson, now a husband and father in India. This makes it difficult to ignore the elements of pathetic fallacy at play in their brief notations. They gather too closely, too relatedly, around moments in which Jackson was on Housman's mind. Moreover, flowers carry on being mentioned after Housman stops recording direct correspondence with Jackson. As news from Jackson becomes less direct and received through others, the arboreal notes increase. Subsequently, the flowers and trees provide a commentary on the scarce notes concerning Jackson: they reflect Housman's imagining of the passage of time which continues to separate him from Jackson. These notes are certainly sparse. Yet, as Laurence Housman and Parker argue, sparsity is the prevailing poignancy of the entire document. The absence of all events except those which oscillate around infrequent contact with Jackson turns the diary into an inversion of itself. Rather than recording the quotidian developments of each day, it traces the moments in which Housman finds himself caught in a contemplation of the past. The images of trees and flowers enfold Housman in an emotional contemplation of temporal distance. Rather than articulating growth, the natural world gestures back to the comments made about Jackson, and his loss to Housman. The diary becomes a textual space which inverts the normal passage of time, making the natural world look back to loss. Yet the diary's narrativization of loss — its noting of a fading of intimacy — also uses images of the natural world to emphasise a growing feeling of morbidity as Housman continually returns to the past. The fading trees represent the increasingly morbid poignancy of a memory that can no longer take place again.

This morbidity is linked to the image of home in the notebooks containing fragments of Housman's poetry written before 1896. One fragment reads:

the thing that never is again
the house that none rebuild
where alone on the bed he lies (Haber 36)

Housman's evocation of the house here is resolutely located in a past which will "never" be again. Yet his speaker's lamentation that none can rebuild

this space constitutes his own imagination of the house. The three lines culminate in an image of a male individual — labelled “he”, like Jackson in the diary. A vast temporal space opens between Housman’s speaker and this figure who is located in the past. The poem records an intimate, subjective imagining, locating the speaker in the bedroom of the sleeping figure. It also resigns this moment of connection to the past. Together, Housman’s notations of Jackson and his floral and arboreal images create the same tension. The fading trees relocate Housman’s thoughts to the memories which are painstakingly recorded in the diary. These memories both depict moments of closeness to Jackson and detail the separation of the years. Like the “house that none rebuild”, Housman cannot return to them. Yet, through writing, he inevitably does return. However, it is the stark contemplation of loneliness and loss that greets him, in the form of a lover who is now insurmountably separated from him. The editor of *The Manuscript Poems of A. E. Housman*, Tom Burns Haber, dates this fragment “before 1890”, aligning this evocation of home with Housman’s diaries and their creation of temporal distance. This fragment is also the precursor of images of homes and flowers in *A Shropshire Lad*.

“Spring was made for lass and lad”: Flowers and the loss of home in *A Shropshire Lad*

The homes from which Housman’s speakers are exiled are initially symbolised by imagery of rural courtship and the springtime landscapes in which adolescent romance takes place. Particularly, flowers symbolise loving and erotic romances between “lads” and “lasses” and represent the possibility of partaking in both familiar and romantic routines. Springtime flowers encapsulate the idealised possibility of remaining in close proximity to a loved individual. The initial poems of *A Shropshire Lad*, “I” to “X”, use flowers to define home as a space which facilitates emotional connection. “Oh see how thick the goldcup flowers / Are lying in field and lane”, begins “V” — a sure sign that “spring was sent for lad and lass” (“Shropshire” 27). The images of flowers are vital here, tied to the sense of growth and youth promised by spring. These fields and lanes are idealised as spaces within which love will, similarly, grow. In “X”,

entitled “March”, “at home at noonday from the hills / [boys] bring no dearth of daffodils” (32).

Efrati reads Housman’s floral imagery in *A Shropshire Lad*’s “XIX”, entitled “To an Athlete Dying Young”, as symbolic of either the transience of desire, or its immortality. She states that “the rose crowned maiden will decay, but the laurel crowned youth will remain unwithered” (106). However, Housman’s idealisation of the immortality of the image of an eroticised athlete, reminiscent of the ideal of Greek love in Victorian culture, is more anomalous than synoptic of his evocations of flowers. Housman’s evocation of flowers in *A Shropshire Lad* is more often part of a wider natural, seasonal discourse with its juxtaposed rhythms of loss and new growth. Flowers evoke the ever-continuing decay of loss, followed by the bloom of spring.

Thus, the image of fading flowers appears throughout the collection. The third and fourth lines of “V” introduce “dandelions to tell the hours / That are never told again”. This floral fading frames the springtime that joins lass and lad as transient. The poem closes, “what is life but a flower / why must true lovers sigh” — a couplet that reads the end of intimacy as inevitable. In “X”, the speaker who describes the boys bringing flowers home stands distant from those happy couples and wishes “let not only mine [heart’s desire] be vain” (“Shropshire” 32). Housman’s imagery of flowers as homes of romantic connection is eventually inverted into the inevitability that romance will be lost with the passage of time. Considering this, Housman’s diaries help one read this idea of fading flowers as much more complex than transience. Housman looked back over his diaries, seemingly caught within a cyclical contemplation of loss. Housman’s speakers who remember homes similarly find that looking back amalgamates associations between loss and connection. This natural timeline becomes morbid through the speaker’s inability to forget the past.

In Housman’s diary, fading bloom gestures back to images of dearth as Housman returns, curates and adds to remembered moments of symbolic separation from Jackson. Where Housman has marked “his son is born” on 2 October 1890, the notation “heather mostly faded” couples natural loss with a suggestion of melancholy. Even if he noted the thinning on the trees later, on 6

November 1890, the comment retrospectively gestures back to the previous birth of Jackson's son and so to even earlier records of Jackson's marriage and departure. Each notation of flowers and trees articulates the ongoing pull of these past events, their ability to endure and subsequently shape Housman's contemplation of the present. This also happens in *A Shropshire Lad*. In "XX", seeing "springtime flowers" leads one lad to "downward eye and gazes sad" ("Shropshire" 37). This evokes the myth of Narcissus, who fell prey to loving his own reflection. Similarly, the melancholic lad wastes away despite being loved by "many" (37). In "XLVI", Housman evokes a lover's plea to "bring from hill and stream and plain / Whatever will not flower again" ("Shropshire" 72). Jules Paul Seigel argues that Housman "ironically juxtaposes regenerative symbols of nature" with natural images that are "apparently sterile [and which] 'will not flower again' ... to bring his belief of man's morality into focus before a background of unregenerate nature" (48, citing "XLVI"). Yet, these images of flowers are not so much harbingers of death, as demonstrative of Housman's speakers' inability to forget. What will not flower again is evoked time and time again evoked in the poems the speakers' attachment to transient images that are already lost. Housman's images of romantic homes are, thus, far more troubling than if they were merely transient, soon to decay and be forgotten, or symbolic of an enduring perfected image, as Efrati reads them. They are metaphorically accumulative. Each time flowers are mentioned, they become more redolent of loss with the passage of time. Simultaneously, they also amalgamate the remembered ideal of connection with the fact that this connection is lost or impossible to possess. The idea of connection fading, then, which is so single-mindedly constructed within the diaries, represents an enduring attachment to "the home that none rebuild" (Haber 36).

It is specifically acts of transgression which precipitate this loss of home and intimate connection. "VIII" opens with a departure from home, "farewell to barn and sack and tree" (30). "IX" opens on a similar, yet melancholic, pastoral scene: "on moonlit heath and lonesome bank the sheep beside me graze" (31). These images of home connect Housman's speakers to spaces that are familiar and loved. Loss is then introduced through a sense of illicit transgression. The speaker of "VIII" has "a bloody hand to shake" (30). In "IX", he is soon to be "naked to the hangman's noose" (31). Housman also evokes a transgressive

sexuality in “XLV”. The speaker advises, “if it chance your eye offend you, pluck it out lad and be sound” (71). This poem immediately follows “XLIV”, “Shot? so quick, so clean an ending”. Subsequently, “XLV” is also potentially signalled by Housman’s newspaper cutting of the Woolwich cadet which kept the page in his copy of *A Shropshire Lad* (Jebb 38). In “LI”, the speaker tells himself to bear his “trouble ... like a stone” (“Shropshire” 77). These transgressive images evoke Robert L. Caserio’s evocation of a theoretical “queer unbelonging” within “normalising” family and home (819). This invests images of loving contact with a knowledge that such normative experiences are beyond the grasp of Housman’s speakers, even while they are nominally attracted to women. These lost homes are like visions viewed from the outside and by lads who can “come home no more” (“Shropshire” 30).

Housman’s speakers’ sense that they do not belong in homes does not prevent memories of homes from repeating as Housman’s poems progress. Throughout *A Shropshire Lad*, images of home become increasingly complicated as they repeat. Housman gradually evokes his speakers’ morbid entrapment within a cycle of memory and loss. The Narcissus-inspired lad in “XV” “looked into a forest well / and never looked away again” and the “silly lad” of “XX” “longs and looks” into the “azure mires” or a reflected world (“Shropshire” 37; 42); Housman’s speakers are trapped in their memories. Homes are evoked as connection. They are then left behind and become symbolic of loss. Most importantly, they continue to appear to speakers who move forward in time and consequentially away from their beloveds. They represent, like Housman’s diaries, a continuing emotional connection to that from which the speakers acknowledge they are physically disconnected.

In Housman’s diaries, the long term is shaped by an ongoing attachment to what has already been lost. Similarly, “IX” in *A Shropshire Lad* centres on this image of a home that repeats after a lad can no longer return to it. The poem depicts a young man remembering another who will soon be hanged and left, “standing on air ... upon moonlit heath and lonesome bank” (“Shropshire Lad” 31). The image of standing upon air evokes an insurmountable distance — a death following criminal transgression. It typifies Housman’s speakers’ relationships with their homes. All of Housman’s speakers must stand on air:

retracing incessantly the “happy byways” of homes to which they “cannot come again” from a position that is not only geographically but temporally separated from these homes (“Shropshire” 64).

It is this tension between desired images and pained absence that endures in the minds of the speakers who walk “the long road that leads me from my love” (“Shropshire” 60). They all capture a sense of standing on air, of an essential gap between the home and the speaker. The gap might as well be the size of a continent, given the knowledge that they cannot return. Moreover, as in Housman’s imagined vision in which “alone on a bed he lies” (Haber 36), this gap can be simultaneously small: memory keeps those lost far too close for comfort. The fantasy that they could reach out and simply touch individuals who are held in the mind’s eye continually haunts his speakers. Thus, temporal distance between speakers and lost loves transforms subsequent mentions of those who live in these lost homes. As images of home reach across this distance, past connections become desolatingly textured with melancholy. In “VIII”, the speaker wishes his friend Terrance “strength to bring you pride / and love to keep you clean” (30). The speaker of “IX” remembers a friend who might have been “a better lad, if things went right” (31). Both these images evoke a better, more connected existence which could take place, if one could but remain at home. The ends of these lines invert this connection into an impure and wrong act of transgression. As each line runs from home toward transgression deeply loved homes, friends and lovers must insurmountably be left behind. Like Housman’s diary that curates an archive of his brief links with Jackson, these memories of homes and loved individuals are increasingly based on images that are self-consciously remembered and which gesture to a loss of intimate connection.

The forward feet of meter

Housman embodies this loss of home through his use of meter. The metric feet of his verse measure out the footsteps that lead his speakers ever onwards. However, his meter also stresses the moments in which his speakers cannot help but remember and look back to home. Desire for the lost home and the lost

lover, then, is warped by the metric moments in which Housman's speakers look back. The insistence of the home within memory is conditioned by the knowledge that Housman's verse has moved the speakers further from home than they were at the start of his poems. The images of homes as desire and connection are increasingly revealed to be faded intimacies. A faded intimacy is more complex, even, than loss: it doesn't lessen with time. Instead, it articulates a loss of a close emotional and geographical connection, which has been replaced by the repetition of memories of what can no longer be.

Housman uses meter to emphasise both the unstoppable onward passage of time and moments in which his speakers turn back to confront the image of a desired home or individual already lost. This is foregrounded in "XXII". The poem depicts soldiers marching through a town and a brief moment of connection between his speaker and one of the men. The first stanza reads:

The street sounds to the soldiers' tread,
And out we troop to see:
A single redcoat turns his head
He turns and looks at me. (45)

Housman opens by emphasising the powerful connection between desire and rhythm in the poem. In the first line, the "street sounds" lead the crowds out to look at the passing men. The double stress on "street sounds" momentarily disrupts the otherwise regular iamb, halting the forward movement of time and initiating the soldier's transgressive backwards turn towards the speaker. The rhythm of the poem also emphasises desire. The stressed halves of the iambic (unstressed/stressed) metric feet fall on both the image of the soldier and the act of looking back: "A **single redcoat turns** his **head** / He **turns** and **looks** at **me**". Yet this meter also asserts its own, conventional progression. As Housman prioritises the "street sounds" of the marching band, these two figures become part of a progressional beat in which desire can only ever be a momentary transgression of law. Like a marching band's drum, the metric beat which embodies desire also paces out the movement of the redcoat away from the speaker. The speaker and the soldier look at each other while knowing that this look cannot last. Housman ultimately asserts the metric law here, evoking

the onward movement of the passage of time which both men are powerless to alter or control.

Two processes, metric law and its transgression, are embodied throughout *A Shropshire Lad* to create a tension between this movement forward of time and the subjective need to look back, to desire and to long for another. The productive combination of these processes was first theorised by Coventry Patmore in his *Essay on English Metrical Law* (1857). Now critically renowned for his symbolisation of the ideology of the separate spheres in “The Angel of the House” (1854), Patmore was regarded by his contemporaries as a prosodist. Although he might not have condoned Housman’s evocation of transgressive desire, he did argue that meter functions to embody intense imaginative feeling: calling it the “body” to poetry’s “soul” (7). Words are made “sensible”, for Patmore, by “a perpetual conflict between the law of the verse and the freedom of the language [when] language combines the greatest imaginative accuracy [with] innumerable small departures from its metrical pattern” (8; 9). Patmore argued that meter creates a standardized rhythm or metric law through textual narrative that is underlined and given life by moments in which the poet chooses to depart from this pattern (9). Through this deviation, “language [can] always seem to feel” (8). Patmore consolidates this embodiment of poetry by equating meter to the “pace” of “natural walking” (10).

Isobel Armstrong further defines Patmore’s embodied meter as metric law and a “transgression” of that law (30). She argues that “there are two antithetical models for binary meter ... the heartbeat and the rush or overflow of water”, or regular and irregular rhythm which “always occur together” (29). Armstrong claims that both metric law and transgression allow images to function together, building into intense feelings. The acceptance or denial of metric rhythm allows the flow of the textual narrative to “well ... up and complete [the] trajectory of its breaking” (40). Metric effect, Armstrong asserts, is either the law of the onwards flow of water or the crashing clamour of surprising feeling which accompanies its transgression. She argues that often, as in Housman’s “XXII”, these processes occur together to give life to a poem. For Armstrong, moments when deviation transgresses metrical law “put the claims of subjectivity and desire against” regulated ideological conventions (40). Poetic

meaning becomes subjective by disrupting, perverting and withholding regular meter, allowing rhythm to “break” at surprising moments. Housman is not mentioned by Armstrong and he may never have heard of Patmore’s theory.⁶⁸ Yet he anticipates Armstrong’s association of metric law with cultural convention: the forward rhythm of “XXII” creates both the unstoppable passage of time and the societal insistence that transgressive love must be left behind and unfulfilled. However, emotion is created, as Patmore asserts it will be, when Housman’s desiring speakers treacherously both undermine and underline this conventional rhythm. Upon images of desire and lost homes, they transgress metric and conventional law by looking back. Subsequently, homes are felt as continually lost by the alternation of metric law and its transgression: homes both insist on being remembered and appear from an increasing temporal distance. The lost homes become increasingly complicated by the speakers’ awareness that even while they turn back, they must, like the soldier in “XXII”, walk resolutely onwards.

Housman prioritised the correct use of meter in his definition of poetry. He also felt the emotional effect of poetry through the transgressive pull of memory. In “The Name and Nature of Poetry” (1933), he argues that the “function of poetry” is its ability to “set up in the reader’s sense a vibration corresponding to what was felt by the writer” (352). Another definition advanced in the same lecture is that “poetry is not a thing said, but a way of saying it” (364). Housman’s poetry creates this “sense of vibration” through meter. In an earlier lecture on the legacy of Swinburne’s *Poems and Ballads* (1866), Housman argued that Swinburne’s lyrics both stood and fell depending on their meter. At worst, Housman wrote, Swinburne is “notably unsure of foot, and seldom went without stumbling for more than a few lines at a time”, unconsciously mirroring Patmore’s alignment of meter and walking pace (283). At his best, Swinburne “dignified and strengthened [meter] till it yielded a combination of speed and magnificence which nothing in English had possessed before” (283). Meter was important to Housman as the driving force of poetry. Any unintentional stumbling potentially lead to the breaking of a reader’s experience of the feeling a writer hoped to convey. One must suppose,

⁶⁸ Armstrong’s essay studies these metric processes in the poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson.

therefore, that metric transgressions formed part of Housman's poetic intention. While meter was an important conduit of feeling, embodying and transmitting complex sensual vibrations defines for Housman the goal of poetry. When defining poets of the "first order" of merit, John Milton and William Blake, Housman argues that they appeal not only to the "external ear", as Swinburne's technically correct meter does. Rather, their poetry speaks "to the inner chambers of the sense of hearing, to the junction between the ear and the brain" (282). In order to reach this place of mingled physical and emotional stimulation, there needs to be both something physical in the melody and something that transcends physicality, reaching out to the reader. Housman wonders, from "six little words of Milton ... 'Nymphs and shepherds dance no more' ... what on earth is there to cry about?" (369). He answers only that he feels "the physical effect of pathos ... because [these words] are poetry" (369). Housman's evocation of "six little words" appealing to the inner ear enacts Patmore's insistence that meter makes art embodied. If meter and footfall were important to Housman, then part of the pathos of his own poetry must be the metric disruption of regular rhythm and progression. His poetry captures moments in which forward movement is arrested by subtle experiences of pathos.

Housman's description of his own method of composition enacts just such a powerful moment of emotional disruption. In "The Name and Nature of Poetry", he states:

I would go for a walk of two or three hours. As I went along, thinking of nothing in particular, only looking at the things around me, and following the progress of the seasons, there would flow into my mind with sudden and unusual emotion, sometimes a line or two of verse.
(370)

He called this sudden emotion "a morbid secretion", often accompanied by a "shiver down the spine" or a "contraction of the throat" (370). Housman describes a sudden impact of words and images on his body. Unbeknown to his initial listeners, this anecdote subtly ties this morbid secretion to his loss of Jackson. In his diaries above, images of seasonal loss also provoke moments

of intense feeling, melancholy which lands with the effect of a painful attempt not to feel. Housman recalls feeling himself suddenly drawn back by the seasonal imagery around him to a potent experience of loss. The setting of Housman's inspiration, a "walk of two or three hours" is far from merely anecdotal. His poetry is born in a present in which walking forwards reflects an emotional experience of loss. Against this moment and onward movement, the sudden recall of the past which emerges through "the line or two of verse" is experienced as a constriction as the power of memory asserts itself.

In *A Shropshire Lad*, Housman's poems also evoke moments of shivering, vibrating emotion, the morbid secretions of speakers who are drawn back in time. When looking at Housman's use of meter to juxtapose the law of forward movement with the transgressive power of looking back, his anecdote consolidates into a repeated poetic process, deployed with skill and devastating precision. Housman uses meter to evoke a morbid desire for long-term intimacy: his speakers' attachment to homes that have been left behind. "LV" captures the inevitability of loss as the "changeless blood of man" ("Shropshire" 82). It layers images of homes that cannot be forgotten with a melancholy that results from separation.

Westward on the high-hilled plains
Where for me the world began,
Still, I think, in newer veins
Frets the changeless blood of man.

Now that other lads than I
Strip to bathe on Severn shore
They, no help, for all they try,
Tread the mill I trod before
.....
There on thoughts that once were mine,
Day looks down the eastern steep,
And the youth at morning shine
Makes the vow he will not keep. (82)

Housman's speaker looks back to "westward high hilled plains / where for me the world began" ("Shropshire" 82). This westward gaze conflates the geographical location of Shropshire to Housman's native Worcestershire with the speaker's remembered home of "Severn shore". The speaker remembers lads stripping and bathing, a scene of idyllic connection with the landscape that is their home, and with each other. Yet the poem's meter moves the speaker along a path of broken promises and ending friendships as "the youth at morning shine / makes the vow he will not keep". Housman's meter plays a key role in turning connection into loss. It initially embodies moments of remembered connection, but by the end of the poem, it emphasises the speaker's temporal distance from the remembered youths. Housman uses repeated iambic trimeter, beginning with a trochaic inversion, for example: "**strip to bathe on Severn shore**" and "**tread the mill I trod before**". Stress falls on the images of home — "Severn shore" — on the connection between friends within homes, "strip, bathe", and on the end of transgressive connection: "no help". Housman's forward rhythm layers his speaker's memory of home with conflicting emotions. Connection and eroticism are inevitably ended by transgression and broken vows.

Part of this loss is created by the speaker's shifting temporal relationship with his home. The speaker's location in time is emphasised by Housman's trochaic meter (stressed/unstressed), the stressed elements of which fall on temporal prepositions: "**Still** they **bathe**" and "**now** that **other lads**". This evokes the speaker's awareness that he is inevitably separated from other scenes of pleasure. However, the "still" of the bathing youths and the "now" of the speaker initially seem aligned. The "now" in which he imagines the bathing to be taking place emphasises that these moments of connection are happening currently. Yet Housman's speaker also states, in the final stanza, that "there" they exist "on thoughts that once were mine". The youths are revealed to be remembered by the speaker and are his memories of desire. The bathers' present connection is revealed in the final line of the poem to be the echo of the connection the speaker has now lost: "the youth at morning shine / makes the vow he will not keep". The bathing individuals develop into a significantly altered image of home. The morning shine gestures to the impermanence of loving connections. The stressed moments of desire become

an aspect of the past, which the speaker no longer inhabits. Home, it appears, has already been lost by the speaker, and he lives this moment continually, as the meter forces an incessant stressing of images that become increasingly melancholic. The linked chain of competing images throughout this poem — home, desire, transgression, walking, loss, all themselves metric stresses — form an embodiment of remembered loss that still pulls on the speaker in the “now” in which he stands. Thus, home is altered by a shifting location in time. “Still” and “now” become “there” and “once”. Housman’s meter both moves his speaker away from the youths temporally and makes him revisit them in memory.

This process turns intimacy with friends into faded intimacy, an acknowledgement that direct contact has been irrefutably lost. In “VIII”, Housman reverses a trochee into an iamb to emphasise the enduring nature of his memories of home: “**long for me the rick will wait / and long will wait the fold**” (“Shropshire” 30). Stress initially falls on “long” but Housman’s iambic stress of “wait” means the meter seems to elongate the passage of time. Housman’s progression through the poem counts out the endurance of these specific images in the speaker’s memory. In “LIV”, Housman alternates stresses between feelings of connection and disconnection. The poem opens with a melancholic memory: “With **rue my heart is laden / for golden friends I had**” (81). The regular iambic trimeter here amalgamates loss and the sadness which this brings before emphasising golden friends. The initial loss conditions the memory of friends who become those who once “I had”. At the close of the poem, this amalgamation of images resolves into a withering of these golden, painful memories: “in **fields where roses fade**” (81). This closely evokes Housman’s faded elder in his diary, his displacement of bloom into loss. The sudden lack of stress on “roses” rushes the line on to “fade”. This final image carries the association of the lost roses, like the lost friends. Housman’s regular meter emphasises the combinations of his potent memories of past events. His transgression of that regularity here acts as a startling realisation that his speaker’s strong connections with the past are metonyms of loss. They stand for what is no longer there. Loss, here, becomes increasingly complex. Simultaneously, the two stressed words of the final line, “fields” and “fade”, form a symbolic association of their own. Both are emphasised in this closing lament.

Housman's speaker may lead himself into a realisation of a loss of connection. This has a similar impact to the Housman's recording of Jackson's lack of correspondence in his diary. However, this line also reminds us that memories endure as faded intimacies, rather than disappearing entirely. It is now the morbid punch of a connection lost that is created by the images of, formerly homely fields and now-absent roses.

"Far I hear the bugle blow / to call me where I would not go", begins Housman's speaker in "LVI" (83). Again, Housman's trochee emphasises how far away the music of home is, and its potent call to return. The speaker is being pulled back. Housman's morbid secretions are moments of such imaginary return to lost homes. Yet they are far more complex, more regularly structured and rhythmical than any spontaneous composition could be. Housman uses meter to explicate how certain images — a soldier turning backward as he walks, friends bathing, faded roses — contain an enduringly melancholic tension between connection and disconnection. Meter contrasts the present moment of the speaker with his memories, defining a "still" happening experience which can only ever be a memory. Housman might have felt this immediately in his compositional walks, grasped in moments that made his body constrict and shiver. However, his poems embody his speakers' gradual realisation of this inevitable transition from intimacy to a faded intimacy. It is the slow elongation of the "road that leads me from my love", as Housman's speakers move rhythmically along it, that makes Housman's desire for long-term intimacy morbid. His speakers endlessly desire a form of familiarity, closeness and contact with those left behind. They possess memories that bear the trace of the aesthetic of long-term intimacy: repeating images that develop in complexity over poetic narratives. Housman articulates the troubling existence of a desire for intimacy that does not disappear but increasingly signals the powerful, melancholic pull of friends or lovers who can no longer be touched.

“The house of dust”: Death, stillness and the absence of long-term intimacy

On 28 June 1889, Housman wrote two entries in his diary. The first: “Posted letters to him”; the second: “Elder fadings mostly”. As has been demonstrated, moments in which Housman thought about Jackson often coincided with the fading evocation of a lost intimacy that nevertheless persists in memory. Poems throughout *A Shropshire Lad* evoke this loss as a contemplation of life from beyond the grave. Housman frequently depicts speakers who watch the living but are, themselves, removed from life. The temporal space which Housman’s poems open through meter is envisaged as the insurmountable distance between the living and the dead. The movements of the living in these poems represent an idealised life of long-term intimacy, in which continued connection with a lover creates a feeling of familiarity. Housman defines a morbid desire for long-term intimacy as the enforced watching of this life from beyond the grave.

Housman’s evocation of death has previously been read as promoting the endurance of transgressive desire. Benjamin F. Fischer notes that an early review of Housman’s poetry in *The Guardian* newspaper emphasised the “sombre themes of death and endurance” (25).⁶⁹ In his reading of “XXX” in *A Shropshire Lad*, Laurence Perrine notes that homoerotic suffering, a tension of “fire and ice” continues after death for Housman’s speaker (“Shropshire” 54). For Perrine, this symbolises the continued “oppressiveness of life” and specifically the “torment” of homosexual desire (Perrine 137–136). Jerome Mandel agrees in his analysis of the same poem, stating that Housman’s narrators “arriv[e] at death but [it] does not achieve the expected release” (408).

Desire clearly endures beyond death for Housman’s speakers. As with Symonds’s men who yearned, this symbolises Housman’s morbid anxiety of an “unquenchable” desire for the same sex. Yet it is not quite right to claim, as Mandel and Perrine do, that death is a straightforward continuation of

⁶⁹ Fischer cites the review “A Shropshire Lad”, published in *The Guardian* on 3rd June 1896. See his endnote no.8 (33).

passionate yearning or tormented desire. Rather, the continuation of desire after death, and beyond the possibility of touch, codes Housman's evocation of longing in a new, morbid way. Archie Burnett has argued that Housman's evocation of death is an extension of his poetic use of understatement. He claims that passions such as "ominousness, exultation and disturbance are alike levelled by a consistency of tone and mood" (3). He argues that Housman highlights his speakers' attempts to disavow intense feeling by using a regular, controlled and consistent pace. The significance of death, for Burnett, is that it means that passion must forever "remain unsensational" (3), disowned and repressed. Housman's morbid desire for long-term intimacy is more attuned to death as a disavowing of passion than as a torment. Death presents an enduring sense of stagnation as repeated images form the remembering subjectivity of the speaker. It prompts an enduring desire for a person who lives in a different world, a home that has been lost. However, it is important to emphasise that the feeling of this stillness itself develops into compounds of feeling as it endures throughout the poem. The stillness of the grave enfolds speakers into an awareness of a lack of onward movement, renewal and continued meeting with a lover. The stillness of the grave constitutes a rest enforced on images of lost connection. As Housman's speakers watch lovers from beyond the grave, their memories locate them in "the house of dust": a space in which erotic and intimate touch is always desired but always signifies the temporal distance between themselves and those with whom they are no longer connected. This initiates a tension between melancholy, anguish and resignation. Intimacy with a lover can never be again, but must continue to exist. The house that none can rebuild continually gestures to its own warping through a loss of intimacy within the minds of Housman's speakers. From the grave, speakers become aware that long-term intimacy has faded and must continue to do so. Connections are increasingly replaced by images that evoke their own inability to move beyond loss. Their ongoing memory of a lover is more and more attuned to their own inability to forget.

This is demonstrated by "XII", in which Housman's speaker's morbid fixation on a lost home turns intimacy and movement into stillness and loss:

When I watch the living meet,

And the moving pageant file
Warm and breathing through the street
Where I lodge a little while

If the heats of hate and lust
In the house of flesh are strong
Let me mind the house of dust
Where my sojourn shall be long

In the nation that is not
Nothing stands that stood before;
There revenges are forgot
And the hater hates no more

Lovers lying two by two
Ask not whom they sleep beside
And the bridegroom all night through
Never turns him to his bride.

The speaker talks from beyond the grave, from “the nation that is not”. Here, “nothing stands that stood before” and “revenges are forgot”. However, death is not merely a nothing. Housman’s speaker remains aware of the living, who are visualised in a past home where the speaker “lodged a little while”. Both the living and their existence in his home inspire his bitter jealousy. However, if one reads “nothing” as a lack of life and movement, then the words ring true. “The hater hates no more” because the grave has dulled and numbed the “heats of hate and lust”. From the perspective of the house of dust, the living’s warmth and movement can only evoke the speaker’s memory of movement. This memory is, now, inimitable. Their movement feels like an absence of the intimacy which typifies the living who can move onwards together. It gestures to the fact that the speaker’s awareness of others runs increasingly cool now, rather than hot. It is this absence of movement that is enduring, in which “my sojourn shall be long”. Stillness becomes an enforced, enduring watching of those who move in the mind’s eye, but whose movement underlines the restrictions faced by the still speaker. As such, “the house of

dust” becomes an inverted symbol of the movement within homes with which “XII” opens. These spaces of love, connection and shared movement come to signal the speaker’s inability to touch or to feel passion. The speaker is aware that, devoid of the heat of hate and lust, he cannot produce new feelings of anger or desire. Rather, he fixates on past images which catch him in a renewed, cyclical contemplation of a tension between enduring absence and enduring jealousy and loss.

The “nation that is not” therefore replaces a living warmth that is synonymous with meeting, moving and producing new shared knowledges with a lover, as well as the long-term intimacies which develop from this sharing. Housman closes the poem by depicting a “bridegroom” who might never turn to his bride. This chilled image of stillness withholds the possibility of beginning a new intimacy. Housman’s speaker experiences a morbid inversion of the sexual and emotional knowledge that formed Symonds’s memories of connection with Norman Moor. Symonds’s memory of touch led to a shared feeling of beauty and connection. Housman’s prolonged inability to touch continually redefines intimacy as an attachment to loss, estrangement and an inability to know another intimately. The stillness of Housman’s speaker is his awareness that his connection with the living both has faded and cannot be replaced. Stillness is initially an absence. However, like the imagery of fading trees in Housman’s diary, it comes to portray the desolating effect of not being able to look away from an intimacy that is no longer. Loss, melancholy and pain are prolonged and underlined by the assurance that this desire will not ever completely fade into nothing. Housman’s speaker cannot either turn away from the past or produce new futures. Therefore, Housman’s house of dust changes the symbolism of the moving pageant into a signifier of a stillness that, itself, is revealed to be an ever more melancholic inability to touch and create intimacy. Housman’s speaker is caught in a cyclical conversation with his own loss. His stillness develops an anger which vies continually with tired acceptance. If meter creates and elongates the temporal distance between homes and speakers, then this idea of stillness records how exiled men must continually live off images which turn intimacy into loss. Remembering those who are separated by temporal distance creates a contemplation of images that persist beyond loss and death and which also insist on a grief-filled feeling of

disconnection. The fading of intimacy into hearsay does not lessen grief: it transforms it into an endless fascination with recycled images that increasingly gesture to the space between Housman's speaker's idea of home, and what home might have become in his absence.

This stillness is repeated throughout *A Shropshire Lad*. "XVI" begins with "the nettle [that] curtsies and removes ... on the graves of lovers". It ends by describing "the man [who] hanged himself for love [and] does not move" (38). "Removes" functions to move the now-still lad, and Housman's reader, back to the memory of movement with which Housman opens the poem. "XVII" reverses the places of the lad and the dead. It depicts a lad as "the son of grief at cricket / trying to be glad" while thinking of the "mirth[less] bones of men [on] the bed of earth" (39). This thought pulls the speaker away from the moving pageant of the living world and into a form of faded intimacy. In "XXVI" "the field as we came by / a year ago my love and I" now "spell nothing in the air" for Housman's dead speaker. He wonders if "perhaps they speak to her" (49). This "nothing" is another evocation of stillness that is far from empty. It is an enforced wondering, a return to past images that iterate a lack of ongoing connection with a lover who, unlike the speaker, may speak, talk, and love with others. Memory here creates a loss of familiarity. The "nothing" faced by the speaker leads him to surmise that he and his lover have drifted apart; while he remembers her, she might no longer remember him. In contrast to the changing, developing living, Housman's still speakers can only negotiate a monologue with their memories. They possess a still and silent house of dust which warps images of home and love into an inability to touch, speak, change or otherwise be intimate. Housman's evocation of death often comes towards the end of these poems and inverts the imagery of connection amongst the living which precedes it. Consequently, Housman's speakers' enduring desire becomes a morbid experience, in which stillness is a disconnection that cannot be shaken off or forgotten.

“Winds out of the west land blow”: Wind as a morbid desire for long-term intimacy

On 29 October 1890 Housman notes that the birth of Jackson’s son was “in the paper”. Eight days later, Housman wrote that “a great wind this night thins the leaves very much”. The thinning of the leaves here appears invested with Housman’s loss of Jackson. It gestures back across the seven empty diary spaces and seems to note the emotional upheaval of newspaper notification, which surely confirmed Jackson’s existence elsewhere with other loved individuals. It reaches back even further still, to the gradual fading of intimacy which began the day Housman left his home in Talbot Road. The wind is the reason for the thinning and loss of leaves, but it also culminates an ongoing experience of removal and disconnection. Housman also evokes the wind to represent homes which are complicated by the temporal distance that is opened out by his poems. The blowing wind spans the temporal distance of Housman’s poetry in *A Shropshire Lad*. It measures out the distance which his speakers have walked, the time that has passed since they left home. It also facilitates an inrushing of memories of home which have been distorted by distance, as loving, intimate movement becomes an enduring stillness. The wind embodies how familiar images of previously loved individuals, memories of erotic and emotional connection, have been warped by a morbid desire for long-term intimacy. More than this, Housman’s speakers identify not with images of lost connection, but with the wind itself: they become embodiments of the painful inability to have long-term relationships with those they love.

The wind is defined as temporal distance in “XXXVIII”. The poem reads:

The winds out of the west land blow,
My friends have breathed them there;
Warm with the blood of lads I know
Comes east the sighing air.

It fanned their temples, filled their lungs,
Scattered their forelocks free;
My friends made words of it with tongues

That talk no more to me.

Their voices dying as they fly,
Loose on the wind are sown;
The names of men blow soundless by,
My fellows and my own.

Oh lads, at home I heard you plain,
But here your speech is still;
And down the sighing wind in vain
You hullo from the hill.

The wind and I, we both were there,
But neither long abode;
Now through the friendless world we fare
And sigh upon the road. (62)

The poem begins with an evocation of the west land, the symbolic site of the speaker's home and also a symbol of sunset and the fading of the day's heat. The wind that blows initially brings the memory of an intimate heat which radiates from the bodies of remembered friends. Housman intimately evokes their bodies, temples, forelocks and lungs. The wind brings voices which connote desire and touch, dialogues which develop from both physical and emotional closeness. Yet the wind also becomes the dying of these voices. The present participle "dying as they fly" — shifting from the past tense — creates an enduring echo of this remembered intimacy: it is still present, but now faded by the very distance which the wind traverses. The repetition of imagery of home in the fourth stanza becomes comparable to the loss of intimacy which takes place beyond the grave. The "speech is still". It echoes but does not change. Instead, it draws the speaker into a contemplation of home that now signifies his disconnection from loved individuals. The "plain" hearing is warped into a morbid admission of loss that reverberates in the speaker's mind.

Housman closes "XXXVIII" with a direct evocation of the distance which the wind both traverses and symbolises. Both the wind and the speaker were

“there” — another emphasised spatial preposition, yet the “there” of home is transient in comparison to the ongoing “now” of the road which both walk. The wind, here, symbolises Housman’s morbid desire for long-term intimacy. It takes the opening images of connection and makes them into echoes, the remembered starting point of journeys. It offers a poetic return to a separation which happened long ago and now is only a signifier of lost intimacy. It emphasises that the speaker is no longer close enough to see his friends’ forelocks scattered free, or able to hear their voices. Like Housman’s cyclical diary, it gestures back to the note that “he sailed today”. The speaker is so engrossed in the memory of an intimacy that can no longer be that he becomes the wind: both the “wind and I” were there; now both are far away. Housman depicts here a fundamental relationship between same-sex desire and the long term. His eroticised depiction of lost friends is wrapped up in a transgressive longing to remain. The complexity of his situation is that the transgressiveness of this desire is twofold. The illicit nature of his desire means it must be avoided, yet the overwhelming desire to remain with a loved individual transgresses even the speaker’s unspoken longing to forget. This is the tension between desire and anxiety, possession and loss that cannot find any expression in familiarity, even in the idealised realms of poetry. Because it cannot be expressed as part of a long-term relationship, it perpetually creates a more desperate sense of loss.

Housman repeats this evocation of the wind elsewhere. “XL” begins with “into my heart the air that kills”, which internalises images of “happy highways where I went / But cannot go again” (64). “XLII” opens with “the wind of morning” which “once ... ranged the thymy wold” where “brooks ran gold”. However, far away, “across the windy world”, Housman’s speaker must “fare on forever” (66). In “XXXVIII”, the road and the wind are linked, creating space for winds to measure out the warping of memories of connection into loss as they endure. Similarly, “XLI” links the road with loss. Housman states that:

On every road I wandered by
Trode beside me, close and dear,
The beautiful and death-struck year. (65)

The fading of images of nature in Housman's diaries comes to fruition here. It evokes the incessant return to homes which have been lost. Consequently, Housman reiterates that subjective, intimate memories of beauty which are held "close and dear" culminate in a distance that does not end suffering. Instead, the passage of time and distance distorts a desire for long-term intimacy into a developing melancholy. Significantly, Symonds closed his "In the Key of Blue" with an intimate evocation of two men ensconced in a bedroom, lit by a candlelight that promised to continue their intimacy into the future ("Key" 15). Housman closes his evocation of a morbid desire for long-term intimacy with a depiction of a temporal distance that equates the passage of time with the inversion of familiarity. The passage of years or distance does not end the memory of loved ones, but amalgamates memories of connection with an overwhelming, enduring loss.

Since its publication in 1896, *A Shropshire Lad* has never been out of print (Parker 4). Parker describes the collection as a symbolic "gazetteer of the English heart" (21). He argues that the collection has encapsulated for generations a romantic and melancholic tradition within English literature: the propensity of the Englishman to "take his pleasures sadly", as one early American review phrased it (Parker 10).⁷⁰ Housman rarely features in studies of homosexual literature. However, this chapter has recovered the relevance of Housman's diary, and his loss of Moses Jackson, to *A Shropshire Lad*. It emphasises that the enduring, popular emotional power of Housman's poetry comes from its evocation of a thwarted, same-sex desire for long-term intimacy. *A Shropshire Lad* is a gazetteer of a queer heart, an unrequited longing for homes that are a centre of familiarity. The fact that Housman's speakers feel they cannot remain in homes and experience memories of connection through the aching, mournful winds of temporal distance heightens rather than diminishes the idealised value of long-term intimacy. This chapter has shown that Housman's popular poetry evidences a homoerotic desire for the very institutions of monogamy, long-term commitment and domesticity that, Housman feels, homosexuals cannot possess. *A Shropshire Lad* therefore

⁷⁰ Parker quotes an anonymous review in the *Citizen* magazine, based in Philadelphia. The particular edition is from 9 November 1897. See Philip Gardner's 1992 *A. E. Housman: A Critical Heritage* (77) in the Bibliography, "Works Consulted".

emphasises the importance of shifting the loci of illicit homosexual desires for intimacy away from urban queer counter publics of the city and into imaginative and real homes. This emphasis on the importance of familiarity within both imaginary and real, secretive and visible homes continues throughout the subsequent chapters.

Considering this, Berlant and Warner are incorrect to dismiss “the love plot of intimacy and familialism that signifies belonging to a society in a deep and normal way” as heteronormative fantasy (554). Domesticity is not desired by Housman as the endpoint of emotional pain and pleasure, a closeting of homoeroticism within the image of respectability. Certainly, his speakers resent the heterosexual “living” who can move freely and, they assume, uncomplicatedly, through everyday lives with loved individuals. But his speakers’ silent, long-term (dis)connections with homes highlight, too, the personal value of intimacy as familiarity. Because Housman’s speakers are absent from lovers, there is no one to share the feeling of an endless entrapment within a never-ending fading of lust, touch and connection into disconnection. The ideal of home emerges as the adverse to their house of dust: a space that can facilitate long-term intimacy, and in which new, intimate knowledges can grow from old ones. For Housman, this is an idealised space from which homosexual individuals in his poetry must always be exiled. The familiarity of long-term connections is not for them and must be observed from a distance.

However, it is to twentieth-century literary accounts of experiences of long-term intimacy and familiarity that this thesis now turns. Chapter Three moves to one avid reader of Housman, E. M. Forster. Forster would respond to *A Shropshire Lad* by emphasising the life-changing significance of loving connections between male lovers who choose to remain together in defiance of mainstream phobic cultures which would see them parted. In *Maurice*, he would write about how sharing sexual and emotional knowledges turns the darkness of temporal distance into a lasting sense of intimacy, commitment and mutual understanding between lovers.

Chapter Three: Long-term Intimacy as a Shared Understanding of Darkness in E. M. Forster's *Maurice*

He scarcely saw a face, scarcely heard a voice say, "That is your friend" [sic], and then it was over, having filled him with beauty and taught him tenderness. He could die for such a friend. He would allow for such a friend to die for him; they would make any sacrifice for each other and count the world for nothing, neither death, nor distance, or crossness could part them. ... Was he a Greek God, such as illustrates the Classical dictionary? More probable, but most probably he was just a man.

E. M. Forster, *Maurice*

E. M. Forster's novel *Maurice* (1914; published 1971) evokes the experience of long-term intimacy between men within the development of a reciprocated relationship. For Forster, a sexual and romantic connection between his protagonist, Maurice Hall, and Maurice's lover, Alec Scudder, creates an increasingly subtle understanding of a friend and facilitates the ability of the self to provide a tender, loving and brave support for that individual. Forster illustrates the development of this intimate knowledge through the changing symbolism of the image of darkness in the novel. Darkness is initially an image which connotes Edwardian conceptions of both unspeakable homoerotic desire and the opaqueness of adult intimacy, when regarded from childhood. Through Maurice's adult romantic and sexual relationships with other men, darkness comes to symbolise a commitment to understanding another loved individual. Between loving friends, sexual and emotional intimacy leads to a redefinition of the dark as an imaginative space in which long-term desires for tenderness can be reciprocated. Through the redefinition of the dark, feelings of vulnerability, isolation and pain inherent in desiring long-term intimacy can become a mutual commitment to tenderness.

The narrative of *Maurice* is dedicated to this development of the image of darkness over the first three decades of Maurice Hall's life. Early in the novel, a

young Maurice dreams of a voice in the darkness promising friendship as a shared tenderness and commitment (12; cited above). He grows up in a middle-class suburban home, assuming that he will follow his father into the finance industry, marry and have children. He is “asleep in the Valley of Shadow”, in which sexual desires are unspoken and unheeded within an unquestioning assimilation to an English attachment to propriety (13). This is changed by two lovers. The first is Clive Durham, a Cambridge undergraduate who awakens Maurice’s appreciation of male beauty and love but demands that their relationship must be a chaste and virtuous form of Greek love. Maurice’s second lover is Clive’s gamekeeper, Alec Scudder, whom Maurice meets after Clive ends his and Maurice’s relationship in order to marry Anne Woods. Through sharing his mind and his body with Alec, Maurice changes the scenes of their private meetings — initially Clive’s estate, Penge, but subsequently hotels in London, the British Museum and a boathouse on Clive’s estate — from a darkness that connotes unspeakable, unacknowledged desire to a subjective, imaginative space in which Maurice “can be free” (165) from social strictures.

The novel ends with Maurice and Alec choosing to abandon their families and their friends to live in the English “greenwood” (Forster “Notes” 216). This is an imagined space of seclusion, nature and self-sufficiency in which they can devote themselves to this liberating, fulfilling darkness. Darkness comes to stand as a metonym for many different feelings in this narrative. It represents the opposite of society and repression: the night and the hidden grounds and bedrooms in which sex between men takes place. It also represents the inversion of the conventionally unmentionable nature of homosexuality. It is an absence and a mystery turned into a complex, shining emotional presence by Maurice and Alec’s frank admission of desire and love. By layering darkness with these different meanings, Forster inverts the traditional bildungsroman, a narrative which typically ends in the institution of heterosexual marriage. The goal of Forster’s novel is, instead, the rejection of the heterosexual institution of marriage in favour of a long-term commitment between men that creates an ability to read the needs of another person, and to define the self through a tender, loving and brave commitment to personal intimacies. The passage of time leads Maurice to forsake cultural definitions of sodomy as criminal and unmentionable as he learns to construct a hidden, exiled darkness that is made

loving and tender due to the presence of his friend. Maurice's early memory of his dream of a friend is a guiding light throughout the novel. It endures into adulthood and helps him recognise a shared desire for long-term intimacy in Alec. This memory is therefore gestured to at important moments in the chapter. That said, Forster depicts the joys of experiencing long-term intimacy as an ability to create new, intimate knowledges within the 'real-world' of the novel. This chapter draws attention away from memory to Forster's evocation of a developing knowledge between lovers in the early stages of their long-term relationship.

Maurice illustrates both the queer tensions inherent in desiring long-term intimacy and the emotional value of familiarity that is created within experiences of long-term intimacy. As time passes, Maurice's changing definition of darkness symbolises a growing awareness of the tensions between desire, anxiety and loss which define his and Alec's unconventional desire for long-term intimacy with another man. Maurice comes to understand that feeling oneself to be silenced by social convention and expecting the loss of a beloved individual leads to a fear of isolation which conditions both brutality and vulnerability. Through intimate, sexualised friendship, darkness becomes a symbol for familiarity between men. It defines a gradual ability to share and understand the tensions inherent in desiring a long-term relationship. It is through being able to read the tensions which lie beneath Alec's words that anxiety is resolved into a tenderness. Robert K. Martin has claimed that the fundamental "transformation in Maurice is in part a shift from Apollo to Dionysus, from light to darkness, from sun to moon, from science to art, from head to heart" (42). Yet darkness is not merely the endpoint of Maurice's transformation. It is not simply a code for the erotic and romantic sensations and possibilities which he finds in his eventual relationship with Alec. More importantly, its transition over the narrative represents the passage of time within a long-term relationship. Even more precisely, darkness represents the emerging ability of one partner to develop a tenderness which comes from understanding, sharing and accepting a lover's idiosyncratic needs, vulnerabilities and virtues. Darkness represents the fundamental relationship between the long term and an intimate, unique feeling of familiarity.

Forster wrote the first draft of *Maurice* between 1913 and 1914. Although he showed it to close, trusted friends throughout his life, he felt it could not be published until after his death, which occurred in 1970. Since *Maurice*'s publication in 1971, critics have focused on Forster's explicit evocation of sex between Maurice and Alec. This sexuality has been read, by Judith Hertz and James P Wilper, as part of a twentieth-century political rejection of a Victorian silence concerning sex in order to build a new, intimate utopic society. Hertz claims that Maurice's development from Clive to Alec creates "the opposition between idealised Platonised homosexuality, in the manner of John Addington Symonds and the *fin de siècle* aesthetes [and] the political homosexuality of [Walt] Whitman and [Edward] Carpenter" (Hertz 605). Wilper also argues that *Maurice* is "greatly influenced by Carpenter's ideals of homosexual relations and the future role of the Uranian in society" (86). However, Jesse Wolfe has made a significant distinction between Carpenter's political activism and Forster's novel. He argues that Carpenter was "buoyed by his sense of the universality of homogenic passions" and thought that "thanks to elite European sexologists, popular opinion ... was changing for the better" (87). He finds that Forster, on the other hand "recapitulates this tale ... on an individual and not a political level" (87). The fact that *Maurice* advocates personal and not social change is read by Wolfe as a sign of Forster's pessimism at the possibility of change (87).

It is important, however, to remember the significance Forster placed on personal relationships and intimacies. Forster credited the inspiration of *Maurice* to a weekend visit to Milthorpe, the home of Carpenter and his long-term partner George Merrill. Forster was intellectually attracted to Carpenter because of his outspoken advocacy of same-sex love as a socially productive and personally liberating experience (Forster "Notes" 215). However, it was specifically the domestic intimacy between Carpenter and Merrill which "made a profound impression" on him and which inspired "the general plan" of *Maurice* (215). This plan, too, emphasised personal relationships: Forster writes that "three characters, the happy end for two of them, all rushed to my pen" ("Notes" 215). In his 1939 essay, "What I Believe", Forster further stated that personal intimacies offer "one's own little trembling light" against a blind acquiescence to dogmas which support the State (66). Forster's essay is particularly framed by

the rise of fascism and state-authorised violence and nationalism during the 1930s. However it also offers an exposition of Forster's conception of personal commitments.

The essay advocates the primary importance of attempting to understand, and commit to, one's friend. It advocates that we need to know each other, if we are to influence society for the better. Forster states that "given the choice between betraying my friend and betraying my country, I should hope that I have the guts to betray my country" (65). Of course, Forster is not claiming that personal relationships can exist outside of the influence of social dogmas or mainstream cultural ideologies. He emphasises the importance of trying to read and understand "something incalculable in each of us" (65). In theory, "we cannot ... know what other people are like", but in "practice" he believes that we "can and do" (65). The practice that Forster advocates here is attempting to understand the emotional tensions that form each individual's engagement with the mainstream social dogmas that support the State. Forster believed that "class and snobbery and respectability and poverty shall vanish" as individuals reach across the social and class divides that these dogmas attempt to construct (Forster "Edward Carpenter" 291). Forster even gestures covertly to his own illicit homoerotic love: "love and loyalty to an individual can run counter to the claims of the State. When they do — down with the State, say I, which means that the State would down me" ("What I Believe" 65). *Maurice's* focus on personal friendships advocates this belief. Maurice eventually chooses to reject a state that would not grant that a relationship between two men could be sexual and emotionally intimate. Maurice and Alec are each defined by secret desires for tenderness which must be hidden because they are deemed monstrous and unspeakable by English society. Personal connection means understanding how hostile, homophobic states create a tension between desire and anxiety. For Forster, the passage of time creates a knowledge of how each partner is formed by a struggle between these tensions and a desire for familiarity. Ultimately, he believes that long-term intimacy is the very thing which can lead to two long-term partners' mutual rejection of the state and its homophobic laws.

The impression that Carpenter and Merrill made on Forster was also significantly physical. In his "Notes on *Maurice*", Forster wrote that Merrill

“touched my backside” and that the sensation “seemed to go through the small of my back and into my ideas” (215). Forster particularly credited sexual passion and honesty between friends with the power to reject a conventional, and unintimate, English reticence. In 1915, Forster wrote to his friend Edward Dent, claiming that in *Maurice*

I do feel like I have created something absolutely new, even to the Greeks. Whitman anticipated me, but he didn't really know what he was after — only half knew — shirked, even to himself, the statement. (qtd. in Moffat *Forster* 119)

The innovative aspect of this friendship, to Forster's mind, was his belief that sex was important in developing and sharing personal, private knowledge of the self and another individual. Forster believed that sexual intimacy facilitated a private knowledge and honesty. He claims that Whitman's insistence on the chastity of male passion and the Greeks' insistence that to be virtuous, passion must ultimately benefit society, meant they only “half knew” this. Rather than replicating Carpenter or Whitman's socialism, then, Forster saw his evocation of personal intimacy as breaking from tradition. He prioritised sexual honesty and openness as key to a developing understanding of one's sexual and emotional needs. Sharing this honesty with a lover means attempting to understand their desires in turn. Forster sees himself as undertaking this honesty where others have shirked it. His consideration of the intimate, enduring meaning of sex resonates with Symonds's unpublished erotic and emotional memories of Norman Moor, discussed in Chapter One, rather than, as Hertz asserts, his “Greek Ethics”. This makes Forster's intimacy not quite as “absolutely new” as he imagined. That said, Forster also develops Symonds's representation of long-term intimacy. Symonds's “In the Key of Blue” depicted long-term intimacy as taking place while hidden from a darkness that symbolised cultural prohibition. Forster believed that the sexual intimacy of two friends created a commitment and understanding that could potentially reject cultural strictures that prohibited physical contact.

Within a sexual relationship, these isolating strictures are replaced by what Forster called “a perfect union”:

I want to love a young, strong man, of the lower classes and be loved by him and even hurt by him ... the 'hurt by him' by the way ought to be written in fainter ink. Although it is on my ticket it is not as vivid as [the] 'perfect union' and is not underlined by the desire to be trod on or shat on which characterizes extremer cases. In the best lovemaking I have known the most violent of embraces gets softened by it. ("About Sex" 216).

Forster's "perfect union" is not ideal perfectionism. Rather it is grounded in intimate knowledge. It is defined as a particular mixture of tenderness and brutality. It is the desire to be loved as well as hurt by a "young, strong man, of the lower classes". Yet Forster is not merely advocating sadomasochism as an erotic fetish — although such practices might have been part of his "ticket". Rather, Forster's yearning for pain is written in "fainter" ink than the "perfect union", while still being part of it. The hurt he describes is part of a primarily emotional proximity, an emotional desire for love and union. It is a sensual and sentimental sharing that "softens" the most violent embraces. If Forster associates brutality and pain with the body, then this knowledge of the body is enveloped within a loving embrace. It is, then, an emotional and not physical pain to which Forster refers. Pain and love therefore become inescapably linked within Foster's concept of personal intimacies between a couple. The connection between them is a knowledge of sex. Forster's language above may seem startling, but appears indiscreet only as it connotes an intensely personal desire. It opens a vulnerability that is normally only known by one's sexual partner. Of course, having sex with another man rendered the individual vulnerable to the law during a period in which sex between men was considered illegal and unspeakable. However, Forster is primarily concerned here with the brutal, yet softened, intimacy that comes with sharing your most intimate desires with another person. For Forster, a perfect union means the ability to cause emotional pain, and the tender decision not to. It is a familiarity with, and love for, the vulnerable knowledge of a partner that is created by the passage of time.

However, Forster's directness about Maurice's sexual desire has been critically regarded as *Maurice's* major weakness. As a novelist, Forster is valued

for his indirect and subtle criticism of English social mores. Matthew Curr has argued that “the main corpus of [Forster’s] work is revered for its subtle ironies [particularly] the mirthful indirection of Forster’s deft-telling” (53). Hedley Twidle concurs, arguing that Forster is aesthetically strongest as a writer of “diminuendos and anti-climaxes”: using “nothing” to mean “something” (25–26). Forster’s indirect exposure of the English limit by evoking a delicate, conventional English inability to discuss sensitive topics openly is heralded as his lasting achievement. Against these criteria, *Maurice*’s direct treatment of sex, desire and fulfilment “has been consistently rejected as weak” (Curr 53). Martin, too, claims that “*Maurice* is E. M. Forster’s least appreciated novel” (35). Wolfe has argued that Forster’s four other novels “emplo[y] a double narrative” in which a character “half conforms to the conventions of straight literature and the other half tells a subterranean tale of same-sex desire” (89). He claims that in these other works, Forster uses “intermediate male protagonists” — a term borrowed from Carpenter, meaning male and female characters who challenge gender and sexual binaries — who “struggle [to] live an emotionally authentic life” (91). This suggests that *Maurice* has been undervalued for its attempt to resolve this internal conflict between self and society.

That said, Forster’s attempt to depict characters who can, eventually, live authentically is precisely the reason that *Maurice* is his most significant evocation of long-term intimacy. George E. Haggerty has argued that Forster’s most complex evocation of male–male intimacy is in *The Longest Journey* (1907). He claims that “descriptions of friendships” in Forster’s works “often founder on the eroticism of the language that is used” to express intimacy (“Pan” 156). Alternatively, Haggerty reads Rickie Eliot and Ansell Stewart’s homosocial relationship in this novel as “conjugal friendship” (156). This is an “alternative to [heterosexual] marriage” and is “playfully physical, probingly intellectual [and] emotionally intense” (160). Haggerty asserts that Forster’s homosocial bonds provide an intimacy that is based on an emotionally stimulating reciprocated intellect, reinforced in moments in which men can interact freely, naturally and physically, although not sexually. This counters the lack of intimacy offered by Rickie’s marriage to Agnes, which leads to an ultimately lethal romantic disenchantment and physical estrangement. Haggerty highlights that friendship in Forster’s work is often far from merely erotic, but

also contains emotional and intellectual stimulation when two friends feel that their relationship offers new ways of thinking: a deconstruction of the social obligation and duty inherent in marriage. *Maurice* also represents a complex emotional friendship between two men, but one which is significantly erotic. However, sex does not reduce the complexity of Haggerty's conception of conjugal friendship. Rather, sexual honesty replaces the necessity of adhering to cultural norms, something which eventually ends Rickie and Ansell's friendship. Conjugal friendship becomes long-term intimacy, for Forster, when two men can be completely honest with another.

Whereas Forster's other novels represent characters who are torn between personal desires and national identity, *Maurice* unashamedly forsakes an identification with English cultural, homophobic values, in favour of personal homoerotic connections. *Maurice* thus depicts a form of intimate connection which can be directly shared between two men, and one which lasts where other male–male intimacies in Forster's fiction fail. Shun Yin Kiang indirectly acknowledges the transience of Haggerty's conjugal friendships when she states that friendship in *A Passage to India* “creates *moments* and spaces in which to imagine alternative ways of being oneself and belonging to others that undercut the colonial taxonomies of gender, race, and class” (125; my emphasis). Forster's homosocial friendships offer only the fleeting possibility of two friends putting each other above the cultural, racial and class conventions which work to drive them apart. In *A Passage to India* (1922), Dr Aziz and Cyril Fielding part “friends again, but aware that they could meet no more” (Forster *Passage* 312). They are aware that each other's identification within their separate nationalities means that they must lose each other. In *Maurice*, two friends connect and remain connected, defying social strictures against their most intimate, shared desires.

Maurice clarifies the importance of intimate understanding between partners, which Forster's other novels avoid stating directly. Wolfe argues that Forster's ambivalence towards the institution of marriage in *Howards End* (1910) — his rejection of stereotypical unions between the “brutish”, hypermasculine Henry Wilcox and the ‘angel of the house’ whom Margaret Schlegel becomes — is demonstrated by allowing “the new woman” that

Margaret was to “disappear” and be “replaced by a domestic angel” at the end of the novel (Wolfe 80). Wolfe asserts that Forster’s indirect, absent figure of the lost New Woman opens a space for the reader of *Howards End* to imagine the possibility of a new form of intimacy, one which is emotionally liberating and personally fulfilling (79). This personal liberation is directly presented in *Maurice*, Forster’s following novel. By rejecting the heterosexual marriage plot in favour of an intimate, sexual lovemaking with another man, the two men construct a model of intimacy that is tender, brave, committed and defined by the sharing of private knowledges, personal vulnerabilities as well as strengths, and fears as well as pride. Legitimate marriages must be left behind for this, yet, in rejecting institutions, Maurice finds a monogamous form of love that Forster believed would, ideally, sustain committed long-term relationships. Reading *Maurice* as an expression of long-term intimacy between two men who stay together showcases Forster’s indirect critique of the English middle-classes — the mainstay of Forster criticism — in positive relief. As Twidle claims, his other novels turn a scandalous something into a conventional nothing. *Maurice* turns the stereotypical nothing of a darkness that signifies unspeakable homosexuality into an intimate something: a knowledge between lovers that has developed over time. Maurice must learn to negotiate his different, often conflicting, emotions and feelings about darkness, homosexuality and friends. Yet, as his feelings coexist besides each other in this one image, Forster articulates his clearest rejection of English conventional stereotypes, in favour of personal intimacy.

This chapter will trace how the image of darkness changes in response to Maurice’s experience of male lovers. First, the significance for Forster of sharing sexual and emotional honesty is demonstrated through his memoirs “About Sex” (c.1920–63), “Charlie Day” (1936) and “On A. E. Housman” (1950).⁷¹ This will provide the basis upon which the development of long-term intimacy will be read in *Maurice*. After this, this chapter is structured into readings of the development of the image of darkness in this novel. It considers

⁷¹ These memoirs have been published in Jeffrey M. Heath’s *The Creator as Critic and Other Writings by E. M. Forster* (2008). Heath’s edition is used by this thesis, see Bibliography, “Works Cited”. These memoirs are also available in the E. M. Forster Archives at King’s College, Cambridge. “About Sex” is listed as EMF/11/15; “Charlie Day” is “EMF/11/3/A”; “On A. E. Housman” is EMF/11/1

Forster's evocation of darkness through the language of obscurity and abhorrence which defined Edwardian perceptions of sexuality, as well as the opposing physicality to the light of chaste, virtuous Greek love. It analyses the ways in which sex facilitates emotionally complex discussions between Alec and Maurice, providing an emotionally authentic reformation of these cultural conventions. It closes with a reading of Maurice's interpretation of his love for Alec as a commitment to understanding the struggle between desire and pain, and his use of darkness to embody the development of this intimate understanding. It demonstrates that touch acts as a gateway to a new, intimate knowledge in which Maurice and Alec's ability to hurt, blackmail and abandon is superseded by their choice to remain, support and help. Darkness is redefined as a symbol of the acquisition of a complex, subtle amalgamation of emotional knowledges, Forster's evocation of the perfect union. The chapter closes with a consideration of Forster's 1914 epilogue and his awareness of the stylistic issues inherent in presenting a loving intimacy that must exist outside of mainstream culture.

Sex as intimate sharing and connection

For Forster's few Edwardian readers, the most unconventional aspect of Maurice and Alec's intimacy was their sexual intercourse. In 1913, Forster showed the initial drafts of *Maurice* to a close group of friends: the Cambridge academic Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson; the writer and critic Lytton Strachey; and the novelist Forrest Reid. Each of these readers advocated the chaste idealisation of men inherent in Greek love. Dickinson responded to Maurice with "disgust" at the "physical contact" within "the Scudder part" (Moffat *Forster* 116). Similarly, Strachey "didn't understand why the copulation question should be given so much importance" (Levy 246). Reid found the "sharing" of bodies to be "repellent" and "perverted" (Moffat 117). Forster's memories of sexual experiences and friendships reveal that he saw sex differently from his friends. Maurice and Alec refer to sex as "sharing" throughout the novel, and the term connotes a merging of both mind and body, knowledge and passion (180; 212). Like his characters, Forster conflated sex with an understanding and sharing of a complex self-knowledge. In a memoir written throughout his life, "About Sex",

Forster recorded and analysed memories of his sexual desire. He began the work in the 1920s, detailing early memories of his sexual desires and fantasies. In 1935, he added a section chronicling events from 1890 to 1893, when he was “113/4” to “14/4” [sic]. In 1958, two years before writing his “Notes on *Maurice*”, he wrote about his adolescent and adult sexual experiences. Forster’s life-long creation of this document demonstrates that his adult sexuality was formed by the examination of the enduring afterlife of his adolescent dreams. In *Maurice*, a ten-year-old Maurice dreams of the voice of a friend calling to him. This reflects Forster’s understanding of his early “dreams being important” (“About Sex” 213). These dreams were important as they revealed a craving for emotional comradeship that he would remember throughout his life. Like Maurice, Forster developed crushes on garden boys who worked at his mother’s house. He remembers “Ansell ... I eight years old he older about 15 ... a pale, snub-nosed and very good-natured boy” (213). Of another boy, Percy, Forster comments: “I never long[ed] to see Percy undressed nor commit any improprieties, or even [felt] as much emotion [for him] as for Ansell” (213). The comparison is significant. Forster remembers his early crushes as primarily emotional affairs. Lust, physical urges and masturbation appear to be of secondary importance to the enduringly stirring effect of Ansel’s good nature. Sexual desire is linked to emotional desire in these persisting memories.

Forster also associated adult sexual frankness with the sharing of a combination of tenderness, affection and the relief of reciprocated feelings. In his memoir “Charlie Day”, Forster recounts asking a sailor of slight acquaintance if

at his school did the boys ever do anything to each other ... the first time I had so much as hinted at the thing ... I thought I had annoyed him. (204)

When Charlie answers “YUS” [sic], Forster asks him to “do those things to me”, to which Charlie responds “YUS MORGAN” (204). The discussion of sex here is not only exciting for the acts that it foreshadows. The acts of speech themselves are lovingly remembered by Forster, who notes the cautious and annoyed tones and relishes the climactic dismissal of uncertainty within Day’s bold

proclamation of Forster's middle name, Morgan: a name reserved for friends. The euphoric moment in which Forster and Day established an intimate connection, rather than the physical acts to which it was a precursor, is made the climax of their sexual relationship.

Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* was a major influence on Forster's developing awareness of his sexual desire, yet Forster's emphasis on sharing this desire could not be more opposed to Housman's life-long silence. Forster wrote a memoir on the influence of Housman in 1950, intended for recital at an unnamed club.⁷² It is not specified whether it was ever read out. He recounts spending a holiday in Shropshire in 1907 "kidding myself into thinking the scenery beautiful and not yet looking out for the lads" ("On A. E. Housman" 126). Forster remembers reading Housman's lads as figures of unrequited homoerotic desire: "the homesickness, the bedsickness [sic], the yearning for masculine death all merged with my own late-adolescence and turned inward on me" (126). After this holiday, Forster discussed the collection with a friend who "agreed instantly" with Forster's interpretations (126). Forster concluded that Housman "must have fallen in love with a man" (126). Forster wrote to Housman at this time thanking him for *A Shropshire Lad*, but received no reply. However, his developing certainty that he shared a desire for the same sex with Housman sharpened his confidence that Housman would welcome contact.

Logistically, such a meeting should have been easy to engineer. Forster and Housman were both fellows at Cambridge, Housman's Trinity College only a short walk up Trinity Lane from Forster's King's College. This was both Forster's *alma mater* and his home as a Fellow from 1926, four years after Housman began working for the university. However, Forster reports only meeting Professor Housman once, at a formal dinner in which Housman "contributed nothing" ("Housman" 126). In 1922, the same memoir recounts, Forster wrote to Housman again. He was carefully circumspect: "I knew now what the poems were about [but] was very, very careful ... only thanking him for the pleasure they had given me" (127). Forster received a reply to this circumspect letter, which he "hand[ed] round" at the reading of the memoir — or

⁷² "On A. E. Housman". See Bibliography, "Works Cited"

intended to — possibly to avoid committing Housman’s response to paper. Although this indicates that Housman’s reply could have alluded to the homoerotic significance of the collection, no intimacy or detailed correspondence developed from Forster’s note of thanks. Tragically, Housman’s response is no longer in Forster’s papers. Six years later, with the “third and final letter” which Forster wrote to Housman, he presented a copy of his recently published volume of short stories, *The Eternal Moment* (1928). This collection contains Forster’s story “The Point of It”, which he stated was a response to Housman’s poem “Hell’s Gate”, “XXXI” of *Last Poems* (1922).⁷³ Housman’s poem ends as two male friends stand “midmost on the homeward track”, looking back to a sleeping hell (“Last” 132). The poem shimmers with the possibility of vengeance, pain and biblical censure for the two friends’ contact. Forster’s “The Point of It” symbolised “the gates of hell shattered by affection” (Forster “Housman” 127). The short story ends with his protagonist being pulled out of a grey, emotionless eternity, an emotive purgatory, by the voice of a friend. Housman, evidently, did not appreciate the collection nor the potentially scandalous homoerotic inferences which Forster claimed to make from his verse. Forster received an “absolutely hateful” response to his letter. In his memoir, he added, “I can’t show it you or even quote it, for I was so disappointed and hurt that I destroyed it after one rapid perusal” (128). Forster’s 1928 letter was, presumably, advocating a franker exchange of tastes than the 1922 letter. Forster admits that “I was forcing the pace. I was pushing for intimacy too soon” (128). This story has more than anecdotal value. It demonstrates that while Housman saw sexual and romantic long-term intimacy as an essentially private and unmentionable desire, Forster prized the sharing of intimate, emotional and sexual experiences with others. Negotiating how friends feel about either their sexual or emotional desire for men, and having the confidence to say these things out loud creates, for Forster, a sharing of an emotional experience and a trust which forms a lasting emotional bond and tenderness.

⁷³ Forster’s *The Point of It* has been republished in a later collection of his short stories: *The Machine Stope and Other Short Stories*, edited by Rod Mengham (1997). This edition is cited in the Bibliography, “Works Consulted”.

Forster's intimate reformation of the bildungsroman

The importance of personal, sexual connection between men in *Maurice* engages Forster's negotiation of long-term intimacy with a significant, intimate reformation of the bildungsroman genre. The bildungsroman is the novel of formation, within which the protagonist's narrative is structured as a developing consciousness of their emotional needs and maturation to a social, environmental and intellectual position in which they are able to create the circumstances that cater for these needs. Jerome Buckley gives this overview of the genre: "a child of some sensibility grows up in the country or some provincial town where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed on his free imagination". This is countered, Buckley adds, by the protagonist's "direct experience of life [which] involves at least two love affairs, one debasing, the other exalting and demands that in this respect the hero reappraise his values" (18).

Forster both utilises and reforms this narrative by separating the developmental effect of the two lovers whom Maurice meets from the formal climatic end of the bildungsroman narrative in the institution of marriage. Forster's attachment to the marriage plot was ambivalent. He desired the potential of life-altering connection which the spouse represented, but saw the institution as repressive. Forster's novels, generally, revolve around the depressing aftermath of ill-suited marriages. Wendy Moffat argues that by 1910, "the conventions of the nineteenth-century novels [Forster] revered had begun to feel a little like a cage. It seemed to him wrongheaded even trivial these days simply to end on a novel with [marriage]" (*Forster* 83). Forster repeatedly destabilises the bildungsroman convention of the heterosexual happy ever after by making marriage the middle of his novels, rather than the end. As Forster stated, "marriage ... the old full stop, is not an end at all" (Moffat *Forster* 83). Characters who marry are rarely allowed the simplicity of a seemingly endless honeymoon as the final pages close. Rather, becoming husband and wife is often the initiator of a majority of the plot of Forster's works. It is the sudden marriage between the English Lilia Herriton and the unknown Italian Gino which creates the panic of the obnoxious Herritons, and the comi-tragic events that

follow in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905). It is only after marrying that Rickie Elliot and Margaret Schlegel realise the true, unpalatable nature of their spouses, in, respectively, *The Longest Journey* (1907) and *Howards End* (1910). This unconventional usage of the marriage ceremony as the origin of character development and plotting was Forster's attempt to expose the hypocrisy of two individuals who are not emotionally forthcoming and honest with each other marrying for life.

However, as Moffat argues, "the oscillation between *conventional* and *not* was in [Forster's] marrow" (*Forster* 70, Moffat's emphasis). In his "Notes on *Maurice*", written in 1960, Forster specified that

a happy ending was imperative. I shouldn't have bothered to write otherwise. I was determined that in fiction anyway two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows. (216)

Forster's insistence on a "happy ending" is entrenched within the bildungsroman convention of the soulmate, finding a specific, fated lover who is instrumental in "exalting" the world-weary protagonist. Brigid Lowe specifies that, within the bildungsroman narrative, the "gathering impingement of patterns of meaning and social constraint" as the protagonist grows up is countered by the soulmate who "proves that the world, beneath the hostile incidentals of social constraint and practical necessity, is a home fit to grow up in" (413). Yet, as Jill Ehnenn has observed, the narrative of the soulmate in bildungsromane is frequently attached to "systems of compulsory reproductive heterosexuality [and] enforced normalcy" (151). However, Forster's use of marriage as a foil to reveal a lack of intimate understanding in the above novels does not mean that he opposes the symbolic ideal of the soulmate, nor its formal place as the climax of the bildungsroman genre. Moffat has highlighted that Forster's desires in this respect were conventionally romantic: "He wanted intimacy, love, domesticity akin to marriage" (*Forster* 71). Forster's weariness with the institution of marriage is, more specifically, a "weariness of the only subject I can and may treat, the love of Men for Women and visa-versa" [sic], as he wrote in his diary just prior to the publication of *Howards End*. Forster needed to unyoke the emotional narrative of personal, emotional fulfilment from the

external image of heterosexual coupling.

Other critics have acknowledged that rewriting the bildungsroman means the rejection of both marriage and the soulmate as the primary source of individual development. Maria Anna Palomar observes that literary modernism provided ground for other writers to depict personal development outside of marriage. She notes that “in the eighteenth century the choice for women was marriage or death” and highlights that in contrast, the protagonists of modernist novels can “develop later, after finding that marriage is initially fulfilling but insufficient for the realisation of the self” (4). Reinterpretations of the bildungsroman genre have resisted the need for a protagonist to find a lover, partner or soulmate in order to make sense of the world and their place within it.⁷⁴

Forster’s reformation, instead, rehabilitates the soulmate, aligning the figure that once symbolised the external morality of the Victorian realist novel with a private self-knowledge. This makes his reformation of the bildungsroman an inversion of the same narrative to new, intimate and homoerotic ends. Consequently, Forster separates the notion of external, social development towards a position of respectability within English culture from the story of an inner, personal development towards emotional fulfilment. Gloria Summerfield and Lisa Downward highlight that, conventionally, both “the influence of external forces, either God or the outside world” and the “protagonist’s imposition of innate potential on the world” must unify and fit together within the established codes of the realist world of the traditional bildungsroman (170). One canonical example of a home that is both socially and emotionally “*fit* to grow up in” (Lowe 413; my emphasis) is *Jane Eyre* (1847). Not only does Charlotte Brontë’s climactic and romantic “reader, I married him” establish a lasting tie between Jane and Mr Rochester, but it also locates Jane within the aristocratic

⁷⁴ In her 1990 survey *The Female Bildungsroman in English*, Laura Sue Fuderer credits Ellen Morgan with being the first critic to write that woman “is a creature in the process of becoming, struggling to throw off her conditioning, the psychology of oppression” (Fuderer 2). The process of women’s becoming, Funder contends, is the fight against the narrative constraints of a genre which traditionally ends in marriage. More recently, Marion Christina Rohrleitner states that queer theory facilitates a rejection of the conventional bildungsroman narrative: “the refusal of [the] unapologetically queer protagonist to be absorbed into a form of homosexual life that can be contained in the institution of monogamous marriage” (2).

household of Ferndean, where she can legitimately be Rochester's sexual partner, something that may only happen once his first wife, Bertha Mason, has died.

Conversely, Forster aligns the image of darkness with Maurice's soulmate, the dream-voice promising tenderness that eventually resolves into Alec. The development of this image leads to the personal rejection of respectability in favour of intimacy. As yet, no study has dedicated itself to identifying the significance of the image of darkness to the bildungsroman narrative of the soulmate. That said, Michelle Annette Masse, T. J. Stape, Gloria Summerfield and Lisa Downward have noted the relationship between darkness and the inner self within the genre.⁷⁵ Most recently of these examples, Summerfield and Downward have argued that darkness is symbolic of the subjective consciousness: "independence, separateness, limitlessness and inner movement" (165).⁷⁶ Forster makes an intimate understanding of darkness signify both the independence and separateness of Maurice from conventional decisions to marry for the sake of duty. Darkness simultaneously also signifies a parallel commitment to recognising his emotional limitlessness: an inner movement from convention to personal interpretation which is facilitated by sharing sexual knowledge with another man.

Thus, darkness becomes key to both cultural and literary concepts of homosexuality and the bildungsroman within the narrative development of *Maurice*. First, darkness symbolises the conventional understanding of the unspeakable nature of sodomy. Second, and relatedly, it symbolises a position of lack of self-knowledge: the typical starting point of the bildungsroman. Forster's reformation of the bildungsroman makes darkness symbolise the unspeakable image of homosexuality and simultaneously ties the narrative development to the realisation of this unconventional erotic, loving relationship between men. Darkness becomes a symbol precisely located to bring

⁷⁵ For an overview of the relationship between darkness and subjectivity in eighteenth-, nineteenth-, twentieth-century and contemporary bildungsromane See Michelle Annette Masse's *Dark Idolatry of the Self: Narcissism and the Bildungsroman from Goethe Through Wolfe* (1981), T. J. Stape's chapter "Lord Jim" in the *Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad*,

⁷⁶ They argue that Lily Briscoe's perception of a "core of darkness" within Mrs Ramsey, in Virginia Woolf's 1927 novel *To the Lighthouse*, uses the image of darkness to emphasise a "potentiality of becoming, rather than being" which is prioritized by the bildungsroman.

homosexual love into a reformed marriage plot, one which ends not in a formal ceremony, but in an enduring and uniquely poignant depiction of a complex long-term intimacy: the “beauty” and “tenderness” that can be created by meeting the one right person and committing to them over time.

“Absolutely beyond the limit”: Sex ed., darkness and obscurity

At the beginning of *Maurice*, darkness symbolises the unspeakable and obscure cultural notions of sex and homosexuality in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. It also represents the narrative position of obscurity from which traditional bildungsromane begin. As has been noted in Chapter One, for Forster’s British contemporaries, sexual acts between men were “the only thing absolutely beyond the limit” of discussion, “the worst crime in the calendar” as Maurice himself says to Clive early in the novel (44). Sodomy had been defined in ecclesiastical law as “*crimen inter Christianos nonnominandum*”, the crime not spoken about among Christians, since the Middle Ages. To restate Neil McKenna’s assertion, for late Victorian society, “sodomy, with its clear associations of excrement lay at the very confluence of fears ... about sex, dirt, disease and death, which haunted the national psyche” (272). Throughout Forster’s childhood and adolescence, the idea of sodomy was provocatively tied to a lack of knowledge that led to a conflation of various dimly acknowledged fears. This dark sodomitical periphery of mainstream propriety shadowed the ideal, conventional mind, which was symbolised by light and clarity.

This is evident in the contemporary treatment of two highly publicised trials for gross indecency. In the London newspaper *The Star*’s sensational account of the Cleveland Street affair (1889–90) and the Oscar Wilde trials (1895), darkness was made synonymous with illicit sexual acts. As Matt Cook notes, “during the Cleveland street scandal [*The Star*] described the house in which men met male postal workers for sex as a “hideous cesspool of wickedness and foulness” (55–56). Cook claims that the “dens” in which homosexual “crimes” took place were clearly defined by the popular media in contrast to the “neat, tasteful and orderly ... standard to which any respectful Englishman should conform” (56). Whereas the ‘normal’ home was defined by

light, clarity and order, homosexual haunts were defined by seediness in the public consciousness. The darkness of these abodes was particularly highlighted by the press during the Wilde trials. In the second of these trials, the landlady of Alfred Taylor, in whose rooms Wilde was charged with meeting young men for sex, provided evidence for the prosecuting council. The press reported her testimony thus:

the windows of [Taylor's] rooms were covered with stained art muslin and dark curtains ... lighted by different coloured lamps and candles ... the windows were never opened and the daylight was never admitted. (qtd. in Cook *London* 56)

Darkness appears here to define more than the physical spaces in which meetings took place and which necessarily remained hidden and discrete. Darkness connotes a broader ill-health and unsavoriness that is attributed to the crimes themselves. It is used to sensationalise and visualise the unnaturalness of sin, depicting it as an absence of a virtuous light.

The beginning of *Maurice* intertwines the unmentionable nature of sex with an attempt by Edwardian society to obscure any form of sexuality, and especially homosexuality. This is demonstrated by the initial appearance of the image of darkness in the first chapter, during a well-meant but deliberately and comically obtuse sex-education lesson. The lesson is of course based on heterosexual reproduction. It is delivered spontaneously on a beach by one of Maurice's preparatory-school teachers, Mr Ducie. As the teacher draws "helpful" diagrams — one suspects to avoid mentioning the body parts depicted — they appear like an "impossible sum" to the uncomprehending fourteen-year-old Maurice (5). "In vain [Maurice] tried. His brain would not awake. Puberty was there but not intelligence. Manhood must steal upon him, as always, in a trance" (5).

Forster experienced the significant problems of sex being beyond the limit of discussion at an early age. In "About Sex", he recounts that, at the age of twelve, he was sexually abused by an older man while walking on the South Downs near his boarding school at Eastbourne. The elder man "made [Forster]

sit between some gorse bushes ... undid his flies [and] told [Forster] to take hold of his prick" (214). Any form of abuse is obviously a traumatic experience. However, Forster's recollection in "About Sex" frames this trauma within a realisation that conventional Victorian morality limited the ability to talk openly and honestly about any form of sexuality. He remembers undergoing the abuse itself with "neither pleasure nor reluctance" (214). He also remembers his headmaster's response to the attack in a conversation that is eerily similar to Maurice's lesson with Mr Ducie. He remembers, while walking to the police station to report the attack, his headmaster, Mr Hutchinson, was embarrassed about discussing not only sexual abuse, but masturbation and sex in general: "we know from the Bible about certain things — there is the story of Adam and Eve — boys may do great harm to themselves" (214). It is his teacher's reticence to discuss sex openly with a confused and vulnerable teenager that Forster recorded in his diary, also recounted in "About Sex": Mr Hutchinson "lost a great opportunity for enlightening me", Forster wrote, "for I was full of curiosity and quite cheerful. I did not go into the police station. I wrote in my diary 'Nothing' [sic] to remember that there had been something" (215). Forster's evocation of "nothing", here stands, in part, for a disavowal of confusion, shame and humiliation. Foster remembers being "quite cheerful", yet feelings of shock and confusion, common to abuse victims, are suggested by his curiosity. Using "nothing" to suggest "something" signals a mixture of feelings that he needed someone else in a position of authority and maturity to put into words. Ultimately, Forster's recollection of the event emphasises the inability of his headmaster to articulate and share any of his confusion.

Forster's diary entry takes this one step further. He uses this isolated event to lament the inability of English mainstream culture to talk about sexuality. Any form of sex appeared to be viewed as criminally as the abuse he had undergone. Even heterosexual reproduction was handled by a reference to the Bible. Forster intuitively felt this to be wrong, unhelpful and, in its own way, a form of negligence. This incident impressed itself on him by prompting his recognition of the strangeness of a culture in which abuse and consensual sexual activities should be related by their unmentionable status. Clearly, the abuse that Forster experienced is not in any way an initiation into the forms of intimacy between consenting friends that he dreamed of, but his recollection of

the event indirectly emphasises the need for more intimate and honest relationships between friends in order to understand how pain, anxiety and silence impact on individuals. By recording it in his memoir, Forster equates this abusive experience with a deeply rooted, if dimly understood, perception of the problematic limit to conventional discussions of intimacy and sexuality.

Darkness is first mentioned in *Maurice* to highlight this tension between Maurice's personal desire and interest in sex and Forster's anger at society's inability to discuss sex openly. During the above-mentioned sex-education lesson, Ducie misreads Maurice's puzzlement as a conventional reticence to discuss sex. He laughingly claims that Maurice will one day understand what at present seems vague: "This day ten years hence," he offers Maurice, if "I invite you and your wife to dinner, will you accept?" (6). Maurice joyfully accepts and, eventually, the lesson ends. Waves obliterate the etchings mistakenly left in plain sight by the embarrassed Ducie on the beach. "For an instant of time," Maurice "despise[s]" his teacher as the mouthpiece for a society that is hypocritically uneasy with sexuality, before "the darkness rolled up again. The darkness that is primeval but not eternal and yields to its own painful dawn" (6). Darkness here is intertwined with illicit sexual desires. The relationship and relevance of sexuality to Maurice remains unguessed by the teenager because desires themselves are enveloped within a conventional silence. This silence is the darkness into which Maurice sinks. It symbolises the "nothing", which is Ducie's ultimate lesson. He teaches Maurice that sex cannot be mentioned within polite society. Thus, the heterosexual marriages which Ducie's offer of dinner advocates seem to be based on an inauthentic avoidance of sex. Darkness signals society's hypocritical avoidance of acts which take place between desiring adults. The lesson Maurice intuits is that relationships based on social propriety and correctness are a more horrific acquiescence to "nothing" than sex ever could be.

This self-revelation of bourgeois hypocrisy is a signature move of Forster's fiction. However, here, Forster amalgamates the idea of darkness as hypocritical obscurity with the idea of darkness as a transition from obscurity to knowledge. Therefore, as a conventional symbol of avoiding sex, darkness also presents the seeds of its own inversion. Maurice's anger momentarily places his

desire for knowledge and emotional authenticity as outside, and against, this cultural position. Through the bildungsroman form, darkness is tied to Maurice's innate potential, the development towards his union with a loving friend.

Darkness is a curtain that can be used to hide sexual acts by late Victorian squeamish cultural morality. Yet it can also be drawn back to reveal sexual intimacy and emotional honesty. The relationship between darkness and positive emotional revelation is alluded to in Maurice's dream of a friend, cited above. Maurice "scarcely saw a face, scarcely heard a voice" (12).

Nevertheless, the darkness which surrounds this voice symbolises his yearning for interpersonal unity and connection. This unconscious aspect of Maurice calls out for realisation. Forster's evocation of a personal, intimate darkness in a childhood dream at the beginning of his bildungsroman makes the eventual dissemination of the other, cultural, definition of darkness seemingly inevitable. As Jerome Buckley states, Maurice's dream of darkness will be realised by the "direct experience of life". Forster, therefore, introduces darkness as an opposition between Maurice's internal dream of a relationship with a man and society's attempt to hide sex. Darkness is set up to reveal itself through the influence of a friend. Yet doing so will necessitate a reconsideration of the English middle-class values which Ducie's offer of dinner represents to Forster's reader. Both suburbia and the marriages which happen within it are symbolic of fear and inauthenticity. Darkness is an image that for the majority symbolises monstrous acts and criminality. It will need to be redefined through personal experience by Maurice as he acquires unconventional, idiosyncratic knowledges.

"The brilliance of the day": Maurice's discovery of Greek love

Maurice's initial response to same-sex love involves traditional associations of darkness as degeneration and criminality. This response is prompted by a convention of the bildungsroman form. Maurice's first lover, his friend and fellow undergraduate at Cambridge Clive Durham, promotes new emotional depths of understanding in Maurice: he teaches Maurice the beauty and tenderness of reciprocated, passionate feeling between two men. "Chapter IX" of Forster's novel details Clive's revelation of his love for Maurice, and Maurice's reaction.

“With eyes that had gone intensely blue [Clive] whispered, I love you” (44). Maurice responds with a conventional refusal to discuss what he understands to be an improper expression of passion between two men: “Oh rot! ... Durham you’re an Englishman. I’m another. I’m not offended as I know you don’t mean it, but it’s the only subject absolutely beyond the limit as you know” (44). Maurice’s response is clear, yet Forster’s narrator creates a tension between conventional anxiety and the emotional significance of this statement for Maurice. The intense blueness of Clive’s eyes, and the privacy of his whisper each evoke the ideal of tenderness and beauty which Maurice has dreamed of.

However, Maurice remains unable to voice his desire, as Clive can. His conflation of sex with an unmentionable darkness, learned from Ducie, dismisses the very honesty and emotional reciprocation of which he has dreamed. This mirrors the contemporary press and law’s consideration of improper emotion as tantamount to sodomy. In particular, Maurice’s insistence that, as an Englishman, the crime is unmentionable, highlights an expressly English reticence. While books detailing homosexual acts, impulses and identities were published on the European continent in the second half of the nineteenth century, English publishers had remained silent on the subject.⁷⁷ Maurice continues to exist in the “Valley of Shadows”. This is a space into which Maurice falls as a teenager, after learning to call his sexual desires “obscene” (13). Forster imagines it temporally between the “peaks of either range”: on the one side, childhood curiosity and innocence before desire appears wrong; on the other, adult maturity, which promises to break upon the darkness once Maurice emerges from the valley (13).

The generic conventions of the bildungsroman itself counteract the strictures of opaqueness and silence through an insistence that darkness shall “yield to a painful dawn” (6). Clive’s significance within the bildungsroman narrative is to provide the “experience of life” that prompts this dawn within

⁷⁷Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds’s work *Sexual Inversion* was the first English publication on the subject, and this first edition was withdrawn from public sale by Symonds’s literary editor. Ellis wrote to Symonds that his “chief quarrel with the psychiatrists is that in England they will not even discuss the question” (Ellis 223).

Maurice (Buckley 12). His influence instigates a development from opaqueness and reticence to clarity and knowledge. In the chapter immediately following, Forster comments that “a slow nature such as Maurice’s ... needs time to feel ... once gripped, it feels acutely, and its sensations of love are particularly profound” (45). Here, Forster emphasises Maurice’s slow but heartfelt reciprocation of Clive’s love. This reciprocation has the power to deconstruct the temporally delaying, slumberous “Valley of Shadow” in which Maurice’s self-understanding figuratively sleeps. Maurice’s years of identifying with conventional associations of darkness and homosexuality end as Clive awakens this emotional storm:

the storm had been working up not for three days but for six years. It had been brewed in the obscurities of being where no eye pierces. It had burst and [Maurice] had not died ... the brilliancy of the day was around him, he stood on the mountain range that overshadows youth, he saw. (46)

Here, the darkness of obscurity, “The Valley of Shadow”, is revealed to be a lack of light. The admission of light, through the influence of Clive, changes the substance of the darkness. The obscene, unspeakable acts between men can be understood, seen and experienced by Maurice. Male–male love becomes associated with the “brilliancy of the day”, an acquirement of clarity and understanding which emphasises the emotional fulfilment of desire and love between men. Therefore, Clive’s admission of love is linked to the voice which announces to Maurice “this is your friend” (12). Clive’s love emerges as something he had always desired. In this moment, the bildungsroman narrative is itself reformed. Until this point, *Maurice* could be defined as what Lowe terms the “tragic bildungsroman”: “against, or within the sublime egoism of the Romantic ideal of destiny, grows up a tragic Bildungsroman where the world stubbornly resists the needs of the soul” (4). Maurice’s homosexual yearning had made him a tragic figure as his desires were resisted by his internalisation of anti-homoerotic sentiment. Yet, with the breaking of the light, the very idea of tragedy is inverted into its opposite: homosexual attraction becomes the basis of a connection which is the relief of tragedy and isolation. It is Clive’s articulation of love, and a reciprocation within Maurice, that presents the ability

to reshape darkness with an intimate clarity. Homoeroticism is revealed to be the understanding which the novel's form moves towards. This temporal movement, Maurice's needing time to feel, makes reciprocation doubly potent as it offers both connection and a relief of conventional understandings of darkness. Love both stands in opposition to obscurity and lessens an unvoiced struggle. Both these emotions are represented by Forster's emphasis on seeing and understanding. His bildungsroman evokes homoeroticism as a long-term, privately virtuous end of confusion and a promise of future collaboration and unity. This new visibility of homoeroticism is defined by its location at the end of a period of obscurity.

It is significant that Clive tells Maurice "I love you". He desires an emotional connection, rather than a physical desire. Specifically, Maurice's darkness is replaced by the virtuous light of Greek love. Clive and Maurice's ensuing loving relationship, which lasts for two years, remains conditioned by the disavowal of the erotic touch:

They were affectionate and consistent by nature and, thanks to Clive, extremely sensible. Clive knew that ecstasy cannot last but can carve a channel for something lasting ... The love that Socrates bore Phaedo now lay within his reach, love passionate, but temperate, such as only finer natures can understand ... [Clive] led the beloved up the narrow and beautiful path, high above either abyss. It went on until the final darkness — he could see no other terror ... he educated Maurice, or rather his spirit educated Maurice's spirit, for they themselves became equal. Neither thought 'am I led; am I leading?' Love had caught him out of triviality and Maurice out of bewilderment so that two imperfect souls might touch perfection. (80)

Forster depicts their passionate friendship as a virtuous influence, visualised on the "narrow path" of the individual's lifespan. This life is lived, from beginning to end, on a self-assured moral precipice far above a deep abyss, "consistent" yet "sensible". Forster also focuses on Maurice and Clive's joint construction of this path. The influence of each friend shapes the other, Clive enlightens Maurice's obscurity while Maurice guards against removed triviality of pure theory. This

road visualises the conventional bildungsroman narrative: an enlightening pathway leading towards the final darkness of death. It assumes, with only the briefest, self-assured prophecy, that this love would prove “lasting”.

However, at exactly the moment when light and chastity seem to be at their greatest assent within the novel, Forster emphasises that Maurice and Clive have different definitions of darkness. The brilliancy of this love is tied by Forster to the conventional disavowal of sex within the novel. The road which both men walk traverses the abyss of transgressive sexuality. For Maurice, this ‘narrow’ path suggests little more than a continuing disavowal of the dark abyss underneath. It is this dark abyss, and not the pure light, that is tied to Maurice’s subconscious yearning. Forster emphasises this in another of Maurice’s early dreams. As a child, Maurice dreamed of “playing football” against a “naked” and “nondescript figure” who turns into “George the garden boy”, reflecting Forster’s own childhood crush. Maurice “feels very cross” and tells himself “I shall go mad if he turns wrong now” (12). Here, Forster infers that it is a direct confrontation with sex that Maurice most desires and most fears losing. Clive is contrastingly defined by his avoidance of the sensual darkness of which Maurice dreams. While Maurice yearns for sex as a form of tenderness, Clive sees erotics as a “terror”. For Clive, a final darkness unfolds after a life that is untroubled by scandal. His darkness is engaged with the conventional avoidance of sexuality. This mirrors Ducie’s inability to discuss sex openly, and Maurice’s intuitive assertion that his teacher had “told [him] nothing” (6). Clive fears falling off this intellectualised height into the sensual abyss. Maurice’s unarticulated worry is inferred by Forster’s narrator: a sense that his and Clive’s relationship is also an inauthentic “nothing” and lacks the sensual connection and honesty he desires. Both men assume an equality within this relationship, “neither thought ‘am I led, am I leading’”. However Forster uses this moment to distinguish between Maurice’s sensuality and Clive’s intellect.

This disparity between the two lovers is revealed by the end of Clive and Maurice’s relationship. Clive’s prophecy of Greek love’s permanence is, ultimately, proved false. They are separated by the traditional climax of the bildungsroman’s narrative. After being in a chaste relationship with Maurice for two years, Clive writes to his lover: “against my will, I have become normal. I

cannot help it" (97). He ends his relationship with Maurice and promptly marries. The failure of what promised to last until the "final darkness" highlights Forster's issue with loving relationships which feel the need to adhere to social mores defining sex between men as improper and immoral. Clive's marriage to Anne results in Maurice spending an unbearable weekend with the newlywed couple at Clive's country, estate Penge. Maurice feels that "life had proved a blind alley, with a muck heap at the end of it, he must cut back and start again" (147–148). Marriage seems the only, unbearably unsatisfying, answer, as Maurice foresees nothing but the traditional full stop as a metaphorical "muck heap" in front of him.

However, more so than in any of Forster's previous novels, this mid-narrative marriage provides another romantic alternative to the marriage plot, one which encompasses the sensual tenderness of which Maurice dreams. During this weekend, Maurice meets Clive's gamekeeper, Alec. This meeting prompts his realisation that true connections are both physical and made at the expense of rejecting the facade of cultural respectability, to which his platonic relationship with Clive clung. As Maurice walks in the dark on the grounds of Penge, he collides with Alec:

corduroys, dull talk, unimportant meeting [sic] yet they harmonised with the darkness and the quietness of the hour, they suited [Maurice, sic] and as he walked away he was followed by a sense of wellbeing which lasted until he reached the house ... Penge, instead of numbing, seemed more stimulating than most places. (164)

In this brief meeting, Alec appears as only partially substantiated by his clothes and a few "dull" words. He is like a passing thought, and indeed mnemonic of the unsubstantiated voice which speaks from the dark obscurity of Maurice's dream. Yet, in this moment, Maurice and Alec momentarily share what was not shared by Clive and Maurice: their bodies. In sharing their bodies, they relate to each other with a physical immediacy and intimacy that is unknown to Clive and Anne. The emotional significance of this physical harmony within the dark is enduring. Penge is transformed from a numbing to a stimulating space as Maurice and Alec experience a connection that transcends the physical. The

emotional significance of their colliding is suggested by Forster's atypical, synaesthetic usage of "suited" to express Maurice's relation to the positive feeling of the dark. This verb infers a sense of fittingness and also amalgamates the idea of a musical suite of related tonal features which combine in a melody. Within the context of the sentence, the harmony of the dark connects with Maurice's unconscious yearning. The newly eroticised and intimate elements of the darkness resonate emotionally and sensually like music within him. This ostensibly "unimportant talk" with a body in the dark foreshadows a meeting of much larger consequence than it immediately appears. Subsequently, heterosexual marriage is revealed to be a step in Maurice's development to a new unconventional and emotional understanding of love and commitment. Maurice and Alec's "unimportant talk" becomes a personal alternative to the overbearing cultural convention of the marriage plot. It is a gateway to a more equal and connected intimacy which stems from an emotional and physical compatibility between two individuals. Darkness here stands as a revolutionary sharing that both invalidates and transcends Clive's conventional marriage.

A darkness where men can be free: The intimacy of sharing the body

The sharing of sexual urges and acts is therefore central to establishing intimacy between Maurice and Alec. While this intimacy is physical, it is more importantly an awareness of emotional complexity, which increases as Maurice and Alec's sharing of the body constructs an intimate and vulnerable awareness of each other. The first time Maurice and Alec have sex is primarily a realisation of emotional freedom from conventional constraint, an establishment of a shared affinity with the darkness. Once he returns to his room, Maurice looks out of his bedroom window. He juxtaposes a new sensual stimulation in the night with the constraints of the house:

How vivid, if complex, were its impressions, how the tangle of fruit and flowers wreathed his brain! Objects he had never seen, such as rain water [bailed] from a boat, he could see tonight, though curtained in tightly. Arh! to get out to them! Arh for darkness — not the darkness of a house which coops up a man among furniture, but the darkness where

he can be free! (165)

The moment in which Maurice mistakenly touched Alec's body in the darkness has heralded a new sensitivity to the natural world. The touch of corduroys in the dark has inspired an emotional "tangle of fruit and flowers [which] wreathed his brain". This natural world symbolises a sensual possibility that lies outside the social convention that is figured by the constraining walls of Penge. The seeming necessity of marriage which Clive has entered is paralleled by a glimpse of sensual freedom. Darkness is significantly, unconventionally tied to Maurice's new ability to see: a gaining of knowledge rather than an obscurity. The moment of touch between himself and Alec has presented a new connection with other elements of the dark that beckon to Maurice from without.

This knowledge is not yet fully realised and Maurice, driven by despair, acts intuitively. Opening the window of his room, he calls blindly into the night:

Come! The action awoke him; what had he done that for? [...] What was the use of it? He was too old for fun in the damp. But as he returned to his bed a little noise sounded, a noise so intimate that it might have arisen from inside his own body. He seemed to crackle and to burn and saw [a] ladder's top quivering against the moonlit air. The head and the shoulders of a man rose up, paused, a gun was lent against the windowsill very carefully and someone he scarcely knew moved towards him and knelt beside him and whispered, 'sir was you calling out for me? ...Sir I know...I know,' [sic] and touched him. (166)

Maurice's shout into the dark momentarily aligns him again with a childish "fun in the damp", a wild forsaking of propriety. This scene redeploys Maurice's earlier childhood dreams to make sexual touch into an ending of obscurity through sharing intimate knowledge. The emotional freedom offered by the dark is its relocation of Maurice within a childhood that exists before the internalisation of conventional restraint. Moreover, darkness is reconstituted from unquestioning somnambulism to an awakening. The disembodied, imagined friend moves from unconscious to conscious, meaning that the

friend's body can now materialise to be held and experienced by Maurice. Maurice and Alec's joint reconfiguring of "the Valley of Shadow" in which desires must be unheeded is Forster's priority here. The brief touch between Maurice and Alec earlier in the evening is revealed to have reconditioned the darkness for both men. It has created a possibility of touching and knowing a friend that is unconsciously desired by Maurice, and consciously anticipated by Alec: while an instinctive sense of blindness animated Maurice's urge to call out, Alec has been waiting beneath the window. Forster also amalgamates physicality and intimate emotional knowledge within the dark. The noise of the ladder creaking is "a noise so intimate that it might have arisen from [Maurice's] own body". The erotic touch between the two men is a powerful acknowledgement of a shared physical urge. Yet sex also consolidates Maurice's past dream of an emotional intimacy. Alec helps Maurice realise desires he has unconsciously held. Maurice "scarcely knew" the man, yet he registers within his own body. Alec's calming "I know, I know" professes an intuitive knowledge of Maurice's previous battles with the obscurity of the dark, because he has also experienced them. The knowledge that is referred to is a knowledge of past visions and future anticipations. This erotic encounter is empathetically a resolution of Maurice's life-long desire for beauty, tenderness and bravery, emotions which Alec embodies as he draws his dreams into consciousness.

This may not be Alec's first time climbing through a bedroom window at Penge, although he tells Maurice that "I have never come like that to a gentleman before" (187). Indeed, Forster evokes a stereotypical familiarity and confidence with the body that is often fetishised in middle-class fantasies of the working classes.⁷⁸ Yet Forster also undermines class boundaries through the men's sharing of an intimate, emotional knowledge. Once established, multiple, contextually specific emotions amalgamate within sexual intimacy and physical closeness:

⁷⁸ In this respect, Alec anticipates D. H. Lawrence's later evocation of the heterosexual working-class George Mellors in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). While both Mellors and Lady Chatterley are instrumental in instigating their affair, Mellors is often emotionally knowledgeable and physically active. Lady Chatterley, although sexually experienced, is hesitant and passive during their intercourse.

'Had I best be going now, sir'?

Abominably shy, Maurice pretended not to hear.

We mustn't fall asleep though, awkward if anyone came in' [Alec] continued with a pleasant laugh that made Maurice feel friendly but at the same time diffident and sad. He managed to reply, 'you mustn't call me Sir', and the laugh sounded again, as if brushing aside such problems. There seemed to be charm and insight, yet [Maurice's] discomfort increased ... They slept separate at first, as if proximity harassed them, but towards morning a movement began and they woke deep in each other's arms. 'Had I best be going now?' he repeated, but Maurice, through whose earlier night had threaded the dream 'Something is a little wrong here but let it be', was resting utterly at last, and murmured "No, no". (169–170)

The class-consciousness signalled by Alec's "sir" is swept aside here by Forster as he emphasises a tenderness within Alec, a desire for emotional and not only sexual intimacy. The after-effect of implied sexual intercourse acts here as a gateway to an emotional conversation between the two men. This dialogue is constructed through tensions between opposing sensations. Maurice's shyness is contrasted with the persistence of Alec's attempt to make conversation. The conversation itself is shaped by a sense of anxiety lest the men be discovered, that is countered by a sudden and unexpected "friendliness", reflected in the noise of Alec's laughter. Sex has initiated an illicit awareness of each other's bodies that ties the two men together: both are in the vulnerable position of having committed a crime. Through this sexual act, Forster emphasises the emotional parity between Maurice and Alec. Alec influences Maurice. Indeed, Alec appears much more fitted to Maurice than Clive as he shares and embodies Maurice's desire for sensuality.

Thus Forster constructs an emotional union between both men. Sex facilitates the discussion of previously undisclosed and, for Maurice at least, unconscious desires for reciprocated physical intimacies. "There seemed charm and insight" within this intimate laughter, "and yet [Maurice's] discomfort increased". Initially, the abatement of erotic desire leaves Maurice feeling exposed and awkward in the dawn of this new freedom to express and connect.

However, again, Forster uses physical intimacy as a catalyst for the emotional acceptance of new physical liberties: “they slept separate at first, as if proximity harassed them, but towards morning awoke deep in each other’s arms”. While they begin separate, both men become unified within a release of anxiety. The presence of the conventional world outside Maurice’s bedroom still threatens, yet this serves only to exacerbate Maurice’s feeling of relief. He turns away from convention and towards the intimate “charm and insight” of Alec and is able to “rest ... at last”.

As Alec turns to leave, Maurice asks him whether he “ever dreamed of a friend ... nothing else but just ‘my friend’” (171). However, Alec has already gone and Forster comments that “class was calling”, disrupting the intimacy of the night (171). The whole scene emphasises a significant inversion of middle-class homoerotic fetishisations of the working classes. On the surface, Forster could be accused of treading a well-worn, deeply classist assumption that working-class men could be used for sex by middle-class men more readily than their own class. However, Maurice and Alec’s conversation in bed, and especially Maurice’s unanswered question about his dream of a friend, unifies both he and Alec within a shared and deep-seated desire for long-term intimacy. As Alec enters, he makes a sound that could be coming from within Maurice. His voice inspires a feeling of rest, calmness and insight which was prophesied by the voice Maurice dreamed of in the dark. It is true that Alec is stereotypically working-class, yet his working-classness advocates qualities of tenderness, bravery and authenticity which Maurice dreams of imitating. The development of their relationship will strengthen his initial, but generalised, sympathy with Alec. The passage of time will specify how Alec particularly experiences a desire for long-term intimacy. In this initial meeting, however, Maurice and Alec are united by a desire for an idealised tenderness which connotes an intimate end of class difference. Maurice’s worry is that, with the end of sexual intimacy, class consciousness might return and separate them.

This fear is abated as Forster continues to emphasise an emotional intimacy which supersedes conventional class ties. During a cricket match between the houseguests and the staff at Penge, both men suddenly “abandon ... caution”:

Alec swiped the ball into the fern. Lifting his eyes, he met Maurice's and smiled ... Maurice played up too. His mind had cleared and he felt that they were against the whole world. They played for the sake of each other and of their fragile relationship. — if one fell the other would fall. They meant no harm to the world, but so long as it attacked they must punish, they must stand wary and hit with full strength, they must show that when two are gathered together majorities must not triumph. As the game proceeded it connected with the night and interpreted it. (174–175)

In this scene, the men are united against the world through a shared physical “play” and an emotional interpretation of the significance of this “playing up”. Their collaboration becomes a symbol of the resistance of their “fragile relationship” against embedded social conventions. That this connection takes place within a quintessential image of an English cricket match is not merely coincidence. The typical rules which govern play refract the larger social and class restrictions that would normally separate Maurice and Alec. Staff and guests would normally have no other “leisurely” interaction than this annual match. Through abandoning caution within the game, Maurice and Alec both also counter the typical trajectory of the bildungsroman, which resolves by emphasising appropriate class and social positions. The physical heat and valour which connects Maurice and Alec's style of play also mirrors the erotic connection which took place in the darkness of the night. Moreover, Forster indirectly narrates the dawning of this interpretation to Maurice. The physical and emotional tenderness of the previous night, thus, illustrates the change in Maurice's conscious identification. The men have shared an intimate and vulnerable knowledge of each other, and both subsequently feel themselves to be linked to each other, above their social positioning.

Yet this knowledge is importantly an ability to hurt as well as to love, as Forster specifies in his definition of a “perfect union”. More precisely, both men's desire for, and sharing of, tenderness is warped by a tension between desire and anxiety. Maurice is, particularly, open to blackmail from Alec. Neil McKenna, Matt Cook and Matt Houlbrook have each identified the prevalence

of blackmailing within relationships between working-class and middle-class men. The danger that undercut many instances of sexual tourism, in which wealthy men sought casual sex from working-class men, was that even soliciting sex fell under the remit of gross indecency. Thus, it was easy for working-class men to extort money from the men they met, in exchange for silence. Indeed, George Ives noted in the 1890s that following the introduction of gross indecency, “an alleged smile or wink or look may cause arrest” (qtd. in Cook 43). Houlbrook, particularly, has highlighted that the figure of the blackmailer was closely tied to conventional class and gender expectations. He contends that throughout the twentieth century, “intimacy, sex, blackmail and assault constituted a continuum within the *same* cultural terrain underpinned by dominant conceptions of masculinity as toughness and resourcefulness” (178; Houlbrook’s emphasis). Threat, within Houlbrook’s continuum, becomes interwoven within the nature of the unique emotional “interiority” of sexual acts between men (178). Deviant acts were shadowed by the possibility of blackmail, which might have fed into the pleasure and piquancy of the excitement in the first place, or the relief of its absence. Blackmail could also be a recourse for men seeking to reaffirm their conventional masculine “toughness”, by reframing a desire for intimacy as a “resourceful” attempt to get money. Forster’s dream of the union certainly echoes an emotional vulnerability at the heart of the intimacy of sex. Forster also implicitly defines a perfect union in contrast to this conventional relation between classes. Between friends, the ability to hurt is withheld precisely because relating to each other meant more than relating to conventional class or gender codes.

However, Maurice and Alec are not yet united within a “perfect union”. Following the weekend at Penge, both retreat into the conventional class positions of blackmailer and victim. Alec invites Maurice to meet him in a boat house on the grounds of Penge. He expresses this in terms of their previously established intimacy: “since the cricket match, I do long to talk with one of my arms around you, then place both arms around you and share with you” (180). Maurice retreats into the anxieties and prejudices of his own class. He resists what he calls the “perversion” of his own spirit (185). He tells himself that Alec is “nothing but a gamekeeper” (183). Alec’s longing for emotional intimacy is lost amid Maurice’s anxiety that his sexual lust will turn to a hypermasculine

aggression (183). Maurice resignedly tells himself that his “holiday is over” (186). Similarly, Alec becomes the threat that Maurice assumes him to be. When Maurice does not come, Alec sends the following letter:

“Mr. Hall ... Sir. you do not treat me fairly ... I wrote to you I am going it is not fair of you never write to me ... you say ‘Alec, you are a dear fellow’ but you do not write. *I know about you and [Clive] Durham.* Why do you say ‘Call me Maurice’ and then treat me unfairly. Mr. Hall I am coming to London. If you do not want me at your home, say where in London. I would make you sorry for it. ... ps. *I know something*” [sic].
(188)

Alec’s letter obscures his friendly insight and charm through formalised threats. These threats extend from Alec’s deliberate emphasis of both men’s positions within the English class system. He reverts to a position of enforced respect for Maurice, calling him “Sir”. Forster also uses Alec’s incorrect grammar throughout the letter to suggest a lack of formal education.

That said, the intimate knowledge that has been shared by Maurice and Alec leads to an unconventional reading of this conventional blackmail note. Alec’s grammatical inaccuracies also intimate the emotional stress which he is under. The repetitive, disjointed structure of the letter mimics a rambling speech pattern. This intimates emotional stress: a sadness and fear of loss which lies behind Alec’s words. Unconventionally, it is these underlying emotions which are foregrounded by Maurice. His response to the letter is intimate. He supposes an ongoing parity and connection between himself and Alec: “Why had he flung out those words, some foul, many stupid, some gracious,” Maurice wonders while reading the letter. “It seemed the sort of letter that he himself might have written. Muddle-headed? ... he didn’t want such a letter, he didn’t know what such a letter wanted, half a dozen things probably” (188). Maurice reads ambiguous motivations and intentions in these words. Subsequently, Alec becomes an individual again, rather than a stereotypical working-class gamekeeper with easily determinable emotions. Like the intimate conversation which the men shared in bed, Alec’s actions indicate the tensions which form his character: an ability to feel passionately attached and to hurt cruelly, and to

love bravely. Together they connote a vulnerable uncertainty, a “muddle-headed” attempt to maintain an illicit connection that is likely to be lost. This letter turns into an indication of Alec’s desire for long-term intimacy; his fear of losing Maurice. Maurice’s response changes the nature of the vulnerability from a class-based experience of blackmail into a shared emotional grappling with the intensely desirable familiarity of an intimate darkness. Long-term intimacy emerges through Maurice’s developing understanding of Alec’s struggle between tenderness, brutality, vulnerability and strength.

This new engagement with darkness heralds the beginning of Maurice and Alec’s experience of long-term intimacy. Maurice realises that “only a struggle twists sentimentality and lust together in love” (189). This emotional struggle is sharply defined against the conventional “middle-classes, whose highest desires seemed shelter” (188). Forster’s narrator asserts that the endless pursuit for middle-class cultures is

not a lair in the darkness to be reached against fear, but shelter everywhere and always, until the existence of the earth and the sky is forgotten ... shelter from poverty and disease and violence and impoliteness; and consequently from joy. (188)

This contrast between struggle and shelter pivots precisely upon a distinction between Maurice’s negotiation of conventional and unconventional attitudes to darkness and his rejection of the former. Love is symbolised here as an experience of the elements from which mainstream society seeks shelter. Forster’s juxtaposition of the home and the natural world again opens out a contrast between social restraint and emotional authenticity. The active concept of a struggle implies a knowledge of the contradictory, complex and even harsh dimensions of another person. Forster’s conception of love develops from perceiving and struggling with the complexity of a lover’s character; from knowing them authentically and rejoicing in the volatility of passion. To hurt and to be hurt is to engage in the violence and impoliteness of authentic human relationships. However, this hurt is also written in a “fainter ink” within the perfect union (“About Sex” 216). Sentimentality becomes love by both perceiving a shared capacity to hurt and attempting to temper that with

understanding and compassion. Sex opens out these contradictory sentimental and vulnerable avenues within *Maurice* because it is passionately, honestly and personally desired. Yet the long-term effect of sex is its personal, emotional aftershocks. Maurice's developing understanding of Alec and his attempt to read him locates him in what others would avoid at their loss: a "lair in the darkness to be reached against fear". Maurice satirises Forster's negative, monstrous language here by understanding this imaginative space to be a joyful and meaningful pleasure: the complex emotional understanding that exists within long-term intimacy.

Underneath the words: Intimate knowledges at the British Museum

Maurice meets Alec; Forster chooses the British Museum in London as the setting for Alec's supposed blackmailing. The large, neoclassical edifice is both located at the geographical centre of national power, and a symbolic home of British tradition and respectability. Yet, for Forster and other like-minded men of his generation, the museum offered more transgressive experiences. In 1904, Forster was a regular visitor (Moffat *Forster* 63). In that year's diary he wrote, "each time I see those Greek things at the B[ritish] M[useum] they are more beautiful and more hopeless [they] stand all afternoon in the thick sunshine [they] simply radiate light" (70). The large numbers of statues depicting naked or scantily clad Greek gods and heroes in the museum offered temptingly beautiful and erotic fantasies to the right viewer. However, much like the idea of "the Greek Gods, such as illustrates the Classical dictionary" in Maurice's dream, these statues seemed to Forster far removed from any "ordinary man", and the possibility of reciprocated erotic touches and feelings (*Maurice* 12). Their beauty, standing in the light of the British Museum, appears linked to a hopelessness, a remoteness and rejection of the deepest desires that Forster yearned for.

By contrast, the British Museum in *Maurice* is filtered through a new relationship with the comfortless, unconventional yet liberating rain and darkness:

the rain was coming down in its old fashion ... in the great forecourt of the Museum it could fall uninterruptedly, plumb into the draggled doves and the helmets of the police. So dark was the afternoon that some of the lights had been turned on inside and the great building suggested a tomb, miraculously illuminated by spirits of the dead. (190)

The lights within the museum appear to make a weak stand against the onslaught of a newly empowered darkness. Against the natural force of the rain, the lights illuminating the museum recall the conventional pursuit of a “security” which acts as a barrier to joy. This joy is expressly linked with the illegality of sex between men, by the reminder of the policemen guarding the museum in the rain. Yet the struggle of love against such strictures is also present within the “draggled” feathers of the doves. As love and convention are juxtaposed within Forster’s description of the rain, the new possibility of an emotional territory outside convention emerges. The museum, full of “old things belonging to the nation” is re-identified as a tomb, aligned with old artefacts and their past knowledges (191). Against this fading spirit, the consolidation of a new darkness that heralds long-term intimacy seems inevitable.

Forster anticipates a new depth of awareness between the two men by shifting his authorial perspective from Maurice to Alec. The reader is given new, intimate knowledge of Alec’s emotional state.

Alec arrived first, dressed no longer in corduroys, but in a new blue suit and bowler hat ... it was only an accident that he had appeared as the untamed son of the woods. Indeed he liked the woods and fresh air and water, he liked them better than anything, he liked to protect and destroy life. But woods contained no ‘openings’ and young men who wished to get on must leave them. (190)

Alec is revealed to be as constrained by the social expectations of his class as Maurice. The necessity of “getting on” and producing financial stability threatens to destroy his innate affinity with, and love of, the natural world of the woods. Alec’s love of life repeats Maurice’s earlier yearning “to get out to [the] rain, [to] a darkness where men can be free” (165). Both men have been manipulated

and restrained by separate cultural conventions that are here symbolised by the dominating solid architecture of places like the fictitious Penge or the real British Museum. It seems unsurprising that Forster decided upon the museum, full of “old things belonging to the nation” for the site of blackmail (191). Alec also closely resembles Forster’s fantasy of a “young man of the working classes” who holds the power to hurt as well as love (“About Sex” 216). He is governed by his strong emotional passions, symbolised by a seemingly random decision as to whether to protect or destroy life. These passions, significantly, also factor into his blackmailing of Maurice. Forster writes that “when his victim arrived [Alec] became half cruel, half frightened. Gentlemen he knew, mates he knew; what class of creature was Mr. Hall who said, ‘call me Maurice?’” (190–191). Here, Alec is aware of needing to define Maurice with complexity and, not yet understanding it, reacts passionately.

In contrast, Maurice’s new identification with the personal intimacy and emotional honesty of the darkness allows him to be a tender, understanding and loving friend to Alec. Before he meets Alec, “something kept rippling in his mind like muscles beneath healthy skin”, He feels “fit, anxious to play the game and, as an Englishman should, hoped his opponent did too” (191). Maurice’s nature had been “slow” (45). Here he parallels the “intuitive” and “friendly” tones of Alec during their night together. He both mirrors Alec’s anxiety and counters and dispels it with resignation and optimism. During the meeting itself, “Maurice [finds] himself trying to get underneath [Alec’s] words” (192). In attempting to understand his friend, Maurice breaks from his identification as an Englishman in favour of the emotional insight that he has learned from Alec. He responds to Alec’s threat of exposing Maurice’s relationship with Clive “thoughtfully” and “continues in the same tone: Scudder ... I have really got to think that ‘natural’ only means oneself” (192). This admission is prompted by a correct intuition that Alec’s threatening, conventional behaviour is contrary to the liberating erotic passions for men — symbolised by the “woods, fresh air and water” — which feel natural to him. Maurice’s new awareness of the liberating darkness means that he is able to read Alec’s emotional vulnerability that is caused by a particular “muddle” (196): a mixture of cruelty, fear, love and passion.

Forster subsequently draws out these emotional tensions within both

Maurice and Alec, along with each man's developing ability to read them within his companion. Alec catches

sight of a winged Assyrian bull and changed into naif [sic] wonder 'He's big enough isn't he', [sic] he remarked, 'they must have owned wonderful machinery to make a thing like that ... a pair, so to speak' ... standing each by his monster, [Maurice and Alec] looked at each other and smiled. Then [Alec's] face hardened. (192–193)

The pair stand before two “monstrous” sculptures. Each is a bull with five legs and feet and a human head. Both are still housed within the British Museum.⁷⁹ They are from the North West Palace of Sargon II, an ancient Assyrian emperor. The curator's sign states that each were originally design to “protect” the entrance to the main feasting chamber by “keeping evil from entering”. The effect of “machinery” which draws Alec's attention is most likely the intricate indentations and flourishes which constitute the pair's ceiling-height wings and flanks (British Museum 118808a/b). The complex physical texture of these monsters offers a fascinating counterpart to the intricacies of each man's subjective emotions, to which Forster draws attention throughout the chapter. Indeed, “machinery” is exactly the term through which Christopher Isherwood professed to understand Forster's novels. In a lecture on his literary influences, Isherwood professes to map the “machinery” of Forster's novels through “elaborate diagrams with coloured lines showing how one character moved from position A to position B” (Isherwood, “Writer and his World”). As Richard E. Zeikowitz has illustrated, Forster and Isherwood shared not only a friendship, but also an ongoing dialogue on “writing and homosexuality” for over thirty-five years.⁸⁰ It is therefore possible that Forster takes this reference directly from Isherwood's praise, suggesting that his evocation of this moment of mutual understanding between friends develops, fittingly enough, from the conversations Isherwood had with him. This moment offers a surface visualisation of the amalgamated, complex texture of Maurice and Alec's

⁷⁹ They are listed in the museum's catalogue as Anonymous “Carved Gypsum Sculpture of Protective Spirit”. 710–705 BC Catalogue number 118808(a/b).

⁸⁰ See Zeikowitz, Richard. E. *Letters Between Forster and Isherwood on Homosexuality and Literature*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 2008. Print.

feelings, which lie underneath their words. The fact that this is represented by a tangible statue reflects the dawning of Maurice's consciousness of this complexity within Alec. Forster's emphasis on each statue's monstrous deformation also compounds Maurice's previous assertion that "natural" means only the idiosyncrasies of oneself. Both men appear as living reflections of the marble pair themselves, and momentarily recognise their shared idiosyncrasies. Their intimate smiles reflect that they are emotionally tied to each other by sharing desires that are unconventional, yet natural to themselves.

Forster's use of sculptures to bring about emotional intimacies mirrors the significance of the physical and sexual in precipitating increasing emotional depths throughout the novel. He further compounds a connection between the physical body and emotional synthesis:

And it was thus for the next twenty minutes: they kept wandering from room to room as if in search of something. They would peer at a goddess or vase, then move at a single impulse and their unison was the stranger because on the surface they are at war [when] their eyes met and his smile was sometimes reflected on the lips of his foe ... the belief grew that the situation was a blind — a practical joke almost and concealed something real, that either desired. (193)

The physical and emotional connection between Maurice and Alec is symbolised by their moving "at a single impulse". This shared movement is marked by each man's dawning awareness of the "strange" uniqueness of their situation. They realise that the cause of their war-like opposition is the "situation", the British Museum with its old objects and conventional baggage. Alec half-heartedly attempts his blackmail: "You've had your fun and now you have to pay up." Maurice responds by feeling that Alec "looked handsome as he threatened — including the pupils of his eyes, which were evil" (193). As Maurice looks at Alec "gently but keenly", Alec's evil "fell away like a flake" (193). What dispels Alec's blackmail here is Maurice's refusal to treat his friend as monstrous. Instead, he acknowledges his friend's capacity to be evil and vulnerable, handsome as well as cruel. He is tenderly interested in the conflicting emotions that his friend feels. In light of the intimacy symbolised by

each other's smiles, the conventional becomes ridiculous, a mere joke to be swept aside. Both friends, each half of a conventionally monstrous pair, have inspired the partial dawning of this realisation that they reflect each other and can draw out and love the emotional struggles which define them.

However, as Forster notes, to dispel this fragile truce "a shock from without was required" (193). This shock appears in the form of none other than Mr Ducie, Maurice's erstwhile teacher. Ducie recognises Maurice as "one of our old boys" but mistakes his name for "Wimbleby" (194). This mistake, which subsumes Maurice within a collective group of "old boys" any of whose names are interchangeable, appears doubly significant considering Maurice's and Alec's personal, idiosyncratic knowledge of each other. Forster uses this "external" symbol of convention to emphasise Maurice's unconventional identification with the intimate knowledge which he has developed through his friendship with Alec:

how like Ducie to get things wrong. To his own name [Maurice] would have responded, but he now had the inclination to lie: he was tired of their endless inaccuracy and had suffered too much from it. He replied, 'no my name is Scudder.' The correction flew out as the first that occurred to him. (194)

Here Maurice conflates Ducie's error in recognition with the previous error of his inability to talk about sex. Comparatively, Maurice now speaks from a position of assured knowledge which is also aligned, indirectly, with a sense of personal correctness. He now understands the joy of a sensual, sexual connection that was initially obscured by darkness. Maurice's desires for a connection with a male friend have materialised from obscure dreams. Specifically, Maurice's realisation of his intimacy is aligned with a long-term commitment through an emotional parody of the sacred nature of heterosexual marriage. Through his previous offer of inviting Maurice and his wife "to dinner, ten years hence" (5), Ducie unwittingly sanctions an informal marriage between the two men, one that rejects the heterosexual image of the conventional bildungsroman finale. Ducie's previous evocation of a marriage based on "nothing", on a disavowal of sexual honesty, is replaced by a connection that is

constructed by a shared tenderness and familiarity. As Maurice becomes Scudder, the ideal of marriage is aligned with the “happy ending” of a “perfect union” (Forster “Notes” 216). Both Maurice and Alec are able to hurt each other in this instance by rejecting this claim to intimacy, yet neither does, and the “most violent of embraces is softened” by the unseen pact (“About Sex” 216), which takes place beneath the surface conversation and the endlessly “wrong” Ducie. Both Maurice and Alec, moreover, are attuned to this binding shift from conventional surface to a natural position of connection because they have formed the ability to read each other. In this moment, the obscurity of darkness has been dispelled by the long-term influence of a friend who desires to commit to intimacy.

Maurice and Alec’s informal marriage is consummated by a conscious alignment with a new understanding of darkness: “they left the enormous and overheated building, seeking darkness and the rain” (195). The repetition of images of both darkness and rain associate what was once obscure with a liberty and freedom of movement that both men previously felt to be beyond their grasp. Independently, the darkness and the rain of the woods “where a man can be free!” eluded them (165). However, the exposure of shared knowledges and natures unifies them and inspire new depths of clarity. This leads to the final intuitive dispelling of the dark through the articulation of long-term intimacy. Maurice suddenly understands and interprets the complex “muddle” of emotions that had been driving both men to act brutally towards each other. Maurice admits, “I didn’t come or write because I wanted to get away without wanting ... I knew something was evil and I kept pretending it was you”. “What was [the evil]?” Alec asks. Maurice responds, “the situation ... my fear — and your trouble has been fear too. That’s why we have been trying to down [sic] each other” (196). Maurice’s intuitive ability to read the fear “underneath” both his and Alec’s words is realised within a darkness that is located as a contrast to the “overbearing” structures of British convention. It is convention itself which is revealed by this new knowledge to be “evil”. Moreover, the consideration of “the situation” to be evil unites the men, framing a shared allegiance towards each other.

Forster gives the final step in establishing a shared, enduring intimacy to

physical touch:

‘Oh let’s give over talking. Here —’ and [Alec] held out his hand. Maurice took it and they knew at that moment the greatest triumph ordinary men can win. Physical love means reaction, being panic in essence, and Maurice saw now how natural it was that their primitive abandonment at Penge should have led to peril. They knew too little of each other and too much. Hence fear. Hence cruelty. And he rejoiced because he knew Alec’s infamy through his own. Glimpsing — not for the first time — the genius who hides in man’s tormented soul. Not as a hero, but as a comrade, had he stood up to the bluster and had found childishness behind it, and behind that something else. (196)

This is a climactic release of the tension between overbearing reality and romantic longing that was first established as a young Maurice dreamed of a lone voice in the dark. Maurice’s perception of beauty proves to be an amalgamation of vying emotions: fear is revealed to be the rationale for cruelty, which was caused by desire. Ultimately, the joy of this intuitive connection comes from the recognition that these feelings have been, are, and will continue to be shared. Maurice discovers Alec’s infamy through his own: both men had been driven to brutality because their cultural situation caused anxiety. The original darkness that overshadowed sex with obscurity conditioned this reflex, and now both friends have helped each other overcome convention and realise the triumph of their profoundest and most natural desires. This amalgamated knowledge, significantly, is a complexity of compounded feeling that no “talk” can, alone, capture. This greatest triumph is realised by a shared touch. And yet, the immediate physical sensation is invested with the commitment each man professes through their shared knowledge. Touch is no longer symbolic of the heightened moment of sensuality, the loci of both lust and panic. Their reaction is no longer tied to the unknown “immediate” movements of the body. Rather, physical knowledge is the surface of a more difficultly acquired emotional certainty that the men’s natures are aligned. Both desire the touch and therefore need not fear leaving this vulnerability in the other’s hands.

It is in this sense that Maurice and Alec’s knowledge both constitutes and

prophesies a long-term intimacy. Physical love, alone, led to knowing both too much and too little about each other. The knowledge that Maurice and Alec gained within the British Museum is an understanding that both have felt since childhood to be silenced and distorted by the conventional awareness of sodomy as an obscure dark sin. The voice of a friend, Forster's bildungsroman prophesied, "would teach him tenderness and beauty, and neither death nor distance nor crossness" would part them (12). Darkness is revealed, here, to be the "something else" behind "childishness" that was unknown to each man before they met each other. Sharing each other's bodies and then their fear leads to a shared awareness that both want, can reciprocate and will commit to a perfect union. This union is defined by a familiarity that comes from their shared ability to read the amalgamation of emotions that exist beside each other within their understanding of the dark. It is their sharing of this darkness that constitutes the personal, long-term commitment that extends from their past and shapes their future.

Epilogue

Maurice and Alec retreat into a fictitious greenwood, one of the wooded patches in England, which hides their love and separates them from mainstream society. There they "shall remain unparted, and that's finished", as Alec tells Maurice (209). In the final chapter of the published novel, Maurice tells Clive that "I have shared with Alec ... all I have. Which includes my body" (212). Maurice feels that this brings closure to his relationship with Clive, as "he could suffer no mixing from the old and the new" (212–213). This rejection of Clive's hypocrisy separates Maurice and Alec's long-term intimacy from a society that refuses to understand them, like Clive who assumes "intimacy with any social inferior" or a man is "unthinkable" (211).

However, the original 1914 draft of the novel has an epilogue.⁸¹ Forster imagines Maurice and Alec being accidentally discovered by Maurice's sister Kitty, years after the preceding chapter. While asking her way out of some

⁸¹ This epilogue has been republished in the Abinger Forster edition of *Maurice* which is used by this thesis.

secluded woodland, Kitty is asked by Alec to pass on a message to his “mate”: he needs a saw brought to him. Maurice is this mate. Kitty’s “abuse, entreaties and sermons” for the vague “awful thing” she has been told led to Maurice’s exile leave him unmoved (222; 221). “Nothing else mattered,” Kitty later reflects, other than the message she passes on from Alec: Maurice had “listened to the noise [Alec’s] axe made, [and] moved away carrying the smaller” saw (222). From the light and safety of her hotel, Kitty imagines that “he must be very fond of his mate, to have given us up on his account” (223). She grasps that Maurice must “love” Alec and that this love does not seem “disgusting” (223). Yet Kitty is immersed within the wariness of minding social opinion (221). She mistakenly believes that Maurice “must be cold up there alone” in the “wilderness in which he has exiled himself” (224). Yet Forster comments that “Maurice and Alec at that moment were neither lonely nor cold” (224). The epilogue closes on their “favourite time for talking”: “couched in a shed near their work [they] shared in whispered review the events of the day before falling asleep” (224).

Forster closes here on an evocation of an intimacy which comes from shared connection and discussion, a scene similar to the candlelight that closes Symonds’s “In the Key of Blue”. Forster changes this light to darkness, and the night which surrounds Maurice and Alec is made warm by their rejection of the hostile, wary society which surrounds them. Maurice’s response to the sound of Alec’s saw stands for the multiple associations of darkness within the novel. The sensuality of the sound connects the two figures with a secret thread, a sharing of “all [they] have”, as Maurice tells Clive. It is this sharing which sustains them. Kitty’s inability to read this warmth stems from her perception of the dark wilderness as merely a physical, exiled space. It is actually a shared imaginative space that is defined by discussion, connection and honesty. Elizabeth Wood Ellem has highlighted the symbolic, rather than literal, function of Forster’s greenwood. She demonstrates that in Forster’s early short stories, it functions as a “refuge from the cultural and intellectual life”, symbolising an unsophisticated opposition to the demands of cultural convention. Ellem asserts that by 1914, Forster’s greenwood becomes a “refuge” and a “reluctant exile from the world” (84). As this chapter has demonstrated, the greenwood that originally ended *Maurice* is embraced enthusiastically, rather than reluctantly. It

is an imaginative space that is defined by the ongoing, idyllic intimate embrace of a friend.

However, this greenwood also reinforces that Forster's representation of long-term intimacy is an imaginative idealisation of familiarity. It is an important one, certainly. It illustrates positivity, time's ability to create a particularly intimate connection between partners that is cherished over all other familial and national ties. It highlights that this desire for long-term intimacy is a personal engagement with queer tensions between the perils and the poignancies of possessing an illicit relationship. Ultimately, however, Forster is aware that the only way in which he can facilitate the continuation of this intimacy is by removing his characters from the influence of society. In the end, Forster took this epilogue out because he felt that no such idyllic seclusion could exist in reality. He stated in his "Notes on Maurice" that this concluding chapter "failed because the novel's action date is about 1912, and 'some years later' would plunge it into the transformed England of the First World War" (219). Forster continues that in the years between 1914 and 1960, "the wilderness of our island, never extensive" had been "built over and patrolled in no time" (219–220). Forster's idyllic close can work only if his reader discounts the historical reality of the decade after the close of his novel.

Forster's reservations about the epilogue were not only spatial; they were stylistic. In a letter to Isherwood, to whom Forster showed the *Maurice* manuscript in the 1930s, Forster wrote that he "daren't ... install them" as "an example of domesticity ... no, nor even under a hay-stack" (Zeikowitz 21). Forster clarified that

I think what might happen is a permanent relationship, but with all sorts of vagaries, fears, illnesses, distractions, fraying out at its edges, and this would take a long time to represent. One might shorten it, perhaps, if one made them take a vow, and Maurice could take it, but I doubt about Alec, as about myself. We are, both of us, more likely to look back and realise that we have, after all, sacrificed enough to bring the thing off. (21)

Forster references the need for further narrative space to articulate the intimate complexities of a permanent relationship which would itself change over time. Forster's epilogue can only successfully evoke Maurice and Alec's commitment to each other and gesture to the robustness and health exile has brought them: "muscles and sunburn ... proceeding from an inner health" (222). A more pressing issue is Forster's realisation that any multifaceted, rounded character cannot exist apart from their historical context without losing the very complexity and authenticity that the representation of long-term intimacy demands. In its published version, a vow is taken at the close of *Maurice*, and taken wholeheartedly. Alec and Maurice love and understand each other intimately. However, Forster admits here that "too much" would have to be ignored were he to present their intimacy as contained within a closed, isolated microcosm. He implies that any depiction of their life would need to present how their intimacy shapes and is shaped by the historical and social contexts in which they love. How Maurice and Alec's conception of intimate darkness would develop alongside the loss of their "greenwood" is a question Forster chooses not to answer. It was better to close on what was vital: a happy ending for his lovers who, in that moment, understand each other and promise to remain together. Isherwood would depict what Forster chose not to. He envisages a long-term intimacy between two men that is shaped by the prejudiced culture within which they live.

Chapter Four: “I’m like a book you have to read”:
Recognising Loneliness and the Loss of Long-term
Intimacy within Christopher Isherwood’s Single Man
Project.

You want me to tell you *what I know* ... I want *like hell* to tell you. But I can't. I quite literally can't. Because, don't you see, *what I know is what I am*? And I can't tell you that. You have to find it out for yourself. I'm like a book you have to read. A book can't read itself to you. It doesn't even know what it's about. I don't know what I'm about.

Christopher Isherwood, *A Single Man*

Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man* (1964) constructs an image of loneliness which results from an inability to express one's subjective experience of long-term intimacy to others. The loneliness of George, Isherwood's single man, is caused by his intuition that his long-term intimacy with his now-deceased partner, Jim, has been lost because it cannot be spoken about to his friends, colleagues or neighbours. George and Jim shared a home for decades. George's intimacy with Jim is constructed from his memories of their shared life. Isherwood portrays their experience of familiarity as an intimate awareness of both partners' strengths and weaknesses, a surety that the self is understood and loved not only in spite of, but because of, their faults and foibles. Theirs was a loving but clandestine relationship — although George and Jim lived together, George has not told his neighbours about the sexual or romantic element of their relationship. If Forster portrayed the beginning of a long-term relationship, then Isherwood's novel starts after a similar relationship has ended. In his new isolation, George believes that, if he were to speak to others about Jim, their complicated and intimate familiarity would be reduced to either tragic, monstrous or even blissful stereotypes by the prejudiced culture in which he lives. His loneliness is not merely a sense of alienation from others. Within a

present that is defined by stereotypes about both homosexual and heterosexual relationships, he is alienated from his past self, a man who loved, and was loved, by acknowledging compounds of feeling which coexisted between two long-term lovers.

Long-term intimacy is both subjective and personal. It results from being with, or thinking about, another person for a long time and acquiring compounded feelings and ideas about them. As such, any long-term intimacy cannot ever be understood fully by others who are not part of that intimate relationship. Even people within the relationship experience it idiosyncratically, although relatedly. Isherwood's intention is not to assert that, within social contexts in which homosexuality is no longer illegal or immoral, one's long-term intimacy could be experienced by acquaintances as if they were a loving partner. Rather, Isherwood is interested in George's feeling that sharing intimacy is impossible within a culture which thinks about long-term relationships through stereotypes.

Isherwood's Single Man Project

Isherwood developed his presentation of George's loneliness in losing long-term intimacy for two and a half decades, from his emigration to America in 1939 to the publication of *A Single Man* in 1964. He did this through a series of texts which, this chapter asserts, need to be read as one Single Man Project. *The World in the Evening* (1954); "Afterwards" (1960); the subsequent drafts of *A Single Man* — "The Englishwoman" (1962) and "The Englishman" (1963); and the final novel itself form this project. *The World in the Evening* is a stand-alone novel. However, it represents the first time Isherwood attempted to depict the loneliness which comes from an absence of self-understanding, and he felt that the text failed to capture this succinctly. He subsequently continued to work on this project through the later texts, which are all drafts of *A Single Man*. The earliest draft is commonly held to be "The Englishwoman" (1962). This follows an English college lecturer's relationship with an Englishwoman and her family while he secretly negotiates the loss of his long-term partner. It starts with the narrator's drive to San Tomas State College, where George works in *A Single Man*. Extensive archival research undertaken with the Christopher Isherwood

Papers at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, for this chapter has brought to light a previously unacknowledged and unpublished earlier draft of *A Single Man*, a short story called “Afterwards” written in 1960. Carola M. Kaplan makes no mention of “Afterwards” in her essay, “Working Through Grief in the Drafts of *A Single Man*” (2015), instead representing “The Englishwoman” as the “first version of *A Single Man*” (39).

“Afterwards” predates “The Englishwoman” by at least one year and five months.⁸² It is a completed short story, a typescript of fifty-six pages, which focuses on the explicitly homoerotic narrative of George’s loss of Jim with which the final novel opens, although the narrator is unnamed, and his partner is called Tom. This short story is written as a first-person diary which emphasises a grief that alienates Isherwood’s unnamed narrator from those around him. “Afterwards” foregrounds the idea that losing a long-term partner creates an overwhelming sense of anger that threatens to eclipse memories of past intimacy: feeling “so obstinately, bitterly queer”, as Isherwood’s unnamed narrator writes (8). It asserts that the lonely single man can reconnect by communicating grief to others. The story ends with Isherwood’s narrator’s instigation of a new relationship. “Afterwards” is important because it highlights Isherwood’s emerging interest in how the loss of a partner can create entrapment within stereotypes of tragedy, monstrosity or even domestic felicity. It demonstrates that, like Forster, Isherwood saw long-term intimacy as an intimate and nuanced understanding of the self and the one’s partner, the opposite of reductive cultural stereotypes. However, Isherwood eventually rejected the contained, private narrative of love between two men and developed “Afterwards” into *A Single Man*, which ultimately focuses on the painful effect of losing a partner within a culture that does not have the language to speak about long-term intimacy between men.

Reading the textual genesis of Isherwood’s *A Single Man* is essential to understanding how Isherwood developed a portrayal of George’s loneliness. Throughout this *Single Man* Project, Isherwood changed the narrative perspective of his depiction of a single man. In 1947, when working on what

⁸² Isherwood began writing “The Englishwoman” on 22 April 1962.

would become *The World in the Evening*, Isherwood wrote that “this is a story of loneliness” (qtd. in Hodson 252). In the *World in the Evening*, Isherwood’s single man, Stephen, does not know why he is lonely. He feels disconnected from those around him but does not relate this to his furtive homosexual desire. In “Afterwards”, Isherwood’s unnamed protagonist knows that his loneliness is caused by the fact that his friends, neighbours and colleagues cannot understand the intimacy he shared with Tom because of prejudices against homosexuality. Yet the first-person form of this story was too enlightened, too knowing and ultimately facilitated a new intimacy which turned loneliness into connection. In “The Englishwoman” and “The Englishman”, Isherwood developed a third-person over-the-shoulder narrator who observes an overtly homosexual protagonist whose grief prevents him from fully understanding that his own monstrous, reductive behaviour effects a lasting loss of intimacy. Within *A Single Man*, Isherwood created a third-person point-of-view which observes his narrator’s relationships with others.

Isherwood believed that “*A Single Man* is my best novel”. He described it as “absolutely composed ... when it was through”. He added, “it had done what I wanted” (Trebay interview 20). *A Single Man* offers a completion of a complex problem of how to depict the loss of familiarity. George experiences time and again a grief-stricken absence of a sense that both self and beloved are defined by amalgamated compounds of emotion. In order to express this, Isherwood needed to depict both George and Jim’s long-term intimacy, and George’s loss of it. Throughout the *Single Man* Project, he identified two essential narratives which needed to coexist. His narrative needed to reveal that George and Jim’s long-term intimacy was experienced as a shared familiarity, a sense that that both men were defined and loved through acknowledging the coexistence of pleasure, pain, certainty and jealousy. George’s memories of Jim certainly idealise their intimate connection. However, these memories increasingly reveal idiosyncratic foibles in Jim’s character: his vanity, his promiscuity. Increasingly, it is therefore George’s deidealised memory of Jim which facilitates a feeling of intimate connection, an enduring frankness and openness and acceptance. This leads him to believe that his familiarity with Jim cannot be expressed through the language of monstrous, tragic or blissful stereotypes.

Even more importantly, George's consciousness needed to be distanced from this developing intimacy. Isherwood needed to demonstrate that George's contextual immersion within 1960s stereotypes warped his engagement with his memories: George's memories and experiences had to be distorted by a feeling of queerness, a belief that, as an outsider, his relationship could not be understood as intimate. This belief leads him to reduce Jim to a reason to act monstrously. George becomes the very monstrous stereotype of homosexuality that he seeks to avoid. Subsequently, his grief, and his anger towards a prejudiced society, isolate his objective discussions and actions from the past of intimacy which his memories evoke. As George tells his student, Kenny, at the end of the novel: "I want *like hell* to tell you. But I can't, I quite literally can't ... I don't know what I'm about" (*A Single Man* 144; Isherwood's emphasis). George has moments of clarity in which he knows the intimacy that he has lost. However, he has lost the feeling of familiarity and frankness through which he can express this to others.

Isherwood's *Single Man Project* is, therefore, a significant record of his particular concern with the loneliness and isolation which comes from homosexual individuals not being able to express the idiosyncratic complexities of their desires for, or experiences of, long-term intimacy. It is even more important as a series of failures. Isherwood rejects protagonists who are carefully distanced from homosexuality. He rejects individuals who know too well that they have lost long-term intimacy and need to express this in order to end their isolation. He maintains a focus on homoerotic memories but portrays them within a character whose bitter sense of his own queerness means that he isolates himself from others. He develops a dual narrative: a record of both a single man's past experience of long-term intimacy, and his entrapment within a stereotypical image of homosexual monstrosity which means that he cannot express this intimacy to others. His past familiarity with Jim is lost twice, once with his death, and again as he feels that to speak about Jim would be to betray him. Isherwood's formal change throughout the project, his movement from first to third person, creates innovative focus on the tension between subjective memories of intimacy and the non-intimate, stereotypical language through which these long-term relationships can be spoken about to the broader public in Cold War America. Isherwood does not emphasise the developing

experience of long-term intimacy, as Forster did. Rather, he focuses on the feeling of having lost it. This chapter is structured with an analysis of each of the stages of Isherwood's creation of this loneliness and an appropriate prose form through which to capture the loss of familiarity and long-term intimacy.

A Single Man has been read as a novel which emphasises a split between homosexual self and a hostile society. William R. Handley argues that the novel emphasises "missed connections ... separation and alienation especially as the effects of identity, politics and [the Cold] war" (70). However, the central disconnection within the novel is internal to George: between his stereotypical acts and thoughts and his own intimate memories. While he dwells on memories, the most honest thing George can say is that he no longer understands himself. His lack of self-knowledge refers to his self-consciousness as a single man, alone and angry. In contrast, the long-term intimacy through which Isherwood defines George's relationship with the now-deceased Jim was a complex compound of familiarity, comfort and tension between two cohabiting male lovers: domestic bliss and jealous promiscuity; pain and happiness. The shared recognition of a partner's strengths and flaws, a subjective experience of openness, frankness and commitment which defined his long-term intimacy with Jim, can now be accessed only by memories. These memories of Jim are lost amid the stereotypically monstrous, tragic or even blissful visions of his relationship which he assumes are held by his neighbours, friends and colleagues, or would be if they knew that the men were more than friends and housemates.

Jamie Carr has highlighted Isherwood's fascination in the ongoing development of the subjective self. She argues that "how the self sees oneself", for Isherwood, appears as a "historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves ... all those discontinuities that cross us" (*Queer* 15). Yet Carr focuses on Isherwood's American novels which relive his life in Europe during the 1930s.⁸³ When briefly turning to *A Single Man*, a novel steeped in George's retrospective prison of grief, Carr only comments, similarly

⁸³ Carr focuses on the following novels: *Prater Violet* (1945); *The World in the Evening* (1954); *Down There on a Visit* (1962) and *Christopher and his Kind* (1976). Each of these books were published after Isherwood emigrated to America.

to Handley, that Isherwood's self-reflection manifests in George's "awareness of [the] centrality of the homo/hetero identification [and] his attempts to rethink and resist the category of [these] identit[ies]" (5). Handley's critique, like the critical collection of essays *The American Isherwood* (2015) in which it appears, focuses on an Isherwood who defies the prejudices of American culture through his expositions of homosexual identity. Yet Isherwood's presentation of long-term intimacy deliberately does not defy cultural stereotype. Rather, he makes a far more worrying observation that a consciousness of the wider, prejudiced culture in which two men love distorts, warps and reduces normal self-development. George's "rethinking" of identity, ironically, is intended to lose the very "discontinuities" which Carr argues constitute the self-reflective self. George is angry, reactionary, even murderous. However, Isherwood saw his success as demonstrating that George's loneliness develops from his loss of the discontinuities, conflicts, imperfections and idiosyncrasies which constructed his past relationship with Jim.

Also in *The American Isherwood*, Kyle Stevens argues that George is "fiercely internal" (88). She compares this to Tom Ford's evocation of George in his 2009 film adaptation of *A Single Man*. She argues that Ford's George is constantly aware of "the gap between George's self-presentation and his private thoughts" (84). However, reading Isherwood's *Single Man Project* demonstrates the importance he placed on developing a gap between subjective and objective self-presentation. In drafting *A Single Man*, Isherwood developed a new form of the novel, which he called a "dynamic portrait". It begins with "a rough sketch" of a central character and ends with a "quite elaborate oil painting" ("How I Write a Novel" 7). This form gradually reveals the complex history of his single man, which is more subtle, intimate and elaborate than his present, stereotypical actions. Through this form, Isherwood simultaneously develops the emotional subtlety, complexity and idiosyncrasy through which George remembers Jim. He also pre-empts Stevens's reading of Ford's film by constructing an ever-increasingly complex evocation of loneliness. George realises what he has lost, but not how he has lost it. He comes to understand that it would be impossible to "betray Jim", to reduce his relationship with his lover to a tragic, monstrous or blissful stereotype through any momentary, revealing action or speech act (*A Single Man* 101). Yet his

belief that to speak of Jim would constitute a reductive betrayal of intimacy itself constitutes Isherwood's point about long-term intimacy and loss. Jim's death means resigning to the past the intimate language through which George and Jim defied cultural prejudice. George's loneliness stems from his conscious alignment with his prejudiced culture. It is Isherwood's narrator, not his protagonist, who is able to infer that because the wider culture in which two men love cannot recognise their intimacy, long-term intimacy cannot exist beyond and after the couple itself.

The monstrous and tragic limits of the greenwood

It is important first to identify the particular historical stereotypes which affect Isherwood's single man's vision of himself, and which he fears becoming if others know about his relationship with Jim. Isherwood locates his single man within a culture that considered homosexuality either as a monstrous threat to the normative, nuclear family or as a tragedy that should be pitied. Within 1960s America, homosexuality no longer inhabited an unspeakable, unknown darkness, as Forster had experienced it. Sex between men, in the privacy of their own homes, was first decriminalised in America by the State of Illinois in 1962. However, as David L. Faber and Beth L. Bailey observe, by the end of the sixties, "in almost every state, homosexual practices were [still] illegal" (72). Until 1969, laws prohibiting "disorderly conduct" were used to convict same-sex sexual acts which occurred in public even while the Supreme Court had emphasised consenting individuals' right to privacy (Painter). Faber and Bailey argue that this pseudo-illegality meant that homosexuals were either "hounded and harassed" or "seen as a perversion by a majority of Americans" (72–73). Indeed, they note that "homosexuality was labelled as a mental distortion by the American Psychiatric Association" during this decade (73). Amid these worries of deviant difference, as Gregory Woods has highlighted, the homosexual was actively feared as an insidious threat to the mainstream nuclear family. Woods argues that mainstream culture feared what he calls the "Homintern": an international, "single network" of homosexuals (xi). This network, he demonstrates, was feared as a "sinister conspiracy against the moral and material interests of [heteronormative] nation states" (xi).

Isherwood's decision to consider the relationship between a homosexual couple and the phobic culture in which they live was shaped by his three-decades-long awareness of *Maurice*. Isherwood and Forster were close friends from the 1930s until Forster's death in 1970. Forster showed Isherwood his manuscript for *Maurice* sometime between their first meeting in 1932 and 22 April 1933, when Forster thanked Isherwood for his praise of the novel (Zeikowitz 20). Isherwood certainly admired *Maurice*. In his autobiography *Christopher and his Kind* (1976), he wrote that Forster's novel was "imprisoned within the jungle of pre-war prejudice" and praised it precisely for the contemporary courage needed to put "these unspeakable [homoerotic] thoughts into words" (130). He argued that the novel possessed a "frank ... declaration of [Forster's] faith" (131).⁸⁴ However, Isherwood asserted that *Maurice's* weakness was its isolationism. He states in his autobiography that he "wasn't satisfied with either" Forster's secluded epilogue or the ending of the published novel (131). Isherwood paraphrased the published ending of *Maurice*, in which Maurice tells Clive about his relationship with Alec, as: "why don't you [the heterosexual mainstream] stop being shocked and attend to your own happiness" (*Christopher* 131). As Isherwood states, from the perspective of the 1930s, the novel's belief in romantic seclusion was "dated" (131). The idea that a homosexual couple could be left untroubled by prejudice was unrealistic. Forster had made a "clearing in a jungle of pre-war prejudice", one which Isherwood admired greatly. However, Isherwood felt this avoided the more complex lived experience of homosexuals who were increasingly discussed and seen stereotypically within American culture. "You should write a sequel," he told Forster. "Alec and Maurice have all their troubles before them" (Zeikowitz 74).

Isherwood foregrounds a tension between personal experiences of long-term intimacy and stereotypical reductions of this intimacy through the location of his single man's home. After emigrating to America, Isherwood lived in New York City, then made his way west to Los Angeles in the early 1940s. He lived

⁸⁴ Isherwood's esteem for *Maurice* is evident: he edited and published the novel in America in 1971. See Cucullu's essay, "A *Single Man* and the American *Maurice*" in *The American Isherwood*, listed in the Bibliography, "Works Cited".

there until his death in 1986. The suburbs of this city is the setting of his Single Man Project. George imagines that the house which he shared with Jim, and in which he still lives, appears to his neighbours as “shaggy with ivy, and dark and secret looking” in its tree-enclosed corner of an otherwise suburban street. This echoes Maurice and Alec’s sylvan shed. Lois Cucullu makes this connection, stating that “it is as if Isherwood’s *A Single Man* was intent on exposing [the] limits of the greenwood into which Maurice and Alec had ventured” (17). Importantly, George imagines his home as *seen* to be “secret looking”. Isherwood emphasises that George feels himself to be perceived as this monstrous, stereotypical threat. As earlier chapters have demonstrated, Symonds, Housman and Forster each portrayed characters who internalised the anxious perception of homosexuality as a monstrous, and therefore inexpressible, transgression. Through George, Isherwood expresses and satirises this anxiety. George imagines that he is seen by his neighbours as the “mean old story book monster” on the edge of the “American utopia, the Kingdom of the good life upon earth” (15). George mockingly imagines the noises of his neighbours’ parties as “the voices of boys calling to each other as they explore a dark unknown cave” (15). Specifically, George imagines them as afraid that at “any moment” the homosexual outsider “might emerge into the undeniable light of their flashlamps, nevermore to be ignored, explained away ... insisting despite all their shushing, on speaking its name” (15). Isherwood foregrounds a context in which the conservative social norms of American culture are on the edge of a dark precipice; a moment at which homosexuality is increasingly insisting on speaking its own name.

Isherwood foregrounds this mainstream anxiety and prejudice concerning increasing homosexual visibility by locating George’s house in a fairly non-descript L.A. suburb. In *Gay L.A.* (2006), Lillian Faderman emphasises that during the 1960s, Los Angeles was widely regarded as a “Camelot” for homosexuals (116).⁸⁵ A developing scene of gay bars in downtown Los Angeles and the comparatively permissive environ of Hollywood

⁸⁵ *ONE*, the first openly homosexual magazine in America, first published in Los Angeles in 1953, eventually “appear[ed] on newsstands in several U.S. cities and [sold] about 5,000 copies a month” (Faderman 116). In 1950, an aspiring actor and screenwriter, Harry Hay, was co-founder of the Mattachine Society, a group dedicated to the progression of social and legal rights for gay men (see Faderman 111–114). The Mattachine Society took its name from medieval folk jesters who “always wore masks when they performed in public” (Faderman 111).

provided an atmosphere far more inclusive than that in the rest of America. By 1961, “an estimated 140,000 homosexual men and women lived in the greater Los Angeles area” (Faderman 145). The city that Isherwood made his home was a vital beacon of homosexual visibility and testified that, for those who called it home, the era of fear and silence which had influenced Symonds, Housman and Forster in Britain appeared to be coming to an end.

Isherwood was involved in the Hollywood world, occasionally writing for some of the major studios during the 1950s. Los Angeles certainly appealed to him for its permissive and even celebratory culture of homosexuality. However, in *A Single Man* George is deliberately located outside of the forward-thinking urban centre of L.A. and placed in a heteronormative neighbourhood. The domestic focus of the novel emphasises George and Jim’s desire for long-term intimacy, rather than for the more typically transient pleasures of the gay scene. This parallels Isherwood’s own valuing of the domestic long-term relationship he had with Don Bachardy.⁸⁶ Even more importantly, Isherwood’s decision to locate his story within American suburbia also emphasises representation of the homosexual within the ‘average’ American home and mind set. The American suburb allows Isherwood to focus on the stereotypes which form the troubling ways in which private intimacies are warped by the stereotypes circulating within mainstream culture.

As well as being perceived as monstrous, Isherwood felt that homosexual relationships were regarded as tragic, doomed to loss and in need of pity. During the 1940s and 1950s, homosexual men were represented and vindicated as victims of tragedy by what Harker has called the “gay protest novel”, a subgenre of the post-war protest novel which represented non-mainstream forms of identity (15). Harker argues that the gay protest novel propounded two main stereotypes of homosexuality. First, the “All-American Boy who just happened to be gay ... insisting that ‘we’ are just like ‘you’” (14). Second, “the tragic ending” which “requires a suicide to exorcise” potentially

⁸⁶ Isherwood’s relationship with Bachardy is the subject of the moving biopic, *Chris and Don: A Love Story* (2007). The directors of *Chris and Don*, Tina Mascara and Guido Santi, have written about their relationship with Don Bachardy, who survives Isherwood and still lives in their Santa Monica home, in “Labor of Love: The Making of *Chris and Don*”. See Bibliography, “Works Consulted”.

deviant sexual relationships between men (24). Harker cites Isherwood's lampooning of the tragical stereotype to Gore Vidal:

this is what homosexuality brings to you [the novel] will say: tragedy, defeat and death ... But there is another side to the picture. Homosexual relationships can be and frequently are happy [sic]. The truth is particularly disturbing and shocking to even liberal people. (Isherwood to Gore Vidal 19, December 1947, qtd. in Harker 24)

Harker reads this letter as Isherwood's "appeal" for "the emphasis on happiness and emotion, the focus on the changing legal status" of homosexuality within American legislation (24). However, Isherwood should not so easily be aligned with the "happiness" of legal liberation. Isherwood's appeal here is rather to complicate any of the stereotypes which are held even by socially liberal audiences. Note his phrasing, relationships between men "can be ... frequently" happy, supposing that no relationship can be happy all the time. To progress Harker's point, tragedy was not the only problematic stereotype. For Isherwood, neither the American cultural stereotype of monstrosity nor that of blissful happiness were able to explicate the whole picture of homosexual intimacy. Equally, the normalising insistence that people in homosexual relationships are "just like you" (Harker 14) is refuted by Isherwood. Being homosexual created an awareness that one's intimacy both provoked and deviated from cultural stereotypes. If long-term intimacy was a complication of these cultural stereotypes, then negotiating the difference between social opinion and personal intimacy led to a frustration of this long-term intimacy. For George, perceiving stereotypes leads to a sense that one's intimate complexity is reduced and lost.

The World in the Evening: Isherwood's "failed" attempt at loneliness

The first novel in which Isherwood attempted to depict the lonely subjectivity of a single man was *The World in the Evening*, which he began writing in the forties and published in 1954. This text depicts the aggressive and alienated behaviour of Isherwood's bisexual protagonist, Stephen. He feels lonely and misunderstood by a series of lovers, and fails to understand, himself,

why he runs from love.

In his 1947 "Writing Notebook", Isherwood claimed that *The World in the Evening* was about "the problem of a lonely man". He also stated that "it must therefore be very subjective" (qtd. in Hodson 258). Isherwood specified that depicting this loneliness successfully stemmed from the issue of narrative perspective: "I'm caught in the cleft between my 'Christopher Isherwood' reportage manner — reporting for the sake of reporting — and the new manner I am trying for in this book" (258). Andrew Monnickendam positions this new subjectivity against the "Christopher Isherwood" narrator, a loosely biographical figure who narrates *Mr. Norris is Changing Trains* (1935) and *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939). He argues that the objective, self-effacing "reportage manner" of Isherwood's Berlin Stories is "eroded away" in his more subjective American work (126). Lisa Coletta further claims that Isherwood's "early narrators were dispassionate and wryly amused, but the narrators of his American period are ... committed to revealing their thoughts and motives" (231). However, Isherwood's development of subjectivity within *The World in the Evening* does not articulate revelation of the self. Rather, it emphasises a loneliness. This loneliness comes from not being able to understand or fully articulate an anger which isolates the self from others.

The World in the Evening opens with Stephen's keen awareness of the false presentation he makes of himself to others. "A mirror on the opposite wall showed me how I appeared to the outside world" of Hollywood middle-class, domestic bliss: "a tall, blond youngish-oldish man with a weakly good-looking, anxious face and dark, over-expressive eyes ... I was wearing my usual mask" (*World* 12; 14). A contrast emerges here between a visible mask and a turbulent internal life. Stephen feels that he does not "belong in their worried movie world" (15) In particular, Stephen's "anxious face and dark, over-expressive eyes" foreshadow later revelations of suppressed homosexual attractions. We later learn that his self-vision as an "alien" (15), started with his disowning of a male lover years before. Stephen's first wife, Elizabeth Rydal, and his lover, Michael Drummond, both realise that his marriage is based on his denial of his emotional yearnings. Elizabeth describes Michael to Stephen, leadingly, as

“lonelier than ever” (199). As Elizabeth intends Stephen to understand, it is ultimately himself who is lonely due to his inability to connect his enduring desire for men to the affair which necessitates that he lies to her. Although Stephen is “seduced” by Michael, and begins a clandestine affair, he runs from their relationship, maintaining that “it was all clean fun ... it didn’t have to be anything more than that” (216). Harker has highlighted the significance of this homoerotic romance between Stephen and Michael. She argues that Isherwood still did not dare to depict his narrator’s homosexuality, making the novel “a coming out story in which the main character never comes out”. She attributes this to Isherwood’s attempt to avoid any critical, phobic backlash (42). Isherwood was clearly frustrated by his evocation of a restless, lonely man. He regarded the novel as “a failure, but an interesting one, I hope, and a necessary one, *I’m sure*, for me” (Isherwood to Edward Upward 15 September 1956; qtd. in Harker 25). Stephen’s loneliness failed to depict the sense of intimate loss that *A Single Man* later succeeded in portraying.

Considering this, is it important to reframe Harker’s conception of Stephen’s problematic relationship to his homosexual desires. The central issue with the novel is not the fact that Stephen never comes out. Neither is it that he is not definitively homosexual. The issue is Isherwood’s inauthentic representation of bisexual intimacy. Stephen is at no point happy or content with either Elizabeth or Michael. Michael also tells him, years after they part, “it’d never have worked” (243). Towards the end of the novel, after hurting Michael, leaving Elizabeth on her deathbed to pursue his second wife, Jane, who is now asking for a divorce, Stephen professes to be “miserably lonely and bitter and aggressive [and] shopping around for a victim to vent my misery on” (279–280). He “tries to tell the exact truth” about why he has hurt those who love him (283). He claims to be motivated by a “self-love which all my faculty for self-deception couldn’t make flattering” (280). He lies to himself but is aware that he lies. Above all else, he describes a “feeling of not belonging” as motivating him to run from his friends and lovers (280).

Isherwood’s self-acknowledged failure in creating Stephen emphasises the importance of feeling oneself to be understood within a long-term relationship: something that Stephen does not feel. Both Elizabeth and Michael

seem to understand Stephen's essential lack of contentment, yet this knowledge does not extend to an intimate understanding between Stephen and other characters. He does not possess a past moment in which he feels a loving connection that is strengthened by a mutual, honest acceptance of his far from perfect character or his tangled desires. Significantly, Isherwood does attempt to link Stephen's loneliness to a failure to see others' homosexual relationships as intimate. Stephen's aunt laments that her neighbour "Charles feels cut off now and very lonely" as their community "refuses to recognise what" he and his partner Bob, who has been called up by the army, "had together" (230). However, this recognition is never extended to Stephen's own avoidance of intimacy.

Stephen does not feel an intimate connection with either men or women. He admits that his second wife is correct when she states his desire for women is really nothing more than a need for "a mother or a nurse" (280). Yet equally, Stephen does not identify his loneliness with a disavowed sexual attraction for men. Stephen is made lonely by a need to run from love, but the specific reason for his running is not present within the novel. Coming out, in other words, would not satisfy him. One of the successes of the novel is a depiction of a feeling of unease, a weariness with romance and connection itself. However, in lacking an intimate relationship within the past, there is no authentic, intimate counterpoise through which Isherwood could present an alternative to Stephen's loneliness. Subsequently, the reason for Stephen's loneliness remains clouded within the narrative's focus on failed connections.

Isherwood's conception of this novel as a failure identifies two elements that he came to regard as of essential importance within his *Single Man Project*. First, Isherwood is interested in the value of subjective, intimate connection within a long-term relationship, rather than in evoking the pessimistic assumption that intimacy is entirely impossible. Second, Isherwood realised that his evocation of loneliness needed to extend from a single man's loss of a past experience of intimacy. Isherwood's realisation that the absence of an intimate relationship made it difficult to express the reasons for Stephen's loneliness is retrospectively evident in the later drafts. In every subsequent stage of the *Single Man Project*, Isherwood's protagonist has had a male partner who

connotes a, now lost, feeling of familiarity. Moving forward, Isherwood realised that his Single Man Project needed to explicate a loneliness which was created by Stephen's sense that he is wearing "his usual mask" (14). However, whilst his single man remains unable to talk about his long-term intimacy with others, Isherwood's text needed to produce a vivid, past sense of frankness and openness. He needed to demonstrate that this has been lost through an inability to talk about these "discontinuities which form us" to others (Carr *Queer* 15).

"Afterwards": alienation and long-term intimacy

"Afterwards" defines Isherwood's Single Man Project with a clarity that was left out of *The World in the Evening*. This story highlights the idea that his single man's loneliness is due to a feeling of alienation from his heterosexual neighbours and friends whom he assumes cannot understand the complexity of the intimacy that he shared with his deceased partner, Tom. The narrative emphasises the narrator's loss of long-term intimacy and his creation of a new, intimate relationship through an ability to talk about his relationship to a new lover.

The story opens with a series of casual sexual encounters in which the narrator seeks to lose himself within the Eros of the present moment in the months following Tom's death. All of these encounters are filled with the "dull aching lack of Tom" (15). The narrator eventually meets a homosexual couple, Forrest and Leonard, with whom he falls in love. In particular, he idealises the "joy" they take in each other's company, the "beautiful ... anxious, acting tension" between the two men "who have gotten themselves so wrapped up in each other that neither can make a move or say a word or think a thought without it affecting the other" (19). What attracts the narrator to both men is the visibility of their long-term intimacy, evoked here as an intuitive knowledge of each other. However, as the narrator becomes more intimate with the couple, this entwined bliss is replaced with a more nuanced and complex awareness of their relationship. The narrator and Forrest begin an affair that is discovered by Leonard. Leonard confronts the narrator and admits that, while Forrest has had

previous affairs, this particular infidelity hurts more because he, Leonard, had always been more interested in the narrator than Forrest was. The narrator relocates from California to the East Coast, and returns a year later, to find that Forrest has left Leonard. The narrator and Leonard reconnect, and begin a lasting relationship.

Harker mentions “Afterwards” within her analysis of Isherwood’s engagement with paperback erotic fiction in the 1960s in *Middlebrow Queer: Christopher Isherwood in America* (2016). However, she reads Isherwood’s short story as a “private” text “distinguished from his literary works” (140). Within the first few pages of the manuscript, the only section to be analysed by Harker, “the logistics of gay sex — K. Y. Jelly, rimming, sphincter muscles, faeces” are described in detail (140). Harker therefore dismisses “Afterwards” as private erotica. This undervalues the significant emphasis on long-term intimacy through which the text treats sex. Immediately after the section analysed by Harker, Isherwood’s narrator states that “the rest of the K.Y. in that tube was inside of Tom and this is the first time I have been with anyone else in our bed ... so what?” (“Afterwards” 3). As with E. M. Forster, the afterglow of sex is used by Isherwood here to emphasise an intimate emotional connection with another person. Yet this person is now no longer there. The unthinking Eros of the casual sex burns away to leave an aching memory of more intimate encounters shared with Tom. Conditioned by this emotionally withdrawn and understated expression of grief, the final aggression — “so what?” — turns from an assertion of the narrator’s free existence in the present moment to a grappling with grief. In fact, the erotic yearning to exist within the present throughout this short story, as well as within *A Single Man*, is continually counterbalanced by memories of Tom or, as he is later renamed, Jim.

The loss of Tom creates an alienation between the negative emotions which Isherwood’s narrator feels and the objective world around him. Isherwood’s narrator writes that “I’ve written less than one page since Tom’s death ... that’s all a part of this feeling of alienation I have since then. Because I feel so obstinately, bitterly queer” (8). He aligns his inability to write with his rejection of the stereotypes that constitute his neighbour’s lives: “I have no stomach for writing heter[o] love scenes. It seems so utterly, shockingly false”

(8). This alienation develops from his belief that his intimacy with Tom cannot be captured by mainstream narratives of the blissful ideal of a perfect union. In a significant development of Forster's evocation of long-term intimacy, Isherwood's narrator is not only ostracised due to an awareness that relationships between men will not fit into heterosexual love scenes. Rather, he feels that conceiving any relationship as solely blissful would falsely reduce intimacy to stereotype. The alienation of Isherwood's narrator extends to a self-conscious separation between his internal feeling and the objective world around him. He notes that "the sunshine and the glitter of the ocean happens so far outside of me. Beyond a pane of glass" (8). The sunshine of the ocean is, here, aligned with a spuriously idyllic conventional presentation of loving relationships that is rejected by the complexity of the narrator's grief for Tom.

Isherwood counters idyllic love scenes with the imperfect but authentic relationship between Forrest and Leonard. He defines their long-term intimacy as a shared knowledge and acceptance of a partner's non-ideal character traits. The narrator meets Forrest and Leonard at the gym and becomes enamoured with both men. He describes Leonard as "handsome" and Forrest as "not obviously attractive" but even so, "one of the most beautiful boys I have met in my life" (17). Forrest is described as a "marvellous honey gold" and looking "more like a tennis player" than a "heavy-weight boxer" (17). Forrest and Leonard's physical attractions remained part of the project's later versions. In *A Single Man*, George watches two tennis players. One is "so sweet-naturedly beautiful, so nobly made" and the other is "handsome, catlike, cruel, compact, lithe, muscular ... a natural dark gold brown" (*A Single Man* 37). Like Isherwood's narrator in "Afterwards", George is struck by the intimacy and emotional honesty that the two men reveal in playing tennis: "their nakedness makes them seem so close to each other and directly opposed, like fighters" (37). This jointly cruel and chivalrous concentration which captures both tennis players symbolises, in "Afterwards", the committed, sensual battling of long-term passionate relationships. In the earlier short story, Forrest is revealed to be promiscuous, adulterous and cruelly calculating. This is increasingly obvious as the narrator becomes closer to the couple and begins to see how their relationship functions. "I had never seen Forrest this coy before" (37) he realises as they have lunch together. Forrest, the loving partner of Leonard, is

re-written as both “the most beautiful boy in America [and] certainly one of our very greatest cock-teasers” (36).

This narrative of changing partners and infidelities may seem to idealise and eroticise the transience of romantic attachments. However, the foundation of the story rests on Isherwood’s evocation of a familiarity with a partner based on honesty, frankness and commitment. Although he cheats, Forrest always returns to Leonard, and the men’s “anxious, acting tension” is revealed to be an acceptance of this promiscuity as part of their relationship (19). The increasing visibility of the complexity of this relationship prefigures an important revelation about Tom and the narrator’s relationship. Tom is revealed to have died whilst with another lover. The narrator writes:

Although I knew, and know, perfectly well that Tom loved me the last memory I am left with is that ugly parting. We kissed when we said Goodbye [sic], but it wasn’t right between us. And he knew it. And he died knowing it” [sic]. (49–50)

The narrator’s grief is revealed to be magnified by the knowledge that Tom walked out of an argument in which Isherwood’s narrator confronted him about his affair. Yet this bitter memory is juxtaposed by his equal certainty that “Tom loved me”. Considering the frankness of the narrator’s self-analysis throughout, it is unlikely that Isherwood meant this to signify naivety on the narrator’s part. Rather, his memories of Tom, like the emerging picture of Forrest and Leonard’s relationship, become an amalgamation of moments of jealousy, uncertainty and promiscuity, which are enveloped within a more enduring long-term connection and love. This intertwining of adultery with painful honesty and, ultimately, commitment and security runs through to Isherwood’s presentation of George and Jim’s intimacy within *A Single Man*. In this novel, Jim has strayed from George by taking a female lover but returns “having satisfied his curiosity and flattered vanity ... saying she’s disgusting, saying never again” (75). In the final novel, as in “Afterwards”, promiscuity and vanity form part of a larger intimate knowledge shared between two lovers. Jim’s curiosity and vanity, and even his and George’s casual misogyny, become part of an intimate dialogue of foibles and flaws that connect the two men. The

steadfastness and jealousy of George, Leonard and the narrator of “Afterwards” is pitted against Jim, Forrest and Tom’s affairs. These relationships are both “sweet-naturedly loving” and “catlike” and “cruel” (*A Single Man* 37). Intimacy, as Isherwood depicts it, is sometimes expressed through the frankness and pain of “being directly opposed, like fighters” (37).

Subsequently, Isherwood’s narrator asserts that

it would be impossible — unthinkable — even after all this time — for me to tell Francine and Bob about Steve [Tom’s illicit partner], or any of the others. And why is that? Because as far as they, and the outside world, are concerned, I still present my life with Tom as a little showcase of homosexual domestic bliss, and perfect faithfulness. (50)

What emerges here is a comparison between the idealised image of a relationship which is seen by the “outside world” and the particular intimacies which are known to the individuals who are involved within the relationship. The narrator’s relationship with Tom is revealed by Isherwood to not be a “showcase of homosexual domestic bliss, and perfect faithfulness”. While queer, tragic or blissful at times, talking about his relationship to his heterosexual neighbours would reduce it to stereotype. In fact, no relationship which the narrator actively takes part in is such an ideal. Isherwood’s short story presents long-term relationships between men as often involving promiscuous flirtation and adultery. Yet Isherwood simultaneously cautions that although his narrator’s relationship with Tom did not look like, or feel like, the cultured restraint of propriety, this does not mean that his relationship with Tom was not a form of long-term intimacy. In fact, the opposite is true. The intimacy that the narrator shared with Tom, the thoughts of him that continue to dog the narrator’s consciousness, are heightened by regret and jealousy that amalgamate into a certainty of shared feeling. Both Tom and the narrator felt deeply for each other and accepted the deidealised qualities of their relationship. Their intimate knowledge of each other incorporates the capacity to be tender and cruel, to cause moments of connection and moments of loss. For Isherwood’s narrator, love means the continuing oscillation towards certainty, towards returning home. It is the fact that this oscillation is broken — in a sense, mid-swing —

when Tom is away that makes their last parting “cruelly painful” (15). Isherwood constructs personal relationships here as a strong and unique bond which calls into question the validity of the morally acceptable but cold image of a relationship built on “domestic bliss and faithfulness” alone.

Isherwood does not focus only on the *loss* of long-term intimacy. “Afterwards” constructs new complex intimacies with others. Isherwood chooses to end his short story with the emergence of a new and lasting long-term intimacy that is defined by a complex emotional honesty that Isherwood chooses to end his short story. Leonard’s discovery of the narrator and Forrest’s affair facilitates a further intimacy between the narrator and Leonard. The narrator is confronted by Leonard in the same beach-side bar where he met Tom:

“You know the silliest fucking thing about this whole goddamn business?” said Leonard, suddenly turning on me. “I still like you, I probably like you a whole lot better than Forrest does.” (“Afterwards” 45)

After returning to the narrator’s home, the men fight and then have sex (45–46). The physical connection between Leonard and Isherwood’s narrator is not just for the sake of erotic reverie. It prefigures an emotional knowledge of each other, one comparable to that shared by Maurice and Alec in E. M. Forster’s *Maurice*. The narrator describes their sex as feeling that “I gave my innermost self to him” (53). It is intimate understanding as well as sexual attraction which forms the narrator’s eventual relationship with Leonard. The “amazement of waking up together” is compounded by a frank admission of mutual love (54). It is easy to suppose that these promises are nothing more than lovers’ pillow-talk, especially amid a narrative of fluid relationships and promiscuity. However, Isherwood validates a new intimate understanding between the two men in two ways. First, Leonard and the narrator share the knowledge of his relationship with Tom: “we knew all about Tom — and what happened”, admits Leonard, delicately broaching the issue of the affair whilst also demonstrating that he understands the complexity of Tom and the narrator’s feelings for each other (49). Second, Isherwood provides, through his narrator, Tom’s benediction of this new relationship. Leonard confides that “I

don't want you to forget about [Tom] ... only — maybe you'll never be able to feel that way again" (55). Isherwood's narrator replies: "I feel differently about you. I know that much already ... and Tom will get to be there for the both of us. You'll see" (55). Here, Isherwood emphasises the importance of being able to share and understand one's past of long-term intimacy. The ghostly, but benevolent, figure of Tom symbolises a shared understanding between the two men. Both understand that long-term relationships can be experienced as tensions between desire and loss, jealousy and commitment. Isherwood does not present a new long-term intimacy between Leonard and his narrator. However, Leonard's mention of Tom suggests that their new relationship will also be defined by an intimate, deidealised frankness.

Isherwood uses the diary format of "Afterwards" to solidify the lasting success of this relationship.⁸⁷ Isherwood's narrator dedicates the finished typescript to an unknown future self: "if the rest of these pages were blank — if there were no further entries — then I would know that this thing with Leonard had worked out" (55). These final sentences of the short story make the typescript itself a testimony to the enduring development of a long-term intimacy between Isherwood's narrator and Leonard. Importantly, Isherwood avoids any potential issue of reducing the complexity of this new intimacy by not depicting it. Instead, his narrator states that he is "going into the unknown" (55): an as-yet undefinable emotional territory of new tensions and understandings, which will be inhabited by these two men who are united by both a present passion and a shared emotional knowledge of the past. It is important to note that there is a significant degree of idealisation within this evocation of a new relationship. This relationship, like those throughout the short story, is formed out of a degree of emotional volatility coupled with an overdetermined sexuality and erotics. As Harker notes, the story always keeps one foot firmly within the erotica of the fag-trash genre (140). The passionate intensity of the erotic short story emphasises a sexual restlessness that may invalidate its narrator's desire for long-term intimacy. One will never know whether the two men stay together.

⁸⁷ The possibility of a new relationship growing out of the afterlife of long-term intimacy was also pursued by Isherwood within "The Englishwoman", in which his narrator begins a new relationship with his student, Colin, a precursor to Kenny. Even in the final draft of *A Single Man*, Isherwood notes the necessity of a new love for George who "believes he will find another Jim" (*A Single Man* 149). Isherwood did not doubt that love was possible after the death of a partner.

That said, “Afterwards” significantly demonstrates Isherwood’s developing understanding of the importance of sharing memories of past experiences of long-term intimacy. A crucial link in the Single Man Project, it progresses from an understanding of the self, which eludes Stephen in *The World in the Evening*, to an awareness that others must learn to see the complex subjectivity of this single man. The story testifies that any new intimacy must grow out of the old and be based on a firm recognition of the past and a shared understanding of its ongoing influence on the future. As Isherwood continued his Single Man Project, he would develop this idealised evocation of a lasting intimacy into its opposite: the loneliness of being unable to express to others the complicated tensions inherent in past relationships.

Changing perspective from “The Englishwoman” to “The Englishman”

Two fundamental problems prevented “Afterwards” from articulating the essential loneliness of Isherwood’s Single Man Project. Its ending enacts another Forsterian finale, in which two men retreat to a happy ever after constructed of their own love. This was incongruous with Isherwood’s awareness of the disappearing of the idealised privacy symbolised by Forster’s greenwood. Equally, while the obscurity of *The World in the Evening* failed to depict the homosexual reasons for its narrator’s loneliness, the self-reflective diary form of “Afterwards” was too knowing. Isherwood intended for his single man’s loneliness to come from a loss of past feeling that one was understood. Therefore, his anger that others would not understand the complexity of his long-term intimacy needed to make his relationship with others stereotypical. As Isherwood wrote “The Englishwoman” (1962) and “The Englishman” (1963), redrafting “Afterwards” into *A Single Man*, he altered his first-person diary format into a third-person omniscient narration of George’s subjective impression of the world around him. This shift in perspective allowed Isherwood to refocus his readers’ awareness on to the relationship between a homosexual man’s memories and the culture in which he lives. The third-person narration which Isherwood created for *A Single Man* contrasts George’s reductive presentation of himself to others with his subjective emotional past. As such, he

explores how perceiving oneself as homosexual and queer reduces intimate familiarity to an unintimate stereotype.

In 1965, Isherwood gave an interview about his writing for the Claremont Colleges in California.⁸⁸ He describes the drafting of *A Single Man* as a process of adjusting his narrative point of view. He states that when he wrote “The Englishwoman” draft (1962), he returned to a fictional, first-person Christopher Isherwood narrator. Isherwood states that he

was really concerned with the character of the Englishwoman ... I had the idea of this woman who was married to a GI and had come to this country ... Christopher Isherwood meets [her] and learns about her problems. (“Interview Conducted by George Wickes” 35–36)

This project of writing about meeting a lonely expat outsider fits with Isherwood’s interest in depicting social outsiders in his Berlin Stories — those “who respectable society regards as outcasts” (*Christopher and His Kind* 180). The figure of the Englishwoman is united to the English Christopher Isherwood by a nationalist feeling of ostracism from American culture. While his narrator in this draft was overtly homosexual, Isherwood felt that the Christopher Isherwood, social-observer narrator did not fit with the Single Man Project. “When I came to start [“The Englishwoman”] neither” Christopher Isherwood as narrator nor the Englishwoman as his focus “worked”: “Christopher Isherwood was wrongly placed. I couldn’t get at the material from his point of view” (36). However, as “Afterwards” demonstrates, it is particularly the recognition of hidden emotions of *homosexual* love and loss that constitutes the social loneliness of Isherwood’s single Englishman. Isherwood’s use of the first person to observe the difference between English and American identities threatened to obscure a subjective feeling of homosexual alienation from heterosexual mainstream culture. It would have been a return to the failure of *The World in the Evening*.

⁸⁸ Originally founded as Pomona College in 1887, the Claremont Colleges are a group of seven private higher-education institutions based around the city of Claremont.

Consequently, Isherwood's Single Man Project uses its narrator's homosexuality to warp the perception of the world around them. In an interview in 1979, Isherwood was asked why he did not openly write about homosexuality in his 1930s "Christopher Isherwood"-narrated Berlin Stories. He claimed that he did "not think that" the censorship of homosexual content at the time "would have prevented" him writing about homosexuality "if [he had] wanted to do [the novels] another way" ("Interview Conducted by Stuart Timmons" 10). He stated that he left homosexual content out of these earlier stories to focus on the "social-political" history of the period. Indeed, Isherwood returned to the events narrated in his "Berlin Stories" in 1976 with *Christopher and his Kind*. He stated that this text would provide a "frank and factual account" of the "important", homoerotic "facts about himself" (1). In his 1979 interview, Isherwood clarified that he didn't make the narrator of "the Berlin Stories" homosexual because

If the narrator is somehow 'freaky' it throws the whole narrative out of whack. If you are hearing about the political, social state of Berlin you do not really want to be told this by anyone who is more interesting than the subject itself. (4)

Isherwood's interest in subjectivity is different within his Single Man Project. It is not based on a revelation of authorial truth, as it is in *Christopher and his Kind*. Rather, Isherwood is interested in how the homosexual identity of the protagonist complicates his perception of the world around him.

In "The Englishman" draft (1963), George emerges as he appears in *A Single Man*. He is now the focus of the narrator's third-person voice. Isherwood's shift in narrative perspective, from a first-person Isherwood narrator in "The Englishwoman" to an omniscient over-the-shoulder narration maintained the feelings that Isherwood developed in "Afterwards", a sense of being made an outsider due to emotions which are not recognised by heterosexual people. George's subjective memories of Jim reveal a painful loss of an intimacy which he feels sure others will not understand. The perception of oneself as "freaky", different and queer, becomes "interesting" for Isherwood not as a prejudicial context to be overcome, but as a lens which shapes the connection between George's subjectivity and the world which he observes (Timmons interview 40).

“‘Queer’ Mr Strunk doubtlessly growls” (*A Single Man* 14); yet it is George who imagines this freaky label, creating his own queer image through the Strunks’ eyes. Differing from the self-reflective homosexual narrator of “Afterwards”, it is now an omniscient narrator who can reveal the ways in which George’s conscious knowledge, dialogue and thoughts are shaped by complex warping of objective images through a prism of loss, anger, defiance and otherness. Isherwood is able to depict George’s intimate memories of Jim. Simultaneously, he can illustrate that what he knows and what he is, his existence within the present moment, is an enforced reduction of intimacy. The mask that George wears is not only a heteronormative concession to mainstream culture; it is a projection of his own monstrosity.

In *A Single Man*, George often feels like he is hiding his homoerotic feelings and passing as one of the heterosexual mainstream: “thinking their thoughts, getting into their mood ... with the skill of a veteran he rapidly puts on the psychological make-up he must play” (27). George’s body is initially evoked as a non-subjective, mechanical concession to the mores of his culture. Isherwood’s narrator de-personalises a newly woken George, claiming “it accepts its responsibilities to others. It is even glad that it has a place among them” (2). Underneath this exterior, moments of shocking, subjective pain flash before George. His external reality is a “brutally broken off, jagged edge” as he realises “with a sick-newness ... Jim is dead” (4). Yet these moments of painful, unspeakable loss, function to warp George’s perception of reality. They make him interesting and fascinating yet entrapped within a claustrophobic feeling of a loss that cannot be fully expressed.

These feelings affect how much George can understand of himself. As George stands in front of a mirror at the start of the novel, Isherwood notes that

it sees many faces within this face — the face of the child, the boy, the young man, the not-so-young-man — preserved like fossils on superimposed layers, and like fossils dead. (2)

It is significant here that George is still the “it” of unthinking cultural assimilation. George is typified here also by his depressed consciousness of his own ageing.

He notices his “dull harassed stare, a coarsened nose, a mouth dragged down by the corners into a grimace” (2). This depression renders George’s emotional, intimate past, the different faces which layer his mirror image, as obsolete and dead. These past faces and their feelings are as depressingly dead as Jim. Even within the moments in the novel in which George thinks of Jim, he still retains this the negative warping which comes from his homosexuality. In “Afterwards”, Isherwood’s narrator feels “obstinately, bitterly queer”, yet Forrest and Leonard offer an intimate release of this anxiety. Isherwood offers George no such conscious release. Rather, Isherwood’s narrator emphasises that it is the moments in which George remembers Jim — in which he feels different, angry and alone — that create the mask that warps his subjective, lost experience of intimacy. As such, Isherwood’s narrator unlike George, can see layers of feeling which lie beneath this sedimented and faded exterior — the subjective feelings which formed the face of the now lost young man. It is Isherwood’s narrative itself and its teller which compile the fragmented, contrasting, painful, loving and idiosyncratic feelings which the moments of remembering Jim create. The novel constructs memories into complex amalgamations of an intimacy that is deadened and turned to anger.

Uncle George’s monstrous fantasies

In hiding his feelings behind a mask of respectability, George’s remembered past of long-term intimacy with Jim is reduced to aggressive and monstrous stereotypes: a hatred of the American middle-class, heterosexual “utopia” that George mocks as “the good life upon earth” (*A Single Man* 15). George’s grief is confined to an internal presence which shapes his conscious thoughts and actions. This, in turn, changes his complex past into rebellious hatred. While George is angry at the world, Isherwood uses his thoughts to create a monstrous consciousness which illustrates a loss of George’s long-term intimacy.

George’s monstrous behaviour initially appears in his relationship to his neighbouring heteronormative families’ children: “what would Jim say”, George wonders,

if he could see [George] waving his arms and roaring like a madman from the window as Mrs Strunk's Benny and Mrs Garfein's Joe dash back and forth across the bridge [that separates George and Jim's home from the suburban street] on a dare. (10)

George experiences his own monstrous image as viewed by Jim and is shamed by the fact that his relationship with Benny and Joe is so different to that of his partner, who always "got along with them so easily" (10). George's monstrous actions are therefore external manifestations of a memory of Jim as tolerant, kind and openhearted. The difference between his subjective memories and the objective monster both is created by, and creates, grief. This creates a barrier between George and his memory of Jim. It is as if George's compassion has died with Jim. Interestingly, George's awareness of his "mean old story-book monster" appearance is informed by two different contemporary stereotypes of homosexuality: the gay protest novel's tragic representation of a sad but inoffensive lost love between men, and the reclusive threat of passionate but unconventional feeling. "How dearly Mrs Strunk would enjoy being sad about Jim," George thinks, "but aha, she doesn't know. None of them know" (16). The subtly understated laughter becomes a chilling aspect of George's obsessive viewing of himself through his neighbours' eyes. By avoiding one tragic stereotype, George imagines himself becoming the other: a secretive, monstrous threat living on the edge of suburbia.

George's perception of himself as a monster also shapes his own imagination. Even within his thoughts he plays the role of this "story-book monster" (10). This is foregrounded in George's drive along the freeways of Los Angeles to work at the fictional San Tomas State College. During this drive, Isherwood maintains a clear distinction between George's acceptable appearance and his deviant feelings. Isherwood expressly emphasises the disjoint between the visible body and the thinking mind throughout this drive. "The body ease[s] itself back into the seat ... it appears to separate itself [an] impassive anonymous chauffeur figure ... driving its master to work" (22). As he drives, George claims that "he loves the freeways because he can still cope with them ... he can still *get by*" (20; Isherwood's emphasis). Despite his sense

of monstrous queerness, the self-conscious pride George takes in passing, emphasised and satirised by Isherwood's italics, aligns him with the freeways themselves, an infrastructure symbolic of American modernity and progress. The body's appearance of getting by, however, is immediately subverted through being reframed as an aggressive fooling of society. George's wandering mind compares the chauffeur-body to a forged identity: "never once has he seen his passport stamped at a frontier without whispering gleefully to himself '*idiots fooled them again*'" (20; Isherwood's emphasis).

Behind the mask of his chauffeur-body, George's deviant inner self is left free to plot acts of violence and terrorism. He considers figures of authority, media and American progress: chief superintendents, companies constructing new high-rise flats on the coast, and newspaper editors. "Wouldn't it be funny", he muses,

to kidnap [them] and take them all to a secret underground movie studio, where, after a little persuasion — no doubt just showing them the red-hot pokers and pincers would be quite sufficient — to perform every conceivable sex-act on each other [with] a display of the utmost enjoyment. The film would be developed into prints and it would be rushed off to movie theatres. (24)

Isherwood presents the abhorrence of these thoughts as a counterpoint to the objective anonymous chauffeur "getting by", which is itself symbolic of a mainstream avoidance of homosexuality. Moreover, George's musings themselves contemplate a shocking inversion of the subjective/objective divide. Individuals symbolic of American culture are forced to commit the very acts that vaguely haunt them from the peripheries of cultural acceptability. Furthermore, they are forced to act out "the utmost enjoyment" of these acts, performing the pleasure that homosexual individuals secretly enjoy. George's fantasy forces the possibility of a connection and communication between the sex lives of any American, and his own illicit one.

However, this coerced visibility is *not* the same as a cultural recognition of the complex long-term intimacy between George and Jim. Intimacy is absent

from the imagined film. Instead, George rehearses American cultural fears, becoming the same monstrous stereotype of the “Homintern” which is feared by the Strunks and Gerfains. Gregory Woods specifies the Homintern’s role in challenging mainstream stereotypes. He asserts that “homosexual individuals who obtained visibility within artistic and *avant garde* circles undermin[ed] previously long accepted truths” (xii). He maintains that the very presence of single and coupled gay men demanded “a re-evaluation of fixed gender roles and more nuanced attitudes to sexual behaviour” (xi–xii). Woods is correct to suppose that the real-life existence of gay men “living as they chose initiated a liberation by sleight of hand” (xii), deconstructing fixed narratives of what love could look like. However, Isherwood’s novel further complicates the liberating role of this threatening figure. In presenting George’s fantastic anger, *in extremis*, Isherwood prioritises the *imagined* threat posed by the stereotype of the Homintern. George’s fantasy clearly reduces the “nuances of sexual behaviour”, as Wood describes intimate, non-stereotypical relationships between men. George’s loss of Jim becomes an attack on America. Ultimately, George’s aggression is mediated through his perception of the unspeakable, monstrous label these individuals would give to his and Jim’s relationship. As a result, his anger appears as the very opposite of a “sleight of hand” liberation. Rather, the grotesqueness of his rage removes the reason behind the rebellion.

Even as George names the fantasy-individual responsible for these acts of revenge Uncle George, a satire of the personification of the American government, Uncle Sam, he wonders at the cause of his anger:

Does Uncle George *want* to be obeyed? Doesn’t he prefer to be defied so he can go on killing and killing? Since all of these people are just vermin and the more of them that die the better. All are, in the last analysis, responsible for Jim’s death: their words, their thoughts, their whole way of life willed it, even though they never knew he existed. (26)

Isherwood reveals here that Jim is the catalyst of George’s aggressive fantasies. Even if, “when George gets as deep as this [Jim] is nothing but an excuse for hating three quarters of America”, George’s anger is levelled at the words, thoughts and will of a culture that would reduce his and Jim’s feelings to

a monstrous abhorrence (26). The specific death of Jim that American culture is “responsible for” is the end of their complex long-term intimacy. Yet, as a person, Jim is no longer consciously part of George’s sadistic parodying of mainstream anxieties. Jim’s “death” becomes George’s enduring sense that others would not understand their relationship. However, Uncle George replicates, rather than refutes, these fears and the reduction of complexity that they generate. At this moment, George’s thoughts are equally responsible for this lack of recognition. The fact that “Jim ... hardly matters anymore” mirrors George’s masking of his own feelings behind the “chauffeur” who can “get by” within American society (26; 20). George’s awareness of himself as an outsider, beyond the reach of empathy and recognition, has reduced his and Jim’s relationship to an aggression directed at American culture.

Isherwood illustrates within these opening scenes of the novel that George’s perception of himself as an outsider necessitates the reduction of “fossilised layers” to a bland, one-size-fits-all mask: George’s chauffeur-body, calmly “getting by” as it drives down the freeway. As George becomes the stereotype that is feared by his compatriots, Isherwood’s narrator demonstrates that acts of shocking rebellion could not reveal the complex pain that causes them. Kidnapping would not help American culture realise that it is “responsible” for George’s lasting loss of the intimacy he shared with Jim. Violence could not portray how the mainstream kills Jim by initiating an anger that boils him down to nothing but “an excuse to hate” (26). The true loss of Jim is caused, Isherwood asserts, by the lasting monstrous stereotypes that George fantasises about becoming. Isherwood emphasises, then, that George’s anger is not truly directed *outwards* to the “three quarters of America ... responsible” for his loss of Jim. Expressing the complexity of their relationship is denied by his, and everyone else’s, need to hide the fact that they are “quite crazy”, different and outsiders beneath the skin (26). Isherwood illustrates that George’s anger is in fact directed towards his own chauffeur-body, which drives him down a freeway that is symbolic of mainstream values of progress and propriety.

From caricature to complexity: Isherwood's dynamic portrait

George's hatred of the mask that he wears prevents him from being able to explain his intimacy with Jim to others. While George's anger reduces his actions and thoughts to monstrous stereotypes, Isherwood uses the form of the novel, which he called a "dynamic portrait", to specify that George's inability to engage with his past perpetuates a loss of frankness which he shared with Jim. Through the introduction of different characters, each revealing new 'fossilised' layers of George and Jim's past, Isherwood demonstrates that their love was constructed upon a frank acknowledgement of each other's flaws and strengths which reconstituted pain, jealousy and promiscuities into a frankness, openness and honesty. Isherwood's dynamic portrait reveals that George's loneliness stems from an enduring belief that he feels he cannot have a similarly frank relationship with others.

In his lecture "How I Write a Novel" (1960), given the same year he wrote "Afterwards", Isherwood describes the structure of his dynamic portrait as different from his earlier Christopher Isherwood style narration which focused on the narrator's reportage of others. Isherwood specified that the "whole interest" of the dynamic portrait is:

in the development of [one] character. It's as though the writer begins by showing you the character in a very rough sketch, like a caricature. Then he shows you a rather more finished kind of sketch and finally a quite elaborate oil painting ... there can be lots more characters ... there can be a plot, there can be action of all sorts, but in such a type of fiction, the real thing which is progressing is the revelation of this character and everything else is secondary. (7)

The defining quality of the dynamic portrait lies in demonstrating the increasing complexity of one character. Significantly, this notion of understanding increasing emotional depth through the passage of time is also a fundamental tenet of Isherwood's conception of the outsider. In the "A Writer and His World" lecture series, which he delivered at the University of California, Berkeley, also in 1960, Isherwood argues that an outsider is marked by an intuition and an ability to understand that "people themselves are not real entities — they

change" (50). This quotes his own translation of the Hindu philosopher and prophet Shankara's assertion that he "only accepts as 'real' that which neither changes nor ceases to exist [and that] no object, no kind of knowledge, can be absolutely real if its existence is only temporary. Absolute reality implies permanent existence" (Isherwood & Swami Prabhavananda, *Shankara's Crest-Jewel*; qtd. in Marsh "Adviata" 105). Isherwood's referencing of Shankara alludes to the outsider's ability to perceive emotional change or growth over the passage of time. The narrative voice of the dynamic portrait uses the action and plot to create an empathetic awareness of subjective change: all secondary action aims to constitute an ever more elaborate understanding of the outsider's subjective past experience. Crucially, Isherwood's dynamic portrait is also different from the pseudo-diary form of "Afterwards". Isherwood's earlier narrator is aware of the reasons for his isolation from the start of the story. The appeal of the dynamic portrait, as Isherwood saw it, depends on an increasingly detailed depiction of someone who is initially seen as a caricature. George's aggressive monstrosity serves as this caricature within *A Single Man*. Yet Isherwood's eventual oil painting of George does not construct depth by allowing George to overcome his anger and his loss. Rather, he depicts the complex reasons for, and isolating consequences of, George's immersion within his own mask. Isherwood's novel paints an elaborate oil painting of someone who cannot speak for fear of betrayal.

A Single Man depicts George and Jim's intimacy as an intertwining of different stereotypes by introducing characters who are each associated with George and Jim's past. The first is Doris. George visits Doris in hospital, where she is dying of cancer. Doris was once Jim's lover. Jim briefly left George for Doris and then returned, "saying she's *disgusting, never again*" (75; Isherwood's emphasis). Doris and Jim's past actions now form George's memories of Jim. Therefore, George's relationship with Doris is filtered through her attempt to take Jim away. She appears in a symbolic role as "woman. the Enemy [sic]" who "demands Jim" as a "biological" and social right: "the big arrogant animal of a girl whose body, which sprawled naked, gaped wide in shameless demand under Jim's body ... who could only be fought by yielding ... on the gamble on the fact that he would return" (75). She recalls a period of anxiety, uncertainty and jealousy. Doris is initially a symbol of a queer promiscuity which challenges

George and Jim's attainment of "domestic bliss" and alienates them as a couple further from the "American utopia: kingdom of the good life upon earth" which George imagines as populated by his heterosexual neighbours. ("Afterwards" 50; *A Single Man* 15). *A Single Man* progresses the sense of alienation which Isherwood's narrator felt in "Afterwards". Through amalgamating memories of Jim's relationship with Doris and George's lasting memories of Jim's return, Isherwood redefines unfaithfulness as faithfulness and frank honesty.

Doris reveals a complex emotional knowledge of both George and Jim's relationship *and* George's relationship with this past. Through her character, Isherwood highlights the frank amalgamation of jealousy and commitment with George and Jim's intimacy, which intertwines into an intimate recognition of flaws in one's partner. Doris's symbolic role as "woman; the Enemy" emphasises that Jim chose to return to George. Jim's misogynistic and heterophobic discussion of the "disgusting" female body acts as a symbolic victory for George's claim to Jim as a queer partner. Moreover, George's interaction with Doris in the present enables the continuation of an intimate dialogue with Jim: "wouldn't you be twice as disgusted" he silently asks Jim, "if you could see her now? ... you had a horror, in spite of yourself, of human sickness ... I know something Jim, I feel certain of it, you would absolutely refuse to visit her here" in hospital (75–76). Doris reveals a list of Jim's flaws: vanity, selfishness and hypocrisy all feature within George's memory of him. Yet these qualities serve as enduring links between George and his lost partner. Doris also, simultaneously, enables Isherwood to present George's forgiveness of these flaws, and to consolidate the solidity of their love. Consequently, Isherwood's dynamic portrait contrasts the unfamiliar and vague ideal of the "good life" on earth with the emotional familiarity of George and Jim's knowledge of each other. Within this knowledge, even pain and jealousy are intimate ties. However, Doris also functions as a reminder of what George has lost with Jim's death. His "hatred of Jim", for the two weeks Jim and Doris were away in Mexico, forms George's bond with Doris (76). As George leaves her for what he suspects is the last time, he admits that "one more bit of Jim is lost to him forever" (81). Through her impending death, she constructs his loneliness as a loss of the same intimate frankness which her ebbing life has, momentarily, facilitated.

Betraying Jim

George and Jim's intimate frankness amalgamates and supersedes the blissful, tragic and promiscuous stereotypes which can be used, in George's present, to discuss it. The second character which the dynamic portrait introduces to demonstrate the difficulty of George expressing his intimacy with Jim to other characters is Charlotte. George and "Charley" are best friends, yet the characters remain disconnected from each other by their assimilation within different gendered emotional stereotypes and their queer and normative positions within mainstream conceptions of family and marriage. If Doris reveals the emotional complexity of George and Jim's relationship with each other, Charlotte's relationship with George reveals the stereotypes which reduce the intimacy of each character's speech within the present moment of novel. To speak about Jim, George feels, is to "betray" him and their intimate "life together" (101). Isherwood's use of the verb betray is significant. George intends it to mean a momentary slippage which would expose the pain that itself constructs the stereotypical mask that he wears. It is George's belief that talking about Jim will be betraying him, which entrenches his consciousness within the stereotypical discourses of "domestic bliss" and "family grief" ("Afterwards" 10; *A Single Man* 101). Ultimately, it is Isherwood's novel which is able to effect another meaning of betrayal: an exposure of the intimacy which George and Jim shared. Against George's denial of intimacy within the present moment, Isherwood's dynamic portrait constitutes George and Jim's emotional roots as defined by an imperfect and erotic openness which supersedes the stereotypes through which George can speak about it. Therefore, in talking through the language of stereotypes, George becomes disconnected from this intimacy. Consequently, George is demonstrated to be lonely, as any expression of their intimacy he could make would constitute a reductive betrayal.

George and Charley are both outsiders: they are English expats who have made America a surrogate home. Charley is, pointedly, framed as eccentric and ostracised from American social norms; her neighbourhood is 'one whole degree socially inferior' to George's and her garden, unlike the

Strunks' and the Gerfains', is "sadly neglected" (94). Unlike George, who performs "get[ting] by" on the freeways, she absolutely refuses to learn to drive"; quite a feat in freeway-bound L.A. (20; 93). However, despite how well George and Charley know each other and their shared unity against American suburban norms, they are disconnected by different understandings of George's relationship with Jim. "What an absurd and universally accepted bit of nonsense it is," George thinks, "that your best friends must necessarily be the ones who understand you" (98). In particular, George feels that Charley doesn't understand his relationship with Jim because she idealises their love: "how many times when Jim and I had been quarrelling and come to visit you," he wonders, "did you somehow bring us together again by the sheer power of your unawareness that anything was wrong". Charley commits the "inexcusable triviality" of reducing George's past with Jim to an idealised "domestic bliss" (*A Single Man* 144; "Afterwards" 50).

Moreover, George scornfully wonders whether there "too much understanding in the world already" (98). This evokes memories of others' similar attempts to label his and Jim's relationship, and his resistance to them. While George rebels against the mainstream disavowal of complex relationships between men, he also rejects the exact opposite. He resists being identified with the label of Jim's partner, a position which he sees as the entitlement of a hostile and hypocritical normative culture. The mainstream is hostile because it rejects the idea of love between men, and hypocritical because, like Charley, it idealises a sterilized form of propriety over intimacy. George resists performing grief to those who would not want to see beyond the ritual of tragic loss between men. He and Charley are further disconnected by their differing abilities to demonstrate grief. Charley seeks comfort in her oldest friend, crying because of her estrangement from her husband and son, while George drinks, isolated in his own sense of a blissful, disconnected "Felicidad" (100). From within this aura of happiness, Isherwood's narrative voice presents George's memory of being told about Jim's death:

how very strange to sit here with Charley sobbing and remember
that night when the long-distance call came through from Ohio ...
admitting George's right to the small honorary share of the family grief

[and then] George's laconic ... no thank you to the funeral invitation ... his blundering gasping run up the hill in the dark ... banging on Charley's door. (101)

In committing this act of raw grief, George believes that "I betrayed you Jim, I betrayed our life together, I made you into a sob story for a skirt" (101). George resists identification with "a share of the family grief" because such a position would be a hypocritical acceptance of partial recognition. He believes it would turn Jim into a tragedy by playing the part of a lover only acknowledged when sex was out of the question; grieving within a familial conception of Jim which simultaneously attempts to side-line his relationships as queer and abhorrent.

This resistance acts as part of George's "freaky and interesting" homosexual subjectivity (Timmons interview 4). It is resistance, as well as his anger, that bars him from the memory of his intimacy with Jim. His resentment of societal hypocrisy warps his conception of Charley. She becomes, like Doris, defined as "woman; the Enemy", rather than as a friend who possesses an intimate knowledge of George and Jim's past (75). Isherwood's use of his third-person narrative voice to present George's thoughts also adds a further degree of emotional removal from the painful memory. This emphasises the contrast between Charlotte's outward display of grief and George's silence. Pain is removed from his conscious awareness of losing Jim within an unfeeling, removed "Felicidad". Even the feeling of losing Jim is dislocated from George's memory by his sense of disconnection from familial and gendered expectations of expressing grief. The introduction of Charley's grief, and George's sense that his friend cannot understand his relationship with Jim, illustrates that George's stoic Felicidad develops from his own inability to grieve openly and honestly. It is this frankness that he has lost with Jim's death.

Furthermore, George's stoicism and Charley's weeping enmesh both within the same stereotypes that forbid the open expression and recognition of George and Jim's long-term intimacy. Charley expresses these normative gender assumptions:

For men, it is different ... Buddy [Charley's husband] could have lived anywhere ... women [have] simply got to hang on to their roots ... we can be transplanted yes, but it has to be done by a man. And once he has done it he has to stay with us and wither — I mean water ... new roots wither if they aren't watered. (110)

Interestingly, George and Charley's own long-term relationship can be defined here as a heterosexual desire for long-term intimacy, which is complicated by a conflict between opposite-sex gender stereotypes. Through this friendship, Isherwood offers an enticing glimpse of the particular ways in which this male-female long-term intimacy is undermined by George's stereotypically masculine stoicism. Significantly, George's grief also leads to his loss of familiarity and intimacy with Charley. Their differing memories of Jim create conflicting heteronormative gender assumptions, which frustrate intimacy between the two. This moment is an important reminder that, while this study focuses on male-male desires for long-term intimacy, heterosexual relationships can be read as defined by similarly unique and deidealised desires for familiarity. George and Charley's relationship can be read as a personal and emotional experience of tension. Isherwood suggests that normative stereotypes function to obscure their intimacy, which, in other circumstances, could be particularly valued and personally fulfilling in a similar, although non-erotic, manner to George and Jim's. Isherwood's novel might prove a fascinating start for later examinations of long-term intimacy within friendships and heterosexual relationships, which this thesis does not have the space or remit to cover.⁸⁹

It is, however, important to emphasise here that George's intimate past with Jim subverts and counters Charley's belief in male rootlessness even while George and Charley's intimacy is thwarted by this stereotype. Isherwood

⁸⁹ As was mentioned in Chapter One, Symonds and his wife Catherine also experienced a long-term intimacy that was defined by a valuation of intimate understanding between spouses. Symonds's relationship with his wife is, importantly, not defined by a sense of transgressive desire. However, he does value the importance of Catherine's support and gives her voice within his *Memoirs*. Any subsequent study of historical or present heterosexual long-term intimacies would need to develop a methodology of reading desires that are privileged by social convention in a way that they homoerotic desires are not here. However, such a methodology would do well to start by considering, as Isherwood does, the prevailing gender stereotypes of the era in question. What would be important in heterosexual intimacies and relationships is the way in which the passage of time facilitates an attempt to read personal engagements with, refutations of, and accommodations within normative gender stereotypes.

indirectly emphasises that George and Jim's relationship did not "wither" in response to a stereotypical masculine rootlessness. Doris highlighted that both men made roots that were strengthened by a sharing of the intimate tensions between desire and the fear of loss. The stereotypical need to "wander" or "wither" is reversed in their attachment, in which memories of Jim "wandering" and *choosing* to come back create an enduring sense of connection. George's stereotypical decision to not voice the roots which tie him to Jim — more than this, to insist that doing so would "betray" his lover — enacts the very reduction into which he fears he will turn Jim. Charley affirms that "roots wither if they aren't watered", and this is exactly what George fears will happen if Jim becomes "a sob story for a skirt" (101). However, it is George's present fear of presenting as a tragic homosexual defined by loss that produces the stereotype masculine stoicism. This disconnects George from his own feeling of losing Jim. It produces the very withering which he fears to cause in betraying Jim.

However little George feels he can talk about Jim, Isherwood uses his dynamic portrait to show that George and Jim's long-term intimacy cannot be understood by a culture that sees only through these normative or queer, alienated or resisting stereotypes. Put another way, George cannot speak about Jim through the language of stereotypes, into which he has assimilated himself, because George and Jim's long-term intimacy is revealed to be an amalgamation of the queer and domestic, blissful and promiscuous. Reading the novel, as George all but begs Kenny to do, demonstrates that George is lonely due to the amalgamation of past memories into something greater than the stereotypes through which he can speak. From within a moment of sudden realisation, the aftermath of the "Felicidad" which Charley's overt presentation of grief creates, George realises "you can't betray (that idiotic expression) a Jim, or a life with Jim, even if you try to" (102). Charley's stereotypical vision of male rootlessness cannot define George and Jim, who built a home together in Los Angeles. They were rooted together in a shared past, and George remains entangled within these memories of Jim. Their relationship, like Charlotte's marriage, had been adulterous, jealous and lonely at times, but it was this experience that brought Jim "back" to George in life, and it continues to bring Jim back to George in memory (75). George realises that his grief is not the same as Charlotte's. Rather than appearing as either a tragic, estranged or

divorced couple, George and Jim knew and accepted Jim's adultery. This allowance, within his relationship with Doris, becomes an enduring memory of a lasting commitment. Equally, George and Jim's intimacy is differentiated from that of the idealised suburban Strunks, who are "embarrassed" by anything "queer", by their frank admission of the needs of the body, "stark naked, gaping wide in shameless demand" (93). Simultaneously, Jim's eventual return, his choice of George over Doris, also intimately roots their desire within an emotional form of intimacy.

Through George's emotional memories of Jim, Isherwood takes separate instances of domestic bliss, queer sexual promiscuity and tragedy and turns them into a secure sense of openness, frankness and commitment between George and Jim. George's memory of Jim is a knowledge of their joint superseding of stereotypical suburban normativity, which avoids mentioning intimate roots of their illicit love. Because of these contrasts, painted by Isherwood's introduction of different characters and memories, it is not possible to "betray" Jim through a momentary, single outpouring of grief. To the reader, George becomes much more than a symbol of the "sacred family grief" that he denies at the moment it is condescendingly offered to him. Isherwood has constructed a connection between them that is made of different stereotypes, "homosexual domestic bliss and perfect faithfulness", men as wanderers and homemakers.

Isherwood's dynamic portrait reveals the numbing, lonely experience of not being able to talk about homosexual relationships within a wider culture that sees them as blissful, tragic or monstrous stereotypes. To cite William R. Handley, George is poignantly, painfully aware of "missed connections ... separation and alienation, especially as the effects of identity" (70). Yet Isherwood offers an even more enduring disconnection: the disjoint between George's rich emotional past, his past experience of a familiarity with Jim based on an understanding of their deidealised relationship, and his stereotypical speech with others. Moreover, Isherwood's creation of this "gap" is not, as Kyle Stevens claims of Ford's 2009 film, a nostalgic exercise in delineating the "epistemology of the closet" (84; 79). For George, as for Isherwood, the closet is not a history, but a reality. In presenting George's increasing loss of a past self,

his cloaking of feelings under a resistance to betraying Jim, Isherwood allows his character to speak the unspeakable. George momentarily realises that he cannot express the painful tensions and loving connections within his past feeling of familiarity with Jim. Isherwood's reader infers that George's loneliness comes from the fact that he sees himself as the monstrous and tragic stereotypes which he wishes to avoid. The central point of Isherwood's *Single Man Project* is revealed here. It is that the discourses of perfection, queerness, domesticity and promiscuity are not, separately, able to define the experience of long-term intimacy between men. The image of George which emerges through reading Isherwood's "absolutely composed" amalgamated "elaborate oil painting" of emotions, is of a man whose prejudices against his hostile culture ostracise him from his past of openness and frankness with another person. George is lonely because his hatred binds him within a stoic stereotype. The loss of intimate familiarity and understanding *between* partners, created by Jim's death, extends to George's inability to recognise the tensions between past intimacy, present anger and loneliness within himself.

"They don't read very carefully": Recognition?

Towards the end of *A Single Man*, George says to Kenny, "I'm like a book you have to read. A book can't read itself to you" (144). George's plea extends beyond his student to the general American public, and Isherwood's voice addresses his readers through the closing pages of his novel. "You could," he emphasises, "but you can't be bothered to ... that's what makes it so tragically futile. Instead of trying to know, you commit the inexcusable triviality of saying *he's a dirty old man*" (144). In asking Kenny to "read" him, George admits that his sensitive awareness of others, and his subsequent fashioning of his visible self through these perceptions, are but an incomplete representation of his intimate memories. Isherwood's intention is that George's subjective experience of loneliness is pieced together and recognised by his readers: a radical understanding of the complex amalgamation of tragedy, bliss, queerness and normalcy not only of homosexual relationships, but of long-term intimacy in general.

Judging from the earliest transatlantic reviews of his novel, Isherwood might have hoped in vain. The British *Times Literary Supplement* reviewed *A Single Man* on 10 September 1964, upon its British and American publication. Thomas Hinde, a pseudonym for an anonymous reviewer, wrote about the novel in the exact stereotypical tones which George fears would betray Jim. The first thing Hinde notes is Isherwood's shift in narrative perspective from a camera-style, objective 'Christopher Isherwood' narrator, to a homosexual subjectivity. He states that Isherwood "abandons the use of Christopher Isherwood as character observer and writes about George, his principle character in the third person ... it is George's own problem he is now treating" which is "the obsessive memory of Jim, a friend he has lived with for fifteen years". George's "problem", however, is still discussed within the reductive discourse of psychiatric morbidity. His enduring sense of a loss which warps his connection with other characters is framed as an "obsession", which the suggestive, but vague, identification of Jim as a "friend", typical of contemporary attempts to avoid any reference to sexual or romantic ties between men, seems hardly to justify.

Against George's seemingly unhealthy grief, Hinde also notes Isherwood's failure to consolidate Jim as a character.

Jim never becomes a real person. The reader is barely even offered, for acceptance or rejection, the cosy domestic co-habitation which George is regretting, let alone of the love or passion with which the affair presumably started. The reader feels that George and the author are understanding less about the situation than themselves. Even less, perhaps, than Mrs Strunk.

Mrs Strunk's belief that George is a "misfit, to be pitied and not blamed" (*A Single Man* 16), is inferred through Hinde's tongue-in-cheek evocation of the two men's "cosy" domesticity. Hinde also anticipates such emotions on behalf of his readers: "a reader must be sure that his sympathy is not being blocked by obvious emotional obstructions ... something of a compound of amusement and pity". His own tone makes the chance of Isherwood's avoiding such feelings seem doubtful.

These stereotypical visions of George's obsession counter and cloud Isherwood's main point. Jim can only be painted by the slow progressions of Isherwood's dynamic portrait, which reveals the complexity of George's intimate memory of him. As such, Hinde fails to consider that Isherwood's final depiction of George's loneliness depends on his inability to evoke Jim as "a real person". Jim is most definitely not a real person in the novel. Not only has he died, but George's conception of himself as "queer", a monster "to be pitied and not blamed", distorts his ability to connect to his lover, who now can only exist in the past (*A Single Man* 10). In his 1965 interview with George Wickes, Isherwood addressed reviews of his novel:

I must say with reference to some of the reviews [in America] that I, rightly or wrongly, attribute a very deep-lying psychological motive behind them ... one review seemed to me nothing else but a kind of racist attack in which ... homosexuality were really a surrogate very possibly for this man's aggression, not only against them but against the whole tiresomeness of having to be nice to others. (41)

Isherwood presents American reviews of his novel as tainted by the very stereotypical views of homosexuality which, as *A Single Man* testifies, cannot fully depict long-term intimacy between men. Isherwood even explicitly hints at a deeper meaning of the novel which eluded his reviewers because of their underlying hatred. "You know," he sympathises with his reviewer, "people don't read very carefully. They have a lot of books to review and it's difficult." This justifiably biting remark exposes the fundamental difficulty of recognising long-term intimacy and the loneliness of its loss in 1964. Like Mrs Strunk and her compatriots in the novel who paraphrase the popular psychology of homosexual morbidity, Isherwood asserts that the general public does not read very carefully. In catching George at a glance, he believed his rushed reviewers missed the subtle ways in which he constructed their intimate frankness, openness and commitment as an emotional honesty which counters the failures of connection within the stereotypical present of the novel.

Yet perhaps Isherwood's intended audience was not the contemporary reviewers of his novel. The readers whom George pleads with to "read" and "know" the reasons for his loneliness may not even be contemporary to the publication of the novel. In 1964, one state had taken anti-sodomy laws off its books. In England, homosexuality was becoming more visible.⁹⁰ Kenny, George's unconventional student, is a symbol of an even more radical, youthful age. Kenny represents a future in which one could express and understand the pain of losing long-term intimacy, subverting a mainstream culture that is obsessed with stereotypes about homosexuality:

George gets the spooky impression that Kenny is laughing ... at the whole situation; the education system of this country, and all the economic and political and psychological forces which have brought them ... together ... George suspects Kenny of understanding the innermost meaning of life. (*A Single Man* 44)

Kenny, at least, might be aware of the stereotypical constraints of an ideological system which brings people together under limiting and false stereotypes of intimacy. His laughter may be attributable to the fact that, in such conditions, no two people are really "together" even while they are in the same classroom. Yet George's intuition that Kenny understands the "innermost meaning of life" is only ever a suspicion. Kenny does not stay for long enough to tell a drunk George that he understands that he has not only lost Jim, but lost his past, complex subjective experience of long-term intimacy. It will be left to Isherwood's readers to interpret both what George has told Kenny, and what Kenny has heard. However, George has a curious dream with which Isherwood closes the novel. In this dream, the narrative voice, which has been closely attached to George's consciousness throughout, mirroring his grief, depression and claustrophobia, moves outside of his mind. It mimics the intertwined standpoint of dislocated observation and prophecy of a dream. The voice imagines different rock pools on the edge of the ocean, "each separate and

⁹⁰ As Matt Houlbrook argues, the 1957 Wolfenden Report in Britain had "radically redraw[n] the relationship between law and morality, moving the discreet and respectable" figure of the homosexual "within the boundaries of social respectability" (243). Of course, the definition of a "decent and respectable" homosexual is intensely problematic and rests on a normative insistence on the disavowal of any public culture of queer sex. That said, George's quiet, domestic life with Jim may fall quite easily within this new, more permissive stereotype.

different”, and “fancifully” names them George, Charlotte, Kenny. While each pool is imagined as a distinct subjectivity, “the waters of the ocean” come “flooding, darkening over the pools” and transfer the water within into a “consciousness which is no one in particular but which contains everyone, everything” (70). Handley has called Isherwood’s spiritual allusion to the Vedantic whole — the realisation of a unity between self and world in which individual subjectivity is washed away before the “real” — an “odd confessional moment in a novel that otherwise has nothing to preach” (70).⁹¹

However, this contemplative, spiritual tone seems “odd” only because Isherwood has, until this point in the novel, immersed his reader so completely in George’s subjective loneliness. This shift of mode from loneliness to connection, however, does not devalue George’s isolation, or Isherwood’s central emphasis on the ramifications of failing to recognise long-term intimacy between men. Rather, it acts as a coda to the story, visualising what Isherwood hopes the novel will mean to readers of Kenny’s generation and beyond. Isherwood anticipates a radical connection and empathy between the queer and the normative, homosexuals and heterosexuals: an amalgamation of stereotypes into frank connection which Isherwood has anticipated through George’s enduring feelings for Jim. From Isherwood’s standpoint, such an empathy can only be, as Handley precisely puts it, a prophecy.

In his lecture series *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M. Forster defines the prophetic mode of writing. Prophecy, he asserts, is “a tone of voice” (129). In Isherwood’s case, this tone is a vague assumption that his own dream is fantastic, coupled with an ardent belief that such connection would be the “innermost meaning of life” (*A Single Man* 44). Forster continues in his lecture: prophecy “may imply any of the faiths that have haunted humanity [or] the mere raising of human love and hate to such power that the normal receptacles no longer contain them” (*Aspects* 129). In *A Single Man*, Isherwood’s own Hindu

⁹¹ Isherwood started practicing Advaita Vedanta in Hollywood in 1939 and remained a devout student of the Hindu philosophy and practice of connection through meditation for the rest of his life. He recounts the spiritual side of his life, and its effect on his writing and on his connections with others more broadly, in his autobiography *My Guru and His Disciple*. Victor Marsh provides a detailed and thoughtful exposition of the Vedantic thought in Isherwood’s American works in *The American Isherwood: “Isherwood and the Psycho-geography of Home”*. For details of both, see Bibliography, “Works Cited” and “Works Consulted”.

faith in the power of human connection breaks the confining walls of the rock pools which are symbolic of the reductive stereotypes that separate individual consciousness. The rushing water symbolises a new, previously inconceivable connection between, and understanding of, each character's past experience. It visualises a recognition of the fossils which constitute a person's face and the intimacies which amalgamate and complicate the individual memories which form them.

The dream-ocean promises to form the complex wholes which Isherwood's dynamic portrait has worked to create — although it is significant that Isherwood, even now, does not specify the causes of George's lonely entrapment within his own rock pool. To do so would diminish the interpretive work he requires of his readers. The prophecy of this oceanic whole heralds a new age in which secret homosexual intimacies are made visible. This is both comforting and menacing; it offers connection, but also a loss of an illicit identity. The subjective experience of loss and isolation, after all, *is* George and secrecy *has* formed his long-term intimacy with Jim: "What I know is what I am", he tells Kenny (144). To have such an intimate connection to one person, as Forster demonstrated, is to be changed by them. To be a part of an intimacy with "everyone and everything", Isherwood prophesies, is to risk losing one's clandestine identity all together. Isherwood's novel ends with a prophecy of a cultural empathy and awareness. In 1964, he could not anticipate the repercussions of this. For homosexual individuals whose lives had been based on secrecy and a bitter, emotional fight against their stereotypical image, a movement towards a more sympathetic and complicated understanding of their experience of long-term intimacy and its loss would be a whole new world. Yet Isherwood states, with the unfaltering tone of faith, that such a recognition is the only way to end George's lonely disconnection from his past and to ensure the continuing recognition of long-term intimacy after one, or even both, of the partners are no longer there to experience it.

**Chapter Five: “The Gay Subject Brought Home”:
Portraying Desires for Long-term Intimacy in the Post-
decriminalisation Home in Alan Hollinghurst’s *The
Stranger’s Child* and *The Sparsholt Affair*.**

This chapter reads images of the marital home within Alan Hollinghurst’s two latest novels, *The Stranger’s Child* (2011) and *The Sparsholt Affair* (2017). Specifically, it traces the development of Victorian homes which decay from sites of illicit risk to shells which await destruction, and portraits of men that develop from illicit, anonymous sketches to oil portraits of male lovers at home. In doing so, it highlights how transgressive homosexual desires for long-term intimacy have been further defined by the twentieth-century decriminalisation of homosexuality, and the increasing late-twentieth-century and early-twenty-first-century cultural location of homosexual long-term relationships within the marital and familial home.

Both *The Stranger’s Child* and *The Sparsholt Affair* are narratives of decriminalisation and increasing cultural normalisation of homosexuality. Each novel has the same narrative structure: five separate episodes, linked by related characters, that jump forward in time towards the twenty-first century. Each begins with a secret and short-lived affair between two men in the early twentieth century. Both narratives follow generations of cultural and biological descendants of these men as they attempt to understand these affairs while living in increasingly liberated circumstances. Both end with an evocation of a married spouse who has lost a husband. Over the course of Hollinghurst’s narratives, homosexual experiences both symbolically and literally come home. The novels start at a moment in which homosexual affairs were invisible and unmentionable, taking place outside the home and located suggestively and excitingly on the boundaries of discussion. The narratives end with domesticated gay marriages and in a context in which homosexuality is often, although not exclusively, culturally located within marital homes and considered part of normative, mainstream families.

In 2004, the year he published his previous book *The Line of Beauty*, Hollinghurst defined the form of the novel as a temporal movement through “beginning, middle and end”, through which the repetition of images can create “not a blurring exactly, but a resolution into complex lights and atmospheres” (*Ivory* xvi). He emphasises the ability of images to change and develop throughout narratives, suggesting an increasingly compounded amalgamation of different sensations, emotions and repeated tropes. The transhistorical narratives of *The Stranger’s Child* and *The Sparsholt Affair* evoke repeated images of homes, the atmospheres of which are physically and symbolically defined by the historical narratives of historical change, social liberalisation and personal accounts of enduring memories. Specifically, Hollinghurst uses these developing images of homes to suggest and visualise the “complex lights and atmospheres” which are formed by homoerotic experiences of desiring, losing and having familiarity with another man.

The Stranger’s Child develops the image of the increasingly decayed Victorian home as a symbol of how unspeakable and invisible desires for long-term intimacy become an amalgamation of desire and loss. In this novel, the home is defined from the perspective of illicit sexual and romantic desires between men which must take place outside the familial and marital home. In the novel’s opening section, set in 1913, the domestic spaces of Two Acres and Corley Court are initially sites of illicit sexual pleasure which is heightened by the need for secrecy and the piquant risk of exposure. However, sexual pleasure is soon amalgamated with what Hollinghurst defines as the “opposite” of pleasure (*Stranger’s* 77): the inability to speak openly about a desire for a lasting form of commitment. Erotic desire becomes confused by uncertainty, doubt and loss as one homosexual lover ages. As Hollinghurst’s narrative moves forward into the twentieth century, these Victorian homes are modernised, institutionalised as boarding schools and separated as private apartments, and eventually await destruction. Beneath their increasingly mundane and abandoned appearances, they suggest an illicit emotional atmosphere of sexual pleasure and risk that is conditioned by an enduring acceptance of loss and a melancholic inability to speak. *The Stranger’s Child* evokes an enduring tension between desire, melancholy and doubt. Hollinghurst suggests that this is inherent within transgressive and transient

affairs that take place, necessarily, outside of the home. The decay of Hollinghurst's country home suggests an enduring decision not to come out, or to expect a future for love between men. It visualises forms of unrequited longing which run through Symonds, Housman and Isherwood's earlier work. *The Stranger's Child* examines how the silence and invisibility of existing outside of the home captures the experience of losing familiarity.

The Sparsholt Affair approaches the marital, spousal home from the perspective of the intimate value of familiarity, shared understanding and domesticity between men. In this novel, Hollinghurst symbolises the home as a site of familiarity through the development of the artistic portrait of men. Here, early-twentieth-century illicit affairs between men are symbolised by the eroticised sketch of the idealised naked male body. This sketch evokes a lack of intimate emotional knowledge and detail, which emphasises the sad transience of affairs that must end before the advent of heterosexual adulthood and marriage. As Hollinghurst moves into the late twentieth century, the idea of sketching becomes equated with the search for intimate understanding between generations of homosexual men and between male lovers. The post-decriminalisation domestic portrait of "men at home" becomes "sexy in a wild new way" as it promises to increasingly reveal the emotional connections which exist between cohabiting, long-term partners (*Sparsholt* 200). This portrait depicts, is created in and remains within homes. It symbolises the intimate value of domesticity as an ability to create and visualise feelings of commitment, emotional reciprocation and connection. Hollinghurst's portrait of men at home becomes a version of Isherwood's dynamic portrait. Within this portrait, domesticity becomes a site of shared memories, knowledges, goals and routines. Where *The Stranger's Child* had been animated by the ability of the home to suggest sexual relationships that needed to remain unspeakable, Hollinghurst's latest narrative mobilises the movement of homosexuality into the marital and familial home as representing a new possibility: the value of being able to visualise, understand and share long-term intimacy with another person.

These two novels structure images around the idea of long-term desires for familiarity: either losing or possessing a form of intimate understanding. This represents a significant departure from Hollinghurst's previous four novels. In

2012, Hollinghurst argued that he saw *The Swimming-Pool Library* (1988), *The Folding Star* (1994), *The Spell* (1998) and *The Line of Beauty* (2004) as a distinct project, “as forming a kind of symphony” (Lee and Hollinghurst 206). The four movements of this literary symphony depict both pre-decriminalisation and post-decriminalisation familial homes as spaces that must be left behind — either physically or imaginatively — in order for the characters to find homoerotic freedom and pleasure.⁹² Critical engagement with these works has also noted Hollinghurst’s attachment to a historical mode of homoerotic secrecy and suggestion which takes place outside of familial homes. In *Alan Hollinghurst: Writing Under the Influence* (2018), critics focus on the influence of pre-decriminalisation writers and texts through which Hollinghurst frames homosexual experiences as invisible and coded, and which offers a shocking queer counter-discourse to the familial home.⁹³ Sex and desire, in Hollinghurst’s earlier four novels, offer an erotic and subversive counter to the seemingly more clearly defined, yet limiting, ideals of family relations within the suburban home.

Images of the familial home or the artistic portrait are not entirely absent from, or unimportant within, these earlier texts; rather, they are mobilised to evoke this erotic atmosphere of allusion and suggestion. Allan Johnson reads both artistic portraits and landscapes made in *The Folding Star* by the fictional painter Eduard Orst as an “almost menacing repetition of individual images” (81). He argues that this obsessive repetition is paralleled by the protagonist Edward’s desire for his student, Luc. For Johnson, Orst’s portraits foreshadow the “trapping of” Edward’s desire for Luc “in the desolate undertow of success” (83; citing *The Folding Star*). The portrait is symbolic here of a faithful

⁹² Will Beckwith in *The Swimming-Pool Library* enjoys the pleasures of London’s pre-AIDS cruising culture. Emily Horton sees Will Beckwith’s “snubbing” of the portrait of his Aunt Sybyll in *The Swimming-Pool Library* as symbolic of his “embodying all the sensations of freedom, arrogance and disillusion” (40). Rejecting the familial, domestic portrait opens up an interest in relationships which are not fixed or enclosed by cultural expectations. Similarly, Edward Manners in *The Folding Star* leaves his middle-class family home for a Belgian city where he takes up a teaching position, and an obsession, with his student Luc. Hollinghurst’s homosexual characters in *The Spell* enjoy the 1990s club scene. Nick Guest explores London’s gay saunas in *The Line of Beauty*.

⁹³ Angus Brown argues that Hollinghurst uses the memory of the writer Ronald Firbank in *The Swimming-Pool Library*, evoked through both a relationship with an aged contemporary of Firbank’s and his texts, to evoke “illicit forms of learning” which take place between boys at boarding school (25–26; 35). Paul Vlitos reads the influence of Firbank as the construction of homosexual inuendo from “bright fragments of dialogue” (20). Michele Mendelssohn has argued that Hollinghurst uses pre-legalisation pornography to sexualise the literary canon (“Poetry” 49).

representation, not of a person, but of a “fantasy of the past” which exceeds and distorts the person who is longed for (83). Through Orst’s portraits, Johnson argues that Hollinghurst conveys Luc’s importantly insubstantial function as a “reflection of a lost symbol” of past desire (82). He is an evocation of the enduring impossibility of Edward’s seeing clearly either his or Orst’s “wild longing” for “lost passion” (Johnson 81; 82). Johnson also highlights how Hollinghurst evokes the “domestic architecture” of a rural cottage shared by two men in *The Spell* as an image which vitalises the need to embrace change. Johnson argues that Hollinghurst vitalises the home through the perspective of ecstasy, which emphasises that the “sources of influential control most ephemeral and fleeting”, like the “pleasures or privileges of the club” scene, have the capacity to create the most persistent, lasting vital reconfiguration” (92; 112). Johnson highlights Hollinghurst’s interest here in the domestic home as a textual structure that can reflect homosexual erotics which take place outside of chrononormativity of the traditional family. He reads both the home and the portrait as evoking the ever-changing, and therefore persistently allusive, individual experience of desire that clouds and distorts its object.

This atmosphere of uncertainty has also been applied to Hollinghurst’s evocation of early-twentieth-century homoerotic desire in *The Stranger’s Child*. Julie Rivkin argues that *The Stranger’s Child* traces the “alternative history” of “queer lives often lived below the threshold of visibility” (81; 90): “secret throbs ... something fleeting, not necessarily visible, a sensory experience not fixed” (90). She asserts that the impossibility of being able to speak about sexualised feelings between men makes homoeroticism a more potent and enduring force in the novel than domesticated relationships. Johnson argues that *The Stranger’s Child* is structured through “confirmation bias” in which a series of characters “shape and dismantle” the life of the poet Cecil Valance, who has an affair early in the novel, by “desperately seeking to rationalise their own experiences of the twentieth century” (133-134). Rivkin and Johnson both read *The Stranger’s Child* through Hollinghurst’s productive interest in the evasiveness of Cecil’s desire, an effective deployment of the erotics of suggestion which “hides more than it reveals” (Johnson 83). They highlight Hollinghurst’s interest in the allusive and secretive nature of emotional connections between men.

This chapter builds on these critical readings. It also reads the marital home as a register of the subjectivity, vitality and flux of both illicit and visible homoerotics. However, it argues that the central image of the marital home in both *The Stranger's Child* and *The Sparsholt Affair* symbolises Hollinghurst's contemplative shift towards the context of understanding and empathy within the twenty-first century. In 2011, after publishing *The Stranger's Child*, Hollinghurst stated: "I am very interested in the idea of a character being inducted into a code, into a way of reading the world and living in it", which made sex "challenging and exciting" (Baron). However, in a 2012 interview, Hollinghurst acknowledged "the enormous changes of the last quarter of a century, legal changes, changes in attitude, a great generational shift in the understanding of gay men and gay lives" (Lee and Hollinghurst 203–204). The atmospheres of secret codes and erotic suggestions are still vital forces in both novels. However, "lives often lived under the threshold of visibility" (Rivkin 90) become important to Hollinghurst due to the possibility that the passing of time can provide revelations and understandings about these relationships. Johnson is quite right that in *The Stranger's Child*, later characters misread Cecil's relationship. However, Hollinghurst uses the developing image of the home to reveal the tension between desire and loss that is experienced by Cecil's lover. The development of the decaying home and the portrait of men at home throughout Hollinghurst's two narratives reveals the emotional ambivalences, connections, complexities and intimacies inherent within both illicit and licit desires for long-term intimacy. Within Hollinghurst's images of homes, personal, historical and textual narratives amalgamate, emphasising how the movement towards the contemporary, twenty-first-century present reveals the tensions between desire and loss and the intimate value of familiarity, possession and intimacy. Hollinghurst's homes are defined by what he sees as an emerging culture of "understanding of gay men and gay lives". *The Stranger's Child* demonstrates how desires for long-term intimacy taking place outside are defined by a prolonged experience of invisibility, silence and uncertainty. *The Sparsholt Affair* portrays how homosexuality's movement into homes emphasises the value of visibility, an ability to share and understand the feelings of familiarity between men. In Hollinghurst's latest two novels, the home

is a textual image which reveals different but equally “complex” amalgamations of emotions (Hollinghurst *Ivory* xvi).

The losses and the consolations of the gay subject being brought home

Hollinghurst’s developing images of the marital home do not portray an uncritical romanticisation of twentieth-century gay liberation. Rather, the personal narratives of enduring desire in both novels symbolise Hollinghurst’s more ambivalent assessment of both the losses and the consolations of the gay subject being brought home.⁹⁴ The importance of the shift from homosexual invisibility to visibility in both novels, and Hollinghurst’s considered, complicated response to this shift, is highlighted by one scene at the end of *The Stranger’s Child*. The novel ends at a wake in 2008. The setting is a remembrance service for Peter Rowe, a fictional writer and broadcaster. During the service, “Peter’s husband” — his civil partner and now widower, Desmond — gives a eulogy (*Stranger’s* 520). Desmond applauds the decriminalisation of sexual relationships between men in England and Wales in 1967: Peter “had always said how important the changes in the law in 1967 had been to him and to so many others like him [and that] the coming of civil partnerships was a great development not just for them, but for civil life in general” (535). Hollinghurst’s narrative voice comments that “this was met by a few seconds of firm applause and flustered but generally supportive looks from those who didn’t clap” (535). Desmond’s words both acknowledge and create a public support and empathy which Isherwood presented as lacking, forty-seven years before, in *A Single Man*. Those who resist the “firm applause” appear not to disagree with Desmond’s words but to be “flustered” by the mentioning of a more prejudicial past. Rob Salter is a young gay man sitting in the audience. He feels that “it was good to see the gay subject, which after all had bubbled through Peter’s life more keenly and challengingly than it did through his own, brought home here under the gilded Corinthian capitals of a famous London club” (535).

As Peter’s widower, Desmond focuses this positive narrative of the effects of gay liberation on not only the 1967 partial decriminalisation of

⁹⁴ Interestingly, and revealingly, the final two sections of *The Sparsholt Affair* are titled “loses” and “consolations”.

homosexuality, but also the later legal changes to marital equality. This scene takes four years after the legalization of same-sex civil partnerships and five years before the legalization of same-sex marriage in Britain.⁹⁵ Indeed, the decriminalisation of homosexuality occurs roughly halfway through both *The Stranger's Child* and *The Sparsholt Affair*, and Desmond emphasises that this change in the law is an important precursor to the twenty-first century atmosphere of social and political equality. Marital equality is symbolic of, more broadly, an increasing visibility of domesticated homosexual desires for long-term intimacy. As Isherwood demonstrated in *A Single Man*, homosexuality had become increasingly visible, albeit mired in stereotypes, throughout the twentieth century. However, the twenty-first century has seen a rapid rise in cultural representations of homosexual intimacies as synonymous with the mainstream family and home. To observe this transition, one needs only to look at the difference between Russell T. Davies's *Queer As Folk* (1999), with its representation of a radically non-familial and sexualised gay cruise culture, and the American sitcom *Modern Family* (2011), with its location of homosexual relationships *within* the twenty-first-century conception of the family, domesticity and marriage.⁹⁶ Matthew Todd, the former editor of the gay lifestyle magazine

⁹⁵ Civil partnerships were legalised in Britain with the Civil Partnership Act (2004). Same-sex marriages were legalised with the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act (2013).

⁹⁶ A casual browse through Netflix in February 2020 highlights several other shows which feature a homosexual character or relationship within the domesticated families and homes. The young-adult TV series *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996) has been rewritten as *The Chilling Adventure of Sabrina* (2018). The rewrite includes a new character, a cousin of Sabrina who is bisexual. *Glee* (2009) depicts a teenage relationship between two men; *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, an American sitcom about the NYPD, features a police captain who is married to a man; *October Faction* (2020) is a thriller about a family of monster killers who have a gay teenage son. *Scandal* (2012) has a main character who is married to another man. Most seasons of *American Horror Story* have featured a domesticated lesbian relationship. *Grace and Frankie* (2015) focuses on the relationship between two women who become friends after their husbands become partners. Their husbands eventually marry each other and both men remain part of Grace and Frankie's lives as friends. These recent productions reflect the increasing representation of domesticated homosexual relationships. They follow international hits such as *Will and Grace* (2004) and *The L Word* (2004) which focus, respectively, on domesticated relationships between men and between women. Davies's 2015 suite of three shows, *Cucumber*, *Banana* and *Tofu*, expresses a more problematic assimilation of homosexual desire into the mainstream home. These shows emphasise feelings of dissatisfaction, frustration and the need to broaden emotional parameters of marriage and monogamy to include other relationship structures, such as polyamory. *Cucumber* and *Banana* are both fictional stories about gay men living in Manchester. *Tofu* is a linked series that interviews real-life viewers about the issues within each show. Davies's representation is both a compelling and a provocative contemporary destabilisation of the ideal gay home and marriage. In this sense, his characters embody a desire for familiarity that is based on frankness, openness and an acknowledgement of deidealised qualities within a partner, like the work of Isherwood and Forster. That said, Davies's characters are, importantly, motivated less by a desire for long-term intimacy than by a desire to appropriate long-term marriages with the transient erotics of queer counter publics. For details of these programmes, see Bibliography, "Works Consulted"

Attitude, has even argued that the visibility of the gay marriage ceremony is symbolic of homosexuality being “welcomed formally into the family” (4).⁹⁷

There is a more ambivalent side to this celebratory narrative. Heather Love has asserted that “‘advances’ such as gay marriage and the increasing media visibility of well-heeled gays and lesbians threaten to obscure the continuing denigration and dismissal of queer existence” (10). Love worries that the contemporary narrative of optimism surrounding gay marriage might dismiss historical and ongoing individual experiences of homosexuality as a form of social queerness; a feeling of being ostracised from, or choosing to reject, the normative ideal of marriage and domestic intimacy. In the scene above, Hollinghurst’s character Rob touches on this issue. He associates the “home” of the “gay subject” as the “London club”, and not the domestic home shared by Desmond and Peter. As such, he associates “the gay subject” with an illicit sexual culture that, due to social strictures, had to take place outside marital homes. One can stretch Rob’s imagined location of the gay subject further, to encapsulate the desires for long-term intimacy portrayed by Symonds, Housman, Forster and Isherwood. These writers experienced a desire for long-term intimacy as a “challenging” mixture of transgression and anxiety, and exile from home: an intimate defiance of the heterosexual, marital home and a lonely loss of intimacy amid mainstream stereotypes concerning homosexuality. Thus, Hollinghurst exposes a complicated undertow to Desmond’s speech. He questions to what extent the “gay subject”, and their desires for long-term intimacies, can be brought home. Through Rob, he suggests that such a homecoming could mean the loss of the poignant tensions between desire and anxiety, possession and loss, idealisation and familiarity which have defined the earlier evocations of desires for long-term intimacy within this thesis.

⁹⁷ Todd’s book *Straight Jacket: Overcoming Society’s Legacy of Gay Shame* (2015) testifies that this domestication of homosexuality is far from ending the significant cultural and emotional struggles with anxiety, depression and body-perfectionism created by the legacy of “gay shame”. However, Todd highlights the important role of openness, empathy and discussion in reducing the harmful behaviour patterns which, he argues, can be caused by feeling the need to keep one’s homosexuality secret. His book also attempts to bring into the open the ongoing issues and traumas faced particularly by gay people.

However, Desmond simultaneously captures an important consolation for this potential loss of illicit tensions. His speech signals that marriage is not only a wedding ceremony but a visible and prominent declaration of an intimate status between spouses. Hollinghurst emphasises Desmond's ability to talk about his relationship with Peter, and his unique ability to speak for Peter. Hollinghurst gestures to the ways in which the label "husband" consolidates an emotional understanding and familiarity between two men: a long-term intimacy which is now understood by his audience to be particularly intimate. This reflects an emotional argument for marital equality. In *8*,⁹⁸ a play about the fight for marital equality, one married man, Paul Katami, argues that marriage is important because

when you find someone who is not only your best friend but also your best advocate and supporter in life, it is a natural next step for me to want to marry that person ... 'husband' is so definitive it is something that everyone understands. (*8* 7.30)

The word "husband" is particularly valued here for its potentially unique ability to signify a mixture of friendship, support, past history and continuing unity. In *8*, in Desmond's speech and throughout *The Sparsholt Affair*, gay marriages visualise the amalgamations of shared memories and intimate knowledges which form long-term intimacy. The American Foundation for Equal Rights (AFER) streamed the play live on YouTube during a performance on 4 March 2012. The AFER publicizes the play on its YouTube page as "an intimate look what unfolded when the issue of same-sex marriage was on trial" (*8*). This description implies that Katami's association of the term husband with familiarity is a widely held association.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ *8* responds to Proposition 8, a 2008 proposition in California state law to outlaw and invalidate already existing marriages between same-sex couples. The playscript is composed entirely out of the transcripts of the civil suit by married individuals attempting to reverse the proposition.

⁹⁹ This play was broadcast on YouTube and this broadcast is referenced in the Bibliography. On YouTube, this play is listed as *8: A Play About the Fight For Marital Equality*. YouTube's comment function is turned off on the page for *8*. This suggests that the AFER is aware of the contentious views surrounding the introduction of gay marriage. That said, as of January 2020, the play has had 985,184 views. It has 10,000 digital 'likes' and only 372 dislikes. This also suggests that Katami's views on the intimate familiarity of marriage are shared by many.

Hollinghurst's images of homes also reflect both the losses of emotional tensions and the consolations of visualising familiarity. The desires for long-term intimacy which are revealed in *The Stranger's Child* ultimately frame the cultural developments of the twentieth century as a form of loss. The home becomes a "ruined pleasure palace" (*Stranger's* 345). This image suggest that late-twentieth-century attempts to bring historical homosexual figures out of the closet run the risk of disavowing the painful historical experience of being unable to speak. However, *The Sparsholt Affair*, Hollinghurst's most recent novel, offers an important contrasting perspective. This novel depicts homes as structures which become symptomatic of the portraits that hang within them. In this novel, portraits take time to create, and similarly promise to gradually unveil ever more detailed understandings of their sitters. The home therefore becomes a visualization of the amalgamation of emotions that come from being able to possess familiarity with another man. Both homes and portraits of homes gesture to the ability of spaces, objects and routines to gradually create a particularly idiosyncratic, and cherished, emotional and erotic understanding between partners.

As far as the present author can tell, *The Stranger's Child* and *The Sparsholt Affair* are read together for the first time in this chapter. Together, these novels balance the losses and consolations of homosexuality coming home throughout the twentieth century. *The Sparsholt Affair* is particularly direct about the ways in which shared homes facilitate an intimate understanding. It frames the idea of understanding the different emotions which form long-term intimacy as "sexy in a wild new way" for Hollinghurst (*Sparsholt* 200). However, this later novel echoes the vital importance of the home as a site of revelation within *The Stranger's Child*. A comparative study of both novels, then, demonstrates that Hollinghurst values the image of home because it is able to define these different complex "atmospheres" to his reader. This is possible only as his reader gradually becomes familiar with these images, gradually understanding the different emotions that come to coexist beside each other as homes develop over his narrative.

The following chapter argues that Hollinghurst responds to the "gay subject ... brought home" by advocating the significance of the textual image

which has been shaped over temporal narrative. The home is significant as a developing image which, most importantly, symbolises the endurance of desire. The point is not that it changes, but that it repeats in these narratives. The marital home in both novels comes to embody the long-term states of continuation, repetition, connection and understanding that have been desired by men throughout this thesis. Particularly, the decaying home and portraits of men at home are spaces that create different understandings. They each symbolise the experience of either having or being unable to have long-term intimacy. But even more important to Hollinghurst is the fact that both images evoke these “complex lights and atmospheres” through the passage of time. Both of Hollinghurst’s narratives prioritize the emotive importance of being able or unable to remain within homes, with objects and the individuals with whom we share them. Through reading these novels, Hollinghurst’s reader, in a very important sense, comes home. This movement into home is an ever greater understanding of the particular emotions which form illicit and licit desires for long-term intimacy, familiarity and the home itself.

Thus, while Hollinghurst is poignantly aware of the potential for loss in this cultural movement, he advocates a powerful consolation for this loss. This consolation is the point that has been asserted throughout this thesis: that long-term experiences of same-sex desire should be read through images that repeat and develop. Reading such images of the marital home, and even being able to live within them, might even do more than counterbalance the losses of the gay subject being brought home. Hollinghurst argues that coming home means shifting to a focus on understanding, familiarity and revelation. This has the potential to reverse the problematic disavowal of a queer past. Attempting to see ever more detail in images that endure over time can show what was previously unspoken. The following chapter provides a reading of both *The Stranger’s Child* and *The Sparsholt Affair* which highlights the cultural movement from homoerotic invisibility to visibility. This means the loss of suggestive codes, themselves a form of doubt and uncertainty. In the wake of this loss, doubt and indecision can be replaced by detailed, ever-expanding and more empathetic understanding of the tensions inherent in both the illicit cultural past and the normative present.

Two Acres: Invisibility and silence in *The Stranger's Child*

The Stranger's Child follows generations of two families, the aristocratic Valances and the upper-middle-class Swales, who are brought together by the secret sexual affair between George Swales and Cecil Valance at George's home, Two Acres, in 1913. This affair shapes both men's emotional experience of their familial, Victorian homes. These homes become suggestive of George and Cecil's excitement, transgression and loss for generations to come. The later four sections of the novel take place across the twentieth century and portray the fates of both families and their homes. The second section takes place in 1926, after Cecil has died in the First World War. George returns to Cecil's home, Corley Court, where George's sister Daphne is now mistress. Daphne has married Cecil's brother, who is modernising the Victorian interior of Corley. The third section takes place in 1967, when Corley Court has become a boarding school. A young teacher, Peter, befriends Paul Bryant, a bank clerk, who has an interest in Cecil's poetry. The fourth section follows Paul as he compiles a biography of Cecil in 1979 and 1980, in which he exposes Cecil's affair with George. The final section depicts Peter's aforementioned wake and also the demolition of Mattocks, a Victorian house belonging to the Swales's old family friend Henry Hewitt. Throughout this narrative, these homes suggest the sexual acts between George and Cecil which took place on the wooded, invisible boundaries of Two Acres. Initially, personal memories shape the experience of jelly-mould domes and living rooms, then these spaces reproduce these experiences of desire and loss to later characters.

Hollinghurst's narrative is concerned with the ability of domestic objects to suggest unspeakable erotic experiences between men. The power of homoerotic code in the early twentieth century is something Hollinghurst is well aware of. His master's thesis, "The Creative Use of Homosexuality in the works of E. M. Forster, Ronald Firbank and L. P. Hartley" (1979), theorised that non-sexual objects become "cryptically suggested" images in early-twentieth-century homosexual literature (56).¹⁰⁰ Hollinghurst asserted that domestic objects are able to suggest "erotic tension", coding mundane objects with erotic

¹⁰⁰ Hollinghurst took his M.Litt at the University of Oxford.

signification: a pleasurable tension between secrecy and exposure for knowing readers (1). He identified early-twentieth-century homosexual experiences of the Victorian familial home as a particular amalgamation of risk, transgression and suggested pleasure. Hollinghurst claimed that

home ... invites maternal shelter, and emergence from shelter is identified with disaster. This is a potent ambiguity in writing by homosexuals, and it can develop, with the inhibiting external pressures of law and society, into a voluntary self-suppression and a feeling that opportunity should not be granted. Equally, when erotic opportunity has to be secretly pursued, the pursuit is given an even further piquancy of risk. (6)

In the early twentieth century, Hollinghurst theorises, bringing secret lovers into the family home, even indirectly by remembering erotic acts, heightened the awareness of the legal and social structures prohibiting sex between men. Equally, the conventional moral symbolism of homes, a staid, unexciting commitment to propriety, can become subverted through the same erotic associations. Pleasure and fear merge provocatively within the idea of home, making large country houses feel both full of potential private shelters and, at the same time, evocative of shelter's exact opposite, exposure. Hollinghurst's early conception of home as a site of pleasure and risk animates the image of the Victorian home at the beginning of *The Stranger's Child*. Two Acres is deliberately expansive, a typical upper-middle-class home of the time with at least four bedrooms and a large garden complete with a wooded boundary. This space is designed by Hollinghurst to encapsulate an unknowing upper-middle-class facilitation of homoerotic possibility — space to hide affairs.¹⁰¹ Equally, the home itself symbolises heterosexual convention and its dependence on security and protection, as well as the easy transference of

¹⁰¹ Two Acres is perfectly sized to evoke the average upper-middle-class home. In her study of Edwardian housing advertisements, Helen Long summarises those targeting the Swales's social bracket as "a house of between eight and eleven rooms including three reception rooms and four or five bedrooms" (32). Two Acres contains one bedroom each for the three Swales family members: George, his sister Daphne and their mother Freda. It also contains at least one guest room, which is used by Cecil during his stay. Two reception rooms are mentioned by Hollinghurst, the dining room and a "hall" (*Stranger's* 26). Given that Two Acres becomes a suite of "six executive homes" later in the novel, it is reasonable to suggest that there are even more rooms (384).

familial wealth, duty and responsibility onto subsequent generations of heterosexual families. While the exterior of the home, the dark peripheries of its woodland, facilitate erotic possibility, the interior attempts to keep transgression and sexual passion, especially homoerotic passion, at bay.¹⁰²

In Hollinghurst's opening section, set in 1913, George brings his lover Cecil, a fellow Cambridge undergraduate and poet, back to Two Acres. George experiences a "potent ambiguity" between excitement and risk: "a nearly dizzy making sense of the dangers ahead" transforms his family's drawing room (*Stranger's* 17). He stands looking out of the window, "where the lamplit room was reflected, idealised and doubled in size, spread invitingly across the garden. His hand was trembling and he kept his back to them" (18). George's sense of risk is created by his awareness that his sexual experiences with Cecil must remain hidden from his family. Subsequently, his memories of "the half an hour they had made for themselves ... in the park ... by pretending [Cecil] had missed his train" form part of the eroticised, mysterious darkness which borders the light of the drawing room (17). George imagines his home as a spatial contrast between erotic risks and the conventional family spaces from which sex must remain invisible. This appears as a tension between the visibility of the familial drawing room and the same liberating, secretive darkness which E. M. Forster created in *Maurice*, which was discussed in Chapter Three. Hollinghurst creates an experience of home in which conventional and secret spaces, erotic risks and the convention from which they must remain invisible, are contrasted by light and darkness. The light of the "idealised" domestic space is forebodingly "doubled in size" with George's sense of guilt and anticipation. Light also defines the darkness into which it extends as an "inviting" arena of obscure pleasures that convention forces to the boundaries of Two Acres.

The erotic possibilities of the darkness are, importantly, as unspeakable as they are invisible. This weekend follows an earlier trip George has made to Corley Court. George and Cecil's shared memory of Corley Court makes

¹⁰² This tension between internal safety and external threat is typical of symbolic evocations of the Victorian domestic home. Sarah Olwen Jones argues that the idea of the middle-class home functioned on a tension between conventional peace and safety and protection from disruptive transgression: "a place of privacy, safety and protection [from] external dangers, intruders and disturbances ... separating the outside from the inside" (183).

domestic objects suggestive of an erotic pleasure that cannot be mentioned around the family dining table. George has boasted about the ornate jelly-mould domes which top the Valance family's dining room to his family, and Cecil is questioned about them. Cecil "looked drolly across the table" at George"; he says, "they're sort of red and gold, aren't they Georgie?" (20). Cecil's use of "Georgie", which Hollinghurst notes is "never used by [George's] family" (20), exposes to Hollinghurst's reader an intimate secret between George and Cecil which both men hide from George's family. Cecil's question becomes erotically loaded because the men share unspoken memories which the jelly-moulds recreate — presumably neither spent too much of their time looking at the ceiling. The jelly-moulds become symbolic of George and Cecil's pleasurable risk, suggesting what cannot be directly stated.

This illicit experience of pleasurable secrecy is, almost immediately, further complicated by the expectation of loss. This weekend proves to be the last of George and Cecil's illicit relationship. Cecil is already flirting with George's sister Daphne. George, who appears to be more attached to his lover than Cecil is to him, anticipates the end of their relationship. Hollinghurst creates George's foreboding through his inability to speak openly about how he feels to Cecil. On the final day of the visit, George and Cecil slip away from George's family into the woods which border his home, for sex. They are interrupted by the sound of a married couple walking through the woods. George experiences a heightened sense of "the tantalised ache in the back of his thighs, and the thick of his chest at Cecil's muscular closeness, his shushing lips, his blatant signs of arousal" (77). The married couple's loud voices lay claim to the light of the park, which becomes symbolic of heteronormative convention. Comparatively, both men stand in a peripheral darkness that is rendered invisible and unspeakable by the conventions which govern the home. George's sense of potential exposure heightens his physical intimacy with Cecil. However, this moment of erotic transgression also exposes the difference between marital familiarity, however flat, and the transience of illicit affairs. George and Cecil's momentary excitement is conditioned, emotionally, by a further inability to imagine a future existing between two male lovers. George is beset with "dreams and plans" of "things they could never do". He realises that "it was so new, this pleasure, flecked with its opposite" (77). After the men have

sex, George feels “spent but tender, and longing for the patient touch and simple smile of shared knowledge” (79). However, he “gave a rueful laugh ... he wanted Cecil to know how he felt, but he feared that what he felt was wrong” (79).

This feeling of "pleasure, flecked with its opposite" is an experience of home and time that Hollinghurst grounds in early-twentieth-century illicit homosexual experiences of the familial home. Silent and invisible, George and Cecil's relationship can only be suggested on the edges of speech and knowledge. In contrast, George longs for “patient” and “simple” touches as well as “shared” knowledge from Cecil. He longs for something that is distinct from the heightened excitement of sexual transgression, to share with his partner a knowledge and connection that comes from routine and commitment. As Forster's *Maurice* illustrated, this intimacy would depend on sharing and defining both partners knowledge of each other. Yet, for Hollinghurst, the unmentionable nature of sex creates an absence of language through which George can express this longing for a lasting, and more intimate, commitment from his lover. In this moment, locating sex outside the home suggests not only pleasure, but its opposite, an anticipation and acceptance of loss. Moreover, the complexity of loss obscurely defies definition. It is only imaginable as the opposite of pleasure.

Hollinghurst emphasises here that George and Cecil's need to hide sex, and the emotions which sex inspires, means that George's desire for long-term intimacy can exist only as a prolonged sense of being unable to speak. George's experience of his own desire for intimacy is grounded in this early-twenty-first-century assumption that homosexual cannot take place within the idea of long-term commitment and marriage which is associated with the home. George does not long to claim Cecil as a partner; Hollinghurst does not yearn for more liberal circumstances which would make a long-term relationship possible. Instead, he prioritises George's indecision about whether to speak, his uncertainty about whether he wants to speak. The aftermath of sex rewrites the exciting spaces outside the home with a longing for intimacy which cannot be voiced. The potent, exciting ambiguity suggested by the home resolves into George's reliance on suggestion and allusive ambiguity itself. Pleasure

becomes its opposite as intimate feelings between George and Cecil cannot be acknowledged clearly or definitively. Almost at the apex of their sexual and illicit relationship, George feels confronted with the troubling lack of familiarity. Hollinghurst evokes George's unspeakable desire for long-term intimacy. Invisibility imposed by needing to hide this desire from the home creates George's ambivalent and indecisive tension between idealisation of the future and his acceptance of the probability of loss.

Jelly-moulds, doubt and loss

The next section of Hollinghurst's novel depicts the modernisation of Corley Court's Victorian interior in 1926 as the suggestive jelly-moulds are "smoothly boxed in" behind the whitewash of a cleaner modernist taste (114). This emphasises George's deepening sense of loss of his intimate memories of Cecil. The following section depicts Corley Court School in 1967, on the eve of decriminalisation, and juxtaposes Corley's suggestive Victorian interior with a new dawn of the age of documentation. In these sections, Corley Court highlights Hollinghurst's portrayal of two intertwined forms of loss. The changing surface of the building, its movement from home to school, enforces the loss of George's intimate memories of his lover. Yet the changed, distorted house comes to represent George's pleasure, flecked with its opposite as an experience of loss. As Peter and Paul peer beneath the modernisations in 1967, they glimpse George's experience of loss, which comes from locating desires for long-term intimacy outside the home.

In the 1926 section, Corley itself makes George doubt his own erotic memories. While standing with his sister Daphne and the handsome young painter Revel Ralph, admiring the Valance home, George

seemed even to blush a little himself ... he looked away towards the house ... the unrestful patterns of red, white and black brick. Creeper spread like doubt around the openings at the western end. [Daphne recalls:] 'I remember when George first came to stay here ... we

thought we'd never hear the end of the splendours of Corley Court, oh the jelly-mould domes in the dining room.' (141)

Both George's blush, caused by the attractiveness of Revel, and Daphne's retelling of George's boast recollects the homoerotic pull of the jelly-mould domes. Yet Corley is more directly here a symbol of George's loss of intimacy with Cecil. His past ties are deliberately obscured by the passing of time. As "creeper spread[s] like doubt" over the building, the suggestive pull of both the architecture and the erotic suggestion seems an awkward clutter of indescribable, "unrestful" memories. George's previous worry that he would lose Cecil is internalised and realised here as a loss of clarity and detail.

Like Corley's exterior, the statue commemorating Cecil's death as a war hero represents the emotional distance between attempts to memorialise Cecil and George's, now vague, homoerotic memories of his own "particular Cecil" (154). George feels that the effigy on Cecil's tomb was "not completely unlike Cecil, and yet not Cecil in any particular way" (155). Against the "standardised" tomb, "pictures of that particular Cecil rose toward [George], naked and dripping on the banks of the Cam ... they were beautiful images, but vague with touching and retouching" (154–155). Hollinghurst's syntax here is vital. The double negative at the start of the sentence conditions its conclusion: erotic and emotional images of the "particular" Cecil emerge behind a textual thicket of considerations of what was "not" Cecil. George's enduring memory of erotic transgression is portrayed as an extended feeling of loss. As he anticipated earlier in the novel, the transient sexual acts which he and Cecil shared have faded and left behind an amalgamation of past excitement and ongoing regret. Hollinghurst foregrounds George's confusion at the ongoing poignancy of these memories. George asks himself, "was it ever a relationship? It was a moment." He refers to Cecil as a "mad sodomitical past" (151). Hollinghurst represents the problematic capacity for memories to endure beyond a relationship which George accepted as transient. Hollinghurst conveys George's awkwardness that a brief relationship which existed only momentarily, on the edges of the home, still possesses the power to subvert that home into a suggestion of loss. Through Corley, Hollinghurst portrays George's confusion that loss is intertwined with unrequited longing.

The third section of *The Stranger's Child* is set in June 1967, only a week before The Sexual Offences Bill (1967) was debated in Parliament.¹⁰³ This section represents a departure from illicit homoerotic experiences to decriminalised and visible homosexual relationships. The bill “could open the way for a lot more frankness” Peter asserts to an elderly George and George’s wife. George responds that “it could certainly change the atmosphere couldn’t it?” while Hollinghurst notes George’s “tiny suggestion that, prominent and public though [the bill] was, it should probably not be mentioned in front of his wife” (320). The difference between Peter’s frank discussion of homosexuality and George’s suggestion that it is unmentionable within polite conversation consolidates these two generation’s different expectations of the long term. Peter looks forward to an era typified by “frankness”, openness and honesty, in which visible, legitimate homosexual couples could be formed. Hollinghurst’s mentioning of George’s wife is vital here. George has moved on, into a familial and heterosexual marital home. He has left his homosexuality behind within increasingly obscure memories of youth.

Peter meets Paul Bryant, a young bank clerk, and takes him back to his rooms at Corley. Under the unsuspecting gaze of Corley’s headmaster, Peter shows Paul the old Victorian jelly-mould domes, which are momentarily revealed by the collapse of the 1926 renovations. Both men climb a step ladder and look between the modern and Victorian ceiling by the light of Paul’s lighter:

[Paul] swept his arms in a slow arc ... they saw festive gleams and quickly swallowing shadows flow in and out of the gilded domelets overhead ... it seemed far from the architecture of everyday life, it was like finding a ruined pleasure palace ... Peter winked at Paul by the lighter-light, gazed slyly at his prim little mouth, slightly open as he peered upwards. (345)

¹⁰³ This bill was passed, leading to the decriminalisation of private sexual acts between men aged twenty-one and over in England and Wales.

Hollinghurst uses the revelation of Corley's jelly-mould domes to expose a feeling of past, fleeting desire that is conditioned by loss. The jelly moulds reflect a sense of lateness, an aesthetic of a "ruined pleasure palace".

Although he doesn't associate it with George, Peter senses a feeling of pleasure, flecked with its opposite. Peter and Paul are, simultaneously, located within an emotional echo of George and Cecil's concealment. The intriguing pull of the shadowy jelly moulds lies in their suggestive amalgamation of colour and darkness, both a revelation and a hiding of colour which echoes the secrecy of George and Cecil's coded evocation of the structures. Momentarily, they reanimate the furtive nature of the affair: Paul gazes "slyly at [Peter's] prim little mouth". It is Peter's awareness that this transgressive experience can only be momentary which is crucial. The jelly moulds are soon to be lost, emphasising that such an illicit fusion of risk and pleasure might never happen again.

Hollinghurst's ruined pleasure palace clarifies that transgressive pleasure is conditioned by a more long-term sense of loss. Although he is immersed in the erotic pull of the jelly moulds, Peter appreciates that this illicit experience must end. George experienced his loss of Cecil as an inability to understand, a confusion that past objects can continue to evoke an erotic moment years after it is ended. Peter understands that the pleasure palace is itself the Victorian home that consigns homosexual pleasure to the unspoken peripheries. He appreciates that resigning illicit experience to the silence and the dark means transgressive experiences must end. Through reading the jelly moulds, Peter understands what George could not. The "swallowing shadows" of illicit desire are far from the "architecture of everyday life". Moreover, he understands that George's inability to understand pleasure flecked with its opposite comes from its location outside of the visibility of everyday life.

At this point in this historical narrative, Hollinghurst layers the jelly moulds and the now-modernised and institutionalised Victorian home with a further experience of loss. The heightened erotic sensuality of the moulds is soon to be boxed in by repairs. This emphasises a historic end of a desire complicated by transgression between men in 1967. Peter wonders whether "the age of hearsay [was] about to give way to the era of documentation" (363).

The impending resignation of the jelly moulds to the darkness clarifies that the relationship between silence, darkness and loss that defines illicit desires for long-term intimacy must remain outside the home, and outside the frankness of the “era of documentation” towards which Peter and Paul rush forward. Hollinghurst emphasises here a threat which shadows Symonds, Housman, Forster and Isherwood’s evocations of long-term intimacy. If long-term intimacy is located outside everyday life, memories of desire must seemingly be left behind. Desire does not end; far from it. Desire, transgression and risk lead to a feeling of a lasting loss of intimacy: pleasure becomes its opposite. It is this melancholic ache of passion that must be consigned to memory which Peter senses. He translates this feeling of loss into a worry that experiences such as this might be left behind and unacknowledged.

Contemporary losses

The Stranger’s Child ends in 2008. Hollinghurst uses the opening of the contemporary section to depict the troubling absence of George’s experience of “pleasure, flecked with its opposite” from twenty-first-century discussion of his relationship with Cecil. Peter’s sense that the complex experience of illicit desires for long-term intimacy might not survive into the era of documentation and, by this point in the novel, cultural visibility and gay normalcy, has proven correct.

While waiting for Peter’s wake to start, Rob Salter starts speaking to the person sitting next to him, discussing Paul Bryant’s now twenty-eight-year-old biography of Cecil, *England Trembles*. Jennifer Ralph says she is related to Cecil Valance: “let me see ... my grandmother”, George’s sister Daphne, “was married to Cecil’s brother”. This makes Cecil Jennifer’s “sort of great, great uncle” (523). She professes a satirical disbelief in the revelations of Paul’s biography, “he was claiming that two of [Daphne’s] three children hadn’t been sired by her husbands, and also did I mention that Cecil had an affair with her brother? Yup, that too” (523). Rob responds: “outing gay writers was all the range then, of course”. “Well fine, [Jennifer] responded with a candid shake of

the head ... if that's all it had been" (525). Jennifer's uninterested perspective on Cecil and George's relationship enacts a further loss of the poignant emotions which endured throughout George's life. In her dubious recounting of *England Trembles*, Jennifer prioritizes what she feels to be scandalous revelations about Daphne Swales. George and Cecil's affair is framed as an uninteresting moment in Daphne's life: an outing which had been "all the rage" in the eighties, but which is less important in a historical moment in which one can be candid, in which homosexuality no longer needs to be invisible. As Paul's book is reviewed in this contemporary moment, George and Cecil's experience of pleasure, flecked with its opposite, vanishes behind a lamentable, but presumably commonplace and historical, closeting of homosexuality.

By 2008, Cecil has even been revived as a gay war poet. Desmond reads a line from one of his poems in memory of Peter: "Oh do not smile on me if this is the last / and your lips must yield their beauty to another" (535). Desmond appropriates Cecil's lines, optimistically, as an assertion of his desire never to be parted from Peter. Desmond's ability to vocalise this feeling might even extend to his audience feeling a saddened respect for the writer of those lines whose relationships with other men needed to be coded and hidden. Yet, this contemporary response fails to grasp the specific experience of the home which George and Cecil shared. Being located physically and symbolically outside the marital home led to both men accepting an amalgamation of loss and desire. It was this compounded feeling that was guessed at by Peter. Neither George nor Cecil wanted to vocalise their relationship. The idea of forming a long-term relationship with another man appears to George as "fantastical" (151). Contemporary culture's attempt to out Cecil through his poetry loses the men's challenging experience of "pleasure, flecked with its opposite", their association of the invisible borders of homes and conversations with loss, acceptance, doubt and silence.

Throughout the narrative of loss with which Hollinghurst negotiates the historical changes in twentieth and twenty-first-century LGBT culture, objects in homes have endured, suggesting George and Cecil's experience of long-term intimacy to later characters. *The Stranger's Child* ends in another of these houses, Mattocks. Rob has driven to a now urban Middlesex on the day that

Henry Hewitt's house is being demolished. He suspects that Hewitt had an affair with Cecil, and wants to find evidence. He is dismayed to find the house cleared and a fire burning. In the back yard, a final load of "papers, rubbish, no use to anyone" is burning (563). Rob walks into a closet beyond the living room and imagines that "a collector needed such a place" and that Hewitt "took more pleasure in possession than in display". He supposes that the safe had "kept one secret, pretty close for ninety years" (563). Hewitt's hidden room suggests to Rob a need to hide: an enjoyment of, and skill in, secret possession. Rob "wonders when [Hewitt] copied [Cecil's] letters out — as they arrived, or when he was grieving, or much later in a painful search for lost feelings" (563).

Through the exposure of this room, Hollinghurst encapsulates a far more intimate homoerotic experience of the home than Paul's biography. Hollinghurst's reader gets a sense of Hewitt's long-term invisibility and the resulting tensions which play out between a secret affair and a knowledge of loss, that he could never possess Cecil. What is suggested by the room is not only grief, but a painful search for grief, in which Hewitt mourns that which he never had, and which both he and George supposed could never be: a long-term, committed acknowledgment from Cecil. Rob experiences a momentary sense, not of Hewitt's desire to speak out and claim Cecil, as Desmond does Peter, but a tension between loss, acceptance and mourning which developed from the need to hide his love for Cecil. In acknowledging this tension, Rob briefly senses that he understands Hewitt. His engagement with the now-decayed Victorian home echoes Peter's. He senses the feeling of loss which comes from needing to hide one's desires, a formation of the home which comes from the realisation that illicit desires for long-term intimacy can never enter the marital home. However, this understanding is importantly elusive and deploys the same uncertainty that was vital in George's experience of pleasure, flecked with its opposite. Rob reads a suggestion of the unspeakable. He briefly intuits that the inability of Hewitt's homosexual desires to enter the home made them a tangle of unspeakable losses.

In this final scene, Hollinghurst's image of the home succeeds in exposing the "complex lights and atmospheres" of an illicit desire for long-term intimacy where biographers have failed. Mattocks, the house itself, reveals an

enduring inability to speak about, or forget about, another man. It is able to do so because it has been formed by the many stages of Hollinghurst's narrative. Before leaving, Rob picks up a forgotten piece of newspaper and realises that it had once been "used to wrap some square object". The absence which is revealed by the crease in these empty pages draws on the previous sections. It echoes the erotic, melancholic and now lost jelly moulds. In 2008, its suggestion of "pleasure, flecked with its opposite" also amalgamates a sense of its own sad, unacknowledged status. Rob decides that it is a "wholly random survival, of no interest in itself" before taking it out to "throw on the fire" (563). It is Hollinghurst's reader who winces at the loss of an object which evokes the emotionally poignant and complicated experiences of desire and loss. In this moment, Hollinghurst draws attention to the necessity of reading images, objects and structures that endure and change over time in order to understand the individual experiences of desires for long-term intimacy which take place outside the home. Hollinghurst's poignant irony is that Rob is unable to read Hewitt's experience of desire and loss because he does not have *The Stranger's Child* in his hand.

The Sparsholt Affair

The Stranger's Child ends with a paradox. Hollinghurst highlights an amalgamation of desire and loss that comes from homosexual experience being located outside homes. He also illustrates the potential to misread this transgressive experience by simplistically assuming that historical homosexual individuals always desired to come out, and looked forward to homes, domesticity and marriage. In the tradition of desires for long-term intimacy that his novel evokes, writers do not seek normalcy; they prioritise the emotionally complex experience of transgressive desire as it develops over the long term. That said, Symonds, Forster, Isherwood and even, indirectly, Housman represent the idea of sharing a domestic space as signifying a unique commitment and understanding between men. Hollinghurst himself "unambiguously" prefers to live in the liberated present (Baron). Yet in his penultimate novel, illicit homosexual pasts are disengaged from either a

contemporary or historical positive valuation of the home. George is constantly grappling with loss.

Hollinghurst's next novel, *The Sparsholt Affair*, addresses this paradox. It depicts domestic homes that are shared by two men and it portrays them in a different light. In this novel, the image of home, particularly the artistic portrait of two men at home, negotiates and visualises both past and present intimacies between men. Home no longer represents either the loss of pleasure or a dismissal of the complexity of being unable to speak. Rather, the portrait of men at home replaces direct speech: the image of two men linked by shared objects constructs a positive emotional experience of familiarity. Conversely, locating sexual affairs between men outside the home leads to a frustrating lack of knowledge. Labelling early-twentieth-century homoerotic experiences suggestively and vaguely as the "opposite" of pleasure is no longer enough for Hollinghurst. Instead, the portraits of home, hanging within homes, develop the revolutionary potential to reveal the emotional nuances of both past and present experiences of desires for long-term intimacy between men.

The Sparsholt Affair opens in the Michaelmas term at Oxford University in 1940. The first section is a memoir written by Freddie Green in the 1960s about two friends and fellow alumni: art collector Evert Dax and artist Peter Coyle. Green's memoir depicts both men's youthful desire for, and successful pursuit of, David Sparsholt. In particular, it focuses on how they sketch him. Evert furtively sketches his knowledge of David's past with scraps of second-hand knowledge, while Peter, more daringly, creates an actual nude sketch of David under the guise of his studies. Hollinghurst's narrative is constructed as similar, successive attempts to sketch and paint David in order to understand him throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It follows the life of David's son Johnny in four further sections which are irregularly spaced throughout Johnny's life. Johnny's initial teenage attempts and failures to draw his father become a driving force for his passion for portraits and his later fame as a professional portraitist. Johnny's late-twentieth-century professional life is conducted from a studio in his London home which he shares with his long-term partner, and later husband, Pat. *The Sparsholt Affair* opens with sketches that underscore the lack of intimacy and knowledge which is created in transient

affairs. It closes with portraits that visualise lives shared with spouses, and which make the marital home a site of complex, enduring connections. This transition captures David and Johnny's differing pursuits of invisibility and visibility. It forms a study of the cultural movement from homosexual invisibility to visibility, from secrecy to normalcy and from the unspeakable pain of brevity to a shared and reciprocated long-term intimacy.

Unintimate subjects: Illicit sketching in *The Sparsholt Affair*.

The opening two sections of *The Sparsholt Affair*, set in 1940 and in 1966, both depict affairs between David and other men which take place outside the familial home: either at Oxford, or on furtive day trips away from a holiday villa in Cornwall. Similarly to those in *The Stranger's Child*, these affairs evoke a tension between desire and the anticipation of loss which is conditioned by the invisibility and silence of homosexual experiences prior to decriminalisation. In this novel, Hollinghurst represents these affairs through two separate attempts to sketch David. The sketches amalgamate tensions between desire and loss with a dimly worrying sense that David is too idealised or too little-known to be intimately understood. They represent a lack of familiarity.

The first sketch is made by Peter Coyle in 1940. Freddie's initial reaction to Coyle's sketch, and Hollinghurst's reader's initial engagement with the image, is that:

in its strokings or fingerings [sic] of red chalk, there was a rush to enhance and ennoble Sparsholt's body, beyond the already enhanced reality. ... years of incessant press ups and weights had been outdone in ten minutes. It was the portraitist's usual flattery, no doubt, but fed by Peter's own desire to worship ... the sex suggested by a little flower, conventional as a fig leaf, while the neck opened up into nothing. (34–35)

While Peter is not necessarily motivated by a desire for long-term intimacy here, the sketch does significantly reflect earlier, idealised desires, such as Symonds's memories of Norman Moor. However, Symonds idealised the

emotional intimacy of his relationship with Moor. Here, Freddie focuses the ways in which Coyle's evocation of David as a "demi-god" leads to the loss of particularity: a generic, hypersexualised male form that supersedes and forsakes with the intimate knowledge of the sitter. He notes how the sketch, conventionally, stops at the knee and the neck. This both suggestively alludes to an invisible sexual content and makes the representation impersonal and anonymous. Moreover, Hollinghurst equates this lack of familiarity with the briefness of Peter's interest in David. There is no indication that Peter regrets the transience of this encounter. Indeed, he soon moves on to new sitters and paramours (28). However, Freddie sees, within the sketch, a link between illicit affairs, transience and a troubling lack of familiarity. The sketch articulates a moment of physically intimate vision, yet this is exposed by Hollinghurst as an idealisation of sexual contact, a desiring gaze that actually reveals a lack of emotional intimacy.

Alongside Peter's portrayal of the unintimate nature of his transient lust, Evert also idealises David. However, he idealises the possibility of a romantic connection with him. Ironically, it is Evert, shy but earnestly attempting to learn more about David, who ends up sleeping with him. This takes place after a night out, when David's fiancée is away from Oxford. Hollinghurst similarly prioritises the transience of this illicit affair. Although he omits an explicit description of the act itself, he depicts Evert lying in bed afterwards, "awake and alone, in a wholly new way, pulsating with hope and triumph and a quite unexpected prospect of despair" (85). This amalgamation of hope, triumph, loneliness and despair develops from the retrospective heat of the night spent with Sparsholt, and his intuitive sense that the night will never be repeated. Hollinghurst's framing of the affair with the past and the future recreates George's melancholy of "pleasure, flecked with its opposite". However, in this novel, the anticipation of loss looms large enough to eclipse the moment of illicit passion. Hollinghurst's focus here is not on the problematic and unarticulated sadness which shadows sex between men, but on Evert's realisation that the thing he most wants, a future with David, is impossible. This is reiterated by David himself, who leaves a message for Evert with the college porter: "the envelope was a standard white postcard" with "a mere three characters in careful ink 'α & Ω'" (71). Evert shows the postcard with the lower-case alpha and upper-case omega to Freddie. He

betrays his desire for a continuing relationship in his hopeful interpretation of the missal, “does he mean by that that I am the be all and end all?” Freddie records his more rational, and it turns out, correct, assumption: “or does he mean [that] it was not only the first time, but the last time too” (71). The painful realisation that Evert will never sleep with David again is linked to the sketch. Coyle gives the sketch to Freddie, and Freddie gives it to Evert. Freddie notes that “Evert got the sketch of David, rather than the man” (93). Evert receiving a sketch of David reflects his disappointing lack of intimacy with the man of his dreams.

The brevity and sadness of Peter’s sketch highlights both Evert and Freddie’s sense of having lost David to a future in which homoerotic desires can play no part. Oxford University has a long tradition of affording erotic opportunities for curious young men who would later identify as both homosexual and heterosexual. Jeffrey Weeks highlighted the ubiquitous nature of this public-school sexual tradition which “might or might not have been the prelude to a later homosexual lifestyle, but it was acceptable within the narrow community of the school” (35). Hollinghurst emphasises this traditional location of homosexuality as a transgressive youthful dalliance, before an adulthood of heterosexual marriage. The last time Freddie sees David, it is through the gaps in a passing convoy of army vehicles; he appears “like a man in a Muybridge photo, in exemplary motion, first here, then there, then no longer there” (*Sparsholt* 94). Here, David’s motion is a visualisation of his distancing himself from Evert. He is “no longer there”, already part of the post-university world of heterosexual and national duty — the reader later finds out that he only completed a single term before marrying and enlisting. The homoerotic dalliances of Oxford sketched in this opening section appear as the melancholic and momentary antithesis of the long-term marital home.

Hollinghurst sets the next section of his novel in 1966, during a Sparsholt family holiday to St Maws in Cornwall. The Sparsholts are joined by David’s professional acquaintance Clifford Haxby and his wife. David lives a secretive double life, conducting a soon-to-be-exposed affair with Clifford Haxby. Although Johnny is unaware of this, his sense that his father is “hard to get at” reanimates the lack of emotional intimacy inherent within Coyle’s eroticised

gaze. Johnny's teenage sketches of his father also represent a frustrating inability to "do justice to ... who [his father] was" (123). Of course, Johnny has a non-sexualised relationship with his father. However this continuing lack of intimacy with David extends, for Hollinghurst's reader, from his past and present affairs.

Johnny's sense that his father is "hard to get at" alludes to his father's emotional and physical absence from the home. Hollinghurst suggestively locates David's affair outside the familial living room, and beyond Johnny's view from where he draws at the kitchen table. As Johnny and his mother watch their favourite TV show, his father and his lover each leave the room: "Clifford took his drink into the hall and shut the door; a minute later he was heard using the phone ... Just as the theme music [to the show] started, Johnny's father got up to pull the curtains across, since the evening sun made it harder to see; and as he did so slipped behind them through the French windows into the garden" (131). Clifford and David's conspicuous exit from the family room — importantly linked to an image of being hard to see — is made erotically significant by Johnny's dim sense that there is some sort of business arrangement between the men, which Johnny's mother "seems not to know the extent of" (123). This is further compounded for Hollinghurst's reader, who, as Mark Mathuray states, is always more aware of the emotional meaning and suggestions than his characters, due to the multi-perspective viewpoint of his novel (160).¹⁰⁴ In this case, his reader is aware of the claims of Green's memoir. Furthermore, immediately prior to this, Hollinghurst describes Johnny spotting the two men in a café "smiling about something" (123).

If these hints were not enough, then the specific setting of the garden at sunset, into which David "slips" is a significant spatial evocation in both Hollinghurst's novels: the garden's darkening spaces at the end of the day suggest the erotic poignancy of illicit transgression which takes place outside the home. Here, Hollinghurst focuses on Johnny's vague awareness that this momentary suggestion is expressly differentiated from the loving familiarity of the home evoked by the theme of his favourite television show. Johnny's

¹⁰⁴ Mathuray's comments focus on *The Stranger's Child*, yet Hollinghurst also employs what he calls "multi-perspectivism" in *The Sparsholt Affair*.

narrative perspective sheds new and significant light onto the poignancies of illicit and transient desire between men. The erotic moment, symbolised by hidden acts, is no longer enough. It is significant that Johnny attempts, and fails, to sketch and know his father in the domestic setting of the familial living room. Yet this is a space which the men move beyond, into the suggestive eroticism of the garden and the bedroom. Both men are therefore out of reach of Johnny, who desires to capture them.

For Johnny, being able to draw his father or Clifford effectively would mean an intimate understanding of them. Elsewhere, Johnny identifies with the ability of drawing to “puzzle out the effects of sunlight and clouds on the sea” (93). Translating this sketch to people would be “puzzling out” who they are, visualising emotions, motivations and desires. Clifford’s wife, Norma, unknowingly hints at this when she speculates, “aren’t people rather hard” to draw, and Johnny replies “that’s why they’re so interesting” (97). However, Johnny’s interest in understanding remains unsatisfied by his father. This is because David’s adult experiences of homosexuality are located outside the marital home. Johnny’s desire to draw, and his frustration with the subjects denied him signals a desire to move beyond the suggestive evocation of what cannot be seen or spoken about and to visualize, discuss and share male–male desire in the domestic home.

Sketches that are produced in the Oxford of David’s youth and his later familial home are therefore increasingly defined by a frustrating lack of intimate understanding. This is created by both the brevity of homoerotic desire at university and the invisibility of homosexual affairs in the marital home. However, through Johnny’s youthful perspective, Hollinghurst moves beyond the illicit location of homosexual desire outside the home. On the edge of decriminalisation, Hollinghurst suggests that Johnny’s adult home life, unlike his father’s, will be dedicated to the pursuit of understanding and visualizing “the complex lights and atmospheres” (*Hollinghurst Ivory* xvi) of the long-term intimacies which exist between married men. Johnny’s interest in people culminates, for this section, in his first visualisation of his parents’ experience of their long-term relationship. He imagines his mother “far ahead in the dark tangled stasis of adult life, whose language he still hardly understood, though

he was learning to hear new tones in it, hardness and significant silence” (142). His parents’ marriage is clearly a problematic “stasis”: an erotic and emotional disconnection between two individuals who do not seem to be particularly attracted to each other. Yet Johnny’s interest in visualizing and understanding unspoken nuance charges the “dark” tangle of adult life with new possibility. He imagines a shared understanding between men as a long-term connection which is defined by the same obscurity and possibility as Forster’s connective darkness in *Maurice*. It is the possibility of drawing these “rather hard” relationships that captures Johnny’s attention and promises their own, fulfilling rewards.

Where his father’s marriage is marked by a lack of communication, secrecy and a lack of familiarity, Hollinghurst emphasises that Johnny’s adult relationships will be defined by visibility and understanding. Unlike his father, Johnny does not anticipate marrying a woman. Importantly, he equates his desire for men with marriage, the family and the home. Johnny notices on the beach, and is irresistibly drawn to, a “sun-browned son, or son-in-law” with a woman and her parents (138). Significant here is Johnny’s imagination of the marital relationship between this idealised youth, the woman and her parents. Part of what he is idealising is the idea of a long-term connection between spouses. It foreshadows the possibility of Johnny loving his own parents’ son-in-law — his husband — later in the novel. In these opening sections, Hollinghurst represents David’s affairs outside the marital home as transient, melancholic and unintimate. Through Johnny’s frustration with the unintimate subject of his father, Hollinghurst looks forward to a post-decriminalisation future in which homosexual desire can be associated with intimate possession of a partner, rather than with George’s doubtful loss of understanding in *The Stranger’s Child*. Johnny is also evocative of a younger generation of idealists, like Kenny in *A Single Man*, who might pave the way not only for liberation, but for an understanding of the idiosyncratic, deidealised and cherished nature of long-term intimacies between men. Hollinghurst prepares the reader for a shift from suggestion, obscurity and uncertainty to the value of attempting to understand others. Johnny anticipates an adult future that will facilitate this familiarity: a visible and valuable sharing of lives and homes between men. In this future,

same-sex lovers may come in from the garden and watch the TV in the living room.

“Unlike the dim labyrinth of a book”: Portraits of men at home

Hollinghurst defines this new era through the relationship between the portrait of men at home and long-term intimacy. In the next section, “Small Oils”, set in 1974, Johnny has recently moved to London in order to pursue his desire to paint. He goes to a photography exhibition called “Londoners at Home”.¹⁰⁵ This exhibition helps Johnny theorise the link between his professional desire to expose intimate connections between men, and his personal desire for a shared home. Hollinghurst also foregrounds a new aesthetic focus on presenting the complex relationships which amalgamate within the shared home over the passage of time. In an important echo of Isherwood’s desire to move beyond the stereotypes associated with homosexuality in his dynamic portraits, Johnny realizes that the photographer has found a more intimate home than the stereotypes of “cockneys [and] eccentrics” whom he imagines populating London (200):

The photographer ... had found a different London, so real that it was hard to recognise. The reality was that of anxiety, confinement, slowly forming despair. Almost all the subjects were alone, in their rooms with a TV, an unmade bed, some worthless but properly treasured object. (200)

Johnny equates these photographs with his past desire for understanding that defines his artistic practice of drawing and portraying people. He notes here the anxiety of isolation and loneliness which plagues his own nervous sense of not yet being assimilated into London. He also notes that the objects in these portraits, such as “an unmade bed” suggest anxiety, confinement and despair. However, visualised with the individuals who own them, these objects can also

¹⁰⁵ Hollinghurst probably bases his fictional exhibition on a real life one: “Londoners at Home: Portrait Photographer” was at the National Portrait Gallery in 1974. The National Portrait Gallery’s website lists only the title.

simultaneously capture the complexities of these Londoners' lives. "Worthless" objects may also be considered treasures through the intimate connections that the portrait invites the viewer to draw between the subjects and their domestic space. The portrait exposes and works through a tension between anxiety of isolation and the treasured consolations of companionship, if it can be found.

What is particularly satisfying, and intriguing, for Johnny is the way in which the portrait gestures to a gradual revelation of ever-more nuanced understandings of its sitters. As he looks around the exhibition, he theorizes that

a picture, unlike the dim labyrinth of the book, could be seen at once, but to bring all to the front of the mind's eye and to hold it there was impossible. Some quite simple image might house irreducible mystery: this he seemed always to have known ... an atmosphere that excited and eluded him. (200)

The portrait merges the idea of visibility and suggestibility and indeed makes the concept of seeing and understanding suggestive itself. In the moment of engaging with the portrait, complex connections are both exposed and withheld. It is an art form that asks for time and familiarity if it is to share its complex depths. The domestic portrait appears to Johnny as an intriguing presentation of contrasts: loneliness and connection; mundane junk and intimate treasures. As the portrait "holds" these images "in the front of the mind" it develops connections and relationships between objects and people through subtle gestures, groupings and signs that turn isolation into connection, mundanity into treasure. To see this "irreducible mystery" at once is impossible, yet the image "excites" Johnny as it promises to reveal the emotions which connect individuals, and which connect individuals and objects. Johnny appreciates that to understand the mystery of the portrait requires time, attention and commitment. As an object, it needs to be possessed and seen, to be placed in the centre of homes, if it to be understood.

As a dyslexic artist, Johnny has his own bias against books. Of course, Hollinghurst translates these images into text for readers who are, presumably,

more comfortable with words than Johnny. Through a repeated use of ekphrasis his novel describes paintings, translating the visual into textual images. That said, Hollinghurst neatly deploys Johnny's gaze to move away from the suggestive potential of word to evoke illicit meanings that animated the houses of *The Stranger's Child*. Instead, Hollinghurst focuses on the suggestive complexity of the image, the effects, produced by the colours and lines of the visible subject. *The Sparsholt Affair* focuses on the pleasures of drawing out the different emotional threads which connect men within domestic spaces. Therefore, its representation of the portrait becomes a symbol of intimate value of the home. It visualises the ways in which shared homes facilitate a sharing of past memories, present objects and future goals that define long-term intimacy.

Hollinghurst immediately links Johnny's abstract valuation of the portrait to the homoerotic photograph of men at home. Johnny's desire for a home with another man is linked to the gradually unfolding complexities of the photo:

in a room lit from the right, two lean young men sat on the end of the large double bed with a dark candlewick covering. There were psychedelic posters behind them and a blown-up photo of Mick Jagger dancing and pointing on the nearest sidewall. Close up in the foreground, items on a table-top loomed large, two glass ashtrays, a gleaming packet of Benson & Hedges, a painted bowl in which objects had been heaped surmounted by a square white adapter plug strangely prominent. ... both men looked away, as though on the brink of some hesitant exposure. Both sat forward, elbows on thighs, smoking. (200-201)

Johnny feels that both these men "are sexy in a wild new way" as he seems "to stare into the room for a two-way mirror" (201). The sexiness comes from the association of sexual relationships between men with the commitment and permanence of a long-term relationship that is alluded to by the bedroom. The atmosphere that at once both "excites and eludes" Johnny issues primarily from the domestic setting of the portrait. As he recreates Johnny's initial overview for the reader, Hollinghurst lists the discrete objects owned by both men before he notes that one man is "shirtless, with tattooed arms" and the other wears a "tight patterned sweatshirt" (201). Hollinghurst depicts the slowly emerging

suggestion of an intimate sexual relationship between two men. What Johnny finds “sexy in a wild new way” is the unsaid assertion that the large double bed is where both men sleep each night, surrounded by their shared objects which themselves evoke a commitment to domestic tastes, shared goals and each other. More precisely, it is visualisation of male–male domestic intimacy which excites Johnny: the hint of privacy in the sense of intrusion that is amalgamated with both men’s desire to share, their leaning forward on the brink of hesitant exposure. Coyle’s sketch of illicit desire signals a melancholic lack of long-term intimacy. This domestic portrait is “sexy” because it promises to continually expose emotional connections between two men. The portrait excites Johnny as it initiates him, gradually, revealingly, intimately into the two men’s experience of long-term intimacy.

Johnny desires a long-term intimacy that is both created and visualised by shared homes. Immediately after seeing this portrait, he picks up another man, Colin, who is cruising in the gallery. The “brutal excitement” of sex with Colin fades away to a more enduring memory of intimacy which is promised and withheld in Colin’s flat (203). “They towelled each other”, drying off after a shower, “which wasn’t easy to do well” (203). As Johnny “did so there was a vision of what day-to-day life with another man might be, everything he wanted of love and coupledness constantly granted” by what seems to be Colin’s “lavish gift of intimacy” (203).

The intimacy of towelling each other off opens to Johnny a new possibility that reflects the wild, new sexiness of the photograph. Johnny’s hook-up with Colin opens out, like the portrait, into new possibilities of intimate domesticities which make daily routines evocative and erotic. Hollinghurst’s irony here is that the wildness of this eroticism lies not in the “brutal excitement” of illicit and transient cruising. Rather, it is the capacity for erotic touch to emphasise a mutual and committed intimate understanding between men which Johnny longs for. Later in the section, with a man called Ivan, this longing is echoed when Johnny feels a “loneliness, subtler than their failing in bed” (285). Johnny equates their lack of sexual connection with a lack of mutual understanding. He feels that he and Ivan play only “a game of closeness” and “someone who shared so little of his mood could never share his life” (283–

285). Johnny's vision of a shared bed evokes a subtle familiarity, a sharing of a mood: not necessarily feeling the same thing, but understanding and appreciating what the other feels. Against these two transient sexual couplings, the portrait of "men at home" visualises a continued emotional and sexual closeness, commitment and familiarity which Johnny feels that he does not have.

The losses and consolations of the domestic home.

Hollinghurst's next section, "Losses", takes place in 1995. It is concerned with the domestic home, shared by two men, as a site that can reveal both the losses and the consolations of homosexuality coming home. Johnny Sparsholt is now a successful portraitist and shares his home with his partner of five years, Pat, and his seven-year-old daughter, Lucy. Johnny's home is filled with portraits. It symbolises the answering of Johnny's desire for long-term intimacy: his need for a partner who is able to understand and share his mood. From the perspective of Lucy, the home signifies her familiarity with Johnny. For Johnny, it is a site in which intimate, sexual relationships between men can be enfolded into the shared ideas, objects and routines that create the significant consolations of intimate understanding between lovers and families. However, Hollinghurst also demonstrates that the association between the home and intimate familiarity leads to the ongoing feeling of loss associated with David Sparsholt, whose inability to speak openly about his memories of homosexual desire leads to a self-imposed exile from Johnny's marital home

Hollinghurst opens the section from the perspective of Lucy. Through her eyes, Johnny's home visualises and clarifies her father's relationship with her. As Lucy walks into her father's home, she registers, in a routine of her own, that "just visible through the sitting room door was her own portrait, painted four years ago, and life size then, though not so now" (308). She feels "tacitly proud of it" (308). The portrait of a three-year-old Lucy conveys both her and her father's deep-rooted familiarity with the space; her own pride in the picture reflects her father's pride in painting and showcasing her. Through Lucy's eyes, the home is also a space through which portraits allude to her father's history.

Portraits fill Johnny's home: "the hall, the landing, the stairs were thick with his pictures. Sparsholt or JS all the way up ... were they treasures kept back or ones no one wanted to buy? They were records of years of encounters of which she played no part" (309). These pictures form intimate evocations of Johnny's professional life. Like the objects in the "Londoners at Home" exhibition, they might be treasures or rejects, yet each symbolises to Lucy a memory of her father's past. Lucy does not understand the significance of these portraits and photos. However, she registers their visible presence. Hollinghurst defines a home typified by the possibility of understanding a parent. Through Johnny's home, Lucy has the polar opposite to Johnny's frustrated attempt to sketch David. His past, the past which he shares with Pat, is visible, readable through an accumulation of objects. Johnny's home is a space in which cherished subjects, like Lucy herself, can be displayed. Lucy is provided with innumerable windows through which to see, and eventually clarify, the emotional relationships of her father's past.

For Johnny, his home particularly signifies the value of understanding one's partner and lover, as well as the ongoing attempt to understand intimate family members. Hollinghurst reverses his traditional dichotomy between sexual excitement and domestic mundanity. From the perspective of *The Stranger's Child* — as well as his previous four novels — it is marriage that appears comparatively "flat" (*Stranger's* 77). However, Johnny's own memories of transgressive and transient relationships are represented as simpler and more monotonous than the familiar pleasures of shared domestic spaces and objects. During a walk with Lucy in a park, he runs into an old lover. Johnny primarily remembers the house they shared as "a whole month of nights": "a dozen different lives going on on five floors, a cooperative, with its meetings and parties in bright coloured rooms". Johnny recalls that "good times were a basic requirement for Mark" and their "dazzling, exhausting all-nighters ... innuendo so endless you checked what you were about to say, with a longing [for] talk as dull and unequivocal as could be" (*Sparsholt* 349). Johnny remembers the excitement of this month of sex with a humorous exhaustion. His sense of monotony is augmented by a feeling that this relationship took place in a house which was impersonal. The inebriated physical sensuality of the partying further obscures the particularity and intimacy of the space, making it dazzlingly hazy.

Johnny's memory of this erotic gratuity forms a relief that their relationship has been replaced by an intimate, shared and personal home. On the drive back, Lucy echoes her father's exhaustion and need for home by falling asleep in the car. Johnny wonders "what they would do later, ideally something with Pat, a game of Cluedo, which she loved, or Monopoly, with its different kind of killings which she naturally expected to win" (351). This plan amalgamates Johnny's intimacy with Lucy — his parental knowledge of her likes and expectations — with his own need for the familiar, supporting presence of Pat. The image of the three of them playing games becomes evocative of a cherished intimate connection in which sex between the two men forms part of a larger, longer and — Johnny feels — more fulfilling dialogue of the home. Against this, the "simple" pleasures of the domestic home cast a more complex and enduring light than dazzling parties or legendary accounts of transgressive sex. It suggests its inhabitants shared knowledge of each other: Johnny's of Lucy's need to win; Pat's of Johnny's pride in his daughter, both adult men's memories of a life shared. The domestic home becomes a site that can create and visualise an experience of long-term intimacy.

Years later, within Hollinghurst's following section, set in 2012, Johnny remembers clearly the emotive, intimate and erotic pleasures of being uniquely understood by Pat:

Each person, if he was lucky found a place where he could shine, and a person to shine on. At Cranley Gardens Johnny had been an audience, to Evert and Ivan. ... But with Pat he was a closely attended performer, he was funny, almost articulate and rich in things worth saying. (397)

Significantly here, Hollinghurst conflates Johnny's marital homes — he and Pat marry in 2004 — with the feeling of intimacy that the portrait of men at home offers to gradually reveal: the "place" is joined with and even precedes the "person" to "shine on". Johnny's home becomes a bigger, inhabited portrait of a past relationship. It recreates the memories that are Johnny's only remaining link to Pat, who has died years before. Cranley Gardens is the house that Johnny lived in, in a house share with Ivan, for an undisclosed period between

“Small Oils” and “Losses”. This space is remembered through a lack of intimate connection: Johnny was merely an audience, watching other people who are seemingly more interesting. In contrast, Pat made, and continues to make, Johnny a “performer”. Vital here is Johnny’s feeling of being listened to and understood by his partner. Moreover, this speech is importantly neither complete nor perfect: rather, it is “almost articulate”. Johnny associates the routines and quotidian mundanities of the home with the sexy, exciting and ever-developing pleasures of trying to speak and hear: a feeling of being “rich in things worth saying” and having found someone who would try to hear them. The home sustains the memory of continually attempting to understand a partner in ever greater detail, and feeling oneself to be similarly understood. Johnny’s home here becomes synonymous with the portraits that hang in it. Both enact a developing feeling of familiarity and intimate connection which has been desired throughout this thesis. Symonds’s homes were imaginary, Housman’s were left behind, Forster’s was too isolated to last and Isherwood’s evoked George’s intimacy as lost, as others could not read it as a portrait of intimacy. Hollinghurst’s homes become portraits of long-term intimacy that can endure in memory as feeling oneself to be emotionally, erotically and intimately particular, and loved for that particularity.

It is exactly because Johnny’s home symbolises an emotional openness that David Sparsholt continues to avoid his son in “Losses”. Johnny feels that David avoids “the studio, the big bedroom that the two men shared [as] stubborn evidence of the way Johnny lived his life [and] irreducible fact that Johnny was doing openly what for David had been a matter of secrecy and then of very public shame” (371). David sees both Johnny’s home and his profession as a portraitist as a “puzzle” and a “worry” (SA 371). The unease which typifies Johnny’s home for David is the important distinction between secrecy and visibility, which typifies the two men’s different experiences of homosexual desire. David’s feelings about his son’s home form into a characteristically unspeakable tension: a need to separate the home and homosexuality, which distances him from his son. For Johnny, painting offers the opposite: a way to expose, clarify and understand his own feelings about his father. As he works on a portrait, “the work of the three brushes, in delicate dashes, quick circlings, inexpressible fusions [sic] of his actions with his remote and shifting ideas ... his

practiced hand brought some order to his unruly and incompletely managed feelings about his father” (372). In the process of fixing the sitter’s image on the canvas, Johnny attempts to negotiate the tension between his “desire for harmony”, a longing to understand and portray the emotions of his subjects, and his father’s “deep-set habits of rejection” of familiarity (372). The home studio from which Johnny paints offers the attempt to understand his father.

David refuses to be painted by his son. This resistance equates to his resistance to speaking about his desires for men openly and, thus, to Johnny’s ongoing feeling of loss concerning his father. Hollinghurst ends this section with a brief moment of intimate understanding between Johnny and David. Johnny has found out about his father’s affair with Evert in 1940 by reading Freddie Green’s memoir of “the Sparsholt affair” — the text of which comprises the initial section of Hollinghurst’s novel. Johnny has taken his father to see Evert. As both men walk away from Evert’s home, David admits that Evert “was pretty keen on me then. You know, looking back” (388). This admission is, of course, only part of the truth that Johnny “knows”. His interest is in his father expressing his own feelings about Evert. Hollinghurst notes Johnny’s awareness of a new possibility of understanding between him and his father: “it was almost as if, in the chill and change of the dusk, in the ambiguous minutes when streetlights came on under the high pink sky, a new freedom was possible” (388). The time and setting, dusk on the edge of home, promises and withholds sexual secrets. Johnny senses his father’s “touch of pathos and nostalgia” that seems to “hint at a desire for” Evert (388). He wonders, “things had happened; not quite named before; why not name them now?” (388). This poignant moment offers an amalgamation of partial clarity and affirmation and a cryptic suggestion of feelings which are not quite stated. The twilight of this later, legitimised era momentarily promises to fill the emotional absences which constitute Johnny’s impression of his father. In this turning point, the twilight which amalgamates the light of the day with the suggestiveness of the dark, the home becomes a symbol of two different “complex lights and atmospheres” (Hollinghurst *Ivory* xvi): an elder man’s reliance on secrecy, and a younger man’s appreciation of the emotional value of gradual revelation and understanding.

However, David only cryptically admits that “things were different then, but, you’re right, we were good mates for a while” (388). Yet, the closeness inherent in the poignant revelation is conditioned by the brevity and loss inherent in relationships that could only exist “for a while”. Johnny senses a return to his “father’s ingrained habit of denial” and notes that “the new intimacy had been just for a moment too” (389). Within this anti-climax, Hollinghurst uses the two men’s different perceptions of being “brought home”, David’s resistance and Johnny’s eagerness. This highlights the elder man’s ingrained need for secrecy and reliance on suggestion and the younger man’s desire to understand his father’s experience. This discussion crystallises Hollinghurst’s twofold point throughout this section. First, homosexuality becoming visibly associated with the marital home creates a personally positive experience for Johnny, who feels the intimate value of being understood by a partner and passes this valuation of intimacy on to his daughter. Yet, second, Hollinghurst significantly demonstrates that seeing the home as a site of familiarity and visibility creates its own losses. Men like David, who either cannot or will not talk about their past, remain exiled from the home. The only thing Johnny can understand about his father here is his frustrating reliance on “denial”, secrecy and absence. Throughout this thesis, desires for long-term intimacy have been formed by personal tensions between feelings of possession and loss. Here, Hollinghurst uses the image of the homosexual familial and marital home to create a tension between two generations of homosexual men: one for whom desire is typified by possessing a long-term relationship, and the other whose long-term desires are defined by loss.

Homes as portraits: Seeing long-term intimacy

The final section of *The Sparsholt Affair*, entitled “Consolations”, emphasises the further value of a cultural shift towards understanding and visualising homosexual desires for long-term intimacy within homes. The most crucial, and potentially the broadest, “consolation” of the gay subject having been brought home is an emerging association within the novel of reading homosexual desires for long-term intimacy through images that gradually reveal ever more complex “lights and atmospheres”. The home is not only significant as a symbol

of Johnny's experience of familiarity, his yearning to portray and understand. Even more importantly, the image of home functions as a portrait itself. Throughout this project, experience of familiarity and long-term intimacy have been created by sharing the tensions that are produced by desires for long-term intimacy. David is unwilling to share his experiences. Hollinghurst proposes that homes are structures that are able to speak for other individuals, both past and present. The home symbolises an ongoing existence with familiar objects, ideas and memories of loved ones.

The home becomes a portrait through its ability to facilitate a gradual revelation of the emotional tensions and intimacies experienced by others. By 2012, Johnny can read the intimacies of other people and is now a portraitist at the height of his prowess. He is engaged by the wealthy TV celebrity Bella Miserden to paint a group portrait of herself, her husband and their three children. Painting the Miserdens provides Johnny with an insight into the intimate relationship between husband, wife and children: "he felt more than ever his ability to expose them" as self-interested, miserly and possessive (398). Their marriage and family appears as a different sort of relationship from his and Pat's. As they sit for him, "the long shadow of Pat's death" makes their materialism more conspicuous: "everything in *their* talk was somehow of having (however fretful and spoilt and blind), as if having was their right" (398). Hollinghurst's italics emphasise this as a fundamental difference between the long shadow of long-term intimacy with Pat and the Miserden's marriage. The Miserdens do not come off well in Johnny's description. Yet Hollinghurst's evocation of surface flattery and underlying manners (or lack of them) constructs the mercenary nature of his sitters as an intimate familiarity within the Miserden family. This is a shared understanding based on greed that is similarly reflected in their home, a "would-be-Georgian mansion" (394). Whatever his readers' morals, Hollinghurst invites us to see a long-term intimacy visualised in both the home and the portrait. This unflattering portrait nevertheless reveals an intimacy. The portrait, in this sense, becomes their home and reflects on the domestic as a space which exposes intimacy as emotional familiarity.

Hollinghurst uses the marital home as way of further clarifying Johnny's inability to create a portrait of his father. David Sparsholt dies during this section. His death provides Johnny with the chance to, similarly, try to understand his father. While visiting the body of his father for a final time, Johnny "sat down and drew him". It is "a rapid but careful and observant sketch, five minute's intense work. He thought, this is what we get to do. He couldn't remember for the life of him what colour his father's eyes had been" (436). The sketch reveals Johnny's recognition of his father's life-long habit of concealment. Here, the lack of David's eye-colour, reminiscent of Coyle's sketch which stopped at the neck, becomes a form of intimate understanding. Rather than a frustrating barrier to familiarity, Johnny sees that his father's silence is the definitive element of his long-term experience of desire. All Johnny can "do" in drawing David, all he could ever do, is to expose his father's life-long reliance on distance, silence and a resistance to visibility. David has been the elusive subject of sketching throughout the book. However, in this final sketch he is portrayed in a far more challenging and intimate manner as a man who always felt the need to resist familiarity. In his grief, Johnny understands the long-term emotional significance, both for himself and his father, of David needing to keep his homosexual desires outside the home.

However, Johnny's melancholic feeling of loss resolves in a subtle, yet heartfelt, recognition that his father was intimately known and loved by his widow, his second wife June. David's need for silence is reflected by the home he shared with June. Revisiting his father's home, Johnny sees David and June's shared possessions as "strangely unexpected evidence of his father's most recent life ... rails flanking the loo ... a square magnifying glass" (435). This connotes a feeling of his father's vulnerability, and June's dependent support and love for his father. Johnny feels "touched with an uncomfortable sense of duty" to the woman "who had made his father happy, and who had always dreaded the talk amongst their friends coming round about what her stepson was doing" (437). June's denial of both David and Johnny's homosexual desires echoes David's need to keep the subject of homosexuality from the conversations that take place in the home. June's intimacy, love and support both encapsulates David's final years and is felt to extend from their meeting in the wake of the highly publicised and embarrassing exposure of

David's affair with Clifford Haxby in 1966. Johnny senses with "intuitive speed and feeling" that June's avoidance of homosexuality extends from protection of his father, which started with June "fending off reporters, pretending the wounding articles and later books about her husband didn't exist" (437). Her reticence to talk about Johnny's homosexuality becomes her intimate understanding of David's need for secrecy, his life-long desire to keep homosexuality outside the home. Johnny's eye for sketching intimacy repaints June's silence into a commitment to defend and protect his father: a loving and ongoing long-term intimacy which made David "happy". Johnny feels a personal sense of loss for his father, who remains a mystery. Yet this loss is softened by the role of the home as a collection of objects, memories and decisions which can reveal a bit more about his father, and his second marriage. Through reading the home, Johnny comes to realise that silence was a form of long-term intimacy, a way of creating a home that builds respite from scandal and the affair which dogged his father's life.

In *The Stranger's Child*, the home reveals loss: George and Cecil's illicit exile from home was defined by their inability to speak. In *The Sparsholt Affair*, homosexual relationships coming into the home symbolise the possibility of understanding and sharing the "complex lights and atmospheres" which are created by both past, invisible and contemporary, visible desires for long-term intimacy. In the final scene of the novel, Johnny puts the finishing touches to a portrait of Lucy, a present for her upcoming wedding. They are interrupted by Jose, or Ze as Johnny calls him, a man Johnny has recently met at a nightclub and with whom he has just begun a relationship. "Johnny looked across from the canvas" at Ze and wonders, "could he see him as Lucy saw him, without intimacy, without interest" (435). Ze reveals his and Johnny's relationship to Lucy by "examining the portrait and the sitter in rapt comparison" and then "kiss[ing] Johnny on the cheek, out of pride" (435). As soon as father and daughter are alone, Lucy tells her father "and, you know, if you want to bring ... Jose", inviting him to the wedding (456).

This scene revolves around Johnny's interest in the home as a site that facilitates the seeing and understanding of intimate connections. Johnny's attempt to see Ze from Lucy's perspective draws on his anticipation of her own

expectations and desires, as he had done when she was a child, imagining how she would play Monopoly. Johnny imagines the beginning of an intimacy between his daughter and his boyfriend. He also acknowledges that, for him, a new long-term intimacy has already started to develop. He cannot see Ze as a stranger would see him, because Ze is already familiar, desired and loved. Similarly, the nonchalant words spoken by Lucy frame her own subtle perception of her father and Ze's intimacy. Her invitation to her father's partner expresses a shared recognition of the intimate value of the word "husband" which she will soon call her fiancé, which Johnny used to call Pat and which one day he may call Ze. Hollinghurst reflects Katami's belief in the ability of the word husband to represent subtle amalgamations of friendship, support, advocacy and love. Johnny and Pat married years before, and Lucy is on the cusp of marriage herself. Hollinghurst's alignment of marriage with the familial home moves beyond the visibility of the marriage ceremony itself. The wedding ceremony only appears as a poignant beginning to a marriage. It is significant as the commencement of a relationship which spans years and even decades and within which two partners become ever more uniquely understood by each other. Marriage becomes significant as a shared, long-term experience of the marital home.

The marriage ceremony here stands for the first glimpse of a portrait: an act which incorporates both Johnny's knowledge that seeing his adult daughter reveals "a challenge and a charge of emotion" (448), and Lucy's first glimpse of Ze. Johnny believes that it would be "impossible" to hold all the emotional associations in the mind's eye and that portraits need to be continually reassessed, developed and commented on. For him, the "gay subject" being "brought home", into homes and marriages, facilitates the chance for both himself and his family to see, understand and empathise with his long-term relationship. In a really important way, Johnny's subtle recognition of different and overlapping experiences of long-term intimacy between himself, Lucy and Ze are only suggested by Hollinghurst and are never fully explained. The reader is not presented with a detailed exposition of the contrasting, amalgamating feelings which exist besides each other and are acknowledged in this domestic scene. Yet the location of this conversation, within a portrait studio that is, itself, nestled in a home, stands for an ongoing and never complete desire for long-

term intimacy. Lucy's invitation is not only an acceptance of Johnny and Ze's new intimacy. It is a moment of visualisation that promises a continuing attempt to understand their intimacy

In this moment, the gay subject has been brought home through being associated with the process of gradual recognition within the marital home. Johnny's desires for long-term intimacy have created a home that is defined by understanding and familiarity. His relationships that take place within it are understood as personal, intimate and unique by both gay and straight individuals. Lucy's recognition of her father's relationship illustrates how far homosexual culture has come since 1913, and the beginning of *The Stranger's Child*. This is a literal movement for Johnny. His relationships are now visibly defined by acts and words that connote loving and intimate affection. However, for Hollinghurst, this movement from homosexual invisibility to visibility is even more important as a move from the erotic suggestion of being unable to speak, which animates the homosexual relationships that are lost in *The Stranger's Child*, towards the erotic and intimate value of being able to read and understand desires for long-term intimacy in ever greater detail. This is one of the consolations of visibility which are visualised within *The Sparsholt Affair*.

Hollinghurst suggests that an even greater consolation is that this aesthetic of revelation, symbolised by both the portrait and the home, can be applied to both contemporary and past homosexual relationships. Hollinghurst does not suggest that Johnny's twenty-first-century ability to marry can itself vindicate the past experiences of David, or of George in *The Stranger's Child*. Their desires for long-term intimacies were continually shaped by the inability to speak. Their desires for long-term intimacy refuse to fit into present experiences of marital equality. It is uncertain whether men like George or David wanted to speak, much less marry. Within the novel, their memory creates a very different history from the easily spoken, yet subtly understanding words spoken by Lucy. Instead, Hollinghurst closes this novel by suggesting that the portrait's visibility and gradual revelation can also continually expose experiences of men who desired long-term intimacy silently, invisibly and doubtfully outside homes. In the final lines of the novel, Johnny realises that the portrait will never be finished, that there will always be more to uncover: he "peered with a familiar

yearning and dissatisfaction at the portrait, the eyes the blue grey (he saw it at last) of her dead grandfather's, the lips, redone, still wet and workable" (454). Within the portrait, Johnny reads the biological inheritance of his daughter, sharing eyes and lips with her grandfather. Hollinghurst uses this to provide an emotional echo of the illicit experience of desires for long-term intimacy which David could never express in words.

The fact that Johnny sees the physical memory of David through the lips of his grandchild is significant. It casts the consolations of contemporary visibility of homosexuality as the ability to speak, and contrasts this with the past inability to speak. Lucy is defined by her ability to speak, share and understand the "complex lights and atmospheres" which come from Johnny and Pat's, and now Johnny and Ze's, home. David's lips hesitate forever on the edge of speech. He is defined by the tensions between desire and loss that come from the ongoing inability to express clandestine desires for long-term intimacy with a man. Hollinghurst suggests here that the intimate value of homes — existing with shared objects, discussing them and learning to understand their value — can extend to the memories of the past which reach into the twenty-first century through texts. David's home visualised a long-term intimacy based on a shared need for silence, expressing the value of his heterosexual relationships. Johnny's portrait is a "patient" and "careful" artistic consideration of his daughter (448). Spending time with the portrait actually reveals to Johnny his enduring desire for intimacy with his father. It also begins to explicate why his father could never speak openly. As David finally appears on Johnny's canvas, the portrait begins to assess the ongoing, emotional significance of both David's silence and Johnny's contemporary ability to speak and create new understandings. In allowing David to appear through the portrait, Hollinghurst expresses another, deeply valuable consolation of homosexuality's coming home. Hollinghurst asserts here that the "home" is not only a physical structure which sustains feelings of familiarity between men. Like the object-filled portraits that visualise intimacy, which are created within it, the marital home is itself "still wet and reworkable". The shared objects which fill the home stand for the gradual accumulation of emotions, memories and knowledges which develop over the passage of time. Certainly, Johnny sees the home as valuable for his own experience of familiarity. However, he also appreciates it as a text, an ever-

developing portrait, which continually reveals how enduring desires for long-term intimacy are shaped by either loss or possession. Coming home in *The Sparsholt Affair* represents a twenty-first-century context which can begin to reveal and share the amalgamations of emotions which exist in historical desires for long-term intimacy.

Hollinghurst ultimately defines the home through the portrait's emphasis on a continual, gradual attempt to understand the relationship between gay subjects, and between gay couples and those who see them. In *The Stranger's Child*, Hollinghurst allows his reader to understand the feeling of being unable to speak through homes which suggest unspeakable emotions. However, in *The Sparsholt Affair*, Hollinghurst prioritizes the importance of gradually revealing the different emotions which come to coexist within desires for long-term intimacy. The gay marital home becomes both a physical space which is shaped by, and a symbolic textual structure for, the passage of time.

Hollinghurst contends that both illicit and licit experiences of homes are shaped by images, objects, ideas and people with whom one spends a long time. He emphasises the cultural movement of homosexuality into domestic homes as a shift towards an ongoing attempt to read and understand another through the spaces we share with them, and through the textual or visual memories we have of them. As a textual image, the home represents a shift in perspective towards reading, discussing and understanding both past and illicit, and contemporary and domesticated experiences of long-term intimacy.

Hollinghurst's novel ends by showing that the contemporary home and the textual image of past desire are united by the passage of time: each can be read over time and therefore can build new knowledges and intimacies with the past, within the present, and extend them into the future.

Conclusion

Les Brookes argues that Forster's *Maurice* and Isherwood's *A Single Man* share a "concern with the ideal of a life-long love relationship ... an ideal central to western cultural and spiritual values, Judeo-Christian in origin and essentially heterosexual" (46). Brookes argues that Forster and Isherwood's evocation of long-term relationships advocates the "basic normality and ordinariness of homosexuality" (44). He suggests that this is motivated by a desire for social and political equality, for a right to enter into the "essentialist", chrononormative timelines of the 'ordinary' relationship and family (46). Brookes would probably include Symonds, Housman and Hollinghurst's desires for long-term intimacy within this "assimilative" category of homosexual literature (2). His analysis perpetuates a broadly accepted assumption that homosexual narratives of long-term relationships are motivated by a desire to be included within heteronormative goals, institutions and values.

This thesis has provided a more subversive, historically specific and intimate way of viewing homosexual engagements with the long term. It has demonstrated that, for two reasons, homosexual idealisations or experiences of "a life-long love relationship" should not be implicitly equated with a desire to assimilate with the "essentially heterosexual" image of heteronormativity. First, these attractions and relationships articulate particular historical homosexual experiences. Rather than a fantasy of being considered "ordinary", they are motivated by a wish for one's unique experience of same-sex desire to be understood by a lover. Second, whether they are silently idealised or actually experienced, long-term relationships are desired because they possess a primarily personal value. Symonds was influenced by prohibitive late-Victorian discourses around homosexual criminality and morbidity. He also redeployed homophile discourses on Greek love to emphasise that, within a long-term relationship, sex can become ennobled with an enduring passion, connection and intimacy. His desire for familiarity with other men is made poignant by, and subsequently able to outlast, the ever-present threat of loss posed by same-sex desire. Housman presents enduring desire as a feeling of being exiled

irreparably from a lover. His assumption comes from a melancholic association of same-sex desire with transgression, suicide and loss. Simultaneously, his poetry idealises the home as facilitating a lasting feeling of connection. This intimate dream is warped into disconnection by transgressive desire. Forster's friendships countered the unspeakable nature of homosexuality, and the hypocritical avoidance of sexual desire, that is symbolised by the heterosexual suburban home. Maurice and Alec's relationship rejects suburban normalcy in favour of an attempt to read a lover's long-term experience of transgressive longing and respond with intimate support, understanding and tenderness. Isherwood depicts how different stereotypes of homosexual monstrosity and tragedy, and heterosexual domestic bliss, lead to the loss of a frank, honest and loving commitment between two men. Hollinghurst demonstrates that homosexual invisibility and silence, which are imposed on illicit affairs that take place outside of the home, create enduring feelings of indecision, uncertainty and loss. In contrast, the visibility created by homosexuality being brought into the home creates the possibility of understanding the value of contemporary experiences of familiarity as well as the historical inability to possess familiarity.

These evocations of long-term commitments, shared homes and, latterly, families and marriages emphasise that the passage of time creates a particularly intimate understanding between lovers. For Symonds, Forster and Isherwood, long-term desires and relationships can share tensions which extend from secret and silenced illicit same-sex desire. Even while Housman and Isherwood portray unreciprocated and unspeakable desires for intimacy, literature and poetry offer them the chance to explicate the homosexual and personal experience of enduring desire. Hollinghurst's contemporary characters also value personal, unique and inimitable knowledges which develop within particular relationships. Same-sex desire is defined here as an experience of the long term. For homosexual individuals, the passage of time is valued as an amalgamation of intimate knowledges.

Brookes also states that historical homosexual literary evocations of long-term relationships are motivated by a desire for marriage that is "Judeo-Christian in origin". He suggests that inclusion in this symbolic sacrament would facilitate Forster and Isherwood's desire for homosexuality to be legitimised by

religious and social convention. As was noted in the Introduction, Robert L. Caserio has argued that such advocacy of the normalcy of homosexual desire leads to a problematic “sanitising” of queer experience (816).

This thesis set out to read desire for commitment, monogamy, domesticity and even marriage from a non-heteronormative perspective. It has demonstrated that desires for long-term intimacy are more complicated than proto-desires for gay marriage. This thesis has highlighted, instead, a same-sex desire for intimate understanding, which spans generations of homosexual men. It has demonstrated that these desires are shaped by changing historical contexts. In particular, the texts studied here highlight a significant evolution from contexts of homosexual invisibility to those of homosexual visibility. Chapters One, Two and Three analyse texts which focus on secretive, potentially unmentionable, feelings between two men. Chapters Four and Five depict later generations who are increasingly preoccupied with how long-term intimacy between men is visualised, and engaged with, by the increasingly tolerant mainstream cultures in which it takes place. In some ways, this progression from invisible desires and relationships to visible partnerships and marriages goes hand in hand with the increasingly public gay-rights movements. This movement has, rightly, sought to represent homosexual people and cultures as requiring and deserving social equality. As Brookes demonstrates above, it is certainly possible to trace this desire for social recognition through literary homosexual relationships. Symonds, Forster and Isherwood dreamed of a time in which they need not hide their intimacies. However, this thesis has demonstrated that these dreams are also significantly shaped by the authors’ melancholic suspicion that such a time might come too late for them. Thus, rather than looking to an uncertain future of social equality, these writers use the passage of time to emphasise the queerness of long-term desires between men before the decriminalisation of homosexuality. Symonds, Housman, Forster and Isherwood’s works are defined by the significant limitations which the need for secrecy and invisibility places on desires. They believe that the long-term provides a narrative of “intimate talk” (Symonds “Key” 15). This intimacy can explain, share and subsequently reduce the resulting, particularly homoerotic, tensions between desire and anxiety, possession and loss, idealisation and familiarity.

Through these desires, the narrative of the long-term relationship actually represents a homoerotic tradition of rejecting heteronormative tradition and respectability. In *The Stranger's Child*, George sees the passionate possibility of intimacy between two men as distinct from the “strange, flat tone of marriage” (77). To Symonds, Housman, Forster and Isherwood, marriage appears comparatively “flat”: devoid of the challenging and keen emotional tensions which define sexually and emotionally frank and deidealised knowledges that can be shared by two men. For Symonds, marriage is loving, but lacks the homoeroticism that he sees as part of intimacy. Housman evokes the lost home as the site of an idealised connection, yet this is a site from which the homosexual individual must exile themselves. Forster defined conventional marriage as a hypocritical avoidance of emotional intimacy. Isherwood framed it as an identification with blissful stereotypes about the “utopia of the good life on earth” (*A Single Man* 15). It is through rejecting the heteronormative route of marriage and chrononormativity that the writers studied here begin the narrative of attempting to understand and share intimate experiences of same-sex desire.

Instead, they value the non-normative, personal intimacies created by the long term. This PhD has provided a methodology through which we can read their, and others', enduring homosexual desires and relationships as distinct from the conventional ideal of marriage-as-normalcy. It has also provided an essential method of reading twenty-first-century gay marriage as a contemporary form of long-term intimacy. In *The Sparsholt Affair*, Hollinghurst moves attention to the strangeness and the inimitable nature of the “strange, flat tone of marriage” (*Stranger's* 77). He emphasises that marriage is also a long-term relationship that constructs long-term intimacy. Certainly, valuing the possibility of talking about and portraying homosexual desire did not begin with twenty-first-century legislation concerning marital equality. Rather, the cultural shift towards homosexual visibility, identified in Chapter Five, has led to the latest evolution of homosexual long-term intimacy.

Historically, desires for long-term intimacy have been shadowed and complicated by loss. Housman's poetry portrays unrequited desire as a gradual fading of connection. Forster's novel ultimately concedes the implausibility of

two homosexual lovers being able to separate themselves from the hostile cultures that surround them. For Isherwood, George's long-term intimacy with Jim is lost because it can only exist as memories that cannot be spoken about. Symonds, Housman and Forster's texts themselves emphasise the relationship between invisibility and loss: Symonds's *Memoirs* and Forster's *Maurice* remained unpublished until they were brought to light by later generations. Housman hid his unrequited desire behind a foil of lads who love lasses.

The ever-increasing international tide of marital equality can be seen as merely the most recent chapter in the evolution of homosexual desires for long-term intimacy, but one that is shaped by the comparatively new context of visibility and empathy. For Johnny Sparsholt, both marriage and the marital home function as dynamic portraits: gradually revealing both past and contemporary emotional tensions and intimacies. Both the familiarity of Pat's presence and the reasons for David's absence continue to be revealed after the death of both men. This is because Johnny is able to live with objects and images. He can gradually read new emotional depths within portraits, possessions and people as he becomes increasingly familiar with them. This reading is strengthened and clarified because he is able to speak about and visualise intimate relationships with others. In *The Stranger's Child*, Hollinghurst captures the pain of being unable to speak about homosexual desire, as a form of increasing doubt and uncertainty. In contrast, Johnny values being able to see more connections, more emotional compounds and more tensions between feelings. He increasingly understands the value of being able to have, or unable to have, familiarity. Hollinghurst suggests that marriages and marital homes can be read as emotional structures that visualise and consolidate the ideal of long-term intimacy which has been desired throughout this thesis. This ideal is not experienced as a form of ordinariness; it is cherished as a unique and intimate archive of particular erotic and emotional detail. It is therefore necessary to reframe the critical place of marriage in homosexual cultural history. It offers the new chance to both experience and share long-term intimacy.

Critics who align the long term with heteronormative ideals see the advent of gay marriage as a worrying disavowal of a queer identity: a loss of the tensions inherent in non-normative forms of sexuality. Reading this evolution of

desires for long-term intimacy offers instead a crucial reminder that twenty-first-century studies of intimacy, homosexual literature and queer theory need to pay attention to the ways in which the passage of time leads to a form of emotional gain. For Symonds, Housman, Forster, Isherwood and Hollinghurst, homosexual desire is an experience that develops into increasingly complex amalgamations over the long term. The passage of time is utilised within their memoirs, novels and poetry to construct their particular, historically specific, experience of same-sex desire. They define illicit desire as a poignant engagement with the melancholic likelihood of loss in contexts that fail to see homosexual relationships as intimate. They employ literary narratives to counter the lingering fear of loss and isolation, creating images that define their characters', and their own, desire for long-term intimacy. Ultimately, these texts seek to defy loss by constructing an idealised, but idiosyncratic, intimate form of understanding. This understanding may be unlikely in hostile historical circumstances, yet each believes that long-term intimacy could be possible and, when found, should be read as almost inestimably valuable. It now falls to twenty-first-century readers of Symonds, Housman, Forster, Isherwood and Hollinghurst to appreciate the beautiful and lasting value that they place on long-term relationships. The twenty-first century may be in a position to experience and share what could once be only a dream. One must begin by reading how the long term creates an intimate sharing of homosexual, personal desires.

Appendix A: The Diaries of A. E. Housman, 1888–1891

Date (Diary)	Records of Jackson	Notes on Flowers and Trees
Jan 4 th (1888)	<i>Bokhara</i> arrives at Gibraltar	
Jan 8 th	<i>Bokhara</i> leaves Naples at 4pm	
Jan 12 th	<i>Bokhara</i> arrives at Port Said	
Jan 13 th	<i>Mongolia</i> leave Suez 11pm <i>Bokhara</i> an hour later	
17 th Jan	Add [Jackson's brother Adalbert (L.H.)] calls at off[ice] and out to lunch	
18 th Jan	<i>Mongolia</i> Leaves Aden this evening	
25 th Jan	<i>Mongolia</i> arrives at Bombay this morning (midnight of the 24 th I learn later)	
27 th Jan	He [Jackson] gets to Karachi at "8 o'clock"	
28 th March	Add calls at off. And out to lunch.	
8 th July	He wrote this day to [Nick] Nightingale, having seen his name in	

	the papers as called to the bar. "my dear Nightingale" "yours very truly" [Housman quotes Jackson's address to Nightingale]	
19 th November	This afternoon at off. I receive letter, written on 28 th and 31 st Oct.	
14 th December	I posted letters to him	
19 th December	His grandmother died	
28 th June (1889)	Posted letters to him [Nightingale did so too, about the same time]	Elder fadings mostly
9 th July	Nightingale has not heard from him for a long while, but wrote to him almost a week ago.	
22 nd October	He came to the office. Lunch he, I MCK [Maycock] /Nick Nightingale. Afterwards he went with MCK into the city. He dined at Nightingale's: K also	

23rd October		Hawthorne and Lilac by no means bare
25 th October	Went to see him. He had just gone out to Camberwell	
14 th November	He returned to London	
18 th November	He came to me at the office a little after 3[pm].	
20 th November	He meant to go home today	
9 th December	He was married	
10 th December	He was meant to sail	
22 nd December	He meant to go home today	
7 th January (1890)	I heard he was married	
9 th January	I wrote to him (mail tomorrow)	
20 th June	Wrote to him by today's mail	
2 nd October	His son born	Sapling forest[?] Hornbeam shows some yellow One honey suckle bloom A tree with red berries and leaves partly turning yellow Heather mostly faded

29 th October	His son's birth in the paper	
6 th November		Hawthorne yellow and reddish, very fair amount of leaves Ash green and not much thinned Oak russet yellow Plane[?] out of London thinned but green A great wind this night thins the leaves very much
7 th November	I [wrote?] by this day's mail	Elder greened and much thinned Some limes have many leaves un some branches
22 nd May (1891)	Sunday 1898 10.45p.m. said goodbye [sic]	
26 th May		Horse Chesnutt and Hawthorne beginning to flower
27 th May		Rowan in flower Some apples nearly out of bloom, some still quite full

A. E. Housman. "Diaries of A. E. Housman". 1888–1891. Archives and Manuscripts, The British Library, London, Add. Ms. 45861.

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