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**THE DANDY AND THE AESTHETE:
MIDDLE AND UPPER CLASS HOMOSEXUAL IDENTITIES
IN LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA**

**By
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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2004

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have accumulated innumerable debts over the long course of researching and writing this dissertation. Foremost, I thank my mentor and second dissertation reader, Randolph Trumbach who has been extraordinarily helpful, illuminating, and giving at every stage of this project—I am very grateful. David Nasaw, my principal reader has also been very generous with his time and comments on my work. I thank further the other members of my Dissertation Committee who also proved invaluable critics: Martin Duberman, Carol Groneman, and Barbara Welter. Among my fellow CUNY students Terence Kissack, Cindy Lobel, and Kathy Feeley have all been of vital importance to me. I also thank CUNY faculty members Carol Berkin and Thomas Kessner for their guidance at various stages of the graduate school odyssey.

After my move to Dallas I acquired an entire new set of friends, critics, and mentors. I remain grateful to my friends Alexis McCrossen, Michael Wilson, and Alison Parker for their wise counsel. The Dallas Area Social History Group and its ever-evolving membership has from the first been an important touchstone for me by providing a non-threatening entrance into the shoals of academic exchange, and I thank each and every member for all I have received at these invaluable forums. Long before I had met any of these people, when even a college education seemed a remote impossibility, one person nurtured my yearning for a larger world and my love of reading. Therefore with great emotion, I thank my earliest intellectual mentor and current guidepost Carol Coon for helping me to discover that with hard work impossible dreams can become realities. Dr. Emily Vaughn Wolf and Dr. Kenneth Wolf similarly

gave me more guidance than they can perhaps imagine: providing me with models at a time when I had few.

Finally, I wish to thank my partner Dr. Farhad Niroomand for his unwavering support over many years in helping me aspire to my greatest potential by acting in turn as my fiercest critic and most loyal advocate—thank you.

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Introduction

In the autobiography written under the pseudonym of “Claude Hartland,” the narrator describes his anguish while struggling with sexual desires for other men in the city of St. Louis during the closing decades of the nineteenth century.¹ After years of uncertainty, despite achieving some degree of toleration from his family, he in desperation seeks the help of an eminent medical doctor. The physician, after listening to Hartland’s story in stunned silence, awkwardly confesses to never having heard of such a case, and promptly sends the patient home with a promise to write if able to locate any medical literature on the subject. Suffice to say, that follow-up never materialized. Despite such rebuffs, Hartland did occasionally find other men like himself, and in time came to realize he was not the only one with this affliction; yet with no reliable source for information he remained essentially alone, continuing to harbor many fears, guilty feelings, and misconceptions. Eventually, frustrated at the seemingly impenetrable wall of silence surrounding his desires, he wrote up his life experiences—in an effort to educate the medical community.

Hartland’s plight is instructive on a number of important levels: first, it speaks to an apparently still-impenetrable wall of silence on the taboo subject of homosexuality as late as 1900 in the United States—at least for the many unable to bridge this enormous information chasm. With his humble origins—his parents were modest farmers, and he himself worked as a tailor—Hartland was able to experience only one manifestation of the era’s homosexual subculture: the working class gay male subcultures of the cities. As the studies of George Chauncey and Jonathan Ned Katz confirm, we now know for

¹ Claude Hartland, The Story of a Life ([First published, St. Louis, 1901] San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1985), 57.

certain that Hartland's experiences were typical of his social class, there were informal networks for sexual contact among men located in the teeming urban neighborhoods of America's cities.² Still, at first glance—and as historians and social commentators have maintained for decades—any real public discourse on the subject seems to have remained virtually nonexistent. Although they certainly on occasion moved through this working class subculture, upper and middle class men of the era experienced their homosexuality on a different level from those such as Claude Hartland. For these middle and upper class men, who enjoyed the possibility of European travel, of access to European texts of literature and history, and to far-reaching male friendship networks, this public veil of silence could more easily be overcome.

From their college days, middle and upper class American men were introduced to the many works on the ancient Greeks and Romans—along with their many institutions constructed around male same-sex eroticism. European travel, books, newspapers—even pornography—further contributed to an extensive, if somewhat subterranean education. Although no public discourse on sexuality appears to have existed, many men in these friendship networks distributed among themselves innumerable books, articles, and other texts on same-sex passions. Historians from our own century in their efforts to understand nineteenth century sexuality, have long allowed their own prejudices—and inability to think outside the established box—to prevent them from looking beyond this seemingly monolithic silence into the actual lives of such homosexual men. Only recently have scholars begun to question the matter, and to

² George Chauncey, Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940; Jonathan Ned Katz, Love Stories: Sex Between Men Before Homosexuality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Timothy Gilfoyle, City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920 (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1992).

search out what is increasingly seen as widespread information networks and a highly developed awareness among many men and women with strong same-sex attractions. As the scholarship continues to proliferate, no longer can these important relationships be relegated to chaste—and thus effectively denied—romantic friendships. Indeed, although often forced to communicate in code or “riddles,” this work will demonstrate unequivocally that these men were nonetheless acutely aware of their own desires and of a larger community of like-minded men and women surrounding them.

This dissertation seeks to build on the scholarship of Chauncey and other studies of urban subcultures by returning to upper and middle class American men of the late nineteenth century and by reexamining letters, diaries, and other materials with the understanding that viable homosexual roles and identities did exist. The study will focus on two men born in the 1860’s, who reached maturity in the 1880’s, and comfortable prosperity by the turn of the century. Most of the analysis looks closely at American society through these historical actors during the last two decades of the nineteenth century and into the earliest years of the new century—up to the premature death of one in 1909. The final chapter follows the surviving subject who enjoyed great longevity, leading a vigorous life until 1951, a span that saw the establishment of an entirely new sexual system (one, incidentally, more familiar to us today).

In turning once again to histories of nineteenth century upper class men—a subject written on so often by popular authors, but rarely analyzed thoroughly by historians—two new and important findings will emerge: first, the importance of the institution of friendship for these men; and second, the two distinct models of homosexuality current in these years. When combined, these two finding should greatly

contribute to the effort underway to at last lay to rest the notion that public silence on same-sex passions equaled an absence of sexual awareness. Rather, this dissertation along with other emerging scholarship, describes a world in which censorship, not ignorance, was the dominant cultural roadmap.³

Without question, the institution of friendship held a central and pivotal position in the lives of homosexual men who lived under this sexual system. Lacking the possibility of marriage, and in many cases even the conceptualization of a loving relationship with someone of the same sex as anything other than friendship, the institution played a critically important role. In the process of building their lives with other like-minded men, these men transformed friendship into an institution stronger and quite different from the larger culture's understanding of it. For them, the publicly accepted institution of romantic friendship served a function much like marriage did for contemporary heterosexual couples. In this way their relationships were allowed to be openly declared, and could remain above reproach—at least by publicly declaring them chaste unions. Extant documentation reveals however, that many of these loving friendships, or unions, were anything but chaste—public concessions to the era's blanket silence on sexuality notwithstanding. Unlike Claude Hartland, many middle and upper class men did not find themselves entirely alone as they struggled with the implications of their male same-sex desires; for much of their adulthood, they organized their emotional lives around romantic and powerful friendships that anchored stable and happy communities. In much the same way, these men often arranged their households using friendship as the central “family” relationship—ie: two friends setting up house together.

³ The powerful forces of censorship are especially apparent in Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz's new work—ReReading Sex: Battles over Sexual Knowledge and Suppression in Nineteenth Century America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).

As will become undeniably clear through the course of this work, the public ideology of chaste romantic friendship often served merely as a cover against an intolerant public.

Extended friendship networks were equally important to middle and upper class men with same-sex attractions: they provided community and support beyond that found in the haunts of the working-class based sexual underworld. Among these men of relative privilege private friendship networks were profoundly important—extending across continents and dispersing critical information to members far and wide. This class component in the study of male same-sex attractions in this period has been too often overlooked. The biographical focus of this dissertation in particular will draw such connections into sharp relief. Large and sweeping historical studies—however critical in mapping out historical periods and trends—are often unable to recreate individual life patterns. This work aspires to provide some much-needed subtlety to those studies undertaken with much wider brush strokes.

In addition to a renewed appreciation of the institution of friendship for the men in this era, this dissertation seeks to articulate the two distinct models of homosexuality widely current in American society at the time. In order to fully grasp this nineteenth century sexual system—along with the two dominant models of homosexuality—one quite distinct from our own era's, the central role of gender behavior must be examined. More than anything else, effeminacy, or perceived effeminacy, was central to how—or indeed if—an upper class man fitted into society. As a man with pronounced effeminate gender behavior, playwright Clyde Fitch (1865-1909) necessarily looked over his shoulder far more cautiously than a homosexual man such as architect Ogden Codman (1863-1951)—who projected mainstream masculine behavior—ever needed to. From his

school days, through college, and during his career as an extremely successful playwright in New York, Fitch battled constant attacks on his effeminacy—attacks that boldly questioned not only his manhood and male status, but by extension his competence in his craft.

In striking contrast, Ogden Codman, with his normative male gender behavior, never suffered from the stigma or marginalization that the effeminate Fitch endured. He always remained impeccably respectable, his career as an architect flourished (at least in early life), and he never encountered the difficulties that dogged Fitch's professional life from beginning to end. With his mainstream male gender behavior, Codman lived the life of a typical upper class American man—in this sense his same-sex attractions were beside the point and never factored into the matter. It should be emphasized again that we are discussing a world far different from our own. For instance, to suggest simply that Codman was "closeted" where Fitch, and others like him were "out," however tempting, is again ultimately anachronistic and misleading. In fact, of the two, the effeminate Fitch was by far the more secretive and fearful of discovery—as his letters illustrate time and time again. All for the simple reason that with his effeminate behavior he was under the closer scrutiny. In contrast, Codman rarely discussed the possibility of discovery—and indeed was quite daring and open in communicating his desires. The important point here again is that he could afford to be bold: in a sense he was above suspicion—his same-sex attractions notwithstanding.

The two homosexual models widely in currency among middle and upper class men extended beyond these differences in effeminate behavior—in their sexual attractions as well, the two models were quite different. Fitch, and other effeminate men

like him, sought out an equal—an “ideal friend,” or, “a real man” with whom to share his life. This effort to settle down with a mate, an equal, roughly equivalent to the heterosexual model, never became a viable possibility—at least at home in the United States at the turn of the last century. Rather than described openly, these relationships, in order to maintain the necessary public silence on homosexuality, had to be shrouded in misinformation. Often such arrangements were publicly presented as “employer and employee” for instance. In Europe, however, such arrangements were possible, and Fitch himself set up housekeeping with a male friend in London in the early 1890’s. Significantly, for homosexual men with mainstream masculine gender behavior, there was no interest in a quest for an ideal friend. Rather, as a sexual predator, Ogden Codman sought out young men whom he could control and dominate. This pattern continued throughout his life—including even the years of his marriage—itself a sign of mainstream behavior. Attractive young men were pursued—normally in their late teens and early twenties—from Codman’s late-twenties right up until his death in 1951. In many ways these two models are similar to those brought forth in Chauncey’s work on working class culture—in both cases male effeminacy is key, and an absence of it allows even the man who participates in same-sex behavior to avoid the negative repercussions that would normally result from such transgressions.⁴ Indeed, this dissertation reinforces further Chauncey’s argument that the hetero-homosexual binary is a “stunningly recent creation” that until well into the twentieth century did not dominate American culture as it does so absolutely today.

Although both men were upper class and developed fully realized identities grounded in their same-sex desires, living in the same period, in the same city—their

⁴ George Chauncey, Gay New York, 13.

decidedly different gender behavior led to their receiving dramatically unequal treatment from society—as a result, the two led drastically different lives. An ironic flip in the respectable is evident when the longer view on the matter is taken. Where the homosexual man who pursued younger men enjoyed virtually unlimited freedom and total respectability in the closing years of the nineteenth century, by the close of our own century such behavior was harshly denounced by all—including most within the organized gay community. As a result of a greater openness on sexuality in general, and a conflation of these attractions with sexual interest in children in particular—along with an embrace of models highlighting unions between two equals, Ogden Codman would today face categorical attack and demonization. Similarly, the effeminate Clyde Fitch would today find himself and his attractions the reigning model—publicly embraced by the majority of homosexuals.

A striking illustration of ever-changing norms and the censorship that continues into our own day is Chauncey's unwillingness to present the currently unpalatable Codman model of homosexuality directly to his readers. In discussing the numbers of arrests for sodomy in New York City during the years around 1900, he presents a startling fact to the reader: almost half of the men arrested were involved with minor boys or young men. Chauncey explains, "The fragmentary court records available suggest that at least 40 percent—and up to 90 percent—of the [sodomy] cases prosecuted each year were initiated at the complaint of the SPCC [Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children]."⁵ Here the matter drops, as the work continues on to highlight those homosexual men who sought out equals (today's dominant model). Such numbers, although admittedly hard to fully document, underscore the necessity of addressing the

⁵ George Chauncey, Gay New York, 140, 407-408.

Codman model of homosexuality as a step toward a more complete understanding of the late nineteenth century sexual system. To shun such realities merely because they are today unpopular, leaves at best a highly distorted image. This ironic about-face should be remembered as important illustration of just how distinct the late nineteenth century models of homosexuality were from our own. To enter this world every effort must be made to avoid projecting our own twenty-first century knowledge onto another very distinct time and place.

Chapter 1 Fitch at Amherst

“The Death of Clyde Fitch”

“Chalons-sur-Marne, Sept. 4 [1909]. Clyde Fitch, the American playwright, died at 9:30 o’clock this evening. The doctors and his friend, Eugene Gauthier, were present at the bedside. Mr. Fitch was taken with an acute attack of appendicitis while traveling in a motorcar from Germany. He was operated on here by Dr. Alquier. The patient was conscious up to 3 o’clock this afternoon, and recognized M. Gauthier. Later, he became delirious. Clyde Fitch was one of the most popular and prolific of American dramatists. In the twenty years since he began writing he had produced nearly forty plays, many of them written expressly for leading actors and acted by them with general success... He was a member of the Lambs and the Players. He was not married.”¹

So the news traveled of Clyde Fitch’s sudden death at the age of only forty-four and at the height of his fame and fortune. The morning after New York had learned of the tragedy, a newspaper article reported, “In every theatre along Broadway and in the Players, the Lambs, the Friars, and Greenroom club houses, the death of Clyde Fitch was the one topic of conversation last night.”² For days, newspapers across the United States carried detailed updates on the tragedy: sudden illness—mother and private secretary depart immediately for France—death—mother’s sad retrieval of the body and return to New York—interviews with theater and society celebrities over the loss—and finally plans for a suitably grand funeral for this famous New Yorker. Fitch was recalled as a flamboyant dandy, a compulsive collector of art and antiques, an astute businessman, but above all a loyal friend. Curiously, the newspaper articles provided precious little sense of the playwright’s personal life—beyond the countless declarations of his role as a

¹ “Clyde Fitch Dead.” Clipping without reference at Amherst College Special Collections, Clyde Fitch Collection. Also see, The New York Sun, Sunday, 5 September 1909, 1; The New Haven Sunday Register, 5 September 1909, 1.

² Ibid.

friend to many, only subtle clues could be distinguished to faintly illuminate the inner Fitch. Here had been a man unusually emotional, of a weak and nervous temperament, perhaps a little too “womanly.” Several articles declared the only woman he had ever loved had been his devoted mother. Most of the newspapers stressed, that apart from his deep love of his parents—the distant Connecticut blue blood Captain Fitch, and the high-strung southern belle Alice Fitch—his greatest love was reserved for his many, many friends.

The funeral was held the first of October at the Church of the Ascension, at Fifth Avenue and Tenth Street. Still standing today, the dignified gothic structure recalls the genteel days of old New York—a fitting site for a final farewell for one of the Connecticut Fitches. Hundreds of friends—from his college days at Amherst College, the theatrical world, New York society—along with colleagues and fans crowded into the noble church. Among the illustrious pallbearers were theatrical producer Daniel Frohman (destined to go down on the *Lusitania* seven years later), artist William Merritt Chase, and Judge Tod Galloway of Columbus, Ohio—a close friend of Fitch’s since their days at Amherst College together. Delegations from his college fraternity, Chi Psi, and from his local clubs, The Players, Lambs, and Friars were also a conspicuous presence. The Reverend Percy Stickney Grant, the Church’s pastor, himself an old friend and Amherst classmate conducted the service. Grant, echoing innumerable newspaper and magazine articles, centered his remarks on Fitch’s “greatest characteristic—his genius for friendship.” The mourners were told the departed had “made a sacrament of friendship, and was generous in the good works it had exacted.” In Clyde Fitch’s death as in his life, his friends and capacity for friendship were of central importance.

Despite such widespread publicity, press coverage, and attention, significant aspects of Fitch's life were absent from this impressive farewell: his famous gender nonconformity and his homosexuality. Although in Fitch's case an identity centered on his same sex desires is clear, in keeping with the phobic abhorrence of male same-sex sexuality still powerful at this time, the subject could not be discussed publicly. Indeed, Fitch had to struggle with this frame of thought from his earliest days at Amherst right up until the time of his death. Particularly, during his time in the public spotlight after the great success of his play Beau Brummell in 1890, the young playwright had to contend with continual press reports highlighting his alternative masculinity, or effeminacy with its concomitant innuendo of the sinful sodomite. Well trained by his experiences in the schoolyard and at college, Fitch became quite savy in manipulating the media, in testing boundaries of respectable and unrespectable: masculine and feminine. Yet, as successful as he so clearly was in such endeavors, he lived in hostile times and frequently had to resort to ambiguity in publicly presenting his life.

Even in Reverend Grant's remarks at his funeral, his personal life remained shrouded in mystery. Only in significantly gendered comments and some startlingly omissions do hints of this important aspect of Clyde Fitch's inner life emerge. Alluding to his famous gender ambiguity, or what could be termed his alternative masculinity—most often known to all of his friends and acquaintances as his “dandyism”—Reverend Grant noted, “this persistent thoughtfulness he carried into his friendships. He loved to do the unexpected—to perform the *delicate* attention, *to paint the lily* of friendship.”³

³ “Remarks by the Rev. Percy Stickney Grant at the Funeral of Clyde Fitch, Church of the Ascension, 1 October 1909.” Bates College, Clyde Fitch Collection.

Marriage and romance are discussed only once in perhaps the most curious of the Reverend Grant's memories of his friend. Strikingly, the romance discussed in Fitch's eulogy does not in fact involve him at all. Rather, he again appears in the role of a true friend, who has no thoughts of his own passions. Grant recalled a couple he had agreed to marry who expressed concerns over the service included in the Book of Common Prayer. In a conscious effort to call attention to his departed friend's religious faith, but also an unconscious one to highlight his own sanitizing of Fitch's own personal life, Grant explained how Fitch had heard about the couple's problem and offered to go over the service with them line by line. Ultimately, with such help from this "writer of plays and man of the world," they agreed to the wedding service with no alterations.

Such public presentation notwithstanding, Fitch had managed in his short life to build a rich and satisfying personal life; this life, however was constructed around the institution of friendship rather than marriage and children. Through extensive reading in European works—especially those of the ancient Greeks—history and literature, he and other upper class men like him were able to find powerful models for relationships that men of their "temperament" had maintained over many generations. As these important relationships contained the possibility of male same sex sexuality, or homosexuality, however, they were suspect in the late nineteenth century upper class transatlantic world and had to be discussed with great circumspection. So influential was this veil of silence on Fitch's contemporaries and many generations that followed, that even as recently as 1985 a dissertation on Clyde Fitch and his work failed to even mention his homosexuality—or personal life at all.⁴

⁴ Thomas Lowell Hellie, *Clyde Fitch: Playwright of New York's Leisure Class* (Unpublished Dissertation, University of Missouri at Columbia, 1985).

After the service the body was taken north to the Bronx, where in the Woodlawn cemetery Fitch was interred in a grandiose structure—still standing to impress the now-infrequent visitor. According to newspaper accounts, only the grieving parents, the elderly Captain Fitch, his wife Alice, and “a few intimate friends of the playwright” were in attendance. We do not know if included among them were Fitch’s private secretary Edward Simmonds, or Tod Galloway; both men intimate friends of his since their Amherst days. These two—and undoubtedly another select set of men and women present at the service—knew only too well the central importance of friendship to Fitch, beyond the hollow definition put forth that day for public consumption.

Overview of Chapter

To better understand Clyde Fitch and his times, a return to his early life is most crucial; for during this period of exciting intellectual growth—in his college years, and the days when he was just starting out in his chosen profession—he was drawn to some very powerful and historically specific models with which to frame his alternative effeminate masculinity. Not only models of behavior specific to his social class, such as the dandy and the drag performance—but also relationship models (equally appropriate for an upper class man), highlighting the institution of friendship—were highly influential in helping Fitch understand his own male same sex attractions. The late nineteenth century was an era of a fast-proliferating discourse on same-sex passions so men such as Fitch found much to digest. While homophobia did not exist in the same form as today, there certainly was a great amount of stigma attached to male effeminacy—and for the aspiring playwright this hostility would prove particularly painful. In the early years however—partially as a result of American silence on male same-sex passions—Fitch lived through a stimulating period of experimentation, largely free from public hostility, as he searched for understanding and models for both his effeminate gender behavior and strong same-sex attractions.

Fitch at Amherst

Soon after young Clyde Fitch arrived at Amherst College in the fall of 1882, he received the following postal card: “direct your Sunday letter to 432; take your tonics, and be sure if you feel sick to go direct to Hartford. I hope you have decided to take the partial course—much wiser with your health. Go to bed early and eat all you can of

meat. Mama.”⁵ Fitch would continue to receive these maternal instructions—always emphasizing his poor health and delicacy—through his four years in college, and indeed up until the time of his death. Significantly, at his death it was his mother who was en route to assist.

His mother had been watching anxiously over Clyde from the moment of his birth, in Elmira, New York on 2 May 1865—the couple’s first child had not survived infancy and this trauma had been for her severe. Clyde too, also showed early signs of being nervous, sickly, and delicate. For all of these reasons, his mother’s vigilance never relaxed. After many years of careful attention, mother and son would form a powerful bond; even during his time in college, Mrs. Fitch visited her son so often that it was still commented on by acquaintances years later. After his move to New York, she would stay for extended periods—often leaving her husband behind in Connecticut. Their few extent letters—most were destroyed by Mrs. Fitch after her son’s death—reveal a deep intimacy. Significantly, Fitch typically began letters to his mother with terms of endearment such as, “My Darling.” Fitch’s relationship with his father was, in contrast, quite distant. The two were, at best polite, and the elder Fitch never could reconcile himself to the younger man’s literary life—as one posthumous newspaper headline succinctly summarized, “Colonel Fitch Did Not Understand.” In later life Fitch commented on this imbalance, “My mother has been the one great love of my life. I have loved others, but it has seemed to me always that beneath and above any other affection was my love for my beautiful mother.”⁶

⁵ Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 4, Folder 14, Amherst College Special Collections, Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts.

⁶ Clyde Fitch, 16 May 1902, in, Montrose J. Moses & Virginia Gerson, Editors, Clyde Fitch and His Letters (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1924), 13.

As his father was in the military while he was growing up the family moved often, eventually settling in Hartford, Connecticut. Young Fitch attended Hartford High School for one term. A classmate later recalled a “sissy” who provoked great ridicule with his immaculate sky blue suits and his habit of remaining indoors writing letters on lavender paper during recess.⁷

Of all the students he was the most peculiar, the most eccentric. He was unlike the normal boy in clothes, gait, manners, tastes, language, and voice. No other youth would have dared to wear such clothes....What did we do to him? It would be better to ask, What didn't we do to him? So far as we could, we made his life a burden. In school life—as indeed in most communities—conformity is king. Those who will not run with the herd commit the unpardonable sin.

Perhaps as a result of this harassment encountered in school at Hartford, Fitch's parents later enrolled him at the Holderness Preparatory School in northern New Hampshire. The Holderness School, at the time an Episcopalian stronghold, served upper class New England families in preparing their sons not only for the college life ahead, but for their social life and responsibilities as well. As he would at Amherst College, Fitch found an environment at the all-boy boarding school where he could thrive and be productive and content—despite his already pronounced gender non-conformity.

The choice of Amherst was a natural one for an upper class Connecticut family such as the Fitches. The college, with approximately 300 students and 20 faculty members during the 1880's, had been founded in 1821 for, “the Classical Education of indigent young men of piety and talents for the Christian ministry.”⁸ In the decades following the Civil War, however, the college had undergone a great deal of change. By

⁷ William Lyon Phelps, “They Called Him a ‘Sissy’ at Hartford Public High School, But Clyde Fitch became Nation's Most Successful Dramatist.” The Hartford Courant, 16 September 1934; William Lyon Phelps, Autobiography With Letters (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), 122-125.

⁸ Thomas LeDuc, Piety and Intellect at Amherst College, 1865-1912 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), 2; Claude Moore Fuess, Amherst: The Story of a New England College (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1935), 230.

the eighties Amherst college had transformed itself into an upper class institution fully equipped to educate New England's sons of privilege (women were not admitted until 1976) in becoming "Christian gentlemen" and instilling in them the proper sense of duty required for their social station. In this sense the college functioned much as its down country neighbors Harvard and Yale. Yet, unlike these two institutions, Amherst still retained—despite its transformation—a strong element of its original mission to instill piety. Reformer Dr. Charles Parkhurst, an 1866 graduate heavily involved with the institution throughout his life, noted how Amherst recognized that "the perfection of manhood is not a matter of intellectuality alone but a happy combination of intellectual, moral, and religious ingredients."⁹

The strong sense of Christian mission was keenly held not only by the faculty and administration, but by the students as well. Student John W. Burgess in his senior class day oration for 1867 proudly noted, "other colleges may send forth more varnished manikins for the puppets of fashionable society...but for her earnest Christian scholars and men, this college must be esteemed the first; and it will be so, as long as its foundation is that fervency of prayer, and strong faith in the promises of Evangelical Religion which have heretofore characterized it."¹⁰ In Fitch's day the curriculum was still quite traditional: a heavy dose of Greek and Latin, English composition, philosophy, and Bible study—there was little modern literature and no science courses required to take one's degree. Whatever the subject matter, all courses were designed to illustrate the superiority of the Christian faith and to instill this fact firmly in the student's mind. Piety reigned seven days a week during each of the school year's three terms. Compulsory

⁹ Thomas LeDuc, *Piety and Intellect at Amherst College, 1865-1912*, 24.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 23

Chapel each morning, and a year of Bible study were characteristic of the moral climate. As late as the 1870's the college's schedule was arranged so that Monday classes would require no preparation on the Sabbath.

By Fitch's day in the early 1880's this sense of Christian mission was beginning to loosen. Fraternities were growing in popularity. These and other student organizations began pulling the students away from the college campus—and its sacred mission—toward more purely social activities. It was in this slowly changing social climate that Clyde Fitch thrived. Through secular pursuits—his work on literary publications, theatrical productions, and fraternities—he was able to carve out a secure place for himself in the college's social life. Many years later, his college-mates would recall Fitch not only for his exquisite dandyism, but for his great popularity and extensive involvement with any and all extracurricular activities. As he would later find of New York's teeming world of commercial theater, the all-male college campus was an environment where Fitch could turn his gender non-conformity into his greatest strength.

Fitch the Dandy

From the time he arrived on campus Fitch carried a high profile. By the age of seventeen he had already begun to adopt key mannerisms of the era's dandy. A fellow student recalled the famous Fitch "bright blue, futuristically cut suits, [and] his immaculate linen." This blue suit became infamous from the first term when the young dandy received an anonymous note informing him not to be seen in it again on campus or face the consequences. In a story repeated often in Amherst publications, Fitch's defiance of gender norms is clear: turning to a professor for advice, he ultimately concluded he had no choice but to keep to his principles and "stick it out." So the blue

suit and Fitch's other dandified accessories remained. An entry in the yearbook for the graduating class of 1886 notes how well known they both had become, "F stands for Fitch, whose suit of sky blue, has at last, to relief of all, bid us adieu."¹¹ Years later a friend noted Fitch's still unbowed dandified appearance,

A hundred eyes followed him... As I recollect, he wore a Scotch suit of pronounced English cut and of a black and white checked design that screamed in race track tones. His gloves were gray, his shirt, waistcoat and cravat purple, and his hat nearly white. He flourished a silver-mounted walking stick, twirled his black mustache with his left hand and sauntered along, apparently oblivious of the fact that he was being commented upon by all, sneered at by some, and causing a general ripple of smiles throughout the big lobby.¹²

This freshman not only had eccentric clothes, but equally curious behaviors as well. His mincing step was recalled. In addition, "his gait was strange, the motive power seeming to dwell exclusively in the hips. His face was impressively pale, looking as it had never been exposed to the sun; this pallor was accentuated by hair both black and copious." Others found his manners affected, his language too precise, and his voice too high. A theater critic later noted sarcastically that indeed Fitch's voice was so high that it was frequently breaking into a falsetto, "and even in ordinary conversation sounded like that of a hysterical woman who has just missed her train." In short, at first glance Fitch could often be dismissed as "effeminate, a mollicoddle, a sissy."¹³

Clyde Fitch himself however, far from oblivious to the attention, or from passively accepting the caricature of an effeminate boy, played a key role in shaping his own dandy persona. In the late nineteenth century the most available model of effeminate masculinity available to him in the culture through literature, history, and the

¹¹ Amherst yearbook, *Olio*, Class of 1886, 133, Amherst College Special Collections.

¹² Archie Bell, *The Clyde Fitch I knew* (New York: Broadway Publishing Company, 1909), 2.

¹³ William Lyon Phelps, "They Called him a 'sissy' at Hartford Public High School, But Clyde Fitch Became Nation's Most Successful Dramatist." *The Hartford Courant*, 16 September 1934.

theatre was that of the dandy or aesthete—so he set about emulating him from an early age. This strategy for understanding, indeed embracing his effeminate behavior he continued throughout his life. A drawing of himself Fitch sent to his friend Amy Baker while at Amherst, already reveals not only this cultivated self-image as the consummate dandy, but the healthy sense of humor on the subject he would later so effectively employ in his adult career. In the quickly done sketch Fitch looks out from the page sporting an exaggerated large mustache, and an equally sizable bow tie. An arm extends out with a very limp wrist as if being offered for a kiss; on this extended hand an enormous ring sparkles.

During these early years as Fitch so eagerly sought models with which to frame his effeminate gender behavior, he found both a rich tradition and history to tap into with his dandy persona. The late nineteenth century was, after all, an era when the aesthete, decadence, and the dandy were at their height. For example, the year young Fitch entered Amherst was also the year of Oscar Wilde's famous 1882 lecture tour across the United States—which had proven a resounding success. As Americans flocked in large numbers to hear his lectures on aesthetics and the decorative arts, the Aesthetic movement gained influence on the country's culture at a quick clip. As Mary Blanchard has explained, the Aesthetic movement provided a powerful tool to young men and women to creatively explore hitherto rigid gender boundaries.¹⁴ With his aesthetic style, Wilde brought to America an alternative style of masculinity—the dandy. Blanchard notes, “The public appraisal of Wilde's physical appearance—his penciled and arched eyebrows, his deliberate, graceful gestures—located him in an implicit genealogy of feminine men.

¹⁴ Mary Blanchard, *Oscar Wilde's America: Counterculture in the Gilded Age* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1998). On Wilde's influence in America see especially Chapter One.

The persistent newspaper banter about Wilde's stylistic effeminacy signaled an underlying concern about American manhood itself." In many of his stops young men attended his lectures elaborately put out in a dandy's proper aesthetic style. Beginning during his time at Amherst, Clyde Fitch also adopted with enthusiasm the aesthetic style as his own; it was nothing if not a natural fit.

In Fitch's only novel, published in 1891, his protagonist Cyril Farnsworth is described as a writer and dandy. Fitch's perception of himself and his style is quite evident,

He was a rather tall, delicately-featured man, with sympathetic eyes, a small moustache, and wavy blond hair which was not close-cropped. He was conventionally dressed, but with an indescribable suggestion of the artistic temperament, which hinted rebellion against the narrow code of a man's costume. Perhaps this showed itself in the color of his cravat, the composition of his *boutonniere*, or the form of his scarf-pin. He was dignified, yet gesticulated while he talked, and used his hands gracefully and more freely than the ordinary modern man.¹⁵

He would maintain this cultural style throughout his life—even after Wilde's fall and disgrace in 1895 when the aesthete became suspect.

While at Amherst in the 1880's however, Fitch the dandy fit right into a thriving transatlantic movement. Not surprisingly, the aesthetic movement flowered in the often-arcadian, all-male upper class college campus—both in England and the United States.

The Philo Mirror, a student publication from Exeter Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, not far from Amherst, explained in 1882, "Aestheticism is only the critic's name for the science of the beautiful." In the piece the anonymous student outlines two traits lacking in American society: a keen sense of the harmony of colors, and a keener appreciation of natural beauty. Searching to educate the senses of his

¹⁵ Clyde Fitch, A Wave of Life (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1891), 7.

readers, the *Philo* authority outlined these developments in language closely modeled on one of Wilde's lectures. "Our young men must be taught that a costume of sharp blue and bright green produce upon the observer hardly the acme of enjoyment." Not only college students, but all segments of American society must be educated in taste. "Our young women must learn in some way that a pink bonnet with magenta strings will not captivate the highest style of manhood." Married women were not above self-improvement in this area. "Our housewives must find out they cannot cover their walls and floors with every variety of shade and color, and make their homes attractive."¹⁶

Fitch's own aesthetic innovations cast a long shadow across the campus; not only through his dress, but in the decoration of his rooms, sets for college productions, and in his literary contributions to various Amherst student publications. In addition to carefully decorating his own rooms, he transformed the reception rooms of his Fraternity Lodge, Chi Psi. As late as the 1920's the distinctive frieze of apple blossoms painted over a background of Pompeii red was pointed out to visitors as the handiwork of the fraternity's famous member. An obituary notice in the Amherst newspaper recalled how some twenty years earlier, "when the house was to be dressed for a party, it was always Fitch who sent the freshmen to the woods and fields for boughs and blossoms."¹⁷ For Fitch in his role as dandy, aesthetics and interiors always would be important. Speaking of his autobiographical hero, Cyril Farnsworth in his novel, he explained the aesthete's approach to life,

Living comfortably with him did not mean the same as with some men. It meant nice chambers, in no matter what part of town as long as they were decently

¹⁶ *The Philo Mirror*, Spring Term, 1882. (published by the Philomathean Society, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts), 4, File of Allen E. Cross, class of 1886, Amherst College Special Collections.

¹⁷ Montrose J. Moses & Virginia Gerson, Editors, *Clyde Fitch and His Letters*, 18.; Obituary clipping, not identified, Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

located and convenient; a large study full of old tapestries, old stuffs, old furniture, pictures, brasses, antique silver... It meant fashionable clothes, though not many, and it meant flowers to give away, to grow on his desk, and to wear in his buttonhole, even during a blizzard.¹⁸

A dandy's ideology could not be more specific; obviously Fitch had thought the issue over in some detail. Also of interest is how in both passages he sets himself apart from other men. Later in life, when success on Broadway permitted, Fitch finally allowed his aesthetic tastes to reach full flower. Especially after he constructed himself a palatial townhouse on East 40th street in 1900, the playwright always lived in grand style—still organized along the lines he had established by the late 1880's.

The young dandy was successful on campus not only in reforming the aesthetics of those around him, but in student publications as well. Fitch was a member of various literary societies throughout his four years at Amherst. At this time in his life, he vacillated in his dreams for the future between a career as a decorator (his father termed this choice, "architect") or poet. With such literary aspirations, he churned out a number of pieces in his four years on campus. His poetry in these days leaned toward the romantic and the overly sentimental, generally sprinkled with French or classical phrases and references. During his days at Amherst, the publication The Student came out bi-weekly and almost every issue had a contribution—usually poetry—from Fitch. He was a member of the Athenae Literary Society, served on the editorial board for the yearbook Olio, and was elected Class Poet in his senior year.

Foreshadowing one of his most effective devices used often in later life, the piece, "Grove Poem,"—appearing in the Amherst Student the semester Fitch graduated in 1886—displays a shrewd manner of employing self-deprecating humor.

¹⁸ Clyde Fitch, A Wave of Life, 38.

My friends, a mournful statement I must make to you,
Truth forces me to speak, to you, in fact, I owe it;
Whatever I was born in this big world to do,
God knows, alas, 'tis true—I was not born—a poet

...

Large missives sent I to the muse, all stamped to be
Delivered 'specially,' that was an act most rash;
It cost me ten cents more, each time I wrote, while she
But echoed magazines and called my writings 'trash.'¹⁹

This healthy sense of humor would serve him very well in the hostile climate the aesthete encountered in later years.

Even in the 1880's however, long before the notorious Wilde scandals, there were rumblings of discontent over the aesthetes and their openly effeminate alternative masculinity. At Amherst College and in New England as a whole, with its strong Puritan legacy, aestheticism had to be particularly restrained. The Philo Mirror article discussed earlier, after strongly arguing the case for aestheticism in the United States, concludes however, with the caution not to take the movement too far. "In defending modern Aestheticism, we do not defend individual men. That excess in anything is unwise and may be dangerous, is a principle so trite that it needs no demonstration. It is then true of Aestheticism, that, when carried to an extreme, it ceases to become longer worthy of respect... Aestheticism abused is an evil; but Aestheticism used with moderation has a refining tendency in its influence on mind and manners." Thus, even at the zenith of Wilde's influence on American culture this typical phlegmatic New England student protested, "When a man treats it [Aestheticism] as Mr. Wilde has seen fit to do, he degrades it below itself."²⁰ This invisible boundary—between tacit acceptance and

¹⁹ "Grove Poem," The Amherst Student, 22 June 1886, 239, Box 6, Folder 4, Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

²⁰ The Philo Mirror, Spring Term, 1882. (published by the Philomathean Society, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts), 4, File of Allen E. Cross, class of 1886, Amherst College Special Collections.

denunciation as extreme, as a danger to society—would be one Clyde Fitch would struggle with not only during his years at Amherst, but throughout his adult career as America's most discussed playwright.

Fitch as Transvestite

The Amherst College yearbook for 1886 in a spoof titled, “the professors in the Female Department,” included a listing second from the top for “Miss Clydie Fitch, Professor of the Captivating Arts.” From early childhood Fitch had been drawn to objects usually associated with women. Throughout his life an interest in such objects as dolls, flowers, and china remained strong. These objects of course played a role in the aesthetic movement as well, emphasizing their blurring of earlier gender boundaries. As an effeminate man in search of models, Fitch during his college years found a role where his gender behavior constituted a strength. His many literary contributions notwithstanding, probably Fitch's greatest success at Amherst was in the area of college theatrics—most notably in playing female roles. In the all-male colleges a tradition had long existed of female impersonation in college theatrical productions—on both sides of the Atlantic. Thomas Hughes's popular English novel, Tom Brown at Oxford (1889) for instance, presents a typical example of male students engaged in female drag for an upcoming performance.²¹ Hughes's book was in Fitch's library, and he no doubt had at least read this single example from among the many available in the late nineteenth century of such cross-dressing behaviors. These roles were clearly class sanctioned and specific: where the working class fairy could go on the vaudeville or music hall stage in

²¹ Amherst College Yearbook, 1886, 73, Amherst College Special Collections ; Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown at Oxford (New York: Lovell, Coryell, and Co., no date.), 88-91.

drag, the upper class effeminate man's were limited to the college productions. For Fitch, these drag roles not only brought him great acclaim, but also allowed him to identify with, and highlight publicly these natural female behaviors.²²

One of his earliest and most legendary performances came in the form of the "funeral of Anna Lit." Tradition at Amherst decreed that at the end of each year's course in analytical geometry the textbooks were to be burned at an altar to celebrate the end of the students' ordeal. His sophomore year found Clyde Fitch cast in the role and he was carried through the streets of the town as the corpse of "Anna Lit" wearing a long white dress, his face chaulked white. Just before the ceremonial burning of the textbooks the corpse rose from the pyre and delivered a poem. So successful was Fitch in transforming this long-held tradition into something new and dramatic that both town and gown authorities agreed to forbid all future funerals for Anna.²³ It was in his female roles in the Amherst theatrical productions, however, that Fitch gained truly legendary status.

He played female parts in all four of his years at Amherst—itself something unusual. In 1883 he played "Susan, a maid from Green Street (a trifle fast); later that year, "Miss Piretta Platts, the charming soubrette, Mother of Little Corinne." Other roles included "Lucy Ann, the Fair Maiden of Choice," Constance Neville in She Stooped to Conquer (1884), Lydia Languish in The Rivals (1885), and his final triumph as Peggy Thrift in The Country Girl the year of his graduation.²⁴ Photographs of Fitch in his role

²² On these college theatrical performances, please see, Laurence Senelick, The Changing Room: Sex, Drag, and Theatre (New York: Routledge Press, 2000.), 355-359.

²³ Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 20; Clyde Fitch: American Dramatist. Amherst College News Bureau, 16 May 1909, Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 1, Folder 4, Amherst College Special Collections.

²⁴ Materials on Fitch and Amherst College theatricals are found in The Amherst College Special Collections, Performance collection, brochures and photographs in Folder 13.; The scholar who has studied Fitch's stage performances and connects them to his later success as a playwright is, Kim Marra, "Clyde Fitch: Transvestite Metteur-en-Scene of the Feminine." New England Theatre Journal, 1999, 15-37.

as Peggy now found in the Amherst College archives reveal not an ungainly man awkwardly playing a woman's role, but a poised comfortable woman. Today, she might appear to us as a drag queen. Hair, ball gown, gloves, and accessories—all are in perfect taste. An inscription on one reads, "In pleasant recollection of the evening you were in the audience at "April Weather." Peggy (Clyde Fitch)." The young aesthete took to these roles so naturally all were both amazed and to a large degree uncomfortable with the ease in which he shifted between genders.

This discomfort—palpable in the cast photographs and in some of the reminiscences—could often lead to danger for an effeminate man. In Henry Blake Fuller's novel set in a turn of the century university, when one of the students is too successful at performing female parts, red flags of warning quickly rise. The campus dowager, Mrs. Phillips warns, "I confess I like boys best in such parts when they frankly and honestly seem to be boys."²⁵ This character, Arthur goes even further and in the excitement of the moment, makes a pass at his male lead—back stage; unceremoniously he is expelled from the school, dismissed as an unhealthy influence. Yet, Fitch at Amherst remained protected through a combination of the popularity of the aesthete, the accepted homosocial nature of an all-male institution such as Amherst, his class privilege, and to a large extent his own sophistication in playing the gender boundaries without going too far. His position on the Amherst campus seems nonetheless remarkable, especially in view of its legacy of Puritanism and piety. Indeed, college theatrics had been forbidden on campus until only a few years before Fitch's arrival in 1882; and all

²⁵ Henry Blake Fuller, Bertrum Cope's Year (New York: Turtle Point Press, 1998, first published, 1919), 257, 271.

through his four years on stage there were faculty members who objected to the immorality of seeing men masquerade in women's clothing.²⁶

While understanding the importance of not conflating transvestitism with homosexuality, we must nonetheless recognize that for effeminate men like Fitch in the late nineteenth century, these female drag performances were clearly a central part of the cultural style they constructed. What these performances actually meant is hard to establish from this distance; still they certainly did provide a way of acknowledging—within the strict confines of the day's morality—his “Woman within,” the feminine part of his nature. Laurence Senelick notes how some homosexual men drawn to these stage roles, strongly identified with women—especially in their “sexual nature.”²⁷ During these heady days at Amherst, while still in the process of understanding his temperament, and how to present it to society at large, Fitch found on stage another vehicle where effeminacy could again be turned into an asset—rather than heralding the usual hostility.

²⁶ Cornelius Howard Patton & Walter Taylor Field, Eight O'clock Chapel: A Study of New England College Life in the Eighties (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1927), 295; this work also has a photograph of Clyde Fitch in his “Anna Lit” role, 252.

²⁷ Laurence Senelick The Changing Room, 358.

Reading: Classics at Amherst

Steeped in tradition as it still was in the 1880's, Amherst College held to a narrow curriculum of Greek and Latin studies as well as religion and Bible study. Not surprising for such a bulwark of the New England Puritan tradition, these extensive studies in Greek and Latin were all infused with a heavy code of Christian morality. In other words, the ancient texts were read with an eye toward the recognition of their essential godlessness and of Christianity's clear superiority. William Seymour Tyler, professor of Greek at the college from 1836 until 1893 cautioned his students to heed this lesson: "I discover in Homer, Aeschylus, and Sophocles anticipations of Christian truths of which they had not knowledge. But we ought to see in these old poets more than they themselves were fully conscious of, because we can see their life and times in the light of subsequent history, their theology in the light of a brighter, purer, and better religion."²⁸ Both Tyler and President Seelye frequently lectured the students that the Greeks had no such concept as the Christian one of love. In an address before the Home Missionary Society in 1884 President Seelye expounded on this favorite of his themes,

The Greek word for love is not found in the New Testament, and the New Testament word for love is not found in Greek writings. It was never used by the Greeks, for the Greeks never knew its meaning. They talked of love; but the only love they mentioned, the only love they knew, was Eros, the love of desire, the love which craved its object, a word which, as Homer uses it, always denotes an appetite or a passion.

Significantly, the Bible was the central text studied (for a full year) in the Greek course.²⁹

Until the closing years of the nineteenth century such was the framework through which the ancient languages were taught—not only at Amherst, but at other New England

²⁸ Thomas LeDuc, Piety and Intellect at Amherst College, 69

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 70; 73.

colleges. These colleges, as institutions dedicated to the training of the region's ruling elite, felt obliged to instruct their students in these culturally rich and ancient languages. Yet, certainly in Fitch's day, and at least until the dawn of the twentieth century when Greek and Latin fell into popular disfavor, the Christian moral message remained central. The students themselves were strongly influenced by these studies and the influence of Greek and Latin is clear. Student publications of the day are full of references not only to the ancient languages, but the intended moral lessons as well. In addition to the regular curriculum, there were two student clubs at Amherst devoted to the study of the Greek Testament—one under the tutelage of the local Episcopal Church.

As a product of his environment, Clyde Fitch was influenced by the all-pervasiveness of Greek and Latin through the halls of the college. His letters home illustrate he was already studying the two languages while at the Holderness School—no doubt in preparation for an application to Amherst.³⁰ Although he did not use Greek references too often in his early poems, an entry in his notebook indicates an awareness of the Greeks and their differently operating sexual systems. While at Amherst, Fitch wrote in his notebook a list of Greek mythical figures: Fairies, Satyrs, and Nymphs were the first three. Next came, "Dyope, beloved of Apollo;" and the final entry reads, "Hyacinthe, a beautiful spartacus youth beloved of Apollo and Tephy. He returned the love of Apollo. But while he was fighting at ghosts with Apollo and jealous Tephy cursed the Gods to sicken and kill him. From his blood sprang the flower."³¹ This brief notation is important in revealing Fitch's awareness of male same sex love through his reading of the ancient literature. Although clearly influenced by the atmosphere of piety

³⁰ Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 7, 8, 13, 16.

³¹ Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 6, Folder 3, Amherst College Special Collections.

at Amherst, he managed to overlook the religious lessons his professors sought to infuse into all of their students' readings of the Greek material. This tradition of romantic relationships—always referred to by Fitch as friendships—between men is very strong in much of the Greek literature. As hard as the authorities tried to emphasize the superiority of Christianity and the inevitable moral lesson, Fitch and many others were able to find a history and a tradition that seemed to speak directly to them, to their very natures.

Years later, on board ship crossing over to Europe in 1907, Fitch wrote his friend Martin Birnbaum to explain that he was revisiting the ancient Greeks and was again becoming acquainted with a sexual system able to incorporate male same-sex attractions, "I like very much a book of Dickinson's called 'The Greek View of Life,' it gives one insight and understanding of the old Greek civilization which was always very confused in my mind before."³² Dickinson's scholarly study had been able to confirm what many of his other readings on the Greeks had told him since his days back at Amherst: there was a historical precedent for men like himself who chose not to marry, and rather to center their lives around intense friendships. Dickinson, in noting the lack of romance between men and women in the ancient Greek world, explained,

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to conclude, from these conditions, that the element of romance was absent from Greek life. The fact is simply that with them it took a different form, that of passionate friendship between men. Such friendships, of course, occur in all nations and at all times, but among the Greeks they were, we might say, an institution. Their ideal was the development and education of the younger by the older man, and in this view they were recognized and approved by custom and law as an important factor in the State.³³

³² Clyde Fitch to Martin Birnbaum, no date, circa 1907, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 334.

³³ G. Lowes Dickinson, The Greek View of Life (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1916, first published, 1896), 46.

Where in much of his college reading in the classics, Fitch had been forced to look primarily on his own for male same-sex attractions, Dickinson had boldly stated what the young man had already surmised: not only did these friendships flourish, but indeed they were recognized and approved by custom and law. In using the literature and historical studies of the ancient civilizations to discover a tradition of male love, or friendship, that had existed for centuries, Fitch was typical of men in the nineteenth century transatlantic culture: this discovery was repeated throughout England and the United States—at least among the upper classes who had access to these texts. Thus an educated reader like Fitch could find a rich literature on male friendship, despite an apparent public veil of silence on the subject.

As his discovery of Dickinson's text so clearly illustrates, Fitch's acquisition of information on male same-sex attractions—almost always framed by the institution of friendship—continued long after the end of his formal education. Like many men in a quest to understand this temperament that had somehow placed them apart from the general population, Fitch eagerly sought out books on the subject for the remainder of his life. By 1909, the year of his death, he had accumulated a great deal of information that had profoundly informed his understanding of both his sexual desires and his gender behavior. Fitch's extensive library, catalogued at his death, contains a number of books of Greek literature and nineteenth century studies on the ancient civilizations. Alongside the "New Testament in the Original Greek" that President Seelye would have expected, are many books he may not have; indeed, many of the books would most likely have caused him a great deal of anxiety. Included among them: Cicero's A Book of Friendship; a study of Narcissus; The Love Sonnets of Proteus; the writings of Sappho;

ten books concerned with Greek and Roman customs; and Edward Carpenter's anthology of friendship, Iolaus (published in 1895) which emphasizes the central role this institution—especially among men—played in the ancient world.³⁴ Fitch's library also contained historical studies by John Addington Symonds and Walter Pater. Significantly, most of these volumes are European in origin, such as Will Low's 1905 volume, A Chronicle of Friendship which details male friendship circles in Paris at the turn-of-the-century. Other significant books found in the library included a number of studies touching on male same-sex attractions: the 1890's publication famous for its male love content, The Yellow Book; all of Oscar Wilde's works—including the first biography by Robert Sherard; the published diaries of the notorious English homosexual Ronald Gower, Lord Sutherland; poems of Lord Alfred Douglass, of Marc Andre Raffolovich; and finally, works by French decadent J.K. Huysmans and Lord Alfred Byron. Among Huysman's books, A Rebours, was the most infamous and had a profound influence on the English aesthetic movement. The novel, following the life of, "Duc Jean des Esseintes, a frail young man of thirty, anaemic and nervous, with hollow cheeks, eyes of a cold steely blue, a small but still straight nose, and long slender hands."³⁵ Echoing many of Walter Pater's works, this hero Esseintes, a dandy who lives only for sensations, embarks on a series of adventures in his sordid life. It is claimed by many that this was the "notorious book" which was supposed to have exerted such a powerful influence over Dorian Gray in Wilde's novel.

³⁴ Inventory, "Books from the Library of Clyde Fitch: New York and Katonah." Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

³⁵ J. K. Huysmans, Against the Grain [A Rebours] (New York: Dover Publications, 1969, first published, 1884), 2.

Fitch seemed to have acquired almost everything available on Regency England's famous poet Lord Byron. As Louis Crompton so admirably chronicles in his work, by the late nineteenth century Byron had clearly become an icon for those interested in male same-sex passion—not unlike Walt Whitman.³⁶ Thus, the presence of his works (in six volumes), *Memoirs*, *Letters*, his final conversation with Countess Blessington; and biographies (including one charting his last days in Greece) is revealing. In Byron's works, and the many biographical studies, Fitch could discover yet another compelling model of one who had chosen the unconventional path. Each of these authors provided important building blocks with which Fitch could construct a framework for understanding himself—a man who intended to center his emotional life not in marriage, but in intense, “sentimental” male friendships.

Reading: Discovery of the Friendship Model

“The degree to which Friendship, in the early history of the world, has been recognized as an institution, and the dignity ascribed to it, are things hardly realized today.”³⁷ Carpenter's theme, informing his entire anthology—*Iolaus*—is clear from this first sentence. The work moves chronologically from the “Pagan and early world” through the “Renaissance and Modern Times.”—ending with Walt Whitman's call for “adhesiveness” between men in the 1850's. At the center of the book, however are the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. Among works by eighteenth and nineteenth century classicists—in addition to translated original texts by Plato, Sappho, and others—

³⁶ Louis Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in Nineteenth Century England* (Swaffham, England: The Gay Men's Press, 1985), 338.

³⁷ Edward Carpenter, *Iolaus: An Anthology of Friendship*. (Boston: Charles E. Goodspeed, 1902 [first published by “anonymous,” in England, 1895]), preface.

John Addington Symonds's work figures prominently. Quotations from his Studies of the Greek Poets, one of the earliest historical works to highlight the importance of romantic friendship among the ancient Greeks, conveyed the reader to a world far removed from late nineteenth century prudishness, "Nearly all the historians of Greece have failed to insist upon the fact that fraternity in arms played for the Greek race the same part as the idealization of women for the knighthood of feudal Europe. Greek mythology and history are full of tales of friendship."³⁸

Carpenter's volume, although clearly skirting on difficult terrain considering the public morals of the day, did nonetheless introduce the idea that these friendships were sometimes less than platonic, "it appears to have been the practice for every youth of good character to have his lover; and on the other hand every well educated man was bound by custom to be the lover of some youth."³⁹ Thus, the book offered Fitch the ability to see clear role models for those who—like himself—chose to invest their emotional lives in male friendships rather than marriage. The young New York playwright also owned Symonds's The Renaissance in Italy (1875-7) and The Life of Benvenuto Cellini (1888)—both emphasized similar themes of "friendship," "comradeship," or "brotherhood."

A number of titles found in Fitch's library reveal the central building blocks that he had spent years gathering in order to arrive at a mature understanding of male friendships and his own sexual temperament. This window into an early twentieth century upper class man's view of himself and his predecessors is important in illustrating what works were available at the time. Among the few American volumes in

³⁸ Ibid., 15.

³⁹ Ibid., 18.

the playwright's collection, are the works of that great celebrator of male friendship, comradeship, and sensuality—Walt Whitman. In addition to the major works such as Leaves of Grass, Specimen Days, and An American Primmer, books exploring Whitman's personal life as a bachelor are here: Traubel's biography and memoir, With Walt Whitman, and Calamus, Letters to Peter Doyle, 1868-1880. When reading Whitman's work Fitch would have encountered a strong advocate for the passionate male friendships that he hoped to center his own life around—such affinity no doubt explains the many volumes he had gathered. Writing on this different kind of friendship between men, Whitman looked to a future Fitch too obviously yearned for,

It is to the development, identification, and general prevalence of that fervid comradeship (the adhesive love, at least revealing the amative love hitherto possessing imaginative literature, if not going beyond it), that I look for the counterbalance and offset of our materialistic and vulgar American democracy, and for the spiritualization thereof. Many will say it is a dream, and will not follow my inferences; but I confidently expect a time when there will be seen, running like a half hid warp through all the myriad audible and visible worldly interests of America, threads of manly friendship, fond and loving, pure and sweet, strong and lifelong, carried to degrees hitherto unknown.⁴⁰

As historian Michael Lynch demonstrates in his article "Here is Adhesiveness: From Friendship to Homosexuality," Whitman tapped into a long tradition with his vision of male love and friendship. Works such as Whitman's were an important validation for Fitch as he attempted to organize his life along the lines he had chosen.⁴¹

Even more than Whitman's works, Walter's Pater's writings had an important affect on Clyde Fitch. Pater's works highlighted not only friendship as a strong institution for a single man's life, but in addition brought forth the effeminate, or "dainty"

⁴⁰ Walt Whitman, Democratic Vistas (first published, 1871; quotation in Edward Carpenter, Iolaus: an Anthology of Friendship, 178.

⁴¹ Michael Lynch, "'Here is Adhesiveness': From Friendship to Homosexuality." (Victorian Studies, Autumn, 1985), 67-96.

man as a role model; such an influence provided Fitch with historical or literary precedents for his own dandy persona. The playwright's library contained two influential collections of Pater's essays: The Renaissance (1873) and Appreciations (1889). Much like Carpenter's and Symonds's work, the theme of male romantic friendship is a constant in Pater's writing. Within this theme, he presents a type of man, of a "certain kind of temperament," who felt most comfortable in such relationships. In the essay, "Winckelmann" Pater explains how this eighteenth century German scholar identifies so closely with the ancient Greeks and the sacred institution of male friendship,

That his affinity with Hellenism was not merely intellectual, that the subtler threads of temperament were inwoven in it, is proved by his romantic, fervent friendships with young men. He has known, he says, many young men more beautiful than Guido's archangel. These friendships, bringing him into contact with the pride of human form, and staining the thoughts with its bloom, perfected his reconciliation to the spirit of Greek sculpture.⁴²

Along with these two volumes, Pater's only novel, Marius The Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas (1885), presents similar themes of male friendship, and a sensitive, aesthetic style of masculinity—and invariably young men of a "certain kind of temperament."

Styling himself from a very young age as a dandy, Fitch naturally gravitated to the romantic, homoerotic studies by the bachelor Oxford academic. Indeed, in his first collection of short stories he dedicated one to Pater—as he did another story in the same volume to another influential aesthete, Oscar Wilde. The inscription to Pater reads, "Your name I dare have written/Above so wee a thing,/Remembering the kitten/Was let look on the King." During his yearly travels to Europe the young man sought out Pater, sent him his work, and generally played the role of devoted pupil—as he would do in a far more passionate way later in the 1890's with Wilde. In response to Fitch's gift of his

⁴² Walter Pater, The Renaissance (New York: The Modern Library, n.d. [first published, 1873]), 159.

book, complete with its flattering dedication, the elder man wrote (enclosing his photograph),

My Dear Mr. Fitch: I thought it extremely kind of you to send me your most charming and affectionate book, which it has given me great pleasure to read; though I find your friendly dedication of 'An Unchronicled Miracle' to myself more than I deserve. You have been well supported by your illustrator. I sincerely hope you will go on with work like this, on an increasing sale. It makes a delightful gift book. Sincere thanks for it, with best wishes for the New Year, from yours very truly, Walter Pater.⁴³

Similarly, in August of 1890 four years before his death, the quiet scholarly academic thanks the young American, "Dear Fitch: Your visit on Sunday gave me great pleasure. We hope to be home again by the end of September. Come and see us then: and kindly accept the enclosed. Very sincerely yours, Walter Pater."⁴⁴

Also included among Fitch's books were two posthumous biographies of the influential Pater; they too provided him with a model for the institution of male friendship. Arthur Benson's 1902 life of the great man discusses briefly his "closest friend and lifelong companion" Charles L. Shadwell—once Pater's student. Benson also raises the difficult subject of sexuality, however obliquely,

He was condemned by temperament to a certain isolation; he was outside the world and not of it. A happy marriage might have brought him more into line with humanity; but his genius was for friendship rather than for love, and his circumstances and environment were favorable to celibacy; and thus he passed through life in a certain mystery, though the secret is told for those who can read it in his writings.⁴⁵

⁴³ Walter Pater to Clyde Fitch, no date, Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 4, Folder 29, Amherst College Special Collections.

⁴⁴ Walter Pater to Clyde Fitch 1 August 1890, included in, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 58. In his later life Pater lived with his sisters.

⁴⁵ Arthur C. Benson, Walter Pater (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1906), 21, 188.

Without question, for men like Clyde Fitch the answer to the mystery was quite clear and they used Pater's writings as an important source for models in fashioning both their lives and most enduring friendships.

A final book from the Fitch library might be the best way to complete the discussion—Thomas Hughes's 1889 novel, Tom Brown at Oxford. The book, a best seller in both England and the United States, is centered around a number of "sentimental friendships" that take place at Oxford University. As his own college writings will clearly show, Fitch underwent similar experiences at approximately the same historic moment during his time at Amherst. Thus this friendship model, perhaps more than any other, would continue to resonate through his later life. The central relationship of the story involves the hero Tom Brown and his friend Hardy. Early in the narrative, Brown ponders this important institution as he, "began to feel that he was contracting his first serious college friendship,"

Blessed is the man who has the gift of making friends, for it is one of God's best gifts. It involves many things, but above all, I take it, the power of going out of one's self, and seeing and appreciating whatever is noble and living (in St. Paul's sense) in another man.⁴⁶

As the many other texts would do also, Hughes's work provided a relationship model for Fitch to follow. It was through such works as these that Fitch began constructing a meaning for friendship strong enough to anchor what would become—publicly at least—his "bachelor's life." Most clearly articulated in his later adult correspondence, this understanding of his same-sex attractions was likely still evolving during his college days: he may not yet have been aware of the possibility of physical love for instance.

⁴⁶ Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown at Oxford, 97.

Religion

Without question, a strict New England Protestant upbringing, followed by years at the Holderness School and Amherst College—with their common goal of providing a strong dose of Christian education—could not help but leave a powerful mark on Fitch’s mature worldview. Writing home to his mother while at Holderness, the young Fitch noted in 1879, “we have sermons every afternoon—I have a daisy seat in church right opposite the choir.”⁴⁷ As has been discussed, Amherst also engaged in almost constant efforts to instill Christian piety into the education given to all of its undergraduates. In a sign that this message had not been lost on him, during his college years Fitch had painted over his room’s fireplace the words, “Oh, ye fire and heat, Bless ye the Lord.” Clearly then, a strong religious belief had been carefully nurtured and continued to be important to him into adulthood. When he began his annual journeys to Europe following graduation from college, however, and began to truly absorb the culture, Fitch’s religious fervor began taking some dramatic departures from the harsh puritan script of his native region.

In the volume of his letters published after his death, in general the only occasions when the playwright mentions religion follows an emotional encounter with a highly ritualistic service—often Roman Catholic. Although he attended church irregularly while at home, when traveling abroad Fitch eagerly sought out the religious experiences the old civilization provided—Italy, Spain, and France with their rich Christian traditions and services particularly affected him. In a typical response, he describes such a service in Sevilla, Spain,

⁴⁷ Clyde Fitch to Mrs. William G. Fitch, 1 October 1879, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 11.

Easter Sunday we heard a gorgeous mass in the Cathedral. I never saw such vestments and such jewels, nor such wonderfully beautiful old silver candlesticks that were carried all the time here and there by boys in old rose, pink, and white silk gowns, trimmed with silk fringe and tassels of the same colors!⁴⁸

Fitch's description brings together all of the elements that became central to his religious beliefs as they developed in the years after leaving Amherst: love of ritual, of the aesthetic experience of the worship, and a fusion of these two with a clear homo-erotic undercurrent. Thus, his male same-sex attractions—far from presenting a threat to his understanding of Christianity—actually became part of it. Virtually all of the descriptions of Christian worship America's famous playwright wrote home to friends as he traveled through Europe incorporate these elements. From Venice he recounted to Virginia Gerson,

I wrote you Sunday of the Whitsun service in the Greek church; it was so lovely! We rowed up in the gondola to the church steps. Inside the sunlight only streamed through one window in a dome. It is an old church with fine old mosaic on the walls, and all along the sides tall black carved choir stalls in which we sat—a myriad of very tall candles burning, and incense thick, also the odor of roses, whose petals were strewn thick over the entire floor. The singing of hidden men and boys constantly occurring all through the service like heavenly punctuation marks; and the gorgeous vestments of the priests and serving boys added more beauty to it all!⁴⁹

Another visit to Spain brought descriptions of the wonders of incense-filled services, and “an enclosure with many hundreds of men, boys, and priests”—all together creating a night, “wonderful and unreal.”⁵⁰ In his seminal article, “UnEnglish and Unmanly: Anglo-Catholicism and Homosexuality” David Hilliard notes how “ritualism provided a

⁴⁸ Clyde Fitch to Virginia Gerson, 6 May 1897, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 108.

⁴⁹ Clyde Fitch to Virginia Gerson, 31 May 1904, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 266.

⁵⁰ Clyde Fitch to Virginia Gerson, 6 April 1900, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 162.

way of escape from the problems of sexual tension and forbidden love into a make-believe world of religious pageantry, ancient titles and ranks, [and] exotic symbolism.”⁵¹ Fitch’s relationship with high church Christian services and rituals appears almost an exact model of the sort Hilliard’s article describes.

Despite constructing a form of Christianity that appealed to his temperament, Fitch never completely shook the legacy of his puritan upbringing and education. More than anything else, Fitch’s guilt over his same sex attractions seems to have been framed by Christian doctrine. Writing to close friend DeWitt Miller the playwright confides that he has yet to reconcile Christian theology with what he believes to be his natural “temperament.” Such a reconciliation would only come much later in life for Fitch.⁵² In another letter he notes along similar lines how he understands his many illnesses, “I wish I were a strong man. Instead I am sick, sick, Sick. Every year!! Well, I have much to be thankful for, and I take my illnesses to be punishment for my sins—and I would rather expiate them here, than there.”⁵³ Thus, although his religious beliefs became in part a source of strength for Fitch, they simultaneously served to remind him of the permanent outsider status he would always hold. The difference between these two apparently contradictory elements of the man’s Christian beliefs ultimately lays between the religion he himself had constructed and the unforgiving old testament God he had inherited—despite years of reading, travel, and contemplation, the former could never completely triumph.

⁵¹ David Hilliard, “UnEnglish and Unmanly: Anglo-Catholicism and Homosexuality.” Victorian Studies, Winter 1982, 190.

⁵² Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 2 January 1891, Clyde Fitch Collection, Special Collections, New York Public Library.

⁵³ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 9 February 1891, Clyde Fitch Collection, Special Collections, New York Public Library.

Friendships at Amherst

As so many recent studies have shown, intense friendships and schoolboy or schoolgirl crushes were common at gender segregated boarding schools and colleges.⁵⁴ Amherst College was no exception. The poem "Amherst Friendships" appeared in the Amherst Student in the spring of 1886, the year of Fitch's graduation; the piece draws attention to these relationships so important to college life at the time.

Of all the joyous happy visions
That Love shall summon to Her call,
It surely will be sweet to treasure
Our college friendships most of all.

The poem, published without signature, further speaks of "college comradery" and "this glad communion" of college friendship. It is important to note from our twenty-first century perspective that these friendships contained no stigma and were not discouraged by the college authorities. This attachment was "as pure as it was happy" and even, "burned our faults away."⁵⁵ For many college men these relationships were important during one segment of their lives, and as they entered the adult world melted away before the new attractions of courting women, marriage, and fatherhood. Such appears to be the case with Fitch's close friend Frank Whitman. For others however, who did not marry,

⁵⁴ Martha Vicinus, Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), Chapters 4 & 5; Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, The Power and Passion of M. Carey Thomas (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994); E. Anthony Rotundo, American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era (New York: Basic Books, 1990), Chapters 3 & 4; Jeffrey Richards, "'Passing the Love of Women: Manly Love and Victorian Society.'" In J.A. Mangan & James Walvin, Editors, Manliness and Morality: Middle Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); D. Michael Quinn, Same-Sex Dynamics Among Nineteenth Century Americans: A Mormon Example (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Caleb Crain, American Sympathy: Men, Friendship, and Literature in the New Nation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Jonathan Ned Katz, Love Stories: Sex Between Men Before Homosexuality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

⁵⁵ Amherst Student, 22 June 1886, 233, Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 6, Folder 4, Amherst College Special Collections.

this model of relationship, which had served as a source of strength and happiness in school, continued to do so into their adult lives.

As a member of the Chi Psi Fraternity, Fitch lived in the fraternity house after boarding his first two years at “the old Hunt’s block.” Despite early problems on campus over his failure to conform, he seems to have fit in rather well with the fraternity crowd. Beginning in the 1870’s the various fraternity chapters had built their “lodges” on the Amherst campus. Through these structures the fraternities were a visible presence, and played a central role in the social life of the campus. When Fitch arrived there in the 1880’s, approximately one half of the student body were members. Within ten years the numbers had gone up even more and almost eighty percent of the students pledged for one of the fraternities. William S. Tyler, a professor at Amherst in these years, lamented that the fraternities showed, “too much fondness for promenades, dances, and other amusements, especially in winter term, the Congregational Lent.”⁵⁶ Thus although clearly losing ground by the last decades of the nineteenth century, the college’s Puritan old guard was not without influence.

The intimacy of the fraternity was a site of much male bonding, where even romance flourished. The romantic mystery, codes of secrecy, and the students’ own version of what constituted a Christian gentleman held its members tightly together during their time there. Within the sentimental spaces of the fraternity, perhaps more than anywhere else on the Amherst campus, intense friendships or attachments were formed—friendships that for many were to last a lifetime. Much of Fitch’s own poetry references romantic friendships; for these were his most enduring and important relationships. Furthermore, as the many works on the institution of friendship found on

⁵⁶ Thomas LeDuc, *Piety and Intellect at Amherst College*, 125

his library shelves at his death attests, Fitch had read many works on the subject during the course of his short life. As his personal writings from these college years illustrate, the friendship models highlighted in these works had made a profound impression on him. Writing in his private journal three years after leaving Amherst, he is hopeful of finding an “ideal” friend in the poem, “A Man with a Heart.”

In all the world I most do prize
A man with a heart, there are such I’m told,
Who stands your friend in the glad surprise,
In all the world him most I prize,
Who still your friend when the only light dies,
Grasps close your hand, tho the world grows cold.
In all the world I most do prize
A man with a heart—there are such I’m told.⁵⁷

Even by this time, he had come to realize that these relationships with other men, so central to his emotional life, brought together both friendship and love. His readings had provided him with a model for these friendships as valuable institutions for those like himself who chose not to marry. In the same year—1889—he draws on the same imagery of a romantic friend standing at his side and giving him strength,

Across the waters of both sea, and life,
I reach a brother’s hand and heart to mine;
To battle, with the, fateful wave, and strife,
Toward blissful peace, our fair horizon line.
Together when the opal dawn floods the glad skies
Together when the sinking sun blurs our sad eyes.

It seems clear that Fitch, in gathering information on same sex affection during his time at Amherst—from his study of the ancient languages, and other works of literature and history—was able to fashion an understanding at least of his romantic feelings for other men. Years later this self awareness of both his effeminate or alternative masculinity and

⁵⁷ Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 6, Folder 6, Amherst College Special Collections.

his physical affection for other men would be refined; eventually to include a clear understanding of the physical side of these affections—and the inevitable dangers of public exposure they would always represent. Yet these sentiments were confined to his private journal. What of Fitch's public presentation of himself?

In the 1886 yearbook, alongside the poem "Amherst Friendships" is a work of his own that Fitch presented. The poem presents the same themes of romantic love as those written in his private journal; only here both friendship and the object of his love's gender are both conspicuously absent.

Unlocked

I could not speak what yet I often wished to say
A pretty compliment I'd think, but—puff—away
It flew, on wings, before I gave it breath, the while
Another's graceful words had won the longed for smile.

Then lo! A miracle,--no warning, forth there rushed
All that I e'er had thought of grace, and lips that hushed.
Devotion, adoration, nothing left to seek,
At last—love opened wide my lips and let me speak.

William Clyde Fitch, '86

In view of the college's lack of women and the mood of the campus as seen in other student writings, and Fitch's own writings, the piece most likely indicates a schoolboy crush. As the later journal entries reveal, the same theme of romantic love/friendship continues to be a strong force into Fitch's adult life. With this student poem, however, he has already begun to consider the thorny problem of how to publicly present himself. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century the most viable model was that of the dandy—and this he adopted with great fervor. Yet, during this period when romance or sexuality between men was harshly viewed as "sodomy" or worse,

simply “unspeakable,” writers were forced to use a form of code. This code is already apparent in Fitch’s poem: the use of a gender-neutral love object for example was a well-worn trope.⁵⁸ Writing from the viewpoint of a female narrator was another effective smokescreen; this method he too used in his early writings. At first alternating between the two, he would in the years ahead employ many more such devices.

As early as his boarding school days at Holderness, Fitch—typical of boys of his social class—experienced schoolboy crushes. When he was fourteen he wrote his mother of a new friend, “I am in love with one fellow here, Livermore, a great grandson of the old Judge. He is rather small, very handsome and a great athlete, is elegant on the ball ground, and is very tony in knickerbockers there, but a splendid fellow.”⁵⁹ At age fourteen it was still quite acceptable for a boy to openly admire another—even to have a crush, or “smash.” Thus, Fitch’s description of his friend is entirely free of any sense of embarrassment or sense of shame. He continues in the letter to explain how he planned to continue the friendship—and how he felt drawn to a masculine boy his father would approve of, “I am going to start Livermore at Greek, as I want him to come to college year after next to chum with me. He is just the kind of boy papa would like.” Judging from the writings of Fitch and others at Amherst, these male friendships held no stigma among this upper class population and typically continued at least through the college years. With a man’s entrance into adulthood, however, this open admiration becomes suspect—especially for Fitch in the years after 1895. It is in these years that he

⁵⁸ Brian Reade, Editor, *Sexual Heretics: Male Homosexuality in English Literature from 1850 to 1900* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1971), 23, 31, 39; Timothy d’Arch Smith, *Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English ‘Uranian’ Poets from 1889 to 1930* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1970), xviii, 12, 33; Byrne R. S. Fone, *A Road to Stonewall: Male Homosexuality and Homophobia in English and American Literature* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 94.

⁵⁹ Clyde Fitch to Mrs. William G. Fitch, 1 October 1879, *Clyde Fitch and His Letters*, 10.

experiments with literary devices designed to disguise his attractions to other men—the female narrator or gender-neutral object for instance.

Upper class bachelors such as Clyde Fitch transformed the model of friendship into the most intense and powerful relationships in their lives—relationships that would anchor them emotionally the way marriage normally did; they then in turn carefully disguised these relationships by framing them in an acceptable manner for the larger public. Thus, although Fitch's new model of friendship clearly incorporated the elements of love and sexuality, he needed to clearly remove himself from any possible hint of the sodomite identity. We have seen how upper class men such as Fitch were able to draw on earlier traditions of male friendship through the study of ancient languages, history, and literature. It is important to note that, to Fitch, who died in 1909, appeared never to have read any of the medical books on sexuality available in his day. Equally significant, there is no evidence of his ever using the word "homosexual." Rather, it was through the study of friendships down through history that he had found his history.

It is clear that at least from his time at Amherst (and most likely from early childhood), Fitch was a gender nonconformist. In constructing himself as the dandy, a role so popular in the transatlantic upper class culture in the 1880's through the popularizations of Wilde and others, Fitch quite successfully participated in college life. Similarly, this setting provided the perfect opportunity for him to publicly don female garb in the theatrical productions these colleges held in the period—never again would such an accepted avenue be available to him to express the "woman within." Upon graduation, and the move away from a sequestered male-only campus, however, new strategies were needed as he ambitiously attempted to break into both New York society

and the country's literary marketplace. As an effeminate man who so clearly blurred gender boundaries, Fitch's "womanly" attributes and characteristics at first served as his greatest liability in this quest—ultimately, however he was to discover they represented one of his greatest strengths.

Chapter 2

Friendships

Introduction: Interpreting Friendships through a Wall of Silence

It would be an impossible undertaking to approach male homosexuality among the middle and upper classes during the nineteenth century without considering the role of respectability, and its resulting wall of silence on virtually all sexual matters. For some years now—going back to Steven Marcus’s early work—historians have been aware that although middle class Victorians did not openly discuss sexuality, this did not mean they were completely unknowing.¹ Rather, as the recently published study by Helen Horowitz tells us, information on these matters was highly censored—especially she argues after the 1870’s—when the culmination of middle class evangelical efforts to eradicate all sexuality from the public discourse gained the upper hand.² No subject evoked greater denunciation than homosexuality, and for this reason uncovering its history presents the most difficult challenge of all. An utter inability to even discuss the “unmentionable” pervades virtually all source materials. Indeed, the efforts at complete suppression of the discourse on homosexuality that Havelock Ellis cried out against in 1897 must be reckoned with whenever attempting to understand the era and its attitudes.³

When turning to male friendships of the day, untangling the knots of chaste romantic friendship rhetoric—so often brought forth as a fig leaf of respectability on otherwise forbidden relationships—from true feelings and behaviors can prove a daunting

¹ Steven Marcus, The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth Century England (New York: Basic Books, first published, 1966).

² Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, ReReading Sex: Battles over Sexual Knowledge and Suppression in Nineteenth Century America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002).

³ Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, Sexual Inversion (London: Wilson & Macmillan, 1897), vi.

task. As a product of his time, Clyde Fitch often employed these evasive survival skills. Nonetheless, even when an interpretation of silence—or significant omissions—is required, this should not be confused with a lack of sexual identity. That Fitch had a pronounced sexual role and identity centered on his male same-sex attractions is clear—yet the rhetoric and silences of the day need to be deconstructed before any true understanding of his time and place becomes possible. Accordingly then, interpreting the playwright's significant friendships requires perhaps more creativity than the historian might normally call forth—all too often the materials raise more questions than answers. Nonetheless, when these friendships are analyzed through the lens produced by a growing understanding of sexuality, new and important insights can result.

Peering through these many layers of silence involves not only interpreting Fitch's own efforts at covering his tracks—but in addition the labors of those around him—most importantly family and friends. At the playwright's death for instance, the enterprise of eradicating all traces of homosexuality from his history moved into high gear. There is no way to know how many letters, books, and papers his mother, his friend Virginia Gerson, and so many others destroyed. Still, what remains can reveal more than these incinerations could ever erase. This history of omissions, however haphazard it may first appear, can ultimately yield a richer and more nuanced understanding of homosexual identity than has heretofore been possible.

In this chapter, three of Fitch's early friendships consummated at Amherst will be explored first. Due to a general paucity of sources and consciously placed misinformation, much of these histories necessarily remain suggestive. In his friendship with DeWitt Miller however—completely absent in the posthumous history which

culminated in the 1924 volume of ruthlessly bowdlerized letters—we gain real insight into Fitch’s understanding of his gender behavior and same-sex attractions. Also central to the chapter is a gradually emerging picture of two models of homosexuality among the middle and upper classes at the end of the nineteenth century: effeminate men such as Fitch, and more normally gendered men such as DeWitt Miller—(or Ogden Codman and Arthur Little discussed in the next chapter). That the latter group endured far less hostility from the society and culture than the former will become unmistakable as the narrative continues.

Frank Whitman

Frank Ellsworth Whitman, born in Saginaw, Michigan on 29 July 1862, was three years Fitch’s elder. Growing up in Chicago, he came east to Amherst in 1881 where the two pledged to the same fraternity and soon became fast friends. Whitman’s letters figured prominently in the collection of Fitch’s letters edited and published by his friends after his death. Included in this volume is an early letter which would seem to indicate Whitman too was the object of Fitch’s schoolboy affections, “My Dear Frank: Here is a little bowl of daisies for the Gym Captain of ’85, with the heartiest congratulations for his victory in the contest for the Gilbert prize.” Following Whitman’s graduation, the two remained in touch. At the end of a long, chatty letter full of events at Amherst, Fitch closes with his usual affection, “I wish I were going to be greeted again when I return to

Amherst after this vacation with the sight of your face, as last xmas. Good night again.

With love, devotedly, Clyde.”⁴

Unlike many of Fitch’s friends, who remained life-long bachelors—especially in the theatrical and artistic worlds—Whitman married in 1891 at age twenty-nine. Although there is not enough information on his personal life to know specifics, there were many men of his social class who married during this period as the years of youth began to pass them by—specifically to avoid the lonely life of the bachelor. These marriage strategies seem to be irregardless of sexual interest—many who had maintained passionate same-sex relationships found marriage the best strategy in adulthood—for stability, respectability, even comfort.⁵ By the time Whitman announces his engagement to Mary Pitkins Hill of Amherst in 1887, the language in Fitch’s letters has changed markedly from earlier days. He seems to attempt more of a traditionally masculine persona and his guard is up, as it is not in letters to his bachelor—or female—friends. Writing from Newport, Fitch celebrates the news awkwardly, “You have progressed, old fellow (‘put her there’!), famously, and I rejoice with you, and God bless you both...why you bold cheeky fellow!”⁶

At this point in his life still searching around for a balance in presenting himself to others, Fitch, in addition to his bravado, attempts to indicate that he too is searching for a suitable female mate. Although he did have a number of female friends—most notably Virginia Gerson, who worked with him in the theatre, and became one of his closest

⁴ Clyde Fitch to Frank Whitman, 24 May 1884; Clyde Fitch to Frank Whitman, 5 April 1888, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 19, 23.

⁵ Although Howard Chudacoff’s recent work indicates that men like Fitch who chose not to marry were on the rise in late nineteenth century America. Howard Chudacoff, The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁶ Clyde Fitch to Frank Whitman, 25 July 1887, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 38.

friends—there is no evidence he ever seriously contemplated marriage, or had a romance with a woman. Yet here in this letter we find Fitch embellishing the truth, providing a cover; a ploy so familiar to generations of gay men in the twentieth century. “I haven’t found the sand to go half as far as you. With us much more was *understood* than said, and it’s Miss Anne’ yet! You see, I’ve no *prospects*, not a blankety blank one, except those little literary shavers... I told her I cared more for her than any other girl I’ve ever known, and said I couldn’t in justice say more with only literary prospects—just now. I confess she took it *kindly*, and we both blushed.” Rather transparently, in the same letter in which he wishes Whitman well after learning of his engagement, Fitch feels compelled to tell of his own thwarted romance. Toward the end of the communication, after congratulating his friend once again, he closes with a request, “well—my secret, keep too, please, and there’s no telling for *how long*.” He then closes on a happier, more natural note, in discussing an upcoming trip to Narragansett Pier for the day with his friend “Joe.”

In his daily life as a business man successively in Amherst, Boston, New York, and Buffalo, Whitman did not move in the artistic circles that Fitch took to after himself graduating from Amherst college; yet the two did remain friends, if not frequently in touch. Indeed, the relationship continued after Fitch’s death: Whitman became an advisor to the playwright’s mother on details of the estate, continuing in this role following her death in 1917. Thus, until his own demise in 1946, his name appears on the many contracts dealing with Fitch’s plays and copyright issues still found in the Shubert Archives in New York. In later years, Whitman’s widow turned over a great

deal of Clyde Fitch material—including a full-length portrait of the playwright painted by William Merritt Chase—over to the archives of Bates College.

For an analysis of Fitch's emotional life, the Whitman friendship is important for it illustrates how in the transition from sentimental schoolboy friendships to those of adults not all men took the same path. Most, like Whitman married and centered their emotional lives on marriage and children. Some men however, did not marry and chose rather to continue with the institution of friendship as the emotional center of their lives. For the latter group public discussion of these friendships could be difficult; for just beyond the ambiguous boundary of romantic male friendships stood the specter of the sodomite representing ruin and scandal.

Tod Galloway

Born in Columbus, Ohio in 1863, Tod Galloway was two years older than his friend Clyde Fitch. His father, by profession a lawyer, had come from an old Ohio family and had enjoyed a long career in public service, holding such offices as Secretary to the State's Governor, Congressman, and a candidate for Governor himself. Tod followed an elder brother to Amherst—again, like Fitch's—a likely choice considering the family's social position. In 1886, approximately twenty-five percent of Amherst students hailed from outside New England.⁷ After his graduation in 1886, Galloway returned to Columbus, at his family's insistence eventually becoming a lawyer—despite

⁷ Among New England colleges Harvard had the same percentage—with 65% native students that year. Yale and Williams were far more open to those from outside the region, both with only 30% natives; Dartmouth and Bowdoin had the lowest numbers of outsiders with 84% and 98% native New England students respectively. Cornelius Howard Patton & Walter Taylor Field, Eight O'Clock Chapel: A Study of New England College Life in the Eighties, 32.

his love of the theatre. Here he remained for many years, living with his mother, practicing law, putting on amateur theatrical performances, and living the life of a dashing man about town. Later in life, Galloway finally gave up his career in the law and moved to New York to work in the artistic world that his friend Clyde Fitch had been so successful in. Over time, he worked as an editor for a publishing house, worked in the theatre, and had his greatest success as a composer of popular songs—including his most famous Yale “Whiffenpoof song.”⁸

While in college, Galloway, Frank Whitman, and Fitch became the closest of friends. As Fitch and Galloway shared a keen interest in the theatre, this common interest bonded them. Indeed, Galloway took to the female roles in the college productions almost as naturally as Fitch did; they co-starred in many plays. The two got away to New York as often as possible to attend the professional theatre; the most famous of these trips was that from their junior year when they managed to see eleven plays in only six days.⁹ The lives of the two friends continued to parallel down to the time of Fitch’s death in 1909: they spent time in Europe together in 1892; Fitch paid many visits to Ohio during Galloway’s swinging bachelor days there; Galloway dedicated one of his songs to his friend; and sadly, he served as one the playwright’s pallbearers at his death. In a letter near the end of his life, Fitch called Galloway, “my dear, faithful, and beloved friend.”¹⁰ He always signed his letters to his Ohio friend “Billy,” as he had been known while still an undergraduate. Despite these many connections however, the historical record on the friendship is difficult to establish.

⁸ Richard Theodore Boehm, “Tod B. Galloway: Buckeye Jongleur, Composer of ‘The Whiffenpoof Song’”, *Ohio History*, (1977), 256.

⁹ *Clyde Fitch and His Letters*, 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 364.

Although the book of Clyde Fitch letters that came out in 1924 refers to Galloway as one of Fitch's best school "chums," few of his letters are presented in the volume. The four included consist of Fitch discussing his work—and much like the eulogy delivered by the Reverend Grant—devoid of any discussion of either man's personal life. A letter buried in Galloway's scrapbook however might explain why the letters were so carefully edited. Presenting this letter in its entirety illustrates not only the intimacy of their friendship, but also reveals details of their male-friendship-centered lives that could present real dangers to both men if they reached the general public; Fitch's pronounced feminine manner was already beginning to be discussed. In the summer of 1892, both friends were in London,

Darling Tod:

This note had better come quick and quick in a cab! And here I am! And O! You're out. Why didn't you visit me? I was waiting eagerly all yesterday afternoon and then all today too. I have sent two telegrams to the hotels in Chelsea, thinking you had stayed there; and wouldn't perhaps get my letter. You should have wired me this a.m. and came straight to me. Especially when you are in such trouble. What's the use of having a friend you love if he doesn't come right to see you. I don't care a tuppence for your Paris friends! So there!! I consider while you and I are in London together you belong to me!!!! You are to come to dinner tonight with me. Jim is dining out so we'll have a good old time together, and you can tell me everything. After dinner we'll do as you please. If a theatre I'll show you how to stand cheap. Tomorrow you are to dine with me and Jim White who will be here tomorrow. These are not invitations they are commands....With love, Clyde. I shall come back at 5 if you are still out will go home and wait for you there. Dinner at 6:30 and I'll wait until you come."¹¹

The letter is interesting for a number of reasons: the intimate tone of the friendship, entirely gone from the public record of the friendship—and now absent from Fitch's correspondence with the married Frank Whitman; the hint that Galloway was in trouble

¹¹ Clyde Fitch to Tod Galloway, 1892, Tod Galloway File, Scrapbook, Amherst College Special Collections.

of some sort; and the window into Fitch's London life—complete with live-in companion.

Also found within Galloway's scrapbook are a number of notes of introduction by Fitch to various men in London society. Clearly, as one of the many Americans to summer each year in England, Fitch introduced his friend to English society; most likely into the gay male subculture thriving in the city at least since the early eighteenth century. Similarly, only one letter survives documenting the friendship today at the Clyde Fitch archives established by his mother following the playwright's death. Miss Mary Hutchinson of Columbus writes back home to her friend Tod Galloway of meeting the famous playwright backstage after the smashing success of one of his plays. When Galloway was mentioned, Fitch exclaimed, "Mr. Galloway is one of my dearest, my very dearest friends!" In closing the note, Miss Hutchinson cheerfully remarks, "What a clever looking man Mr. Fitch is, and what fun you and he must have together!"¹² The letter speaks volumes to the era's forced innocence regarding sexuality—especially when the unspeakable vices were concerned.

A Columbus newspaper article from the early 1890's described Galloway as a, "figure in becoming curls and eye glasses, who might be pointed out to a stranger as a poet or an artist, with the greatest possible impunity." The reporter seems to pick up quickly on how Galloway's appearance—if not his actual profession—immediately suggests "the artistic;" otherwise his testing of gender boundaries seems difficult to explain. His appearance does not at all suggest the lawyer and judge that he actually is—normally the dandy's alternative masculinity, or gender nonconformity needs to be

¹² Mary Hutchinson to Tod Galloway, no date, Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 1, Folder 15, Amherst College Special Collections.

relegated to the artistic fringe. His actual career notwithstanding, Galloway's artistic skills are impressive: "in a literary sense he is just a good fellow who can write a brilliant letter, respond to a toast with or without the quail, write a racy sketch, or criticize a play." Before concluding his story, the reporter does acknowledge, "But those choice spirits he in life has met—who know his turn—have nothing to regret in saying he is neither one of these, though talents he has for either if he please."¹³

Socially Galloway kept extremely busy during these years in Columbus. He was a member of the Perriwig, Arian, Columbus, Shakespearean, and Magazine Clubs. Although unmarried, he entertained often—generally at all male functions. As these gender segregated social events were not at all unusual for the upper classes during this period, it is unclear to the twenty-first century observer if these events constituted a homosexual subculture or the mainstream of Columbus's male society. Most likely, they were a complex mixture of both. Judging from the scrapbook, many events were written up in the society pages of the local newspapers. Such mainstream attention notwithstanding, however, coded references to same-sex sexuality abound in the newspaper accounts. To cite only one example, in a listing of the dinner toasts given at the Perriwig Club's annual dinner in 1888, Galloway's is a quotation from the American writer Bayard Taylor; author of the novel Joseph and His Friend (1870), which explores the loving friendship between two men. Not only did Galloway and his friends work their own coded references into these highly public events, but—as was seen in the earlier description of him—the news reporters too clued their readers into the threat of male effeminacy or male affections by using female gendered language. "Mr. Tod Galloway gave a very novel entertainment at his home on East Town Street, Friday

¹³ Unidentified clipping, Scrapbook, 82, Tod Galloway File, Amherst College Special Collections.

evening for the Perriwig Club and Dayton friends. The parlors were prettily lighted by rows of candles with pink shades in different parts of the rooms. Music and recitations were the order of the evening. The affair was one long to be remembered by those present and Mr. Galloway as host is a grand success.”

Clyde Fitch attended some of these Columbus, Ohio functions his friend organized as well. An undated article clipped into the Galloway scrapbook notes, “Columbus had a treat during the early part of the week in a visit of Mr. Clyde Fitch the writer in dramas and stories, who was the guest of Mr. Tod Galloway. A brilliant conversationalist, with a large experience of life, makes him a most delightful man to have come to us.” Another account reporting on the previous evening’s Perriwig Club dinner relates, “Mr. William Clyde Fitch, the author of Beau Brummell, sent his regrets. Mr. Fitch was expected to be here but was unable to come owing to work on his new play.”¹⁴ Fitch’s presence in Columbus indicates that upper class male friendship networks extended not only to such established cities as New York, Boston, London, and Paris, but to those more recently developed in the heartland. Currently, little research has been done on sexuality in these locations, but the window Galloway’s scrapbook opens is suggestive.

Based on circumstantial evidence, it can safely be assumed that Judge Tod Galloway had same sex attractions similar to his friend Clyde Fitch’s. With far less material available on Galloway than on his friend, the historian cannot know absolutely—especially when the extreme horror with which public ideology held same-sex sexuality is considered. Much like New York’s famous playwright, there were many times in his life when he could be himself and fit easily into the mainstream masculine

¹⁴ Unidentified clipping, Scrapbook, 107, 67, Tod Galloway File, Amherst College Special Collections.

culture. During his years at Amherst, romantic college friendships and female drag performances seemed a perfect fit. Later, he seems to have found an intimate circle among the all-male social life of Columbus—not unlike the one Douglass Shand-Tucci has discovered among upper class Boston in the final decades of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ Yet, despite the subtle tension displayed in the newspaper accounts, Galloway was still so much a part of the mainstream life of the city that he could carry on a successful law practice and enjoy a political career. In the twilight of his life, after closing the law office and moving to New York, Galloway volunteered to entertain overseas troops when the First World War broke out. Here, among the young doughboys, he began his love affair with the American soldier. He referred to them as, “the true American Knights of Democracy.” Among these soldiers he seems to have found the period of his greatest happiness; from the front he wrote his sister back in Ohio, “I cannot tell you with what joy I welcome my going back tomorrow to be with the troops. They are so wonderful.”¹⁶

Of relationships more personal we know little. Among the many songs he dedicated to friends, including former classmates Whitman and Fitch, a late one, “The Lonely Hour” is dedicated to his friend John M. Taylor with the inscription, “From Jonathan to David.” Reference to this Biblical story, by the latter half of the nineteenth century is a clear—if coded—reference to same sex attractions. Of Taylor we know very little: he was a long-time friend of Galloway; he is mentioned in many of the society page clippings found in the scrapbook; he once served as Galloway’s accompanist; and in later

¹⁵ Douglass Shand-Tucci, Boston Bohemia, 1881-1900, Volume I, Ralph Adams Cram: Life and Architecture (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).

¹⁶ Richard Boehm, “Tod B. Galloway: Buckeye Jongleur, Composer of ‘The Whiffenpoof Song.’”, 273. The comparison to Walt Whitman’s hospital work in Washington during the Civil War is obvious.

years acted as “his agent in all personal and financial matters.” Taylor was also the person who nursed him in his final illness in 1935.

Edward Simmonds

It is ironic but nonetheless revealing that the relationship most likely of greatest importance to Clyde Fitch—his friendship with Edward Simmonds—is the one we know the least about. Simmonds’s great intimacy with Fitch, and the very real possibility that they were lovers, insured that he would be erased from the playwright’s public history wherever possible. The two were classmates at Amherst and it is here that they became lifelong friends. Graduating in 1885, a year before Fitch, Simmonds seems to have left little trace at the college. In joining the campus Antivenean Society whose members publicly vowed to abstain from alcohol, tobacco, and opium he committed one of the few acts recorded from his days there; all fifteen of the society’s members were listed in the 1885 yearbook.¹⁷ Following graduation, Simmons attended Columbia Law School, passing the New York state bar in 1887. From that year he practiced law in New York City until 1895 when he mysteriously moved back to his hometown of Greenfield, Massachusetts—not far from Amherst. After two years of practicing law in Greenfield Simmons gave up the law entirely, moved back to New York, and took charge of Fitch’s business interests. He remained with the playwright until Fitch’s death. He never married. The intimate nature of the two men’s friendship no doubt required extreme caution; so many years later all is shrouded in mystery. Filling out an Amherst College alumni update in 1920 Simmonds listed his occupation as “retired, invalid, former Major Domo for Clyde Fitch.” At his death from pneumonia in 1929 his obituary noted, “for

¹⁷ Yearbook, The Olio, 1885, 59, Amherst College Special Collections.

many years Mr. Simmonds was a private secretary to Clyde Fitch, famous dramatist, holding the position until Mr. Fitch died.” Numerous newspaper articles mention him as the private secretary accompanying the grieving mother Mrs. Alice Fitch to France to retrieve her son’s body in 1909. After the funeral, however, Simmonds virtually disappears from the historical record; he is not mentioned in any of the published works on the playwright—his name does not appear in the index for the 1924 collection of Fitch letters.

During the preparations for the gift of money, books, and Fitch’s East 40th street library to Amherst in 1914, trustee Frank Whitman wrote to Robert Fletcher, Director of the college library of someone who had knowledge of the Fitch collection, “Edward Simmonds—or as he spelled while in college—Simons, was Fitch’s secretary. He was a Greenfield, Mass boy and now lives at the Hotel Laurretton, 147 West 55th Street. So you see you remembered both the name and the semite suggestion perfectly. Simmonds told Mrs. Fitch that he was quite familiar with the history of the ceiling and would be glad to inform...the president or anyone else in authority. He was with Fitch when practically his entire collection was acquired and knows everything about it.” Whitman then continues on to wonder, “I notice that Simmond’s address is given in the latest address list as 119 East 40th Street, which is Fitch’s old address, now Mrs. Fitch’s. But Simmonds himself gave me the Laurretton not long ago.”¹⁸

The life of Edward Simmonds—or Simons—raises more questions than answers. Most glaring, why would someone leave a successful law practice in New York to return to rural Massachusetts, and then eventually to become a private secretary? A scandal of

¹⁸ Frank Whitman to Robert Fletcher, 2 June 1914, Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 1, Folder 9, Amherst College Special Collections.

some sort is possible. As we know from Tod Galloway, Fitch himself, and others of their circles, scandal or blackmail was a very real possibility in late nineteenth century America for a man with same-sex affections.¹⁹ His relationship to his employer is also unclear. On the front cover of an original manuscript of the play Nathan Hale, is written, “Edward Simons, from his friend Clyde Fitch, Christmas, 1897.”²⁰ This would have been the year he joined Fitch’s household. When Fitch began keeping a guest book at his Greenwich, Connecticut country house in 1903 Simmonds is listed along with the playwright’s mother on the first weekend.²¹

In Fitch’s letters included in the posthumous volume, he does discuss “Ed” as someone clearly very important in his household. The volume’s editors never acknowledge or attempt to explain who this mysterious man is with no surname. In 1904 Fitch wrote his friend theater critic John Corbin from Greenwich, “I’ve been quite alone till today, when Ed came down; it is divinely beautiful weather, with snow solid everywhere and such moonlights! But I’m too exhausted to enjoy it.” Four years later, writing again to Corbin, Fitch presents a relationship apparently far more intimate than employer and employee, “The Gersons are here till Monday, and then Ed and I motor to Mass. I expect to stop a couple of days with Mrs. Wharton and then join Ed in Greenfield, and go on together to see Matt Luce in Cohasset.”²² Finally a letter written to Virginia Gerson during these years indicates that Simmonds had traveled to Europe with the famous playwright for his annual summer trip. Writing from Venice,

¹⁹ Angus McLaren’s recent work, Sexual Blackmail: A Modern History (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), provides an overview of the tangible threat to homosexual men of blackmail during this era. See especially Chapter 1.

²⁰ Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 5, Folder 9, Amherst College Special Collections.

²¹ Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 7, Folder 1, Amherst College Special Collections.

²² Clyde Fitch to John Corbin, [January] 1904; Clyde Fitch to John Corbin [no date, circa 1908], Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 255, 361.

Monday we go to Paris via Lucerne and half a day on the lake! Yesterday was Ed's birthday. I gave him a cigarette holder which he wanted, and C.S. gave him a lunch. Delightful! In his gondolier's house, cooked by the wife, with the daughters and gondolier to wait on us...and Ed had presents....Ed has gone off photographing, and I am going to take Sidney out in the gondola to pay some bills.²³

A final example of the effort to eradicate Simmonds's from Fitch's life—at least as it was represented in the 1924 book of letters—can be found in a letter the playwright sent to the young actor Arthur Byron. In November of 1903, characteristically rushing from meeting to meeting, Fitch apologizes for his failure to attend a rehearsal that afternoon, “I am so over rushed with the scenery and cast (50 people) for ‘Glad of It,’ and Simmonds at the same time still in bed with a trained nurse, so that no one can attend to any of my business but me—that I won't be able to get to the Savoy; now it is 8:20 and I am only just in with a huge pile of work before me for the evening.”²⁴ Years later when compiling the book of letters for her deceased friend, Virginia Gerson included the letter—yet pointedly omitted any reference to Simmonds. The letter as published read, “I am so over-rushed with the scenery and cast (50 people) for ‘Glad of It,’ and my secretary at the same time still ill in bed... so there is no one to attend to any of my business but me.”²⁵ The letter serves as a telling reminder of the efforts of Gerson and others to clean up Fitch's life after his death—to remove any hint of homosexuality from the record. With most of the original letters published in the volume no longer available it is impossible to know what other potentially revealing epistles were similarly excised by the steady hands of its editors.

²³ Clyde Fitch to Virginia Gerson, 31 May 1904, *Clyde Fitch and His Letters*, 267. Sidney was Fitch's valet—as the book's editors describe him in a footnote.

²⁴ Clyde Fitch to Arthur Byron, 21 November 1903, Arthur Byron Letters, Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁵ Clyde Fitch to Arthur Byron, 21 November 1903, as it appears in, *Clyde Fitch and His Letters*, 254.

Tod Galloway's scrapbook however, provides another clue into the shared lives of Fitch and Simmonds: the two are occasionally mentioned as both attending their Ohio friend's parties—making the journey together from New York. With Fitch's sudden death, without having left a will, another possible sign into the closeness of their relationship disappeared. No record exists on what—if anything—Simmonds received from the estate, transferred by New York State law to the playwright's father. His quiet life in a succession of boarding houses in New York City over the years indicates the legacy was at most minimal.

In approaching Fitch's three Amherst friendships—Whitman, Galloway, and Simmonds—one central point seems clear: the relationships the least intimate and personal are those most documented in the historical record. For the friendship that Fitch forged with Edward Simmonds as a source of true emotional support and stability in his life, either as his intimate friend, loyal employee, or lover, is more-or-less absent from the Fitch legacy carefully constructed following his death. If these two men did indeed build a loving partnership, the relationship of employer and secretary was one of the few public covers available which would allow them to live their lives together without scandal. Thus, although seeking—and possibly finding—an equal, or ideal friend, Fitch was forced to present the relationship to the public under false pretences—in the end only perpetuating the Victorian veil of silence on the subject of male homosexuality.

DeWitt Miller and the Quest for an Ideal Friend

As he was maturing into adulthood—traveling throughout Europe, continuing his intellectual acquisitions through constant reading, and falling in and out of more intense friendships—Clyde Fitch was gradually developing both a clearer sense of his identity as a man who would not marry, and a sharper understanding of the institution of friendship as central to his emotional life. By focusing on his extraordinary well-documented friendship with DeWitt Miller we can most clearly trace this evolution of his self-awareness. Most importantly, this correspondence provides a rare window into Fitch's innermost feelings: in one extraordinary letter in particular, he clearly articulates an understanding of men like himself who are attracted to other men. This one communication more than any other, provides a window into what Fitch referred to as his "secret life" to a degree only inferred from his more prolific public writings. Such frankness, rare for the middle and upper classes in this period, is as invaluable as it is unusual. The collection of the friends' correspondence consists of eighty-eight letters sent from Fitch to Miller between 1890 and 1908; apparently none of Miller's letters survive.²⁶ Most likely the playwright himself, his mother, or some unknown third person destroyed them—further contributing to the public wall of silence.

Although Fitch's contemporary, DeWitt Miller, born in March of 1857, emerged from far more humble beginnings than the playwright's upper class New England pedigree. His formal education is sketchy: he attended the Pennington Methodist Seminary in Pennington, New York and claimed to hold no academic degrees; yet in adulthood always presented himself as a Methodist minister. For most of his life he led a

²⁶ Clyde Fitch Collection, Special Collections, New York Public Library, Fifth Avenue, New York, New York. The letters in the collection are not numbered. The letters were purchased by NYPL sometime in the 1930's.

strangely nomadic existence traveling across the country, earning a living through delivering Chautauqua lectures and the occasional sermon. Interested in people's lives, he lectured on such subjects as the book, Reveries of a Bachelor, and "Love, Courtship, and Marriage." A friend recalled him as eccentric in appearance, noting he, "did not dress as other men."²⁷ Aware of his oddities, he did not seem to mind the "little or no curiosity he awakened as he went from place to place, [and] sometimes astonished the chance observer by certain eccentricities of dress." Highlighting these eccentricities, his biographer humorously noted that, "for a man who spent so large a fraction of his time at the Turkish Bath he was singularly indifferent to dirt."²⁸ Miller never married, and never settled down with a place of his own. Until his death, he lived in hotel rooms in cities and town across the country, occasionally staying with close friends; actor Francis Wilson and his wife, for instance were favorites. It seems possible that he on occasion stayed with Fitch, and there were probably many other friends who welcomed his company as he passed through town on his peripatetic travels. He died of heart failure, alone in an Idaho hotel room in July of 1912.

In addition to his lecturing and ministry, Miller's real passion was reserved for books. His lack of a home base notwithstanding, he seems to have been a true and passionate bibliophile. He loved to read books, to collect them, to send them to friends, and to discuss them. In keeping with his unorthodox approach to all things, "Miller looked on books as something to be acquired, just as he looked on dollars as something to be got rid of." Among his interests in books, he focused most closely on those books which explored various aspects of same-sex attractions, friendships, and eroticism. Walt

²⁷ Leon H. Vincent, DeWitt Miller: A Biographical Sketch (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Riverside Press, 1912), 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

Whitman, for instance always remained an important influence as his letter to the poet in the 1880's attests. Perhaps due to his nomadic life, or the lack of an upper class Amherst-style education, Miller appears remarkably free of the fears and tortures that dogged Fitch's steps so often. Similarly, Miller refused to subscribe to the era's generally resolute silence on these subjects—this refusal to remain silent eventually would cause a great deal of panic and anxiety from his friend Fitch, prompting his most candid discussion of his own same sex desires. Indeed, in a characteristically bold declaration of male to male passion, Miller wrote on a copy of Whitman's Leaves of Grass (1855)—which became an icon for many by the end of the century, “To H--, this book, which if occasionally erotic, is never neurotic or to my notice.”²⁹ The understanding—and rejection—of the medical literature's late nineteenth century thesis that homosexuality represented psychological illness seems obvious in this defiant gesture.

Understandably, Miller with his great storehouse of information and positive approach to male friendships, proved a strong draw to the conflicted Clyde Fitch. Although he would successfully present himself to New York society and the burgeoning world of commercial theatre as the consummate dandy and man about town, Fitch faced obstacles—internal and external—at virtually every stage of his career. From the time his first play was produced until the posthumous “The City” saw its premiere, he was relentlessly attacked for a dangerous lack of “manliness.” It is impossible now to say how the two friends met. Miller's complete absence from the “official” Clyde Fitch history makes such information most likely inaccessible. Clearly they crossed paths after the playwright moved to New York in the late 1880's. The earliest dated letter we have

²⁹ Ibid., 40, 115.

is from January of 1890. Fitch sustained support from this friendship in two important ways: Miller provided him books that he used to continue on his journey of self-discovery begun at Amherst (their correspondence indicates he sent at least forty books between 1890 and 1908)—while also encouraging and supporting his career aspirations. In fact, Miller even maintained a clipping scrapbook on all publicity related to Fitch's work. Quite possibly, the voluminous Clyde Fitch scrapbooks housed today at Amherst College were those started and continued by the loyal Miller. Frequently in his letters Fitch thanks his friend for clippings mailed from whatever distant city he happened to be lecturing in at the time.

For Fitch the friendship was intense, and in his usual style he approached it with gushing sentimentality—behavior typical for a proper nineteenth century woman, but not necessarily for a man. Early on in the friendship he begins characteristically, “Absolutely, I am so pleased I am speechless! You have done the thing that goes to, straightest to my heart. Only one other person had the same kind of sympathetic thought and that was my mother. You will see what a high plain in my friendship that places you.”³⁰ Clearly Miller had already become a strong shoulder to lean on. The letter concludes with the thought, “I have longed for the book. Really I wanted it, is this thought transference?” Before signing off as “yours faithfully,” he signals to Miller just how important the friendship is becoming to him with the question, “May I send you my photograph?” Upon receipt of another book in 1892 Fitch writes from London, “If I say, and I do truly, that it went right to my heart, will you understand?”³¹

³⁰ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, no date, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

³¹ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 11 May 1892, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

As the friendship progressed through the 1890's Fitch brought small gifts of different sorts back to Miller from his travels in Europe—a razor, books, clothing; meanwhile the itinerant lecturer continued sending books, books, and more books. By this time, as his career began to flourish, Fitch found himself often in the spotlight and thus felt obliged to present his effeminate manner more judiciously. In his close friendships however, he still felt comfortable enough to return occasionally to his drag “Peggy” feminine persona, “your beautiful scrapbook came all right. I don’t know what you want re: the title page. I think I feel rather embarrassed by the book. ‘It seems so much for so little a person,’ like the ‘Birthday Fete of the Little Princess.’”³² The “Birthday Fete of the Little Princess” was one of the stories in his collection just published—written from the perspective of a female narrator. In addition to discussing the books exchanged, Fitch’s letters dwell frequently on his career—both successes and failures. In his role as a close friend, Miller’s support seemed of great importance to the playwright. To Fitch, this “sweet and lasting expression of a sympathetic interest and friendship, extraordinary in this nineteenth century of ours, and in this commercial corner of the world,” helped him enormously in his struggles in both his private and public lives.³³ One letter in particular discusses how he drew strength from the relationship; after explaining in detail recent career developments, Fitch notes,

I write you fully in this way of all my work because I believe you are really affectionately interested in what I am doing and trying to do, and because I value the interest immensely and want to deserve it, and hope some time to repay you with my accomplishing—the dear encouragement, your belief in me has always been to me.³⁴

³² Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 1 February 1892, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

³³ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, no date, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

³⁴ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, no date (written on 58 West 57th Street letterhead), Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

As bachelors such as Fitch were not to have the support of wife and children, they would necessarily depend more on close friendships. In this role DeWitt Miller's support was to prove invaluable—especially in the earliest years.

Although the best-documented, Fitch's warm friendship with Miller was not his first adult relationship of this kind: an early friendship with the painter William D'Urban is another of these important milestones reached in the years just after leaving Amherst. Fitch's journal for 1888 and 1889 contains a number of short love poems dedicated to "W.D'U." or "my portrait painter." Written in New York, Boston, and London they display a fervent love for this friend, "sometimes the pictures perfect are, But sometimes they are stupid, He's painted me—God grant no man, This time from brush with cupid."³⁵ On board a ship bound for Europe, he writes in another entry of an intense heartbreak at parting with this special friend,

Parting

A look, a thought, a kiss, a wrenching wound,
Eyes fighting tears back, shut, or with hard stare;
From out a choking, swelling throat no sound,
A felt resolve, and a self-whispered prayer.³⁶

As these words make so clear, despite an intense love for his friend, publicly Fitch was obliged to remain quiet—all affection and emotion had to be suppressed. Thus the era's resolute wall of silence on male same-sex affections remained unbridgeable.

Of D'Urban's biography little survives: a postal card sent from London to Fitch at his lodgings in that city is the only remaining correspondence, "Dear C, I am sending a book by this post which I hope will catch you—can't manage a letter today—Wm.

³⁵ Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 6, Folder 6, Amherst College Special Collections.

³⁶ Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 6, Folder 6, Amherst College Special Collections.

D'Urban."³⁷ Heartbroken poems written later in Fitch's journal however, do inform us of the English painter's death—probably in 1890. In the poem, "to the Memory of William M. H. D'Urban," he wrote of an unexpected loss,

He was so young, so lovely and so loved!
The colors of his pallet still were wet!
The brush warm from his hand! And yet
From all of us this promise was removed.

I cannot see him now, nor take his hand,
And yet I know our friendship is with me,
Through all my life, its influence will be,
Until the end; I wait, but do not understand.³⁸

The little information remaining on this early friendship reveals how important these male friendships were already becoming to young Fitch. As he mourned the loss of this friend, correspondence began with another—and this next friendship, the one with DeWitt Miller has far more light to shed than the scattered fragments from the D'Urban relationship. What is clear from the D'Urban materials still is how at each stage of his life after leaving Amherst, Fitch was never without at least one close male friendship to anchor his emotions. Also of interest is the playwright's inevitable choice of male companions: never younger men, but rather those of his own age, or older—and significantly, virtually always more conventionally masculine in gender behavior than himself.

With his sentimental nature, Fitch saw these relationships through a nineteenth century lens of romantic friendship. In effect continuing the schoolboy patterns established at Amherst, and gleaned from literature and history, he successfully fashioned close, intense friendships that would serve him as pillars of support. Many of his letters

³⁷ Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 4, Folder 11, Amherst College Special Collections.

³⁸ Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 6, Folder 4. Amherst College Special Collections.

to Miller, for instance often speak of love and are very romantic. By 1893—three years into the friendship—for instance, Fitch draws hearts on the notes he sent off to his friend. Writing from Chicago where he was at work on a play in June of that year, he attached a postscript, “Has it struck you, its time you didn’t call me Mr. Fitch anymore?”³⁹ Next to this line he drew a heart. Another note, undated but written in the same period before he moved to his townhouse, reads similarly, “My Dear DeWitt: I have only time to say I sail Wednesday next—April 18th for London...and to send you—“ Here he drew another heart—with a second one drawn next to his signature.⁴⁰

To show his affection, Fitch also provided little pressed flowers or poems along with his letters to Miller. Writing from the same 1893 stay in Chicago, he concludes a note with the following,

Ever on earth the flowers have died,
And short is every song bird’s lay;
I dream of summers that abide Always.

Ever on earth lips greet and glide
Nor let their velvet softness stay;
I dream of kisses that abide Always.

Ever on earth have mortals sighed,
O’er loves and friendships turned to clay;
I dream of unions that abide Always.⁴¹

That such a poem—which Fitch indicates he found in a book—is included in a letter to his “beloved friend” speaks volumes on not only the importance of the friendship, but in addition, to his conceptualization of the institution of friendship as a “union”—a emotional foundation on which to build his life. That such friendships functioned much

³⁹ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 8 June 1893, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁴⁰ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, no date (on 58 West 57th Street Letterhead), Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁴¹ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, “Monday Night,” 1893, (on The Virginia Hotel, Chicago, Letterhead), Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

as a marriage did for many of his contemporaries seems quite evident; thus the friendship described at Fitch's funeral—due to a wall of silence—was necessarily incomplete.

Fitch's quest for an "ideal friend" was a frequent pursuit during these years—and this search is apparent in many of the letters he mailed to Miller. A letter from 1895 illustrates how he used such imagery in conceptualizing this important friendship, "I've been thinking so much of you all morning... you see, I think of you really often. You are so loyal, God Bless you, and don't forget, God Bless You, you're sort of an ideal friend, God Bless You!!"⁴² Clearly for Fitch, his relationship with Miller represented nothing short of a dream come true: in this intense friendship, he believed he had at last been granted a partner or "chum" with whom he would share his life. In this romance—more than any other that can still be documented from Fitch's life—a glimmer of the emotional intensity that infused so many of these same-sex friendships shines through. Unless this enormous emotional investment can be appreciated, even the word "friendship" seems woefully inadequate to describe such unions. When viewed in its context then, the "genius for friendship" so often commented upon by commentators on the playwright, assumes a new and central importance to understanding his emotional life. Above all, the friendship with Miller represented investment in an institution around which to organize his life—with male same-sex passions at its center.

"It was really so pleasant—my morning with you—the time went so happily. I want just to tell you so. Yours always, Clyde Fitch."⁴³ Judging from the friends' correspondence, the two did not see each other that frequently; yet when they did manage a meeting, usually in New York, they did embark on adventures. In the winter of 1892

⁴² Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 8 July 1895, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁴³ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 5 February 1893, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

Fitch reminded Miller of one such promise, “When do you come to New York, and aren’t you coming to see me again in my diggings?? And, I am going to remind you that you promised to initiate me into the Turkish Bath in New York.”⁴⁴ Most likely within a few days the promise was fulfilled, “My Dear Friend, Yes, with the greatest pleasure. Shall I meet you at the Baths or will you come here? Or What? I shall be so glad to see you again.”⁴⁵ As historians have now solidly documented, the Turkish Baths in New York were a site for male same-sex sexual activity. Police records confirm what was most likely well known to men interested in such matters. Interestingly, these sites—such as the baths, or saloons, sometimes called “resorts” such as “The Slide”—were places of cross-class mixing; upper class men such as Fitch and Miller moved through them for purposes of adventure, but apparently had little identification of cross-class solidarity with their working class brothers. This lack of commiseration is striking, especially when Fitch’s gender behavior—so similar to the working class fairy—is considered; social class then truly represents an unbridgeable chasm, if the documentation from the playwright’s life is representative.⁴⁶

For the general (middle and upper class) public in the late nineteenth century, however, a determined blindness—the wall of silence—was maintained not only erasing the mere existence of these sites, but in many cases an inability to even acknowledge the very possibility of sexual relations between men. As a result, men engaged in same-sex relationships such as Fitch, actually enjoyed a greater degree of safety in these days of

⁴⁴ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 20 February 1892, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁴⁵ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, no date (on 58 West 57th Street Letterhead), Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁴⁶ See, Chapter 3, “Ogden Codman of Boston”; George Chauncey, Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940, chapters, 1, 8; Jonathan Ned Katz, Love Between Men: Sex Between Men Before Homosexuality, chapters, 20, 21.

silence, then they would as their situation came to be more understood—especially of course after 1895. DeWitt Miller’s biographer, for instance mentioned his subject’s particular fondness for the Turkish Bath with no perceptible trace of embarrassment as late as 1912.⁴⁷

In addition to important emotional support, Miller offered the young Fitch another very critical gift in the latter’s effort to define himself in late nineteenth century society: valuable information on other men who had also centered their lives around the institution of friendship. Beyond the intense emotion apparent in the two friends’ correspondence, books are the secondary focus of the friendship. More often than not, Fitch’s letters begin with thanks for the most recent literary arrival. Through these volumes, sent from friend to friend, Fitch and others like him continued their education in how men like themselves had lived in earlier generations. Furthermore, these books kept him up-to-date on the plethora of material published—often privately—on male same-sex affection at the dawn of the twentieth century. As many recent studies now reveal, this period saw a dramatic expansion in the number of such covert works reaching print. Thus, through their reading, the two friends were able to monitor an emerging public discourse on the subject of male homosexuality—slowly and painfully the nineteenth century wall of silence was lifting.⁴⁸

Writing from his “bachelor hotel,” The Albany, in London in June of 1892, Fitch updated his friend, “I have been very ill indeed again with abcesses in my throat and am

⁴⁷ Leon H. Vincent, *DeWitt Miller: A Biographical Sketch*, 46.

⁴⁸ Brian Reade, Editor, *Sexual Heretics: Male Homosexuality in English Literature from 1850 to 1900*; Timothy d’Arch Smith, *Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English ‘Uranian’ Poets from 1889 to 1930*; James Gifford, *Dayneford’s Library: American Homosexual Writing, 1900-1913* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995); Katherine V. Snyder, *Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel, 1850-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Roger Austen, *Playing the Game: The Homosexual Novel in America* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1977).

only sitting up today for the second time in a week. Cannot remember now if I thanked you for the Bachelor of the Albany which it pleased me so much to receive, and for which I am grateful.”⁴⁹ So often Fitch managed to understand his same-sex desires not only by reading those recent works which addressed the topic more openly, but also by collecting books from earlier periods that, while less direct, nonetheless provided him with clear role models for men who had lived their lives centered not on marriage and family, but on male friendship. Two such books—sent him by Miller—were Ik Marvell’s (Donald Mitchell) Reveries of a Bachelor, first published in New York in 1850, and the English novel, The Bachelor of the Albany (1847). In “Reveries” the confirmed bachelor imagines himself in a series of vignettes of courtship and marriage; within each story, however, he manages to avoid the dreaded institution. Even in the final story, where he at last marries a childhood friend, ultimately all proves a daydream. Thus, in the end he remains with his dear “chums” and other male friends.⁵⁰ Similarly, The Bachelor of the Albany follows the life of two old friends—Mr. Spread, who is married and Mr. Barker, who is not. Here too the story revolves around the bachelor’s timid steps out into the world with its possibility of marriage. Yet, his routines are so established, and his rooms so “substantial and comfortable,” that he is hesitant to leave it all behind. Both works employ humor in examining these bachelors’ lives; so ultimately both are presented as marginal “peevish” and crotchety figures. Indeed, the bachelor of the Albany is often referred to as unfulfilled in his selfish efforts at “zero commitment.”

⁴⁹ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 13 June 1892, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁵⁰ Donald G. Mitchell, Reveries of a Bachelor (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, Fifth edition, 1884). Katherine Snyder’s work has some interesting analysis of the novel in her book, Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel, 1850-1925, 47-63.

Yet, if he resists commitment to matrimony, he is very dedicated to his friends—especially Mr. Spread.

Although both novels revolve around bachelors avoiding the snare of marriage, they served for Fitch as markers of an unmarried man who centered his life on friendships. Chapter three of The Bachelor of the Albany begins with a reflection on nineteenth century mores, “I have often thought those noble pairs and examples of friendship not so truly histories of what had been, as fictions as what should be.”⁵¹ Thus, apart from their actual stories, as bachelor texts they provided additional models for an alternative, softer style of masculinity that dovetailed with Fitch’s own effeminacy. The books also served to highlight a model of man who chose to organize his emotional life around the institution of friendship rather than marriage. Both models were important as Fitch fashioned his single life in a culture seemingly with few such alternatives. Illustrating how these books served to supply him with solace, not only to remind him of kindred spirits, but to recall Miller’s affection, Fitch writes, “On my desk I keep the ‘Life of Beau’ you sent me—the only book on it. And on my little table of books—precious books—your ‘Reveries’ and your ‘Vicar’ have the most prominent place. I often take them up—oh, yes, many, many times to read their kind, pretty dedications, and fly leaves.”⁵²

In addition to those works discussing male romantic friendship, Miller also was not above sending his friend books dealing directly with undisguised sexuality between men. Although judging from his letters and journals, Fitch by the early nineties had become aware of the sexual possibilities possible within the model of romantic

⁵¹ Marion Savage, The Bachelor of the Albany (London: Chapman and Hall, Fourth edition, 1867), 20.

⁵² Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, no date, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

friendships, he generally maintained the middle and upper class wall of silence on the subject. For instance, Miller was careful to save a fragment of a letter from Fitch in which the playwright discusses reading Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891), and promises to take a copy to the author for his signature.⁵³ The book, a notorious sensation on both sides of the Atlantic when it reached publication, publicly presented the dandy persona Fitch had so long cultivated—along with a hint of male same-sex love and sexuality. That the two friends were discussing the Wilde text indicates quite clearly they were at least beginning to discuss some of the complexities of male same-sex attractions. Among many homosexual men after 1891, “Dorian” became shorthand for the sexual possibilities of male same-sex passion. Still, in keeping with the times, by this mature adult phase in his life, Fitch's silence on male same-sex attractions is rarely broached. Writing from his men's club—The Players on Grammercy Park, an establishment he frequently utilized for socializing and entertaining when he still lived in small apartments—Fitch uncharacteristically speaks more openly, and thanks his friend for a racy work just received—most likely one of the homosexual pornography novels circulating at the time. Although still pointedly keeping his language ambiguous, he ventures, “Thank you very much for the ‘party’ you sent me. It is an immensely amusing, breath-taking in a way volume, the naughtiest thing I’ve ever seen in type.”⁵⁴ Clearly then, with the steady stream of books he sent his friend, Miller had a significant role in Fitch's growing awareness by this time. The day would come however, when Miller would push the playwright too far in these dialogues and he would react in a fury of fear and anxiety.

⁵³ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, no date, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁵⁴ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, no date (on Player's Letterhead), Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

Among the pornographic novels with homosexual themes circulating at the turn of the century two stand out prominently: Imre, published in Italy by an expatriate American in 1908 under the pseudonym “Xavier Mayne,” and Teleny, or, The Reverse of the Medal: A Physiological Romance, which appeared in England in 1893 and has sometimes been attributed to Oscar Wilde or others in his circle. As the Fitch/Miller correspondence is at its height in the 1890’s, Teleny, or something of this period would be the more likely. Set in Paris, the novel traces the amorous adventures of two young men in unabashed graphic detail. Originally only two hundred copies were printed in London, but the book circulated among male friendship networks, and continued to be published on and off at least through 1907.⁵⁵ If Fitch’s letter refers to this particular novel or not, there were others on the same themes circulating in a like manner among friends.

For Fitch, despite a nineteenth century ideology of male friendship which did not allow for physical expression, friendship for him clearly did not preclude expressions of physical affection. His letters to Miller often reference physical affection and even the physical sensations his love for his friend could produce. By December of 1896 he feels comfortable enough in the relationship to write suggestively, “May 96 kiss you goodbye and 97 greet you with an affectionate hug.”⁵⁶ In another letter after thanking Miller for another book just received, Fitch exclaims significantly, “when I saw the writing my pulses beat faster with being glad.”⁵⁷ Writing in thanks for yet an additional book, he becomes choked up with emotion in trying to put his feelings into words—thus, for Fitch

⁵⁵ Anonymous, Teleny, or, The Reverse of the Medal: A Physiological Romance (Reprint edition, Winston Leyland, Editor. San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1984), introductory essay.

⁵⁶ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, December 1896, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁵⁷ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, no date, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

the friendship had grown so intense that, in addition to physical sensations, he found himself overcome. Thanking Miller, he repeats the sentiment that so often end the passionate letters he sent his “ideal friend,” it is this friendship more than anything else, “which I value more deeply than I could easily say. God Bless You.”⁵⁸

When Fitch’s early writings and friendships are examined one thing is perfectly clear: from an early date he fell passionately in and out of love with other men—whom he then conceptualized as his “special” or “ideal” friends. This evidence makes obvious that, although he maintained strong friendships with women, he seemed to hold no romantic interest in them. What is less evident from the documentation, however, is the extent of Fitch’s physical relations with his male friends. Outings, such as those to the Turkish Bath discussed with Miller, are certainly suggestive, but not conclusive. Fitch did uncharacteristically discuss the sexual component of his male friendships only once—when pushed to the wall by the inquisitive Miller who had embarked on a series of friendships with other men of the homosexual temperament in order to gain information. When Fitch discovered the intent, he pulled back the wall of silence, and in a passionate outburst proclaimed public discussion of male same sex passions impossible—and dangerous. Before proceeding to this discussion however, it might be useful to study one more clue: the few extant letters Fitch wrote another friend, Morton Fullerton during the same period.

Morton Fullerton (1865-1952), writer and intellectual, graduated from Harvard University the same year as Fitch, 1886. He was a friend of philosopher George Santayana, and moved in upper class male friendship circles in Boston, London, and

⁵⁸ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, ‘Sunday,’ no other date, (on 58 West 57th Street Letterhead), Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

Paris—where he eventually settled permanently. He gained his greatest fame posthumously through his friendship with Henry James, and a torrid love affair with Edith Wharton, not publicly known until R.W.B. Lewis's biography of Wharton was published in 1975. Himself bisexual, Fullerton engaged in a number of brief and intense sexual friendships with other men—including Fitch's friend Percy Alexander and Ronald, Lord Gower whose memoirs Fitch had in his own library.⁵⁹ Owing to three hasty notes in Fitch's hand, written to the dashing Fullerton, we now know the two were also friends—at least briefly. The relationship is germane to the Miller discussion as it illustrates quite clearly how Fitch felt about public revelations of those men who shared his temperament.

Writing his new friend from the Massachusetts seashore where he was staying, Fitch was suggestive in his insistent urgings that Fullerton visit, "I am wondering if you won't come down Tuesday and spend the day and night with me, or if you can't come for the night, can you spare Thursday, or if you cannot get away during Thursday can you come in the afternoon and stay until the next a.m.?"⁶⁰ Fitch's interest in this new acquaintance seems patently clear: "no" did not appear to be an option. While the language could simply be that of a romantic friend, there is a clear homoerotic subtext in all three of the letters. This invitation, for instance, concludes determinedly—and suggestively, "Hope to see you Thursday then for the day and night perhaps," along with the promise of, "a walk on the beach in the sunlight and another by the light of the

⁵⁹ R. W. B. Lewis, *Edith Wharton: A Biography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975); more recently Fullerton is discussed in, John McCormick, *George Santayana: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988); Sheri Benstock, *No Gifts from Chance: A Biography of Edith Wharton* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994); There is a new—although highly idiosyncratic—life of Fullerton written by a researcher from the original Lewis book, Marion Wainwaring, *Mysteries of Paris: The Quest for Morton Fullerton* (Hanover, New Hampshire: New England University Press, 2001).

⁶⁰ Clyde Fitch to Morton Fullerton, no date, #7427, -a, -c, Barrett-Fitch Box, Manuscripts Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

moon.” In another letter Fitch attempts both to declare his affection for his new friend, while simultaneously explaining why he had to be very cautious, “I am grateful to have met you Fullerton, tho’ pretty hard in this world to honestly like a man and even harder to tell him so.”⁶¹ Through the years and experience that had followed him, Fitch had learned his lesson well—that however central these male friendships were to his emotional life—extreme care would always be needed. He concludes his note with the warning, “Shame makes us so hard-hearted and cynical, and friendships one is more apt to dream of and to read about than to realize. One has to be cynical, it is not safe not to be so.” These few letters Fitch wrote Morton Fullerton have much to tell: an awareness of the importance of friendships, along with a fear and shame about their public disclosure. As outlined in poems by Lord Alfred Douglass and Andre Raffalovich, “shame” emerged at the end of the nineteenth century as another shorthand code for homosexual—judging from this letter, not to mention his ownership of these poets’ works, Fitch was well aware of the code.⁶²

By the last decade of the century, with his guard now up concerning his same sex attractions, Fitch was soon to face an unexpected challenge—Miller’s all absorbing quest to gather data on other men who shared their temperament. Through his voluminous correspondence, Miller for years had been seeking information on such men. In letters written to American writer Charles Warren Stoddard (1843-1909) he had found a man willing to discuss all aspects of the issue. His questions to Stoddard were frequent, detailed, and seemingly never-ending and the two covered a great deal of material in the years up to Stoddard’s death—just a few months before Fitch’s. As Miller explained

⁶¹ Clyde Fitch to Morton Fullerton, no date, #7427,-a,-c, Barrett-Fitch Box, Manuscripts Department, University of Virginia Library.

⁶² Timothy d’Arch Smith, Love in Earnest, 31, 55.

once to Fitch over dinner the two shared one night, he intended to “write up” the subject of male same sex attractions in an effort to educate the seemingly blind public, to break the deafening wall of silence on the subject that had held for so long. Unlike Stoddard however, Fitch was to panic—anticipating only public revelation, humiliation, and disgrace in such an undertaking—accordingly, he lashed out in a frank discussion of his sexuality, and its problems; a discussion exceedingly rare not only for Fitch, but for any middle class American man accustomed to the era’s wall of silence.

When he was confronted with Miller’s questions, Stoddard experienced none of the anxiety that Fitch felt—he answered freely—and as a result, a great deal of information on male same sex attractions traveled back and forth between the two men. As none of Miller’s letters to Stoddard survive, our reconstruction of their discussions rests solely on the latter’s writings—yet these provide an abundance of information. In obvious response to a question about his own travels and experiences, Stoddard explained, “as far as any experience goes, the [South Sea] islanders were unacquainted with the Greek ethics as considered by Symonds in his ‘Problem.’”⁶³ The reference here to John Addington Symonds and his “The Problem of Greek Ethics” (1891) is significant—all three men would have been familiar with the work, one of the first in the late Victorian period to address homosexuality openly. If this volume had been in Fitch’s library at his death, it had become so notorious by 1909 that it would have been immediately destroyed.

With the same openness, so atypical for the nineteenth century, Stoddard provided Miller with all he knew about the Italian boy photographs so popular during these years,

⁶³ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 15 October 1901, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38383, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

“the photographs are delicious. I have looked at them again and again. I know of no place in this community [Washington] where they can be obtained. Most art dealers in Europe have hundreds of them in stock. I don’t know the addresses of these people. The best of all are taken in Taormina in Sicily.”⁶⁴ In another letter Stoddard explains all he had learned of the English homosexual underworld during his travels—again, an inquiry by Miller seems unmistakable—despite the absence of his letters.⁶⁵ By 1906 the writer, now in his sixties and living quietly in Monterey, California, was warming even further to Miller’s project—and judging from the contents of his letters, the latter’s questions still kept coming. In March Stoddard begins to recount more of his own experiences, “as for Clifton Tipton—I really know very little about him. I met him while he was at Bretanos in Washington, nearly or quite ten years ago. He was young and rather picturesque.”⁶⁶

And so began an extensive compilation of the many men Stoddard had admired, loved—and slept with—over the years, along with his understanding of the temperament of men attracted to other men. In striking contrast to the Fitch’s panicked reaction when confronted with questions on the subject, Stoddard ended one of his letters with the encouraging postscript, “ask me any questions you care to.” Without hesitation he answered all of Miller’s inquiries; for instance he recalled, “I think it was in the summer of 1890 that I first met [him]... [we] grew very fond of each other; he was twenty-four and a marvelously beautiful lad—in features, I mean... we never spooned.”⁶⁷ Right up until his death, Stoddard continued to feed the seemingly insatiable Miller information on

⁶⁴ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 12 June 1902, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38387, The Huntington Library.

⁶⁵ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 21 April 1908, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38412, The Huntington Library.

⁶⁶ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 29 March 1906, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38397, The Huntington Library.

⁶⁷ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, September, 1906, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38401, The Huntington Library.

this preferred topic. Over all, he outlined upwards of fifteen tales of his less than furtive encounters with young men from the 1880's through 1900—along with every scrap of information he could summon on male same-sex attractions. Even with his own letters now all gone, Miller's probing questions to Stoddard on these questions clearly seems to have played a role in prompting so many recollections. Why Stoddard and Miller were so remarkably free from the era's veil of silence—and indeed, eagerly pursued as much information on the subject of homosexuality—is a complex and difficult question. In bringing together for the first time the biographies of so many upper class American men from the late nineteenth century this dissertation attempts an answer.

When Clyde Fitch was confronted with this absorbing interest of Miller's—and learned of the latter's project in not only gathering data on men who shared their temperament, but even entertained aspirations of one date publishing on the subject—he reacted with great intensity. His response, limited to one uncharacteristically frank letter, provides a rare unobstructed window into the playwright's knowledge of, and opinions on, male same-sex sexuality. So concerned was he however about breaching the public wall of silence, that he wrote in capital letters and underlined at the top of the page, “I ASK THAT YOU WILL ANSWER BUT DESTROY THIS LETTER.”⁶⁸ Above all, he feared public exposure.

Fitch begins his discussion of the subject abruptly, “your letter from Ohio has just reached me. It is a shock and a surprise.” He then goes on to recount his friendship with a mutual friend, “Whittlesey.” Charles Terrill Whittlesey, graduated from Amherst the year before Fitch, in 1885, and is referred to by his nickname of “Whit” in the 1924 volume of the playwright's letters. An 1886 letter by young Fitch suggests the two had

⁶⁸ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 2 January 1891, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

remained friends following graduation, “Whit and I slept over [in Boston], and, wakening up at 11 o’clock had to go down to Parker’s for breakfast.”⁶⁹ There is no information on how Whittlesey might have met Miller—although both spent considerable amounts of time in the Pacific Northwest.

In his letter, Fitch then recounts that although he and Whittlesey were, “two very different men, a mutual appreciation of artistic coloring and things attracted us into friendship. I also admired what I believed to be his honesty, his great and sweet good nature.” Fitch further acknowledges, “we have not been very strong friends of late,” and wonders if the reason for this break was his own effort to be ethical in his work while Whittlesey seemed to have art itself as his highest aim. “Art for art’s sake” was of course the operating phrase of Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, and the English decadents who had so strongly influenced Fitch. Yet here he seems to be setting himself somehow outside the worst elements of this tradition; as he would later shun Wilde as public word of his excesses spread Fitch already seems to be declaring that some public boundaries are not to be crossed.

“For Whittlesey to make any ‘revelations’ of my private life is absurd. He never thoroughly knew me,” he continues. “We met, stopped a moment, and then passed each other in the youthful phase of life when happiness isn’t serious. He had no right, no rhyme nor reason, to make any ‘revelation.’ If you will remember our conversation at lunch (we two) in Delmonicos, you will remember that I did not know Whittlesey’s inner life!” Relegating homosexuality to a “youthful phase” of experimentation became a well-worn trope throughout the twentieth century as discussions of male same-sex attractions became more public—Fitch seems to anticipate this diversion. The letter then moves on

⁶⁹ Clyde Fitch to Frank Whitman, 5 April 1886, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 22.

to recall a conversation the two friends had engaged in where Miller had explained his interests and his project; the conversation had left Fitch very concerned, “I had been frightened by something you said... You spoke of certain temperaments of men for who felt not ordinary sexual enjoyment, mentioned several names, and said you were going to write up the subject.” After spending so much time—first at Amherst, then in Europe, and in New York—attempting to craft an acceptable public persona for himself, Fitch was well aware of the dangers of public exposure. “Thinking it over afterward, I felt and feel that you could have no right to do this. To expose what would ruin the reputations of many men living and dead who had fought hard against their temptations and done all in their power to make up for their secret life by those good and noble qualities that the best of them possess.” For Fitch, the “temptation” of sexuality needed to be resisted; and when all else failed, this “secret life” had to be somehow atoned for. These statements also reveal that he believed men like himself were in fact a group set apart from normal men—an identity is clear here.

While certain in the knowledge that those men like himself represented a distinct identity of manhood, Fitch with his religious background was conflicted about the morality of them. He continued in his chastisement of Miller, “I believe this temperament belongs to them, and they are answerable to God (who is perhaps answerable to them) and should not [be exposed] to the world who would condemn and damn them, their family, their mothers should be remembered.” Obviously, here is a man deeply troubled over his temperament, and not entirely comfortable in his own skin. And in view of Fitch’s famously close relationship with his mother, the underlined reference to a mother’s public shame is particularly poignant. Finally, it is significant that as

discussed above, many of the authors in Fitch's library—Pater, Carpenter, Symonds, and Raffalovich for instance—all used the term temperament in attempting to explain a variety of men attracted to other men.

In striking contrast to the uninhibited Miller or Stoddard, for Fitch and others of his social class invested in respectability, along with the wall of silence this entailed—these discussions were powerful and frightening. So frightening, in fact that the mere mention of same-sex sexual attractions seemed almost beyond belief. At the beginning of his letter Fitch recalled, “we did not talk plainly, we talked in riddles somewhat.” Indeed, talking in riddles when attempting to broach the unmentionable subject of male same-sex sexuality had a rich history in American life—especially during the priggish nineteenth century. In addition, the subject was deadly serious, carrying the very real threat of public exposure, shame, and ruin. Thus for Fitch, this conversation itself combined with Miller's intention to write up the subject, “made an impression upon me of not liking you.” Yet, despite this initial frightened reaction, his friend's “innumerable kindnesses, splendid letters, and many acts of unexpected thoughtfulness went straight to my heart and stayed there!! All these wore away this other impression.” The friendship had grown in spite of this early shock. In time Fitch began to even think the discussion perhaps could not have really happened, “I wondered if I hadn't misunderstood or if you hadn't been talking to sound me, or if I hadn't dreamed it. And lately I had forgotten all about it.” So then, just as Fitch had lulled himself into forgetting these unsettling thoughts, Miller had jerked him back into a state of fear with his letter alluding to Whittlesey's ‘revelations.’ This chasm, between respectable and not-respectable, or

between the wall of silence and an open discussion on homosexuality, would never be fully bridged between the two men.

The 1891 “temperament” letter to Miller, so astounding for Fitch, in its uncompromising frankness, ends with his revalidation of the friendship now so important to him, “I am proud of your friendship, grateful, and happy in it. I want your affection.” Drawing to a close, the letter ends with a cryptic declaration of intimacy—which will most likely now remain unknown, “the condition you make I acceded to before you made it. I will be!!” Perhaps uncertain on how to respond to Fitch’s intense defense of maintaining a public silence on the subject of male same-sex attractions, Miller apparently did not immediately address this frank letter from the heart. About a month later Fitch asks, “why, tho’ have you never answered or noticed my long letter? It was honest and frank and didn’t it deserve some word in reply?”⁷⁰ Miller’s silence here is important: for in pushing forward his project on homosexual men, and in pumping Fitch for information, he had run up against a solid brick wall of resistance; only later, when he presented Charles Warren Stoddard with similar questions did he find another who shared his refusal to subscribe to the era’s almost impenetrable wall of silence.

These differences notwithstanding, Fitch’s friendship with DeWitt Miller provided him with a great degree of comfort. Following the publication of his first and only novel, A Wave of Life, and then the first successful play, Beau Brummell in the first years of the nineties, the two friends began slowly to drift apart. Miller often delayed in visiting or writing to his friend; and typical of his unorthodox nomadic life, he refused to be pinned down to dates or obligations. In time, Fitch’s cry for attention grew in

⁷⁰ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 1 February [1891], Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

intensity from a low sound in the early 1890's to a high-pitched one by the end of the decade. In 1892, even as literary success seemed for the first time possible, the toll that attempting to present himself as an effeminate man to the general public—in his work and in his persona—seemed to wear on him,

My Dear DeWitt:

Only a few lines (as I am rushed with work) to tell you that it was a very real pleasure to hear from you. I had feared I had taken my place among your memories. I wish you would come to see me sometimes when you are here in New York. There is always a hearty welcome for you here and a bite and even a place to sleep in and this invitation holds good, and is meant to come and make my acquaintance, we are good friends I know, but we don't know each other, at least at any rate you don't know me, for you have [unreadable] me, nice old Clyde he's been put away. Life has made its mark on me, and seriousness has laid her fingers upon me...⁷¹

Throughout the course of Fitch's friendship with Miller he expresses resentment about not seeing his friend often enough. This resentment builds through the years, until by the dawn of a new century, the letters slowly decline in numbers. It is at this point that the friendship begins to draw to a close—most likely Fitch had by now realized that Miller would not ever become the ideal friend he had so longed for. These years also would have seen Edward Simmonds move into the Fitch household—this may too have played a role in his backing off from Miller. It is also possible that, as an effeminate man primarily interested in men with normative gender behavior, Fitch may been more interested in Miller sexually than the nomadic lecturer could reciprocate.

Virtually every letter the playwright wrote to Miller ends with a variation of the question, "I hope you are well, and I wish I could see you!!"⁷² Typically he writes from his apartment at 58 West 57th Street, "How are you, and where are you? And WHEN do

⁷¹ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, no date, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁷² Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, no date, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

I see you?" Repeatedly, invitations are issued attempting to bring Miller to New York and to Fitch's rooms. Just before leaving for his annual summer trip to Europe Fitch asks, "Where are you? And where are you to be this summer?"⁷³ Months later, wrapping up his European trip, he again pleads, "My Dear Friend, Please tell me why it is I do not hear from you? I wrote you several letters abroad—did you not get them?"⁷⁴ Yet another note sent upon his return home reveals he has still yet to lay eyes on his friend, and concludes, "And am I not to see you at ALL this winter? I want to so very much."⁷⁵ Perhaps due to his travels and lectures, Miller was always on the road and this movement was difficult for Fitch, leaving him lonely for his friend—despite the many people now surrounding such a now famous celebrity. "I often think of you in your journeying, and wish they might bring you to me, and very, very often have the desire to write to you (do you ever get any of these mental letters) but, my hands get weary with my play scribbling, and it becomes a mental and physical impossibility to write all I wish."⁷⁶

In fact, Miller could be so distant, so unable to pin down, that Fitch did not even know what part of the country he might be in, or even where to direct the letters he so loved to write his friend, "Please send me a permanent address. Last year I got one from the Wilsons, but this year I couldn't find out where Francis was... I hope this reaches you. I will try New Rochelle."⁷⁷ By 1895 Fitch had grown certain that Miller was avoiding him, "I really had begun to fear maybe you had forgotten me, and to feel extremely oppressed on that account. BUT WHEN AM I TO SEE YOU? Don't you

⁷³ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 4 May, no other date (on 154 West 54th Street Letterhead), Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library

⁷⁴ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, no date, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁷⁵ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, no date, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁷⁶ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 9 February 1891, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁷⁷ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 30 December, no other date, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

ever come into this part of the world? I believe you do, and don't let me know, which I think, if its true, very shabby of you.”⁷⁸ And that July he wrote from London, “I don't know when I shall come back probably early in October. Am I never to see you again?”⁷⁹ Fitch duly returned in October as promised and the two did apparently meet in Philadelphia. Arranging this trip, while Fitch was ecstatic, he still could not remove an edge of bitterness, “I CAN! I WILL!! For it will be a real pleasure to see something of you, at last, and if I am your guest you will have to say at least Howdy do, and Goodbye.”⁸⁰

No doubt 1895 was a difficult year for Fitch all around: in addition to his deepening distance from Miller, the Oscar Wilde trials wound themselves through the courts that year, culminating with his conviction in the spring. Fitch would have been troubled not only because of his personal friendship with the irreverent Irish playwright, but because of the nature of the crime—attempted sodomy. Such public spectacles would only serve to emphasize to him the supreme importance of discretion, indeed secrecy for himself and those who shared his temperament. Although he had forged his own definition of the institution of friendship in his life, Fitch would never achieve the brazen self-assurance and confidence on the subject that Miller, Stoddard and others had somehow attained.

As the new century approached, the friendship continued to diminish in intensity, with a resulting decline in the number of letters Fitch sent to his friend. By October of 1898, so large had the distance grown between them, that Fitch hesitates about receiving a friend introduced to him by Miller, “I would be delighted to see your friend. But where

⁷⁸ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 8 April 1895, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁷⁹ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 8 July 1895, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁸⁰ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 18 October 1895, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

are you? Will you be there with him?”⁸¹ A note of 1902 illustrates how Fitch’s communications have become politely distant, the intense romantic friendship that had once given him so much strength had essentially come to an end. In March he responds to an apparent request for help to an acquaintance of Miller’s, with the thought that he cannot really recommend anyone for a part in his current play. He concludes this brief refusal with the hope, “Good night dear DeWitt, wherever you are. I hope you are well and happy.”⁸² Still, like so many of his male friendships, this relationship had given him support at critical times in his life, and for this he was grateful. Writing the day after Christmas, sometime after moving into his townhouse on East 40th Street in 1901, he notes, “It really added much to my Xmas to be remembered by you! The books are most welcome in themselves, but I like even better to know that you haven’t forgotten me. I shall never forget your friendship and loyalty in my early days and I wish when you come to New York sometimes you’d look me up. Affectionately, Clyde.”⁸³

Postscript

At his death in 1909 Fitch had reached the age of forty-four—no longer was he the young aesthete of his Amherst College days. He had also filled out physically over the years—many letters in the posthumous volume discuss a vigorous, if unsuccessful, battle to regain his former boyish figure. Fitch’s age as a contemporary of Miller’s—when viewed in the context of some letters sent to the latter by Charles Warren

⁸¹ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 15 October 1898, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁸² Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 19 March 1902, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁸³ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 26 December, no year (on 113 East 40th Street Letterhead), Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

Stoddard—can at least partially explain why the itinerant lecturer held back so much from the playwright’s obviously powerful affections. In fact, the Stoddard material illustrates quite clearly that Miller was primarily romantically interested in younger men; and he actively courted them—writing letters, sending gifts, and arranging meetings—at the exact moment he was also receiving Fitch’s outpourings of unreciprocated affection.

The first sign of Miller’s interest surfaces in an 1898 letter in which Stoddard notes that Kenneth has indeed received his note—and apologizes for his failure to acknowledge it.⁸⁴ Stoddard himself shared this interest in younger men, and had long pursued the young men whom he termed his “kids.” In these relationships they normally called him “Dad.” When living in Washington, D.C. in the early 1890’s he rented a small house and moved in with one of these troubled teenagers—Kenneth O’Connor, or Ken. In a later letter to Miller, Stoddard recounts another of these kids—and thus indirectly sheds light on his relationship with Kenneth, “He played the kid prettily. Used to sit on my lap and liked to be petted. We never got further than that.”⁸⁵ “The Kid—my beloved Kenneth” was to remain under Stoddard’s roof for a number of years; only as a man in his twenties did he move out—primarily as a result of the older man’s financial losses when forced out of his professorship at the Catholic University.

“Please forgive Ken for not answering your kind letters. He lives for the moment, and with the best intentions in the world forgets to do his duty,” Stoddard wrote his

⁸⁴ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 5 January 1898, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38369, The Huntington Library. On Stoddard’s life, please see, Roger Austen, Genteel Pagan: The Double Life of Charles Warren Stoddard. Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991.

⁸⁵ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 29 March 1906, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38397, The Huntington Library.

friend.⁸⁶ It seems clear that Miller devoted a great deal of time to Stoddard's housemate—showering him with letters on every possible occasion. In another apology Stoddard hazards further explanations, "Kenneth only received your letters and is grateful for them; he is the worst correspondent in the world and that is why he has neglected your kind favors."⁸⁷ His wandering schedule permitting, Miller tried to meet the young man in person as well. In December of 1898 Stoddard again apologizes to his friend—this time for a failed meeting, "Ken was sorry he missed seeing you. Had you left him an address he would have called on [you] the following day."⁸⁸ As even the most cursory reading of these letters explains, Miller was showing far more enthusiasm for the friendship than young Kenneth. Undeterred, Miller turned to another of the troubled teenagers living at least partially in the Stoddard household—Billie Combs.

Curiously, Stoddard again played the role of facilitator—attempting to arrange meetings and smoothing out any difficulties—between Miller and this other young man. Again, apologies and strained explanations abound, "I was so sorry to miss you when you called and I wish I could have made Billie C. acquainted with you. You are all wrong about his not liking you, or caring to like you. When he received your letter he did not answer it because he thought Ken was getting up a joke on him. He did not know you; he didn't even know your name. Ken and he are always larking: can you blame Billie for being a little suspicious."⁸⁹ A few months later Stoddard's updates on Combs's doings

⁸⁶ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 16 January 1900, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38376, The Huntington Library.

⁸⁷ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 28 September 1899, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38375, The Huntington Library.

⁸⁸ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 3 December 1898, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38371, The Huntington Library.

⁸⁹ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 26 June 1901, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38380, The Huntington Library.

continued, "Billie Combs slept here last night, on the divan in the back parlor."⁹⁰ Less than a week later Stoddard again writes—this time apologizing for Combs's failure to make a meeting Miller had arranged,

I am very sorry but I am not responsible. Billie is charming, he is warm-hearted, generous, affectionate, and utterly unreliable. You cannot trust him out of your sight. Poor Ken with all his faults is more to be realized afar. We have not seen Billie since Thursday night when we parted. He then told Ken that he was not going to Philadelphia with you—because he 'had a date with his girl.' Ken called him a fool for not appreciating your favors. So goes the world. Ken says we shall not see Billie again till next payday (Ken's). November 1st! These boys are two delightful desperadoes.⁹¹

It is unknown how many, if any, meetings Miller managed with Combs, what is clear however is the older man's sexual interest in the younger—especially when one more letter from Stoddard is examined. Also quite apparent is how knowledgeable both young men are about the nature of the elder men's interest—and the benefits they could bring them. In September of 1907 Stoddard begins, "Billie Combs's mother is dead. He is now a solitary orphan and alone in the world."⁹² He then continues to update his friend on Combs's life—displaying a concern over the recent turn of events,

The last I heard from him he was on the street with a lady of easy virtue. It seems a pity that so good a fellow should go that way. He strips like a Roman Gladiator and is an artist—in the sexual line. Any fashionable woman would be only too glad to keep him for her pleasure. Billie is one of the best-hearted boys I know... Billie was wonderfully good to me and humored me in every way. I thought him one of the handsomest kids I ever had seen, but he was handsomest when least clothed. It was a case of 'beauty unadorned.'

Judging from Stoddard's descriptions, Combs was a young man interested primarily in women, but who allowed older men to take sexual liberties—a transaction of some sort

⁹⁰ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 15 October 1901, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38383, The Huntington Library.

⁹¹ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 22 October 1901, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38384, The Huntington Library.

⁹² Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 10 September 1907, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38407, The Huntington Library.

seems obvious. For Stoddard—and Miller—such younger men kept their normative manhood by, “granting me every indulgence even encouraging my excesses, [he] never once in all the years I knew him was more than the most amiable of passive agents.”⁹³ This pattern is only confirmed by Stoddard’s references to the later marriages of many of his “kids”—eventually including Billie Combs. As late as 1908 Stoddard again answers his friend’s inquiries with the answer that he cannot help him, and no longer knows Combs’s address.⁹⁴

One final example serves to shed further light on Miller’s apparent neglect of the intensely romantic Fitch. Beyond discussions of male same-sex passions and books on the subject, Miller could never reciprocate the playwright’s affections—for his attractions lay elsewhere. Austin Strong was a child of a friend of Stoddard’s, and he had watched the boy grow up. Although the family lived in San Francisco and eventually in Hawaii, Stoddard remained closely in touch with them through many letters. Writing from Washington in 1901, Stoddard penned a note of introduction for Miller to Strong—then around eighteen years old, “My Dear Austin, I want you to know my good and faithful friend DeWitt Miller, Esq. He will talk to you of books, of art, of poetry, of architecture, and landscape gardening—and of Francis Wilson who is his chum, as it were. He has traveled all over this country from sea to sea and I am sure he will enjoy meeting your mother and comparing notes.”⁹⁵ A little more than six years later Strong’s name again surfaces when Stoddard asks Miller, “can it be that I have a substitute as Austin’s God-

⁹³ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 16 July 1906, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38399, The Huntington Library.

⁹⁴ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 31 January 1908, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38411, The Huntington Library.

⁹⁵ Charles Warren Stoddard to Austin Strong, 8 March 1901, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38418, The Huntington Library.

father?”⁹⁶ Clearly Miller was paying court of some kind to the younger man—now working in a theatre according to Stoddard’s letter. He ends his note with the wistful comment that here too was another young man who had fully matured and would probably no longer accept his attentions, “as his natural-born godfather—he no longer having a father of his own—when I get East, if I ever do, I shall long to spank him cordially. He used to have a lot of that sort of thing when he was a ‘tot;’ now that he is beautifully developed, I fear his beauty goes to waste.”

As the Stoddard/Miller letters explain without question, DeWitt Miller sought out young men as companions—it was here that his attractions lay—and not in a contemporary as Fitch so obviously was. Miller’s gender and sexuality model was characterized by normative male gender behavior and an attraction to younger men who could be sexually dominated. As a result of his gender behavior Miller lived under no stigma and feared little from public exposure—in striking contrast to the effeminate and vulnerable Fitch. The vagabond lecturer clearly refused to subscribe to the era’s veil of silence on homosexuality, and his openness took Fitch by complete surprise, and terrified him to no end. For Fitch, whose gender and sexuality model we have established as an effeminate man attracted to an equal—an “ideal friend” in the tradition of male romantic friendships—stigma, marginalization, and indeed even active hostility were dependable realities. With his effeminacy there was little protection or safety; and as a result he approached the question of male same-sex passions with far less bravado than his friend. If Fitch ever found the ideal friend he had sought so eagerly in Miller and others he approached in early life, there is today perhaps no way of knowing—reading the

⁹⁶ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 14 January 1908, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38410, The Huntington Library.

orchestrated silences is at best a hazardous undertaking. As the budding playwright told Morton Fullerton, he had learned his lessons well: caution, discretion, even misinformation were needed—accordingly, in later years Fitch rarely opened himself up to anyone with the intensity found in his early passionate declarations.

Chapter 3 Ogden Codman of Boston

Introduction:

The story of Ogden Codman begins in Boston, Massachusetts—the year 1891. In July of that year he and his friend Arthur Little first exchanged the long intimate letters that would become so important for both men. For Codman, born at 34 Beacon Street some twenty-eight years earlier, Boston was not only where he lived and worked—but a fundamental part of his identity as well. Codmans had been prominent in Boston's upper class society for as long as anyone could remember, and Ogden had grown up in a world of relative ease and comfort—yet, in keeping with parsimonious New England traditions—not luxury. The oldest of five siblings, Ogden was the first to venture out of the family household and into a profession; indeed, none of the others ever followed: all remained at home, unmarried until their deaths.¹ In addition to his pride in the family genealogy, Codman took a great amount of care to project the image of the aristocratic gentleman—and something of a dandy. Describing himself during the early nineties he wrote to Little,

You would scarcely recognize me now I am so smart, single eye glass, Boutoniere, gray or brown waistcoat, varnished boots, top hat and cutaway coat or frock gray or black, the very smartest gloves—everything from the very excellent London people. I constantly see myself in the glass and wonder who it is, pink, blue or mauve shirts, butterfly ties, etc., do make a difference. My moustache is curled like this [drawing] and nearly gets into my eyes...I have such a nice spirit lamp to curl my moustache, heat the tongs too. you would love it.²

¹ The other Codman children were in order of birth, Alice Newbold Codman (1866-1923); Thomas Newbold Codman (1868-1963); Hugh Codman (1875-1946); Dorothy Sarah Frances Codman (1883-1967).

² Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, no date [1894], Box 87, Folder 1701, The Ogden Codman, Jr. Papers (OC), Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), Cambridge Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

Photographs of Codman from this period present a tall slim man, with an unmistakable air of aristocratic confidence or, as many said, arrogance. Indeed, in most of the letters his condescension virtually leaps from the page.

Its population recorded at 450,000 in the 1890 census, Codman's Boston was undergoing great transformation at this time. With a huge surge in European working class immigration, its exclusive elite community sequestered within the center of the city faced challenges from all sides. Remarkably, Boston Brahmin families like the Codmans—virtually all descended not from the earliest Puritan settlers, but rather from the merchant class which rose to prominence in the decades after the American Revolution—managed to retain their exclusive enclaves. The Beacon Hill neighborhood for instance remained the elite's bastion, although as Douglass Shand-Tucci notes "Bohemian" elements lapped at its margins. Beginning in the 1880's the newly filled in Back Bay became the city's top residence of choice for the upper class; and as late as 1891 these lots were still in the process of development. Arthur Little's house, built at 2 Raleigh Street in 1890 is a good illustration of this progress. Thus, despite immigrant and working class neighborhoods teeming all around it, Codman's Boston still strived to preserve its traditional genteel way of life in the midst of an increasingly diverse and modern metropolis.³

³ For the history of Boston's upper class during the nineteenth century the best works are, Betty G. Farrell, Elite Families: Class and Power in Nineteenth Century Boston (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1993); Ronald Story, Harvard and the Boston Upper Class: The Forging of an Aristocracy, 1800-1870 (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1980); E. Digby Baltzell, Puritan Boston & Quaker Philadelphia: Two Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Class Authority and Leadership (New York: The Free Press, 1979); Frederic Cople Jaher, The Urban Establishment (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 15-156. Sarah Deutsch's impressive recent work, which examines inter-class relations among women in the city adds the hitherto neglected discussion of gender in this period, Sarah Deutsch, Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Codman himself was living in Beacon Hill, at 100 Chestnut Street (on the water side of Charles Street) in 1891. In his bachelor rooms he lived in modest comfort comparable to men of his social class, close to many social events and living very much in the heart of the city. Answering his inquiry about lodgings, a Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague wrote to Codman explaining terms representative of an upper class bachelor's living arrangements during this era,

The house is kept by a Mrs. Robinson who lives in 286 Beacon Street. The house is quite comfortable, the table fairly good including fish, meat, two or three vegetables and a pudding, fresh fruit, plenty of eggs. The chief deficiency was in linen towel and the prices are moderate, 12 to 20\$ for a single room, and 18\$ for a double room if occupied by one person. The best rooms are in the back of the house and I should judge that one might be very comfortable.⁴

The year 1891 also marked a milestone in Codman's professional life. He opened his own architectural firm at this time, listing the Chestnut Street lodgings as his business address in the Boston Directory. After spending years in the study of architecture, including one at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology—his only formal higher education—and some short-lived apprenticeships, he felt ready to go his own way. Throughout his life Codman concealed, at times more successfully than others, a sharp aristocratic disdain for the world of work. This lack of a strong work ethic, more than anything else, most likely kept him from the fully realized national career he had seemed destined for. In 1891 however all of these professional excitements and disappointments lay ahead: it would be two years before his commission from Edith Wharton marked the first degree of public recognition.

⁴ Elizabeth Sprague to Ogden Codman, 13 May 1888, Ogden Codman Jr. Papers, Box 88, Folder 1708, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. (SPNEA), Cambridge Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

It was during one of his apprenticeships, that Codman had met two kindred spirits, two men he would remain friends with for life—fellow architects Arthur Little and Herbert Browne. Little (1852-1925), also a native Bostonian, son of a wealthy financier, had received his professional training—a decade earlier than Codman’s time there—at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1877 he had published one of the earliest and most influential works calling for the appreciation of eighteenth century architecture, Early New England Interiors. Best known as the architect who built summer “cottages” for the wealthy, he was an influential voice in the city by the early 1890’s. He and Browne opened their own architectural firm in 1890 and were quite successful in the movement away from the heterogeneous Victorian architecture of the late nineteenth century. In this task the two partners and Codman were in complete agreement.

With their passionate interest in American colonial architecture—the three friends became known by the early 1890’s throughout Boston society as the “colonial trinity.” In different ways each sought to preserve the heritage of a New England they saw fast disappearing. As Sam Warner has noted in his seminal work, Streetcar Suburbs, Boston and its surroundings underwent unprecedented physical growth and transformation during the last decades of the nineteenth century—a trend that troubled the three.⁵ For Codman, the proud New England embodied in such structures as the eighteenth century family manse, “The Grange” in nearby Lincoln, seemed in danger of becoming engulfed by a modern, twentieth century suburban world.

⁵ Sam Bass Warner, Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962).

As the extensive correspondence between Little and Codman indicates however, more than an interest in the region's colonial past and its artifacts bonded the friends so closely: all three also shared a strong sexual attraction to their own sex. While the three friends shared Clyde Fitch's sexual temperament, only Harold Brown shared his feminine gender behavior. For Codman and Little at least, their lack of effeminacy seems quite clear. Both pursued younger men and women, and were typical examples of the era's mainstream upper class manhood. Furthermore, although both men had a highly developed sense of their male same-sex attractions, neither harbored any trace of guilt or shame as a result of these desires. In fact, they generally presented the subject in strongly positive terms, despite negative images that dominated the culture of the day.

However tempting initially, it would be ill-informed to see these men as gay men similar to people from our own twenty-first century world. They did not have "gay" identities in our modern sense, but rather lived in a gender and sexual system entirely different from our own. Indeed, in their attractions to both younger men and women—groups they could unequivocally dominate—Codman and Little represent a different model of homosexuality from that of the effeminate man: as long as they remained the dominant partner their privileged male status was preserved. Therefore, with gender behavior as the defining characteristic, sexual object choice stood apart as irrelevant—again, here was a system of gender and sexuality quite distinct from our own. By reconstructing their world—Boston during the last decade the nineteenth century—a nuanced understanding of their sexual identities becomes possible.

While fin-de-siecle Boston certainly did not provide the type of "gay subculture" known to our own era, or indeed even those available in London or Paris at the time, a

thriving male sexual underworld together with an extensive upper class male friendship network were both realities. In unusually candid and frank language a world of sexual intrigue, romance, and assignation emerges in the Codman/Little letters. Harboring an almost obsessive interest in tracking attractive young men, they devote a great deal of time and effort toward pursuing them as potential conquests. Significantly, these young men cross all lines of social class—from working class messenger boys to their upper class equals—yet all are below them in the social hierarchy, and thus seen as sexually available. Each of the friends engaged in romantic affairs as well. Their male same-sex eroticism was not confined solely to sexual trysts devoid of emotion. Judging from the Codman and Little material a number of institutions were well known to them that allowed male same-sex activity. Both discuss such notorious sites as the “Slide” in New York City, a saloon where homosexual men of different classes met, and numerous Turkish Baths—the Boston Athletic Club most prominent among them. In addition, the letters reveal an extensive world where those of similar sexual temperaments met and exchanged information and gossip. There is no sense of isolation or being marginalized from the two, indeed quite the contrary—their double worlds of gay subculture and Boston society dovetailed in an extraordinarily seamless web.

Even more fascinating than the relationships, crushes, and attractions that Codman and Little experience, is the sense of identity so pronounced in their letters. Strikingly, neither man saw their male same-sex desire in anything other than a positive light. The guilt, which so permeates the personal writings of Clyde Fitch, is entirely absent. Repeatedly, for instance Little refers to his male attractions as no different from heterosexual attractions—pointedly refusing to rank one as superior over the other. The

friends even develop their own terminology with which to define homosexuality. The word “queer” is among the most interesting: although the two friends continued to use the word to stand for the culture’s larger definition of “odd” or “strange”—they simultaneously began to employ it for homosexual when Codman one day declares its added meaning. Thus, during the early nineties, between the two friends at least, the term is one in transition, consisting of different definitions depending on the letter’s context. While absolutely devoid of shame or guilt, the two men did clearly realize the dangers involved in discovery; and indeed openly discussed these unfortunate possibilities. Yet, ultimately their fear seems on the shallow side, as both continued not only to write explicitly frank letters back and forth, but to preserve them as well—at least until the seminal year of 1895, when the Oscar Wilde trials in England heralded the beginnings of a more public discussion of homosexuality.

Sources

More than anything else, the significance of the Codman/Little correspondence is found in its wealth of detail—the collection represents an archive of almost unprecedented abundance, worthy of serious study. Not so many years ago such explicit discussions of male same-sex attractions were thought not to exist for the period. Even today, as new documents are rediscovered almost daily, a collection of letters outlining thoughts, actions, and feelings surrounding homosexuality at the turn of the last century is still extremely rare. Codman’s extraordinarily detailed letters, so utterly devoid of the era’s generally all-pervasive wall of silence—once they are read and analyzed by

scholars—will significantly alter the historiography. For these reasons, a careful analysis of these hitherto-unexamined letters and the issues they raise seems obligatory.

Consisting of 92 letters written between 1891 and 1913, the most detailed exchanges took place when one of the friends toured abroad—invariably Europe. The period of the friendship's greatest intimacy appears to be during the early 1890's—a time when Codman had entered his late twenties, and Little his early forties. The majority of the correspondence centers on two years—1892 and 1894, with 32 and 21 letters changing hands respectively. Virtually all of Codman's remaining letters for instance were written between 1891 and 1894. Thus, it comes as no surprise that he and Little both spent considerable amounts of time in Europe during these years. The archive itself originated with the Codman family, when the estate was left to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities at the death of the last of Ogden's siblings, Dorothy in 1967. Logically then, the file of Arthur Little's letters to Ogden Codman are by far the more complete. For example, Little mailed Codman seventeen letters in 1894 while in Europe; although each communication refers to a return letter, only six sent by Codman to him survive from that year.⁶ There is a reference in one of the later letters to Little returning Codman's letters back to him—yet this would necessarily have been a haphazard process. Following Codman's move to New York in 1893 and later to France, the intensity of the friendship diminished as the two grew increasingly apart. The few letters from this later period illustrate a greater distance opening up between the two. Their respective marriages in 1904 (Codman) and 1903 (Little) may have also played a

⁶ Following are the total number of letters arranged by year: Ogden Codman to Arthur Little: 1891-(6); 1892-(15); 1893-(2); 1894-(6); 1895-(0); 1896/7-(0); 1898-(1); no date—(3). Arthur Little to Ogden Codman: 1891-(6); 1892-(17); 1893-(0); 1894-(17); 1895-(2); 1896-(1); 1897-(3); 1898-(3); 1899/1900-(0); 1901-(2); 1902-(2); 1903-(0); 1904-(3); 1911-(2); 1913-(1).

role here as well. Any intimate or personal discussion of male same sex attractions or eroticism is therefore generally absent from the letters written after about 1903.

Following the lead of Codman and Little themselves in the correspondence, this chapter will remain closely focused on their sexual desires and actions. For, with the unusual wealth of information the letters provide on the subject, an identity can be documented in a way rarely possible for this period. The correspondence touches of course on other subjects—architecture most prominently among them—and these topics will be covered in a later chapter. The remainder of this chapter however, zeros in on sexuality.

Attractions

The Albermarle, New York
February, 1892

Dear Arthur:

I hope I have not forgotten how to write. I have been here since Tuesday and such fun. Opera and dinner all the time. I am going to see *Faust* tonight and dine with the Wetmores. The Astor Ball afterwards. I lunched at Delmonicos with Arthur Rotch of all people. I dined with the Casmays and went to the concert and I have dined with Mrs. Fish twice and one day I had three invitations to dine. I was going home Wednesday but I may be back next Wednesday instead. The Vanderbilts (Cornelius) have a dance on Friday....

I have not seen Mason and I found the haunts of vice too expensive so as the Slide is broken up I shall see [him] no more. I really must go home but I don't want to. I saw Miss Anita Lawrence at the theatre and she asked after you. Mrs. Laudenburg is ill, Mrs. Fish suggests 'too many six o'clock baths.' I hope she will not die... I want to see Mrs. Jones. I mean to go to see the Morgans. That nasty Clippy is doing over a house for Jack Keorgan—he is her cousin. I hear Mrs. Jack Astor dances now she has had her baby. Brock Cultney was at the Cushing dinner. He is rather nice I think. How is Miss Tilden? Herbert and I are going to Portsmouth for Sunday some time soon. Don't give up writing altogether.

Sincerely yours, Ogden Codman, Jr.

P.S.: They say Mrs. Jack discovered Paderowski in some low place in London! What was she doing?⁷

In reading through this rich correspondence a highly focused picture emerges of the two friends' attractions and relationships—along with commentary on those men they admired from afar. In reconstructing this emotional world, the first step will be to review the attractions, relationships, and interests; while a second will be an analysis of their sexual interests, beliefs, self-understanding, and ultimately identity. Within the course of two years—from 1892 through 1894—Codman actively pursued at least fifteen young men—all save one of his social class. While ample evidence of sexual activity abounds, signs of a more lasting romantic love or relationships remain elusive. Writing from London during the summer of 1891, Codman echoes language from Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, published that year, "I have just made the acquisition of a gilded youth named Baldwin. 'Moon-Eyed Charley' he is called, who is to take us driving in his coach tomorrow."⁸ Less than a year later he comments on an exhibit at Boston's Camera Club providing additional insight into his attractions. The photographs, titled "the Bathers" had seized his imagination; he explained to Little they consisted of, "Frank Curtis and Freeman Allen naked on the rocks at Nahant. Also some nice little boys, their cocks hidden by their legs. I want a copy awfully."⁹ Later in the same letter he expresses another interest along similar lines, "There is such a nice letter boy I keep meeting him in

⁷ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, February 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, The Ogden Codman, Jr. Papers (OC), Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), Cambridge Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

⁸ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, August, 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA

⁹ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 9 May 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA

the streets, so well dressed and rides or drives a very smart T-cart. His name is Tsidore Hope. Son of Leopold the Jew clothing man. But really he seems quite nice. I hear they go to the Synagogue.” And then in a jarring reminder of the Boston upper class’s anti-semitism he adds, “Do let us take the rich Jews into society in Boston as they do in London and Paris. They can’t be worse than Cabots.” After all this was an era when hierarchy still ruled upper class Boston society, when the “Lowells talk only to Cabots, and the Cabots talk only to God.”¹⁰

Among his contemporaries, Codman was not alone in his attraction to letter boys (variously referred to also as messenger or telegraph boys). These young men, who were seen racing through the streets of most American and European cities, provided much needed speedy communications in an era still ahead of reliable telephone service. For Codman and those of his sexual temperament however, the messenger boys held additional interest beyond expeditious communications. Timothy D’arch Smith has concluded, “the telegraph boy appears to have provided the Uranians with a considerable erotic stimulus.”¹¹ Many of the late nineteenth century English poets eroticized these, “young modern Mercuries:” Sholto Douglas, John Gambil Nicholson and Henry Scott Tuke to name only a few.¹² In one of his earliest scrapes with blackmail, Lord Alfred Douglas became involved with a telegraph boy while still attending Oxford. And notoriously the infamous Cleveland Street Scandal of 1889 involved a number of messenger boys. As historian Lesley Hall has recently noted, “the telegraph boy seems to

¹⁰ The famous ditty, first written at the turn of the century for a Harvard alumni dinner sums up beautifully Boston’s high society at the time. It goes as follows, “And this is good old Boston/The home of the bean and the Cod,/Where the Lowells talk to the Cabots,/And the Cabots talk only to God.” Cleveland Amory, The Proper Bostonians (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1947), 14.

¹¹ Timothy d’Arch Smith, Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English ‘Uranian Poets from 1889 to 1930 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 24.

¹² *Ibid.*, 29.

have been an almost fetishized erotic object for upper and upper middle class Victorian homosexuals.”¹³ Codman’s keen interest in young Tsidore Hope seems to confirm that this pattern reached across the Atlantic as well during the end of the nineteenth century.

The correspondence between Codman and Little is peppered throughout with critiques on the beauty of the young men they encountered in their daily lives. In a passage typical of these exchanges Codman writes, “The more I see of David Gray the less I feel attracted, he seems too thin and pimples that I did not see at first begin to show.”¹⁴ And on another occasion similarly noted, “He is less good-looking than I thought but talks well. He is too tall, and slight and rather weedy looking but will fill out well. And so bright and well-read and amusing both about books and people.”¹⁵

Both men were always in search of young male companions when on their travels. In February of 1894 Codman writes, “did you ever hear of some people in Montreal named Dobell—I met one, a nice lad in Genoa, and he took me on board ‘The Spree’ where he introduced me to his family who were going to Cairo for the winter....”¹⁶ By return mail Little responds, confirming the family’s solid social standing, “I asked Willie about the Dobells for I thought the name sounded familiar and they stayed there last summer... your ‘lad’ is a nephew of the ones who asked to come to Swampscott and play with Mrs. G. when he was nineteen—they had a lovely time up there and the Dobells dined with the G’s in New York just before sailing.”¹⁷ Significantly, Codman saw no need to hide these friendships with younger men; indeed courting them quite openly.

¹³ Lesley A. Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain Since 1880* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 47.

¹⁴ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 12 May 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁵ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 22 March 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁶ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 1 February 1894, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

Most likely those in the larger culture did not consider the possibility of sexuality—however obvious to the initiated. Less than a month later he writes of another new companion, “I picked up a nice traveling companion in Rome, a nice young New Yorker, Moses Taylor by name whose people I knew in Newport. He was on his way around the world. We did Florence, Venice, Verona, Milan, Nice, Monte Carlo, and Cannes together, parting at Marsailles. He has gone to Paris for some hunting and sails for home on the ‘Compania’ April 7th and I shall probably come with him, as that is about when I expect to sail and a friend at sea is a friend indeed to change the proverb.”¹⁸ Writing during this same journey, Little asks after another young man, “I hear you have picked up George Adams, it must be mighty nice to have anyone as amusing as he is to travel with.”¹⁹ Codman however, answers that this friendship has been of the shortest duration, “George Adams is really more suited to my father than to me. I think Ned Cod [man] is right, I like him but I prefer foreigners.”²⁰ Sometime later Little delivers a post-mortem on this fleeting connection, “[Ned Codman] says, speaking of G. Adams and you, that probably G.A. got somewhat excited by going around with you!”²¹

Without question Codman enjoyed having young men around him—whether at home or abroad. Following his marriage and its resulting financial security, for instance, he always employed an attractive young male secretary. In many of these earlier relationships also, the intimacy may not have progressed that far beyond platonic friendship—albeit a highly charged and eroticized one. Yet his friendship with Walter Abbott illustrates that many of these relationships did indeed have a sexual component, “I

¹⁸ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 10 March 1894, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 10 March 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

²⁰ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, no date, 1894, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

²¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 5 May 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

am rather interested in Walter Abbott, Gordon Abbott's younger brother who has been in New York for a year and is quite unhappy in Boston where he has to live and is wild to get back to New York. He is much improved in looks, has rather nice skin and curly hair. He has grown thinner and is better dressed but looks cross and says foolish things about Boston which make him unpopular."²² Upon hearing of his new interest, Little strongly advocates action, "How does your smash on Walter Abbott get on? Also, the young Gray? You ought to push some of these things and get some wild adventures."²³ Less than a month later he again inquires, "How is your smash on Walter Abbott getting on? You don't mention him so I suppose all sorts of things. Silence is golden. What is screwing for God's sake then?"²⁴ Codman's cursory response indicates there had been and would be no adventures—at least with young Abbott, "I have not seen much of Walter Abbott but he is rather stupid and drinks a lot."²⁵ Judging from Little's leading questions, Abbott was not the only one Codman had designs on. In another typically forward inquiry he again urges Codman to act, "How is Russell? I should think it was nearly time for developments!"²⁶

An exchange on the Sturgis family's approaching visit (relations of the Codmans) conveys quite explicitly where both friends' sexual interest were directed. Codman notes, "there are two or three boys who are left in England at Eton. I think I wish they were coming and not the girls who are as ugly as fiends."²⁷ Little's response illuminates further, "certainly the Sturgis boys would be much more fun in a sexual way than girls!

²² Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, March, 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

²³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 29 April 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

²⁴ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 20 May 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

²⁵ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 12 May 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

²⁶ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 8 December 1891, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

²⁷ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 3 April 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

Girls have such an inconvenient way of wanting to be virgins where as boys are never virgins when they have a right hand and are perfectly formed.”²⁸ A letter from the end of the decade points to the two friends’ concern with age as a marker of sexual attractiveness, “Chapin—your friend has they say defaulted or used Bank funds—he was a teller... Anyway, hasn’t been arrested as it wasn’t much and his bond covered it all. Paper speaks of him as, ‘thirty and unmarried.’ So you see you thought him too old—you were not alone however, or wrong.”²⁹ In fact, all of the men Codman and Little pursued in these years appear to have been significantly younger than themselves: as far as can be deduced from the letters, men in their late teens to early twenties. Thus, in these attractions the pattern seems quite clear.

In addition to his seemingly countless attractions and observations from this period, Codman appears to have also had ongoing sexual relations with at least three other young men simultaneously during the winter of 1891/92. By charting these three relationships Codman’s pattern of relationships will be illustrated—as his other sexual interests inevitably follow the same route: admiration, the striking up of a friendship, and ultimately sexual relations—all transpiring with little or no display of emotion. After discussing a tea party with “Julian” and his sister along with other friends at the Puritan Club, Codman adds in a postscript, “Julian wants me to come to Cambridge and dine. wish they could do something besides getting drunk, really one is far less used up after ‘The Slide.’”³⁰ A few months later Little writes home from Europe, “I hear you are quite ill so I must cheer you up. What is the matter, too much dining with Julian? I fear that is

²⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 29 April 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

²⁹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 19 February 1897, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

³⁰ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 27 November 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

what makes your boils in fact—and since ‘The Slide’ wouldn’t I am sure!”³¹ In a letter mailed just before the end of the year Codman had anticipated the question, “I haven’t seen Julian since he came to spend the evening with me one night when I expected Winnie Clark who brought Julian fearing to come alone. I suppose I thought Julian was rather drunk. I would have preferred either alone in spite of Herbert’s saying about nice people who know how.”³² Julian and Winnie’s sense of fear around the soon-to-be twenty-nine year Codman speaks volumes on the latter’s more senior standing—chronologically and socially—as does a reference to youthful Julian’s trip to New York with the Pudding Amateur Theatricals, “he has a leading part.”³³

Codman had been in fact maintaining a sexual relationship with Winnie Clark at the same time as his relations with Julian. Little first discusses Clark in a note pointing to a circle of friends and their parties, “Poor dear Winnie Clark. I shouldn’t have supposed that after that bath on the sea ride in June he would ever have been afraid of anything again. I mean the midnight one!”³⁴ A few months earlier Little had bluntly inquired, “Have you been screwing W [innie] Clark lately?”³⁵ Codman answers, “I have not seen Winnie Clark this winter but I shall ask him to dine when the Pop Concerts begin.”³⁶ Here the trail on Winnie Clark abruptly ends, no doubt due in part at least to the others Codman devoted his time to.

Among these other interests Mason Hammond stands out; not only for Codman’s sexual interest, but for his involvement with him in New York City’s urban subculture as

³¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 1 January 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

³² Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 28 December 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

³³ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 3 April 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

³⁴ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 June 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

³⁵ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 29 April 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

³⁶ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 12 May 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

well—which has been uncovered in our own time first by George Chauncey and most recently by Jonathan Ned Katz.³⁷ Little writes of his confusion over names, “Fancy my disgust on seeing in the book of the Bankers—‘Hammond Mason.’ I fancy if it had been, ‘Mason Hammond,’ what fun we should have had! ‘The Slide,’ which by the way I saw [only] in the distance would have been nothing to it!”³⁸ Later that month Codman writes back on the subject of their mutual interest, “I saw Mason Hammond at the Horse Show, he did look so forlorn and dirty.”³⁹ And months later he indicates that a sexual congress took place, “Still in New York. Saw Mason yesterday and dined with him at Dels [Delmonicos] and spent the evening.”⁴⁰

Throughout the early nineties Codman frequently laments his unhappiness in Boston and his strong wish to spend more time in Europe—or if in the United States, at least in New York. As often as possible he traveled to Manhattan, not only for work but for pleasure as well. Typically, he wrote during one of these trips to New York, “if only business will keep on as it has begun I can come here quite often... I go home Monday, but come back later... I must stop now and dress and make endless calls.”⁴¹ In another communication he laments to his friend how his uncle’s death and the required period of mourning has meant the more important loss of a projected trip to New York, “Your letter of Jan. 1st has just come, also sad news of Uncle Ben—by cable. I am quite sorry as I was going to New York for the spree of my life.”⁴²

³⁷ George Chauncey, Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940 (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Jonathan Ned Katz, Love Stories: Sex Between Men Before Homosexuality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

³⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 12 November 1891, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

³⁹ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 27 November 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁴⁰ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 4 February 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁴¹ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 4 February 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁴² Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 15 January 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

Following repeated inquiries after Mason from Little still on his European trip, Codman again responds that another of his friendships has broken up, “I have not seen Mason and I found the haunts of vice too expensive so as ‘the Slide’ is broken up I shall see him no more.”⁴³ Little responded again with alacrity, betraying a deep familiarity with such underground “resorts” as “The Slide,” “How sad for you that ‘The Slide’ should go broke up! What do they do without it? And how does Princess Maud earn a living?”⁴⁴ Little’s question clearly indicates he and Ogden had visited the infamous resort, and knew it well enough to ask after one of the effeminate “fairy” waiters. That November, before The Slide’s closing Codman had written wistfully to Little who was touring Italian cities, “of course you will have fun in Italy if you care to look about. I always heard ‘The Slide’ was mild compared with Italy.”⁴⁵ In a letter written a few months later Codman outlined a humorous story revealing his family’s possible connection to the infamous Slide,

I am still here [in New York] and am beginning to think that ‘The Slide’ was in my ancestral house!! One of my old cousins was telling me that the old house was in Carroll Place, was stills standing, and was a very low place—quite awful, and I must be sure not to go and see it. This was the last time I was here. So today I found out that Carroll Place was part of Bleecker Street, between South Fifth Avenue and Thompson Street. And I went there and there was ‘The Slide’!!!!⁴⁶

Codman’s ability to joke at the Slide’s origins provides clear evidence of how untroubled he remained over his forays into the sexual underworld, and how the possibility of public exposure held little fear over him. His many references to the Slide, along with recent information unearthed by historians, explains in part his great desire to be in New York—

⁴³ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, February 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁴⁴ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 February 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁴⁵ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 21 November 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁴⁶ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 4 February 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

for here lay a sexual subculture which allowed him far greater freedoms than possible back in Puritan Boston.

Recent documentation emerging on the Slide provides an extraordinary opportunity to place Codman—and by extension countless other upper class homosexual men—directly in the teeming sexual underworld outlined in Chauncey’s Gay New York. Historian Jonathan Ned Katz has just recently brought to light the trial transcript of one Thomas Frank Stevenson—charged with “keeping a disorderly house” or an establishment used for prostitution. The defendant’s saloon, The Slide, was located at 157 Bleecker Street, New York. This transcript supplies a clear picture of the saloon Codman acknowledged frequenting before it was shut down by the city in January of 1892. Physically, the resort was described as a series of basement rooms—with the entrance on the street down a short flight of steps. Within its walls could be found a bar, tables, dance floor, and piano—complete with a “fairy” who occasionally sang for the patrons. A New York Press account published at the time reads, “the basement floor is ‘filled nightly with 100 to 300 people most of whom are males but are not worthy of the name of man. They are effeminate, degraded and addicted to vices which are inhuman and unnatural.’”⁴⁷

Another press account stressed, “one of the most vile, vulgar resorts in the City, where no man of decent inclinations would remain for five minutes without being nauseated. Here men of degenerate type were the waiters, some of them going to the extent of rousing their necks. In falsetto voices they sang filthy ditties, and when not otherwise busy would drop into a chair at the table of any visitor who would brook their

⁴⁷ New York Press, 11 May 1890, quotation in, Jonathan Ned Katz, Love Stories: Sex Between Men Before Homosexuality, 288.

awful presence.”⁴⁸ One of the witnesses at Stevenson’s trial testified that one of these “fairy” waiters had, “minced up to me and lisped” a request for a drink.⁴⁹ Others noted their feminine names, “Fanny Davenport, Madam Fisher, Maggie Vickers, Princess Ida, Princess Toto, and Sarah Bernhardt.” Another fairy named Maude—possibly the “Princess Maude” Little expressed concern for—reportedly invited customers to a sexual “performance” to be held in private.⁵⁰

The fairy’s gender behavior was patently and unmistakably feminine. One witness marveled at how, “they would refer to each other as ‘she,’ and ‘her’ and, ‘would call each other bitch.’” They also spoke of their “husbands” or of “being kept.” As Chauncey has argued, these fairies modeled themselves after women they knew and understood—most often the prostitute. A letter Little sent from Europe confirms this pattern: describing people he had encountered at a Paris nightclub, he noted how two men, “dressed as fallen girls” came in and picked up two (presumably “normal”) men.⁵¹ At Stevenson’s trial a reporter also testified to the rampant homosexuality at the Slide—although significantly, this word is never used at any point. “The effeminate men” he noted, put their hands near visitors’ “private parts” and would “lean over and whisper in a very affectionate manner.”⁵² In the end the Slide’s owner was found guilty and sentenced to one year in prison and a five hundred dollar fine. The Slide was closed permanently and would not ever reopen; although many other similar resorts would quickly take its place.

⁴⁸ George Chauncey, Gay New York, 39.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 40.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Ned Katz, Love Stories: Sex Between Men Before Homosexuality, 291.

⁵¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 3 March 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁵² Jonathan Ned Katz, Love Stories: Sex Between Men Before Homosexuality, 293, 295.

The utter lack of concern on Codman and Little's part over the abrupt demise of the Slide seems at first glance troubling. Yet, as men with mainstream male gender behavior they typically did not identify with those fairies who may have shared their sexual tastes but decidedly did not their gender behavior. Newspaper reporters and witnesses also appear to have made clear distinctions between the effeminate fairies and their male customers. A drawing of the Slide, this "lowest and most disgusting place" as it was called, depicts clearly effeminate waiters—complete with limp wrists—serving normal masculine-gendered male customers.⁵³ In their analysis as well, historians Chauncey and Katz concur, "in this testimony, the effeminates partnered 'men' and there was not the slightest hint that the manliness of the men, or the character of their sexual desire was compromised by going off with such partners. The masculine men retained their normative gender status, only the effeminates were called 'unnatural' and thought of as 'depraved.'"⁵⁴ Codman and Little's striking lack of discomfort—often even of any fear—confirms such an analysis. Where the effeminate Clyde Fitch, despite his upper class status, lived in fear of ridicule (or worse, discovery) and rarely let his guard down, for these two Bostonians such anxiety is virtually nonexistent. Their normatively gendered behavior protected them from within and without—their homosexual orientation was in this sense irrelevant.

Turkish Baths

Another important site of the sexual underworld in addition to the Slide were the Turkish Baths. Recent historiography—in particular that of George Chauncey and John

⁵³ This newspaper drawing appears in both, George Chauncey, Gay New York, 38; and Jonathan Ned Katz, Love Stories: Sex Between Men Before Homosexuality, 288.

⁵⁴ Jonathan Ned Katz, Love Stories: Sex Between Men Before Homosexuality, 295.

Donald Gustav-Wrathall—illustrates how the baths became well-known meeting sites for those in search of male same-sex eroticism.⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, Turkish Baths figure prominently in the Little/Codman correspondence. In New York the baths on Lafayette Place, and at 28 West 28th Street are discussed, and the Boston Athletic Association back home was another favorite. As with resorts like the Slide, the Turkish Baths provided the friends with a safe space in which to explore their sexual desires.

In February of 1894 Little writes from Boston, “Took a Turkish Bath yesterday, the boys were bathing nothing particularly pretty however. I shall never forget the lovely one last year. Do you suppose, ‘beauty but skin deep’ means remove the skin to find beauty?”⁵⁶ Within the week, he had returned, “I took a Turkish Bath this p.m. It was very nice. I had a towel over the shower so it became one stream and then lay on the floor to let it come on my bottom! My balls were shrunk up into my chest! Then I went to the steam room... it was bully.”⁵⁷ Seemingly unable to stay away, before three days had passed he had been again, “1st: I took a Turkish Bath this p.m., it was indeed Turkish. That fat Charlie Rice, a man named Balderstein and a Taylor were more less full and B. took it into his head to try...[left blank]”⁵⁸ Little then explains how, despite an invitation to a dinner party where a mutual friend Tom Kelly was to sing, he chose instead the bath, “certainly the scene at the B.A.A. [Boston Athletic Association] was worth all I should have seen there. I was on the other side of the T. Bath, otherwise I might have fallen victim to the lust of B. I would have given anything to have seen all he did. Once they carried a lot of towels and I couldn’t tell whether he put his mouth or fucked off!! The

⁵⁵ George Chauncey, Gay New York, 207-225; John Donald Gustav-Wrathall, Take the Stranger by the Hand: Same Sex Relations and the YMCA (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁵⁶ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 21 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁵⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 27 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Tatler is almost impossible to do if you have drunk a lot, so I fear it wasn't so!!!"⁵⁹ His manner of providing graphic illustrations of the sexual activity at the Turkish Bath, and then ending with a step back—that perhaps none of it really happened—is an interesting way of avoiding otherwise taboo topics. By return post Codman responded from London, "I have just got your nice long letter, certainly I never dreamt of such scenes at the B.A.A.—it must have been great fun and quite worth losing a sight of Tom Kelly."⁶⁰

In discussing the Turkish Baths Little's commentary leaves little ambiguity on the reasons for his intense interest, "Harry Williams says the Lafayette Place Turkish Bath in New York—no one hears anything!!"⁶¹ Although his excitement is palpable, the issue of safety occasionally enters in here as well. In his discussion of the Lafayette Place Bath George Chauncey notes the risks, including frequent police raids, involved with patronizing such establishments at the turn of the century.⁶² Little's evaluation of another New York bath is therefore similar in explaining why these dangers should be broached, "as for 28 w 28 st, NY—it is all the difference of having a cock or not in the case of need."⁶³ While the two friends explored Turkish Baths around Europe, Canada, and the northeastern United States, all seemed to pale in the face of excitements available back in Boston at the Athletic Association. Writing from Italy Little wonders, "you never write about the Athletic Club and Turkish Baths! Do you take any? There is one in Naples, [if] I can get Bowdoin to go to Naples I shall go and try the T.B. and see what will happen."⁶⁴ A series of letters written later that spring chart Little's intrigue and ultimate

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 15 March 1894, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁶¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 January 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁶² George Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 220-223.

⁶³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 14 May 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁶⁴ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 24 June 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

disappointment with the Paris Turkish Bath. Writing in early May he explains, “I have not yet been to a Turkish Bath. Dick Weld is going and I shall make him go with me. As for other indecencies, I have such a cold I don’t know when I shall be able to go out in the evening.”⁶⁵ Within a few days his burning curiosity has been satisfied, “the Turkish Bath here is a fraud, really not much better than the B.A.A.—and the attendance far beneath it!”⁶⁶ A week later, having migrated across the channel to London, Little seems eager to find the as-yet-unexplored English baths, “I shall try the Turkish Bath here. I hope it is better than Paris which was not as good as B.A.A.!! It is dirty and not the right kind of dirt!”⁶⁷ While himself touring Europe Little could not help wondering about Codman’s activities back at home—and the doings of the Boston Athletic Club, “do you take Turkish Baths? And with whom?” Later in the same letter he again questions, “What was it about you and Kip having a wrangle in the bath tub or something? Nothing nasty I hope?”⁶⁸ Responding to these questions only months later (at least as far as we can tell from surviving documentation), Codman acknowledges far less activities than his friend, “I have not had a Turkish Bath this winter. They are no fun alone.”⁶⁹

Two years later during the Spring of 1894 Little begins his letter to Codman on a subject familiar to both, “I took a Turkish Bath this p.m. No sights. Frank was there looking well and was very lust [ful]!!!”⁷⁰ Later in the letter, he briefly touches on another significant event, “Saturday Mamie Watson has asked me to drive to Auburndale and [we] attracted a great deal of attention driving home this p.m.” A few weeks earlier he

⁶⁵ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 May 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁶⁶ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 14 May 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁶⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 20 May 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁶⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 4 December 1891, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁶⁹ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, March 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁷⁰ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 March 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

had also mentioned Mamie, "Mamie Watson took me on a sleigh ride the other day. She has a sort of a smash on me just now. She has a nice pair of horses which she drives well."⁷¹ And then in a reference to jealousy, or possibly shock at seeing him courting a woman, he notes of mutual friends, "you should have seen Gus and Gordon Dexter look at us when we were away out by Chestnut Hill." At the very least, not completely indifferent to her attentions, Little was apparently seeing a good deal of Mamie Watson that spring. Describing a recent dinner party he adds with his usual irreverent humor, "Mamie Watson also sat next to me and patted me on the leg from time to time! It was the right leg fortunately! She might have wondered why I carried so large a corn cob in my pocket!"⁷²

Arthur Little

At least in terms of their gender behavior and sexual temperament, Arthur Little and Ogden Codman were striking mirror images of one another: both expressed sexual interest in young men and women, actively pursued these two groups, and eventually married. Much like Codman, Little always searched vigilantly for attractive young men. During the winter of 1892 he wrote home to Codman from Rome, "this p.m. I have been talking with a nice Philadelphian whose name I am not very sure of. He is very nice however. There is another named Brice not so good-looking but nice. I picked them both up last evening in the Billiard Room."⁷³ Later, he describes developments, "the two Phila. Youths are named Brice and Denckle. We went and looked up a lot of smutty photos yesterday... D. is the better beauty... very attractive and nice looking he and I area going to a Café Chantant tonight." Two years later, now back in Boston, Little

⁷¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 12 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁷² Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 21 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁷³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 3 March 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

describes a recent dinner he attended—along with the latest prospects, “the dinner was for G. Robbins and Caswell—he is rather a nice little boy... his manners are a little too ‘elbowy’ but still he is not bad. I have asked them to lunch here the 25th... That boy Bradlee Fueno was at the Bradlee’s dance, he looks as if he would ‘toss it’ very well, or it would him!!”⁷⁴ Revealing similar attractions, a month later Little notes new arrivals to his summer-house (Swampscott) neighborhood, “John has let the Shingle style house to some people named Swift from Dayton, Ohio... The oldest boy is a cherub and has been at Belmont—but one boy stabbed another there—with a knife—I don’t suppose the other ‘stabs’ count—and the Swifts’ thought it best to remove their attractive kid!”⁷⁵ In another communication, Little describes not only his attractions but also a party where men could apparently express their attractions quite openly, “Did I write you of Jarley’s last dance? Gordon Ball set in my lap and was very affectionate.”⁷⁶ As seen in his pursuit of sundry and various young men, Little’s attractions, much like his friend Codman’s, were not limited by social class—their interests apparently transcended such criteria.

Willie Beal represents a typical example of Little’s attractions and their generally brief duration. Willie is mentioned occasionally in letters throughout 1894; normally due to Codman’s asking after him. That summer Little relates how a visitor had dropped into

⁷⁴ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁷⁵ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 23 March 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁷⁶ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 23 April 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA. In his rose-hued and nostalgic memoir of growing up in Codman’s Boston, Samuel Eliot Morison notes that the Boston amateur theatre, which counted Little among its members, were so enthusiastic about their productions that after one particularly successful play, “Mrs. Jarley’s Waxworks” the various players kept the character’s names among themselves for life. The female friend Codman and Little refer to as “Jarley” throughout the letters played this character in the play. Another character from the play who appears in the letters is “Fair Rosamond.” Little himself played Sir Walter Raleigh and it was for this reason that he was able to name his small newly laid out street in the Back Bay, “Raleigh Street.” Samuel Eliot Morison, One Boy’s Boston, 1887-1901 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), 58.

his house in Swampscott unannounced, surprising he and Willie sunbathing on the rocks—thus the two apparently enjoyed great intimacy.⁷⁷ By 1898 however, all friendship between Little and Willie had come to an end. In answer to Codman's repeated inquiries, he explained, "I haven't seen Willie for nearly a year, he is so lazy that this is too far for him to come. I heard that Edith Kendall said, 'the family thinks Willie has been worried by the luxury of Arthur Little's house?!!'"⁷⁸ Quite possibly, the fear of "luxury" represented a metaphor for something else troubling at Little's house—homosexuality seems to be the bull in the china closet in this case.

Among Little's myriad of personal attractions, flirtations, and short-lived romances, one relationship stands apart. In his friendship with James Bowdoin Sullivan—who was twenty-two when they met—the forty year old Little seems to have uncharacteristically lowered his guard and remained on intimate terms for an extended time. Sullivan—variously known in the letters as "Bowdoin" or "Iran"—made the unusual leap among Little's acquaintances from conquest to intimate; that the two were lovers is likely, although in the final analysis such questions are irrelevant to appreciating the importance of the relationship to Little. Sullivan's name first appears in Little's letters during his tour across Europe in January of 1892. Immediately on learning of this young man's identity, Codman established and conveyed back to Little the family's social standing in New England society. It was clear from the beginning that to Little, Sullivan was more than just another pretty face, "Bowdoin is not at all good looking, that is handsome, but is great fun. He is so liberal-minded and can talk Italian like a native or

⁷⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 6 June 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁷⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 18 April 1898, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

nearly so!”⁷⁹ Another letter further indicates the attraction is this time more than Little’s usual quest for physical male beauty, “I have just been reading your letters to Bowdoin who is very nice and dear. And never conceals his ideas or actions or anything else.”⁸⁰ And again, “I should not suppose Bowdoin would find Italy much to his matter of fact taste if he could not stand the endearments of Arthur Amory...The Italians must be too much entirely for him.”⁸¹ One letter explained the confusion surrounding the multiple names he had assigned to his new friend, “Bowdoin’s real name is James Sullivan, Iran being the last syllable. Fancy anyone having concocted Iran out of Sullivan.”⁸²

Little and Bowdoin obviously enjoyed each other’s company and remained together for much of that year. In late April, writing home to Codman in Boston, Little explained Bowdoin was still with him, “we have great fun together poking around as our tastes are so entirely the same, except he is fearfully musical and sings and all that. But then he is never in a hurry and is at least as lazy as I am!”⁸³ In his next note Codman approved of his friend’s new relationship, “How nice for you to have Bowdoin Sullivan with you so much. I always have wanted a companion when travelling as I never enjoyed anything alone. What a pity he is musical. I hope he does not practice much.”⁸⁴ During this tour, Little’s letters find them at baths together, in Sicily, “for a wild spree,” searching for choice photographs of Italian boys, and at various other sites of the European sexual underworld. Another letter from Rome draws a portrait of intimacy and harmony, “last night Bowdoin and I went to the opera, such a lot of people! The man in

⁷⁹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 17 February 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁸⁰ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 28 January 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁸¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 February 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁸² Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 April 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁸³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 26 April 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁸⁴ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 9 May 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

the pit coughed and grinned when the [dancers] put up their legs! There was the dearest little officer in front of us!! I read your letters or parts of them to B. at his breakfast this a.m. We shouted over it—what fun about D.W.!!”⁸⁵ Later he reveals another aspect of the relationship’s intimacy, “Iran has been taking some photos of me with little on! They seem quite a success!”⁸⁶ A final story—gleefully related by Little—particularly appealed to his irreverent humor, while also illustrating his own view that he and his new friend enjoyed illicit secrets,

Last evening I was sitting with Bowdoin in the corner of the Reading Room when the porter brought me a card of a man and the man advanced and said it was a mistake, he had seen my name and concluded it was the Rev. A. Little—who was an old friend of his. If he had known what we were talking about he would have thought there was a greater difference than he thought.⁸⁷

In April Little explained Bowdoin intended to visit Boston that coming September, “I am rather in hopes he may get rooms somewhere near you. He would need a sitting room, however so Laurence would not do.”⁸⁸ Characteristically, Codman responded with unbridled enthusiasm over the addition of another young man to his regular circle, “when does Bowdoin come to Boston? And will he stay? Or go to New York? What will he do here? I am much interested.”⁸⁹

When their travel plans separated Little and his new friend he conveyed a deep sense of sadness back home, “[Bowdoin] is now I suppose in Constantinople as he left Venice a few hours before I did. I miss him ever so much. I tried in vain to make him come to Paris but he had decided last September to go to the Caucesses and so it was no

⁸⁵ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 17 February 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁸⁶ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 29 April 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁸⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 24 January 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁸⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 April 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁸⁹ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 12 May 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

use.”⁹⁰ His next letter however betrays better spirits, “I have just had a letter from Iran, it was very amusing and graphic! There are no chambermaids only boys in the Constantinople hotels! What a time one, I will not say you, would have.”⁹¹ Bowdoin’s final appearance in the correspondence is a little over two years later: with obvious relish Little explains to Codman how Bowdoin had recently spied, “a man f---king a servant girl in a neighbor’s kitchen!!” In concluding his story he adds, “my what a delightful sight! How he must have felt when he sought his own bed! Mrs. Iran must have reaped the benefit of it.”⁹² Thus, it appears, much like Little and Codman, after a time of watching attractive men, and cavorting with Arthur Little through the male sexual underworld of Europe, Bowdoin had eventually married. Equally significant, the friendship between Little and Bowdoin seems to have survived the marriage.

If the sexual component of Little’s many friendships with young men cannot always be clearly understood, a careful reading of his letters and a reflection on them as a whole leaves little question on the issue. Comments culled from the correspondence illustrate without question that his many attractions to young men often did in fact lead to sexual consummation. Writing to Codman from Boston, Little exalts, “Charlie Winston spend the night here and wet drawers on every hand!!!”⁹³ Similarly, he notes, “Do ask Charlie Winslow to tea and ask after his armpits. Bowdoin says if he is as good looking as I say he must have been screwed to death nearly.”⁹⁴ Similarly, he mused while on a visit to London, “There are lots of johnnies here one would like to know in a Biblical

⁹⁰ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 May 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁹¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 14 May 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁹² Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 6 June 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁹³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 22 January 1894, Box 83, Folder 1662, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁹⁴ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 28 January 1892, Box 83, Folder 1662, OC Papers, SPNEA.

way—one of them smiled at me in a suggestive way yesterday.”⁹⁵ Later in the same letter, he proceeded to acknowledge, that while caution was surely advised, he nonetheless would continue to seek sexual experiences, “I agree with you about doing things alone being best—but there are somethings that require two most decidedly!”

Bisexuality or Quest for Respectability?

As was the case with so many men of their sexual temperament who lacked effeminacy, Codman and Little moved effortlessly from the sexual underworld to respectable Boston society. Like many of their contemporaries, both men ultimately married: Little at age fifty-one in 1903, and Codman at his forty-first birthday in 1904. Both married widows with established families—and fortunes—and produced no offspring of their own.⁹⁶ Although the two friends’ correspondence dwells most often on the attractions of young men, there is the infrequent reference to women’s physical allure.

Whenever in Boston, Codman in particular courted the young women of his social class. During the winter of 1892 he recounts his evening, “I danced with one of the Chandler sisters, with Miss Hunewell, and Miss [unreadable] between the three Germans [cotillions] I was at... I saw B. at the assembly and danced with her. Her sister is very ill, Mrs. Fish thinks too many six o’clock baths.”⁹⁷ And the next week, again, “I am going to the opera tonight and shall see Miss Edith Cushing. She is to sit in the Bowdoin’s box.”⁹⁸ That summer when staying at the fashionable society resort community in Bar Harbor Maine, Codman continued this busy schedule of courting

⁹⁵ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 20 May 1892, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁹⁶ Codman married Leila Howard Griswold, who had two teenage sons. Little was wed to Jessie Means Whitman, mother of five children.

⁹⁷ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 19 February 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

⁹⁸ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 25 February 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

available young women, “I lunched with Mrs. Morse at the Kebo Club, Mrs. Wheeler a pretty Philadelphian was there... also Miss Brown and Dick Bush—he has a polo pony this year. Miss Brown is great fun and we went to a dance at the Kebo Club last night.”⁹⁹

Unraveling his motivations in his pursuit of these young women is more difficult than it is to understand his attractions to young men; rarely does he express strong opinions on their looks, or linger over comely features as he does with the young men he meets. Also the subject of physical sex is never broached. Whether such an omission is a revelation of a lack of physical interest in women, or an embrace of the reigning ideology concerning respectable female purity remains unclear. Still in Bar Harbor as the summer season drew to a close Codman comes closest to connecting his young women with sexuality, “the last Kebo [Club] dance is tomorrow. We go on after Mrs. Mason’s dinner. Miss Barry and Miss de Ruyter (my last girl) left today. I am going to try Miss Ganneau next I think... Miss Jennings asked me to bath in her mother’s tank with anyone I liked, so I asked Miss Davies... [who was] the wrong girl to—she was much shocked.”¹⁰⁰

While it may be possible to conclude that Codman merely sought respectability through these flirtations with the opposite sex, Arthur Little’s more candid letters sweep such conjectures aside entirely.

Little’s sexual interest in women—like his interest in young men—is far less murky: he expresses sexual interest in women numerous times and indeed even admits to an encounter with one. With his usual humor, he relates his interest in a mutual female acquaintance, “Herbert has been called in to furnish Grace Amory’s bedroom. I should put myself in the bed I think! Be built into the mattress with one hole the size of a silver

⁹⁹ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, Sunday [September], 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁰⁰ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 6 September 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

dollar halfway down it!!”¹⁰¹ In a later letter he inquires about another woman, who he believes to be “low”—ie: sexually available, “do you remember a pudding-faced girl named Morris or some such thing... I think she is in the house but as she’s low now, of course, I can’t [be sure] but I am sure she is.”¹⁰² During that same winter he conveys his desires even more explicitly, “I hear Mrs. Tom [Cushing] looks like one of the ‘gayiety girls’, I suppose she is screwable?”¹⁰³ While in Europe that spring he further explains to Codman that his Roman holiday has involved more than baths and Italian boys, “I have been scr---ng a little Roman girl here most of the [month] who is the image of her [Mrs. L] only not as pretty.”¹⁰⁴ Further down in the letter, in relating a story on sexuality in the Middle East, Little confirms that his interest in salacious stories is not limited to those involving homosexuality, “I hear the great thing in Egypt is to have a girl fucked by a donkey...” The correspondence also indicates Little traveled with a “Miss Tilden” during his 1892 European trip; yet although Codman often asks to be remembered to her, she never figures in any of the friends’ discussions. It is entirely possible, indeed likely, that she was a family friend of some sort—otherwise Little’s complete failure to mention her is difficult to understand.

In an otherwise commonplace remark on the decorations of his lodgings in London in May of 1892, Little best explains how his affections could naturally be directed at either gender. Writing to Codman in Boston he explains, “you would be charmed with the little house we live in: two rooms on each floor but mine where there

¹⁰¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 21 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁰² For some time I read these letters as coded messages that were in reality discussing men Little had slept with—yet, after reflecting on the many men he discusses attractions to—I have come to accept them, with reservations, at face value. Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 30 March 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁰³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 28 January 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁰⁴ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 20 March 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

are three! The one which makes mine so small is I think about 7 x 11! But everything is clearly painted and papered, and with the man or woman of your heart temporarily, or for a honeymoon, would be very attractive.”¹⁰⁵ Here Little reveals not only that he felt strong desire could be possible for either men or women, but additionally, that neither love was superior in any way to the other.

Establishing the two friends’ bisexuality—or “normal” mainstream sexuality in the traditional sense, where men naturally pursued both young men and women, those who were their social inferiors—is in Little’s case rather straightforward. Depending on how reliable his letters are to be judged, he expressed sexual interest in, and actively pursued both sexes. Codman’s case however, presents far more of a challenge: perhaps due to a concern with discretion, or sexual indifference to women he has left behind a far more murky trail. A natural modern temptation would be to see in him the story of a homosexual searching for respectability or cover through dating women. This conclusion, however seductive initially, must after due reflection be rejected. As the reconstruction of Codman’s world has illustrated, fear and cover were unfamiliar concepts to him. Most likely, his interest in women existed, but was perhaps less intense than Little’s: both men did after all ultimately marry. Yet, in another clue to his attractions—following his wife’s untimely death, rather than remarrying, Codman employed a succession of attractive young male secretaries.

Reconstructing Identities

The task of understanding anyone’s sexual identity is an enormous undertaking. When the subject of inquiry lived in a cultural context quite distinct from our own, and

¹⁰⁵ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 20 May 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

has been dead for many decades, these perils of comprehension are only compounded. Normally such a formidable assignment would be beyond the realm of possibility. Yet, through a series of circumstances—namely the unusually intimate nature of the Codman/Little correspondence, and the Codman family’s penchant for saving all things great and small—a reconstruction of both Ogden Codman’s sexual identity and his cultural context becomes not only feasible, but indeed called for. Therefore, having established the two men’s sexual desires, attractions, and practices the next logical step lays in the direction of some well-grounded speculations on their self-conceptualizations—especially during the early years of the 1890’s. The writing of letters to one another for so many years allowed them to articulate quite clearly their identification of a history of male same-sex eroticism, its “naturalness,” and the unmistakable fact that such people represent a distinct identity. These realities, outlined in their communications, extended even to the adoption of linguistic terms such as “queer”—defined as someone of their own sexual temperament. Whether Codman—who first introduces this specific language—had heard such descriptive terms from others is hard to establish as no such connection is presented.

Writing from the elegant house he had built for himself in the Back Bay, Little updated the traveling Codman on Boston’s social whirl, “I am asked to the Howes to meet Mrs. Robbins and Caswell, hers—not the apothecary’s son, but fearfully rich, owns a coach, etc., etc. They say he is very fond of change so he may prefer a male to a female!”¹⁰⁶ As this odd bird reference illustrates, in his earliest letters Little struggles with the absence of a word that would convey the message of a man sexually attracted to another man. While in London, and having recently separated from his friend Bowdoin,

¹⁰⁶ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 12 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

Little explains he intends to immediately look up the latter's friends, as such men would be, "a likely crowd"—an obvious allusion to the very real possibility that they would share his sexual temperament.¹⁰⁷ Employing similar language, he speculates later in the same letter on two other young men he suspects share his sexual tastes, "I should say Frank Curtis or Freeman Allen were both 'likely subjects' from what I have seen of both at the T. B. [Turkish Bath]. I should say that their 'pulses beat fast and furious!!'" His use of quotation marks once again when presenting these labels further reinforces a sense of tentativeness over language. Yet, in the same letter, he explains plainly his understanding that there were many others like him, and had been throughout history, "since lunch have been to the Abby. I did not see the monument to dear Harry II who had Piers Gaveston's cock replaced by Parliament with a red-hot poker. How queer people are with their resolutions, etc., etc." Here the reference to traditions of homosexuality across time, to one who shared his proclivities hundreds of years earlier—if indeed not his identity is quite striking.

Little's language did evolve over time. In January of 1892, he provided Codman with some newly acquired linguistic information, "I find the term 'screwing' seems to refer to either male or female."¹⁰⁸ That male same-sex eroticism is his meaning for "male" is confirmed in a letter written about a week later, "I continue to hear charming stories of 'screwing' at English schools."¹⁰⁹ The friends' use of the word "queer" is equally significant, and when carefully charted and analyzed yields far more insight into their identities. In much of the early correspondence Codman and Little utilize the word as the majority of their class did at the time: to convey a sense of oddness or

¹⁰⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 20 May 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁰⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 28 January 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁰⁹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 February 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

strangeness—something peculiar for instance. In describing Codman’s relative John Codman’s wedding Little wrote, “John Codman had such queer ushers... Al Bond!! Sydney Wyeth! John Baworth!! Ned Codman was one and was disgusted as you can imagine.”¹¹⁰ Similarly, he noted an acquaintance’s strange behavior, “They say Alice Russell was walking little Emily Sears and E.S. heard her saying to herself, ‘My God! How can I fear it!’ over and over again until E.S. said she wouldn’t walk with her if she [did so anymore]!!! She must be really queer. I feel awfully sorry for her.”¹¹¹ Codman employed the term similarly, “The T.T. [Town Topics] says Gus Hewlerway is going to Newport. What queer people to go there.”¹¹² And again he describes a block of houses with the oddest appearance, “There is also a queer old block of houses of which I have often heard, DePaw Row.”¹¹³

Their conventional use of the word “queer” grows less certain when a letter in which Codman discusses a curious article he has found is examined. In the course of this explanation he introduces a new and startling definition, “There was a weird article in the paper of the freedom sulphur mines where they do queer things. However, I guess it isn’t the only place in Italy.”¹¹⁴ The reference to an all-male site such as a mine, along with the allusion to Italy leaves little question that Codman was fashioning a new and different meaning for the otherwise commonplace word—a meaning which could provide a name for his sexual temperament. A letter written that November mentions “queer” in three different contexts—at least one, and most likely two employ the new definition.

Beginning with the conventional, “I was very glad to get your letter. Sammy Dexter is to

¹¹⁰ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 12 April 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹¹¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 March 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹¹² Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 3 April 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹¹³ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 4 February 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹¹⁴ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 19 January 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

be buried tomorrow. He died at Saranac suddenly. Lunched with Gordon, he had such queer eyes.”¹¹⁵ Later in the letter he mentions someone who is queer, “It seems that du Maurey’s real name is something else and his father was queer but married to his mother which was a pity for much more fun if not.” If his meaning is ambiguous here, his last usage of the word leaves no uncertainty—as he clearly links the word with male same sex eroticism—much as he would in the reference to the sulphur mines, “I should think you might get some awfully queer engravings and photos in Italy, you might send me some photos anonymously to my Chestnut Street [address].” Thus, when read with care Codman’s letter illustrates beautifully how the word “queer” was still in transition with double or multiple meanings—at least between he and Little. In time his linkage of “queer” with his own sexual temperament would grow more pronounced.

In an obvious response to Codman’s definition of “queer” as involving male same sex attractions, Little agrees while also announcing defiantly, “I haven’t the slightest doubt that they did ‘queer’ things as you call them but which I am assured are perfectly natural and have always thought so you know!”¹¹⁶ The rare insight into a late nineteenth century world is nothing short of astounding here. Little not only concurs with his friend in employing a new definition of queer—as meaning those of his sexual temperament—but further declares such activity to be “perfectly natural.” The emphatic underlining of the word natural betrays an uncharacteristically defensive posture for Little; in general his discussion of homosexuality seems curiously at odds with the negative messages ubiquitous in the cultural production of his day. In time—at least in the private code between the two friends—queer came to be defined as homosexual. Writing two years

¹¹⁵ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 22 November 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹¹⁶ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 28 January 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

later Little notes, “There are three fellows here who I think do queer things. I saw one talking to a nice looking boy downtown who was flushing and wiggling!”¹¹⁷ A further example unequivocally casts aside any hint of ambiguity: writing to Codman on tour in Europe Little asks, “Have you been to any of the places in Paris where one looks through cracks in the walls and sees queer things going on?”¹¹⁸ And again, when placed in the context of the larger correspondence, Little’s pointed question seems unmistakable, “Loveland Ronalds has a fine house at Tuxedo I think and is very rich. Is he queer?”¹¹⁹

Despite having a clearly delineated meaning for queer between themselves—and possibly among those friends in their circle—Codman and Little still continued to sprinkle their letters to one another with the larger culture’s meaning of the word. As late as 1904, for example Little still uses the word as meaning odd or peculiar, “You ought to see the Sprague house with its great temporary roof, the walls being built up in white marble and the whole upper story going on at the same time—it is the queerest bit of work you ever heard of but goes on well.”¹²⁰ Similarly, in 1897 when the two friends were drifting apart, Little speaks of their mutual friend Herbert Browne’s odd behavior, “Herbert goes to New York for 22nd! He seems to have grown to have a queer unnatural fancy to see his family on every occasion. I don’t know what it means. Actually bought things to take to the children!! Fancy must be losing his mind I fear.”¹²¹ In view of the private dialogue he and Codman had developed however, Little’s overt connection between queer, unnatural practices and the family is no mere coincidence. Such a statement, even when delivered in his usual tongue-in-cheek style is another reiteration of

¹¹⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 23 April 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹¹⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 23 April 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹¹⁹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 21 November 1891, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹²⁰ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 22 May 1904, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹²¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 19 February 1897, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

his earlier insistence that queer (or homosexual) activity has always been perfectly natural. Thus, when carefully deconstructed, Little's use of queer provides quite clearly the outline of an identity centered on male same-sex eroticism.

For the historian, however, unraveling these two separate, but intimately related definitions can prove a formidable challenge. In reviewing Codman's letter concerning his approaching meeting with Amy Lowell his meaning for queer is uncertain, "I shall like dining at the Somersett even though the dinner is to meet Miss Amy Lowell—oh, it just occurs to me—she is the daughter of Mrs. Augustus Lowell of course. The queer one. I was thinking of the pimply Alice, Ned's daughter, she is the horsy grooming one. Well, I am glad!"¹²² Amy Lowell, a well-known masculine lover of women, who lived her life in Codman's Boston quite openly and unapologetically would certainly be a perfect match for the definition he had privately forged for the word. Yet, his meaning is unclear; and in general he does not discuss women's sexuality—even in his repeated references to his professional protégé Elsie de Wolfe, who lived openly with her lover, Elisabeth Marbury on New York's Irving Place during these years. Similarly, in speaking of his friend Tom Howard's expression of surprise, his meaning is less than straightforward, "Tom Howard is here as fine as silk, not brainy! Miss C. said how queer he looks quite startled."¹²³ Chauncey finds a group of men by the 1910's and 1920's referring to themselves as "queers;" thus the Codman/Little correspondence is the first evidence moving this chronology much further back—into the 1890's. Significantly, Chauncey emphasizes that these "queers" discussed their attraction to normal men—in the two Bostonians' case, however their attraction is exclusively directed at younger

¹²² The Somersett Club was the choicest men's club in Boston at the time. Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 22 March 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹²³ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 27 July 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

men.¹²⁴ In his study of Boston at the turn of the century Shand-Tucci also uncovers a possibly similar use of the word in 1895. Charles Wentworth, in attempting to warn his business partner that his reputation is fast becoming suspect, actually links the word queer with the now-infamous Oscar Wilde, “You are two innocents and besides you are both queer and queer things are looked askance since Oscar’s expose. Poor Oscar, what horrid privations he will have to endure.”¹²⁵

Just as historians have researched the etiology of modern terms such as queer, Jonathan Ned Katz’s latest work also documents the earliest known American usage of a more negative term. During the course of the trial for the Slide’s owner, one of the witnesses explained how, “the feminine inclined” men at the infamous resort were, “people commonly known as ‘cocksuckers.’”¹²⁶ Without question, the witness employed the word to signify a despised “other”—someone engaged in acts he felt immoral. Yet interestingly Arthur Little also uses the word on at least one occasion, similarly marking off a group of deviants apart from himself, “I should not think Freddy Allen might be safe from c---ksuckers. I know him well by sight.”¹²⁷ Little’s letter leaves no question that he found this young man attractive and knew others would too. Yet his use of the negative word is interesting; it may be possible that with his overall normative gender behavior he placed himself apart from “cocksuckers” who he saw as the effeminate fairies—people in his worldview as quite distinctive from his own identity. Knowledge of this term suggests that terms such as queer were also in circulation among those in the know—and not only with Codman and Little. If others

¹²⁴ George Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 16.

¹²⁵ Douglass Shand-Tucci, *Boston Bohemia: 1881-1900, Volume I, Ralph Adams Cram: Life and Architecture* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 147.

¹²⁶ Jonathan Ned Katz, *Love Stories: Sex Between Men Before Homosexuality*, 293.

¹²⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 3 March 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

used the word in the same manner—to convey an identity centered around male same-sex preferences, its characteristics and history—is a larger question for which further research will be needed.

Effeminacy

Themselves free from the charge of effeminacy, Codman and Little nonetheless were acutely aware of this behavior in other men—and its possible meanings and associations. For instance, writing in the spring of 1892, Little appears to imply that a friend's effeminacy precludes him from marriage and heterosexual activity, "Fancy 'George' Stackpole engaged! I should suppose he would giggle so he could never get in or work it off. Perhaps being an alleged Dr. will help him however."¹²⁸ Stackpole's effeminacy is further highlighted by Little's placing quotation marks around "George"—indicating unfamiliarity with using the name; possibly a woman's name had been common among their circle. Discussing a young man he has just recently met in New York, Codman snickers, "Mrs. Fish called him the Lady of the Lake."¹²⁹ They also discuss another friend Hamilton, whose effeminacy appears to have been well known to both men and women, "Hamilton was flittering around in New York. I was walking with Russell on Fifth Avenue and he met us and beamed in his greasy way at R., but didn't look at me! He never does! I was walking with a girl one day and we met Herbert [Browne] and Hamilton. She... said, 'how ladylike Hamilton is!'"¹³⁰ Indeed, the two friends assigned female names to many men—usually in quotation marks or underlined in

¹²⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 May 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹²⁹ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 25 February 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹³⁰ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 23 April 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

the letters, “Lapsley’s name is Gilliard, maybe some relation of ‘Aunt Mary.’”¹³¹ By referring to men as “Aunt Mary,” “Aunt Kitty,” or “Auntie Belle” Codman and Little emphasized these men’s effeminacy, while never once attaching a feminine name or imagery to themselves.

The figure known throughout the correspondence as “Auntie Belle” sheds the greatest amount of light on the female-gendered men in Codman’s circle. In his first mention of this Aunt—or friend, Codman writes, “heard today of the death of Aunty Belle’s father, and I wonder how she will mourn—perhaps in Europe.”¹³² His next reference to her immediately raises a red flag to the reader that here is a most unconventional nineteenth century upper class woman, “Aunty Belle showed me some rare old books she bought at an auction. Superb bindings, etc., etc., on smutty subjects, but alas! In Italian.”¹³³ Later that winter as Codman exults in his latest professional commission with Aunty Belle, the realization becomes unmistakable that this figure is indeed a man, “Aunty Belle and I are doing the Rector’s Room in the Church of the Advent and I must go back to see about it.”¹³⁴ And the following week, “Aunty Belle and I are about done with the room at the C[hurch] of the A[dvent]. I think if a fine place is built and room painted, all done in a fortnight, she cannot complain of my being slow!!”¹³⁵ Exactly two years later Codman asks after Aunty Belle, explaining the two intend to work together once again, “Do find out when Auntie Belle is coming out here—she is a dear and so she is going to help me do the Cornelius Vanderbilt house. Well I am glad of it, for she is a hustler and would be a splendid partner. And has lots of ideas and

¹³¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 23 April 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹³² Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, August 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹³³ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 21 November 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹³⁴ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 19 February 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹³⁵ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 25 February 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

good ones too.”¹³⁶ Writing from France many years later Codman noted his friend’s death; in writing to his brother Tom however, he returns Aunty Belle’s name again to quotation marks—further indication of her biological gender, “your envelope with clippings about ‘Aunty Belle’ postmarked South Lincoln July 19th and your letter dated July 21st, postmarked July 22nd [arrived], and were very welcome indeed. I hope that someone might send me some clippings about ‘Aunty Belle’ and the one by Jack Chapman I think is delightful.”¹³⁷

Without further documentation to establish some additional facts on Aunty Belle—identifying her appears unlikely. Yet hazarding an educated guess can help further illuminate both Codman’s circle and their understanding of male effeminacy. If one builds on the assumption that “Auntie” indicates an older friend, Codman’s relationship with someone known in his letters archive as J. G. Roper would be the most logical candidate. A number of his invitations can be found among Codman’s letters from the 1880’s. Just a month before his eighteenth birthday in December of 1882, he received the first, “My Dear Ogden: will you come and dine with me, and pass the evening, on Thursday this week? If you can, please meet me here about 6pm. And wait for me if I am not in. Spend the night if you can. I have a spare room. Yours, sincerely, J.G. Roper”¹³⁸ Another note sent a month later held similar promise, “Have you any engagements for Wednesday or Thursday evening this week? If you have not, I wish you would dine with me, and spend the evening, and night, if you like. There are some nice pictures in the St. Botolph Club which I would like to show you.”¹³⁹ That Mr. Roper

¹³⁶ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 11 February 1894, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹³⁷ Ogden Codman to Thomas Codman, 31 July 1924, Box 87, OC Letterbook, SPNEA.

¹³⁸ J. G. Roper to Ogden Codman, 19 December 1882, Box 82, Folder 1655, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹³⁹ J. G. Roper to Ogden Codman, 2 January 1883, Box 82, Folder 1655, OC Papers, SPNEA.

worked in the architectural field—as Aunty Belle did—and helped out a young man who had caught his eye is confirmed by the following epistle, dated 1887, “Dear Ogden: Andrew Jacques has this day offered to take you into their office. So you can call there and make your arrangements as soon as convenient. I answered for your punctuality and assiduity and faithfulness: so be careful old boy! Yours, affectionately”¹⁴⁰ Although he did not prosper—or indeed remain long—in this particular position, Codman had started down the path which would find him enjoying great professional and financial success by the mid-nineties. With a little help from a friend he had entered a field much more to his liking than the German bank a family effort had pushed him toward.

A final example culled from the Codman/Little correspondence provides by far the most intriguing information on the two’s understanding of male effeminacy. Writing in the spring of 1892 Little confides, “How indiscreet the Sunday Herald woman is when she says Julian and someone else have so much femininity about them that it is no wonder the other fellows fall in love with them as they do!!! If that means what it says Julian must be worth knowing one day. How does he walk?”¹⁴¹ Thus, while the newspaper reporter observed how effeminate young men might be sexually attractive to other men, Little himself goes one step further in explicitly connecting effeminacy with male same-sex eroticism. And significantly, identifying the effeminate man as a possible object of his sexual attentions, while in no way identifying himself as among such a group. Thus again gender behavior’s centrality in male effeminacy seems patently clear.

¹⁴⁰ J. G. Roper to Ogden Codman, 12 November 1887, Box 82, Folder 1655, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁴¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 May 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

Such distinctions notwithstanding, in relating one of his dreams to Codman, Little betrays a deep understanding of his same-sex attractions as ultimately much like a woman's love for a man. He writes that same spring of 1892,

I was surprised to think HMS had enough in him to produce a baby girl. I had such a funny dream about him and Phil. HMS had a beautiful Maine villa with a court area. H. was fearfully jealous of Phil—which jealousy I had helped along. He, H. would not let Phil see Carrie and I advised him that Phil was deeply smashed on her and I would go out and try to comfort him. When he came finally I got smashed on him—and used to go out and hug and kiss him to make up for his disappointment at not seeing her! Wasn't it funny?¹⁴²

Although “HMS's” identity is unknown, his marriage most likely made him an older object of attraction than was common for Little. Equally significant is his secretive effort to replace the man's wife—the only connection, however remote and clandestine—he makes in placing himself as one of the “third sexers” he saw at so many sites in the male sexual underworld.

Secrecy

Despite their invariable pose of light-hearted banter and an utter lack of shame on the subject of homosexuality, Codman and Little did nonetheless understand that some degree of discretion—indeed secrecy—was obligatory when discussing their sexual temperament. With characteristic nonchalance, Little concluded a story of homosexuality at English public schools, “I hope you will be very careful of what I write you and not post the letters at the P.C. [postal center?]. I might be too popular on my return!”¹⁴³ Similarly, he hints at their respective sexual interests, pursuits, and exploits in another letter posted ten days later, “I am so glad you are keeping my letters as I can then explain

¹⁴² Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 20 March 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁴³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 February 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

things in them. We might publish yours and mine in order! There used to be a book called, 'Six months in Italy'—we could call ours, 'Six months, etc., etc!!!'¹⁴⁴ Without question the two were aware that not everything discussed between them could be shared. Their exchanges on posting Italian boy photographs anonymously, or going to the trouble of marking many of their letters "private," and "personal," only confirms this understanding. Referring to this need for secrecy Little explains in one note after a description of his latest Turkish Bath visitation, "This letter would be mighty interesting reading for the family!!! And I hope there may be room for the address—that is for the morals!!" He concludes the communication with by exclaiming, "Well, this is an eventful letter!!"¹⁴⁵

On occasion a jarring reminder of the consistent risk of discovery surfaced and hit them with a jolt. On a European trip Little opened his letter home to Codman, "I got here [in Rome] last night and found a very nice letter from you which had been opened in Paris as they said there was no room for more addresses—fortunately, it was written to be read aloud so no harm was done to anyone's morals."¹⁴⁶ Ten days later he revisited the incident and pondered its implications, "my letters lay opened in Paris. I shall have to be very careful."¹⁴⁷ The same letter ends with yet another example of the elaborate juggling act required, "Jarley was here and wanted to know about you, but I didn't let her read your letter!" When another female friend Minna wanted to read Codman's letters sent home while he was away, Little again resorted to any and all tactics needed to keep their sexual desires secret, "[Minna] wishes parts of your letters read to her at lunch Sunday! I

¹⁴⁴ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 17 February 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁴⁵ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 27 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁴⁶ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 1 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁴⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

hope I shall read the right parts!!”¹⁴⁸ The same letter also notes Jarley had not forgotten her request for the letters either, “Yesterday was lovely, we all went to tea at Herbert’s.... Jarley was as funny as ever, she wanted to read your letters. I said, ‘there were parts she couldn’t’, she said mark them with a blue pencil and I won’t. That’s what Miller’s father used to do to books he read and he never read the marked places!!” In a postscript written some days later Little describes the success of the Sunday luncheon and noted how Minna, “had forgotten about your letter so I was not forced to skip parts of it.” Yet, whether Jarley, or Minna, or the family, the issue of secrecy persisted; a month later Little again notes—albeit now with his usual humor, “I called on Minna yesterday, she was very gay and cheerful—wants to see your letters!!”¹⁴⁹

Much as having a letter fall into the wrong hands represented peril, so too did an exposure of any physical acts. Little refers to the latter danger only once throughout the long course of the correspondence. In answer to an inquiry from Codman about his acquisition of any new bad habits, he explains, “Thanks I have learn’t no new tricks or bad habits. As a girl in Rome said my hand showed that my heart (!!!) would never run away with my head, but then as you say being found out is the greatest mistake! That is always what prevents me from doing anything.”¹⁵⁰ Although poignant, this thought seems at odds with Little’s other letters which find him in Turkish Baths across Europe and the United States; yet the sentiment of caution itself seems genuine—if unusual for the normally jocular Bostonian. During that same European tour, Little notes seeing some “dissolute” prints, that he was ultimately afraid to buy, “I saw some delightfully dissolute prints this a.m. but have not bought any as I can’t think where I should put such

¹⁴⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 21 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁴⁹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 March 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁵⁰ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 April 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

shocking indecencies!”¹⁵¹ Such references serve as an important reminder that the friends did have some trace of fear—despite a normally upbeat view, harsh realities did on occasion intrude into their inner world.

When reviewing the issue of secrecy the two friends felt they needed one of the most intriguing puzzles concerns their letters for 1895—the year of the infamous Oscar Wilde trials. Despite a prodigious outpouring of at least twenty-three letters changing hands in 1894, the sum total for the following year—from either Codman or Little—are two very brief letters. The first, sent to Codman’s New York address on West 16th Street discussed the weather and a recent move. In short, a letter that would embarrass no one.¹⁵² The second missile is written in such an elusive manner as to be almost indecipherable. Sending a brief note along with a newspaper article under the headline, “Eel Suck Eggs,” Little writes,

Dear Ogden: I enclose you a clipping from the paper. Isn’t it improper and puts such ideas into young lobsters’ heads! Fancy a young lady lobster who had been too intimate with a lusty young male going to see a wicked old eel and... of course its very nice for the young lady lobsters particularly—but so bad for the salad that I cannot approve. Yours, Arthur.¹⁵³

That such a letter could have been written in the same month as Wilde’s conviction, widely covered in the American press, seems at first glance inexplicable. Yet, in view of the subject the two friends discussed in earlier years, the correspondences’ silence during 1895 is deafening. All that was possible might have been Little’s double speak allusions to lobsters and eels and their activities exuding sexual connotations. That the trials and

¹⁵¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 14 May 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁵² “Dear Ogden: They have sent me word that you are elected to the A. Club and probably have to you. I moved yesterday. Today is hot as thunder. I shall go home and go in the water if it keeps up. Next time you come on you must come to Swampscott. Sorry I could not have had you last Sunday but they had begun to pull things to pieces and put away beds. As ever, Arthur.” Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 25 April 1895, Box 83, Folder 1663, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁵³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 27 April 1895, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

near-universal commendations of the unspeakable vice play a role in curtailing the two friend's lively epistles on male same-sex eroticism seems almost certain. Whether they held off from writing to each other at all out of this concern, or probably more likely, subsequently destroyed them—the Wilde trials account for the abrupt termination of their mutually satisfying and affirming dialogue. Codman's move to New York and a drifting apart of the two could have contributed, yet would not have ended the letters so dramatically.

As trouble brewed after 1895 and all male-same sex affections received a new and keen interrogation, Codman and Little did not need to cross the Atlantic in order to see how catastrophic public exposure could be. Right here at home they had the example of their friend George Griswold. Buried among Codman's personal letters from this period is a curious exchange on Griswold and his deathly fear of apparently approaching scandal. In October of 1902 Codman, by then relocated to New York, received the following letter from his friend Eliot Gregory in Newport,

Dear Caddy: I've had such a queer experience with George Griswold. I am sure he is going out of his mind. Yesterday he stopped me in Bellevue Avenue (he was in a cab) and looking half mad, he said, 'Ah! Can you come to Boston with me right away! I'm in such awful trouble!'!! His teeth were chattering and his hands trembling! He could hardly speak!!! So I tried to talk to him and calm him a little. But he could not say anything but, 'I've been putting up a pretty good bluff all summer but now that's gone!' Suddenly, he said, 'Where's Caddy? I think I'll go to New York and talk it all over with him!' Instead of going to Boston! I tried to ask him what it was all about? Anything about his father? He said no! Then he suddenly jumped into his cab and drove off saying, 'I'll go to New York and see Caddy!' He's a good friend.' Then last evening I received this telegram from New Haven!! It worries me. He looked queer enough to do anything!¹⁵⁴

What trouble or scandal Griswold faced is uncertain; yet his membership in the Codman circle points to the possibility at least of sexual scandal—again, it should be noted that

¹⁵⁴ Eliot Gregory to Ogden Codman, 12 October 1902, Box 82, Folder 1655, OC Papers, SPNEA.

blackmail was quite common for homosexual men in this period. Eight days later Griswold himself sent a plea to Codman indicating the scandal most likely did involve his personal life in some way,

My Dear Friend:

Of your charity I pray you add not to my ruin by gossip and idle rumor. I have been temporarily off my trolley due to insomnia and worry for which I am now under treatment by Dr. Cres. De F. Smith, 44 East 29th street. Please invoke Eliot Gregory's silence. Yours as ever, GG2nd.¹⁵⁵

Today all remains mired in questions and uncertainty concerning Griswold's troubles and fate. That he and Codman were close friends is confirmed by the only other reference to him in the archive; a brief note from A. Nitchie, at the Bank of New Zealand enclosed stamps from that country Codman had expressed interest in. Nitchie's note concludes by asking to be remembered to his "traveling companion Mr. Griswold."¹⁵⁶

Conclusion: An Extensive Subculture

With documentation as rich as the many intimate letters between Ogden Codman and Arthur Little, this chapter has necessarily focused in detail on these two men. Yet, when we step back from this sharp focus for a moment, the correspondence also yields an extraordinarily detailed window into an extensive gay male subculture among upper class men in Boston and New York at the turn of the last century—a conclusion the recent historiography confirms. In their frequent exchanges of information Codman and Little indirectly chart an extensive circle of upper class homosexual men centered in Boston. These friends and acquaintances—judging from the archival material—managed to stay quite well-informed on one another: stories, books, photographs and more were all passed

¹⁵⁵ Eliot Gregory to Ogden Codman, 20 October 1902, Box 82, Folder 1655, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁵⁶ A. Nitchie to Ogden Codman, no date, Box 82, Folder 1655, OC Papers, SPNEA.

from hand to hand. Despite the very real possibility of discovery, there is little sense of fear among the many stories related. While this levity could be a function of Little's upbeat sense of humor, it is striking how utterly absent any sense of danger exists among those in the subculture. In reading through the correspondence it is not the metaphor of the closet which comes to mind; but rather that of a many-layered Boston society—with this male subculture co-existing, overlapping, and influencing Boston Brahmin life during the last decade of the nineteenth century.

When examined as a whole, the two friends' correspondence presents a large number of friends and acquaintances sharing their sexual temperament. If the biographies of Codman and Little (and indeed Fitch) are representative, Boston's subculture was quite extensive during this period. Often, their letters convey a sense of male same-sex eroticism existing all around them—and this experience clearly serves as important element in their overall identity and day-to-day lives. Illustrating this sense of ubiquitous homosexuality surrounding him, Little recounted with relish how a friend of his had been groped during a crowded cab ride, "a fellow told me he had his prick squeezed in a crowded cab the other night!! A very nice looking man with two others were the only ones that could have done it!! Think of that—I call it wild."¹⁵⁷ Similarly, when discussing Codman's Uncle Ben, Little remembered, "He was very anxious [and told me], 'you and I could visit all the low dance halls.' I told him Tom Cushing was said to have no balls. 'Oh! He has' said he, 'I've felt them!'"¹⁵⁸ By the next post, Codman intrigued fired back, "what did Uncle Ben mean?"¹⁵⁹ Little explained this action had probably taken place during childhood, yet Uncle Ben had obviously not outgrown

¹⁵⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁵⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 20 November 1891, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁵⁹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 22 November 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

such interests, “Uncle Ben meant I think that as boys there was some doubt as to the balls of Tom Cushing, and little Payne. So I suppose all the boys proceeded to have some means of knowing!”¹⁶⁰

Occasionally in their gossip about those they knew in the subculture, the two Bostonians alluded to men of the working classes; yet, although these references surface infrequently, undoubtedly such inter-class connections took place in the many sites—Turkish Baths, saloons, etc.—available. In a rare example Little wrote, “So I see that Searles can play with his brakeman and Palmer—the dressmaker whom I hear has a terrific tool! Mr. [unreadable] told me a man told him Palmer took it out on the Common one day and showed it to him!”¹⁶¹ He also noted in the same letter, “What did Chapin do to Potter? Velvet hand or mouth?” These references certainly point to a high degree of knowledge of sexual practices among their contemporaries interested in other men. Far more common are Little’s projections or fantasies about those men he interacted with and admired in his every-day routine. Much like his fantasies centered on Italian or English public school young men however, these observations may be based more on Little’s hopes rather than being based in reality. In a typical exchange of this nature he related to Codman, “the dinner today was very pretty...the butler (or when they travel they call him the valet) has got the wickedest eyes I have ever saw. I am always made to think of ‘Baptiste’ in ‘La Cure’ when I see the footman whose forehead is full of lines and wrinkles as if he was kept up very late by the former’s desires!!! You remember B. was not fond of horses but the grooms!!!!”¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 8 December 1891, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁶¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 3 March 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁶² Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 27 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

Frequently the letters are sprinkled with romance and intrigue, “Harry Morse is going away for summer and winter! How Rollins will screw without he! I expect he will come to a smash one day and all go up in smoke. I don’t believe it can last.”¹⁶³ Similarly, in an earlier letter after providing the latest news on mutual friends, Codman drops casually that du Maurey has finally, “got rid of Count Rudolf Festalics.”¹⁶⁴ One of their closest friends, Herbert Browne—the third arm of the self-proclaimed “Colonial Trinity”—also appears in the correspondence. Interestingly, in a sign that secrecy did still in fact reign, Browne is often described in pursuit of men, while himself in turn pursued by women—particularly one of the Codman relatives known familiarly as “Lil Cod.” Codman wrote one summer day, “your blue letter was here when I got home. I missed part of it that [Laurence] came to see Herbert in his pajamas and had to read it three times before I got it straight.”¹⁶⁵ In return Little duly noted this latest installment on Browne’s activities, “How funny your story about Wm. Prescott and [Herbert Browne] was! I daresay Herbert often sleeps with the guests! I think he must be as the old Roman said, ‘kinder searching!’”¹⁶⁶ And only three days later Little again ponders their friend’s sexual interests, “are there any signs that H. [erbert] and G.C. have ever had any connections?”¹⁶⁷

While following all signs of his romances with other men, the two friends simultaneously watched closely as the drama unfolded as Browne sought repeatedly to extricate himself from his overly zealous female pursuer. In one of these typical updates Little wrote, “H [erbert] and Hamilton are to spend Sunday and Monday at Lil Cod’s!!

¹⁶³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 27 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁶⁴ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 21 November 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁶⁵ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 31 July 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁶⁶ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 26 April 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁶⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 29 April 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

Herbert has been invited to meet you at Lil Cod's the 29th!! I fear it will be a meeting between H. and L.C."¹⁶⁸ He ends the letter by explaining how Browne had reached the end of his patience over the matter, "Herbert rebels at being thrown anymore with Lil Cod. He says he won't! And it is certainly time. Do you suppose she will have to encourage Johnson Morton!!" Interestingly, unlike both Codman and Little, Herbert Browne never married. Apart from official records of the architectural firm he and Little founded in 1890, no private correspondence remains from him. The Codman/Little correspondence does however place him squarely in their flourishing male networks during the 1890's and Douglass Shand-Tucci hints in his work that Browne was an effeminate man along the lines of Clyde Fitch—which most likely explains his unwillingness or inability to date women.¹⁶⁹

The letters tell innumerable other stories about many—providing therefore an invaluable window into this subculture, and co-existing network of friends. The biography of "Dicky Longfellow" also can be traced through the two friends' correspondence and again sheds light on intrigue and male romance that would have been completely lost to us otherwise. In the short span between November of 1891 and the following February Codman and Little closely followed Longfellow's ups and downs in the world of romantic friendship. Codman was the first to mention him, noting that November, "Dicky Longfellow's engagement is 'busted' at last. Gus Gardner is engaged to Miss Lodge as you no doubt know, so will Dicky get left all behind."¹⁷⁰ Little responded with great interest, "I think Dicky Longfellow will have to find a new

¹⁶⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 6 June 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁶⁹ Douglass Shand-Tucci, Boston Bohemia: 1881-1900, Volume I, Ralph Adams Cram: Life and Architecture, 288.

¹⁷⁰ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 22 November 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

protector! Harry French cannot offer him much now—and he having lost the Wheelwright and Gardner interests will drive him with marked. I should not be much surprised to hear of his ‘soliciting’ on the street! Still he is not so attractive that he could get anything exciting!”¹⁷¹ Towards the end of that month Codman eagerly relayed the latest developments—which he had serendipitously overheard at his Boston club,

I was in the club last Monday (before my relapse) and sat in the little front room waiting for Herbert, there came in a tall light haired youth who waited a few minutes and then Dicky Longfellow came in. The youth said Hello Dicky your looking bully. Then they left the room and the youth said, as soon as my house is in order you must come and stay—I heard no more nor have I seen either since, perhaps the youth will be ‘Gussie’s’ successor!¹⁷²

Soon after the new year Little responded from Italy, “How exciting about the light-haired youth and Dicky. I can say when the house is in order there will be fun.”¹⁷³ Their last word on Longfellow comes a few weeks later with Codman explaining somewhat cryptically about, “a great stir about the Dicky initiation here. I have heard nothing really revealing about it but I always supposed it might be.”¹⁷⁴ While Codman’s final remark raises the possibility of scandal, Longfellow’s real value to the historian lays in how his story pulls back the curtain on sexual roles far more permeable than today’s world allows: the ease with which Gus Gardner, for example, moves from an homosexual to an heterosexual relationship is significant.

The final representative case from the correspondence, documenting the far-flung and at times uncertain boundaries of this subculture, is certainly one of the most enigmatic. That both Codman and Little were completely fascinated by Charlie Gibson, known in their private epistolary world as “Little Charlie,” is beyond question; in many

¹⁷¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 8 December 1891, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁷² Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 28 December 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁷³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 January 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁷⁴ Ogden Codman to Ogden Codman, 19 January 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

ways he represented their ideal—young, attractive and obviously charming. Yet, these exchanges cumulatively reveal a sense of mistrust or disbelief accompanying their attraction. It seems entirely possible that “Little Charlie” intended to string the two admiring older men along for whatever gain might be forthcoming—at least this is what the letters imply. Charlie is first discussed in December of 1891 when Codman wrote, “I forgot to say that Rosie said in her note that she had sent Little Charlie to see how I was when she heard I was ill. So I said in mine that I should hope to have him come again when I was well. He is really quite nice tho I haven’t seen him since you left.”¹⁷⁵ Little responded almost immediately, “I am sorry you didn’t see Little Charlie after a winter in Italy. I think he would be a nice little boy to know! And I hope he will come and see you before long, I think I shall encourage him.”¹⁷⁶ Later that month Little was still on the subject and already planning ahead for the approaching summer, “I dare say ‘Little Charlie’ and ‘beautiful Charlie’ might have things in common—I must ask both to Swampscott.”¹⁷⁷ That spring, with his plans coming to fruition Little wondered, “think of the Gibsons coming to Swampscott—I shall have a good chance to investigate ‘Little Charlie’ now and his ways and see if there is any truth in the wild accounts Willie Beal has given.”¹⁷⁸

For his part Codman felt himself equally drawn to Little Charlie mentioning him in his letters often. In February he shared some new information on their mutual interest, “asked him [Mason Hammond] about Little Charlie Gibson, he says Charlie is a bought boy with very little to him. Really just little feeble impulses that he is principally

¹⁷⁵ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 28 December 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁷⁶ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 January 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁷⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 28 January 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁷⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 May 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

interested in his clothes and in Samuel Hooper-Hooper with whom he dined at the Parker House often.”¹⁷⁹ Little answered directly, “I am afraid Mason has ‘had’ ‘Little Charlie’ and therefore discourages you about him for fear you might discover it! How funny he and S. Hooper must be together! Anywhere, but mostly in a bed!”¹⁸⁰ Codman’s thoughts too were racing ahead to the summer, “Charlie is nice but I don’t see him so much as I should like to. He will be a great addition to Swampscott.”¹⁸¹ And then in a bid to remove their competition added archly, “you will find we must cut out Samuel Hooper this summer.”

The image of Little Charlie that emerges from the letters is a young man without real direction, something of a drifter. Two years after his arrival on the scene, Charlie announced he was heading to Europe; judging from his friends’ skeptical tone, they apparently doubted his veracity, “he’s expecting to go to England” noted Little, “has a ‘fine literary offer’! The present Earl of Chatham wants him to catalogue the correspondence of his ancestor Fox!! Fancy Charlie doing that...really you would have gasped if you had heard it all. I hope it will amount to something and it may but you would have been amused.”¹⁸² A month later Little writes somewhat incredulously, “Charlie has really sailed today! The man he went off with is named Hammersworth!”¹⁸³ Codman too, remained fascinated almost in spite of himself, “I never heard of such fools as the Gibsons their doings with Charlie beat the Dutch. I am much interested to hear of

¹⁷⁹ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 4 February 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA; Morison briefly recalls Samuel Hooper Hooper from his childhood in Codman’s Boston, “There were also debutante balls, to which older people were invited more often than now; and subscription assemblies managed by the elegant Samuel Hooper Hooper.” Samuel Eliot Morison, *One Boy’s Boston: 1887-1901*, 54.

¹⁸⁰ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 17 February 1892, Box 83, Folder 1661, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁸¹ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 9 May 1892, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁸² Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 February 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁸³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 March 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

his plans.”¹⁸⁴ The two friends followed Little Charlie’s travails with great interest: reporting that he was headed for the Artic, and had been seen in London. Frequently they question where the money keeping him afloat had originated. In a typical exchange they convey their mutual fascination—and lingering skepticism, “I saw someone who saw Charlie in London and he said that he, ‘was making a great deal of money’!!! That he, ‘had been to the Royal Box at the opera,’ etc., etc. Although they thought it sounded very ‘vague in certain ways’!!”¹⁸⁵ Codman, his interest unabated, responded, “I have just got a long letter from Charlie Gibson, who is staying with the Playfairs and having a splendid time. I wonder where he gets the money to do so.”¹⁸⁶ Little’s final word on Little Charlie finds him still pondering his mysterious actions while delivering a warning, “your letter from Charlie must have been funny. I doubt if he ever comes home. He had better lay up treasures at the Bank as I suppose the other thing can’t last for ever...”¹⁸⁷ Youth and beauty will not continue indefinitely he seems to imply.

Summation

The extensive Codman/Little correspondence is significant on a number of levels: first in providing an invaluable window into a thriving upper-class gay male subculture and friendship network in Boston during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Second, the letters allow a detailed portrait not normally possible in establishing sexual lives and identities from the period. That this information reveals how strikingly different Ogden Codman’s life experience, sexual attractions, and identity were from

¹⁸⁴ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 15 March 1894, Box 87, Folder 1701, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁸⁵ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 5 May 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁸⁶ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, n.d., Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

¹⁸⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 16 June 1894, Box 83, Folder 1667, OC Papers, SPNEA.

effeminate men such as Clyde Fitch constitutes a significant finding and further clarification of a chronology too long forgotten. The positive self-image these two men held consistently through times when the culture apparently supplied only negative and hateful messages, truly begins a revision of our understanding of homosexuality in nineteenth century America. Finally, the now dated arguments stressing that these nineteenth century men and women were in general unaware of their same-sex attractions and the concomitant physical implications, should be at last laid to rest with the exuberant and unmistakable erotic sentiments Ogden Codman and Arthur Little not only managed to articulate, but to preserve.

Chapter 4
Uranians Abroad:
Americans Find Community in Europe

Introduction

As historians have noted time and time again, American cultural dependence on the mother country remained long after the War of Independence had been won. This cultural dependence still flourished as strong as ever at the turn of the last century. The upper and upper middle classes especially continued to look to Europe for the latest trends in the arts, fashion, literature, etc. Among the young in these privileged classes, European travel was generally seen as a rite of passage, an important building block toward a secure future in genteel society. Typical of their social class, both Clyde Fitch and Ogden Codman spent considerable amounts of time in Europe—as part of their general education. Yet, for these two, and other men with same-sex attractions, the European experience had an even more profound influence than it would for most of the general population.

Following graduation from college, for a young man of Fitch's upper class station, the next step toward understanding his sexual temperament lay logically across the Atlantic. In his quest to find like-minded souls reading had been of central importance. Not coincidentally, most of the works that had affected him—that had provided models—had been written in Europe. So naturally, it would be to the mother continent that he turned in search of communities of men like himself. Here an abundance of resources was immediately apparent: homosexual subcultures, both the sexual underworld found among London's working class neighborhoods, and more

importantly, an upper-class network of men unapologetic about their sexual temperaments. Also of tremendous importance was the fertile intellectual atmosphere of exploration, research, and debate roaring through Europe—which by the late nineteenth century had produced for the first time a fledging public discourse on the hitherto forbidden topic of homosexuality.

Europe provided not only identity models for Fitch, but relationship models as well. In nineteenth century New England society Fitch would find few examples in this area—except perhaps the still-accepted romantic friendship model mostly accepted among women. In Europe, specifically Great Britain, the young American encountered a number of men living together as couples in committed relationships. Among the American expatriates who had established households along these lines were Howard Sturgis and Edward Perry Warren. Although explained publicly in ways that today might appear evasive or even misleading—such as two distant relatives living together, or employer and employee—for the initiated, such as Fitch, the true nature of these relationships proclaimed itself unequivocally. Fitch himself embarked on co-habitation in London's fashionable Chelsea neighborhood with his close friend James White. It seems clear that these American homosexuals found in England, not only identity and relationship models, but a "secure space" as well where such relatively open experiments could be attempted by one living in a foreign land. These experiments were not permitted them at home in America, or indeed, it would seem, permitted among the English middle and upper classes themselves in their own country.

With their different sexual object choice, for Ogden Codman and his friend Arthur Little, two homosexuals whose gender behavior was decidedly masculine, Europe

represented a seemingly unlimited opportunity for information and history on male same-sex eroticism along with a large dose of sexual tourism. Although as strongly influenced in realizing his sexual temperament through European culture as Fitch, Codman, had no wish to settle down into all-male domesticity and thus had far different objectives for his travels. Without question Codman and Little spent a great amount of time admiring and pursuing European young men; yet this pursuit seems to have had less of an effect on their self-awareness, or identity, than was the case with Fitch. In contrast to the effeminate Fitch, who felt so painfully alienated from his own gender due to both his desire for men, and his identification with women, the confident and comfortable Codman was less in search of models—rather, he simply sought information and pleasure.

Fitch in Europe

“Yes, I have read ‘Dorian.’ I have a copy which Wilde gave me. I will take your volume over with a great deal of pleasure and will ask Wilde to write something in it. I sail on the Majestic—April 27th. ”¹ In his reference to Oscar Wilde’s novel, The Picture of Dorian Gray, Fitch draws forth a veritable icon among aesthetic homosexuals on both sides of the Atlantic at the close of the nineteenth century. The novel, published in 1891, instantly became a symbol of male same-sex eroticism for men in the know. Codman and Arthur Little too reference the book simply as “Dorian” in ways clearly indicating that for them the book stood as an unmistakable code for their sexual temperament. It is not surprising that Fitch and Miller would discuss the book; yet although Fitch indicates he is on friendly terms with the famous Irish novelist, this letter does not reveal just how

¹ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, no date, Clyde Fitch Papers (all the Fitch letters are in two unnumbered letter boxes), New York Public Library, Fifth Avenue, New York, New York.

intimate the two had in fact become. As Fitch's letters to Wilde himself show however, the young impressionable American had fallen head over heels in love with him—undoubtedly with some encouragement. At his graduation from Amherst College in 1886, Fitch had completed a preliminary quest for self-discovery—primarily through his readings on the Ancient Greeks and the contemporary European decadents. The next stage for him was to take place as he traveled to Europe and began experiencing the culture where male same-sex eroticism had found soil more fertile than the cold stony hills of New England. Fitch's relationship with Wilde culminated this growth process, even as it heralded the very real dangers of public exposure, which would come to preoccupy him increasingly as the new century was born.

In one of countless books published in the wake of Oscar Wilde's fall, only one—Martin Birnbaum's Oscar Wilde: Fragments and Memories—recalls the famous playwright's relationship with a younger, then almost completely unknown American,

Early in the nineties Clyde Fitch, an ambitious young American, had a play produced in London. After the final curtain some rowdies in the pit coaxed the inexperienced playwright to appear before the footlights and proceeded to 'boo' and hiss him off as soon as he stepped into view. But the young man was not crushed, 'they will have to applaud me yet,' he exclaimed, and his subsequent meteoric career proved he had fine talent. At that time, however, there were few in London who would listen to his verses, stories, and plays, and fewer still to buy them.²

In the face of such unrelenting denunciations of his ability, and indeed of his very manhood, only one stood loyally by him, "sympathetic criticism and encouragement meant a great deal to him, and these were given him by Oscar Wilde." Then at the summit of fame the older Wilde generously shared center stage with the young and unknown Fitch, "when they met socially at the houses of London's smart set the kindly

interest of the celebrity was highly appreciated by the aspiring playwright.” Indeed, Birnbaum explains, “the acquaintance had long since ripened into a fine friendship.” As the author knew and yet so coyly presented, friendship in this period represented an institution easily incorporating passionate love—even physical love—between men. Acknowledging a perusal of those notes that had passed between the two men, Birnbaum was certainly well aware that Wilde had in this relationship, again moved beyond the respectable boundaries of chaste romantic friendship.

It seems most likely that the young Fitch and the by-then famous writer met through mutual friends in London sometime in 1889.³ Fitch made his initial European trip during the summer of 1886 with his mother; yet all subsequent travels—and he crossed the Atlantic each summer right up to 1909, the year of his death—were made with a series of male companions. In this friendship with Wilde, Fitch discovered the very embodiment of the cultivated and literary aesthete: here lay a path toward refinement and culture (not to mention a sexual identity) he had hitherto only lived vicariously through reading. For Wilde’s part, Fitch was merely one of countless young men that he pursued during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. There had been many before Fitch; and he in turn would be followed by a great many others—John Gray (who many believe was the model for Dorian Gray), and Lord Alfred Douglas are only two of the most well known. William Rothstein, a young artist in the nineties, and yet another of these conquests, recalled in his diaries the way in which Wilde had

² Martin Birnbaum, *Oscar Wilde: Fragments and Memories* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1920), 7.

³ The relationship is outlined in the following contemporary works: Gary Schmidgall, *The Stranger Wilde: Interpreting Oscar* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 154, 178-181, 441-443; Barbara Belford, *Oscar Wilde: a Certain Genius* (New York: Random House, 2000), 163-166; Melissa Knox, *Oscar Wilde: A Long and Lovely Suicide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 151-153; Kim Marra, “Clyde Fitch’s Too Wilde Love.” In Kim Marra & Robert A. Schanke, Editors, *Staging Desire: Queer Readings in American Theater History* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 23-54.

completely charmed him, "Oscar Wilde talked of me as a sort of youthful prodigy...I had met no one who made me so aware of the possibilities latent in myself. He had a quality of sympathy and understanding which was more than mere flattery, and he seemed to see better than anyone else just what was one's aim."⁴

Judging from the infatuated tone of the young American's letters to him, here too Wilde found a more than eager protégé. Responding to some recent writing of his older friend, Fitch exclaimed in exaggerated language typical of the friendship, "Perfect, Perfect, Perfect!! It is the most delicate, the most exquisite, the most complete idyl I have ever read. Oh! You are an adorable creature! You are a great writer. And Oh! Such a lovely one. Never was a genius so sweet, so adorable."⁵ On these extended trips to London Fitch felt himself free completely from the straightjacket that American society had placed on him and his male friendships—Amherst College with its Puritanical legacy had not allowed for such unbridled male passion. The letter ends with further declarations of the young American's love, "you are my poetry, are my painting, my music, sun—you are my sight, and sound, and touch...you are always with me when I have not seen you since time—it stopped when you left—I'll always, in every weather, flourish by absorbing you." In another letter Fitch begins, "Nobody loves you as I do. When you are here I dream. When you are away I awaken... Make me what you will, only keep my yours forever, Clyde."⁶ Such passionate adoration could not last—especially when directed toward a man, not only married, but in constant pursuit of more and more young men. In an undated note, Fitch's passion and frustration are starkly

⁴ William Rothstein, Men and Memories, 1872-1938. (Edited and abridged by Mary Lago, Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1978), 51.

⁵ Clyde Fitch to Oscar Wilde, no date, Oscar Wilde Collection, Finzi 916, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

evident, "It is 3. and you are not coming. I've looked out of the window, many, many times. The town is blurred, colorless, and I think my heart is leaden. I have not slept. I have only dreamt, and thought. I don't know where I stand, nor why. I don't care I only want to be his... I will only wonder and love. Passionately yours, am I, your faun eyed fawn."⁷ In a passage Wilde biographer Gary Schidgall believes suggests a sexual component to the relationship, Fitch declares that the, "brown-eyed Fawn lay on his grass green bed, with a strangely shaped wound—like this [here a heart is drawn on the page]—in his side."⁸ These passionate declarations betray an unwillingness to accept the hard fact that Fitch was merely one among a stable of young men that Wilde cultivated and—notoriously—went everywhere with him throughout London. For instance, while the elder playwright had obviously given Fitch the pet name of his "faun;" it was well known among Wilde's friends however, that any young man he found attractive constituted one of his "fauns." The identity of the faun seems to have been well-known in English homosexual circles as the merry, tempting, narcissistic, and naughty youth.⁹ Wilde's few remaining letters to Fitch illustrate his usual wit and charm, but hold back from the passionate language of his young friend. In September of 1890 he writes, "Dear Clyde, just a line to tell you how sorry I am that you have left town and how much I shall miss you. When you return we must make merry over a flagon of purple wine, and invent new tales with which to charm the world."¹⁰ His inscription on a copy of his

⁶ Clyde Fitch to Oscar Wilde, no date, Oscar Wilde Collection, Finzi 914, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library.

⁷ Clyde Fitch to Oscar Wilde, no date, Oscar Wilde Collection, Finzi 915, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library.

⁸ Clyde Fitch to Oscar Wilde, no date, Oscar Wilde Collection, Finzi 917, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library.

⁹ Martin Green, *The Mount Vernon Street Warrens* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1989), 95.

¹⁰ Oscar Wilde to Clyde Fitch, September, 1890. Rupert Hart-Davis, *The Letters of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), 275.

volume of fairy tales, The Happy Prince (1888) similarly charms yet retains emotional distance—making no commitments or declarations, “Clyde Fitch, from his friend O. Wilde. Fairy stories for one who lives in Fairy-Land.”¹¹ Years later, following his imprisonment as a “corrupter of youth,” Wilde confided to a friend the path these friendships with young men inevitably followed, “I used to be utterly reckless of young lives: I used to take up a boy, love him ‘passionately,’ and then grow bored with him...that is what I regret in my past life.”¹² In reading through Fitch’s few extant letters to Wilde, the relationship certainly appears to have followed this familiar progression.

Yet beyond the uninhibited passion that Wilde opened up for the young American was the intellectual stimulation and growth that this very important relationship produced. A letter discussing Wilde’s story, “The Portrait of Mr. W. H.,” published by Blackwood’s Magazine in July of 1889 provides a window into this information exchange on male same sex passion. Although undated, Fitch clearly wrote the letter during the summer of 1889 as the story reached publication—the relationship seems to have been at its height that year and the next,

You precious Maddening Man:
Your letters are nicer than you—because they come and you don’t. Last night when I came home I flung myself on the bed evening clothes and all with MY Blackwood. ‘I will just look at it’ I thought. But could not leave it. I read, unconscious of the uncomfortability of my positions and of the fact that one arm and two legs were asleep, fast

Oh, Oscar!

The story is great—and—fine!

I believe in Willie Hughes: I don’t care if the whole thing is out of your amazing beautiful brain. I don’t care for the laughter, and I only know I am convinced and I will, I will believe in Willie H.

¹¹ Inscription from Oscar Wilde to Clyde Fitch, no date, Ibid., 275.

¹² Oscar Wilde to Reginald Turner, [7] June 1897, quotation in, Stanley Weintraub, Reggie: A Portrait of Reginald Turner (New York: George Braziller, 1965), 87.

Sometimes if the Gods are kind I shall send you a picture of Mr. W.H., it may be another forgery—but that won't make any difference will it? What? More! Only that isn't the word. Adoration!
Invent me a language of love. You could do it.

*Bewilderdly all yours, Clyde*¹³

The story traces a romantic theory spun by a series of young men that it was a young boy actor who had been the primary muse on Shakespeare's writing of his sonnets. This beautiful young man, is invented by the romantic Cyril, from the initials W.H., the dedication in one of the sonnets; despite painstaking research, no proof whatsoever can be found documenting his existence. Cyril then simply has a portrait forged to authenticate a man he believes with great certainty was real. Without question, this portrait reveals Wilde's own attractions,

It was a full-length portrait of a young man in late sixteenth century costume, standing by a table, with his right hand resting on an open book. He seemed about seventeen years of age, and was of quite extraordinary personal beauty, though evidently somewhat effeminate. Indeed, had it not been for the dress and the closely cropped hair, one would have said that the face, with its dreamy, wistful eyes and its delicate scarlet lips, was the face of a girl.¹⁴

Cyril too is effeminate, yet, "wonderfully handsome...the most splendid creature I ever saw, and nothing could exceed the grace of his movements, the charm of his manner."¹⁵

Fitch's own pronounced effeminacy and youth undoubtedly led Oscar Wilde to him in the first place. The story's two themes of the attractions of male effeminacy and of romantic male friendship would both have resonated powerfully with young Clyde Fitch—who had turned twenty-four that year. The story's first hero Cyril creates "an

¹³ Clyde Fitch to Oscar Wilde, no date, Oscar Wilde Collection, Finzi 913, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library.

¹⁴ Oscar Wilde, "The Portrait of Mr. W. H." Roy Gasson, Editor, The Illustrated Oscar Wilde (London: Jupiter Books, 1977), 190.

immense sensation” in playing the female parts on stage. Indeed, a friend pondered after his suicide, “if he had gone on the stage he would be alive now.”¹⁶ After Cyril’s death his close supporters carry on the struggle to prove the existence of the elusive sixteenth century boy actor Willie Hughes. Thus, a history of boy actors—always cast in female roles—is carried forth next in the story. For Fitch and other effeminate men, playing female roles in the theater was one of the few places where they were accepted as they truly were—without forcing themselves into more “manly” postures as they so often had to do in daily life. For these men the “ambiguity of the sexes” constituted not a threat, but indeed a fascination.

“The Portrait of Mr. W. H.” also outlines a rather detailed history of romantic male friendship. Following a chronology almost exactly mirroring Edward Carpenter’s anthology on male friendship, *Iolaus* (published anonymously in 1895), the history moves from the Ancient Greeks and Romans up through Bacon, Montaigne, to the eighteenth century German scholar Johann Winckelmann—whose life, work, and passions had been so lovingly re-constructed in Walter Pater’s 1873 essay.¹⁷ Thus, for Clyde Fitch, the publication of Wilde’s story illustrated dramatically that here in England a strong community of men like himself—who found their most meaningful erotic and emotional relationships with other men—thrived, even to the extent of entering into the mainstream culture. In an America with its middle class and Puritan heritage, such public evidence of male same sex passion was not to be found. Therefore, in looking to Europe to find traditions, models, and communities of like-minded souls, upper class homosexual

¹⁵ Ibid., 192.

¹⁶ Ibid., 193.

¹⁷ Walter Pater, “Winckelmann,” In *The Renaissance* (New York: The Modern Library, no date, (first published 1873)).

Americans followed the trends of their class—albeit with an added twist most likely not widely known to the general public.

Wilde's influence on his young protégés such as Clyde Fitch is important and should not be discounted. Especially for one coming from the less accepting provinces as Fitch did, the discovery of flesh and blood role models who were producing important works distributed in mainstream culture, and who enjoyed acceptance and support in their intimate friendship circles served as powerful role models. Indeed, as he had earlier modeled his dandy persona on that created by Wilde and others, the young American strived to emulate his mentor in terms of his literary career also. On the eve of his departure from a summer spent in England, Fitch wrote his friend a message illustrating not only his love, but his intellectual debt as well, "My Dear Oscar: I am so glad to come to you tonight—my last night in London. You have [inspired] all that I have done and more this summer in Angleterre. You have been the sun that has gloried my horizon."¹⁸

Meanwhile, to most of his American friends and family, an edited version of this important relationship seemed obligatory. As early as 1890 Wilde already had an unsavory reputation and too much intimacy with him would immediately be suspect. In a curious effort at minimizing his friendship with Wilde, Fitch insisted to his Boston friend Grace Mosher in 1890, "I am bringing the Rosetti I promised you, and also Oscar Wilde's book of short fairy tales, 'The Happy Prince,' and I got him to write in it, as if were my own, and now I send it to you. Oscar's inscription sounds as if he gave it to me, but he DIDN'T—I bought it."¹⁹

¹⁸ Clyde Fitch to Oscar Wilde, no date, Oscar Wilde Collection, Finzi 917, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library.

¹⁹ Clyde Fitch to Grace Mosher, 1 October 1890, Montrose J. Moses & Virginia Gerson, Editors, Clyde Fitch and His Letters (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1924), 56.

Although the two remained friends, by Fitch's arrival in London for the summer of 1892, passion had cooled on both sides; most likely the American protégé could no longer ignore the herds of other admirers flocking around Wilde. And of course, most famously the notorious Irish playwright had met his beloved friend, Lord Alfred Douglas in 1891. Even after Wilde's fall into criminal convictions and bankruptcy in 1895, the friendship survived, albeit at a less intimate level. At his release from prison two years later, Wilde sought out the by then famous American playwright for advice on marketing his writings. Yet, as any association with the now infamous Wilde could damage a man's reputation, Fitch wrote no letters, never mentioned his friend publicly, or defended him in print—he had his own career and reputation to protect. His health permanently broken, career finished, and impoverished, Wilde lived out the few years remaining to him in exile on the Continent—by 1900 he was dead.

Years after both men were dead, Fitch's friend the Yale drama professor, William Lyon Phelps sought to explain the relationship and—even decades after his friend's death—protect him from any suggestion of homosexuality. Explaining Fitch's necessary break with such an unhealthy influence, Phelps recalled,

Before the public scandal Wilde's perversion was known by many men of letters. One day when Fitch was driving in his Victoria along Piccadilly, he was hailed from the pavement by Wilde; he drew up to the kerb, and Wilde entered the carriage saying, 'Why is it, Clyde, that you don't come to see me anymore?' And Fitch replied, 'Oh, Oscar, you know the reason perfectly well.' They conversed for half an hour in friendly fashion, and Fitch did not see him again until after his release from prison.²⁰

Birnbaum's 1920 book also recounts this story—however in his version it is Wilde who grows angry at his young friend's ingratitude, "The poet attempted to turn the matter into

²⁰ William Lyon Phelps, Autobiography with Letters. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 124.

an epigram, but his friend would not be put off. He wanted a plain answer to the charges. Wilde refused to discuss the topic and finally called to the driver: 'Stop to let this man out! I invited him for a drive, but he is not a gentleman!'²¹ Fitch's relationship with Wilde had taught him far more than how to tap into hitherto unrealized male same-sex eroticism, and how this could help him understand his identity; it had also brought the specter of public exposure to the fore. From those first few exhilarating days forward, Fitch was acutely aware that, for a man of his sexual temperament, secrecy would be needed; and as he grew increasingly successful as a playwright this threat of public scandal continued to trouble him.

English Homosexual Underworld

In the final analysis Wilde was only one element in the European education of Clyde Fitch: for he found many other male friends in England who shared his temperament. Along with Wilde and his friends the young American was introduced not only to circles of upper class single men, but also to the nefarious homosexual underworld that would eventually lead to the 1895 scandals. This subculture, centered in London, revolved around sites of sexual assignation: bars, brothels, and private clubs, along with more public spaces such as parks and lavatories. Most of the general public chose to be unaware of these sites, but for the initiated a community of those interested in male same-sex eroticism was not difficult to locate. Writing at the turn of the century, "Xavier Mayne" revealed, "The skeptic has only to walk around London, around any English garrison center, to stroll about Portsmouth, Aldershot, Southampton...large cities

²¹ Martin Birnbaum, Oscar Wilde: Fragments and Memories, 9.

of north Britain or Ireland to find the soldier prostitute in almost open self-marketing.”²² In a visit to England in the 1880’s, Charles Warren Stoddard had stumbled onto a similar scene at an Inn in the city of Chester, “soldier boys frequented the Top Room with its sanded, no sawdust floor—and quaffed sweet brown ale. They wore short jackets, and tight trousers we even called ‘Cherry Buns’ by the view. [It was then] that I met Bob—now a grandfather but then a charming kid. He was ripe and luscious.”²³ Occasionally however, when a scandal such as Wilde’s broke, this subterranean subculture became known and discussed, if only for a time, among the general public.

Although Wilde’s exaggerated behavior was often characterized as effeminate by the press in its efforts to warn readers of the dangers such a man presented, Wilde was not effeminate in the same way as Fitch. Rather, as seen in his attractions presented in the story “The Portrait of Mr. W. H.,” he felt attracted to young men and boys—the model Ogden Codman embodied. In addition to cultivating the young men of the upper classes, Wilde also began to involve himself with working class young men, or “renters” as they were known. Ultimately these relationships would lead to his downfall. Through his friend Alfred Taylor, who ran a brothel of sorts for these young men, Wilde made many such acquaintances. It was here that he gave all male parties for upper class men to mingle with working class men. Wilde not only sought encounters with these men, but courted and pursued them, as he did those of his own class—in a manner that a man

²² Jeffrey Weeks, Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present (London: Quartet Books, 1977), 39. More recent works describing this London subculture are, Lesley A. Hall, Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 47-64; and, Randolph Trumbach, “London,” in David Higgs, Editor, Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories Since 1600 (New York: Routledge, 1999), 89-111.

²³ Charles Warren Stoddard to DeWitt Miller, 21 April 1908, Charles Warren Stoddard Papers, HM38412, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

would do to a young woman: buying them gifts, flowers, dinners, trips, etc. Ultimately this disregard for the class system led to catastrophic problems.

The Wilde scandals of 1895 moreover, were not the first time this homosexual underworld had broken out of the shadows for all of respectable London to gaze upon. The so-called Cleveland Street scandal of 1889 had provided another such revelation of an homosexual underworld centered around the same cash nexus between working class young men and upper class gentlemen.²⁴ This scandal centered on a male brothel the police had watched on Cleveland Street in London. Initially, authorities were led to the house by a young telegraph boy, arrested for another crime and who was found to have a considerable amount of money on his person. As a working class boy would normally not have this sum of money, he was questioned repeatedly until he confessed it had been given to him for spending the night with a “gentleman” at a house on Cleveland Street. When a number of telegraph boys were arrested and the scandal broke, those implicated reached the highest levels of English society—some speculations extended even to the Prince of Wales’s eldest son, the eventual heir to Victoria’s throne, Prince “Eddy.” The most prominent aristocrat actually caught in this legal web however, was Lord Arthur Somerset—known to the telegraph boys simply as “Mr. Brown.” Rather than face the indignity of a trial and possible imprisonment, he fled the country; as an arrest warrant awaited him if he ever sought to return to England he remained abroad for thirty-six years until his death in 1926. A London newspaper article reported on the scandal and clearly implied what social class was known to frequent such sites, “Another incident concerning

²⁴ The standard works on the scandal are, H. Montgomery Hyde, The Cleveland Street Scandal (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1976); Chester Lewis, et., al, The Cleveland Street Affair (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976). A book less reliable on the subject is, Theo Aronson, Prince Eddy and the Homosexual Underworld (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1994).

the abominable institutions frequented by aristocrats and others moving in fashionable circles has passed away.”²⁵

English laws regarding sexuality had been changed as recently as 1885. The Labouchere Amendment passed that year, familiarly known as the “blackmailer’s charter” read in part, “Any male person, who in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and being convicted thereof, shall be liable, at the discretion of the court, to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding one year with or without hard labor.”²⁶ Despite this new law dramatically increasing persecutions of such men, the English situation had always been quite different from the American one, in the sense that although such laws were on the books, they were in fact only enforced when some aspect of the illicit homosexual underworld saw the light of day; otherwise an implicit toleration, or blindness, reigned. There is ample evidence, for instance that the authorities allowed sufficient time for Lord Somerset to escape the country. Similarly, Oscar Wilde was only arrested a full hour after the last train left London bound for the final crossing of the English channel over to France that night. Therefore, Clyde Fitch who had come to understand male same-sex attractions primarily through European books, found not only a rich society of like-minded souls awaiting him, but unmistakable signs of danger as well. As the Wilde friendship, trials and scandal would all highlight so dramatically, the young American could not help but observe the peril that was never far removed from these charmed circles.

²⁵ H. Montgomery Hyde, The Cleveland Street Scandal (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, Inc., 1976), 128.
Ibid., 171.

Upper Class Male Friendship Circles

Of equal importance to Fitch as the underground homosexual world, were the upper class male homosexual circles that he immediately joined. In these circles a young man like Fitch could find acceptance and encouragement of his identity and proclivities—especially if he seemed to publicly advocate a higher, non-physical romantic ideal of male friendship. Such ideology must be carefully understood within its historical context however, for when men found others around them facing arrest, scandal, or exile, it is not at all surprising that a protective—if somewhat misleading—veil should have been lowered over these potentially dangerous friendships. Thus, there may have been many men, like John Addington Symonds, who clearly experienced the physical element of these relationships, yet found it necessary to shroud this aspect publicly in favor of a more acceptable ideology of chaste male friendship. Most likely there were those also who had internalized the horror at sodomy, and their male same-sex attractions notwithstanding, truly believed that such things were to be avoided at all costs—yet one must not assume this was the case with all.

In addition to Oscar, Fitch became friends with many among the Wilde circle. Robert Ross, Reggie Turner, and Max Beerbohm are all listed in his faded red velvet address book. Another friend of Wilde's, the writer Robert Hichens whose 1895 novel, The Green Carnation, poked fun at Wilde and his circle of young exquisites, remained Fitch's close friend until his death. Percy Alexander, an English set designer who sometimes worked with Fitch most likely also drew him into these male networks. After the two men became closer and closer friends, during his London summers Fitch would

travel to Alexander's country house for long weekends. It is possible that it was at Alexander's that Fitch first made the acquaintance of fellow American Morton Fullerton—who, as we have seen, he later wrote intimate letters to. Fullerton, a Harvard graduate and expatriate, and Alexander had a passionate affair before the roving American moved on to the notorious Ronald Gower, Lord Sutherland.²⁷ Among the other houses the young American visited was the Surrey cottage of Russian expatriate Andre Raffalovich. Before breaking with him over his sexual promiscuity, Raffalovich too had been a member of the Wilde circle. Not only a member of this extensive male friendship network, Raffalovich was also a published poet and essayist—most notoriously on the subject of male same-sex eroticism. As Vernon Rosario has recently illustrated, this Russian expatriate played an influential role in the emerging discourse on homosexuality at the end of the nineteenth century. And indeed, Fitch's own copy of Raffalovich's homoerotic poems, *In Fancy Dress*, is inscribed to him from the author.²⁸ As a friend and visitor, not to mention careful reader, Fitch would surely have been influenced by such a powerful and positive voice for those of his sexual temperament.²⁹

In a series of letters exchanged between Fitch and theatre acquaintance, George Pierce Baker, we see how the American playwright worked himself into this upper class male subculture, "[I] accept your very flattering invitation to talk to the Mermaid Club."³⁰

²⁷ The Percy Alexander and Lord Gower affairs are discussed in, Marion Mainwaring, *Mysteries of Paris: The Quest for Morton Fullerton* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2001). Indeed, Mainwaring believes the infamous case of Fullerton's blackmail, which Henry James and Edith Wharton became embroiled in, stemmed from homosexual love letters—rather than notes from a former mistress as earlier scholars had concluded.

²⁸ Clyde Fitch copy of Marc Raffalovich's *In Fancy Dress* (1886), inscribed, "William Clyde Fitch from Andre Raffalovich, June 1887", Amherst College Special Collections, Amherst College.

²⁹ Vernon A. Rosario, *The Erotic Imagination: French Histories of Perversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 69-111.

³⁰ Clyde Fitch to George Pierce Baker, 11 November 1890, George Pierce Baker Letters, folder *S17, Harvard Theater Collection, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Later that month Fitch writes Baker from the Hotel Berkeley, "Yes, I will dine with you Friday and visit the club afterward with pleasure. And will either [give] my London paper or—something else. Will you write me first how many are in the club and just what it is. This is because if it's not possible to do so without any publicity and without the fact being known outside the club, I might be able to read 'Demaitre.' If the club is what I imagine it to be, it must be very delightful and besides that a good thing."³¹

Fitch's enthusiasm and curiosity over finding new friendship networks among like-minded people is clearly evident here, yet a sense of caution over publicity and public exposure also seems already apparent.

A clipping Fitch pasted in the back of his notebook provides another window—this time from a more public perspective—into the upper class society he entered when he crossed the Atlantic each year,

Among the guests at the house party at Heath Lodge are Mr. Laurence Kellie, Mr. George Power, and Mr. Clyde Fitch, Lady Cadagon, Lady Dorothy Neville, and other men and women well known in the social world are expected before the week is out. Mr. Kellie, who is a young man of six and twenty, is perhaps the most popular composer of songs today in England. He was educated at the bar, but gave up that profession for music, and although he has been writing only three years, has already published some forty songs. The most successful is 'Douglas Gordon.' This song has only been published three months and the average sale during the season has been three hundred and fifty copies each day. Mr. Kellie sings his own songs and is in constant demand for concerts and private musicals. His style is unique and there is little doubt that he will make a great success in America, where he is sure to come sooner or later.

Mr. Power, who was the original 'Ralph Rackstraw' in Pinafore, is no longer on the stage. He is a great favorite in society, and still sings like an artist. He was one of the first men of social standing to adopt the stage as a profession, and was a brave pioneer in the right direction. He is equally popular with men and

³¹ Clyde Fitch to George Pierce Baker, 22 November 1890, George Pierce Baker Letters, folder *S17, Harvard Theater Collection.

women, and as his cousin has recently become the Duchess of Newcastle, he is, at present, even more sought after..."³²

In the margins of the notebook, an intimacy not possible in the newspaper is found: next to the clipping Fitch had written a poem, most likely for Laurence Kellie—as there are many others equally full of devotion to him throughout the book for this period,

To you who write
What I, I feel,
Who stand upright
Where I—sit—kneel
In the same maze,
Toward you above
I yearning gaze
Write, print, and care
And dare to you I send
Beside my face
A heart, my sweet friend,
Has it a place?

Another poem dedicated "To Laurence Kellie," begins, "there was a singer of sweet songs."³³ Although difficult to date precisely, Fitch's friendship with Kellie does fit with his earliest years in England—most likely the early 1890's. Clearly then, Oscar Wilde was not the only one to capture Fitch's heart in that first flush of freedom away from home. The George Powers discussed in the clipping as part of the house party we can also place in the Wilde circle. In his letter thanking Wilde for a dinner at his Tite Street house to take place that evening, Fitch ends with a postscript, "George Powers wishes me to ask you to come to a quiet little party in his rooms tonight. I have promised to go for a

³² Clipping, no date, Clyde Fitch Notebook, Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 6, Folder 6, Amherst College, Special Collections.

³³ Ibid.

little while when I leave Tite St., and G.P. wishes you to come—if you will—I fancy there is to be some music, probably a song or two. So I shall come dressed.”³⁴

Fitch and London Domesticity

Documenting many of Fitch’s summers in Europe is difficult; too often the historical record is sketchy. Still, broadly speaking, he toured various countries most of these years (1886 through 1909)—attending plays, museums, touring, and purchasing antiques. In the early years especially the longest time was spent in London; and even later he would always remain in England for at least one of the summer months. After 1905 when his New York friends the couple Elizabeth Marbury and Elsie de Wolfe purchased a chateau in Versailles, annual extended visits were made here as well. The English return address for much of his early correspondence was simply a postal box—Low’s Exchange, 57 Charing Cross³⁵ Fitch’s earliest recorded address is that of the Albany Bachelor Hotel in London, a well-known establishment that catered exclusively to single men and recreated the male life of the universities or other such settings. The Albany, a fashionable address for the man about town, would have been a good fit, and a calculated choice for the up and coming American playwright. It seems likely that the building served as a draw for men of Fitch’s temperament with this all-male tradition. In July of 1891 Fitch invited his friend George Pierce Baker to dine with him in his Albany rooms, “won’t you come and have a very ‘pot luck’ luncheon with me on Monday at 2 o’clock?” In explaining his bachelor’s living arrangements, he provides a glimpse of his

³⁴ Clyde Fitch to Oscar Wilde, no date, Oscar Wilde Collection, Finzi 917, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library.

³⁵ Clyde Fitch to Esther Singleton, 23 March, no date, William Clyde Fitch Collection, 1727-a-c, Manuscripts Department, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

version of roughing it—bachelor style, “I put it in this forbidding way because I am making my first [effort] in the art of housekeeping and I find a ‘cook-housekeeper’ as they are called, is as rare as any other bonefide article! My present one is honest, therefore the condiments prepared by her for the daily meals do not poison, and may nourish. They are sometimes palatable I confess, but never delectable. And as I go away in ten days I do not care to change again!”³⁶

After spending three summers at the Albany from 1891 through 1893, the next year found Fitch entering into new living arrangements. Luckily 1894 is a year rather well documented, allowing us to see how he led his life when away from the curious eyes of American society—and the glare of the American media. Writing to Mrs. Sol Smith Russell, wife of one of the day’s leading actors, he explains his new arrangements, “I sail for England on the 18th of April and am going to live by the Thames in Chelsea, near Carlyle’s old house.”³⁷ To Mrs. Russell however, he failed to mention he would not be living in this house alone; he was moving in with his friend Jim White. After arriving that April Fitch wrote his friend Virginia Gerson, describing his birthday celebration, for two, “this afternoon Jim bought me a lovely old set of knives and forks with green ivory handles. After lunch we went shopping, still furnishing the apartment... and came home to a late dinner with a pint bottle of champagne!!” The evening finally concluded when, “after coffee and kummel, we went to putting up curtains!” And, he playfully notes, “O! Jim has just put his pen in his mouth and tried to address an envelope with his pipe!”³⁸

³⁶ Clyde Fitch to George Pierce Baker, 15 July 1891, George Pierce Baker Collection, Harvard Theater Collection.

³⁷ Clyde Fitch to Mrs. Sol Smith Russell, 14 March 1894, Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 4, Folder 32, Amherst College Special Collections.

³⁸ Clyde Fitch to Virginia Gerson, 2 May 1894, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 88.

The letters reveal an intimacy beyond mere roommates—although their status beyond close friends is not discussed in the letter as Gerson published it. In the same communication for instance Fitch describes the confusion that accompanied his arrival, “I rushed out of the carriage, expecting to rush into Jim’s arms on the platform, but I didn’t! There was no Jim anywhere.” The two had mixed up dates. Along these lines, his descriptions of their domestic intimacy convey an intense relationship. Since arriving, Fitch tells Virginia, “we’ve scarcely been out, except on household errands, except once to the theatre.” A month later, again to Virginia, “We are having our coffee and cigarettes out here [in the garden] after dinner, while the sun sets. Summer has come to us, too, at last. And we have our breakfast out here too, now, under a big Japanese umbrella.”³⁹ Later that summer he describes a projected three week vacation he and Jim intend to take through the continent.⁴⁰

A letter Fitch mailed to his friend DeWitt Miller in July of that summer of 1894 sheds further light on his altered living arrangements, “Well, here I am living in a charming little top story flat in Chelsea, near the river, Rossetti’s house, and Carlyle’s, and George Eliot’s, with a roof garden where we grow old-fashioned English flowers... it is more quiet, more livable here than in the hurly-burly of Piccadily, where I have always before put up my book shelves and cut my peas!” He then goes on to explain that he no longer lives alone, “I don’t recall as you know who ‘we’ is, but we is my good old chum White, with whom I have been for the last seven years.”⁴¹ Thus, for Fitch this male domesticity is framed in the acceptable terms of male friendship—irregardless of sexual consummation between the two. Although we have little information on Jim White,

³⁹ Clyde Fitch to Virginia Gerson, 30 June 1894, *Ibid.*, 90.

⁴⁰ Clyde Fitch to Virginia Gerson, 24 August 1894, *Ibid.* 91.

indirect evidence indicates his identity was of the type (like Oscar Wilde and Ogden Codman) who felt attracted to young effeminate men and himself betrayed no gender deviance. Despite Virginia Gerson's inclusion of these letters in Fitch's volume, Jim White is not identified, or included anywhere in the index. He is again mentioned in one of the last letters in the volume—once more without explanation or context. In the last known letter he wrote from France before falling into what would prove his final illness, Fitch explained to Virginia, "Jim White has just written me of his engagement—I suspected it in London—he seems very happy." Here the letter has been edited, cut-off in mid-sentence; perhaps in her role as protector of Fitch's posthumous reputation, Gerson felt obliged to extricate any awkward confessions on his part.⁴²

⁴¹ Clyde Fitch to DeWitt Miller, 23 July 1894, Clyde Fitch Collection, New York Public Library.

⁴² Clyde Fitch to Virginia Gerson, 28 August 1909, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 383.

Howard Sturgis and Qu'Acre

Clyde Fitch was not alone in finding a social space in Europe which allowed him to experiment in establishing a household with a male friend. American expatriates Howard Sturgis and Edward Perry Warren also both lived under similar arrangements at the turn of the last century. Sturgis, often termed a “dilettante” with mild literary ambitions, concerned himself far less with the maintenance of respectability back home in the United States than Fitch who was always preoccupied with the issue. A shy man with an effeminate manner as pronounced as Fitch’s, Sturgis centered his life around such all-male institutions as Eton and Cambridge and his own inner circle of friends. His two closest relationships were with his former Eton tutor and a younger Eton boy he invited in as a domestic partner to share his house. Far less driven than Fitch, and largely immune from the playwright’s close media attention, his writings indicate Sturgis was nonetheless aware of the dangers public exposure of his temperament could bring.

Even among an elite of devout Anglophiles, Sturgis had become more English than most American men of his social class and temperament living abroad. Born in 1855, a full decade before Fitch and Codman—he grew up in England and was educated at two premiere institutions of the English upper class: Eton and Cambridge. As a result of roots in an old and affluent Boston mercantile family, and his father’s position as director of a bank in England, Howard and his three siblings always lived free from want. Despite a very English upbringing, Sturgis assiduously kept up close connections with his Boston relations. In addition to frequent visits to Boston and New York, a steady stream of American relatives made their way to the all-male household he established in 1890 following the death of his parents. Among his American cousins were Ogden Codman

and George Santayana—both frequent guests at the elegant house in Windsor, known to all as “Queen’s Acre”, or simply, “Qu’ Acre.”⁴³ Years after Sturgis’s death, Santayana would recall his cousin typically presiding over a table full of beautiful blond youths at the all-male household. With prominent exceptions such as the American writer Edith Wharton, the Qu’ Acre circle remained almost entirely males of the homosexual temperament. Novelist and fellow American Henry James, himself most certainly homosexual, served as the circle’s anchor and most prominent member.⁴⁴ From 1890 until his death in 1920, Sturgis maintained this close circle of friends—generally Americans, expatriates or visitors—with his Windsor house at its center. Here he and his partner William Haynes-Smith, known familiarly as “the Babe” presided.

In her 1933 memoir Wharton recalled her friend Howard Sturgis as, “a sturdily built handsome man with brilliantly white wavy hair, a girlishly clear complexion, a black mustache, and tender mocking eyes...his hands occupied with knitting needles or embroidery silks.”⁴⁵ Similarly, A.C. Benson, a friend for over thirty years, and himself of Sturgis’s temperament, acknowledged it was some time before he could be comfortable in the presence of, “his almost feminine grace of manner, and his superficial dilettantism.”⁴⁶ In his own single visit to Qu’ Acre, E. M. Forster encountered, “a clean, plump, extremely kind, yet distinctly formidable old lady.”⁴⁷ That all recall Sturgis’s

⁴³ Commonly pronounced “Quaker.”

⁴⁴ Scholarship in recent years has irrevocably laid to rest the question of James’s powerful attractions to his own sex. On this issue please see, Kelly Cannon, Henry James and Masculinity: The Man at the Margins (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994); Wendy Graham, Henry James’s Thwarted Love (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995); John R. Bradley, Editor, Henry James and Homoerotic Desire (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999); Susan E. Gunter & Steven H. Jobe, Editors, Dearly Beloved Friends: Henry James’s Letters to Younger Men (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2001), introduction.

⁴⁵ Edith Wharton, A Backward Glance (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1985, first published 1933), 225.

⁴⁶ Arthur C. Benson, Memories and Friends (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1924), 307.

⁴⁷ E. M. Forster, Abinger Harvest (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanoich, Publishers, 1936), 123.

effeminacy in one way or another is significant: his gender deviance, like Fitch's, was pronounced.

It was the hostile pen of his cousin George Santayana however, that has best preserved a feminine but caricatured image of Sturgis. Santayana remembered how growing up, his cousin, "became, save for the accident of sex, which was not yet a serious encumbrance, a perfect young lady of the Victorian type."⁴⁸ Later, as host of his own household, Sturgis appeared to his cousin, "a figurine, a voluntary caricature, sitting with his golden hair beautifully brushed, his small feet daintily crossed, in the middle of a square of carpet on the emerald lawn, with his work basket and menageries of little dogs about him."⁴⁹ His own homosexuality sublimated into intimate friendships with his young male students at Harvard, Santayana, threatened by the openness of Qu'Acre, sought to ridicule Sturgis by invariably gendering him as female—and thus always slightly ridiculous. Such powerful and distorted images of Qu'Acre's host, were uncritically adopted and savaged even further by Santayana's recent biographer, who wrote simplistically, "[Howard] was brought up by his mother as though he were a female. The result was a character straight out of La Cage aux Folles. Believing that, 'there was nothing women did that a man couldn't do better... he learned to sew, to embroider, to knit, and to do crochet....He would emit little frightened cries if the cab he was in turned too fast around a corner; and in crossing a muddy road he would pick up

⁴⁸ George Santayana, The Middle Span: Volume II of Persons and Places (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), 118.

⁴⁹ George Santayana, My Host the World: Volume III of Persons and Places (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), 101.

the edge of his short covert-coat, as the ladies in those days picked up their trailing skirts.”⁵⁰

Although the surviving historical record on Sturgis is extremely limited, there are nonetheless a number of striking similarities in the psychological makeup of his and Clyde Fitch’s. The identities of both men, clearly positioned within their social class, center their dandy personas around gender behaviors most commonly associated with women—very similar to the working class fairy discussed in Chauncey’s study of New York. In a virtual mirror image of Fitch’s success in female roles on stage while at Amherst, Sturgis was remembered years later for his skill in performing the female parts in various Amateur Dramatic Club productions while at Cambridge. He was particularly successful as Kate Hardcastle in “She Stoops to Conquer.” A fellow student recalled Sturgis as, “the best actor in female parts that the ADC produced for a long series of years, if not ever. He was curiously feminine in his tastes, e.g. he used to embroider his mother’s nightgowns.”⁵¹

Also like Fitch, Sturgis centered his emotional life around close relationships with other men. His former tutor, A. C. Ainger and he became very intimate friends in the years after Sturgis graduated from Eton—even renting a summer house together for many years in Wales. Benson looked back fondly on times spent in the, “exquisitely and romantically beautiful house,” known as “Tay-yr-allt.” He recalled, “there used to be a perpetual flow of visitors through the house... Eton boys, Eton masters, friends of Howard Sturgis’s, sometimes a big party, sometimes small, but always harmonious.”⁵²

⁵⁰ John McCormick, George Santayana: A Biography (New York: Paragon House, 1988), 130.

⁵¹ Elmer Warren Borklund, Howard Overing Sturgis: An Account of his Life and Writings Together with His Unpublished Work (Unpublished Dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1959), 32.

⁵² Arthur C. Benson, Memories and Friends, 303.

Sturgis's friend Ainger appears to have been somewhat severe, but distinguished in appearance, with a reputation for the witty epigram. Benson admired them for working so well together as couple in always keeping their many guests at ease. Later, when Sturgis bought his own house, the choice to locate in Windsor, close to Eton—and Ainger—is significant. Decades later, after having himself successfully held off cancer, Ainger's death in 1920 seems to have contributed to Sturgis's own demise less than two months later.

It was after the purchase of Qu'Acre in 1890 that Sturgis embarked on the other significant relationship of his adult life: inviting the young Eton graduate William Haynes-Smith to join the household. Over the years, "The Babe" as Haynes-Smith was always known, gradually assumed more and more of the burdens of household management. Benson's memoirs cryptically speculate on possible blood relations between the two as accounting for the co-habitation. He believed that young Haynes-Smith was, "a cousin of what the Scotch would describe as a reasonable degree of nearness" to Sturgis.⁵³ Other sources offer no explanation beyond Sturgis's obvious affection for the young man. Much as Ainger did during summer holidays, The Babe served as host while Sturgis himself presided over the tea table—often in front of an open fire, while working his embroidery.

Among the very few extant letters from Sturgis's own pen, are those at the Codman archives in Boston. The following letter sent to Ogden Codman conveys a sense of both Sturgis the man, of "the Babe"—and their life together,

⁵³ Arthur C. Benson, Memories and Friends, 315.

Qu'Acre, 16 July 1900

My Dear Oggie: Thank you so much for your kind welcoming letter which I have been meaning to answer ever since. You are surely not still in New York. I sail on August 2 for Boston by 'SS New England.' I go straight to Concord on arrival. I am making no other plans till I go there, but I may come to the []'s for a few days if they will have me. I shall hope to see you there. I am, as usual, dreading the journey, but looking forward immensely to being in America and seeing my beloved family there. In which dear Ogden I always include you. Things are much as usual with us here. Babe slaving away and making very little. I am really sorry to say he does not come with me. He took a longish holiday early in the year to go and see his people in Cyprus and does not feel he can go away again. Much as he would like to. Yours, affectionately, HS⁵⁴

Codman, a frequent guest at Qu'Acre, speculated with his friend Arthur Little on the nature of his cousin Howard's relationship with his young housemate. Writing from Paris in 1892, soon after "the Babe" had moved in, he mentions his imminent visitors, "Uncle Howard and a boy named Willie Haines Smith [sic] are coming in August."⁵⁵ By return post Little expresses interest, "What a wild revelation about Howard's man, how long has he had him?"⁵⁶ A week later, still wrapped up in the subject, Little writes again from Boston, "I should think Uncle Howard and the boy might make good the [unreadable]!!"⁵⁷ Two years later Codman writes Little of a tour he and Sturgis had of the Eton campus that day. By return post, Little responds, "It must have been nice going over Eton—was Howard's 'wife' present?"⁵⁸ Codman, now in Paris, answers some weeks later, "I have been seeing a lot of young Walter Burns, Pierpont Morgan's nephew and of the Babe as we call Howard Sturgis's friend, not 'wife'—husband would be more like it, but son is really what it amounts to. 'The Babe' has been here nearly a week and I

⁵⁴ Howard Sturgis to Ogden Codman, 16 July 1900, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 72, Folder 1520, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), Cambridge Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

⁵⁵ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 3 April 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, folder 1701, SPNEA.

⁵⁶ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 April 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, folder 1661, SPNEA.

⁵⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 26 April 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, folder 1661, SPNEA.

⁵⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 26 March 1894, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, folder 1662, SPNEA.

have been showing him Paris.”⁵⁹ Interestingly, Codman speculates on the relationship through both the classical age structured model and the gendered structured model—both of course prevalent throughout Europe. Still, Sturgis’s gender behavior and history seem to indicate that he preferred “normal” men, not those who resembled himself. Indeed, in keeping with this pattern, following his death in 1920, “The Babe” soon married one of Sturgis’s Beacon Hill cousins.

With “the Babe’s arrival at Qu’Acre, however, all was not tranquil for Sturgis; without question he paid a high social price for his more-or-less open living arrangements. Even within his own inner circle of friends criticism ran rampant, not over his sexual temperament, or gender behavior, but for his too public living arrangements. Almost without exception, Sturgis’s friends resented “the Babe” and the open homosexual relationship he represented to them. In one of the kinder comments about Sturgis’s partner, Santayana insisted, “I had always been on pleasant terms with the Babe, liked him, and didn’t despise him for not being intellectual or for letting Howard adopt him and support him.”⁶⁰ Although Santayana could not approve of their living arrangements—their “grotesque morals”—which he thought a grave mistake, he still felt great kindness toward the couple. “The Babe was certainly a minor personage, and feeble; but he kept his head and spirits up in a difficult position, and was really the victim of devotion that Howard insisted on showing him.” Most of Sturgis’s circle were less charitable: Wharton for instance, omitted “the Babe” entirely from the glowing tribute to her friend and the Qu’Acre friends she evoked in her memoir.

⁵⁹ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, no date, [1894], Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, Folder 1701, SPNEA.

⁶⁰ George Santayana, My Host the World, 100.

Letters between Sturgis and Codman also reveal open disagreements over the living arrangements at Qu'Acre. In 1910, now married, Codman writes from France explaining why a visit to Windsor is not possible, "I am very sorry, my dear Howard, to have to hurt your feelings, as I see by your last letter that I have. I am still sorrier that you should think I do not want to come to your house; but I am sorriest of all that it should be for the moment true. I hope and believe that I am not more easily offended than most people; but really the Babe's manner the last time I was at Qu'Acre was so rude and offensive that it seemed wiser not to run the risk of a repetition of it."⁶¹ "The Babe's" manner, and indeed his very presence not only drove Codman away but many others. Codman concludes his letter emphasizing his personal affection remains strong—despite a difficult situation, "I am not willing that you should think of my staying away was due to any lack of appreciation on my part of the warmth of your welcome, or of your kindness and consideration of the feelings of others." Following Sturgis's death, and "the Babe's subsequent marriage, Codman confided to his brother Tom, "How amusing about the Sturgises. I think Uncle Harry and the English cousins all despised the 'Babe' and our Sturgises have taken their cue from the English ones."⁶²

The primary sources remaining on Sturgis's life are scant: his letters were all burned before his death, and the only known diary disappeared afterwards. Nonetheless, he did leave important sources behind that can tell us much about his personal life and give clues to his identity: his three published novels. His first, the anonymously printed Tim is by far the most revealing. The novel, which came out the same year "the Babe"

⁶¹ Ogden Codman to Howard Sturgis, 15 August 1910, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, Folder 1699, SPNEA.

⁶² Ogden Codman to Thomas Codman, 26 July 1924, Ogden Codman Papers, Letter Book, Box 87, SPNEA.

joined Sturgis at Qu'Acre—1892—focuses on the romantic love of the delicate, sensitive, young protagonist for his idealized, though conventionally masculine friend Carol. When they meet, Carol, who inadvertently injures Tim, appears to the latter as a vision of male beauty and he naturally extends his arms for a kiss.⁶³ Much of the story takes place at Eton, where the effeminate Tim inevitably does not fit in, yet his (and Sturgis's) sexual attractions have clearly remained focused on Carol,

Tim used to trot off to the playing fields in those long hot days, and lie there under the trees, watching the light athletic figure clad in white flannel springing hither and thither in the game; till the other boys, knowing his indifference to their sports, wondered sometimes at the regularity of his attendance at all the cricket matches."⁶⁴

Like Sturgis himself, Tim is always gendered as female. What theatre critic Kim Marra terms the homosexual's "woman within" seems clear in this case. Tim's distant, and disapproving father laments, "It is true... that I have disapproved of Tim's foolish infatuation for his young neighbor... I told him that I thought he might with advantage to himself be less like a silly schoolgirl in his friendship and more like a man, and that I thought it bad for him mentally and physically to sit cramped up all day writing long sentimental letters."⁶⁵ Tim recognizes how he is different from other boys and does not fit in. Indeed, not fitting in is a constant theme running through the main characters' lives in all three of the Sturgis novels: in his second, All That Was Possible, a young sensitive woman, recently jilted by her wealthy lover, faces the formidable task of rebuilding her life while in the position of a social pariah. His third and last work, Belchamber, follows the unhappy life of the familiarly-female-gendered hero, "Sainty." Yet by 1904 the year

⁶³ Anonymous [Howard Overing Sturgis], Tim (London: Macmillan & Co., 1892.), 34.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 252.

of the last novel's publication, Sainty's same-sex affections are muted; and attempting to conform, he marries—with predictably disastrous results.⁶⁶

If no record survives informing us how Sturgis conceptualized his love for “the Babe,” his novel Tim addresses the question quite directly and serves as a useful substitute. Tim's love for Carol is powerful, and he understands it by using the Biblical imagery from the story of David and Jonathan, “Tim listening to the history of those two friends long ago, felt his love for his friend almost a religion to him. ‘Thy love to me was wonderful,’ said the voice of the reader, ‘passing the love of women.’ ‘What woman could ever love him as I do?’ thought Tim, as he looked naturally to the seat where Carol sat.”⁶⁷ As Timothy D’Arch Smith, Jeffrey Richards, and others have so admirably illustrated, the Biblical story of David and Jonathan served as a well-known trope, or code for those interested in male same-sex passion. The emotional story, taken directly from the scriptures allowed the discussion of an otherwise unmentionable subject.⁶⁸ Thus, if there is nothing further than his fiction, a clear sense emerges that Sturgis—much like his contemporary Clyde Fitch—understood his passion for other men in historical terms—not in those outlined by the medical sexologists of the day (as Radclyff Hall's 1928 novel, The Well of Loneliness would later do so clearly).

Carol, unlike the effeminate Tim, is a “normal” boy and thus he grows out of the relationship and ultimately becomes attracted to women. At his engagement, however, his fiancée sensing something unnatural, protests his friendship with the slight and sickly

⁶⁶ Howard Overing Sturgis, All That Was Possible (New York & London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1894); Howard Overing Sturgis, Belchamber (London: Constable & Co., 1904).

⁶⁷ [Howard Overing Sturgis], Tim, 252.

⁶⁸ Timothy D’Arch Smith, Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English ‘Uranian’ Poets from 1889 to 1930 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1970); Jeffrey Richards, “Passing the Love of Women: Manly Love and Victorian Society,” J. A. Mangan & James Walvin, Editors, Manliness

Tim. Tim retreats and subsequently dies—but not before a final kiss from his friend. Thus, Sturgis clearly understood that by 1890, romantic friendship between men was suspect. This knowledge seems apparent when judged by the fact that he had the book published anonymously, and chose to center the story around the lives of children—a far less inflammatory subject than if Carol and Tim had both been mature adults.

“Think of Howard Sturgis having written a book about a boy in love with another boy—‘surpassing the love of women’—called Tim. Tim is the boy—it’s very nice and I like it extremely, you’d better read it.”⁶⁹ Codman’s unbridled enthusiasm over his cousin’s novel is predictable—especially when America’s context of silence on homosexuality is considered—and contrasted with his own quest for any and all information he could dig up on the subject. In answer to his friend’s letter, Little responded eagerly to this rare public discussion, “I have read Tim and thought it a very pretty story. Do you suppose that was Howard Sturgis’s own experience with ‘Freddy?’ And he made it more proper by having him die?”⁷⁰ Codman and his friend were not alone in immediately seizing on the unmistakable same-sex eroticism in the novel. Many of the reviews, indeed were concerned about the implications of this romantic love, The Saturday Review cautioned, “Tim is the story of a boy, but not a story for a boy...A healthy-minded boyish boy wouldn’t care for it, and a sensitive, morbid boy would be the worse for it. It is prettily written, in a delicate feminine style.”⁷¹

and Morality: Middle Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1914 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 92-122.

⁶⁹ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 21 November 1891, Box 87, Folder 1701, Ogden Codman Papers, SPNEA.

⁷⁰ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 13 December 1891, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, folder 1661, SPNEA.

⁷¹ Elmer Borklund, Howard Overing Sturgis, 74.

In the end what do these limited facts about Howard Sturgis and his domestic life at Qu'Acre tell us about his sexual identity? First, it seems clear that he acknowledged his same-sex passions, and allowed them a place in his life while seeking no cover. For this openness, as much as for his gender behavior, he endured a great deal of criticism. Despite a lack of sources, extant materials do point to both sexual awareness and a sexual identity, much like Fitch's grounded in history and literature, with its own vocabulary, and models of male effeminacy—i.e. the dandy. Yet both this openness and identity have been historically denied, either by those homophobic or who believe such matters are not to be discussed. As late as 1988 biographer Miranda Seymour argued that for Sturgis and his circle platonic love was the norm. In a selective reading of the sources, she insists, "there was nothing irregular" in the relationship between Sturgis and "the Babe." And indeed, in a curiously self-revealing passage declares, "it would be rash to interpret" his affection for another man—and those of his circle—as, "a group of promiscuous homosexuals."⁷² Fortunately, the literature has finally moved beyond such secrecy and conjecture; the focus has now shifted away from these purely physical questions to the unmistakable importance of such male partnerships for those involved in them.

For Ogden Codman, however, there was never any doubt as to the nature of his cousin's affection for other men. In the spring of 1892, he wrote to Little, "Let's go and live near Eton—Uncle Howard has a lovely place at Windsor called Queen's Head [sic] cottage. I guess the reason all these men like Avery Gardner like teaching is in some way connected with the habits of boys. Perhaps even here at St. Mark's and at Groton. They are not so very unlike Eton and Harrow. I must say that I could only understand it with

⁷² Miranda Seymour, *A Ring of Conspirators: Henry James and His Literary Circle, 1895-1915* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988), 188.

very good looking ones.”⁷³ Similarly, although in language far less direct as it was intended for public consumption, Benson recalled his friend Howard’s one weak spot, “The only people whom he used to confess, he found it difficult to resist were young Eton athletes in the full tide of early glamour and youthful success.”⁷⁴ Thus, although not academically inclined, Sturgis in locating his establishment in close proximity to the all-male school—chose to organize his life along the lines of a Walter Pater, or his own friend A.C. Ainger. Yet, unlike these men, as an American abroad, he appears to have enjoyed a greater degree of liberty than these Englishmen—even to the point of feeling comfortable in sharing Qu’Acre with a male partner.

It is also possible that, at a time when Codman and Little were using the word “queer” to indicate homosexuality, that Sturgis did the same as a form of code in his published work. In numerous passages for instance, he refers to Tim repeatedly as, “queer,” or, “a queer little figure.”⁷⁵ Although much work remains to be done on the etiology of the word; a consensus has slowly emerged indicating the word was in use—among the initiated, if not the larger public. George Chauncey’s work on New York, for instance, finds “queer” used by the early twentieth century. The Codman/Little correspondence reinforces such findings. A final piece of evidence pointing not only to Sturgis’s sexual awareness, but indeed to his possible involvement in London’s homosexual underworld lies buried among the documentation of the 1889 Cleveland Street scandal. Before he fled to the safety of Italy, when there was still talk of Lord, Arthur Somerset facing trial, with its concomitant heavy expenses, his friend Hugh

⁷³ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 12 May 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, Folder 1701, SPNEA. Avery Gardner was one of the founders of the Groton School and resided and taught there for years.

⁷⁴ Arthur C. Benson, *Memories and Friends*, 320.

⁷⁵ [Howard Overing Sturgis], *Tim*, 121, 133.

Weguelin sent a letter to Reginald Brett declaring that others implicated in the case should be called upon for financial assistance. Howard Sturgis is one of the names included in that short list.⁷⁶ Somehow Sturgis managed to avoid any implication as the scandal erupted. Yet this solitary mention of his name in that letter opens up numerous questions about his involvement in London's sexual underworld that Wilde had so notoriously moved in.

Edward Perry Warren and Lewes House

The life of Bostonian Edward Perry Warren (1860-1928) serves as a final case study. Much like Fitch and Sturgis, Warren found that only by leaving his native country for Europe was he able to fulfill his dream of living openly with a male friend. At Lewes House, he established an all-male household of young men employed in the study of Greek art and culture—with himself and his partner John Marshall as hosts. In a typical example from his era, Warren found traditions on which to mold his life in ancient Greek culture. Thus, he represents the American branch of such influential and better-known English intellectuals as John Addington Symonds who also looked to the ancient cultures in order to frame historically their male same-sex attractions. And much like Sturgis, Warren centered his life almost entirely around all-male institutions: in addition to Lewes

⁷⁶ "Frankly, Reggie, the only person seriously implicated is A[rthur] S[omerset]. That is perfectly evident and I am afraid you will have to warn him that his must produce the sum required by hook or by crook. I certainly think that for him it is importance that the affair should go through as quietly as possible. You may have seen The Star on Friday night; it mentioned a 'sporting nobleman.' I should strongly advise him to come home, and see Leo Rothschild or someone like that and borrow if he can. I think it very unfair that other people whose names are mentioned in this business should not bear some of the heat of the day. I think Eric Barrington, Howard Sturgis and one or two others should be called upon to assist and that money whatever it amounted to should be given him to repay the loan..." H. Montgomery Hyde, The Cleveland Street Scandal, 41.

House—which did not generally admit women—he devoted much of his life to Oxford University.

As was the custom among Boston's upper class families, Edward (known to all as "Ned") and his brother attended Harvard University. Continuing a trend that had started early in childhood, while his brothers Sam, Henry, and Fiske thrived in Cambridge, Ned was almost inconsolably unhappy there. He graduated in 1883, and immediately after commenced studies at New College, Oxford. Here, in the all-male setting, where at that time the Dons were still not allowed to marry, he found an environment more receptive to his budding aestheticism. Much like other Americans of his temperament, Logan Pearsall-Smith and George Santayana, for example, Ned compared the American and English campuses and found the former severely wanting. Steeped in the study of the Greeks and aestheticism, he thrived in this heady world that had produced and still harbored such models for him as Walter Pater. Judging from Warren's writings he eroticized the all-male English public school and university in much the same way that Codman and Little did in their own letters to one another a decade later. For them, virtually all aspects of this world represented some degree of homosexual innuendo and intrigue. Indeed, the work Warren considered his greatest contribution, The Defense of Uranian Love (1928) framed its understanding of male same-sex desires within the traditions of the Ancient Greek friendships as they were understood at Oxford at the end of the nineteenth century.

Before finding contentment in Oxford, Warren had struggled with a conflicted relationship with his birthplace, New England's Puritan capital; a struggle no doubt exacerbated by his pronounced feminine gender behavior. From his earliest days at the

family household on Mt. Vernon Street, Warren stood out. At a remarkably early age he became heavily involved in aesthetics—especially centered on those objects used in religious ceremonies. From the age of ten, the young aesthete tirelessly searched all over the city in pursuit of ornate candlesticks and fancy china. Until much later in life, during his first Oxford period, when it was replaced by a passion for idealized male Greek culture, Warren was devout in his high Anglican religion. Indeed, his sister harshly criticized this apparent religious fervor as little more than, “religion for its aesthetics.”⁷⁷ A collective portrait, drawn from the memories of his many friends recalls a fussy man, who suffered most of his life from the hysteria of the day, neurasthenia (an illness so often gendered as feminine), and who was rabidly misogynist. Friend and biographer E. H. Goddard remembered him with, “short, but well shaped legs, whose toddling gait added an incongruous feminine touch to this bodily movement.”⁷⁸ Unlike his brother who excelled as a star at Harvard, enjoyed a brilliant business career, and married a girl from a socially prominent family, Ned Warren never truly fit into Boston society. As he lived in a nineteenth century sexual system quite unlike our own, he stood out not for his sexual temperament, but more for his feminine gender behavior. Ogden Codman’s successful business and social career, in his native Boston illustrates quite clearly how those with male same-sex attractions, or temperaments, but with “normal” male gender behavior—could thrive with little apparent concern of discovery. It was those men with a “third gender” or feminine behavior, whose “woman within” seemed unmistakable, who always remained vulnerable to public exposure. Clyde Fitch’s tumultuous career—where

⁷⁷ Martin Green, The Mount Vernon Street Warrens: A Boston Story, 1860-1910 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1989),49.

⁷⁸ David Sox, Bachelors of Art: Edward Perry Warren and the Lewes House Brotherhood (London: Fourth Estate, 1991),132.

his abilities and manhood were constantly challenged—when contrasted with Codman’s, again illustrates this important point.

George Santayana, himself raised in Boston during the same years seems to speak for these men of an alternative masculinity when he recorded in his memoirs, “America in those days made an exile and a foreigner of every native who had a temperament like mine.”⁷⁹ During Warren’s many difficulties at school—for instance becoming known to all in the Phillips Grammar School as “Tassles”—his trips to Europe were his only solace. These trips provided him his, “only sense of life” at that difficult time.⁸⁰ His biographer echoed this sentiment in noting how the young aesthete, already drawn to the study of art and the ancient Greeks could not feel at home in America, “clearly such a man with such ideas and with such a soul would be a misfit in every way imaginable in New England society.”⁸¹ In his memoir, never completed, Ned recounted how his sense of isolation and loneliness pushed him forever harder toward finding a special friend—someone to share his life with. “I had always condemned my companions because their friendship was superficial, ie: not really love... My friends were affectionate, but their affection did not pass beyond a certain point, or had not as yet. They seemed to me not to differentiate between a casual friendship and that final recognition of their friendship which involved their holding together.”⁸² For Ned there seems to have been no question of settling down in a conventional marriage; rather, from a relatively early age he searched for a male companion with whom to share his life. During a trip with Arthur George Bainbridge West, an Oxford man four years younger than himself, he explained

⁷⁹ Martin Green, The Mount Vernon Street Warrens, 50.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 12.

his search for an “alter ego” who would read Greek and search and study antiquities with him. Warren’s novel A Tale of Pausanian Love written in the late 1880’s just after he had finished his studies at Oxford, highlights a hero who is also in quest for an ideal male friend.

In John Marshall, another Oxford man, originally from Liverpool, Warren found this ideal friend—with whom he was to remain devoted to the end of his life. Although letters clearly indicate love between the two, Warren engaged his friend officially as his secretary to assist him in the collection of Greek statues—the vast majority destined for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Accordingly, Marshall was engaged at 200 pounds per year, and the two men set up house in Lewes, a small town close to Brighton. Years Later, Warren confided that he had always thought his friend Marshall a “faun.” He gave his friend this label of the young male tempter despite a near parity in the men’s ages. If considered a faun, Marshall soon after moving in to keep house with his American friend became known to his partner as “puppy.” Indeed, they continued to call each other the petname until death. At his deathbed in 1928, Marshall’s last goodbyes were for his beloved Puppy.

As he conceptualized his closest relationships as friendships, Warren envisioned Lewes House as an all-male institution along the lines of his revered Oxford. Its architectural style a hybrid of Queen Anne and Georgian, the house was substantial. Although filled with rare antiques and many of the antiquities the two collected, and lit only by candles, the house had the feel of a college dormitory—complete with large shared bathrooms. With Marshall as only the first among many, Warren hired over the years a veritable army of attractive young men who worked as assistants in the collecting,

restoration, cataloguing, and shipping of the antiquities. Each assistant had his own room, study, dog, and horse for the afternoon gallops which always followed a morning of work.⁸³ In his Defense of Uranian Love, Warren wrote of the all-male household as he envisioned it,

His home life has a different color from that of most homes which women control, but it is nonetheless a home life... The shocks, dissonances, and compliments of married life are not there to provoke, to fortify, or to annul passion. Men who constitute their own society and yet find love in it, become masters in what women usually count as their own arts... [those entering] this circle, will at once note a warmer atmosphere and perhaps will not like it.⁸⁴

Much like the Qu'Acre circle, many of the Lewes House members overlapped with the infamous Wilde circle: residents Fothergill, and Pritchard were friends reportedly rescued after the scandal; Robbie Ross, one of Wilde's closest friends and supporters was a close friend of Warren's as well.

In his writings, specifically the autobiographical novel, the Defense, and a fragment of a never published autobiography, Warren articulated his clear understanding and embrace of the physical side of these friendships. As early as his grammar school days in Boston the young Warren had fallen in love with other boys—and his piano teacher. The 1887 novel also quite clearly describes the consummation of the hero's love with his beloved friend. Later, across the Atlantic from Boston, Warren was able to develop these ideals further when he merged them with his studies of male friendship among the Ancient Greeks. As he attempted to create this ideal in daily life at Lewes House, he committed endless hours to the composition of his three-volume Defense; for here he recorded his vision for a revived institution of male friendship. Warren always

⁸³ Martin Green, The Mount Vernon Street Warrens, 115.

⁸⁴ Quotation included in, David Sox, Bachelors of Art, 88.

used the term “Uranian Love” which comes from the story of the Greek God, Uranus, the father of the Titans, and who personified heaven.⁸⁵ Others—all Europeans—had used the term before Warren, yet his use of these ancient Greek models seems typical of his era and again illustrates the homosexual’s identity’s debt to European culture history, and literature. In the Defense, a boy’s sexual awakening is described, “[he is] ready for ecstasies, and treads lightly on the earth. But he foresees, dimly, that his love, once developed, will weight him and bring him down to earth. [He meets] an older lad who appears to him to have the beauty of a Greek statue, and a solidity and stability which he misses in himself.”⁸⁶ In this relationship the boy (Warren) appears to be in want of masculinity and this he finds in a union with an older—and more masculine—youth. “Enthroning the virile, perhaps somewhat repugnant to him before, he becomes its jealous servant and defender.”⁸⁷ And further, he describes how in these relationships the older youth has power and authority over their young friends. The younger boy’s, “ideal will be the youth of twenty, already possessed of the full virility which, to him, carries with it some degree of awe, but not yet disfigured by maturity. He is worshipping what he would become.”⁸⁸ For Warren, a young man needs a noble lover, “to console and fortify him, to gratify his longings, and to shout at him at football.”

Conclusion

Sadly for Warren his English experiment in creating an aesthetic male brotherhood, or all-male household was destined for failure. After the move into Lewes

⁸⁵ Ibid., 17.

⁸⁶ Martin Green, The Mount Vernon Street Warrens, 87.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 62.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 88.

House in 1890, a succession of young male assistants joined the household, with Warren often adopting particular favorites. Inevitably, Marshall grew jealous and began to search elsewhere for happiness. A volume of poems Warren published in 1903 illustrates the problems: although dedicated to "J.M." (John Marshall), most of the poems, such as "Lad's Love," were odes on the beauty of young assistant Harry Thomas. When his growing concern in the family business in Massachusetts pulled Warren back home more and more often, Marshall fled entirely. In 1907 he married Warren's spinster cousin, Miss Mary Bill of Boston. Interestingly, Warren still considered himself bound to Marshall, he remained in close touch with the couple, settled an allowance on them, and following Mrs. Marshall's death in the early 1920's returned to life with his beloved "puppy" much as before the marriage. Nonetheless, by 1907 the Lewes House experiment in Greek living was at an end: the art collecting stopped, and the young assistants all gradually moved on—many of them into professional positions in American museums.

Warren spent his last years back in Oxford, a refuge of the all-male world he had romanticized from his earlier days. Here he obtained rooms and an informal appointment in his old college. He thought within the traditions of Oxford lay the greatest chance for his idealized male Hellenic ideals. During these years he also supported a number of youths—including a boy Travis he legally adopted in 1911. When he returned to life with Marshall, he found occupation fussing over his "puppy" until Marshall's death in 1928. After seeing Marshall through his death, and now remote from most of his young men, Warren lived on only a few more months. A friend who saw him after Marshall's death observed, "He had the air of a man who is quietly putting his house in order before

departure.”⁸⁹ The Portland Maine newspaper (where the family factory was located) reported on Warren’s death in December of 1928, “Estate of \$1, 204,000 Disposed of in Will of Edward Perry Warren...[the will] distributes property to 73 beneficiaries here and abroad. Mr. Warren died in England, where he had spent much time in recent years, Dec. 28th, just a few days after having been named executor and residuary legatee in the will of his warm friend, John Marshall, an expatriate in Italy, who passed away in the latter country in February, 1928.”⁹⁰

Ogden Codman and Europe

Ogden Codman also came to more fully understand his same-sex desires through interactions with European culture. During his many journeys to Europe, Codman sought out books on the subject, followed all homosexual scandals he learned of, and avidly investigated opportunities for sexual experiences as well. Unlike Fitch and the men in his mold, Codman did not seek out domesticity, but rather information and adventure, travels and thrills. With young men—and possibly women—as the objects of his desire he continued his endless pursuit of beauty and conquest as he had done in Boston and New York. Yet for Codman, a sexual predator in his relationships, the European experiences represented symbolic ideals far removed from his experiences in New England. To Codman, and his friend Arthur Little, European same-sex eroticism was represented by a eroticized view of Italian boys and English public school and university young men.

Virtually all we know of Codman’s sexual interests, habits, and identity are learned through his extensive correspondence with his close friend Little. Beyond these

⁸⁹ David Sox, Bachelors of Art, 129.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

unusually candid letters there is little: no writings, or diaries have as yet been discovered among the voluminous Codman family archive. Yet the differing nature of the sources notwithstanding, the Codman material is so specific, and so detailed that a crystal clear window into his sexual thoughts, practices, and identity can be achieved.

After a childhood spent almost as much in Europe as in the United States, Codman felt equally at home on both sides of the Atlantic. Although unabashedly proud of his heritage in having roots in one of Boston's oldest mercantile families, he always found American culture inferior to Europe's. Writing to Little in 1894 Codman exalts in his Paris surroundings,

I doubt if I will get home till July which pleases me very much... Oh, this is the kind of place I love. I am going to see some Watteau overdoors tomorrow in such a nice place on the Marais, lunch at Voisin's with Freddy...The Babe, and Walter, or rather they lunch with me. I go over to Cambridge soon to stop a few days with one of the Dons. I dine with Egerton Winthrop's sister tomorrow... have been to the opera, etc. As before people seem to like me here much more than in Boston. And that does make me feel at home, and half New York is drifting through Paris...I shall miss it so at home.⁹¹

Repeatedly in his letters Codman emphasizes how in Europe he feels, "more at home anywhere than in America." Another letter sent to Little who was touring Europe and had considered delaying his return to Boston insists, "you are right not to come home till May. It would not be safe, as we have nasty weather often till the end of May—you will die of the dullness—for a long time you will be so discontented and forget all that was unpleasant about Europe."⁹² Continuing in this vein Codman asks, "shall you ever be contented in Boston—I am sure I should never be in your place. And as I am far from being so, as one has only one life to live it seems such a pity to waste it here. I really

⁹¹ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, no date [1894], Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, Folder 1701, SPNEA.

⁹² Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 22 March 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, Folder 1701, SPNEA.

prefer the old civilization.” Indeed, Codman never wavered in his goal to live in Europe—he was most fond of France and here he would end his days. As a young architect through the 1890’s he continued to spend part of each year in Europe; and following his marriage in 1904 he and his wife purchased a chateau near Paris and spent more and more time there. In 1920 he retired permanently to France.

Without question there were more sources of information for those interested in male same-sex passions available in Europe at the turn of the last century than in the United States. In fact, when American “Xavier Mayne” wrote his book of case studies on homosexuality, The Intersexes, in 1909 he had it privately printed in Italy as such an undertaking would not be possible at home. These books, circulated among male friendship networks did, of course eventually reach American shores and had a powerful influence on those who read them. Yet public conditions were slow to change: as late as 1919 Henry Blake Fuller had difficulties publishing his novel, Bertram Cope’s Year which highlighted intense male friendships. For Codman and so many other Americans, trips to Europe represented an opportunity to gather information on this still forbidden subject. In February of 1894 he shares with Little his latest acquisition of forbidden information, thus highlighting this point, “I have got the most astonishing French book called ‘Onanism’, that I found in a show window in Genoa—one of a series, ‘Marriage,’ ‘Impotence,’ etc. I only got one as they were heavy to carry—but such a one, it explains everything in its droll French way.”⁹³ A little over a week later, Little responds, “I remember seeing a book called ‘Onanism’ in Genoa out in a book stall. I wonder if it were not the same!! How odd for you to get it—I should be interested to hear what it

⁹³ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 1 February 1894, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, Folder 1701, SPNEA.

says. I have heard that boys were addicted to the offesaid [sic] vice. How do they do it?!!!!” Then Little closes with his characteristically tongue-and-cheek humor on the subject of sex, “I hope you will not be lead on it to _____ [blank space in letter]—well!!!!!”⁹⁴ Such texts were especially prized by the two friends in the effort to collect all of the books on sexuality they could locate. Their correspondence indicates these were to be found only in Europe.

In April of that year Little, knowing that such things were publicly available only in Europe, asked his friend, who had remained in France, “find a book in French called “Les Confessions of Jean Jacque Bouchard.” Published in 1630. It is a daisy I hear. He describes—I hear—the whole process now what is called masturbation, fucking, etc., etc. all about everything and everything called by name—most unblushingly and delightful.”⁹⁵ The two friends also discussed the most famous symbol of male same-sex eroticism in their day—Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray. In December of 1891, soon after the book had reached publication, Codman wondered, “I wish I could find out what novel Oscar Wilde means in Dorian Gray as the worst French novel—it is not du Maupin—I want to get it.”⁹⁶ As Little was touring Europe, the task of obtaining this book would surely have been his. Yet he responds, “I never know what book O. Wilde refers to in Dorian Gray.”⁹⁷ Beyond this question, the anecdote Little later conveys on Dorian illustrates how the name alone had become for them shorthand for homosexuality (although they were apparently unaware of this clinical term), “In England they have [in] all country houses what they call a morning bell which rings ½ an hour before the bell to

⁹⁴ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 February 1894, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1662, SPNEA.

⁹⁵ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 29 April 1894, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1662, SPNEA.

get up in the mornings! Then everyone is seen trouping back to their rooms!! Fancy the scene at Dorian Gray's!!"⁹⁸

Codman and Little delighted in following scandal, and those involving same-sex eroticism were especially prized. Their letters indicate, however that the English newspapers were far more useful for them. One senses a validation, or search for kindred spirits in their eagerness to unearth these scandals. Astonishingly, the uniformly hostile bent and unrelenting negativity on the subject generally found in the reports appeared not to concern or affect them. From Rome Little wrote home,

I was much interested in reading about Lord and Lady Russell's divorce. Have you seen anything of it? I shall scan the papers as they are quite exciting! It seems that Lord R. had a friend—a college friend named Roberts whom he wanted to stay [with] after his marriage... he left his wife in bed and went quite undressed 'up to Roberts' where he stopped for hours! Lady R. thought nothing of it only that it was unkind until his mother and sisters and brothers enlightened her as to the relations between Lord R. and Roberts! The English papers are quite explicit and not like our goody-goody sheets. Lord R. frequently spent the night with Roberts. Quelle fun!⁹⁹

Ogden's answer only confirmed the American papers he was reading were less than forthcoming, "Do save cuttings from the English papers on the Russell divorce case as I don't know the funny part at all well."¹⁰⁰

In what was to become one of the most notorious marriages of the decade, John Francis Stanley, or Lord Russell, married Mabel Edith Scott in London during the winter of 1890. Before three months had passed, the bride had fled her husband, claiming

⁹⁶ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 10 December 1891, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, Folder 1701, SPNEA.

⁹⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 January 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1662, SPNEA.

⁹⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 24 January 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1662, SPNEA.

⁹⁹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 4 December 1891, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

physical and emotional abuse; after a trial reconciliation failed that summer, the two never again lived together. As various suites wound their way through the courts culminating at last in a 1901 divorce, the couple gained great attention—and reprobation—when Lady Russell implicitly accused her husband of having a homosexual affair with his friend, Mr. Roberts. Interestingly, Little’s observation on the superior reliability of the English press is more than validated by the fact that his version of the charges is remarkably similar to Lady Russell’s testimony as recorded in court documents—so in Europe he did learn the true nature of the case. Meanwhile, back at home, Codman—forced to rely on American “goody-goody” sheets—learned precious little about this homosexual inference. The anxiety surrounding upper class masculinity, and the grave threats posed by male effeminacy—and homosexuality—is clear in the enormous press coverage it received.¹⁰¹ Yet as the two friends observed, this debate remained bottled up—indeed absolutely stifled, on their side of the Atlantic.

In 1892 Little passed on to Codman his friend Bowdoin’s (Sullivan) version of another English homosexual story then filtering through the European press: the Cleveland street scandal, “He says the reason the Cleveland street was found out was that ‘some bloody ass burst!’ or split! I believe was the correct term.”¹⁰² Little’s brief and casual reference to the scandal merely as “Cleveland street” reveals that both friends had heard of the affair and were well versed in its details which had been publicly exposed some two years earlier. Much like “Dorian” this otherwise nondescript London address

¹⁰⁰ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 28 December 1891, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, Folder 1701, SPNEA.

¹⁰¹ The case is discussed in, Ann Sumner Holmes, “‘Don’t Frighten the Horses:’ The Russell Divorce Case.” In, George Robb and Nancy Erber, Editors, Disorder in the Court: Trials and Sexual Conflict at the Turn of the Century (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 140-163.

¹⁰² Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 January 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

served as shorthand for their same-sex desires. Significantly, the friends' correspondence reveals no such shorthand taken from American popular culture—again Europe's information and thus influence on them was thus that much greater. In another reference Little requests information on another case from his friend traveling in Europe; his frustration with the American press palpable, he asks, "I was in hopes you would be able to tell me a lot about the Club Men scandal for it is merely hinted at in the papers."¹⁰³

For Arthur Little the association of Europe with male same-sex eroticism extended beyond the intellectual—or the mere acquisition of information on the subject from books and newspapers. So complete was his sense that male same sex attractions were an important part of European life—in striking contrast to American society—that he eroticized elements of European homosexuality. Like many men, Little and Codman devoted endless hours to the subject of Italian boys. Typical of the "sexual tourism" rampant in the era the two friends discussed them, pursued them, and collected the photographs of them widely distributed.¹⁰⁴ As the photos were apparently not available back home, whenever one of the two friends were in Europe the other would demand more photos. In December of 1891 Codman wrote, "Be sure and get all the photos you can of architectural subjects and others as well as I shall expect great things."¹⁰⁵ By return post Little confides, he has had little success but continues to search, "I don't see many photos. I have some of Neapolitan boys with their clothes on which are rather nice and Bowdoin is going to show me some others in a shop he has seen."¹⁰⁶ Within a week

¹⁰³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 3 March 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art, and Homosexual Fantasy* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

¹⁰⁵ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 28 December 1891, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, Folder 1701, SPNEA.

¹⁰⁶ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 January 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

Codman has hatched a plan allowing him to receive the coveted photos without the possibility of discovery, “you must get lots of photos. If you were to send some unmounted ones in an envelope without any letter and then if they got lost it would not matter—and they are such fun.”¹⁰⁷ Little agreed, “I may send you some photographs in a newspaper before long.”¹⁰⁸ Still in Rome two months later Little at last strikes pay dirt, “I have bought some more ‘Neapolitan boys’ some are daisys! Such c—ks!!”¹⁰⁹ Judging by Codman’s next letter the photos were received,

I have just got your letter of the 3rd and 9th with its charming enclosure for which many thanks. It is indeed lovely, what a good time you must be having. I envy you so much—nothing to do here... If your photos are all as this what great fun to have you back. And to hear of all the fun you have had and seen—and to see all the pictures and photos you will bring.¹¹⁰

One final example of the transcontinental photo exchange serves to remind that, despite rarely conveying a fear of discovery of his sexual temperament—as Fitch constantly did—Codman was nonetheless aware of the dangers discovery might entail, “I should think you might send me some photos anonymously to my Chestnut Street [address].”¹¹¹

Over the years Arthur Little became a veritable connoisseur of Italian boy photographs. In the winter of 1894 he updates Codman on the collection, “Have had all my Italian boys mounted in two big books and they look mighty well—no one ever sees them but I... have to keep them safe so they couldn’t get rolled up badly. You never saw

¹⁰⁷ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 19 January 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, Folder 1701, SPNEA.

¹⁰⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 28 January 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹⁰⁹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 3 March 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹¹⁰ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 22 March 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, Folder 1701, SPNEA.

¹¹¹ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 22 November 1891, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, Folder 1701, SPNEA.

them all—there are 83 in the 2 books!!”¹¹² That spring he relates a story to his friend revealing that the photos come from Taormina in Sicily; it was here that Wilhelm Von Gloeden had established his photography studio. It was reported that men traveled from far and wide to this remote city in quest of the exotic pictures—all nominally posed in a classical style suggestive of the Ancient Greeks.

Went to a stunning dinner at Bartlett’s, also lent him my Taormina boy photos. I saw him at the Union [Club] today. I said I would sell him the lot for \$100, so today he said, ‘Too much pecker! Or, I’d buy them, but I feel as if I’d have dynamite in the house! Have to lock all the doors when I look at them!’ He was very funny about them.¹¹³

Even as late as 1904 when both he and Codman were by now married, Little recounts his recent Italian vacation—and reveals the interest in the photographs has not diminished, “Italy was as lovely as ever—Sicily also. Some of the photos in Naples would interest you!! Nowadays they stop at nothing! Photography and those of the boys are quite interesting. I wish we had some measurements there to tell you.”¹¹⁴

The European visits involved more than collecting photographs; the boys themselves were important as well. Soon after arriving in Florence in 1891 Little explains, “The boys do not go bathing in the canals which is a disappointment.”¹¹⁵ Within the month however he had become acquainted with one, “the elevator boy or lift boy is the image of Gus Rautoul except his nose. He is a dear child and his name is Calmenina Cortes.” And then as if the boy were just another beautiful object to purchase

¹¹² Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 12 February 1894, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1662, SPNEA.

¹¹³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 12 April 1894, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1662, SPNEA; Von Gloeden’s biography and work is described in Robert Aldrich, The Seduction of the Mediterranean, 143-152.

¹¹⁴ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 March 1904, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1665, SPNEA.

and take home to his collection he adds, "I have some thoughts of bringing him home to wait at table if he would go."¹¹⁶ Another letter glows with descriptions of, "beautiful blue-eyed castratas."¹¹⁷ With his typical humor Little celebrates the homosexuality he feels all around him in Rome, "Haven't been able to s—w for 10 days but did yesterday pm! I propose to teach some of the (boy) models to say, 'B----r me' to Englishmen. B— (Bowdoin), not B---r thinks it would be great fun. The thing would be however I expect that the poor (!) boy would always be accepted!"¹¹⁸ During the same trip he sends home a story of an Englishman, "who the moment he landed in Naples had a boy offered him!! What fun!"¹¹⁹

Little's letters also frequently discuss the places of sexual assignations he finds throughout his travels—most often the Turkish Baths. "I had an amusing adventure in a bath place in Florence but I cannot write it out in cold blood, it would be unnatural in cold blood."¹²⁰ That same week another encounter, "I took a bath here Sunday as before... and, etc., the man played a hose twice!! The force of the water was tremendous, it nearly carried away certain portions of me!"¹²¹ Such coded language allowed Little to avoid explicit references to sex; as he knew his friend Codman would immediately understand exactly what had transpired. In the same letter he confides that when he asked the "very attractive hotel elevator boy" where to play he answered, "the

¹¹⁵ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 12 November 1891, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹¹⁶ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 13 December 1891, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹¹⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 3 March 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹¹⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 17 February 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹¹⁹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 3 March 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹²⁰ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 4 December 1891, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹²¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 8 December 1891, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

lavatory of the Billiard room.” Thus, it appears he felt so comfortable that public sex at the hotel seemed a possibility. Other letters discuss such terms as “playing the flute” and “the velvet hand.” During the same 1892 trip Little explains how he and Bowdoin are “going on a wild spree in Sicily. I hope Sicily will be fun, and it should be [judging] by the photos are fine! And I hope to find some interesting conditions!”¹²² Some two years later Little wonders what adventures Codman might be up to while in Europe—further signaling how both friends were sexually active and discussed it among themselves quite openly, “Have you been to any of the places in Paris where one looks through the cracks in the walls and sees queer things going on?”¹²³

Along with Italian boys, imagery of the English public schools and universities is of equal importance as a touchstone of homosexuality in the Codman/Little correspondence. Indeed, the subject of male same-sex eroticism is most often discussed around the context of the English public school. Such eroticism would fit partially due to sexual object choice alone—both were clearly attracted to young men as conquests and not to their contemporaries. Furthermore, there seems to be a sense that the all-male institution was an established and accepted site for male same-sex eroticism. In 1891 after asking after their mutual friend, “Charlie Morris,” Little continues, “He was at Eton, you know, and there they bugger each other’s armpits!! I was told by one who knows. Don’t tell this much around as it is too good to have any but a select circle know... I have

¹²² Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 20 March 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹²³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 23 April 1894, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1662, SPNEA.

found a fount of information on the subject.”¹²⁴ Little loved to relay salacious stories—often on male same-sex eroticism and often taking place in English schools. “At Harrow they put a small boy against the door and then all stand in a line behind each other and ram into one caught in the door until they [here he has drawn musical notes]!!!!”

Another typical story concerned, “one fellow was in the sick house and another was wild to have him, told the matron he had a headache and was put in also. Outside he would have found it impossible as he was across a court, but in the ‘sickroom’ he was put in a bed in the same room with his ----!!!! You can fancy what a night they had of it! He the active one and afterward he stopped and got fearfully screwed!!!”¹²⁵ That same year he explains what he has heard of the premier English military college, “they say at Sandhurst if a man has his breeches down and is stooping to pick up his shoes—if his rear tale shows he would be screwed in a minute by the nearest one who could stick it in! 350 men and only 3 women who screw—and 3 hours from London!”¹²⁶ He wrapped up another story with his opinion that male same-sex eroticism seemed ubiquitous in the English public school, “one fellow was new at school and was in the mirror. A fellow waited until he was through and then screwed—and he never could know which fellow it was! As he had not got to [see] their faces!! That’s the way of English schools!”¹²⁷

Later in the same letter he recounts a story which for him again illustrated how common homosexuality could be, “the teacher somewhere found one boy on top of another in the gallery and only said, ‘don’t be silly! Go to bed.’!!!!”

¹²⁴ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 24 January 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹²⁵ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 February 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹²⁶ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 28 January 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹²⁷ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 11 April 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

Little's fascination did not end with the public schools: the English university too held him in rapt attention and appreciation. On his 1892 European tour he writes home to Codman, "ask me sometime about a letter from a Cambridge fellow. An English fellow read me selections from it! They are a hot lot there and are continually smashed on each other and know about each others' 'flies as [well as] their own!'"¹²⁸ Another letter conveys, "Bowdoin says English schools are terrors for it [homosexuality], he wanted to know if they did much at Harvard! I said I thought not."¹²⁹ When presented with the possibility of visiting this institution which had so seized his imagination, Little jumped at the chance. Soon after establishing his friendship with Sullivan Bowdoin, he described his new friend's family—all in Italy, save one son Harry, nineteen years old—at school in Cambridge, "I want very much to see him but am afraid I shan't as he will not probably get here."¹³⁰ Later that spring he again urgently explains, "Harry who is 19 I am wild to see and almost think of writing him to let me come to Cambridge to see him and some other Johnnies."¹³¹ Within a few months he had managed to arrange an invitation from Harry; his letter to Codman after arriving glowed with excitement,

I went down to Cambridge and meant to have written you while there but had no time for we loafed all the time. Harry Bowdoin is very nice and made it very pleasant for me... Cambridge is very amusing. The streets are very narrow and they can look directly across into each other's rooms... They don't have much liberty poor dears. They can't go out after 10pm. But they can just before and stop until 12—the doors are locked at 10 and you have to ring and be let in and out! Lots of Johnnies playing tennis, etc. They are a pretty good looking crowd and in their different colored blazers, even plain red, they look very jolly... we went to the theatre which was [unreadable]. It was 'Carmen up to Gata', very silly and flat but the noise those boys made as they erupted, hooted, or booed when

¹²⁸ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 20 March 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹²⁹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 7 January 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹³⁰ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 28 January 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹³¹ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 20 May 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

they applauded, etc...a few women and girls but they are few—but all respectable ladies really. The heat was tremendous, but I would not have missed it.¹³²

Later, he continues to bask in the atmosphere, “There are lots of Jonnies here one would like to know in a Biblical way—one of them smiled at me in a suggestive way yesterday.”

As the evidence presented in chapter three makes clear, both Codman and Little not only expressed great interest in male same-sex eroticism, but participated as well. Yet, as was the case with Fitch and so many other American men of this generation, Europe represented far more than a place of sexual thrills. Rather, the importance of European culture was much greater to them. Here in “the old civilization” they found powerful representations of male same-sex eroticism, love, and a male homosexual identity (although they never of course use this word). Such representations were crucial building blocks with which to construct a positive view of themselves in the face of American denunciations, or more often, simple silence on the unmentionable topic. That Codman, Sturgis, and Warren found living in Europe more to their liking is significant: for across the Atlantic lay a greater amount of freedom than possible at home. Two examples culled from the Codman/Little correspondence illustrate these greater possibilities they found in Europe. In March of 1892 Little wrote, “You would have been interested at a fancy ball to see the men dance together! For hours two danced a can-can which I will describe on my return.”¹³³ Similarly, he seems almost breathless when describing a party in Paris, “Pomeroy says he [Howard] came to a ball at Julian’s as Bacchus—rather a lanky one—with some skin on his shoulders, something to cover his

¹³² Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 30 May 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

john and a wreath of poppies!! No tights worn, nothing else but sandals... why don't we have such things in Boston!"¹³⁴ Without question, even in the upper class circles described in Douglass Shand-Tucci's Boston Bohemia, such freedoms would not be possible in Boston in the last years of the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

As few of Clyde Fitch's personal letters outlining his experiences in Italy have thus far been unearthed, there is far less certainty about his sexual activities or interests during these trips than there is for Codman. Yet, with information from his years at Amherst, New York, and England, combined with the few remembrances available, some educated deductions can be attempted. Unlike England, which functioned for him as a second home, Fitch always visited Italy as a tourist. Never remaining in the country for long, he flew through historic cities and countryside with a ferocious energy. His friend Robert Herrick who accompanied him during one of these whirlwind tours in 1901 recalled visiting several areas in a matter of days. Herrick does place Fitch in the Sicilian city of Taormina—which we have seen drew men interested in male same-sex eroticism from around the globe. In view of his London connections it is impossible for Fitch to have been unaware of this enterprise. Writing to Virginia Gerson during that 1901 journey he exclaimed, "Sicily was a sort of fairyland! Beautiful, beautiful!!"¹³⁵ It is also known that during his mad rushes through Italy he had acquired a particularly favorite

¹³³ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 20 March 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder, 1661, SPNEA.

¹³⁴ Arthur Little to Ogden Codman, 14 May 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 83, Folder 1661, SPNEA.

¹³⁵ Clyde Fitch to Virginia Gerson, 5 June 1901, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 185.

gondolier—Giovanni—who watched over him whenever he traveled to Venice. In fact, the posthumous volume of Fitch letters contains a photograph of the playwright and his gondolier. As Robert Aldrich notes, John Addington Symonds, and poet A. E. Houseman, to name only two examples, were both involved in highly charged relationships with their gondoliers; both relationships highly eroticized, if not overtly sexual.¹³⁶ As Aldrich makes clear, and indeed the Codman material confirms, a sexual economy similar to London's underworld flourished in Italy during the period. In view of the Fitch biography, although most certainly aware of the Italian boys, he would rather have searched out "normal" adult men.

Above all, as an effeminate man, or third gender, Fitch could not help but be preoccupied with keeping his sexual life a secret—for his gender deviance made him suspect. Europe did represent freedom for him, and it was here that he experienced love in a more open way than was possible elsewhere. Yet, as Oscar Wilde's fate so vividly illustrated there were clear limitations to such liberties. Perhaps referring indirectly to Fitch's temperament, Robert Herrick wrote of the longing for Europe so palpable in the men outlined in this chapter, "it was not merely for rest and recuperation that he went so often to Europe; it was for the unconscious exhilaration to his mind that he felt while there."¹³⁷ Pointing to both gender nonconformity and how this precluded him from ever truly fitting in at home, Herrick added, "there was something colorful and expressive in his nature, quite un-American." In keeping with his more conventional masculine gender behavior, Ogden Codman betrays virtually none of these fears of discovery—whether at home or in Europe. For Codman, "the old civilization" provided him with information on

¹³⁶ Robert Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean*, 181-184.

¹³⁷ *Clyde Fitch and His Letters*, 184.

his temperament, along with the sense of freedom that accompanied his ability to experiment sexually; as a gender conformist, however, he experienced none of the fears that so troubled his countryman New York's famous playwright.

CHAPTER 5
“America’s Oscar Wilde”

Premiere of “The City.”

There was a great deal of excitement within the halls of the Lyric theatre in New York City the night of 21 December 1909. The newest play from Clyde Fitch, one of America’s most prolific and well-known playwrights of the day, was scheduled to premiere. “The City,” the playwright’s 60th work, had been much discussed—and New York’s commercial theatre world was in keen anticipation. The New York press, long Fitch’s nemesis, had devoted a great deal of coverage to this latest effort. Many articles indicated that this play was to be different from all the others—not only was it said to be of better literary quality than usual, it also promised to be his most “masculine” play to date.

The playwright, who had completed some sixty plays in the twenty years of his working career (the first at the tender age of twenty-three), had built his name by writing plays that promoted female actresses. Critics and fans alike remarked on his uncanny ability to understand women. Through his busy career, he had “made” a number of famous actresses. His male roles were far less successful. A contemporary article summarized, “It was averred, over and over again, that he [Fitch] could not write men—that his male characters were trousered females.”¹ Another critic insisted, “the virilities of life were beyond his reach.”² In fact, there were a number of Fitch plays that had highlighted male characters, and had been enormously successful; yet they presented an

¹ “Clyde Fitch as Collaborator,” *Theatre Magazine* (clipping, no date), Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Harvard Theatre Collection, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

² *Current Literature*, (February, 1910), Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Harvard Theatre Collection.

alternative masculinity to those mainstream examples embodied by Theodore Roosevelt or Richard Harding Davis. In contrast to such models, Fitch's work presented the male dandy, otherwise known as the aesthete to the American public. The character of the dandy, although an influential figure in late nineteenth century culture, partially through these plays, caused a great deal of anxiety among most male theatre critics of the day—especially after the nineteenth gave way to the twentieth century. So, in writing "The City," Fitch sought with great deliberation to create, "situations that were strictly masculine in their attitude and strength."³ Speaking to a reporter from the New York Sun he declared that he had "set out to write 'The City' as an answer to people who said he couldn't write a man's play."⁴

Among the theatre critics, Fitch himself was most often understood as an uncomfortably suspect figure—a non-conformist—a man in the habit of skirting their much-cherished gender divide. Not only could he "become womanly" when directing his female leads to wide acclaim, but his personal appearance and behaviors were decidedly effeminate. Friendly critics remarked on this curious insight into womanhood. Less friendly voices mocked him with such labels as "the man milliner," "the dude," and occasionally raising an even more sinister specter, the "American Oscar Wilde." Within the burgeoning commercial theatre at the turn of last century Fitch had found a space to present a very modern homosexual role. The unrelenting public criticism notwithstanding, he managed to present himself to American popular audiences in the role of an effeminate man—and homosexual—as well as doing much the same thing

³ Montrose J. Moses & Virginia Gerson, Editors, Plays By Clyde Fitch (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1920), Volume IV, ix.

⁴ Quotation from the New York Sun, printed in pamphlet advertising premiere of "The City." Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Harvard Theatre Collection.

through his extremely successful plays. Each work highlighted an elegant, passionate woman seeking to find her man—or alternately, the male role of the elegant dandy. As even the most cursory glance at Fitch’s biography illustrates, these female leads appealed to women so powerfully because he poured his own frustrations, passions, and desires into them.

“The City” did not depart that dramatically from Fitch’s typical melodramatic story—albeit it with some profanity introduced for shock value. The play’s plot centered on a respectable family from “Middleburg, New York” who discover in the process of moving to and conquering New York City exactly how corrupt and dishonest all is behind a thin veneer of respectability. There is also an illegitimate son of the family’s patriarch, a drug abuser and all-round scoundrel who resorts to blackmail and even incest when he secretly marries his half sister (although both were not aware of their relationship at the time). In a jealous rage the black sheep kills his wife/sister, is arrested, and the play’s hero realizes the corruption of his own ways and decides to come clean and face the music. The play ends with his fiancé—an aristocratic, strong, and noble woman typical of Fitch’s leading heroines—electing to remain with him for his honesty in accepting responsibility for his actions—despite the unfolding scandal.

As Fitch had become quite adept at getting his work before the newspaper reading public, anticipation had been building over the play for months. This attention, together with the tense story line—not to mention the shock of hearing such words as, “that’s a God damned lie!” shouted on stage for the first time—left the audience on the verge of hysteria on opening night. The New York Morning World noted, “for the first time in many a day in New York women in various parts of the house screamed in hysterical

excitement. One box was depopulated of five occupants unable to stand the pressure...even the men gripped their seats in tense interest.”⁵ The end of the second act found some women screaming uncontrollably, others fainting, while the steadiest among them stood about waving their handkerchiefs. Finally, when the final curtain came down, all pandemonium broke loose. Many fainted, including the theatre critic for the New York Sun. Amidst the confusion there were many curtain calls for the cast, some remembered eighteen, others twenty. Miss Lucille Watson, the play’s female star told a biographer years later, “Several times, days and weeks later... persons who were in that hysterical first night crowd told me they had seen, through their tears, Clyde Fitch walk to the footlights and take a bow.” Fitch’s bow would indeed have added to the night’s general hysteria: for he had died suddenly that September at age forty-four of appendicitis. The night of “The City’s” spectacular premiere, its author had already been dead some three months.⁶

The next day the critics weighed in: The New York Evening Sun declared, “From his grave last night Clyde Fitch gave the lic [sic] for all time to those who claimed he could not create a manly stage character.”⁷ The New York Morning World echoed these sentiments, “The irony of Clyde Fitch’s untimely death was never really understood until last night... for years he had been celebrated as the most acute observer of feminine character... It was often said of him that he could not write a man’s play.”⁸ Another

⁵ New York Morning World, 22 December 1909, (clipping), Box 5, Folder 5, Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections, Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts.

⁶ New York Magazine, 18 December 1978 (clipping), Biography File for Clyde Fitch, class of 1886. Amherst College Special Collections; Pamphlet for premiere of “The City,” Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Harvard Theatre Collection. Peter Andrews, “More Sock and Less Buskin.” American Heritage Magazine (April, 1972), 55.

⁷ New York Evening Sun, 22 December 1909.

⁸ New York Morning World, 22 December 1909, (clipping), Box 5, Folder 5, Clyde Fitch collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

critic went even further in insisting that, at last, he had written a real man's play, "It seems tame to say merely that the play was strong for in its strongest scene it is tremendous. The play is as strong as a raging bull...a hungry tiger...this is a play to shudder at. The art employed is remarkable, the effect is at moments mighty."⁹ Ironically—or not—the most unqualified critical praise Fitch had ever received for his masculine roles came to him only in death. Had the playwright been alive to attend "The City's" premiere one suspects the critical response would have been quite different.

As will be seen by tracing his writing career from his first big success with "Beau Brummell" in 1890, through other plays up to his death, rumors that Fitch lacked not only sufficient manliness, but indeed even competence in his craft dogged his every step. This negative cacophony followed him despite monumental success both in the United States and in Europe. Indeed, later theatre historians have generally agreed that—literary limitations notwithstanding—Fitch had helped to create the modern American play.¹⁰

Overview of Chapter

This chapter seeks to chart the public discourse on Clyde Fitch's dandy, or alternative masculinity focusing primarily on the publicity surrounding his playwriting career. First, we review the critics' response to his first and last play, and then relate their comments in general to both Fitch himself and his highly popular work. For the reigning male theatre critics of the day, Fitch's effeminate dandy persona constituted an anxiety producing challenge in an era full of such attacks on the status quo. Invariably these

⁹ New York Tribune, 1909, cited in, Janet Ann Carnevale Kanak, Clyde Fitch and His Reception by the American Periodical Press (Dissertation: New York: Fordham University, 1978), 247.

¹⁰ Margaret G. Mayorga, A Short History of the American Drama (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1943), 204, 211. Don B. Wilmeth & Christopher Bigsby, The Cambridge History of the American Theatre (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Volume II, 275-278.

critics gender both Fitch and his work as female—almost unanimously they label him as a womanly third gender, or invert—often little more than a pathological case. This finding (or diagnosis) can be found in virtually all of the articles written on the man and his work. Thus gendering him as in some sense “female” they then take the next logical step, which is to render him emotionally and intellectually limited, thus not capable of serious literary work—just as women were not. Although the end of the nineteenth century is indeed a time of great change within the theatre—with an emphasis on professionalization of playwriting—and of intense tension between writers and critics, Fitch’s case is nonetheless unique in this gendered reading of his literary output.

Fitch himself was also actively involved with the media representations of his alternative, or effeminate dandy persona. Quite agile in the fast-changing commercial world of the theatre, he managed to project a positive image of himself through the newspapers—often through, or in spite of, universally hostile critics. For Fitch, his ability to become womanly, to present the effeminate dandy boldly as a male character, became his greatest strength, and he skillfully defended himself against such gendered dismissal of his work. Ultimately this public presentation constituted an enormously powerful cultural force in fin-de-siecle American culture—not only serving to expand the boundaries of mainstream masculinity—but also in presenting publicly for one of the first times a modern homosexual role. Thus, when we examine the publicity surrounding Fitch and his work in this era, we really are discussing two competing discourses on homosexuality—one which labeled him as a pathological case—and the other created by such men as Fitch themselves, offering a positive model of alternative manhood.

Early Efforts

Following graduation from Amherst in 1886, Fitch and his father agreed to a compromise. The architectural career the latter had long insisted on would be set aside for a period of three years. During these three years young Fitch would move to New York and embark on a literary career. If at the end of this time, he was still unable to support himself financially, he would abandon the literary life and become an architect. Fiercely ambitious, he immediately began casting around for financial gain through virtually any medium. These earliest years were difficult: he tutored children; wrote short stories and poems; did some newspaper reporting; gave professional public readings of the eminent authors of the day; published a collection of children's stories; and completed a novel in 1889. The children's stories would be the first to see publication.

In a draft of one of these children's story with color illustrations done by the author, "Being a Tutor" Fitch presents himself leaving Amherst, "With the blue bow tied about my diploma, I stepped out into the world by myself, alone. By alone I mean unmarried." In this story he boldly presents his effeminacy, or dandy persona, "There were so many different paths... it was difficult for a young and unprotected male to choose in which to tempt his fate."¹¹ In presenting himself as "young and unprotected" Fitch almost seems to be returning to his college drag persona—"Peggy." At the very least, his imagery in these writings challenges accepted norms of gender behavior in the late nineteenth century. He explains his decision to become a tutor for children in similarly inverted language, "thus it was to aid in my expenses as a debutante in belle letters, thus it was that I became a tutor." Again, the choice of the word "debutante" is of interest.

¹¹ Draft notebook, Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 5, Folder 1, Amherst College Special Collections.

Fitch's writings from this early period illustrate a man still working through various strategies for presenting himself for public consumption. The two most successful strategies—a presentation of the dandy, or aesthete persona, and the assumption of a female role—he would continue right up through his later Broadway successes. In the children's book for instance, among the eleven stories, eight are narrated by girls and only three by boys. Significantly, each of these three boys is essentially a budding aesthete: thin, slight, sensitive, nervous, morbid, ill or physically weak, and acutely aware of the beauty around him. In this work then, he utilized the two most workable options available to him in presenting his brand of masculinity to the larger public.

More than anything else he had produced up to that time, it was his novel A Wave of Life (written in 1889, and published in book form, 1891) that allowed him to refine his public presentation of male effeminacy. In the autobiographical protagonist Cyril Farnsworth, he again employs the aesthetic male narrator—a figure of manhood in the popular culture style of Oscar Wilde, far removed from the virile image Theodore Roosevelt would cast across American society later in the decade. Farnsworth, much like his creator, blurs traditional lines of gender behavior. Although in appearance a dandy, described as a “masculine coquette,” he attempts to strike a masculine pose in courting the two Synnett sisters; yet an awkward ambiguity pervades the story as his intentions are unclear—even it seems to himself. Only when the novel returns midstream to a female narrator does the story lose this awkwardness: as Madge Synnett looks out at her finance on the football field Fitch's genuine feelings emerge,

Weldon looked very handsome in his knickerbockers and loose jersey, his tanned throat bare; and his curly golden hair tossed about and shining almost like metal

in the sun. As he stood there, Madge could not but admire him, he seemed such a perfect type of physical manhood; his figure was worthy of a Grecian frieze, and his forehead might have worn an Olympic laurel.¹²

The narrator's clear enthusiasm over Ned's beauty is in striking contrast to the ambiguity and confusion surrounding Cyril's admiration of and courtship of the two sisters. In addition, the reference to the ancient Greeks alludes to long established friendship traditions institutionalizing male same-sex attractions that Fitch had studied back at Amherst. With the exception of those plays he wrote centering of Regency England's famous dandy, Beau Brummell, A Wave of Life represents his last work in which an aesthetic male plays a leading role. Times were changing, the aesthete was growing even more suspect, and the device of the female narrator—which so many other nineteenth century male writers used to paper over difficult questions of effeminate masculinity—also ultimately proved extremely popular. In writing his later plays from the perspective of his female persona "Peggy," Fitch seemed to speak directly to American upper class women.

In addition to highlighting Fitch's methods of presenting the effeminate male, the novel—again more than anything that came before or after—also most forcefully presents coded references to male same-sex attractions. As would be the case with the figure of the dandy himself, any homosexual references, however carefully coded, are generally absent from the later works. By then he had learned the tangible dangers such references could present. After this work was published, never again would he venture into such dangerous territory: all of the plays that followed were efforts at mainstream male/female courtship, and few would have an effeminate male lead. Early in this illuminating story, Fitch speaks to the attentive reader in search of coded language on

¹² Clyde Fitch, A Wave of Life, 106.

same-sex passions. A character reflects, “she knew the dangers of a morbidly artistic temperament, and she knew this danger was so much greater when the temperament was not held in control.”¹³ Here Fitch utilizes coded language to signify same-sex desires found in many of the works he had studied, and that he himself had used in his letter explaining his temperament to Miller at approximately the same time.

Far more cautious than his expatriate contemporary Howard Sturgis who published his story of romantic love between men the same year—1891—Fitch instead presented his sexual or social dilemma in apparent disguise. Yet, for the reader in the know, the coded language circulating among upper class homosexual men of the transatlantic world would be obvious. The hero Farnsworth’s love for Rita would seem to represent marriage (heterosexual love) while that for her mysterious sister Madge symbolized male romantic friendship (homosexual love). When viewed through the cultural lens of this male homosexual subculture that Fitch was part of, the novel summarizes quite well the struggles the young writer found himself confronting at the close of the century.

Rita is good, sweet, and noble—and soon catches Farnsworth’s attention. Uncertain of his intentions, she concludes after one of their meetings, “she stood for some time just where he left her, the discarded novel lying forgotten on the floor at her feet, thinking over their conversation, and of what good friends they were—simply good honest friends.” Himself torn over his plans, Farnsworth daydreams about life with a woman like Rita, “How one could write with the encouragement of a constant presence so sweet as hers! How one might overcome those periodical despairings of one’s existence, with so hopeful a heart as hers beating against one’s own! Life would be purer

¹³ Ibid., 14.

and larger.”¹⁴ Quickly however he retreats, and in language closely echoing his explanation to Frank Whitman on why he could not marry his college “sweetheart” in the mid-1880’s he muses,

But, of Rita Synnett, I am not worthy... I will not think of love and her; I will not break the friendship which now means peace and happiness to me. She gives me this: why think of asking more—more than she would likely give, more than I, God knows, deserve? What would I have to offer her? Only prospects! It would be cruel indeed to yoke her to me under the burden of a career like mine, which is only begun; to ask her to share all the disappointments, the sacrifices; to offer her ‘Grub Street’ in place of her own luxurious home. It is madness. I will not think of it.¹⁵

After this internal debate, he concludes, “I must be wedded to my work...” that is the way a man has. He decides it is to be friendship and not love, and then he walks up and down his room a few times, with his hands behind his back.”¹⁶ Farnsworth could not marry, “the greatest stumbling block of his nature: it was his sentimental intensity, its excessive sympathy—dangerous weaknesses” prevented him. In an awkward exchange Rita begins to understand they are to be just good friends, but appears confused; Farnsworth, himself irresolute, ponders, “He had an impulse to speak out, to contradict her, to ask her if she was sure they were only friends. How could one be sure? He did not know if it were love. It was not the sort of love he had given the women in his novels.”¹⁷

In contrast to such ambiguities, Farnsworth could not resist Rita’s mysterious sister, Madge (the symbol of homosexual love), “an irresistible attraction, which came suddenly like a sweet delirium upon him and swept away his power of reasoning, and

¹⁴ Ibid., 58, 98.

¹⁵ Ibid., 99.

¹⁶ Ibid., 100.

¹⁷ Ibid., 138, 142.

even his power of will.”¹⁸ Unable to explain this powerful attraction he agonizes, “there’s something strange about that girl that draws me to her and at the same time repels me.” Resorting again to coded language on homosexuality Farnsworth, far from happy over his love, worries,

It is a dangerous time when two like people reach this stage—people of a like temperament, the intense temperament, the sentimental temperament by some people; it is all the same thing. Those who haven’t it do not understand it, often do not believe in it. Those who have it sooner or later learn to know its wide extremes—learn to know they can enjoy the more, as they can suffer the more in turn; learn to know that as the capacity for bliss is greater in them, so is the capacity for sorrow.¹⁹

Giving in to his “morbid sympathy and oversensitiveness of nature,” he marries Madge at her insistence—although he knows it is unnatural and wrong. The marriage, doomed from the start is unhappy: Madge realizes Farnsworth cannot love her in the way she wishes, in fact he cannot even bring himself to touch her. Tormented and miserable, Farnsworth decides to throw himself overboard the honeymoon ship,

He thought of Rita, and the tears poured out of his eyes, streaking the salt of the waves that dried on his cheek. He could not avoid thinking again of what his life might have been, with a shudder of self-abasement, nor avoid the comparison of what his life now promised to be. No calm, no peace, no rest, but only the unceasing rising and falling, backward and forward, of the sea. A life made up of moods. He saw the mockery in his passion for Madge... he realized his worship of Rita, which he had failed to understand, had been the ritual of that pure love which he had chosen for his own ideal. He knew he was not fit to kiss the tips of her fingers, yet he knew he would rather, once, than clasp the other, his wife, in his arms for a lifetime.²⁰

Madge watches, and she too throws herself overboard after him. At no point does Farnsworth say that Madge is evil or even unworthy—only “strange,” “unnatural,” or of an “artistic temperament.”

¹⁸ Ibid., 195.

¹⁹ Ibid., 149.

²⁰ Ibid., 287.

Ultimately Fitch's effort to present the effeminate man and heavily coded discussions of male-same-sex passions did not prove successful. The strained, tormented desires of Farnsworth and his plight did not create enough interest in the reading public to offset the novel's many literary shortcomings. Appearing to realize that these early works were too naïve and revealing of himself—as an effeminate man with attractions to those of his own sex—Fitch, when churning out seemingly conventional love stories in later years, would always attempt to distance himself from these unsuccessful experiments.

Despite his almost complete lack of popular success in these early works, in 1889 everything would change for Fitch—with a recommendation from a newspaper friend, his period of obscure apprenticeship abruptly drew to a close. The well known American actor Richard Mansfield, in casting his net about for a new vehicle with which to highlight his abilities seized on the idea of a play centered on the life of the English Georgian dandy George (or “Beau” Brummell. At the suggestion of New York Times theatre critic E.A. Dithmar, he chose the young and unknown Fitch to write it in collaboration. As would be the case throughout his career, controversy swirled around the play—despite, or perhaps because of, its enormous success.

Beau Brummell

Fitch first brought the dandy into American newspaper headlines not through his own life, or early writings, but through his first hugely successful play, “Beau Brummell” which premiered in 1890. All of the later Fitchian elements are already visible: a celebration of the dandy or noble woman—and great popular success coupled with a

near-universal denunciation by critics. As would happen at each stage of his later career, critics found creative ways in which not only to question the playwright's work, but his very "manliness" as well—sometimes to the point of hinting toward "more than a streak of lavender" swirling about him.

As Fitch soon learned, Richard Mansfield, however well established in the American theatre, was not an easy man to work with. A product of the age's star system, Mansfield conducted his life along the lines of a Roman Emperor: he treated stage managers with contempt, never played in a theatre that would not accommodate his every whim, and generally did not talk offstage with anyone save his personal acolytes. In this era, wide public acclaim made such behavior possible; as a national star, Mansfield (and others like him) wielded a great deal of control over productions they worked in. As Broadway historian Brooks Atkinson notes, Mansfield's case was particularly egregious. "His ego was so massive and his temper so quick and savage that some people suspected that he was insane. In rehearsals and on tour, he behaved like a member of royalty. He spoke to no one at rehearsals; he treated all his actors as if they were serfs."²¹ Thus the unknown twenty-three year old Fitch entered into a contract to write a play for Mansfield, then at the height of his fame—terms, thirty dollars per week salary and royalties capped at \$1,500. Only exacerbating such inequalities, the playwright's status during the nineteenth century rarely rose beyond that of a hack; so from the beginning Mansfield looked upon young Fitch as little more than an "amanuensis."

Fitch later recalled that Mansfield had brought him to Philadelphia where he was appearing on stage, and ordered him to remain at his desk day and night until the play's completion. Using the full force of a dominant personality accustomed to having his

²¹ Brooks Atkinson, Broadway (New York: McMillan, 1974), 24.

way, the actor cajoled, “I want ‘Beau Brummell’ at once—at once, do you hear?! You must sit up... day and night and do it... Think you’d better come on here and stick to me until it’s finished. I once wrote a play (‘Monsieur’) in three days and it wasn’t half a bad go.”²² Foreshadowing the nature of their working relationship, the demanding actor ended the summons with, “Hurry, hurry, hurry. Good things are done this way sometimes. The ‘Beau’ just suits me!” After his arrival in Philadelphia, Fitch confided to close friend Grace Mosher just how difficult the capricious man actually was, “to you and to you only I dare breath that Mansfield is unbearable, and if it were not of as much moment as it is, I would not, ‘suffer the slings and arrows of his outrageous fortune.’”²³ Despite the good fortune of securing such an important job, Fitch could not help chaffing at the conditions he now found himself laboring under, “I go now to my room, and probably stay there, except for a few moments, for lunch, until 12:30 to-night, when I rejoin Mansfield for the play, for I must re-write Act II, all of it.”

Working from an earlier French play and a mid-nineteenth century biography of Brummell, Fitch wrote quickly—bringing each act to Mansfield as it was finished for suggestions and revisions. As a result of this collaborative effort, the title page of the play read, “Beau Brummell: Written for Richard Mansfield by Clyde Fitch,” and just beneath the title a further explanation, “The idea of this play was Richard Mansfield’s, and the author gratefully acknowledges his debt to the actor for innumerable suggestions.”²⁴

²² Richard Mansfield to Clyde Fitch, 15 November 1889, included in, Montrose J. Moses & Virginia Gerson, Editors, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 50

²³ Clyde Fitch to Grace Mosher, 20 November 1889, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 51.

²⁴ Clyde Fitch, Beau Brummell. Montrose J. Moses & Virginia Gerson, Editors, Plays by Clyde Fitch. (Boston: Little, Brown, & Company, 1920), Volume I, Title Page.

A play centered on the life of dandy Beau Brummell seemed a natural fit for Fitch. Since his undergraduate days at Amherst he had fashioned his persona very much around that of the dandy—or, as popularized by Oscar Wilde in his American tours in the early 1880's, the aesthete. Brummell (1778-1840) was one of the young American's role models; not only had he read everything he could find on him, but had consciously modeled his rooms and dress after the early nineteenth century figure. The story, centered in Europe, also attracted Fitch for its location, as it was here that he sought his models in both his private and public lives.

Brummell never married and as Fitch himself had no plans for matrimony, he was able to present a model of a bachelor's life centered around, not the institution of marriage, but the equally important one of friendship—generally his own way of framing his same-sex desires. The play traces Brummell's career as an arbitrator of fashion from his peak as a close friend of the Prince Regent, later George IV, through his break with the Prince, bankruptcy, and eventual death as an exiled pauper on the opposite banks of the English channel in Calais, France. The two most loving and enduring relationships the play highlights are those involving male friends: Brummell's intimate relationship with his valet, Mortimer, and the equally intimate one with his nephew, Reginald. At the margins of the play, a love story also takes place between the Brummell's nephew and a young and beautiful woman—but the dandy's story and male friendships remain center stage throughout. The only reference to romance or marriage for the protagonist—apart from these important friendships—is his half-hearted attempt at securing marriage to a wealthy woman to rescue his finances. Yet, when he discovers that it is his nephew who is in love with her, he drops the idea with evident relief.

With Mansfield starring as “the Beau,” the play opened on 17 May 1890, at the Madison Square Theatre in New York, and became an immediate hit. Indeed, so much so that it became a staple of Mansfield’s repertoire and he played the role well over a thousand times until his death a decade later. With the rise of the curtain in the first act, Brummell’s effeminacy is obvious. As Janet Kanak (the theater historian) notes, Mansfield “minced his way through the first act,” all the while delivering witty epigrams worthy of Fitch’s mentor Oscar Wilde. Peering out at the world from behind his enormous monocle—complete with silk cord—Brummell/Mansfield is an aloof and superior contrast to the more conventional masculine characters such as the Prince. Photographs taken of Mansfield in this role reveal a tall thin figure in lace collars, tight velvet pants, and an exaggerated effeminate gesture of surprise. It should also be noted that, far from representing a comic or caricatured figure, Brummell is one to be admired and emulated through the course of the play; thus Fitch delivered a very public example of his alternative masculinity to the stage—to great acclaim.

Despite such great success, clouds of doubt were cast over Fitch’s abilities as a playwright from the start. Soon after the play began filling the house, Mansfield himself began to challenge Fitch’s authorship—publicly asserting that the young man had not written all of the dialogue. More of the same followed: with the play emerging as a surprise hit, New York Herald Tribune theatre critic and friend of Mansfield, William Winter published an open letter in his newspaper stating that the actor had indeed written most of the play, while he (Winter) had formulated the overall plot. Fitch had been responsible for little more than “the silly dialogue of which is but little creditable to

anyone concerned in writing it.”²⁵ Mansfield agreed that he had created most of the play—Fitch, he insisted, had really only cleaned it up. “I owe it perhaps to Mr. William Winter... to say that Mr. Winter’s statements are absolutely correct. Mr. Fitch was engaged by me to write the play of “Beau Brummell,” and I promised to use his name as author. He would still be figuring as such but for his own folly and ingratitude. Mr. Fitch did not write ‘Beau Brummell’ except with his pen!”²⁶ Ultimately a lawsuit was fought between playwright and actor with neither party receiving clear vindication.

For theatre critic William Winter (1836-1917) the intense public controversy over Fitch’s work on “Beau Brummell” constituted merely the beginning to his many years of written attacks on the playwright.²⁷ Viewing the theatre through his puritanical self-righteousness, Winter’s writings—published weekly in the Tribune until 1909, along with numerous books—suggest a man on a holy mission. According to Brooks Atkinson, “vindictive, sanctimonious, and prudish,” Winter saw the cleaning up of America’s public morality as his task when he sat down to craft his weekly theatre review. Insisting on “order, decency, and decorum” on the stage, Winter excoriated such realistic playwrights as Henrik Ibsen, whom he found, “a reformer who calls you to crawl with him into a sewer, merely to see and breath its feculence.”²⁸ Works that did not contain a didactic message he dismissed as a, “base enterprise which would cater to a morbid

²⁵ William Winter, New York Herald Tribune, 7 November 1890. Cited in, Janet Ann Carnevale Kanak, Clyde Fitch and His Reception by the American Periodical Press (Unpublished Dissertation: New York: Fordham University, 1978), 60.

²⁶ Richard Mansfield to the New York Herald Tribune, Ibid., 66.

²⁷ On William Winter’s life and writings, Tice L. Miller, Bohemians and Critics: American Theatre Criticism in the Nineteenth Century (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1981), 70-101; Walter J. Meserve, “William Winter,” John A. Garraty & Mark C. Carnes, Editors, American National Biography (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), Volume 23, 658.

²⁸ Brooks Atkinson, Broadway., pg. 93.

curiosity or gather profit by pandering to the gross appetites of the vulgar mob.”²⁹ His work, as a theatre critic must, “in order to be useful,” he argued, “excoriate evil and ridicule trash, [and] should expound, interpret, sympathize, and help—cheering the actor who is trying to do fine things.”³⁰ Although historians have observed how Winter and the theatre critics of the day led a neo-Puritan attack on Fitch and others who violated their sense of public decency, all have hitherto failed to note that frequently the gender nonconformists—“long haired men and flat-chested she-goats of women”—were the particular targets of his wrath. In reviewing what Fitch termed Winter’s “vile articles” on “Beau Brummell,” a gendered component pointing toward the author’s effeminacy seems unmistakable.³¹ This theme would continue in virtually every review he ever wrote on a Fitch play.

On the defensive in 1890 following Winter’s public denunciation of his claims, Fitch wrote a letter published in the Boston Evening Transcript at the height of the play’s popularity, “at the advice of my friends, interested and disinterested, I have up to this time kept silent in the controversy.”³² He then went on to explain his side of the story in the hopes that this firm stand against two far more influential figures might allow the story to be laid to rest,

Mr. Mansfield is not the author of ‘Beau Brummell.’ But I do not claim that I could have or did write in my first play one so successful...without

²⁹ William Winter, Vagrant Memories: Being Further Reflections of Other Days (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1915), 484.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 480.

³¹ Brooks Atkinson, Broadway, 93. Clyde Fitch to E. A. Dithmar, 5 December 1890, Montrose J. Moses & Virginia Gerson, Editors, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 63. Janet Ann Carnevale Kanak’s dissertation, Clyde Fitch and His Reception by the American Periodical Press, (1978) for instance presents the Puritanical crusading critics as going after Fitch for his too often discussing once forbidden topics—such as divorce. Left out completely from her analysis however, is the gendered component to their criticism of him.

³² Clyde Fitch letter to the Boston Evening Transcript, 13 April 1891, Montrose J. Moses & Virginia Gerson, Editors, Clyde Fitch and his Letters, 65.

the valuable assistance of someone with more experience than I.... But I claim, as I always have, that I wrote the play. I agreed to Mr. Mansfield's suggestions in order to have the privilege of writing for him the play—I did not know I was doing this in order to have the authorship of the play taken from me in the event of its success.

Questions about his authorship had become so intense that Fitch felt obliged to recount where and when each act had been written, "Act I, I wrote in Philadelphia alone in my own room, reading at night my work to Mr. Mansfield..." The letter ends by summarizing criticism of himself and his work—and indirectly illustrating the low esteem that playwrights were held in by both critics and actors alike, "The Tribune next morning [after the play's premiere] said the play was utterly worthless. After it had run some weeks the Tribune said there were some good things in it but they were Mansfield's. After it had run some months the Tribune said everything good in the play was Mansfield's." Although he had no way of knowing this at the time, Fitch had in fact charted how his work was to be treated by critics from this day forward—despite greatly successful plays critics always belittled them, when a play's success could not be denied, they then poked at Fitch's authorship or his strange effeminate, or "womanly" appearance.

To the male critics at the turn of the last century it did not seem possible that this delicate, aesthetic young man, whose appearance, "brought a smile to one's lips," could actually be the author of such successful plays. As Kerry Powell has illustrated so admirably in his study of the Victorian theatre, men had firm control of this burgeoning—and increasingly highly lucrative—industry.³³ To them, Fitch with his third gender effeminate (or homosexual) role, seemed to challenge the prerequisite of "manliness" that was needed to be a professional. After Fitch's death critic Albert Bard

³³ Kerry Powell, Women and the Victorian Theatre (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

recalled the playwright's skirting of the gender divide, "His mind was both masculine and feminine. His tact and intuitiveness, his understanding of people, were feminine; so were his adaptability to his surroundings, and his ability to manage on a small income and make it go a long way. He had the feminine ability to make a pin do, where masculine reason would have demanded a button, forty stitches or a nail."³⁴ The important point to note in terms of the theatre critics' gendered criticisms is that they considered Fitch's alternative masculinity a problem, at best an awkward embarrassment, at worst a dangerous illness. This view of him as pathological places their discourse in accord with the medical models crossing over from Europe at the time—even if there is no tangible direct linkage.

The Critics React

The general discomfort with Fitch is best summarized in an unsigned clipping from a story which ran in a New York paper at the time of the fantastic "Beau Brummell" success. The article—thus far not identified—was clipped and pasted into Fitch's own scrapbook—most likely by his own hand,

On a winter morning, three years ago, I was reading my mail in my office when an extremely dapper young man, notable for the remarkable precision of his small black mustache, came in and softly inquired if he could recover some verses which he had sent in gratuitously some days previous. I looked up the young man's verses, read them, and told him that I thought there was no doubt about his ability to recover them, as I was not absolutely anxious to print them. The personal appearance of this youth has haunted me ever since, though I long ago forgot his poetry. As though never to permit me to forget him and his beautiful clothes, he has been scooting before my eyes at all the theatrical first nights, art

³⁴ Albert Bard, "Some Recollections of Clyde Fitch in College." Amherst Graduates Quarterly. (May, 1928).

exhibits, and such entertaining functions, always attired with panic-creating neatness, and seeming to have his revengeful eye fastened upon my movements.³⁵

Probably I should never have got beyond a sort of nervous dread of this mysterious youth had I not attended the first performance of 'Beau Brummell' at the Madison Square Theatre the other night... at the end of the third act there was a growing sentiment that another Brinsley Sheridan had arrived, and, not being able to longer restrain itself, the audience set up a shout for author, I myself, being as much elated as anybody joining in the demands. Presently the curtain rose, and Mr. Mansfield led out a slender, pale, dark-haired, and moustached youth, whose faultless evening dress I could never mistake. I was my haunting spectre, whose poetry I had rejected three years ago.

Although the anonymous author does refer to Fitch's youth, a far more arresting image highlighted here is his fastidious aesthetic attention to his costume—and his effeminacy—"the panic-creating neatness." Somehow, when faced with such a figure he is "haunted," filled with a "nervous dread," and on the play's opening night confronts his "haunting spectre." Coupled with this palpable discomfort focused on the young playwright's brand of masculinity is his utter bewilderment that such a man could produce such a first rate play.

Far and wide the critics were unable to accept that this young effeminate man had written such a successful play. After all, it was well known that women were not capable of serious literary work—as the almost complete absence of successful female playwrights attested. Perhaps more to the point, however, these critics were unnerved by Fitch's bold alternative masculinity, which embraced rather than shunned his effeminacy. Another newspaper critic noted sarcastically, "Clyde Fitch looks very aesthetic as he leaves his apartments in the Carnegie Building each day and saunters down Broadway with his celebrated Fitch walk. His cheeks are very smooth, his collar is very high, and

³⁵ "Manhattan Pickups." (29 May 1890, clipping not otherwise identified), Clyde Fitch Scrapbook, Clyde Fitch Collection, Box 1, Folder 15, Amherst College Special Collections.

his walk is very unique. He is not by any manner of means, however, a dilettante of the hothouse variety, for any man who can write a play like 'Beau Brummell' at 23 must be certainly worthy of some attention."³⁶ The critic was forced to conclude—in spite of his better judgment—that this effeminate man had indeed written a good play. Other critics admitted that they too had been proven wrong. Such effeminate mannerisms notwithstanding, "those who have always looked upon Clyde Fitch as the embodiment of the inanely aesthetic can hardly be said to have the right end of the argument at present."³⁷ Or again, "there was a time when we gazed upon Mr. Clyde as we would at a Bunthorne [sic], with much amusement, mixed with something akin to derision. His impeccable frock and waistcoat, his marvelous neckwear, his boutonniere, and above all, his mincing, though not at all effeminate manner, seemed to invite a smile to the lips. Then he wrote 'Beau Brummell' and we all stood aghast that such a young man could write such a good play."³⁸ Still, not all were enthusiastic over the play; and many of those who criticized it did so in female gendered terms in order to question its author's manliness indirectly. Another 1890 review in disparaging the work noted in unmistakably feminine gendered language, "As it is, the play is a dainty picture of costumes of England at the beginning of the century...very pretty indeed...[and it] will never become a lasting success."³⁹ Whether supportive or dismissive of his work, critics were unanimous in agreeing that his alternative masculinity marked him as a poor specimen of American manhood.

³⁶ Unidentified Clipping, (circa 1890), Clyde Fitch Scrapbook, Box 2, Folder 7, Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

³⁷ Clipping, (no date), Box 2, Folder 3, Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

³⁸ Unidentified clipping, (no date, circa 1890), Box 2, Folder 3, Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

³⁹ Dunlap's Stage News, (no date, circa 1890), Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Harvard Theatre Collection.

In attempting to establish the chronology of male effeminacy in the United States the year 1895 is pivotal. With the infamous and widely reported Oscar Wilde trials, it was during this year that a general uneasiness associated with such aesthetics gave way to a direct linkage between such behaviors perceived of as effeminate and homosexuality.⁴⁰ Thus, in the very years when Fitch was first building a successful public career as a playwright in New York City, his effeminacy grew increasingly suspect. As a result, in negotiating the media attention he began to receive after “Beau Brummell,” careful steps were needed. In turn adding even more difficulties to an already formidable task, Fitch discovered in the final years of the century that a professionalization process for playwrighting was gearing up. It was in this period that theatre historians note, “the professional dramatist finally came of age.”⁴¹ With new copyright laws protecting their literary work, and the return of the respectable middle classes to the theatre, the playwright was by 1900 no longer the hack of the past; and was compensated accordingly. In this effort to raise their once lowly status, and to shed any lingering traces of the effeminate, bohemian, artist, or aesthetic, in their profession, playwrights eagerly embraced a Teddy Roosevelt brand of masculinity.⁴² Ironically, although through careful public manipulations of his public persona, Fitch enjoyed the fruits of an increasingly respected—and compensated—profession, at the same time in the strong push for such status, most playwrights highlighted their more masculine credentials

⁴⁰ This linkage is traced in, Alan Sinfield, The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Moment (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁴¹ John Russell Stephens, The Profession of the Playwright, British Theatre, 1800-1900 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 189. Brooks Atkinson, Fisher & Watt, and others chart a similar, almost simultaneous development in the United States as well as in Great Britain.

⁴² On the history of professionalization of the playwright in this era, John Russell Stephens, The Profession of the Playwright, British Theatre, 1800-1900, 184-192. Judith Fisher & Stephen Watt, Editors, When They Weren't Doing Shakespeare: Essays on Nineteenth Century British and American Theatre (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1989), I-XIX.

making the effeminate man's position at times untenable. This embrace of the virile was not limited to the theatre—historians have traced a similar process underway in the years after 1895 among artists, politicians, and other public figures.⁴³

Years later, after the news of Fitch's death reached the United States, a Boston Evening Transcript account of his life and career recounted, "It was the custom, through all of Clyde Fitch's life, to speak and to write of him slightly." ⁴⁴ In an age where patriarchy—although at last facing real challenges—still dominated most fields of business, including the theatre, a series of assumptions went into the critics' view of Fitch as incapable of good, serious work. To male critics like Winter, Fitch embodied an uncomfortable reminder of illness—and the blurry lines of the gender divide. By gendering him repeatedly as female, and in the process discounting his work, the threat could be contained. As the obituary concluded with a sense of regret, "at home, the very youngest writer about the theatre, knew how to 'handle' Fitch and be duly smart and superior in the process."⁴⁵ They "handled" him of course, just as the boys had done in his schoolyard playground: ridiculed his effeminacy and questioned his masculinity.

The aim of this discussion is not to assess the literary quality of Fitch's work, but rather to examine the ways in which the reigning male critics of his day critiqued these plays through highly biased and anxiously gendered attacks on Fitch the man. The Boston Evening Transcript in 1909 noted, "As the world knew Mr. Fitch, it was not easy for it to take him seriously. Those who looked upon him saw a slight, olive-skinned,

⁴³ Sarah Burns, Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1996); Gail Bederman, Manliness & Civilization: a Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1-44, 170-215.

⁴⁴ Boston Evening Transcript, (8 September 1909), Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

⁴⁵ Boston Evening Transcript, (8 September 1909).

soft-eyed, almost Italian looking man with a gentle voice and gentle manner.”⁴⁶ Again, all contrary evidence notwithstanding, the clear message is: effeminacy = woman = limited abilities.

Virtually every discussion of the famous playwright and his work references Fitch’ lack of the requisite virility. When commenting on him physically, the newspapers inevitably led the reader to conclude that something was amiss with this specimen of manhood—in addition to his effeminacy, his boyishness, short stature, and dark complexion were frequent signposts. In November of 1903 critic Kenneth Herford described in The Pilgrim Magazine the Clyde Fitch he had met, “the figure of a little boy-voiced man, with great eyes, an air of femininity, an up-tipped mustache, and extremely small feet.”⁴⁷ Critic Archibald Henderson concurred, “the man was effeminate in nature, juvenile in mentality, bird-like in a sort of empty sprightliness.”⁴⁸ Another objected to his pronounced dandyism, “Such collars I have never seen choking a frail human as those that have bothered the ears of Mr. Fitch.”⁴⁹ The commentator goes on to predict that this utter lack of manliness must necessarily extend to his voice as well, “I have never heard Mr. Fitch speak, but I fancy that his elocution would not be reassuring.” Yet another had heard the dandy’s voice and wished very much that he hadn’t, “his voice was very high, frequently breaking into falsetto, and even in ordinary conversation it sounded like that of an hysterical woman who has just missed her train.”⁵⁰ The Baltimore Sun echoed this

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Clipping, Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Robinson-Locke Collection, New York Public Library, Theatre Division, Lincoln Center, New York.

⁴⁸ New York Daily News, (circa 1938, clipping), Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Robinson-Locke Collection, New York Public Library, Theatre Division.

⁴⁹ Unidentified clipping, Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Harvard Theatre Collection.

⁵⁰ The Hartford Courant, (16 September 1934).

concern over the playwright's severely limited abilities in a 1903 article, "Mr. Fitch is a tremendous worker. Considering his physical equipment he accomplishes marvels."⁵¹

Summarizing his career in September of 1909, The New York Evening Transcript declared that with, "the feminine perceptions that guided him" Fitch brilliantly portrayed the American woman on stage, but "seemed groping and baffled when he would design and vivify figures of men... scarcely one of his men lingers in recollection... as do the women."⁵² Having established Fitch's status as a woman, or third gender, the article then moves on to illustrate the obvious limitation to his abilities such an identity meant, "He had not the mental fiber, concentration, and endurance that think long and hard. The mirror of his talents and temperament answered instinctively and sympathetically to little things. They contented him." The author then continued outlining other essential elements of manhood that this playwright simply did not have, "Similarly, Mr. Fitch lacked the sterner artistic virtues. Resolute, almost rigid concentration upon a single idea... was difficult and almost impossible for him. His talents were too elastic, his temperament too diffuse and evasive. He yielded too often to the easiest way." Theatre Magazine agreed, noting Fitch's "glass... was not large... in his heart he knew he gave the public the best that he had. His intellect was of the quick, bright, shifting variety."⁵³

Even those who applauded his work could not resist commenting on the playwright's shortcomings in the manhood department. The New York Dramatic Mirror in an article clipped and pasted into Fitch's scrapbook commented on this apparent inconsistency, "Clyde Fitch does not resemble the popular idea of a dramatist... He is young, handsome, well-bred; he dresses in the extreme of fashion, running to enormous

⁵¹ The Baltimore Sun, (15 February 1903), Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Harvard Theatre Collection.

⁵² The New York Evening Transcript, (8 September 1909).

⁵³ Theatre Magazine, (no date, circa 1909), Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Harvard Theatre Collection.

boutonnieres, marvelous scarfs, the latest thing in silk hats, etc. His work however, shows no lack of virility or originality of conception.”⁵⁴ The Metropolitan Magazine in 1902 simply concluded that the case of Clyde Fitch confirms, “one can never tell” when judging the abilities of a writer. Somehow this man with a “sensitive, highly strung temperament,” had achieved great success, to the great surprise of all—including the article claimed—Fitch himself.⁵⁵ Writing in the Book News Monthly, critic and Fitch supporter Montrose J. Moses relegated him to the woman’s sphere despite, or perhaps because of, his phenomenal success, “by temperament Mr. Fitch is a sentimentalist, and because of his temperament he views the details of environment in their bearing of feeling.”⁵⁶

Moses, a theatre critic whom Fitch carefully courted and cultivated, was inclined to be a fan of the playwright—even to the point of editing a posthumous collected edition of his plays and a volume of letters—yet he too could not avoid gendering his friend as female. A series of notes Fitch sent to Moses from 1905 until his death in 1909 outline how an extremely busy playwright, initially allowing no time for a young critic and admirer, eventually formed a very close association with this acolyte. The earliest communications are terse and to the point—most often citing time constraints for his inability to meet. A note mailed in December of 1906 is typical of these early exchanges, “Dear Mr. Moses: I am in Chicago and will not be in New York till toward the end of January, to stop any length of time. All the information you want, I feel sure you could get from Mr. Roi Cooper Megrue, 1430 Broadway, who is my business representative as

⁵⁴ Unidentified clipping, (no date, circa 1891), Clyde Fitch Scrapbook, Box 1, Folder 1, Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

⁵⁵ The Metropolitan Magazine, (9 May 1902), 307.

⁵⁶ Montrose J. Moses, “Concerning Clyde Fitch and the Local Sense.” The Book News Monthly, (September 1908).

well as friend, and would no doubt be very glad to hand over information of all and any sort to you.”⁵⁷ By January 1908 Moses was beginning to break through the barricade of Fitch’s hectic celebrity schedule, “Dear Mr. Moses: If you will call Monday at 12, at 113 E 40th I will see you. Yours, Clyde Fitch.”⁵⁸ From November of 1908 until 1909 the two became friends, with Fitch inviting Moses often for dinner, tea, or the night. Writing in December of 1909 the playwright’s note illustrates how the relationship has changed, “My Dear Moses: Will you come and dine with me Sunday at 7:30, no party just our two selves, and don’t dress up! Hoping for the pleasure of seeing you.”⁵⁹ Many of these invitations were sent from Fitch’s country house in Katonah, New York; a telegram sent just before his last crossing to Europe reads, “Will you take two nine train Tuesday and spend night. CF”⁶⁰ Such strong intimacy between the two men, combined with Moses’s admiration of Fitch’s plays should have insured a seamless professional relationship. Yet, whenever Moses picked up his theatre critic’s pen he could not help joining in the loud chorus of critics who dismissed the author of these plays as simply “too feminine.”

In an exchange typical of tense communications with critics all too quick to condemn him, Fitch responded to his friend’s review in The Book News Monthly with a passionate six-page defense of his work. He spoke of the “Puritanism” of his critics and

⁵⁷ Clyde Fitch to Montrose J. Moses, 11 December 1906. Montrose J. Moses Papers, Special Collections Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. Roi Cooper Megrue worked for Elizabeth Marbury’s Theatrical Agency which represented—in addition to Fitch—such eminent playwrights of the day as Oscar Wilde. On Marbury and her lover Elsie de Wolfe (who was incidentally, a business protégée of Ogden Codman in interior decoration), see Alfred Allan Lewis, Ladies and Not-so-Gentle Women. New York: Viking, 2000; Jane S. Smith, Elsie de Wolfe: A Life in the High Style (New York: Atheneum, 1982); Elizabeth Marbury, My Crystal Ball (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1923). An archive of Marbury’s business papers is located at the New York Public Library, Special Collections, New York, New York.

⁵⁸ Clyde Fitch to Montrose J. Moses, 6 January 1908, Montrose J. Moses Papers, Special Collections Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University.

⁵⁹ Clyde Fitch to Montrose J. Moses, 3 December 1908. Montrose J. Moses Papers, Special Collections Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University.

⁶⁰ Clyde Fitch to Montrose J. Moses (telegram), 31 May 1909, Montrose J. Moses Papers, Special Collections Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University.

their inability to distinguish between the Fitch public persona and the Fitch plays.

Preparing to sail for Europe on what would turn out to be his last journey, he finished the letter, “[soon] I go to Europe—where I am not known or talked of... and where my work must speak for itself.”⁶¹ Although Moses the man showed loyalty to his departed friend following his untimely death by editing volumes of his plays and letters, Moses the critic could only conclude in his 1917 book The American Dramatist that in contrast to contemporaries such as Bronson Howard, “the Dean of American Drama,” Clyde Fitch the playwright had, “never made good.”⁶²

While reserving his greatest acclaim for a Fitch who wrote plays revealing the intimate lives of New York’s elite, Moses could only conclude overall, the work fell short of the mark. Fitch’s masculine characters for instance he condescendingly noted, “reveal a delicacy and deftness which, although lacking in virility, constitute nonetheless, miniatures of a notable order.”⁶³ Rather, “the interests of Mr. Fitch usually centered on the feminine side of his play.” Indeed, surpassing even some of Fitch’s harshest critics, Moses’s entire reading of his friend’s career was based on a gendered analysis of the plays. Although forty-four years old at his death, Fitch had remained a boy, Moses explained—a Peter Pan figure at heart, whose inability to mature and take on the proper masculinity constituted the central reason greatness had always eluded him. Tragically, just as Fitch was finally beginning to mature, death cut him down preventing the emergence of a great playwright,

Clyde Fitch has been dead over a year (1911). Had he lived much beyond forty five, we should have seen a certain transformation in his technique, and a more

⁶¹ Clyde Fitch to Montrose J. Moses, no date, circa 1908, Montrose J. Moses Papers, Special Collections Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University.

⁶² Montrose J. Moses, The American Dramatist (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1917), 175.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 175.

pronounced purpose in his plots; for he was becoming deeply conscious of the fundamental truths of life, and he was eager to put strength into his dialogue in order to offset the delicacy and feminine flashes which the public always considered purely Fitchian. 'The City' was his first, as it proved to be his last, effort in that direction.⁶⁴

Thus, although still taking "his success as naively as a boy," Fitch had been on the verge of at last growing up. As evidence of these changes, Moses explained how the playwright had tired of fashionable society, and appeared to be spending more and more time in the contemplative countryside. Yet, this transformation had been thwarted, the great playwright had never come, and Fitch the writer of popular plays for women was sorely missed, "now that he is dead, we know that something rare is taken from the theatre—something with a distinct literary value—light, no doubt; airy, and sometimes frothy, but nonetheless life with which we are all familiar."⁶⁵

Thus rendered irrelevantly female by friend and foe alike, Fitch the dandy could be condescended to without concern. As a result, even highly favorable reviews without exception called attention to his status as something less than a man. The theatre critic for the Chicago Times, for example, recounted Mr. Fitch's "pretty little speech before the curtain last night."⁶⁶ Another article complimented him on his, "amiable little talent."⁶⁷ Similarly, in an undated clipping in Fitch's scrapbook, the headline reads, "CLYDE FITCH'S DAINITY WORK." Reviewing the premiere of the play that following "Beau Brummell," the critic describes the work "April Weather" which played at the Boston Museum theatre, "it is a pretty domestic picture, so faithfully painted that one hesitates to

⁶⁴ Ibid., 182.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 184.

⁶⁶ The Chicago Times, (no date, circa 1900), Clyde Fitch scrapbook, Box 1, Folder 17, Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

⁶⁷ Boston Evening Transcript, (8 September 1909).

believe it the work of a young bachelor.”⁶⁸ Another newspaper, far more antagonistic, scorned, “The fluffy, feathery, and neatly monogrammed young ‘society’ writer, Mr. Clyde Fitch, to whom the sexes represent one vast cotillon.”⁶⁹

Regarding Fitch’s work, American theatre critics were in near unanimous agreement: his male characters were impossible, mere figures of clay—indeed, perhaps too much like the man himself—while his portrayals of women were disturbingly accurate, some thought even brilliant. Overall, however, most agreed his talents were limited: too emotional, high-strung, etc. One critic warned, “Mr. Fitch’s men and women [are] aristocratic imbeciles and degenerates... his characters are sexless; there is no tonic in their utterances, no real passion.”⁷⁰ The piece ends with the dark conclusion, “Mr. Fitch pours out nearly half a dozen plays in a season. It can’t last. This season has proved it.” Such forebodings notwithstanding, Fitch continued to enjoy spectacular and unparalleled success from “Beau Brummell” in 1890 right up until his death almost twenty years later. Critic Johnson Brisce, representing the vast majority of his colleagues, noted, “it often seemed almost uncanny that a member of the opposite sex could draw sad, and remarkable, scalpel-like, often piteously unkind pictures of the fair sex... that were always faultlessly true.”⁷¹ Again reflecting the majority opinion of the critics he added parenthetically, “his men characters, especially of the ‘hero’ variety, were generally sorry affairs.” Another New York paper, in an 1898 account, drew much the same conclusions, “He should write plays of women of all sorts, for Clyde knows

⁶⁸ Unidentified clipping, (no date, circa 1891), Clyde Fitch Scrapbook, Box 1, Folder 17, Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

⁶⁹ Unidentified clipping, (no date), Clyde Fitch Scrapbook, Box 2, Folder 5, Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

⁷⁰ Unidentified clipping, (no date), Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Harvard Theatre Collection.

⁷¹ Johnson Brisce, “Clyde Fitch,” (clipping, no date), Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Harvard Theatre Collection.

about women, but his men if fashioned out of his own clay, are impossible...the men in 'The Moth and the Flame' are really a trifle more trying than the usual Fitch man and that is beyond hope."⁷² Thus from the beginning to the end of his playwrighting career, Fitch endured unrelenting critical denunciation of his plays, his abilities, and even of his manhood.

This contradiction running through almost all of the critical receptions to his work is important: it was said Fitch could not write good plays, yet his characterizations of women were said to be brilliant—not to mention his enormous popularity with the theatre-going public. Even more interesting, for our purposes of understanding the complex interplay of gender and sexuality in this era, is the gendered reading of the man's plays, and of the man himself. As Kerry Powell and others have illustrated, in the theatre, as in so many arenas of public life at this time, sufficient manliness was necessary to convey the proper note of virility on stage. All critics were in agreement: the slight, effeminate, and unmarried Clyde Fitch simply did not measure up. Obviously, such attacks on effeminate men were not new to the late Victorian period, but the number of changes taking place in society at the time added a new intensity to the charge. For Fitch operating in the years following the much-publicized Oscar Wilde trials, an atmosphere emerged where attention on male effeminacy was increasing, ever more scrutinized, along with the concomitant hostility.

A brief article appearing in 1896 introduces Clyde Fitch as the author of the new play, "Gossip," soon to open. After outlining basic information on the production, the piece continues, "Mr. Fitch is a very aesthetic young man, and at one time he was called the Oscar Wilde of America. Owing to late developments, however, not even the most

⁷² New York Daily News, (23 August 1898), clipping, Clyde Fitch File, Harvard Theatre Collection.

malignant of Mr. Fitch's enemies would now libel him to that extent."⁷³ Two years later the Chicago Tribune also linked the two men while labeling him a "dilettante," and thus calling immediate attention to his suspect gender behavior, "Mr. Clyde Fitch, playwright and dilettante, has been in Chicago since Saturday, planning, consulting, smoking cigarettes and rehearsing his new play."⁷⁴ Reviewing his work, the article continues, "the dialogue is very much in the style of Oscar Wilde, epigrammatic and on the surface witty." Such linkage at a time when Wilde's name had been virtually expunged from polite society on both sides of the Atlantic was, to say the least, startling—and speaks much to the dangers of public exposure Fitch himself faced on a daily basis. Thus behind the unpleasantness of this criticism lay a more sinister danger: public exposure, humiliation, and ruin. Another article warned of the dangers such a figure represented, "Beau Brummells are entertaining stage figures, but they are not charming when they get their make-up off and go into Broadway."⁷⁵ As Fitch and those in his situation knew, seemingly unimportant gendered criticisms could easily lead to the possibility of a lightening-fast downward spiral: blackmail, followed by public humiliation, a total loss of income—and even the very real possibility of imprisonment. The true severity of these threats is apparent in Wilde's descent through such a spiral—from the time of his release from prison he essentially became invisible—not spoken to, or of, and certainly not published. Fitch with his close European connections would have followed this unfolding tragedy carefully.

⁷³ Unidentified clipping, (no date), Clyde Fitch File, V. 6789, Robinson-Locke Collection, New York Public Library, Theatre Division.

⁷⁴ Unidentified clipping, (no date, circa 1898), Clyde Fitch Scrapbook, Box 2, Folder 9, Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

⁷⁵ Unidentified clipping, (no date), Clyde Fitch Scrapbook, Box 1, Folder 15, Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

Fitch's Hard Work & Success in the Commercial Theatre

From the moment he arrived in New York, Fitch's sights were set on establishing himself as a prominent literary figure. Not content to write in obscurity and to allow success to eventually reach him through his literary work alone, however, he at once embarked on a tireless campaign of self-promotion that no doubt contributed to his phenomenal success. He quickly learned how to manage the new commercial world of the theatre along with the nascent celebrity culture as well. Surviving correspondence from Fitch to Major Pond, one of the great lecture promoters of the day, attest to his persistence in finding some bookings for his readings of Browning's poetry. He was not above doing anything to get himself in front of the public. While the success of "Beau Brummell" was just taking off in the early 1890's Fitch bombarded Mr. R. M. Field of the Boston Museum with requests—ultimately successful—to read his new play. "Could you use a one-act comedy by the author of 'Beau Brummell' this season? And if so may I have the pleasure of reading it to you? I expect to be in Boston on Wednesday to rehearse my new play."⁷⁶ Later, he sent another frank note, "if... there is the slightest [chance] of your taking the piece, if you liked it, if it should be so lucky as to please you, I should like to run the risk, and read it to you as soon as possible. And let me assure you I am Stone, you will only have to say you don't like the piece. I have no children starving, and I have lived just long enough to know that disappointments can be borne."⁷⁷ This persistence he retained until the end of his life; Fitch was ever alert to the possibility of a deal, some promotion, or getting his name into the papers. In a 1903 newspaper

⁷⁶ Clyde Fitch to R. M. Field, no date, Clyde Fitch Archive, Manuscripts Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁷⁷ Clyde Fitch to R. M. Field, no date, Clyde Fitch Archive, University of Virginia.

interview Fitch discussed frankly his careful attention to the financial aspects of his profession, "The playwright who professes to work for art alone is, nine times out of ten, an unsuccessful one. I work for both art and dollars in the belief that the successful play brings the realization of both... I think the artist is not sincere who pretends to ignore financial reward."⁷⁸

In all of his business dealings Fitch kept his eye on the ball, and proved a tough negotiator. By the turn of the century his income was reportedly somewhere between \$150,000 to \$250,000 per year; this amount in a pre-income tax era represented a considerable fortune. Whenever possible he took complete control of a play's production—interviewed and hired actors, designed sets, ordered costumes, and conducted marathon rehearsals. With typical attention to the details of his career, Fitch sent a sharply worded note from his summer location in Paris to Miss Alice Kauser who was arranging for the production of one of his plays, "will you please arrange in placing the plays in stock that it is agreed they are to be billed as my plays—my name must always appear. They can say what they like about the stars who produced them, as well, but my name must always appear on posters and in advertising as author."⁷⁹

Actor Arthur Byron, who starred in several of Fitch's plays, most notably the Revolutionary war historic piece, "Major Andre," maintained a close intimate friendship with the playwright—quite similar to his relationship with Montrose Moses.⁸⁰ Surviving letters to the dashing Byron reveal Fitch's exacting attention to the myriad details of stage production: he instructs the actor on when his costumes will be back from the tailor's,

⁷⁸ Citation in, Janet Ann Carnevale Kanak, Clyde Fitch and His Reception by the American Periodical Press, 203.

⁷⁹ Clyde Fitch to Alice Kauser, 16 July 1907, Alice Kauser Collection, Harvard Theatre Collection.

⁸⁰ "Major Andre" opened at the Savoy Theatre in New York on 11 November 1903. Byron also starred in "The Stubbornness of Geraldine," (1902), and "Her Sister" with Ethel Barrymore (1907).

how to read his lines correctly, discusses actors he is interviewing for other parts, and advises on how to conduct headline-catching newspaper interviews. Fitch even became involved with the advertising for Byron's production, stressing in 1903, "Please get me as soon as possible the pictures of you without mustache. I want the artist to have them for the Andre poster."⁸¹ Ultimately, this minute attention to detail paid off as Fitch's audience loyally attended most of his plays not only in New York, but across the country in repertory companies as well.

Also of interest in the Fitch/Byron correspondence is how the playwright channels quite openly his homoerotic energy into both the relationship and simultaneously their mutual work. Writing in November of 1902, the playwright employs the language of romantic friendship—which he often used with the men he worked with, and cared for, "Dear Arthur, Thank you for your note of this morning which was like the strong grasp of a good friend's hand...I am proud of you in your triumph in today's papers."⁸² Similarly, "Thank you for your kind telegram the other night. The proof of your friendly thoughtfulness goes straight to my heart."⁸³ Much like the Moses friendship, once the two had become friends, Fitch invited the actor to his house often. A letter sent in the spring of 1903 is typical in combining elements of romantic friendship and the workings of a bustling theatre, "come and see me at 4:00 if you can. I'm saving an hour for you then. As you can imagine, I am tremendously rushed... I gave the Telegraph a scratch interview and said the most enthusiastic things I could think of, of you.—because I feel them. I give the Herald an exclusive last interview Monday and shall make a shining

⁸¹ Clyde Fitch to Arthur Byron, no date, circa 1903. Arthur Byron Papers, Special Collections Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University.

⁸² Clyde Fitch to Arthur Byron, 4 November 1902, Arthur Byron Papers, Duke University.

⁸³ Clyde Fitch to Arthur Byron, no date, circa 1903, Arthur Byron Papers, Duke University.

point of you and 'Andre' of course.”⁸⁴ Fitch stressed repeatedly, that these intense friendships with men such as Byron, so important to his emotional life, were above and beyond business connections. For instance, upon learning that Byron was to star in a play other than his, Fitch explained that ultimately it was the actor's friendship he treasured most of all, “of course I can't blame you for doing what may have been so much more to you're advantage; and I can sincerely say, in spite of my desire to have you in my play, that I honestly hope you a big success...in great haste, but loyally always, Clyde.”⁸⁵

In an age when a burgeoning commercial theatre grew by leaps and bounds—and became extremely lucrative—Fitch managed to hitch his wagon to the Shubert Brothers production company. The working relationship that resulted benefited many—producer, writer, and celebrity actors. At the turn of the century almost all major plays were either produced by the national Syndicate (an example of the period's trend toward monopoly) or the Shuberts; thus, their ear was necessary to see one's plays reach the stage. Judging from the letters remaining today in the Shubert archives, Fitch managed not only to make himself heard, but further to make himself indispensable as a writer whom the Shuberts could work with. A typical note enclosed with a bulky manuscript sent special delivery to the playwright at 113 East 40th Street from Sam Shubert read, “Mr. Fitch, I am enclosing you here a play that I should very much like to have you read. Will you let me know if you think it can be made a great play, if you were able to take it in hand and put

⁸⁴ Clyde Fitch to Arthur Byron, 5 April 1903, Arthur Byron Papers, Duke University.

⁸⁵ Clyde Fitch to Arthur Byron, 15 August 1904, Arthur Byron Papers, Special Collections Department, William R. Perkins Library, Duke University.

finishing touches on.”⁸⁶ Thus Fitch managed to crank out plays made to order—for both production companies and for their celebrity stars as well. Over all it was quite a tidy—and profitable—operation.

Fitch’s Voice

Beyond his unmistakable business sense, Fitch was equally clever in presenting himself as a celebrity figure to the New York press. Indeed, far from a passive participant in the male critics’ construction of him as a third gender dabbler, Fitch actively participated in this discourse: arranging interviews, and publicity of various forms, while simultaneously presenting both his carefully crafted dandy persona and grand houses for public display. After a large degree of success in introducing the dandy into late nineteenth century American culture—after 1895, an age when male effeminacy was fast becoming increasingly suspect—Fitch adapted and moved on to another construction also personally important to him: the upper class female heroine. These characters, if melodramatic, and to twenty-first century sensibilities clearly an early form of gay camp, still reflected their era exactly and ultimately constituted the playwright’s greatest public triumph.⁸⁷ In these plays he achieved unparalleled financial and popular success; although as we have seen, the critics were not entirely comfortable with this male playwright’s curious insight into women’s character. Yet, ultimately these Fitchian women on stage were less directly threatening than the far more menacing figure of the

⁸⁶ Sam Shubert to Clyde Fitch, 7 January 1909, Shubert Archives, West 40th street, New York. Fitch also had a close working relationship with producer Charles Frohman, himself involved with a long term same-sex relationship. This friendship is touched on briefly in Kim Marra, “Clyde Fitch’s Too Wilde Love,” in Kim Marra & Robert A. Schanke, Editors, Staging Desire: Queer Readings of American Theatre History (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 39.

⁸⁷ On Clyde Fitch’s portrayal of women, see Kim Marra, “Clyde Fitch: Transvestite Metteur-en-Scene of the Feminine.” New England Theatre Journal (1992, 3, no. 1), 15-37.

effeminate dandy—whose persona now became inextricably linked with homosexuality. In addition, through his carefully publicity on himself, he skirted once clearly delineated gender boundaries—all at a time when the Wilde scandals were fresh in the mind of every European-oriented upper class American.

To both fan and foe Clyde Fitch was known by 1900 as the playwright who wrote plays highlighting leading ladies—often turning them overnight into stars. The list of great actresses who attained fame thanks to Fitch's plays is formidable: Ethel Barrymore, Clara Bloodgood, Maxine Elliott, Julia Marlowe, and Elsie de Wolfe, to name only a few. Among theatre people he became known as the absolute master of rehearsals—for he always had a very clear idea of how each part was to be performed on stage. Again, his particular strength lay in the female characters he had created. A New York Times article of 1905 discussed the playwright's uncanny knowledge of women. An actress confided, "Clyde Fitch at rehearsal does one thing that no stage manager I have known can do, he becomes womanly."⁸⁸ Fitch himself assented that here lay the strength of his female roles, "'No man can do this except at the expense of his dignity. I suppose I get up there and make an ass of myself,' he said, waving his hand toward the stage, 'but I find I can get my effects only by directing myself.'" An article from the New York Sun elaborated, "He was perfectly confident that he could teach actors to do all the acting necessary provided they could look the part as he conceived it and repeat the lines as he told them."⁸⁹ Indeed, another article noted, Fitch, "The Man Behind the Stars," actually "made" actresses—not only through his writing, "but he actually infuses into her

⁸⁸ New York Times, (1 October 1905, Part III, 6).

⁸⁹ New York Sun, (5 September 1909).

something of his own instinct.”⁹⁰ William Phelps similarly recalled this curious femininity in his friend,

If my memory serves me right, Miss Elsie de Wolfe once expressed her amazement that Clyde Fitch should know more about women than they know about themselves. She said that at a rehearsal her cue was to walk upon the stage in high emotion; she did so; but her inner complacency was jarred by the playwright’s voice coming out of the dark auditorium, ‘that isn’t the way to walk in order to express your feelings in the scene; I’ll show you.’ He did; he walked on, and she saw immediately that he was right and she was wrong. She could not understand his insight; but I could, for I went to school with him. During the long recesses when we were playing football he was spending those minutes with the girls, for he instinctively knew that they had more to teach him than we. That is where he laid the foundation of his success as a dramatist, even as Richardson learned how to write novels by composing letters for the village maids.⁹¹

If the actresses were grateful themselves that the playwright’s attention brought them great fame and fortune, the theatre critics on the newspaper circuit were less so. In keeping with their general distrust and uneasiness over Fitch’s skirting of the gender divide, his ability to write seemingly authentic parts for women, and then further to “become womanly” himself left the critics alarmed. One critic, in describing Fitch’s methods, confided to his readers, “he would strut about like a Wall Street corporation president, chatter like a toothless old woman, parade around with the icy serenity of a Gibson beauty or coquette with the abandon of a show girl in the early morning at Rector’s”⁹² Continuing his revelation, the writer noted how awkward and difficult this spectacle was—especially for the male actors, “I have watched old stagers in the business who came for the first time to a Fitch rehearsal nearly double up when the author went bounding across the stage with the gait and swing of a sixteen year old girl... it was often difficult for us to keep from roaring with laughter until the actors saw how serious Mr.

⁹⁰ E. Elderkin Fyles, “The Man Behind the Stars,” American Illustrated Magazine, (November, 1903), 72.

⁹¹ William Lyon Phelps, Autobiography with Letters, 125.

⁹² New York Sun, (5 September 1909).

Fitch was and that he was stretching his powers of mimicry to the furthest in order to help them and the play.” Attempting to disguise discomfort as humor is a common reaction in cases like this when all sense of the gender order seems under siege.

In fact Fitch did have an insight into women’s behaviors, thoughts, and dreams. From the time he entered Amherst College as a freshman until his graduation four years later in 1886, he gained a considerable amount of local fame for his drag performances in college productions. As explored in earlier chapters, Fitch played female parts in all four years of his time at Amherst—itself something unusual. Although a long tradition of men dressed as woman on stage had preceded him, Fitch took to this particular gender behavior like a fish to water. The young aesthete took to these roles so naturally all were both amazed and to a large degree uncomfortable with the ease in which he shifted between gender roles thought so impermeable.

Social class played a central role in Fitch’s career choice—as an upper class man, he could not take to the stage in women’s clothing as some working class men did. Indeed, even though completely unable to address the gender issue, a college friend noted that with the general attitude toward the theatre, “the profession of acting [was] quite out of the question for a young man of Fitch’s social position.”⁹³ As George Chauncey’s work on New York has established, working class men could locate space to pursue work incorporating their propensity for drag performances. The career of Julian Eltinge serves as a good example. Eltinge, of working class background, became a hugely successful drag performer on the turn-of-the-century vaudeville stage—in time acquiring great

⁹³ Clinton L. Powell, “Clyde Fitch’s Apprenticeship.” *Amherst Graduates’ Quarterly*. (May, 1928), 164.

riches and fame.⁹⁴ For the commercial theatre seeking respectable middle class audiences willing to pay up to \$2.00 per ticket, however, presentations such as Eltinge's were not possible. With such social constraints, Fitch's going on stage represented an impossibility—especially when the gender question is considered. Consequently, he did the next best thing by creating leading female performances on stage in his meticulous crafted image.

Typical of these women Fitch put on stage—all manifestations of his own drag personas—who put him on the theatrical map is Jinny Tillman, in "The Girl With the Green Eyes," first produced in December of 1902, "she is an adorable little human being, pretty, high-strung, temperamental, full of certain feminine fascination that defies analysis, which is partly due to the few faults she possess."⁹⁵ Another leading female character, which in addition to filling Fitch's coffers, helped make actress Ethel Barrymore a national star, is Aurelia in "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marine." The play centers on the life of a famous actress who has everything she could ever want—except the love of a man. In a passage again clearly reminiscent of Fitch's "Peggy" persona, Aurelia explains her plight,

The only triumph I want is denied me, the triumph of love! Oh, papa, you can't understand how I feel—you're only a man!! You say the people tonight stood up and shouted themselves hoarse! Did they? I heard nothing but the beating of my poor heart. You say I have been deluged with gifts of flowers, but the only gift I want is missing—one man's honest love! With that, tonight would have been a triumph! I would have given him my success as my first gift; but without his love, it all means nothing!⁹⁶

⁹⁴ On Julian Eltinge see, Laurence Senelick, *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag, and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 307-312; Lesbian and Gay History Project, *Improper Bostonians: Lesbian & Gay History from the Puritans to Playland* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1988), 112.

⁹⁵ Montrose J. Moses & Virginia Gerson, Editors, *Plays By Clyde Fitch* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1920), Volume II, 250.

⁹⁶ Montrose J. Moses & Virginia Gerson, Editors, *Plays By Clyde Fitch*, "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines." Volume II, pg. 418.

As seems clear to today's careful reader, these female characters' exaggerated femininity does somehow miss the mark of true womanhood, often bordering on the theatrical nature of a male drag performance. Presenting what is today seen as gay camp in disguise much like Noel Coward later did, many of these leading women give off clues to same sex desire: as when Aurelia gushes, "I adore soldiers!!"⁹⁷ Or, similarly when another leading lady forwardly admires a soldier in uniform, "Were you one of those beautiful creatures in uniform, with lovely furred jackets hung over one shoulder?"⁹⁸ As was well known in the homosexual circles Fitch frequented in London—and most likely in New York as well—young attractive soldiers were often available as sexual partners in exchange for a little "gift."⁹⁹ To the initiated theatre audience, these uniquely "Fitchian" female leads convey a modern homosexual sensibility as much as the more obvious male aesthetic stage characters.

However unbelievable critics found the men in Fitch's plays, his work did as we have seen present a number of strong male characters—many in plays that came long before "The City." These men were however, problematic for the critics as they continued in the Beau Brummell dandyish, and effeminate masculine model. As Fitch himself so clearly did, these male leads made most of the male theatre critics extremely uncomfortable. All of the plays, for instance highlight an upper class—and usually physically attractive—young man. Many are clearly echoes of Fitch himself. Steven Carley in "Her Own Way" (1903) is typical, "He is a slender, smooth-shaven, young-old looking man, his voice and body vibrating with every nerve; a personality that so often

⁹⁷ Ibid., "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines," Volume II, 420.

⁹⁸ Ibid., "The Stubborness of Geraldine" Volume III, 56

⁹⁹ Jeffrey Weeks, Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present (London: Quartet Books, 1977), 39. J. R. Ackerley, My Father and Myself (New York: Coward McCann, 1968).

appeals to the tenderness of women, while it irritates men.”¹⁰⁰ This description could easily serve as one for the playwright—even down to the reactions of both women and men. During the course of the play, as an upper class New York family struggles with financial collapse—and the prospect of leaving Fifth Avenue for unknown parts of the déclassé upper West side—Steven’s wife surmises what most think of her husband’s lack of virility, “The only trouble with Steve is he’s weak. He’d have been all right if he’d been a girl.”¹⁰¹ Although now decidedly marginalized from the center of the narrative, such effeminate characters do still echo Fitch’s most autobiographical figure Cyril Farnsworth from the early novel. Older and wiser in his dealings with harsh critics, Fitch knew now that he could not push these effeminate leading men as openly as he had once hoped.

Thus, many leading men cast in the Fitch, or dandy mold, did indeed still occasionally appear in the playwright’s work. Yet at a time when male effeminacy grew increasingly suspect, these figures created great unease, and the playwright necessarily turned more and more to his leading woman vehicles—always more popular with his audience. Indeed, his last play highlighting the dandy, “The Last of the Dandies,” was never produced in the United States—it ran instead in London’s Her Majesty’s Theatre in the fall of 1901. The fate of Lord Tilbury, an aristocratic character in one of the later plays, underlines the dangers Fitch understood the effeminate man faced in his society. As one of the women in the play explains to her friend, “I can marry him if I want to... Did you ever see such perfectly beautiful pants as he wears? Oh, I think they’re just too swell for anything! But of course, you know, we can’t let him wear them in Butte City—

¹⁰⁰ *Plays by Clyde Fitch*, Volume III, 473.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 469.

the boys would yell after him in the streets.”¹⁰² In this difficult process of expanding the boundaries of American manhood at the turn of the last century, Fitch’s softer brand of alternative masculinity—both on and off stage—made many, especially such critics as William Winter, extremely anxious. Accordingly then, they lashed out at him with a sustained and bitter ferocity.

Self Defense

Although inevitably presenting a cheery face and a seemingly impenetrable optimism, the constant onslaught against his work and personal life caused Fitch great pain. In a letter to his close friend De Witt Miller in the days just after the success and controversy over “Beau Brummell,” he confided, “When I landed here last week I found a letter with some clippings in it, which please me. But you mustn’t please send any more bad notices. For I have had so many lately and I found they depressed me and interfered with my work.”¹⁰³ Whenever criticism appeared in print that he felt unfair he responded with a vigorous defense. Typical of these response letters is the one he mailed to the New York Tribune—home of his fiercest critic William Winter, “I have for many years now been accused of all sorts of literary fraud and incompetence in the dramatic columns of the Tribune.”¹⁰⁴

Four years later responding to Harper’s Weekly’s harsh criticism of his play, “Sapho” as immoral, Fitch’s note of bitterness is evident, “The lurid career of [“Sapho”]

¹⁰² Plays of Clyde Fitch, “The Stubbornness of Geraldine,” (1902) Volume III, 173.

¹⁰³ Clyde Fitch to De Witt Miller, 30 November 1891, Clyde Fitch Letters, Special Collections, New York Public Library, New York, New York.

¹⁰⁴ Clyde Fitch to the New York Tribune, (clipping, no date, circa 1898), Clyde Fitch Scrapbook, Box 2, Folder 3, Clyde Fitch Collection, Amherst College Special Collections.

has left me feeling very much like the stick of a rocket!”¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the cries of the drama critics were so loud over the immorality of this particular play that eventually it was closed down by the city and its leading star, Olga Nethersole charged with public indecency. Appearing at Wallack’s Theatre in February of 1900, the story—adapted from the French novel by Alphonse Daudet—dealt with the life of Fanny LeGrand, mistress of many men, and an unmarried mother. In the popular novel the hero—a young inexperienced man from the provinces—serves as the victim of his designing mistress—LeGrand. In keeping with his usual methods of identifying with the heroine however, Fitch had rendered her a sympathetic character and critics were outraged at his failure to denounce and punish such a sinner.¹⁰⁶ Fitch came to believe the publicity-hungry Nethersole had helped precipitate the police action by overplaying a controversial scene where she unmistakably spends the night with her young man—a reality the audience learned of by his carrying her up to his bedroom—where she awakened glowing the next morning. Clearly the playwright was testing the boundaries with this work—such blunt realities were virtually unknown on the nineteenth century New York stage. Although himself not personally charged in the case, Fitch vowed that he would necessarily be more careful in picking subjects and observing boundaries in the future, “I think I have finally learned my lesson... I have burnt my fingers in the fire, and I leave them to those who can handle them better than I.”

¹⁰⁵ Unidentified clipping, (3 January 1903), Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Harvard Theatre Collection.

¹⁰⁶ On the history of Fitch’s production of “Sapho” please see, Randy B. Kapelke, Artistic Victories: How the Legitimate Theatre Overcame New York City’s Effort to Impose Censorship on Sapho in 1900, Mrs. Warren’s Profession in 1905, and other Productions (Unpublished Dissertation, Tufts University, 1998); Joy Harriman Reilly, “A Forgotten ‘Fallen Woman:’ Olga Nethersole’s ‘Sapho.’” In, Judith L. Fisher & Stephen Watt, Editors, When They Weren’t Doing Shakespeare: Essays on Nineteenth Century British and American Theatre (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 106-120.

By 1904 the pressure had not let up and Fitch found himself still answering the same charges. In a private letter to theatre critic John Corbin written in response to yet another negative review of his work that had just appeared in Scribner's he lashed out, "on the whole, I have done my work against antagonism, public and private, misrepresentation of my character and life, public and private, and ridicule and belittling of my work, and still I have made a record of 22 successful plays before I was 38."¹⁰⁷ Although generally quite circumspect about his personal life, Fitch in a letter to the privately sympathetic Montrose Moses explains he knew precisely why his work and abilities were forever questioned. Pointing out how popular and well respected his plays were in Europe, he returns to his American critics, "fifteen years ago when I was said to be superficial, writing too fast, etc., etc., an attitude at first struck by the press, because they didn't like the cut of my coat, nor my sensitive shyness which looked like a lack of good fellowship, or conceit!! Why is it that where my personality is either unknown or agreeable, my work is taken more seriously, and depths found in it, not dreamed of at home? I don't know."¹⁰⁸

The Two Discourses Meet

As we have seen, part of Fitch's success lay in his constant look out for an opportunity to sell himself—or his work. In time he became an expert manipulator of the press, itself so necessary for luring ever-larger audiences to the newly expanded and commercialized theatre world. Through these very studied presentations—interviews,

¹⁰⁷ Clyde Fitch to John Corbin, 30 October 1904, Montrose J. Moses & Virginia Gerson, Editors, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 279.

¹⁰⁸ Clyde Fitch to Montrose J. Moses, 3 October 1909, Montrose J. Moses & Virginia Gerson, Editors, Clyde Fitch and His Letters, 363.

tours of his various houses, and short pieces written for newspaper or magazine publication—he also skirted the gender divide, seeming to blur distinctions between male and female. Thus, a struggle of sorts is clearly underway in the media: the male critics on one side alert to the slightest deviation from their sense of proper manhood, and Fitch on the other attempting to control his public image. A close examination of three examples of these media representations on Fitch will provide a way to draw clear distinctions between these two competing discourses. Such examples reveal newspaper reporters and critics so determined to belittle the playwright that it is nothing short of remarkable how he managed to convey his positive message at all.

The headline in the New York Dramatic Mirror reads, “A SUPPER TO FITCH.” The supper, arranged by the press guild of New York, is recounted as a tribute to the playwright who, according to one of the speakers, “keeps about a hundred of us throughout the country writing...[on his plays] he ought to be kept alive.”¹⁰⁹ Most of the article is taken up with describing Fitch’s many plays running throughout the country, his prodigious output, and his early life. Near the end of the evening, according to the piece, Fitch himself said a few words to the assembly; they are quoted briefly, “this is the sweetest and happiest honor I have received... there is no class so lovable as the press representatives.” After these initial sunny comments, he turned to the more difficult realities of his public career, alluding to his public reputation troubles, and obliquely at least, to his unmentionable and highly stigmatized gender deviance, “I am a queer man. I’m straight and sincere, and the reason I don’t go to public dinners is I do not want to be with men who will praise me to my face and damn me behind my back.” The entire night

¹⁰⁹ New York Dramatic Mirror, (no date, circa 1907), Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Harvard Theatre Collection.

was filled with irony, as this process is exactly what was happening as Fitch sat at the dinner listening to praise from his normally merciless nemesis—the press.

His use of “queer” is also of interest, for as his contemporary Ogden Codman’s letters illustrate, some upper class homosexual men were employing the term already to refer to men with same-sex desires. It is for this reason Fitch seems to say, that he has consistently received such harsh treatment from the media. After these introductory remarks, he could not resist launching into his now familiar defense,

I am called a dude and a flippant. I am not a dude, a flippant! And I’ll say what I have to say here and never take it back. During my eighteen years of work I admit I’ve tried to make money, but most of all I’ve tried always, always, to make a good play...to die fighting is the game I like. The press agent is the best of all critics, and I always take his word first. He is in touch with the public and the press, and he doesn’t think he can write your play for you better than you can. I thank you gentleman. If I am ever asked who I want to write my epitaph I shall answer, ‘a press agent.’

Although his stated love of the press is somewhat dubious, more importantly Fitch defends himself on two fronts here—not only by justifying his work as worthwhile and himself as more than the traditional hack, but also in defending his manly credentials. He is not an effete “dude” the speech insists, someone to be summarily dismissed, but a serious contender in the male centered marketplace.

The Baltimore Sun ran a full-page story on 24 January 1908 under the headline, “PLAYWRIGHT WHO DRAWS IMMENSE ROYALTIES IS A LONE, LORN, HARD-WORKING BACHELOR.”¹¹⁰

Clyde Fitch, author and adapter of more plays... than any other living American; a bachelor with royalties amounting to a sum that makes the salary of the President of the United States look like a clerk’s wages... came to Baltimore last night for the opening at Ford’s of ‘Toddles.’ [When asked], ‘Haven’t you been ensnared yet?’ ‘Good heavens, no!’ exclaimed Mr. Fitch, removing his gloves and showing some nervousness. ‘To tell you the truth, I don’t believe any version

¹¹⁰ Baltimore Sun, (24 January 1908).

of femininity is after me. If any should come along I believe I might find time to give them an ear...' Then Mr. Fitch smiled as if he didn't mean it.

In the interview the give and take between interviewer and his subject seems clear. Both writer and subject are attempting to get their message through: Fitch mouthing conventional platitudes regarding marriage, while his manner hints his heart is not really in it. Simultaneously, the reporter pointedly draws his reader's attention to Fitch's greatest vulnerabilities—his defiantly single status and obviously feminine gender behavior. Through these contradictory efforts at manipulation, the tension in the text is palpable. Finally, when read with razor-sharp precision, this piece provides a surprisingly honest appraisal of the situation—especially at a time when articles were running hawking rumors of the famous playwright's eminent engagement with actress Elsie de Wolfe. Reporters' indisputable knowledge of both Fitch's romantic male friendships to the complete exclusion of any female attractions, and de Wolfe's "Boston Marriage" of many years with Elizabeth Marbury highlights the era's penchant for rigidly separating private realities from public print. To the readers in the know, the Baltimore Sun piece provided a revealing glimpse of Fitch's most closely guarded secret—his sexual temperament.

A similar dynamic is apparent in another interview which ran a year later in the Boston Traveler under the headline, "AMERICAN HUSBANDS ARE SELFISH ACCORDING TO CLYDE FITCH. WHEN A HUSBAND DECLARES HIMSELF A SLAVE TO BUSINESS HE LIES." Above the published interview are a series of drawings, indeed caricatures of Fitch—lounging in an upholstered chair, standing—all with a cigarette, and all exaggerating his effeminate gestures. Again, the piece is obviously a tongue-in-cheek contest between the eminent playwright and his newspaper

interviewer. Beginning with his entrance, the writer emphasizes Fitch's effeminacy, "he stripped himself of a mink-lined coat, adjusted a cigarette and flung himself into a piece of upholstered Touraine furniture. 'Now I'll give you twenty minutes, no more.'" In the interview ostensibly arranged to promote Fitch's latest play, "The Happy Marriage," the playwright describes the plight of the American women as their men devote too much attention to business and other all-male pleasures—such as the club. This neglect, he insists is utterly selfish. Having established himself as an authority on American marriage, Fitch continues,

I hope to send a message to the American husband that will be felt and understood. The woman has the best of any argument on the subject, for she is the victim of man's rank selfishness. She naturally cannot understand why a man who once had time enough to call every night should suddenly develop such a rush of business right after marriage. Of course, wives are sometimes unreasonable, or perhaps I should say, unfamiliar with the queer traits of man. A man's nature is so entirely at variance with a woman's that she should make some allowance. If she will do that, and the husband is reasonable, they will find no trouble when they come to the first hurdle in their domestic relations. If they both are obstinate, somebody's toe is going to hit the rail. A woman is naturally affectionate and demonstrative, and so is a man during his courting days. The man, however, will probably come down from the clouds first, but it doesn't mean that his love has grown cold. His nature that has been at high tension has simply returned to normal. Common sense on both sides of the marriage contract will keep the machinery running smoothly—all you need is common sense. Do you see what I mean? There was no mistaking Mr. Fitch's meaning.¹¹¹

His expertise on marriage and women now quite apparent, the interview ends with the final line, "'Of course you are married,' said I, aiming for the door. 'Of course not,' was the retort." Thus, after carefully recording the playwright's extraordinary knowledge of women, the writer is now "surprised" to discover that in fact Fitch is a bachelor. Most readers would have known that Fitch had made his mark on the theatre precisely through this peculiar knowledge of women—a strength he knew well to underline. For the

¹¹¹ The Boston Traveler, (13 February 1909), Clyde Fitch Clipping File, Harvard Theatre Collection.

newspaper reporter, here representative of the derogatory male critics, the oddity of Fitch's situation and his lack of proper manhood must necessarily be the interview's focus. Again, a give and take is evident: Fitch conveying the positive self image of a single effeminate man with a great deal of humor, while the reporter simultaneously seeks to point out to the reader a ridiculously comic, potentially even dangerous figure.

Often these published interviews of Fitch were framed by his elaborate houses—either the limestone townhouse he had built in 1900 at 113 East 40th Street (now destroyed), or the Georgian country house in Greenwich, Connecticut, (and later in Katonah, New York). The full two page spread in the Boston Sunday Herald is typical: great detail on the luxurious rooms and the innumerable European antiques within them, and many photographs as well—often with Fitch prominently presiding over his domestic space. Here he placed himself in his famed bachelor quarters, highlighting his all-male domesticity; indeed, his staff was generally all male—cook, valet, servants, and secretary/companion. The 1901 Boston Sunday Herald interview takes place in the East 40th Street house—which the reporter describes in great detail. The visitor noted, “two figures of cupid in front of his house, giving an air of defiant sentiment to a bachelor's home... I passed from the street into a Pompeiian hallway, wherein a small Roman fountain, musically splashing, was spraying. A large bunch of violets carelessly thrown there, it seemed, by some admirer.”¹¹² This piece—and so many others like it—again draws attention to Fitch's problematic single status, to the beautiful home without a female hostess; all the while speculating on what alternative romantic entanglements might be taking place behind closed doors. Despite the elaborate and detailed descriptions of each grand room he entered, the reporter failed to mention the beautiful

¹¹² Boston Sunday Herald, (3 March 1901).

statue of Adonis said to be at the front of the hallway. Normally, Fitch was in the habit of pointing it out to visitors.

Conclusion

Fitch's brief friendship with the novelist Edith Wharton might be the best way to summarize the obstacles he faced in daily life with his brand of alternative masculinity—especially as the nineties gave way to the twentieth century. In her 1933 memoir, Wharton recalled with great warmth playwright Clyde Fitch who had by then been dead for almost twenty years. As a writer, she had respected his work, recalling, "I thought him more gifted than was generally supposed... his sense of theatre was keen... [as was] his sense of the irony of life."¹¹³ Together the two had spent considerable time working her best-selling novel, The House of Mirth (1905), into a play for the New York stage. These days fostered a genuine friendship between them. But respect for his work and affection for him as a person could not prevent Wharton from ridiculing his appearance; rendering him a comic figure she remembered, "my husband and I both became very much attached to the plump showily dressed little man, with his olive complexion, and his beautiful oriental eyes full of wit and understanding." For Wharton, manhood would always lay in the mold of someone like her distant relation Theodore Roosevelt. An effeminate dandy such as Fitch was therefore not to be taken seriously—even by one who felt so acutely the discrimination she as a woman faced from the ruling patriarchy. To Wharton, the second Roosevelt in the White House (FDR), was not to be distrusted as much for his radical politics, as for his softer brand of masculinity—she longed for the reassurance that Teddy had given.

¹¹³ Edith Wharton, A Backward Glance (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), 160.

With hostility so widespread that it extended even to the sympathetic, male effeminacy remained at best an awkward embarrassment, at worst a pathologized illness. Such virulent hostility notwithstanding, Fitch did manage to expand the boundaries of American masculinity at the turn of the last century. When the life stories of men such as Fitch and others are eventually told and their important cultural influences appreciated, the current view of American manhood in this era as represented only by Roosevelt and his strenuous life model will be complicated. Through his highly successful plays—virtually all highlighting the softer masculinity embodied by the dandy—and his carefully orchestrated publicity of himself as a celebrity, Fitch presented a bold, public model not only for male effeminacy but also for a modern homosexual role. The efforts of those threatened by this new role—in this instance the reigning male theatre critics of New York—to label Fitch as deviant, pathological, or womanly, and thus limited, was merely a sign that times were already changing. Fitch represents yet another example of a breakdown in exclusive male control of the public discourse in nineteenth century America. His great success in presenting himself publicly to such varied and far-reaching populations is all the more astounding considering the hostile climate the Oscar Wilde trials created on both sides of the Atlantic beginning in earnest the year 1895.

Chapter 6

Changing Friendships and the New 20th Century

A Snapshot

During the summer of 1907 when art historian Mary Berenson managed to secure a position as Ogden Codman's secretary for her young protégé Geoffrey Scott, it was to Codman's chateau in France that the young man reported. Having few design commissions, and as a result of his 1904 marriage to a wealthy woman, little incentive to obtain them, Codman had felt free to embark on one of his many scattered projects—this time a comprehensive study of eighteenth century French chateaux. Young Scott, twenty years old and a recent graduate of New College at Oxford University, was to assist on the project—and its eventual publication. It did not take the ambitious young assistant long to realize however that it was the quest for data itself—the more exacting and minute the better—that attracted Codman more than anything else. In the true style of a nineteenth century leisured gentleman, his project had grown to over 340 albums of chateaux postal cards, but had yet to acquire any further direction or scholarly focus. Eventually, the collection would entail information on over 36,000 buildings.¹ Codman's other scholarly ventures—documentation on eighteenth century New England buildings, biographies of all sitters for Copley's portraits, and seemingly endless genealogies of New England families—were all similarly aborted, never passing the all-engrossing stage of acquisition and cataloguing. Young, brash, and impatient for worldly success, Scott soon grew discontent, sensing that the day when the promised book would take shape lay far off in

¹ Pauline Metcalf, Editor, Ogden Codman and the Decoration of Houses (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1988), 46.

the distant future. After little more than three months in the household, he fled for greener pastures.

Scott's brief stay in the household is extremely useful for the reconstruction of Codman's private life in the early years of the twentieth century: for in a series of chatty informative letters back to Mary Berenson at her hillside villa outside Florence, he drew a very detailed picture of all he saw. In his brief, stormy engagement as Codman's private secretary, Scott had joined a list of many similar men. As soon grew apparent, his employer sought more than anything else, the daily companionship of an attentive and attractive young man—of the proper social pedigree. The life was not overly demanding: during his days there, Scott generally slept late and took breakfast in bed. From about ten in the morning until lunch the two worked in the library; following lunch afternoons were spent touring the countryside in the luxurious Codman automobile. Himself a “confirmed sodomite” as acquaintance Lytton Strachey put it, Scott quickly sensed Mr. Codman—his respectable marriage notwithstanding—shared his proclivities.² When another young and attentive secretary, Julian Sampson arrived, he and Scott quickly became friends; Codman, intensely jealous, exploded in a rage. Apart from the great frustration over the stalled book, such intrusive efforts at control, coupled with Codman's invariably haughty patrician demeanor quickly helped Scott in his decision to abandon the whole project.

On his final visit to the Codman household a few years later Scott encountered markedly altered conditions: the sudden death of Leila Codman following surgery in 1910 had changed life forever for, “the now happily widowed marquis of post cards” as

² Richard M. Dunn, Geoffrey Scott and the Berenson Circle (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998), 46.

he so irreverently wrote.³ A new footman, “of handsome and imposing aspect” had joined the household, along with Codman’s latest secretary—or “pet dog”—Chuffy Breakspear, “a charming and amiable youth of thirty or less...penniless though aristocratic.”⁴ Codman’s cousin Howard Sturgis, along with numerous other male guests were also now in residence. Firmly ensconced with this new family, Codman’s level of professional industry had if anything diminished even further. In a matter of days Scott again fled, this time never to return. As Scott’s contemptuous descriptions make clear, these young male secretaries assumed a new and increasingly central role in Codman’s life after the death of his wife. For the first time in his life, he had begun to incorporate the institution of friendship into his inner emotional world.

Perhaps due to his lack of effeminacy—and the concomitant freedom from any marginalization from mainstream society for his powerful same sex desires—Codman maintained for much of his life far less of an urgent dependence on the institution of friendship than someone like the effeminate, and thus forever-hounded Fitch. Requiring no defensive armor with which to face a hostile world, Codman did not incorporate friendships into his life until much later. As a result, although he too undertook work traditionally associated with women—in this case interior decoration—he had no reservoir of strength to tap into as he sought success. In no uncertain terms then, Codman’s mainstream gender behavior, his ability to “pass,” or to not completely self-reconcile to an homosexual identity—even to the extent of marrying—in the end constituted a weakness which hindered his ability to establish either a fully successful

³ Ibid., 76. Pauline Metcalf disagrees with this characterization concerning Codman’s reaction to the death of his wife, noting how distraught he actually was. Correspondence from family and friends at the time confirm Scott’s purposeful distortion, or over-simplification.

⁴ Ibid., 76.

career or an alternative family. Only after his wife's death, by then well into middle age, did he begin to incorporate homoerotic-infused friendships into his life. Thus, from the 1910's and 1920's on, he lived with other men, and despite career disappointments—with these many young friends at his side—he enjoyed his most contented years. Much like other all-male households from the late nineteenth century—Clyde Fitch on East 40th Street, Edward Perry Warren at Lewes House, and Howard Sturgis at Qu' Acre—these secretaries essentially functioned as lifetime companions, or even surrogate spouses—yet were still acceptable to the public eye. It was also during these very same decades of the early twentieth century that the absolute censorship on homosexuality so pervasive in the nineteenth century began to crack, and the subject increasingly discussed in the larger culture. As a result, as he settled into old age, Codman was able to tap into a nascent public discourse on his sexual temperament. These readings, mainly from middle-brow, popular texts, provided him with not only with contentment and reinforcement but also nostalgia and anger as he watched an unfamiliar new world developing in which male same sex attractions could be at last openly discussed.

Career

The publication of Ogden Codman's book, The Decoration of Houses in 1897, co-written with his friend and client Edith Wharton, confirmed for many his rising star as an architect and interior designer. In short order the book proved an enormous success throughout the country—and has remained an influential text, almost continuously in print up to our own day. Reacting to what they perceived as the egregious excesses of Victorian eclecticism, Codman and Wharton forcefully advocated a modern, pared down

look—an aesthetic heavily dependent on eighteenth century European design. The book, as much as any other printed work, spelled the end of Victorian architecture and interiors full of exuberant clutter. The authors strongly condemned newly-rich Americans who had erected so many of the Gilded Age palaces that were springing up across the country; indeed, they sought to educate, to cultivate these misguided builders by bringing together historical models and the clarity of good taste. In his professional work Codman followed much the same path: to introduce good design to all of the Gilded Age barons who employed him.

With the introduction of this public manifesto of taste, Codman entered into the most productive period of his professional life. The transfer of his business and home base from Boston to Newport and New York City in 1893 symbolized a conscious change in career strategy. Such a move signified not only a wish for distance from an extremely close-knit nuclear family, but also a bid to move beyond an emerging reputation for upper class dilettantism—a reputation representing more than anything else a public comment on his chosen field of interior design—invariably female gendered. Indeed, this physical and emotional shift toward those cities benefiting most from Gilded Age capitalism proved to be a crucial first-step in a strategy to ferret out highly lucrative—and socially prestigious—commissions. Before the relocation, still under the protective arm of his family and native city, Codman the professional had yet to prove himself. He lamented to friend Arthur Little in 1892, “the church is nearly done. Mrs. Paine and Updike are all done but getting in bills. This leaves only the Ogdens. I am praying for some work as I am very hard up. Every cent melts away as soon as I get it.”⁵

⁵ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, March 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, Folder 1701, The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), Cambridge Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

Early that year he often expressed anxiety over his business, “Only two jobs, the Ogdens and Aunty Belle—still it is not yet March 1st!”⁶

Years later an elderly Codman recalled his initial journey to Newport—then bursting with New York wealth, “it was that first visit, and seeing all the very expensive houses being built there that gave me the idea that it would be a promising field for an interior decorator, as indeed it proved to be for me.”⁷ Much as he and Wharton did in their book, Codman in his architectural jobs sought to educate the wealthy on classical European—especially eighteenth century—furniture and domestic design. Later in the same letter he acknowledged ruefully how this effort ultimately achieved only mixed results, “I have always supposed that Newport as I knew it had been terribly spoiled by what Dan Curtis used to call ‘Vanderbuilding,’ but as that was my opportunity, I profited by it, so ought not to complain.” With his Beacon Hill antecedents, Codman did not arrive on the shores of fashionable Newport a stranger. His many social connections not only landed him on his feet, but put him almost immediately on the path to success. Recalling for instance the assistance of socially prominent Egerton Winthrop, Jr., he explained this process, “He and Edith Wharton, who lived opposite and who was also a friend of my father’s invited me to delightful dinners and lunches, so I met everyone I wanted to know. All this made a great difference, as I realized at the time, and was duly grateful for. It made everything much easier for me, and helped me to get the right clients.”⁸ Indeed, extant correspondence unmistakably reveals how Wharton dexterously

⁶ Ogden Codman to Arthur Little, 25 February 1892, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 87, Folder 1701, SPNEA.

⁷ Ogden Codman to “Clem”, 1 January 1936, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, The Boston Athenaeum, Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

⁸ Ogden Codman to Herbert Browne, 21 April 1936, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, The Boston Athenaeum.

guided her friend through the treacherous shoals of innumerable Newport and New York society matrons in an effort to land commissions to decorate their houses. Significantly, contacts with male members of the household were rare—house decoration was, after all, women's work.⁹

More than anything else Codman's social standing helped him begin to secure a great amount of business among the upper classes. Thanking Updike for what appears to be yet another commission sent his way by friends and acquaintances, the young architect writes, "you are indeed a true friend; and I wish I could put ten times as many dollars into your pockets as you have put into mine. Quite a tidy sum it would be by the by. I am delighted to hear your news, as it is quite unexpected."¹⁰ Even at the height of his career, Codman retained a clientele primarily interested in his interior decoration work—and generally appreciated more by the female members of the household. The male architectural establishment, concerned about his limited formal training, but more importantly, his focus on interior design, never accepted him into their ranks. His solitary effort to join the professional group in 1894, the National Association of Architects, ended in his being blackballed—he never again attempted to join. Interior design, the Association informally explained to the young Bostonian, fell far short of the needed professional work expected from its members.¹¹ Apart from the few houses he designed—and the most significant among these for himself—Codman's work always consisted primarily of, "alterations to brownstones...installing decorative plaster-work

⁹ See the many letters from Wharton to Codman, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 84, SPNEA.

¹⁰ Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, 20 August 1900, Merrymount Press Collection, Box 12, Folder 4, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

¹¹ Pauline Metcalf, "Ogden Codman, Jr., A Clever Young Boston Architect," (*Nineteenth Century*, Spring 1981), 46.

and paneled moldings in the French style...confections of swags, garlands, and putti.”¹²

In essence, he rode the wave of revulsion against Victorian excesses—and indeed helped to guide it, at least where interiors were concerned. Not surprisingly, his career peaked at the time when fashion dictated undoing the eclectic styles of the recent past.

Landing the commission for the private quarters of the Cornelius Vanderbilt estate in Newport, “The Breakers” in 1894 certainly marked the young Bostonian’s arrival. As became the norm, he had landed the job through the female members of the family who wanted his decorations for their own rooms—the house plans overall, and the sumptuous public rooms were reserved for the more “professional” architects. At the time Codman wrote his mother back in Lincoln, explaining how his social connections had again come to his assistance, “Just think what a client! The nicest and richest of them all... I am going to thank Mrs. Wharton who brought this all about.”¹³ With such a prestigious client, other commissions bearing such names as Rockefeller, Fish, Thayer, Sears, Coolidge, and other old families soon followed. Writing to close friend Daniel Berkeley Updike, Codman explained why leaving Boston had been so crucial to his professional development and subsequent success, “I am beginning to acquire some better self-confidence which I have always lacked. I am thrown so much more on my

¹² Pauline Metcalf, Editor, Ogden Codman and the Decoration of Houses, 21. As a social historian concerned with questions of sexual identity, I provide at best an impressionistic review of Codman’s architectural career—most of all on how it might affect his personal life. For any questions or judgments on his work I defer to architectural historian Pauline Metcalf, who has devoted much of her professional career to the subject. Pauline Metcalf, Editor, Ogden Codman and the Decoration of Houses (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1988); Ibid, “Ogden Codman, Jr., A Clever Young Boston Architect.” Nineteenth Century, Spring 1981, 45-47; Ibid, “The Interiors of Ogden Codman, Jr., in Newport.” Antiques, (September, 1980).

¹³ Citation in Pauline Metcalf, “From Lincoln to Leopolda,” In, Pauline Metcalf, Editor, Ogden Codman and the Decoration of Houses, 12.

own resources here and my European experiences taught me a lot.”¹⁴ In short, the move from Boston had marked a significant step: a bid toward not only new directions, but an autonomy once unimagined as well. Generally all of Codman’s interior commissions were completed with furnishings hand-picked by the architect on his many trips abroad. In his own study of the Bostonian’s career, Stuart Drake describes how, such widespread commissions notwithstanding, recognition from the architectural profession always remained elusive. He makes the salient point that Codman’s work remained for the most part, out of the scholarly and professional journals—yet was recognized and publicized quite often in the popular press, women’s magazines and society papers.¹⁵ Thus, despite entrée into the most fashionable houses in the country, and the many important commissions that followed, Boston’s young architect was never truly able to penetrate the sacred male bastion of architecture, or to gain its recognition. His work on the invariably female-gendered interior design field precluded such approbation. In this single but important aspect of his life, Codman’s homosexual sensibility had thrust him to the margins of society; for once, mainstream masculine gender behavior could not protect him from the taint of effeminacy that his chosen profession (interior design) had brought. Committed to professional recognition and worldly success, Codman almost immediately began casting around for a way to shed this negative association.

In a sign of how the Vanderbilt work kept him busy, Codman wrote Updike in 1895, “I hope to come to Boston early next week. Mr. Vanderbilt sails on March 16th, ie:

¹⁴ Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, 7 January 1895, Merrymount Press Collection, Box 2, Folder 7, The Huntington Library.

¹⁵ Stuart A. Drake, “Ogden Codman, Jr., 1863-1951.” (Unpublished Harvard University M.A. Thesis in Architecture, 1973).

Saturday next. And I shall have a little time to breath then.”¹⁶ Writing again to his friend back in Boston, Codman fairly bristles with excitement over his New York and Newport successes, “Mrs. Abraham Hewitt and her three daughters all came to see me this afternoon to 5 o’clock tea, the looked at books, etc., and were great fun. I smell a large job there. She spoke of a gallery 73 feet long!! Don’t mention this, will you, they are coming next week again.”¹⁷ The next year, in a letter again to Updike, he projects a still busy professional calendar, “I hope to be in Boston one day this week and shall try to see you, but unfortunately this week my time is not my own and I cannot tell what day it will be.”¹⁸ By 1903, a full ten years after the move from Boston, Codman had achieved a great deal of professional success—interior commissions especially grew by leaps and bounds. A letter from September of that year, begging off a project for Updike explains, “I have had so much work on hand ever since you first spoke to me about the church that I have had very little time to spare for anything outside of my regular business, which I do not feel I can afford to neglect.”¹⁹

The move to New York and Newport signaled a major shift not only in Codman’s professional career, but concomitantly in his personal life as well. Significantly, the relocation spelled the end of his intimate friendship with Arthur Little; their correspondence declined after 1893, and by 1895 dramatically drew to a virtual close—never again to return to the warmth of the early nineties. No doubt related to this change, the New York period saw Codman pursue the idea of marriage with a new seriousness.

¹⁶ Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, 14 February [1895], Merrymount Press Collection, Box 2, Folder 8, The Huntington Library.

¹⁷ Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, no date [January, 1895], Merrymount Press Collection, Box 2, Folder 7, The Huntington Library.

¹⁸ Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, 8 June 1896, Merrymount Press Collection, Box 5, Folder 6, The Huntington Library.

¹⁹ Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, 15 September 1903, Merrymount Press Collection, Box 22, Folder 2, The Huntington Library.

In many respects, the rise of his professional fortunes—along with the nagging inability to shake the stigma of working in a “woman’s sphere”—pushed him to more eagerly embrace respectability and to look with renewed appreciation toward its resulting rewards. Where in the early nineties his pursuit of women had been erratic, and always secondary to a quest for attractive young men, the years after his move reveal a turn toward matrimony with a vigor unprecedented in his adult life. After several rebuffs by eligible—and incidently, wealthy—women, including heiress Anne Morgan, Codman married “railroad widow” Leila Griswold Webb on 8 October 1904—he was forty-one years old.²⁰ Mrs. Webb, at forty-seven, had inherited a substantial fortune from her husband and also had two sons already into young adulthood. The two had come to know one another after Codman had been commissioned to design a house for the wealthy widow on East 51st Street in New York. Although the ceremony was simple, in actions clearly revealing his designs, Codman saw to it that New York’s high society—including the Vanderbilts—attended his wedding.

Without question Codman’s marriage is closely connected to his professional career. His ambitions rising even faster than his fortunes, the transplanted Bostonian clearly began to appreciate the importance of a consort as he sought larger and ever larger commissions from the New York elite—not to mention the still-elusive professional recognition he so craved. Following a professional (and incidently self-serving) strategy of presenting his own domiciles as illustrations of the work that could be done, Codman repeatedly showcased his own houses. A sophisticated wife presiding over such a carefully orchestrated household constituted merely the crowning—and critically important—accessory. This fact has been noted by architectural historian Pauline

²⁰ Pauline Metcalf, Ogden Codman and the Decoration of Houses, 45.

Metcalf in her various studies of Codman; yet, although briefly alluding to his same-sex desires, she advances little beyond stating that the marriage appeared to be a happy one. Extant personal correspondence confirms, for instance how distraught Codman was at his wife's unexpected death. Yet, for the historian interested in questions of sexual identity, the marriage is interesting for a number of reasons, and provides another example of the normally gendered man's inclusion in mainstream society—his sexual orientation notwithstanding. During the six years of their marriage, until her sudden death in 1910, Leila performed a vital function in the larger Codman enterprise. Such buildings as the house he had designed for her on East 51st street, a chateau in the French countryside, and a Paris apartment were presided over by the ever-respectable Mrs. Codman. Within these houses, Leila was present to reign over the tea table, provide sophisticated ideas and discussion, and generally add an element of bourgeois respectability clearly absent in the earlier bachelor rooms. Similarly, with a wife ensconced at the opposite end of the dining table, Codman found himself for the first time able to entertain his well-heeled clients. That Mrs. Webb's railroad fortune brought a degree of material comfort along with this recognized status was also clearly appreciated by the rising architect.

Elusive Professional Recognition

As early as April of 1896 Codman found himself struggling to endure the horrors of the American climate—both weather and cultural conditions. To Updike he wrote,

The weather has been a direct importation from Hell these last few days—I roast at the office all day, but here the rooms are shut as early as possible and the air remains a little cooler but dead. There was a lovely breeze yesterday but it is also dead. It is all due no doubt to universal suffrage—and majority rule. In the effete monarchies they never dare to have such weather. I believe New York is Hell and that my sojourn here will be credited to me by the recording angel, I really don't

think it even so bad in Boston. I have had a light attack of the grippe or should be in Newport or Boston. I am sure Newport is quite cool, but then I hate it there quite as much as here—at this season it is so dull. Perhaps I shall die in Europe this summer and never return to this infernal country where all that makes life worth living is left out.²¹

Such exaggerated comments on the inadequacies of American life merely highlighted a Euro-centric world view that so many of the American upper classes still felt strongly, even as late as 1900. Indeed, Codman, and his friends, and family routinely voiced such sentiments in their correspondence of the 1890's; and he himself never wavered from his plan to settle eventually in Europe. Following his marriage, Codman spent more and more time in France. Ultimately, after his wife's death, by then almost completely alienated from the fast-changing culture of his native country he at last made the move he had always yearned for: relocating permanently to Europe in 1920. A letter of 1911, however, suggests he seriously contemplated the move much earlier, but could not yet bring himself to leave. Urging Updike to visit New York, the architect recalls, "I want so much to see you again. We spent so much time debating the question of my settling in Europe the last time you were here that we had little time for pleasanter things. So come again as soon as you can."²²

Especially after the slowdown of his business and his wife's death, Codman, by the first decade of the twentieth century sounds in his letters to Updike like an increasingly lonely man—someone in search of a new purpose or plan for his life. Requests for visits from Updike to Manhattan multiplied accordingly. Along these lines, a letter of 1913 reads, "I hope you are coming on soon—your room now has its electrical

²¹ Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, 18 April [1896], Merrymount Press Collection, Box 5, Folder 4, The Huntington Library.

²² Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, 15 June 1911, Merrymount Press Collection, Ogden Codman File, The Huntington Library. (archival note: all correspondence of the Merrymount Press before 1910 is kept in simple chronological order; that after 1910 is filed under the correspondent's last name).

light fixtures and all its chairs are covered, but still no carpet.”²³ By 1913, casting about for new direction, Codman sold his house on East 51st Street and built a palatial townhouse for himself in the far reaches of northern Manhattan—along Central Park on Fifth Avenue at 96th Street. He apologizes frequently that such a distant location makes Updike’s visits now even more unlikely, “I understand that you are not coming to stop in Harlem the next trip you make to New York, but you must try to make a meal here.” A few months later entreaties to Updike persist, “is it not about time for you to reappear in this gay Metropolis? Do let me know when you are coming. I want so much to see you again.”²⁴ Updike, fully occupied by his press and the extended “family” of his staff of young men, responded with ambiguity, “I have just received your note, but my plans for coming to New York are rather vague. I am afraid I shall not be there before the end of this month or the first of next. How much longer will you be there or have you not made any definite plans as yet? I will certainly let you know when I am coming.”²⁵ Like many of his Boston connections, Codman’s friendship with Updike remained strong to the end of his life; the correspondence indicates in fact that the relationship grew increasingly important to the architect as he struggled to focus his career and emotions in the years before moving to Europe—feeling ever more alienated and discontented.

As was the case with many upper class Americans, the First World War interrupted Codman’s increasingly lengthy stays in Europe—at home when the war began, he elected to remain on this side of the Atlantic until the situation cleared. By this

²³ Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, 2 January 1913, Merrymount Press Collection, Ogden Codman File, The Huntington Library.

²⁴ Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, 6 April 1913, Ogden Codman File, Merrymount Press Collection, The Huntington Library.

²⁵ Daniel Berkeley Updike to Ogden Codman, 8 April 1913, Merrymount Press Collection, Ogden Codman File, The Huntington Library.

time unhappy in New York, and with no wish to return to Newport, after much exploration he found a house to rent in Ipswich, Massachusetts. Here, in close proximity to his native Boston he spent his summers and free time for the duration of hostilities. Partially due to age, and partially to a growing alienation from changes in American society, Codman's letters take on an even greater sense of unhappiness during these years. Writing to Updike he characteristically confides, "It has been very sad here lately, so many deaths among people I know—Eliot Gregory, Mrs. Philip Schuyler, Egerton Winthrop, Howard Cushing, Mrs. Lloyd Bryce...."²⁶

Far from obsequious, Codman could be difficult to work with. This characteristic, combined with a less than rigorous work ethic, prevented his career from ever truly taking flight. His wealthy clientele notwithstanding, Codman continued to be seen by most in the architectural as a dilettante, an idler, capable of only the female work of interior decoration. Even following his marriage recognition remained elusive, and now financially secure, his productivity slacked off still further. Not surprisingly, as even Pauline Metcalf acknowledges, his best work was done for himself. Outfitting his own palatial settings for a life lived amid eighteenth century antiques would always remain his most passionate avocation. Even during the nineties, as his career was picking up steam, Codman seemed to resent clients' time that took him away from his own dwellings. Writing to Updike he complains, "I am very sorry to miss you as I wanted to show you the designs for St. John's Church, which I have been working on... Mr. Granger has begun to get tiresome about it, and I am rather at a loss what to do, as churches especially

²⁶ Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, 1 May 1916, Merrymount Press Collection, Ogden Codman File, The Huntington Library.

gothic ones have always rather bored me.”²⁷ Again, in asking Updike after an unfinished printing job, the impatient Codman employs revealing humor, “And I suppose I ought to hustle you as my clients love to hustle me—but as I know how I hate it... I shall omit it in your case.”²⁸ Increasingly alienated, a dispirited Codman continued to drift from project to unrelated project. In addition to architecture, he gathered extensive data on New England genealogy, and lengthy lists and photographs of eighteenth century American, English, and French domiciles. All he intended for scholarly publication of some sort—none were ever finished. The collection and organization of data seemed to hold a strong attraction for him; and it was at this stage that even the most promising projects always seemed to lose steam. As early as 1898, Codman was writing to Updike with grandiose plans, “I have been amusing myself lately by getting my notes on the Codman genealogy in such order that I might have them typewritten as a preliminary step towards having them printed by you. In my mind’s eye I see a small quarto covered with some of your marbled papers.”²⁹ The letter continues on with a passion typical of him when engrossed in a project’s initial phase, “I should so like to talk all this over with you, as it has been one of my dreams I have cherished for years to publish this book. I have worked on it for over twenty years!” Unfortunately, innumerable other ideas periodically caught his attention—and none were ever completed, only the volume co-authored by Wharton.

²⁷ Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, [no date] Merrymount Press Collection, Box 21, Folder 1, The Huntington Library.

²⁸ Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, 4 January [1895], Merrymount Press Collection, Box 2, Folder 7, The Huntington Library.

²⁹ Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, 15 April 1898, Merrymount Press Collection, Box 8, Folder 1, The Huntington Library.

Codman the interior designer did have another—often overlooked—influence on American decorative arts in this period: his mentoring of actress-turned-interior designer Elsie de Wolfe. De Wolfe spent a great deal of time at Codman's knee and learned much of the business from him—the two re-designed a number of New York houses together—installing an eighteenth century veneer onto even the most pronounced Victorian brownstones.³⁰ Friends from the time Codman moved to New York, the two saw each other socially; indeed, the young architect often attended the Sunday afternoon salons de Wolfe and her partner Elizabeth Marbury held at their Irving Place house.³¹ When de Wolfe's book, The House in Good Taste was published to great acclaim in 1913, Codman's influence on American aesthetics expanded even further—as the later book copied essentially all of the important concepts from The Decoration of Houses, albeit presented in a far more accessible manner. At the time, de Wolfe's work influenced middle America at least as much as Codman and Wharton had their targeted elite audience. Together, the two books held a great deal of sway over American decorative arts well into the twentieth century.

It was to this most successful work however—The Decoration of Houses—the book for which he is today most remembered, that Codman returned to in his old age. Unable or unwilling to land architectural jobs, and with even interior commissions increasingly scarce, Codman spent many years renovating and expanding an eighteenth century chateau—Gregy—he purchased for himself in 1926 outside Paris. By 1936, in search of a new avenue for his thwarted talents, he outlined a new project to friend Julian

³⁰ Jane Smith, Elsie de Wolfe: A Life in High Style (New York: Atheneum, 1982), 131 ; Pauline Metcalf, "Ogden Codman, Jr. A Clever Young Boston Architect," (Nineteenth Century, Spring, 1981), 46.

³¹ Clyde Fitch, another friend of the couple through the theater world, also attended these salons, and their Irving Place drawing room would have been the most likely place he and Codman met—although such a meeting has, to my knowledge, never been discussed.

Sampson, "I am writing to a number of my old clients, to ask them for photographs of houses I have built, and rooms I have decorated for them, as I am making a collection of such photos. With a view of writing a book about my work and what I was striving to obtain."³² He confided indirectly what most who knew him had long suspected—that it had been Wharton who gave the book its crisp prose, thus insuring its continued success, "in the end I fear I shall need a ghost [writer], as I have no illusions about my own literary style." Like all of the other projects, this second volume on his work did not progress beyond an extensive, and superbly catalogued, collection of photographs. Next, he turned back to Wharton, client, friend, and by now fellow expatriate living in France. Their friendship, always tumultuous, had mellowed somewhat as they aged and by the 1930's had settled into a reassuring tranquility for both. Codman explained in a letter to her, "of course there has been very great progress in taste since 1896. But from my own personal experience, there is a great deal more of what I might call 'The Eternal Verities' in the book, than the mere ousting of House Dressmaking."³³ The book had fallen out of print and Codman forcefully argued for an updated edition—this he hoped would be a project worthy of his boundless, but unfocused energy, "It still seems to me a book that most architects, and all their clients should buy, 'to read, mark, learn, inwardly digest, and profit thereby.' As the book is entirely out of print, I want a second edition to put it in everybody's reach." In view of the working relationship between the two on the original book, Wharton's hesitation at this new venture is revealing. As she no doubt recalled, not only had she done most of the research and writing, but had been forced

³² Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 20 July 1936, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, The Boston Athenaeum.

³³ Ogden Codman to Edith Wharton, 18 April 1937, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 27, The Boston Athenaeum.

repeatedly to threaten and cajole the recalcitrant Codman to complete even the smallest task.³⁴ Assuming the task of a new edition would be sure to place the bulk of the work squarely on her own desk. Despite such realities, appealing to a sense of her own reputation as tastemaker, Codman managed to convince Wharton of the re-publication's importance and they duly embarked on the project together. Sadly, it was at Codman's chateau Gregy, where she had traveled to plan the revised book, that Edith Wharton had a massive stroke. Never regaining consciousness, she was eventually transported back to her own chateau, Pavillon Colombe by ambulance where she died a few short months later. Without her efforts, Codman never managed to progress far in completing the second edition he had argued so strongly for.

The House of Windsor

Among the many colorful legends handed down by Codman's friends and family over the years, his business dealings with the former English King Edward, later the Duke of Windsor, is certainly the most treasured. Viewed from the standpoint of his career, the story is a powerful illustration of the architect's perennial dilettantism, alienation from professional and business ethos, and an utter unwillingness to compromise. If seen as a microcosm of his career, the episode dramatically underlines the difficulties—many of them self-created—that never allowed him to move beyond the limited niche of “female” interior decoration. For this combination of low professional output, and a supreme mania to spend money on himself, ultimately he—and his family—would pay dearly.

³⁴ See the many letters from Wharton from 1896-1897 demanding countless tasks, at first in a friendly fashion, but increasingly exasperated in, The Ogden Codman Papers, Box 84, SPNEA

In 1929 as the great depression swept across Europe and the United States, Codman embarked on what Metcalf calls, “the culmination of his architectural career”—the building of his villa, “La Leopolda.”³⁵ On land once owned by King Leopold of Belgium, the palatial villa eventually loomed over the French Riviera, a monument to Codman’s eighteenth century aesthetic. Even before its completion, the house was much discussed—bringing Codman some much-coveted attention. As early as 1931 with construction ongoing, he was already turning away magazine reporters eager to write about his grand house.³⁶ Among the many friends who managed to catch a glimpse of the villa, Mary Berenson exclaimed to its creator, “Your house looks enchanting—and so well suited to the hillside, the sea, the scenery. Please accept my congratulations. I do hope BB [her husband Bernard Berenson] will stop to see it.”³⁷ With the depression’s arrival in full force, and a subsequent fall in his income by 40%, the master of La Leopolda was allowed little time to enjoy the fruits of his labors. As his debt soared, Codman came to realize even before construction was finished that the house would need to be rented or sold. Thus, during the mid-thirties, at a time when many faced financial difficulties, he sought to rent the magnificent villa. Explaining his precarious situation, Codman wrote hopefully to Updike in 1932, “I hear many Bostonians are coming over to Cannes this year... You must wish for me to sell the villa, and content myself with my beloved Gregy. In some ways it reminds me of Lincoln, in its isolation, but Paris is very

³⁵ Pauline Metcalf, “Odgen Codman, Jr., A Clever Young Boston Architect.” (*Nineteenth Century*, Spring, 1981), 45.

³⁶ Ogden Codman to Mrs. Caroline Whipple, 2 April 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

³⁷ Mary Berenson to Ogden Codman, 8 January 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

near.”³⁸ Apart from a few short-term tenants, he found no takers for the villa. By 1937, the year of the King’s abdication, he was still unsuccessfully trying to occupy it. Thus, he arrived at his dealings with the Duke of Windsor—recently abdicated, exiled, and married.

Unmistakably built on a scale for royalty, La Leopolda appealed to the Windsors—here would be a suitable substitute for the royal palaces sadly left behind in England. It was clear that the couple strongly wanted to rent the house, and in a series of letters to his friends Codman relayed how the story played itself out. To Julian Sampson he exclaimed how the Duchess—a client of Elsie de Wolfe’s with a keen interest of her own in interior decoration—“wanted to remove all the statuary, all my beautiful carpets, all the furniture in the salon, in fact everything (except my books) that gives the house its artistic character.”³⁹ Determined not to let the “Duchess of Simpson” dismantle his creation, and characteristically unconcerned with impending financial disaster, Codman drew up a four page list of conditions and demanded a “sufficient guarantee” of a thousand pounds to insure the house would be put back in order at the couple’s departure. From birth accustomed to deference, the Duke invited the recalcitrant architect to his hotel to negotiate—certain he would eventually agree to his terms. Both men however refused to budge, and the expatriate New England architect took his departure with words now part of Codman lore, “Good day, Sir. I regret that the House of Codman cannot do business with the House of Windsor.”⁴⁰

³⁸ Ogden Codman to Daniel Berkeley Updike, 25 December 1932, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

³⁹ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 28 April 1938, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 18, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁴⁰ Pauline Metcalf, Editor, Ogden Codman and the Decoration of Houses, 35; Florence Codman, The Clever Young Boston Architect (Augusta, Maine: Lithokj Press, 1970), 31.

“The let of Leopolda is definitely off as I absolutely refused to let the lady monkey around with my decorations or move any of my statues,” Codman wrote to Julian Sampson a few days later. In a subsequent letter he continued, “I declined to let the Windsors hire my villa, because she wanted to make so many and to my mind such disastrous alterations and he declined to put up what I consider a suitable guarantee... to say that they were furious hardly describes it.”⁴¹ To his younger cousin, Fiske Kimball, Codman explained simply, “I decided they were not desirable tenants, and did not let them have it.”⁴² Codman’s final word on the affair reveals a curious wish to savor what he clearly considered a victory, “there are now three men who have interfered seriously and prevented her from obtaining what she wanted, ie: The ArchBishop of Canterbury and the Prime Minister who prevented her from becoming Queen of England, and little Ogden Codman who kept her from spoiling La Leopolda.”⁴³ True enough, Codman had prevailed—yet in the end he won the most pyrrhic of victories: La Leopolda remained vacant, quickly consuming his fast-diminishing resources. The villa would not be finally sold until his death in 1951. By that time, Codman had used up not only all of his own money, but all of his late wife’s (including her sons’ inheritances). When the real financial story became clear, his surviving siblings were forced to sell their Beacon Street townhouse and move year round to Lincoln in order to settle many of the debts. Where Codman himself and Pauline Metcalf saw a triumph over “compromise, the ultimate statement of his professional ideals,” another reading is that the story illustrates an

⁴¹ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 14 April 1938, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 18, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁴² Ogden Codman to Fiske Kimball, 13 September 1938, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 24, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁴³ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 28 April 1938, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 18, The Boston Athenaeum.

alienated dilettante, a man utterly divorced from his professional world with little beyond the petty to occupy his time.

The House of Codman

As Geoffrey Scott had discovered to his astonishment upon returning after the death of Leila Codman in 1910, Codman's household in this mature phase of his life had come to be organized around the institution of friendship—hitherto absent from his emotional life. A bifurcated organization had always informed Codman's personal life earlier: chaste friendships and marriage on the licit, or public side, while same-sex attractions remained entirely separate, secret and illicit. In contrast, Codman's newly created family consisted of many different men, especially the young men who had always been the object of his attractions. Thus fashioned—as an extended family, or employer and employee—the house of Codman could not only serve his innermost emotional needs, but could also remain acceptable to the larger public. Over time, as homosexuality entered increasingly into the public discourse, such nineteenth century fig leaves were less needed. Yet never completely reconciled to the modern world, Codman continued to live his life along these lines. Only after finally accepting that a prolific and publicly acclaimed career as an architect would not be his, was Codman at last able to strike out toward new ground, and dare to organize a family life centered on his attractions to young men. As a result, despite the strains of financial uncertainty, of exile, along with many professional disappointments, the years following his wife's death and the move to France were his happiest.

While useful in presenting the all-male household centered on homosexual interests to the general public, Codman's relations were not always easy for the young men hired as his employees. Harold, or "Chuffy" Breakspear, dismissed so contemptuously by Geoffrey Scott, apparently had his own difficulties in adapting to this intentionally ambiguous social status. Of high social standing, as all of Codman's secretaries would be, Breakspear obviously chafed at either a subordinate status, or perhaps required quasi-spousal duties. Buried among the voluminous archives of his Boston-based Merrymount Press, are two illuminating letters between owner Daniel Berkeley Updike and young Breakspear. In January of 1912 Updike delicately approached the younger man's request for help in negotiating terms with the often-petulant Codman,

My Dear Breakspear, your note is received. I cannot go into the matter which you write. Ogden is an old friend and I do not like to interfere, even indirectly in, which is, after all, a private affair between you two men. So I can't advise—even if I was to be in New York at present, which I do not expect. The sort of difficulties you find, are, I am afraid, inherent in the sort of position you have taken, rather than any particular person; and the question to be decided is whether you wish such a position at all. This of course can only be settled by yourself. When it is settled the rest is easy. I am sorry not to be more satisfactory; and I am sorry if things have not gone well.⁴⁴

Chastened, the secretary hastened a deferential response—clearly cognizant of having crossed some sort of acceptable boundary, "Please forgive me if I unintentionally said things I ought not to have said—and I won't say anything more about it."⁴⁵ Then, perhaps fearing for his job, he sought to explain such transgressions as emerging from

⁴⁴ Daniel Berkeley Updike to Harold Breakspear, 7 January 1912, Merrymount Press Collection, Ogden Codman File, The Huntington Library.

⁴⁵ Harold Breakspear to Daniel Berkeley Updike, [no date, circa 1912], Merrymount Press Collection, Ogden Codman File, The Huntington Library.

something other than his own discontentment, "I have been very ill with an abcess in my ear which has given me 'hell.' So I daresay it has upset my temper and liver!"

Like so many of the secretaries, Breakspear did not remain long in Codman's employ. With the pattern established, the architect would continue to go through young men at breakneck speed for years to come. Only when he found someone who could provide all of his needs—and who was willing to live in such an arrangement—would the cycle be broken. A brief letter of resignation from a James Geddes apologizes for leaving without saying goodbye, conveying a less-than-positive relationship—the polite rhetoric of the day notwithstanding,

Dear Sir: I have had a good opportunity of going to Australia and am sailing this week. I regret exceedingly leaving your employ, it has certainly been a good education to me, and I am writing this note to convey my appreciation of that, and of your kindness to me. Am sorry not to be able to see you before leaving. Very truly yours,⁴⁶

As late as 1931, some twenty years after his wife's death, the young men still were not staying much longer than the time needed for him to learn their names "For about a year I have had an American secretary, who proved a complete failure and I dismissed him a short while ago, after a series of proofs that he was utterly incompetent."⁴⁷ As Codman ran the household himself personally, down to the smallest detail, and never resumed a full working schedule after his 1904 marriage, the secretary's key role appeared to be more along the lines of being entertaining and available. In the same 1931 letter Codman contradicts himself and probably more accurately explains the reasons for this latest departure, "your friend sounds as if he might prove a very pleasant companion, but I am

⁴⁶ James D. Geddes to Ogden Codman, 20 September 1907, Ogden Codman Papers, Box 71, Folder 1532, SPNEA.

⁴⁷ Ogden Codman to "Beaumont," 10 May 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

sure he would find the life at Gregy a very dull one, as indeed did Ronny, who was always trying to suggest changes that I did not care for, as well as people who bored me beyond belief; and now that it is over I dread the idea of someone who might feel as Ronny did.”

At times even the indomitable Codman grew discouraged at keeping these disparate young men content. Writing of another assistant named Penton who announced himself very unhappy with La Leopolda’s hilltop location he muses, “Poor Penton is much discouraged by the idea of spending eight months on ‘top of that mountain.’ So if I buy another place at any future time it will have to be down low, somewhere that I shall hate worse than Cannes, or else a flat in Monte Carlo, which sounds pretty loathsome.”⁴⁸ In another letter from later in the decade Codman asks after another of his now formidable list of former secretaries—men he tried hard to keep in contact with, and who he considered part of his extended family, “I wonder if you saw in the paper that ‘Bob’ Tritton had married an immensely rich NY jewess, named Lady Baron, whose husband made his money making cigarettes? I never see him now, but the last time I saw him he borrowed 1000 francs, which he has never returned.”⁴⁹ To friend Julian Sampson (himself also a former secretary, and thus part of the larger Codman household) he also wonders about this former companion’s fate, “I often wonder how Bobby Tritton is getting on with the ex-Lady Baron? I doubt if she goes any (real) where in London, but of course there are all kinds of sets so everybody can go somewhere.”⁵⁰ Apart from

⁴⁸ Ogden Codman to Robert Tritton, 30 September 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁴⁹ Ogden Codman to “Clem,” 1 January 1936, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, the Boston Athenaeum.

⁵⁰ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 13 March 1936, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, The Boston Athenaeum.

Codman's disconsolate note at his estrangement from a former assistant, Tritton's strategy of marrying comfortably seems to have been learned directly from his employer.

Finally, in the fall of 1931, after a long line of short-term secretaries Codman found at last one who would remain and thrive within the friendship model he had sought for so long—a worthy successor to the long-departed helpmate Leila. Writing to a friend he explains, “I went up to Paris to have my eyes treated and was there about 6 weeks, and brought back with me a young man, highly recommended by Mr. Schmidt of Morgan & Co.—who has proved very capable... I think [he] will remain with me until he can find a place where he will have greater prospects of advancement. So at present I am very well satisfied with things as they are.”⁵¹ To Russell Page, friend and landscape architect, he cautiously noted how possibly at last he had found the right man, “I like my secretary very much, he has just returned from Paris, where he had left his clothes, etc.—now he is here to remain for good I hope. As there is a good deal for him to do.”⁵² Francis White, only in his early twenties when he arrived at Codman's household, was to remain with him right up until the latter's death twenty years later in 1951. Always overly concerned with questions of background and family pedigree, Codman remarked often that White, half French and half English, was most suitable in this area. Equally important, a Codman relative recalled the young assistant as “most capable and unruffled”—two characteristics that would serve him well in remaining on the good side of his often capricious employer.⁵³ In his letter to Page, Codman exalted in the apparent wonders of this new companion, “I have found a pleasant young secretary, named Francis White—

⁵¹ Ogden Codman to “Beaumont,” 10 May 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁵² Ogden Codman to Russell Page, 15 November 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁵³ Florence Codman, The Clever Young Boston Architect, 27.

his father is English and his mother is French, so he speaks and writes both languages.” Weeks later he posted a brief note of thanks to the agency that had found the young man, “Many thanks for sending me Francis White, he is just the secretary I need, and I like him very much. I am sorry to say that he will have a lot of rather puzzling work setting up the accounts related to the villa, but he is helping me and seems to take a good deal of interest in the work... I have waited to see how we got on, before thanking you.”⁵⁴

White’s arrival in the household coincided with the building of La Leopolda and the subsequent financial strain on his diminishing resources. Just at the time when the new secretary had settled in, Codman worried, “I have had bad news from America, and find my income so reduced that I have decided to close down the garden at Gregy.”⁵⁵ Later that month he confided to Page the situation appeared to be even worse than he had at first realized, “as things look now I shall probably have to close up Gregy, and live in Paris, which I hate doing, and close this place [La Leopolda] unless I can sell or let it. Gregy is what I really love, the rest does not matter.”⁵⁶ In Francis White, however, Codman had found a willing partner to help him with the increasingly arduous struggle to remain solvent. In the summer, at the height of this effort, he wrote to Edith Wharton, asking if he could bring his assistant over to see her gardens and how they were managed, “He likes to see gardens and wants to learn how to manage them. Thanks to his energy and efficiency he made La Leopolda’s garden produce sales amounting to over 25,000 francs the first year he took it in hand, which has been a great help towards its upkeep.

⁵⁴ Ogden Codman to Miss Clitherow, 26 December 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁵⁵ Ogden Codman to Russell Page, 4 December 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁵⁶ Ogden Codman to Russell Page, 29 December 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

Next year he hopes to do even better, as it is now carefully organized.”⁵⁷ Similarly, he confided to her later that winter, “Francis White and I have been trying to think of a way to raise a little money to help both our Abbeys, Compteur and Dolbeau in their very similar work on the outskirts of Paris.”⁵⁸ Once again his secretary had shown great industry, “Francis has had an idea....that interests me very much, which is to open the Leopolda grounds some day before Easter, at say 10 francs per head, the proceeds to be divided between both our charities.” In like fashion, when faced with a possible business deal, he typically turned the details over to White; writing to a Mrs. Havemeyer, Codman explained, “Francis White, my secretary is at 60, Rue de Varenne, he takes his examination at the Sorbonne next Tuesday. I am writing him to call you up after his exam is over, he is a very practical young man, and understands all my affairs much better than I do myself.”⁵⁹ Thus, without question by the mid-thirties White was heavily involved in the affairs of his employer; and sought himself to find creative ways for them to manage the looming financial crisis.

Indeed, so trusted and helpful had White become that Codman even tried to reciprocate—enlisting his own name in some of his young assistant’s concerns. Writing again to Wharton, he sought her involvement in a boy’s camp that White had become involved in, “I am enclosing a little pamphlet regarding the patronage at [SC camp] which my secretary Francis White takes so much interest in. I send him over to it every Sunday afternoon when we are at Gregy, and he takes his vacation in August at the

⁵⁷ Ogden Codman to Edith Wharton, 27 July 1935, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 27, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁵⁸ Ogden Codman to Edith Wharton, 22 February 1936, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 27, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁵⁹ Ogden Codman to Mrs. Havemeyer, 17 June 1933, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 14, The Boston Athenaeum.

vacation camp in Brittany...it would be a great help to us if you would lend us your name to put on the committee.”⁶⁰ Over time then the secretary had grown from able assistant to trusted member of Codman’s household—and as more than anything else, a close friend and companion, a member of his extended family. For Codman, the twenty-year relationship with White represented his most rewarding friendship—so rewarding in fact that it stood at the center of his emotional life. Yet, technically still employer and employee, great inequalities remained in the friendship, no matter how much trust and intimacy had been established.

Although he invariably referred to his employer as “Mr. Codman,” letters indicate White over time did become quite close to the older man. In 1937 Codman confided to Julian Sampson of what he perceived as the latest indulgence of his young companion, “Francis now has a baby ‘Fiat’ with which he is much pleased, and is busy getting a ‘permise de conduire.’”⁶¹ During a brief trip White took to Paris, Codman wrote from home fondly, “enclosed is a postcard that some of your boyfriends sent to you. Do send me one like it...you are very much missed, Rip is worried about your disappearance and stays with me all day long, but has told Teddy to keep away and remain in the kitchen.”⁶² Indeed, as the architect plaintively explained in a letter to old friend Herbert Browne back in Boston, his life had become increasingly centered on White—beyond whom his contacts were now severely curtailed, “I am passing rather a lonely X-mas, as my secretary, Francis White has flown over to London to see his father, and my only

⁶⁰ Ogden Codman to Edith Wharton, 28 March 1937, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 27, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁶¹ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 16 July 1937, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 17, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁶² Ogden Codman to Francis White, 4 August 1932, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

companion is my delightful Alsatian, named 'Rip' who has been with me six years, and is the gentlest and most amiable of dogs."⁶³

Himself often leading what he termed an "invalid's life,"—returning to bed each afternoon at 3:30 for instance—Codman was nonetheless not above nursing his young helpmate and maintaining a vigilant eye over all details in his life, "Poor Francis has not been at all well for some time, and he has what we hope will be a very light attack of jaundice. He had a sort of carrot soup for lunch, and his diet is to be varied with applesauce."⁶⁴ In a further indication of intimacy within the household, by the mid-thirties Codman had taken to routinely signing his letters with greetings from White. Signing a 1937 letter to a Mme. de Montozon he concludes, "with kindest regards, in which Francis joins me, OC."⁶⁵ Again, in a note to Julian Sampson he explains how the two enjoyed a recent visit, "I think Bernard was a delightful guest, and so does Francis."⁶⁶ Clearly then, the two were functioning as close companions at a level apparently never achieved among the many secretaries who had come before White's arrival in 1931. Only in his old age had Codman at last found a way to incorporate his same-sex attractions and the sensibility they nurtured into his emotional life—by organizing his life around the important institution of male friendship he entered into a period of great contentment.

⁶³ Ogden Codman to Herbert Browne, 25 December 1932, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁶⁴ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 13 December 1935, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 15, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁶⁵ Ogden Codman to Mme. Montozon, 19 January 1937, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁶⁶ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 16 November 1937, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, The Boston Athenaeum.

Extended Friendship Networks

As guests who visited Codman during the years after his move to France often noted, his household always consisted of many young men—both as guests and as servants. There were times when he found himself with more than one secretary—as had been the case with Geoffrey Scott and Julian Sampson back in 1907. Writing to his former secretary, Robert Tritton, the master of Gregy speaks of this contentment so long in coming,

Biancho and I were at Gregy this afternoon, and it is to be closed for the present... I have never been so busy nor so contented, as I love work and Biancho is the only secretary I ever had that ever thought of anything but filling his own pockets; he is almost too good to be true. He has lots of friends of his own age here, which make it far pleasanter than Nice was. He is also much interested in Gregy, and thinks he would like to live there in summer, but I doubt if we can afford it, as I am really very poor.⁶⁷

In his letters back to Codman, Tritton during 1932 often asks after young Biancho, “What news have you? You do not write to me—you ought to and that naughty little Biancho—he doesn’t write either.”⁶⁸ In ending the letter he concludes, “Best of love dear Ogden to you—remember me to the household and give my love to little Biancho.” Codman speaks often in letters to Tritton of his travels with “Biancho”—yet this assistant’s dates overlap with Francis White’s arrival—whose name never appears in these letters. Unless further information is discovered on Codman’s life and household during this period, it will be impossible to know for certain if Biancho worked alongside White. Short of this certainty, it seems quite plausible that “Biancho” served simply as a pet or nickname for Francis White—who was proving himself a valuable edition to the household the master

⁶⁷ Ogden Codman to Robert Tritton, 6 February 1932, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁶⁸ Robert Tritton to Ogden Codman, 26 August 1932, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

of Gregy confided in letters to other friends. If this were the case, White probably shared his employer's homosexual attractions (as did former secretaries Robert Tritton and Julian Sampson, among others); such an inclination would help explain his unusually long tenure with Codman, and why the two were so comfortable with one another. Whichever reading we accept, "Biancho" is clearly the object of great interest and flirtations from Tritton, and does not even appear on the radar among Codman's other correspondence with other, non-homosexual friends.

Among the many migrations that took place to Codman's hearth, the ones he noted most often with obvious pleasure came from attractive young men. Writing to friend Mrs. Guy Norman back on Long Island he describes one such memorable visit, "the bright spot of my summer was a visit from some young cousins at Gregy...John Codman Fiske, a son of my cousin Susan (Codman) Fiske, was staying at Fountainebleu, with his friend John C. Phillips, and he came over to see me."⁶⁹ With obvious relish he recounts, "He is tall (6'1") fair, and good-looking, with really charming manners. He never made me feel old, and for a boy of 21, that was remarkable." Codman's homosexual attractions—so pronounced in his early adulthood—had always remained entirely separate from his emotional life. Now entering old age, with a sympathetic male companion, and an extended network of other male friends, these attractions surface again—this time less segregated from his emotions. Especially to male friends—so often secretaries and thus part of what he conceived of as his real family—Codman dwelled lovingly on male beauty. Accordingly, to Robert Tritton he relayed news of this second cousin's visit, "John Fiske was such a nice link, he brought over three girls, and his

⁶⁹ Ogden Codman to Mrs. Guy Norman, 12 September 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 14, The Boston Athenaeum.

roommate Jack Phillips, six feet two and slender, dark hair, rather like an Irish gentleman.”⁷⁰

Former secretaries such as Tritton and Julian Sampson provided the older man with frequent opportunities to discuss quite openly his male same-sex attractions; in this sense their correspondence served him much as his letters to Arthur Little once had back in the 1890’s. Long before the Windsors ever thought of living at La Leopolda, as the English constitutional crisis and scandal were unfolding, Codman first took note of the affair in a letter to Sampson, “did you see the photograph of Ernest Simpson in ‘News Reviews’ of 10 December 1936? As his picture appears in the Harvard U. class album, 1919. His eyes are a bit too close together, but otherwise he is not a bad looking lad.”⁷¹ Much of these epistolary discussions Codman engaged in with his extended circle of male friends would have been far more circumspect in the latter’s late nineteenth century youth. During the first decades of the new twentieth century however, a true public discourse on male same-sex sexuality was emerging. Although in his reading avidly following these changes, the master of Gregy could not always approve as the public veil of silence he had once negotiated and understood so well crumbled into oblivion.

Sampson, who had first worked for Codman back in Geoffrey Scott’s time, remained a close friend after leaving the household; for many years the two continued to spend their holidays together. “I have been wondering if you would be coming over for X-mas as usual,” Codman wrote in the winter of 1938.⁷² Similarly, both Sampson and

⁷⁰ Ogden Codman to Robert Tritton, 24 August 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁷¹ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 6 January 1937, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 17, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁷² Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 6 January 1938, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 18, The Boston Athenaeum.

Tritton often brought their latest male dates for visits with the elder Codman—who urged in the spring of 1936 in a letter to Sampson, “Be sure to let me know when you want to come and bring your friend.”⁷³ Late that summer, as Sampson organized an impending visit, his host wrote with anticipation, “I shall be delighted to receive my ‘young visitors’ on Friday, the 31st, and will meet you at Combs-la-Ville if you will let me know by what train you will come.”⁷⁴ Following the visit, Codman writes, “the photos of Bernard and John Fiske are delightful, in spite of John being so very much overdressed.”⁷⁵ That next December, plans for the Christmas holiday were again underway, “Will you and Bernard come to me on the 28th for a week? I think that would give him time to get back to his work when his college opens.”⁷⁶ In another example, a letter of 1937 finds Codman admiring a recent magazine article on actor Errol Flynn and his recent film, “‘A Perfect Specimen’ [which] says the Irish actor, a godlike young man of limited acting ability performs the title role, and demonstrating his perfection is at one time required to take off most of his clothes and they give a charming photo of him dressed as a boxer.”⁷⁷ Similarly, in another letter he discusses in vivid detail a recently published memoir which openly discusses homosexuality among the upper classes—a book he had read, “with much interest.”⁷⁸

⁷³ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 15 June 1936, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁷⁴ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 20 July 1936, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁷⁵ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, no date [circa 1936], Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁷⁶ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 11 December 1936, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁷⁷ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 8 November 1937, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 17, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁷⁸ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 25 March 1936, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, The Boston Athenaeum.

Codman's relationship with former secretary Robert Tritton also provided him with this type of intimacy. Tritton, who had opened a London antique shop after leaving Codman's employment, and later had married, always remained a close friend. Writing to his friend following a vacation they had spent together in Dieppe Tritton explained, "You cannot know how much I enjoyed our little honeymoon together. It was nice and I have told you before that there is nothing like old friends."⁷⁹ Codman too had enjoyed their time together, "our little trip cheered me up very much...I suppose you are back in London, but if you do your trip with Harry Phillips, do let me know, as I shall want to hear all about it."⁸⁰ Then finally he concludes wistfully, "I wish you were not so far off, you cheer me up so."

As in his communications with Sampson, Codman's correspondence with Tritton often centers on male same-sex attractions. Tritton sent a letter for instance describing in great detail a bathing spot he had found—and knew Codman would be fascinated with. This member of the extended household also brought his male dates and love interests to Gregy. In the fall of 1931 a series of letters between the two friends discuss Tritton's possible visit accompanied by "Pat,"—"Indeed, I am sorry that you will not come for the weekend and should like to see Pat, though I cannot make out why you lay so much stress on his having red hair. My taste runs to blue eyes and fair hair, the type so prevalent in Dresden. However, good manners, and intelligence is much more important than good looks, though the latter is not to be despised."⁸¹ The note ends with a request, "Send me

⁷⁹ Robert Tritton to Ogden Codman, 21 August 1932, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁸⁰ Ogden Codman to Robert Tritton, 11 September 1932, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁸¹ Ogden Codman to Robert Tritton, 30 September 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

Kodak of the red-haired gent, so that I can see what I am missing also.” Within a week Codman had posted another letter with further explanation of the visit’s postponement, “I should have been delighted to see both Pat and you at any other time than this particular month, which has been devoted to moving into a new house.”⁸² His age Codman explains, prevents too many visitors, “the moment I get a bit tired, I have no strength to draw upon, and must go to bed, under these conditions, ‘Bright Young People’ would be bored stiff, and I could not cope with them. I hope Pat will have some more holidays.”

His marriage notwithstanding, Tritton’s discussions of attractive men do not stop—or go underground as Codman’s did with his own nuptials in 1904. In December of 1931 Tritton conveys sadness that his wife has just left for a vacation apart from him, “Elsie has just sailed for Egypt—we both wept bitterly and hated parting, but there it is.”⁸³ While the historical record thus far remains silent on what information, if any, Codman provided his wife on his male same-sex desires, a postscript in one of Tritton’s letters reveals how less than forthcoming he had been—even at this late date, the 1930’s with an open public discourse on homosexuality well underway. Writing in 1932 to Codman he ended his letter with the significant warning, “P.S. Be very careful what you put in your letter, as E. may read it.”⁸⁴ Although he never commented on his younger friend’s honesty in marriage, Codman—himself once in the same situation—had strong opinions on the subject. When a book was published specifically discussing this once

⁸² Ogden Codman to Robert Tritton, 2 October 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁸³ Robert Tritton to Ogden Codman, 16 December 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁸⁴ Robert Tritton to Ogden Codman, 21 August 1932, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

taboo subject of homosexual men and marriage he exploded in a fury without parallel in his voluminous correspondence.

Wish to Remain

“Indeed letters are a pleasure to look forward to when one lives so quietly in the country. Living at Gregy is in many ways like living in Lincoln, only the climate here is infinitely less trying.”⁸⁵ Codman wrote often in these terms late in life, almost always portraying his life as far more retiring than it actually was—with so many visitors coming and going. Through the 1930’s as the depression ground on, and his finances only worsened, Codman at times felt acutely the possibility of a forced repatriation—which, nostalgia for his native New England notwithstanding, he firmly opposed. To Tritton he anxiously confided at the height of these worries, “I am feeling a perfect pauper, and it will not be long before I shall give up all the joys of life and retire to Lincoln, Massachusetts to keep the house open for the family, whilst they luxuriate in the hectic gaities of the Boston season.”⁸⁶ Ultimately, the master of Gregy came to realize that these feelings for the United States were so nostalgic that he could best keep old New England close by remaining abroad—he fully understood, the world he pined for no longer existed. Recalling Newport where he had experienced his earliest professional success, he acknowledged that by 1937 he knew there would be nothing there for him, “I spent the summer of 1919 in Newport, and the place had changed so much since my first

⁸⁵ Ogden Codman to Frances Sturgis, 26 February 1936, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁸⁶ Ogden Codman to Robert Tritton, 28 December 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

visit there in the 1890's, so I feel sure I should feel quite a stranger there in 1937."⁸⁷

Even as early as the 1920's Codman had come to realize how strongly nostalgia guided his thoughts of home,

Reading all the articles about Beacon Hill makes me feel quite homesick. If they had not destroyed so many of the nice old houses, and messed the place up so, I do not think I could keep away. But I think automobiles have ruined Beacon Street, and I miss so many landmarks when I am in Boston, both architectural and human that it makes me feel quite homesick when I am there. One realizes the changes that have taken place in the last 40 years more when one returns to a place after long absences, than do the people that have always remained there. They had time to adapt themselves to the changes.⁸⁸

In leaving the United States behind completely, Codman allowed himself to remain steeped in nostalgia for a world past without the need to confront unpalatable realities.

Only once after his permanent move to French soil did he return home; by the time of his 1922 visit, however, he could no longer reconcile himself to the many changes in American culture, and he re-crossed the Atlantic sooner than he had originally intended. He never again returned to his beloved New England. Even during the German occupation of France, Codman remained at Gregy—with his new family to look after him. When the Germans confiscated the estate, he retreated to his bed and there he remained until liberation—reading novels and architectural books, and subsisting almost entirely on chocolates. Writing to an American friend who had recently lost his mother, Codman explained in 1938 how, if at all possible, he intended to remain with his adopted family of friends, "I have not crossed the ocean since my own mother died in 1922, and doubt very much if I ever cross again, unless driven to it by what I hope will not take

⁸⁷ Ogden Codman to "Paul," 3 April 1937, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 17, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁸⁸ Ogden Codman to "Aunt Fanny," 27 February 1924, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 8, The Boston Athenaeum.

place again during my lifetime, a general European war.”⁸⁹ These words indicate not only an intention to remain, but a strong preference to do so. Thus, Codman steadfastly remained at Gregy, steeped in the America of the past, carefully drawing up lists and genealogies of ancestors long dead—with his many friends always around him.

Central to the strength and contentment Codman found in his European life was this alternative family he had brought together—due at least in part to a shared sexual temperament, he always felt more comfortable with them than with the Codmans back in Massachusetts. Writing to his brother Hugh, who along with all of the siblings—save Ogden—remained at the family house in Lincoln, Codman uncharacteristically expressed loneliness, and urged a visit—yet still asserted that his adopted household would always be central to his life, “It is all I can do to bear being alone here, or in Cannes, with all of my things around me, and my servants who are like friends, having been with me so long.”⁹⁰ While loneliness is in evidence, as it had been in the wandering years in New York following his marriage, a degree of defiance shows itself repeatedly in reference to this alternative family he had constructed around his French manorhouse—and preferred to remain with. At Francis White’s arrival, this sense of an alternative family grew even more pronounced and he settled into his most contented period. Despite near annual visits from his siblings, Codman spent the majority of his days apart from his biological family, and occasionally expressed wonder about the world passing him by in his “retired” life. Writing to his friend Mrs. Guy Norman, he mused, “I envy you your grandson so much, I do wish I had one like him, to keep me posted in what the young

⁸⁹ Ogden Codman to Chester Burden, 7 April 1938, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 18, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁹⁰ Ogden Codman to Hugh Codman, 5 November 1923, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 8, The Boston Athenaeum.

generation are about.”⁹¹ Yet, if he did not have children running about the grounds of Gregy, its master did have plenty of young people—generally young men, and most often homosexuals—in this way he remained abreast of the changing in an emerging public discourse on same-sex sexuality.

20th Century Changes: A Public Discussion Emerges

Much as he had done in his younger days, Codman continued to seek out information—most often printed material—on male same-sex attractions. By the time he reached middle age a proliferation of materials were becoming readily available. No longer forced to search out obscure texts or interpret cryptic references, Codman could now find works that discussed the issue far more openly. If these texts appear evasive to the twenty-first century reader, a look back toward the late nineteenth century and its impenetrable public wall of silence on homosexuality is instructive. Never an intellectual in the highly curious and ferociously driven manner of his friend Edith Wharton, Codman’s reading always remained decidedly middle brow: memoirs and novels especially predominated. Yet as an upper class man with ample leisure time, he nonetheless read a great deal—and the texts he read and discussed with his friends shed light on an emerging public discourse on sexuality in general, and homosexuality in particular, during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

In August of 1931 Codman wrote to Robert Tritton, “I am reading ‘The Other Man’s Saucer’ for a second time, just after finishing it, to be sure I missed no bits.”⁹² For

⁹¹ Ogden Codman to Mrs. Guy Norman, 3 August 1933, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 14, The Boston Athenaeum.

⁹² Ogden Codman to Robert Tritton, 24 August 1931, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 13, The Boston Athenaeum.

the former Beacon Hill dandy, a novel centered on male romantic friendships was sure to be of interest: after all, he too had now organized his life around this important institution. The novel, published in the United States in 1930, explores the late childhood and early adulthood of the central hero Shaw Latimer, an aristocrat from a landed English family. Once the hero leaves his loving family for boarding school and later Oxford University he embarks on a series of intense male friendships. Each ends in frustration and unhappiness as he confronts men always unable to acknowledge the relationships openly—even to themselves. Near the end of the story, after repeated references to his lack of interest in females, Latimer finally meets a young woman who he believes himself in love with. After spending only a short weekend with her however he, “became listless. With her lovings and her pawings she sapped his vitality.”⁹³

At last in his friendship with Orm Lind, Latimer believes he has found the ideal friend he has so long searched for. As Lind explains, the two had hit it off so easily; they seemed destined for one another, “Liking or disliking has very little to do with our relationship. You are part of me and I am part of you...I am just as much a part of you as your foot is. You might suddenly get to dislike the shape of your foot, but you wouldn’t want to cut it off.”⁹⁴ Having met someone as comfortable in a male friendship as Lind, Latimer himself becomes tormented by self-doubt; in a climatic scene after deciding Lind represents all that is wrong with his life, Latimer attempts to drown his beloved friend who seems to be preventing him from a normal marriage—only to fail, and in turn to be rescued by him. In an unmistakable autobiographical gesture, the author revealingly dedicated the book, “To Peter—In Spite of Everything.”

⁹³ J. Keith Winter, Other Man’s Saucer (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1930), 200.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 261.

Unlike the nineteenth century texts that dealt with male same-sex attractions, this novel—as a product of an emerging public discourse on this once-forbidden topic—spells out particulars quite openly. Interestingly, Winter discusses and condemns the nineteenth century insistence on never acknowledging such attractions. From the moment he arrives at boarding school for instance, the hero Latimer learns that while romantic male friendships abound among the boys, they were still publicly denounced, “on the assumption that friendship between boys of different ages is unnatural, not to say wicked, the public school recognizing regretfully the inevitability of such friendships decrees that they shall at least be conducted in decent secrecy.”⁹⁵ Above all it is this charge against nineteenth century hypocrisy, in conjunction with a new openness in discussing these friendships among men that places the otherwise obscure book alongside such well-known efforts as Radclyffe Hall’s 1928 novel, The Well of Loneliness.

It is Latimer’s sister, the sexually mature Sadie who calls the reader’s attention to the unmistakable physical aspect of her brother’s intense friendships, “His infatuation with this boy is ridiculous, if nothing worse. I only hope he will avoid being expelled or something equally foolish.’ ‘What do you mean Sadie?’ But Sadie would only smile a mysterious smile and shrug her lovely shoulders.”⁹⁶ Similarly, when Latimer’s romantic friend breaks with him, and subsequently beats him, he all but reveals the sexual component of the relationship with an ancient Greek reference obvious to many by 1930, “‘He pulled off most of my clothes, then he produced a knotted dressing gown cord and thrashed me. I think it must have gone on for nearly five minutes, but after a time I could hardly feel anything...’ There was such concentrated bitterness in his voice that

⁹⁵ Ibid., 68.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 68.

something prompted Jetta to ask: 'Have you told me everything, Shaw?' He looked out at the brave tree 'Athens.' 'At least, everything that can be told,' he said."⁹⁷ Numerous other references in the text dispel the nineteenth century myth that such friendships were no more than platonic. Of particular note is a reference to the male bathing spot, where, "it was impossible to swim properly. Besides, there were too many old men about, who stuck out in places where they shouldn't. They made him feel ill."⁹⁸ Another reference to a man loitering around the public lavatory would have had similar resonance with Codman—as his letters to Arthur Little in the 1890's clearly illustrate, such sites were well known to men who sought out sexual assignations.

The Odd Man Out

While The Other Man's Saucer illustrates an emerging public discourse on homosexuality as it simultaneously exposes the hypocrisy of the nineteenth century's absolute silence on the issue, another book Codman read at the height of the great depression brought an even sharper focus to the discourse—indeed, so moved was the master of Gregy that he copied entire passages down in his letterbook. English novelist Douglas Goldring's 1935 memoir, Odd Man Out: The Autobiography of a 'Propaganda Novelist', recounts his youth at Oxford University and later efforts to become a professional writer in both England and Ireland. Approximately Codman's age, and thus another transitional figure bridging different worlds, Goldring presents his own same-sex preferences through ambiguous and elusive clues—while excoriating social trends among the irresponsible generations who followed him.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 87.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 176.

Goldring also discusses youthful male friendships among the upper classes during the late nineteenth century, and it is in these discussions that he acknowledges his own attractions. In a chapter focused on the “unnaturally repressed” and “morbid” sexual life of school masters, the author confesses to his own schoolboy indiscretions—a result of, he implies, soaking up this unhealthy atmosphere. He casually recalls undergoing, “a fierce attack of calf-love for a pupil of Cecil Sharpe’s, several years my senior.”⁹⁹ However, as the narrative follows the inevitable passage of time and the author’s entrance into adulthood, these male same-sex passions go underground. From this point forward he openly discusses his two unhappy marriages, while permitting himself only heavily coded language on the still-touchy subject of homosexuality. For the inquisitive Codman (and the vigilant historian) such a code could be discerned with relative ease. Goldring no doubt drew Codman into the secret through his discussions of the books he read—Whitman, Wilde, Lord Alfred Douglas’s poetry, Huysmans, and Houseman’s ‘A Shropshire Lad’—and of the friends he meets—Robbie Ross, Reginald Turner, and another “delightful creature who seemed like a survival of the ‘Green Carnation’ days”.¹⁰⁰ When speaking of time spent in a foreign city, he significantly zeros in on a public bath, recalling, “a municipal Turkish bath establishment (the latter institution I look back upon with affection and regret).”¹⁰¹ Similarly, the novelist’s special friend, clearly his closest relationship, is never identified beyond the cryptic label, “The Influence”—with whom he set up a “bachelor household” for a number of years in

⁹⁹ Douglas Goldring, *Odd Man Out: The Autobiography of a ‘Propaganda Novelist’* (London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1935), 51.

¹⁰⁰ The Green Carnation of course was the flower worn by Oscar Wilde’s young aesthetic protégés throughout fashionable London at the height of the playwright’s fame; Douglas Goldring, *Odd Man Out.*, 54.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 296.

London.¹⁰² Goldring makes the point repeatedly through the memoir that male friendships (and same-sex sexuality) seemed superior in the nineteenth century world he had thrived in—something had been lost he stresses, with the greater openness the twentieth century brought.

Strikingly, these carefully constructed codes disappear when Goldring turns to his bitter observations on the decline of society—or, “the ever increasing vulgarization of English life,” that he insisted accompanied the greater openness that began to proliferate after the First World War. For him, and for many upper class men who had maintained such deep satisfying lives centered on male friendships during the last century, the new openness seemed to usher in far more disadvantages than benefits. Speaking of the public schools he warned, “I cannot remember more than two or three of my schoolfellows who had any ingrained homo-sexual tendencies. On the other hand, of the young public school and university men I have come across in recent years, fully 75% of them are quite openly and even conceitedly homo-sexual. This may be the result of the war, or of the modern and scientific and ‘outspoken’ sex education.”¹⁰³ Further, the upheaval of the war had brought other changes to academia, “the universities produced an astonishing number of effeminates of the type known as ‘fairies,’ and a mannerless crowd of young hooligans, with money to burn.”¹⁰⁴ Overall, Goldring could predict only imminent destruction as a result of this new open sexual system, “‘Bright Young People,’ popularized gate-crashing, took drugs, indulged or pretended to indulge in unnatural vices, and drove their cars about at high speed when under the influence of drink, in the

¹⁰² Ibid., 60.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 227.

hope, if there was a smash, that the case would be reported in the Sunday newspapers.

Publicity was the drug for which they chiefly craved.”¹⁰⁵

In a letter to Julian Sampson, Codman wrote of his recent perusal of the Goldring memoir—and urged him to find him other works on homosexuality that he knew to be now available, “Do not forget The Odd Man Out, and any books like it.”¹⁰⁶ Then in a reminder that the great depression continued to preoccupy him, he hastened—“second hand copies please.” Codman left behind additional evidence illustrating that it was above all else, Goldring’s discussions of male same-sex attractions that drew him to the volume: he copied those passages concerning the subject into his letterbook. In addition to the sentence declaring the fairy a recent product of the modern English university, he also hand-copied such passages as, “page 228—‘The male contemporaries of the emancipated young women were preponderantly homo-sexual thus a match for them.’”¹⁰⁷ Indeed, all such references to male homosexuality he duly copied into his letterbook.

The book would have resonated with Codman for a number of important reasons—all illustrating how the world of male romantic friendships and male same-sex assignments, no longer existed. By the 1920’s a new set of rules regulating homosexuality had emerged—most importantly, an unprecedented openness now permeated the subject. For Goldring and Codman, such changes were hard to adapt to—and ultimately the two longed for the earlier sexual system they had both reached maturation under. Goldring’s nostalgia, coupled with a denunciation of those changes that had overtaken society after the First World War, echo many of Codman’s own letters

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 227.

¹⁰⁶ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 10 November 1935, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 15, The Boston Athenaeum.

¹⁰⁷ Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 15. Passage copied from Douglas Goldring, Odd Man Out, 228.

from the 1920's and 1930's. Granting at least a tacit agreement to the author's negative portrayal of this newly changed sexual system, Codman—despite a meticulous transcription of the homoerotic passages—never commented on these vehement attacks on the dissipated morals of the roaring twenties.

Conclusion: A Backward Glance Toward the Gilded Age

“A friend has lent me Mrs. Harry Lehr's book, 'King Lehr,' and I have read it, I will admit with much interest as I knew nearly all the people she mentions, some very well, others as little as possible.”¹⁰⁸ 'King Lehr' and the Gilded Age, published in the United States in 1935, narrated the unhappy twenty-nine year marriage of Elizabeth Lehr—primarily focusing on the couple's life among the fashionable wealthy in Newport and New York around the turn of the century. Codman felt himself immediately drawn to the book for two complex and interdependent reasons. Here was both an intimate description of the sexual system he had reached maturity under, and at the same time a relatively open discussion of the homosexuality found within it—the latter rubric thus representing the new and open public discourse now possible on the subject. Not surprisingly, this memoir more than any other resonated powerfully with the now-elderly Codman.

The central drama of the story focuses on Mrs. Lehr's revelation that her marriage to the fashionable man-about-town Harry Lehr (called “King” because of his great success in rising quickly through the ranks of New York society) had never been consummated—his homosexuality had prevented it. Although such an arrangement had

¹⁰⁸ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 25 March 1936, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, The Boston Athenaeum.

been quite common for the era, Mrs. Lehr directly challenges these nineteenth century standards by exposing the deception to the light of day—for instance she explains to the reader in no uncertain terms how her husband had deliberately planned the arrangement, primarily to secure her considerable fortune. As she prepared for her wedding night, Mrs. Lehr recalls her new husband abruptly announcing, “our marriage will never be a marriage in anything but name. I do not love you, I can never love you. I can school myself to be polite to you, but that is all...you are actually repulsive to me.’ A second later he was gone and I was left alone sitting by the fire, staring into the ruins of my life.”¹⁰⁹

Beyond the marriage question, Mrs. Lehr draws attention to Harry’s effeminacy repeatedly—indeed, recalling their first meeting she presciently noted his, “curiously high pitched” voice, and further observed, “all women were happy in his society. He liked them and understood them. He had an almost feminine intuition.”¹¹⁰ Later in the narrative she again underlines what she perceives as his suspect effeminacy,

He [Harry] spent all of his time in their [women’s] company, listened to their confidences, gave them (whenever they sought it) his advice with the same careful consideration, whether the problem was arranging a dinner or luring an erring husband back to the fold. He chose their dresses for them, planned their house parties, taught them how to manage their love affairs and found them husbands.¹¹¹

Much like Codman’s captivation of upper class women who wanted him to redesign their houses, and Fitch’s alliance with society women as patrons and actresses as substitutions of his own “Peggy” drag persona, it was Harry Lehr’s affinity with women—and their loyal support—that resulted in his enormous success in high society, eventually

¹⁰⁹ Elizabeth Drexel Lehr, ‘King Lehr’ and the Gilded Age (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1935), 44-46.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 154.

culminating in the advantageous marriage to Elizabeth. Significantly, the author also notes that these, “friendships with women were so completely sexless...[that] the men were pleased enough to have him [Harry] always in the company of their wives. They knew that he would give them no cause for jealousy.”¹¹²

As was often the case with the effeminate homosexual, Lehr’s feminine traits extended also to his assuming a drag persona on stage. “Delighting in women’s clothes,” he took the next logical step and performed female roles repeatedly for the Baltimore “Paint and Powder Club.” Mrs. Lehr explained his phenomenal success, “the whole of Baltimore society rang with praises of his performance of feminine parts in the different operettas which the Club presented.”¹¹³ Indeed, she provided excerpts from reviews of these performances, which Lehr had at the time carefully cut out of the local newspapers and preserved,

Mr. Harry Lehr was simply a picture. Nature having been very kind in figure and grace of movement was further enhanced by two stunning gowns. Add to this a faultless pair of shoulders and a throat which might be the envy of many women, and a natural aptitude for dancing and posing, and an idea will be formed of his success. He was one of the hits of the evening.¹¹⁴

In keeping with this effeminate male model, Lehr was generally perceived as a dandy of the first order—“New York’s Beau Brummell.”¹¹⁵ As had always been the case with Clyde Fitch, and as the Lehr memoir makes clear, despite his widespread social success, Harry endured a great deal of negative attention for his effeminate gender behavior. Another newspaper quotation—again unattributed by Mrs. Lehr—illustrates the stigma

¹¹² Ibid., 58.

¹¹³ Ibid., 53.

¹¹⁴ No newspaper provided in text for citation, Ibid., 53.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 60.

that so often accompanied the effeminate man's success in any venue. Writing about his intention to summer again in fashionable Newport, an article mocks,

Harry has provided himself with a particularly cute bathing suit of his own designing, with which to ravish the eyes of the 400. The vest will be décolleté in order to expose the whiteness of his snowy neck, and the trunks abbreviated so as not to deprive his admirers of a full view of his shapely limbs, which will be modestly encased with silken hose. A chic summer bonnet will protect his peach-blown complexion from the ardent rays of the fiery sun.¹¹⁶

Positioning herself as a new and sophisticated modern, Mrs. Lehr explains repeatedly throughout the work that she now is attempting to tell the truth about Harry—in other words, with new and far less reticent rules concerning sexuality, she at last will draw back the nineteenth century veil of silence. In doing so, she clearly sought to dismantle a sexual system that she thought so unfair to married women like herself—and ultimately to men like Harry who she stressed were forced to live their lives in secret. By bringing the subject into the public discourse, such works were indeed insuring that silences that had reigned for so long would not be continued. In addition to emphasizing his significant gender behavior, Mrs. Lehr presents indirect messages to the reader leading them to the inevitable conclusion that her husband was homosexual.

The climax of “King Lehr” centers on the revelations found in the notorious locked diary discovered only after Harry's death. Below are some of the most revealing passages printed near the end of the volume,

April 30th [1916], Two young men from the American came to tea; one was young Hamilton, Edith Gould's cousin. He is very handsome, the most beautiful creature I have ever seen.

May 13th: Went to an amusing tea at Howard Sturgis's.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 61.

September 4th: Later Mr. Burden-Muller came to tea and also Harcourt Johnstone, the son of Lady Johnstone, a splendid looking young Englishman with marvelous skin.

December 25th: Bessie lunched at the Hotel Ritz with Emily Yznaga and the two young Yznaga children. I lunched at home with a dear young Romanian friend of mine. We had a marvelous time together.¹¹⁷

The obvious message deduced from these repeated references to attractive men is a further articulation of homosexuality beyond the earlier focus on effeminacy. A tea with Howard Sturgis also indicates an involvement in the transatlantic upper class homosexual friendship network—here the couple’s permanent move to Paris seems significant. Near the end of the story, before providing the passages from the diary, Mrs. Lehr reveals the secret that had doomed her marriage from the start, “after his death I went through his papers, [and] came upon the diary he had always kept locked. It told me everything. For the first time I understood. ‘I can never love any woman,’ he had said to me so often...it had been true. Yet he had known love, had given an emotion of which I had not believed him capable. His diary was a love story.”¹¹⁸ In many ways the metaphor of the locked diary functions as a perfect metaphor for the nineteenth century sexual system that men with same-sex attractions lived under: once resolutely locked, and behind an impenetrable public wall of silence, but now in the new twentieth century forever opened and exposed.

To Codman—who had come to maturity and had always lived in this nineteenth century sexual system—Mrs. Lehr’s telling of her husband’s secret story was utterly inexcusable. In his letter to Julian Sampson he denounced this public exposure,

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 321.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 288.

searching for an explanation for such an act, and could only conclude by questioning her honesty—and even her sanity,

It is indeed a vulgar book, and mostly about vulgar people... Mrs. Lehr writes about spending the first night of her marriage alone—she must have known all about Harry before she actually married him. He really was blatantly so. And everyone thought so, and nearly everyone said so. And to write all about this, for a few dollars seems to me to prove what I have always said that she was a bit mad.¹¹⁹

Codman's sensitivity on Mrs. Lehr's book is understandable: after all he had lived under this system which had not allowed any public discourse on homosexuality, and had thrived—now suddenly, many people were changing the rules—exposing all that had once been hidden. As a transitional figure, who in many ways bridges these two sexual systems, Codman's unease with an increasingly public discussion of his sexual proclivities is understandable. For him, Mrs. Lehr's public accounting of her marriage represented a betrayal in no uncertain terms of the censorship of sexual matters that they had all once accepted so unquestioningly. Further, his anger at the author indicates—if only indirectly—that Leila Codman had been well aware that her husband's sexual interests lay elsewhere.

In his impassioned letter to Julian Sampson, Codman confirmed also Mrs. Lehr's accuracy in presenting Harry as an effeminate man. He writes of the memoir, "She might have called it 'King of Queens,' as some of us call 'Bob' Tritton." Recalling that Tritton too had married points to further examples of effeminate men who, finding alternatives so unpalatable in a restricted nineteenth century world, had bowed to this apparent pressure

¹¹⁹ Codman reveals here how he had managed to keep up with homosexual slang of the day—historian Rictor Norton explains that homosexual men during the 1930's often referred to each other as "so." Rictor Norton, *The Myth of the Modern Homosexual: Queer History and the Search for Cultural Unity* (London: Cassell, 1997), 99.

to conform. Finally, Codman asserts his own distinctive model of homosexuality—as a man attracted to other men, but who had no effeminate gender behaviors—by declaring his own sexual attraction to Harry as a young effeminate man, “There is a photograph of Harry and Charley Greenough dressed as the ‘Heavenly Twins.’ I should like to know what the locked diary had to say about that.”¹²⁰

More than any of the other books from the increasingly public discourse on homosexuality that Codman was exposed to during his later years, “King Lehr” precipitated by far the greatest reaction. After all, Elizabeth Lehr’s volume not only presented the world he had once inhabited, but also exposed its secrets—thus in no uncertain terms contributing to a new and relatively open public discussion of homosexuality. Taken together, Codman’s reading of these revelatory twentieth century texts, reveal a man aware of a new sexual system, but due to age and perhaps a sense that his interest in young men would now be suspect—his gender behavior notwithstanding—still resisted reconciliation with the new order. His bitter denunciation of Mrs. Lehr for going public with her story, and his failure to comment on Goldring’s negative portrayal of twentieth century homosexuals only further confirms a palpable discomfort with new twentieth century ways.

¹²⁰ Ogden Codman to Julian Sampson, 25 March 1936, Ogden Codman Papers, Volume 16, The Boston Athenaeum.

Conclusion:
The Conundrum of Male Effeminacy

It seems appropriate to end this study with the story of another man's struggle with his same-sex desires—and effeminacy. Known to us only by his synonym, “Jeb Alexander,” was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1899—some thirty years after Claude Hartland, and a full generation after Fitch and Codman. After attending college in Virginia, he settled in the city of Washington—where his family also lived in a nearby suburb. From 1918 until his death in 1965, Alexander religiously maintained a daily diary recording his life and loves; homosexuality in particular, preoccupied his thoughts in these entries.¹ Unlike the men of Fitch and Codman's era, Alexander understood his same-sex desires through the lens of the medical literature: often referring to himself and his friends as “inverts” or “homosexuals”—words the older men never used. Alexander's relation to effeminacy is also markedly different from nineteenth century norms. Unlike Claude Hartland, Clyde Fitch and others who equated their effeminacy directly with homosexuality, the younger man did not. Effeminacy was still suspect, and a dangerous stigma to avoid, yet, although himself effeminate, he never referred to his “woman within.” Instead, Alexander ferociously strived to stamp out his own effeminate behavior and repeatedly denounced it in others.

As historian Paul Robinson simply, but importantly explains, “not surprisingly, the further back one goes [in time], the greater the distance from the lives (and stories) of

¹ Nina Russell, Editor, Jeb and Dash: A Diary of Gay Life, 1918-1945 (Boston: Faber & Faber, Inc., 1993).

gay men today.”² In many significant ways, the early twentieth century world Alexander recorded in the pages of his diary, resembles homosexual models from our own day—not only in his relationship to effeminacy, but also his quest for an “ideal friend “ or companion. After all, he was of a generation that had reached maturity after the infamous 1895 Oscar Wilde trials that many historians argue connected more directly than ever before the two hitherto independent problems of male effeminacy and homosexuality—at least in the public mind. Those such as Codman and Fitch who came before, lived in a world where the two were both stigmatized, but not automatically connected. For Alexander and his generation, such connections were taken for granted.

Many studies have now established the fact that with the First World War and its aftermath—especially in the 1920’s—a new era of openness and public awareness dawned on the subject of homosexuality. In his synthetic look at the wide sweep of the entire century in the United States, John Loghery in The Other Side of Silence: Men’s Lives and Gay Identities: A Twentieth Century History, notes how conditions at the time of the 1919 Newport scandal were in great upheaval; a new system seemed to be on the verge of emergence.³ He finds that the, “concept of a ‘homosexual identity’ in America was in an early but dynamic stage. It was possible for a man like Harvard professor F.O. Matthiessen to write his lover in 1925 about the ‘unchartered’ land they were inhabiting,

² Paul Robinson, Gay Lives: Homosexual Autobiography from John Addington Symonds to Paul Monette (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), xii.

³ It is worth noting the very real possibility of Codman’s involvement in this subculture and scandal: he lived in Newport that summer of 1919, and later that year made his final irrevocable decision to leave the United States for the greener pastures of France. The timing seems an interesting coincidence. On the Newport scandal please see, George Chauncey, “Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion? Homosexual Identities and the Construction of Sexual Boundaries in the World War I Era.” In, Martin Duberman, et., al, Editors, Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past (New York: New American Library, 1989), 294-317.

which (he nervously observed) called on them to ‘create everything for themselves.’”⁴

Matthiessen and his partner artist Russell Cheney, involved in a relationship between two equals they wanted to publicly acknowledge, were indeed charting new territory. Yet, as Loughery and others neglect to adequately explain, an earlier sexual system, which had also provided a space for homosexual behaviors had long preceded this twentieth century world. This dissertation has sought to resurrect this earlier world and to provide a roadmap backwards in time. As Paul Robinson’s comment underlines however, each step backward from our own era grows progressively difficult as it becomes necessary to relearn entirely new cultures, codes, and languages.

In searching for a sharper understanding of the now-forgotten nineteenth century sexual system prevalent among the middle and upper classes, it is best to conceptualize male effeminacy and homosexuality as two independent variables—each highly stigmatized, but existing in parallel formations. Thus, for the effeminate Fitch, bruising attacks and an almost constant effort to marginalize him were the result not of his homosexuality, but of his effeminate behavior—which so many saw as an ignoble surrender of male privilege. While some did occasionally draw a connection between his behavior and homosexuality, they did so rarely—until late in Fitch’s life as the sexual system began to undergo cataclysmic changes. In complete contrast to Fitch, the case of Ogden Codman—a man with normative male gender behavior, and thus free from the taint of effeminacy—illustrates someone entirely free from stigmatization, and as a result strikingly unconcerned with public exposure of his same-sex attractions. Only with the gradual collapse of a once impenetrable wall of silence, and an increasingly open public

⁴ John Loughery, The Other Side of Silence: Men’s Lives and Gay Identities: A Twentieth Century History (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1998), viii.

discussion of sexuality in the first decades of the twentieth century did Codman find himself no longer automatically immune from the charge of homosexuality—or indeed, effeminacy. In a world where homosexuality and effeminacy were now inextricably linked, unpleasant associations he once thought impossible, were now commonplace. Under this new system he now faced an unprecedented scrutiny for his romantic attachments. Never really capable of adjusting to these new sexual mores, Codman continued to live his life along nineteenth century lines—remaining curious, but still firmly entrenched in a value system where he pursued young men and not equals—while carefully sidestepping the new openness.

As this dissertation has also sought to document through analysis of this nineteenth century world, men with recognized same-sex attractions—and suspect effeminate men in particular—were generally unable to live openly in a relationship between two equals. Although they desperately sought such relationships, Clyde Fitch, Edward Perry Warren, and Howard Sturgis among others, all ultimately lived in relationships with dependents—the arrangement Codman organized his life around as well. Only under the guise of secretary and employer, for instance were such male same-sex intimacies publicly tolerated. In the United States of the 1890's, such open relationships between two men of comparable age lay far in the future. Such monumental difficulties notwithstanding, this work has illustrated repeatedly that these men were still able to fashion important and meaningful relationships with other men under the acceptable rubric of friendship. Indeed, these pages display in a way seldom articulated how centrally important the institution of friendship actually was in so many men's lives; with few other options for same-sex relations, friendship assumed a new and

hither-to unappreciated role in the lives of so many men we would today recognize as homosexual.

If this effort to reconstruct a now forgotten nineteenth century sexual system could be boiled down to one succinct point it would be this, again borrowed from Paul Robinson: “in other times and other places homosexuals have often done quite different things and entertained different ideas about the meaning of their orientation. Nor have they necessarily been unhappy with their fate, as we perhaps too smugly assume with our enlightened views about coming out.”⁵ Like Robinson’s work, this dissertation—by illustrating a sexual system with distinctly different understandings from our own—seeks to “expose the provincialism of our current notions of what gay life is or should be.”⁶

⁵ Paul Robinson, *Gay Lives*, xii.

⁶ *Ibid.*, xii.

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