

PATER'S CROSSINGS-OUT:
INSCRIPTIONS OF TRANSITION IN *THE RENAISSANCE*¹

Hilary Fraser

Pater's first book, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), was a kind of coming out, revealing the young Oxford don to be the author of a cluster of discrete articles, including the anonymously published "Winckelmann" and "Poems by William Morris." Their implications excited new attention when repurposed into a controversial book with a compelling overarching thesis. Its publication history is an exemplary story of print in transition.² Under a new title, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, the book went into three further editions in Pater's lifetime, its Contents list evolving with each iteration prior to the fourth edition of 1893, the copy-text chosen for volume one of *The Collected Works* published by Oxford University Press in 2025. Ian Small goes so far as to observe "it is perhaps not really accurate to talk simply of 'editions,'" for "at what point these different 'editions' can be said to be different works is not easy to determine" (38). Its textual history offers a fine instance of mediamorphosis, involving many crossings-out, both large and small, literal and metaphorical; and if you cross something out, you almost always add something else in. This is apt enough for a book that conceives the historical Renaissance not as a conventional re-birth, but an exercise in seriality more akin to the bumpy transitions of evolutionary change. Pater's volume thus embodies the very temporality of which he writes. Its textual variations capture other transitions – epochal, epistemological, inter-medial, sexual – that govern the book's transformative thesis.

As well as the major transitions evident by comparing the Contents pages for each edition, Pater's evolving book is full of smaller variants. Some are simply refinements of punctuation or expression, to be sure, but others (like the macro-level variants) invite critical scrutiny. In "Winckelmann," for instance, Pater observes of Greek sculpture that it "deals almost exclusively