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**ESCAPE FROM AESTHETIC CONFINEMENT:
FINDING THE WAY BACK OUT OF PATER'S TRANSFIGURED WORLD**

By

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ABSTRACT

ESCAPE FROM AESTHETIC CONFINEMENT: FINDING THE WAY BACK OUT OF PATER'S TRANSFIGURED WORLD

By

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The dissertation is an investigation of a problematic aestheticism located in the writing of Walter Pater and transmitted to contemporary critical discourse via the canonized Modernists who inherited Pater's aesthetic: Wilde, Yeats, Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, and Lawrence, among others. It proceeds from a recognition that the unresolved epistemological problem at the center of Pater's aesthetic has enormous consequences both for constitution of the Modernist canon and for the procedures of academic criticism sanctioned by Structuralism and Deconstruction. A view that nothing can be known but one's own perceptions gives rise to an aesthetic of denial and projection in which the idealizing distortions shaped by the impulses of the desiring subject are substituted for historical reality.

Charting the development of Pater's aesthetic in his essay on Fichte's "Ideal Student," "Diaphanéité," "Coleridge's Writings," "Winckelmann," "Poems by William Morris," the "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance*, *Marius the Epicurean*, the imaginary portraits, and *Plato and Platonism*, I read in that history of Pater's writing a process of defensive and compensatory denial ending in capitulation and defeat. Situating Pater's two most tellingly confessional and autobiographical portraits, "The Child in the House" and "Emerald Uthwart," in a larger material history, I use the conceptual tools of historical materialism to identify the impinging forces in response to which Pater's defenses are activated. My history of Pater's work reveals the consequences of unresolved conflict between the fear of vulgarity driving him to seek sanctuary in the repressive order of Oxford life and longing for an ideal amounting to emancipation of the life of the body.

Given the limits of his Positivist-historicist ideology, I demonstrate Pater's inability to resolve that conflict because he lacks the systematic terms by which to identify and counter the forces which constrain him. Although Baudelaire reverts from a materialist aesthetic of revolutionary practice to a visionary idealism, unlike Pater he retains the theological categories by which to write a poetry that "contradicts fact" in such a way as to release the revolutionary potential of the aesthetic response. Whereas Pater and the Modernists who succeeded him could only reject and transfigure a world disfigured by capitalism, Baudelaire unleashes the force of Romantic irony to indict a disfigured world at the same time that he holds with determined resistance to his vision of a transfigured world.

The House Beautiful of art to which Pater has retreated becomes a hospital in which "appetite grows cold." As the impulse to freedom is thwarted by the repressive order of Victorian empire, Pater's desire for homosexual and social liberation sickens into necrophilia and sadomasochism. Coming to identify with the ruling order which has kept him tormented, Pater in turn becomes tormenter as the hospital in turn becomes an imperial fortress and, at last, an asylum for the criminally insane. Having surrendered the terms of resistance to the "modern, relative spirit," Pater undergoes a reactionary conversion.

Pater's failure to write a poetic prose which "contradicts fact" in such a way as to release the revolutionary energy generated by the tension between ideal and real informs the subsequent failure of Modernism to find in private metahistory--or the mythical method--any alternative in history to fascism. His movement from capitulation and defeat to protofascism is typical of the course taken by Modernism.

The consequences of the Paterian fixation on forms and surfaces can be seen in the manipulative techniques of commercial advertising by which children are driven to kill each other for a pair of brand-name tennis shoes. Having deconstructed the categories by which to resist such invasions, academic theorists playing indiscriminately with

techniques properly specific to Structuralism, Deconstruction, Freudian psychoanalysis, or even Marxism leave human beings defenseless against the onslaughts of technology privately held hostage to the profit motive. The way out of confinement to idealizing aesthetic distortions and back onto a historical ground where effective human agency is again acknowledged cannot be forged by critics whose techniques render them socially blind.

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DEDICATION

**For my father, whose courage was
equaled only by his compassion,
and my mother, who has stood fast**

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There are many people without whom this work could not have been completed: my director, Victor N. Paananen, who introduced me to Marx and knows what it means to enable people; his wife, Donna, who got me work; Reade and David Dornan, who gave me shelter; Robin Bolig, whose energy in preparing the manuscript was unfailing; Jim Grasman, whose generosity has been a mainstay; Minaz Jooma and Russell Angrisani, whose vitality brought infusions of pleasure to the task; and Larry Manglitz, whose imagination has been a cherished port of call.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	The Problem of Aesthetic Historicism: Walling Out the World	1
II.	Wall-Building: Bricks and Mortar	42
III.	House Beautiful	90
IV.	Hospice: The Immense Nausea of Advertisements	142
V.	The Worst of All Possible Worlds: Indeterminacy within a Closed System and a Discourse of Impotence	187
	Works Cited	198

Although Pater remains deeply rooted in the nineteenth century, and so is usually classified as a Late Romantic, there can be no doubt that his work prefigured the problems that have become dominant in our time. And the parallels between his *fin de siècle* and our own fast-fading century make it all the more fitting that he should now emerge again from the shadows to which his aesthetic label has so long confined him.

--Wolfgang Iser, *Walter Pater: The Aesthetic Moment* (x)

Chapter I. The Problem of Aesthetic Historicism:
Walling Out the World

The technology of reading distributed by Deconstruction dictates the uses of mind in relation to texts, limiting those uses to what the technology can do. A reading, like a test, can only measure what it is designed to measure; what it cannot measure it does not record: the sum of its measurements is false. Or as Terry Eagleton reminds us in his *Literary Theory: An Introduction*,

What you have defined as a 'literary' work will always be closely bound up with what you consider 'appropriate' critical techniques: a 'literary' work will mean, more or less, one which can be usefully illuminated by such methods of enquiry. . . . what you get out of the work will depend in large measure on what you put into it in the first place. . . . (80)

In *Transfigured World: Walter Pater's Aesthetic Historicism*,¹ Carolyn Williams' reading capacities have been severely, and symptomatically, circumscribed by the critical technology she has opted to use. While the buttons on her touchtone phone have accessed certain insights, her reliance on that mode of access precludes what she might have observed if she had chosen to walk around the block instead. This is what Williams' critical techniques have enabled her to see. I take the terminus of her book as the limit of her vision. The point at which she stops is the point at which she can see no more.

On the "side" of historicism, Pater begins by acknowledging epistemological difficulties that are structurally similar to those involved in the procedures of "aesthetic criticism." He begins, in other words, with the moment of identification between subject and object. Projected into the field of historical inquiry, this identification constitutes the epistemological problem we today call "cultural relativism." Pater was acutely sensitive to this problem--as in his aesthetic criticism--yet while he insists that the moment of identification is the necessary "first step," he also insists that it is only the first step. . . . In the effort to restore a sense of objectivity, he proposes an aesthetic solution in which the sense of historical difference is recreated from within the present

¹Published in 1989, it is a revision of the author's 1977 doctoral dissertation, *Pater's Typology* (U of Virginia).

subject as a representation. "We cannot truly conceive the [past] age: we can conceive the element it has contributed to our culture: we can treat the subjects of the age bringing that into relief". . . . The lines of "relief" separating subject and object are drawn provisionally, of course; this operation manages to provide not objectivity but only the "sense of" objectivity, together with the tacit acknowledgement that such a "sense" is an aesthetic reconstruction. An awareness of the skeptical dimension of historicism, in other words, returns us to the aesthetic. Pater's historical representations are all bracketed by this awareness.

This sort of perspectivism concentrates on the present moment not as the ideal "now," but as the end point of a long history, the retrospective position from which the past may be totalized, its continuity may be constructed, and its differences may be gathered up into an identity. There is, in other words, a "kind of inconsistency" in Pater's treatment of the ideal present moment, which becomes in his work both the figure of radical discontinuity and the figure of retrospective totalization. If the impulse toward "modernity" may in several senses be considered the opposite of the impulse toward "history," Pater holds the two together in a radically conservative, dialectical relation. I have argued that it is Pater's strength to have practiced this "kind of inconsistency" as well as to have theoretically examined its consistent practice. (284)

The view from such a point is negligible. Having looked at the fundamental epistemological problem "we today call 'cultural relativism'" and noted that Pater's "aesthetic solution" restores not objectivity but only a "sense of" objectivity which is in fact an "aesthetic reconstruction" suitably attended by "awareness of the skeptical dimension of historicism," Ms. Williams is content to observe that the consequence of this "sort of perspectivism" is a "'kind of inconsistency' in Pater's treatment of the ideal present moment." To establish that there is this inconsistency, and that it becomes a figure both of "radical discontinuity" and of "retrospective totalization," by which Pater holds the impulses toward modernity and history in a "radically conservative, dialectical relation," is innocuous enough, if apparently gratuitous inasmuch as Williams does not explain why it is important to note that fact. But to argue that it is Pater's "strength" to have "practiced this 'kind of inconsistency'" is to make a virtue of avoidance. To conclude so is to leave off precisely where the problem begins, without appearing to acknowledge that the consequences of its irresolution have been both enormous and enormously counterproductive.

The attitude enacted by such a procedure trivializes the problem. If one is told that the consistent practice of inconsistency is a strong response to a problem, one is inclined to wonder: what difference does it make?

The problem is manifested in clearer as well as more insistent terms in the passage from *Marius the Epicurean* to which Williams' key phrase alludes:

And yet, with a kind of inconsistency in one who had taken for his philosophic ideal the *νόστος* of Aristippus--the pleasure of the ideal present, of the mystic now--there would come, together with that precipitate sinking of things into the past, a desire, after all, to retain "what was so transitive." Could he but arrest, for others also, certain clauses of experience, as the imaginative memory presented them to himself! In those grand, hot summers, he would have imprisoned the very perfume of the flowers. (127-28)

One must first recall that the reason why Marius has "taken for his philosophic ideal . . . the pleasure of the ideal present" is his reductive view of the epistemological problem. Nothing can be known with any certainty but one's own perceptions, one's own aesthetic experience, to which one is thus confined and by which one is thus carried along, like a piece of flotsam and jetsam, in the stream of one's lonely consciousness, from moment to transitive moment. One can then begin to delineate the problem of aestheticism in fairly simple and concrete language.

The longing to "retain" and "arrest, for others also," certain highly pleasurable but necessarily transitory qualities of experience which are felt so deeply and intensely at moments that they seem to approach the ideal--moments when actual experience coincides with what is oftener only imagined--is really quite common. The pleasure of eating an ice cream cone on a hot day, after all, has been described as heavenly. Most people discover, however, that the pleasure of eating that ice cream cone cannot be prolonged by making up yet another and another cone, for pleasure will give way to satiety and discomfort. More importantly, most people do not mistake the heavenly sensation of eating that ice cream cone for reality, "the real life" ("for ever and

ever," according to the Schlegel sisters in E.M. Forster's *Howards End*). They may say, settling into a deck chair after mowing the lawn and relishing every bite of a double-dipper, "This is the life," but they do not conclude that "life is this" and yearn for a way to prolong that illusion. Aesthetes do, and that is the problem.

Aesthetes substitute art for the ice cream cone and finding themselves at a loss between artistic experiences, since they have concluded that life is just the experience of art, seek to construct a continuous sequence of such experiences, which they then call the history of art. The "rule" that Pater "urges upon his readers," William Buckler writes in his Introduction to *Walter Pater: Three Major Texts*, is "adopted from Sainte-Beuve and is as secular as it is practical: 'To confine themselves to knowing beautiful things at first hand, and to nourish themselves thereby as discriminating amateurs, as accomplished humanists'" (12). As Wolfgang Iser formulates the "rule," the "individual does not need to set himself any goals or to make any decisions; the only response required of him is an uncommitted enjoyment" (139).

To the extent that aesthetes are successful in prolonging the illusion, moreover, they are exceedingly lonely people, always longing for someone to enter their illusory world and share with them the pleasure of ice cream cones, macaroons, second movement crescendos, play of light and shadow, cool breezes, or whatever sensory phenomena have provided the basis for their heightened experience of the "ideal present," the "mystic now." But since few people are willing to sit, as it were, for another man's or woman's vision, even when the aesthete induces someone to come into his *tableau vivant*, he is usually disappointed. The intruder will not sit still, insists on talking at the moment of musical climax, fails to observe the particular angle of the shaft of light; in short, disrupts the fluid but stable form of the aesthete's vision and leaves him lonelier than he was before.

Part of the problem here is that since the "junction" marked by Burke, when "aesthetic feeling frees itself from given rules and aesthetic objects and becomes a subjective quality of the percipient" (Iser 6), there are "no longer any aesthetic objects with an existence of their own--there are only aesthetic potentials in the empirical world which must each be realised individually" (Iser 64). For this reason, Iser notes, Oskar Becker "calls the structure of the aesthetic sphere 'Heraclitan'":

i.e. the 'same' experience by the 'same' person in relation to the 'same' aesthetic object cannot be repeated with any certainty. And so ultimately the aesthetic is to be found only in the extremely vulnerable 'momentary' experience of what in turn is an extremely vulnerable and also merely 'potential' object. This is what conditions the 'fragility' of the aesthetic. (64)

Becker is putting the extreme case, however, and forgetting that what "conditions the 'fragility' of the aesthetic" is not located solely in the consciousness of the beholder. Shifts in mood, the passage of time, and a world of historical experience filling that passage of time will, of course, alter the "percipient's" orientation to the object. Still, one bite of a macaroon can release potent memories of the original experience. More to the point, the same experience by *different* persons in relation to the same aesthetic object cannot be *shared* with any certainty. What seems beautiful to one person may not seem so to another. *Bel canto* to one listener may be shrieking to another. Hence the great desire, often frustrated, for intimacy.

Similarly, on the other hand, the aesthete has trouble negotiating fields of consciousness and activity emanating from sources outside himself, especially since his sense of identity is of a piece with his aesthetic perceptions. For Pater, after all, the "highest function of art is to help us to *become* something, the ultimate aesthetic ideal to make life itself a work of art" (Buckler 4). The aesthete does, in fact, sit for his own visions, becomes unsure of who or what he is on standing up and walking out of the field of consciousness in which the highly charged forms of his *tableau* have figured. The pleasingly cool

breeze in someone else's environment may feel like a chilling draft to him, may even ruffle his hair and make him feel unkempt, blowing him off balance and threatening his composure. Not to mention the possible effects of a cross-town ride in heavy traffic on the color of his mood or the configuration of his person. Experiencing the "insecurity" of a life "orientated" solely by art, the aesthete is driven to seek modes of ideal continuity that transcend such annoying disruptions as soot, fumes, jostling conveyances, and unwelcome winds.

Iser quotes Dolf Sternberger as summing up "very vividly the emotions vibrating behind the propagation of hypostatized art":

These rambling, errant and sensitive nerves, these senses, which ceaselessly grope for and follow contours and consistencies--cool and 'heartless' gems, metals, the velvety or taut or thin and translucent skin of the female body--they search as if with a wishing wand for the hidden sources of a life that must be lived and perhaps also must be patterned on the far side of inherited conventions. (32)

Having made his way cross town to his hostess' drafty rooms, the aesthete is not likely to find scope for his sensual appetite in tea and cakes and polite conversation. Rumpled and discomfited, he is more likely to be thinking, in a vaguely troubled way, "This is not it. This is not what I had in mind."

So far the problem seems inconsequential enough, confined to a few gluttons whose fate, whatever it be, they must deserve. It gets bigger, however, when these same people substitute the history of art for human history itself, crown themselves emperors of ice cream, and deny that anything else is worthy of their attention, neither the lawn mower nor the lawn nor the person who mowed it. Harold Bloom notes, for example, that when Wallace Stevens "reduces to what he calls the First Idea, he returns to 'the ordinary, proper, and true appearances of things to us,' but then finds it dehumanizing to live only with these appearances" (xii). What needs to be remembered, of course, is that the initial reduction is even more dehumanizing--certainly to the person who is seen mowing the lawn or, as it may be, pushing the red wheelbarrow.

But if an aesthete's life must be "patterned on the far side of inherited conventions," as "autonomous art" it "cannot be subjected to any normative concepts" (Iser 4). Pater "was a dedicated student of history and philosophy," Buckler tells us,

but in his valuation of things, they were, though indispensable, ancillary, subordinate in interest and importance to art's manifestations of the capacity of the human spirit to master its environment by creating for it an ideal form that was rooted in matter but infinitely more significant. (1)

If art is hypostatized as the "capacity of the human spirit to master its environment" by devising a "scheme of some higher and more consistent harmony," as Pater understands transcendence to mean (McGrath 146-47), the need to "legitimise autonomous art" springs from the "instability" of such an existence (Iser ix). The aesthete seeks, then, in history and myth the "hidden sources" or types by which to "pattern" a life that must be lived on the "far side of inherited conventions," ordinary appearances, normative concepts, and the actual environment in which he is rooted. A tall order. To "this end," Pater "mobilised the entire past":

His invocation of history and myth sought to elevate the intensified moment into a life-line for the aesthetic existence, thus indicating a change in the function of legitimation. In the past, world pictures provided the orientation, whereas Pater sets out to justify both the transitoriness and the in-between state of the aesthetic existence by making the totality of the human past subservient to this end, thus inverting the idea of legitimation. Instead of providing a framework to which cultural and social activities have to be subsumed, legitimation now applies itself to private longings. (Iser ix)

For the aesthete the pleasures of a now ideal history are all that really exists. Art gives "binding form to an inner world that draws its life from experience and yet at the same time transcends it, and this form is to stand level with, if not above, the real world" (Iser 27). And since the only acknowledged threat to his enjoyment of those pleasures seems to be his own aging and death, he becomes obsessed with the idea of life's brevity and the question of how either to pack as much pleasure as he can into so short a span or, somehow, to escape, transcend, or countermand its limits. Art is "conceived as the

countervailing power to the temporality of human existence. Its basic definitions are given in negative turns owing to the fact that time and death are its frames of reference" (Iser 31).

Its capacity, however, to "transmute the fugitive moment into enraptured ecstasy" makes it the "ultimate value of human existence." Thus it is "hypostatized," and the "slogan of 'art for its own sake' is meant to indicate that it is not subservient to any overriding reality. On the contrary, by constantly selecting from the pageant of existence the precious, the incomparable and the inimitable, it endows human existence with a seeming perfection which in reality it lacks" (Iser 31).

Unwilling or unable to contend with human existence as it is, fraught with imperfection, the aesthete turns away. Disgusted, frustrated, dissatisfied, he leaves his hostess' party, goes home to his rooms, and turns back to his art. His art "creates a haven resembling an earthly paradise" which no hostess' salon, however sumptuous or socially select, can match. In doing so he renounces much, however. If art "idealises secular life," "contains its own criteria within itself," and is "thus 'fulfilment everywhere,'" it is also fulfillment nowhere. In hypostatizing art as autonomous, the aesthete has cut himself loose, we recall, from inherited conventions, ordinary appearances, normative concepts, and the imperfect social environment in which he is grounded. Though not "conceived as a form of protest by Pater," autonomous art does nevertheless "represent a detachment from and a contradiction to man's ordinary modes of existence, and those negative qualities are integral to a definition of art in the Paterian sense" (Iser 32).

The question emerges: how can such an impulse be given expression? How "can this ever-changing, fragile quality be given objective expression without having an idea imposed upon it?" (Iser 66) Pater finds his first tentative answer in history, for

Art records the different phases of the individual's struggle for unity with himself and the world, and so its history is a constant tailoring of the world according to the needs of

human self-representation, turning the world finally into an aesthetic phenomenon. (Iser 75)

But that answer is obviously problematic in at least two ways. In the first place, admission of the need to ground art in something outside itself undermines the claim of aesthetic autonomy. To "consider history as a sanction betrays an inherent weakness in the *l'art pour l'art* concept, for whatever is absolute ought to carry its own legitimation within itself." In the second place, history has undergone a precipitate conversion into art:

As the claim of art's autonomy could not be sustained, Pater propped it up with history. This, in turn, made his perception of history lopsided. If history is meant to sanction the autonomy of art, it suffers a severe reduction by being confined to the history of art. This shrinkage of history bears witness to the fact that art as the ultimate is a claim that cannot be substantiated but only posited. (Iser 76)

Having cut himself loose from an imperfect world, the aesthete's existence is extremely precarious, but he cannot recover in human history a firm foundation for his free-floating island of imagined perfection. "The search for earthly paradise in experience can only be successful by way of a Utopian fantasy that either negates or overcomes the menaces of reality" (Iser 92).

What I have been calling the problem of aestheticism may still seem inconsequential unless or until one adds that the same people who are ready to reduce history to history of art--a "constant tailoring of the world according to the needs of human self-representation"--are in fact installed in institutions where they function as arbiters of cultural values and influential participants in the processes which determine, set limits on, the actual lives of diverse members of entire societies.

One can catch a glimpse of what that in fact means in William Buckler's quite sincere, not in the least ironic, description of Pater's Hellenism. It was, Buckler tells us, "metaphoric rather than literally historical." Already it is evident that Pater is not alone in his impulse to confuse art with history. Buckler's scrupulous

discrimination between the two is, after all, a mere detail. It doesn't appear to modify the possibilities inferred. Pater's Hellenism, says Buckler, was "metaphoric rather than literally historical, an ideal representation of what modern man might make of his life if he accepted his earthly estate as what *is* and used his creative human resources to become what the example of the classical Greeks shows he can *be*" (7). Presumably, Buckler means to contrast "modern man's" "earthly estate"--the "what *is*"--with the false expectation of a heavenly estate in the "what *comes after*," but the fact that he doesn't notice the contradiction he is left with indicates the extent to which this humanist stops short of a thorough going materialism. "Modern man" is encouraged to accept one "estate" and yet desire another. So, presumably, he can be a taxi driver and yet be in the process of *becoming* a demigod. Or perhaps he can be an accountant and yet *think* like a demi-god; sell insurance by day and *be* a demi-god by night? To borrow a phrase from Raymond Williams, it is time this bluff was called.

It's the same bluff by which Positivists such as John Morley, editor of the *Fortnightly Review* and one of Pater's first publishers, conceived of the project of democratizing art. "In an address in 1887 to the students of the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching on the then controversial subject of the study and teaching of English literature," Franklin E. Court reports,

Morley called their attention to the great need to bring literature and the other arts to the people, to the common man. 'Our object is,' he told the students, '--and it is that which . . . raises us infinitely above the Athenian level--to bring the Periclean ideas of beauty and simplicity and cultivation of the mind within the reach of those who do the drudgery and the service and rude work of the world. . . . And it can be done without blunting or numbing the practical energies of our people.' (81)

Court's approving comments confirm that he is not about to call the bluff. With Morley, he is quite ready to assess Pater's contribution in positive terms:

That Pater attempted to bring the merits of art down to the world of daily existence and to show the spectator or the reader, whoever or wherever he might be, how to savor the pleasure independently, on his own terms, without absolute

pronouncements or the instructive prescription of the specialists, is Morley's most permanently valuable critical observation on Pater's contribution to the democratization of art.

Morley's being the "only critic at the time who seems to have recognized that particular virtue in Pater's work" (Court 81) tells us rather more about Morley's progressive social agenda than it does about Pater's procedure.

Court's commentary offers a convenient, and very familiar, example of the form Paterian aestheticism has taken in the institutions of higher education which have been the purveyors of culture in capitalist democracies. "Morley was addressing himself," says Court, "to a timeless and particularly important objective of students and teachers of literature" (81). Periclean ideas of "beauty and simplicity and cultivation of the mind" can be brought "within the reach of those who do the drudgery and the service and rude work of the world" without "blunting" their "practical energies." Data processors will have read a bit of Joyce. Dental technicians will have heard of Yorick's skull. Behavior treatment specialists will know that Robert Burns was once moved to write that his love was like a red, red rose. Such cultivation will be had for its own sake, allowing for a few flowers among the weeds of workaday life. Quality of life will be enhanced; substance of life will be unchanged--or if changes come, they will originate in quite another sphere than the "timeless" world of art.

Students will be encouraged to refresh and ennoble themselves by occasional excursions into the artistic realm of wish-fulfillment. "When shall we set sail for happiness?" asks Baudelaire. "There is no frigate like a book," writes another poet, less revered, "to take us miles away." "Expression implies correction of the world, and it will only reproduce those parts of experience that accord not with the patterns of outside reality but with the secret wishes of the expresser" (Iser 27). Aesthetic expression has become projection. The question is, whose wishes will be given expression and which expressions will be purveyed as timeless art, exposure to which is deemed ennobling? "What

modern art has to do in the service of culture is so to rearrange the details of modern life, so to reflect it, that it may satisfy the spirit." Art is packaging. "And what does the spirit need in the face of modern life?" The question is asked again and again. From liberal humanists, the answer comes back, again and again: "The *sense of freedom*" (Iser 34, emphasis mine). Artistic production becomes a massive industry of denial, the real power of which is nowhere more evident currently than in television advertising. The world requires enhancement, "correction." The "details of modern life" do not "satisfy the spirit." The techniques of cultural production are so quickly applied to fill the gap, there is no room to stand and ask *why*? What's wrong with the world, that it requires correction? Will rearranging the details fix it? Why does the spirit lack satisfaction? Why is its greatest need in the face of modern life a sense of freedom?

What is our attitude toward the questions, that we rush in to cover them over with abstractions? *L'art pour l'art* "means the triumph of art over reality. The aim is not imitation but transformation of life, and the aim of this in turn is not to present the ideal but to relieve man of the burden of his finiteness" (Iser 35). *Death; being and nothingness; temporality*: are these the most basic terms, both of the questions and of the answers? Is mortality what the aesthete seeks to transcend, death the insurmountable limit in the face of which "the modern spirit" so tenaciously creates a "sense of" freedom?

"That the end of life is not action but contemplation," writes Pater:

--*being* as distinct from *doing*--a certain disposition of mind: is, in some shape or other, the principle of all the higher morality. In poetry, in art, if you enter into their true spirit at all, you touch this principle, in a measure: these, by their very sterility, are a type of beholding for the mere joy of beholding. To treat life in the spirit of art, is to make life a thing in which means and ends are identified: to encourage such treatment, the true moral significance of art and poetry.

Yes, runs Iser's argument. Pater's aesthetic procedure liberates the spirit from the burden of finiteness. "Art removes the 'end' from life,

in both senses, and by dispensing with all teleology it not only relieves the burden of finiteness, but also liberates those elements of life that would otherwise be only 'means' to the end" (Iser 35). If nothing is undertaken, presumably, nothing can be cut short, interrupted. "The beholder is released from activity and may bask in aesthetic quietism." If nothing is desired, nothing can be lost. From heightened experience we have come to art as complete renunciation of experience, sheer spectatorship, voyeurism. "Thus art becomes a kind of privileged world to which are devoted 'the wisest, at least among "the children of this world"' (Iser 36).

The terms of the argument have brought us to the moment in literary history of Henry James and Robert Browning as they have been read by Modernist critics. All that is left to art are perceptual perspectives, with no "normative concepts" by which to make sense out of a whole so assembled. It is but a short step from that situation to Pound's Vorticism:

The aesthetic attitude as an answer to the existing challenge was promulgated as the new horizon encompassing all the remnants of former conceptualisations of life. An atmosphere had to be distilled out of these fragments, formed neither by laws of dogma nor concepts of philosophy, but by the contingency of association. (Iser 37)

The trouble with Vorticism, of course, as with Impressionism before it and Surrealism after, is that it "lift[s] appearances out of their defining contexts and so frees them from the normative interpretation imposed on them in different cultural periods" (Iser 37), not to mention different cultures and different social formations within and across cultures. Assemblages created by wrenching people, objects, symbols out of their defining social contexts have no validity outside the logic of the assemblage itself: a reductively subjective and random logic which reflects, nonetheless, the socially constituted consciousness of the assembler. "When all systems have fallen apart," runs the argument, the aesthete's "last chance of capturing the inner vision--even if only indirectly and cryptically--lies in the word" (Iser 50). Desire to "transcend the vulgarity of the world by artificial means" culminates in

the "mannered style" which Nietzsche identified as the "hallmark of all literary decadence" and characterized as the "page as life at the expense of the whole." It is the means by which the "artist's manner triumphs over the non-subjective world" (Iser 51-52).

But of course all systems have not actually fallen apart, certainly not the one that Maynard Keynes, at the height of the Modernist moment, stepped in to help save. The artist has chosen not to acknowledge them as binding, or defining. And many surviving Modernists--Robert Motherwell, for example²--are still at it, capturing the inner vision as the page, or the canvas, at the expense of the whole, despite the fact that they and their work have been completely assimilated by the largest and most binding system of all. Why they are still preoccupied with the reductive terms of *being* and *nothingness*--confrontations of white and black, in Motherwell's case--is an important question requiring much deeper probing. That they haven't wearied of the endless journey into themselves is surprising, but they are entitled to the *taedium vitae* of such self-absorption; it is harmless. What is not harmless, is objectionable, is the process by which teachers and critics, as purveyors of cultural values, perpetually appropriate what the "autonomous subject arrogates to itself" in the reductive "page as life at the expense of the whole": "not only the richness of nuances sedimented in the word, but also the compelling stringency of logic and the fervent ardour of religion, in order to equate itself with the impact it is able to exercise" (Iser 54).

Somewhere along the line, Iser's argument has taken a mysterious turn. What began as a renunciation of ends so as to liberate oneself from the effects of "terminality" has turned into a means of arrogating possible meanings, logic, crypto-religious fervor, and power to depict, not what people *should do*--for they shouldn't, precisely, *do anything*--but what people *should be*. Teach people to desire to *be* something

²Robert Motherwell died in the summer of 1991. For all its limitations, I have always found his work compelling.

totally at odds with what it falls within their means to do and they will labor unceasingly to acquire the symbols of such being, without ever acquiring the power to do anything except harness their labor-power to the machinery of capitalist production. At the same time, one is wrenching the recipients of such education out of their own defining social contexts and directing them to have their being in the elaborate projections of "autonomous subjects" who have neglected to acknowledge the systems which support them.

The problem of "aesthetic historicism," then, and the consequences of Pater's and subsequent literati's failure to break out of it, is a very big problem. The critical techniques deemed appropriate by a network of second and third string deconstructionist functionaries are not equal to it.

A reading practice which contents the reader with an act of foregrounding does indeed provide relief. It lets one off the hook, allowing one to substitute oxymora of dubious value--"radically conservative"--for meaningful articulations of the consequences of unresolved conflict, simply folding the "relieved" conflict back into the discourse of scholarly observation. That procedure calls to mind Pater's conception of the essay as the "form of formlessness," a form which "deconstructs itself in order to represent open-endedness, unrelatedness and endlessness as facts of experiential reality." Like the essay so conceived, Ms. Williams' is a "discourse simultaneously renouncing a discursive tackling of its findings, thereby casting doubts on the efficacy of discursive thinking" (Iser 19). The last best defense of this sort of academic discourse seems to be impotence rationalized as a strength. But it is not a strength of mind to be hobbled with inconsistency, nor a particularly strenuous exercise of critical powers to identify it as such. Consistent inconsistency is not to be confused with dynamic dialectic. It contains tension; it does not generate movement.

Wolfgang Iser, the one reader of Pater who has discerned most fully in his oeuvre the dimensions of the problem--and on whose insights I have been drawing from the inception of this study--understands the distinction.

For Pater . . . the driving force is one of reconciliation, not of rupture, for the latter would imply conceptualising the new beginning, which would be totally alien to Pater with his deep distrust of any kind of philosophical concept. . . . Reconciliation was not a dialectic movement towards synthesis; it was, rather, an interaction of opposites, a telescoping of incompatibles, resulting in a syncretic and synchronic perception of what was and what had been. . . . Through the co-existence of opposites, reconciliation makes it feasible for the vast variety of human possibilities to be embraced, and this is the meaning of art, which, however, can only open up this play of possibilities in a realm that lies beyond challenging realities. (39)

Iser's analysis of Paterian aestheticism is the most penetrating to date. Worked out in a study published in 1960 as *Walter Pater: Die Autonomie des Ästhetischen*, it was translated by David Henry Wilson and published in 1987 as part of the Cambridge University Press series, *European Studies in English Literature*, under the title, *Walter Pater: The Aesthetic Moment*. Iser's comments there on the contradictory impulses--toward modernity and history--registered in Pater's aesthetic historicism do not "relieve" the problem those contradictory impulses represent only to fold it back into the issueless discourse of scholarly observation.

Recognizing that, as Williams says, "awareness of the skeptical dimension of historicism . . . returns" Pater "to the aesthetic," Iser identifies therein the "decisive reason for Pater's preoccupation with myth":

It is a prehistoric region in which man could still view the world as a whole. History merely records the aimless changeability of things, whereas in myth all changes relate to a perceivable totality. History unfolds itself in temporary mediation of opposites, whereas in myth the opposing forces converge into an overarching meaning. . . . Such an experience elevates and purifies the emotions, and so has a healing effect on the modern mind entangled in confusions and contradictions. (113)

Leaving aside for the moment Iser's marking of Pater's recognition of the futility of any attempt to recover a mythic mode of consciousness as

the way to restore vitality and coherence to modern experience, one is tempted to draw in what Iser says about the function of myth overagainst history an analogy with the function of Deconstruction's exclusive preoccupation with the structure of a text.

Myth fulfils Pater's longing to view the whole--a longing which for him could not be fulfilled by history, as this would have demanded action and commitment, inconceivable for the quietism inherent in the aesthetic attitude. Myth, however, corresponds to this disposition: it is poetry, requiring no more than aesthetic contemplation, without the need for ethical decision. (113)

From Paterian aestheticism to Derridean and derivative modes of deconstructive practice, there is a continual shrinkage: from history, to history of art, to myth as the equivalent of art (and vice versa), to linguistic structures/systems, to texts. For the "modern mind entangled in confusions and contradictions," Deconstruction reduces "the whole" to a text, satisfies itself with identifying the "inconsistencies" it contains, and commends the practice of a "radical conservatism." If myth satisfies the desire to see "opposing forces converge into an overarching meaning," relating historical changes to a "perceivable totality," Deconstruction satisfies the desire to dismantle an "overarching meaning" understood to be oppressive or authoritarian by confining "opposing forces" within the "totality" of a text. To exceed that function would demand "action and commitment, inconceivable for the quietism inherent" in the deconstructionist "attitude." If we call the first procedure "radically conservative," we might call the latter procedure "conservatively radical." Deconstruction too "corresponds" to the quietist "disposition": it is textuality, requiring no more than linguistic scrutiny, without the need for moral commitment or political action.

But we've had enough of this confounding of terms and opposites. The important point is that both procedures are, in effect, chimerical. That Ms. Williams arrives at her inconclusive conclusion using the techniques of Deconstruction demonstrates the inadequacy of those methods of inquiry. More importantly, it points to the consequences for

contemporary criticism of the problems passed down from Paterian aestheticism. The problems have been transmitted via the institutionalized version of Modernism and contained by academic critical practice. Though it actually offers readers a choice of the extremes of determinism or indeterminacy, it ignores the irreconcilability of those extremes and plays indiscriminately with the methods specific to each.

The absence of a middle ground between those extremes, both of which exclude the possibility of meaningful human agency, is part of the legacy of Paterian aestheticism. The unacceptability of that situation supplies the impetus for this study. The skepticism--or in its newer formulation, indeterminacy--inherent in historicism confines the scholar to "aesthetic reconstructions." The consequences of that confinement are not only crippling, but finally self-destructive, regardless of whether one chooses, from within the confinement, to speculate about how it has been constituted (Structuralism) or to identify the *aporia* by which it is said to collapse (Deconstruction). J. Hillis Miller writes that

Deconstruction as a mode of interpretation works by a careful and circumspect entering of each textual labyrinth. . . . The deconstructive critic seeks to find, by the process of retracing, the element in the system studied which is alogical, the thread in the text in question which will unravel it all, or the loose stone which will pull down the whole building. The deconstruction, rather, annihilates the ground on which the building stands by showing that the text has already annihilated the ground, knowingly or unknowingly. Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. ("Stevens' Rock")

Once large numbers of readers housed by academia have become comfortable with the idea that "any literary text, as a ceaseless play of 'irreconcilable' or 'contradictory' meanings, is 'indeterminable' or 'undecidable'. . . [and] hence, that 'all reading is misreading'" (Miller, "Walter Pater"), it is easy enough for young scholars taking instruction there to conclude that the consistent practice of inconsistency is a strength.

Initially this mistake is felt to be liberating, a throwing off of the yoke of authority, an eluding of the "hierarchical categories" enforced by vestiges of the "absolute spirit." Whereas the "absolute spirit reduces the world to a set of hierarchical categories," the "relative spirit registers an expansion of things and an obliteration of dividing lines" (Iser 15). As Jerome McGann says in one of his Trinity College, Cambridge, lectures, "experience always outruns conception" (ix). We shall gain rather than lose by "surrendering human life to the relative spirit" (Iser 16). Poetry is, after all, the "discourse which lays bare, which makes it possible to understand, how all texts--including the text we call 'the world'--function." And the "heteronomy which Bakhtin . . . postulated of fictional discourse . . . is itself a tool, a signifier, by means of which human beings, as individuals and as groups, define the possibilities of their lives" (McGann, "Marxism, Romanticism, and Postmodernism" 630). "What the moralist asks," Pater writes, is:

Shall we gain or lose by surrendering human life to the relative spirit? Experience answers that the dominant tendency of life is to turn ascertained truth into a dead letter, to make us all the phlegmatic servants of routine. The relative spirit, by its constant dwelling on the more fugitive conditions or circumstances of things, breaking through a thousand rough and brutal classifications, and giving elasticity to inflexible principles, begets an intellectual *finesse* of which the ethical result is a delicate and tender justice in the criticism of human life. (Iser 16)

The idea of the efficacy of this "delicate and tender justice in the criticism of human life" is predicated, however, on the assumption of a Montaignesque tolerance which amounts to quiescent spectatorship on the arena of human activity.

In *Marius the Epicurean*, Pater discovers that attitude to be sickeningly disjunctive with the fact of forced combat and slaughter presided over by the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, whose Stoic detachment from the celebration he has authorized awakens in Marius an inarticulate outrage. In that context, no amount of "heteronomy" could have been sufficient a "tool" to contravene the effect of an imperial sign. For the signified in that arena, no amount of signifying would have availed

to "define the possibilities" of his or her life. But the relative spirit is "ranked above philosophical dogmatism because it grasps the dynamism and the associative multiplicity of experience" (Iser 16). The Roman *jeux* generated a good deal of energy, excitement, *jouissance*. The absolute spirit is a killjoy--like Kilman in *Mrs. Dalloway*, and unlike Clarissa, who would "not say of herself, I am this, I am that"; for "there she was," mistress of ceremonies: to have chosen "this" or "that" would have been to shut out so many lovely possibilities, none of which is realized, however.

Because it "has to impose a rigid pattern of cognition upon it," the absolute spirit "cannot allow for this all-important flexibility of experience." So when the civic ritual ceases to be charming --the "beauty of holiness" conspicuously absent--Marius the aesthete simply takes his departure, sorrowing, to seek other forms of pleasure than blood lust or the abusive exercise of power on a massive scale. One cannot call them higher forms of pleasure, exactly, because one has thrown off the oppressive "hierarchical categories" by which one could rank modes of experience. Finding such displays distasteful, the aesthete does not display the bad taste of protesting that these games, whatever anyone else may call them, are morally repugnant. Such "dogmatism" would "impose a structure on the world," and reality is "at best approached, not with a compulsive imposition of norms, but with a keen sense of observation, catching the multifariousness of its experiential nature" (Iser 16).

The "unpredictable road of experience" is Marius' "sole route to knowledge" (Iser 17). When it carries Marius into contact with Cornelius and the community of Christians, it does not lead him to embrace a set of "idealising distortions" (Iser 21). It simply exposes him to a quality--whether sensation or idea, it would be hard to specify--that is satisfying to his spirit. The quality is hope: what the spirit needs in the face of modern life, a sense of freedom, a sense of the possibility of liberation from the limit imposed by the fact of

death. It invests Marius' death with the same liminality that has saturated every experience of his life.

The sceptical, relative spirit . . . is a countervailing force, subverting and undoing all frameworks set up by the filing system of the human mind. It releases the facts from their subservience to general principles to which they have been yoked by the absolute spirit. In undercutting all normative ordering, it highlights open-endedness as the hallmark of experience. The relative spirit is no longer committed to a cognition of reality, but mobilises the human mind to face up to an open future, so that it will follow the unpredictable road of experience as its sole route to knowledge. . . . It is the polemic against closed systems which throw the liberating impulse of the relative spirit into proper relief. Pater's scepticism is negative (rejecting the norms of the absolute spirit) and positive (bringing to light the undefined and undefinable). (Iser 17)

Therein lies the problem central to aesthetic historicism, the problem which has dogged every version of historicism ever since. Once the "facts" have been "release[d]" from their "subservience to general principles," their import is diminished. One does not know how to interpret them, let alone toward what ends to use them. In the commitment only to "open-endedness," both the Socratic and the Marxian ends of dialectic are lost. One is left with negative dialectic, advancing neither toward truth nor toward effective change. One achieves, instead, merely a "temper," a disposition, an attitude of receptivity. Pater writes in *Plato and Platonism*:

The treatise, as the instrument of a dogmatic philosophy begins with an axiom or definition: the essay or dialogue, on the other hand, as the instrument of dialectic, does not necessarily so much as conclude in one; like that long dialogue with oneself, that dialectic process, which may be co-extensive with life. It does in truth little more than clear the ground, as we say, or the atmosphere, or the mental tablet, that one may have a fair chance of knowing, or seeing, perhaps: it does but put one into a duly receptive attitude towards such possible truth, discovery, or revelation, as may one day occupy the ground, the tablet,--shed itself on the purified air; it does not provide a proposition, nor a system of propositions, but forms a temper. (188)

Inasmuch as Pater's aesthetic empiricism equates the "ground" with the "mental tablet," however, the dialectic process is ultimately confined to the mind processing the data of experience. And since the aesthete is disposed to admit only the data which he finds pleasing, exchanging history for the history of art, even though it is a "vital function of

scepticism to protect man from all idealising distortions, and so man is no longer set above reality but is placed in association with it" (Iser 21), the reality in which he is placed in association is a highly selective one. The attitude of receptivity is shaped or guided by the impulses of the perceiving subject. In shaping experience to satisfy its impulses, it does not escape "idealising distortions." As Iser observes, private longings provide the framework for all of historical reality, instead of the other way around. Since history does not in fact support such idealising distortions, "art becomes the legitimate continuation of myth" (Iser 119).

So far from remaining receptive to reality, the aesthete "lives in contradiction to reality." Iser observes that "herein lies the revolutionary aspect of his attitude, for his approach breaks up existing, solidified forms of life" (168-69). Because he is "unable to devise new forms and ideals," however, the aesthete "can go no further than this negative contradiction" (Iser 169).

That Pater understands this aesthetic impasse his imaginary portrait of Sebastian van Storck makes clear. In the portrait the road of aesthetic experience finds its destination in the void. Aware that "Poeticising the world will not change man's basic experience," Sebastian's "only solution is to detach himself, but this in itself is a negative reaction to the world, depending on the very situation it seeks to escape from, and so detachment cannot generate a new ideal." Iser considers that "Theoretically the void may be the ideal, since the reaction is one against what Pater calls 'fulness,'" but goes on to assert that "a void is absence, not presence, and life is presence" (Iser 163). What he does not consider is precisely the historical ground from which Sebastian recoils. If Sebastian detaches himself from it, Iser ignores it, substituting the abstraction "fulness" for its historical referent: the material prosperity and physical energy of social life in seventeenth-century Holland, the earliest seat of venture capitalism in Europe.

The aesthetic impasse explored in "Sebastian van Storck" is an old problem. It is the problem Samuel Johnson explores in *Rasselas*, the moral tale in which Johnson sets his protagonist marching between vacuity and the moral entanglement which immediately ensues upon taking a step out of vacuity. What is new, or specific to Pater, is the absence of normative concepts by which to surmount the vacillation between vacuity and entanglement. For Dr. Johnson, the fear of entanglement involved the recognition that with activity and involvement comes moral error; in Johnson's "closed system," the fact one termed *sin*. It was Johnson's extreme sense of his own inadequacies--exacerbated by his ungainly appearance and lack of physical self-control--that disposed him to doubt that the Christian dogma of forgiveness could extend to him. Hence his dread of moral error, and the great relief he experienced when, after fervent prayer, the symptoms of his dropsy abated, convincing him of God's mercifulness to him.

For Pater, however, the fear of engagement is experienced very differently. What is at risk is not moral error, but identity. Aesthetes such as Sebastian van Storck withdraw from the social world because they fear contamination by the forces which might threaten their compensatory self-image. It is their very incapacity to negotiate the social world which drives them to project a transfigured world, one in which they can act out the imaginary drama of a transfigured self.

Finding ample materials in the ever-enlarging world of "culture," they can avoid, defer indefinitely, confrontation with a ground of experience just outside the history of culture; can confound indefinitely history and history of art.

Likewise, Deconstructionists, having an ample supply of texts, can confound indefinitely history and textuality. The confusion of terms in J. Hillis Miller's description of Deconstruction is symptomatic of a larger confusion.

Deconstruction as a mode of interpretation works by a careful and circumspect entering of each textual labyrinth. . . . The deconstructive critic seeks to find, by the process of retracing, the element in the system studied which is

alogical, the thread in the text in question which will unravel it all, or the loose stone which will pull down the whole building. The deconstruction, rather, annihilates the ground on which the building stands by showing that the text has already annihilated the ground, knowingly or unknowingly. Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself.

Miller equivocates about whether it is the deconstructive critic or the text which does the dismantling; also about whether it is the structure or the ground on which it stands that is annihilated. There are two obvious confusions here. Who or what is doing what to what? Structure is confused with agency and ground is confused with structure. The reason is really rather simple: deconstructive critics ignore the two fundamental issues of human agency and historical ground. That is apparently why they generally fail to be bothered by the fact that to say one has deconstructed something by which one continues to be confined is meaningless. To reveal the faults or flaws in a structure is neither to pull it down nor to blast away the ground on which it has been erected, presumably by human agency. To speak of the structure dismantling itself is to invest it with an agency it does not possess, a gesture which exhibits a forgetting of the concept of agency altogether.

My purpose here is to seek the way out of aesthetic confinement and back onto a historical ground where human agency is again made visible; where human agents can engage with determinate facts which "aesthetic reconstructions" can only transcend. The first steps of that expedition take direction from Wolfgang Iser's insights into the problem of aestheticism. What makes Iser's analysis the most penetrating to date is his emphasis on the fact that Pater's aestheticism was not just a mode of literary or art historical criticism, or of literary production, but an existential hypothesis.

"An analysis" of Pater's "work," he writes in the 1985 Foreword to Wilson's translation,

. . . seemed to promise experience of what it meant to make Art the ultimate value of finite existence. Such an experience would bring to light the problems which New Criticism could not cope with, since it was no longer concerned with the consequences of the autonomous object. Pater dealt precisely with these problems, because for him Art

was an ultimate value, enabling man to forget the pressure of finite human existence. For Pater autonomous Art and real life joined hands, as it were, under the table--a relationship that could only be anathema to the basic principles of New Criticism. (vii-viii)

First ventured in Pater's essay on "Aesthetic Poetry" (1868 [1889]) and given definitive expression in the "Conclusion" to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), the hypothesis was tested out in Pater's historicist criticism and beyond that in his strangely inert fiction, where the logic of the hypothesis could only, finally, be imagined. As Iser puts it, "Where cognitive criticism comes to an end, literature begins, for fiction alone can stage that which is inaccessible to referential discourse" (x).

Though Iser explains that his aim was to explore the intrinsic dynamics of the aesthetic mode of existence imagined by Pater, he is aware that its failure as a paradigm for aesthetic autonomy presumes the immediacy of extrinsic forces. On the one hand, "by analysing Pater's work," he "hoped to uncover what had been glossed over by New Criticism and had thus ultimately caused its demise as a paradigm of interpretation." Acknowledging that the "aesthetic existence, narcissistically turned in upon itself and yet unable to sustain this fixation, seems to require viewing from standpoints outside itself," he supposes, on the other hand, that "to do this would mean blotting out all inherent problems--especially if one were to use the Kierkegaardian reference of the ethical decision or the religious renunciation of self, not to mention the condemnation the aesthetic existence would have suffered if viewed from a sociological angle" (viii). He is right, of course, insofar as outright condemnation tends to preclude careful scrutiny, and it was his willingness to explore the problem from within the subjective experience recorded by Pater's writing that allowed him to penetrate so deeply into the active process of denial at work there. At the same time, however, the fact that the process being viewed is one of denial requires, at some point, equally careful scrutiny of the

impinging forces in response to which the aesthete's defenses are activated.

That Iser's conception of the problem is limited to an "either/or" choice of focus on "inherent problems" or "extrinsic references" is indicative of his position in the history of criticism. As he writes in his Foreword almost thirty years after the book was originally written,

In historical terms . . . my monograph may be taken to reflect the problems of literary criticism in the 1950s. On the one hand, I was trying to free literature from being taken as evidence of anything other than itself . . . on the other, I wanted to show through Pater's work what was entailed in the concept of autonomous art. (viii-ix)

It does indeed "reflect the problems of literary criticism in the 1950s" that Iser could conceive of his study in those terms: that he could be "trying to free literature from being taken as evidence of anything other than itself" at the same time that he was engaged in a thoroughgoing exposition of the impossibility of aesthetic autonomy.³ That stance follows in part from Iser's rejection of a "historical approach" whose characteristic focus on "motives, parallels, and influences" doesn't include "criteria that would enable us to assess Pater's work comprehensively." Refusing the limits of a critical approach which is "for the most part descriptive" and "uses categories inherited from the positivistic tradition" to define, in the case of Pater, a "form of writing whose main thrust is to break down all cognitive pigeon-holing," Iser is looking for a "new and more adequate method" by which to explore problems that have "scarcely been touched on in earlier studies" (4).

³ See Bloom's attack on Blackmur in the essay, "Lawrence, Eliot, Blackmur, and the Tortoise," in *The Ringers in the Tower*, in particular his contention: "That the imagination needs support can perhaps be argued; that a structure properly conservative, classical, and Catholic enough is its necessary support is simply a social polemic, and irrelevant to the criticism of poetry." The essay was written in 1958. Bloom's position is that the question of what sort of "structure of support" a poem "may be taken as evidence of" is "simply a social polemic," which is "irrelevant to the criticism of poetry." What he ignores is the ideological basis of his own canon-making; his choice of "strong" poets/poems and the "structure of support" implied by the imaginative dramas they enact, which is not "properly conservative, classical, and Catholic," but liberal, Romantic, and Protestant.

His concern is to "work out the nature of aestheticism, asking first what were the conditions that led to art being hypostatized and endowed with ultimacy, and then how to conceive of the autonomous art which arose out of this transfiguration" (4). What limits the results of that effort is the extent to which he is still caught in the historicism he is trying to exceed: his willingness to participate in the movement to "break down all cognitive pigeon-holing," on the one hand; his readiness to find the "conditions that led to art being hypostatized" in the history of art itself rather than the structures of support which art "may be taken as evidence of" in a larger material history, on the other. That he is grappling with the difficulties he is himself, precisely, entangled in, however, gives his study impressive force and intellectual urgency.

Iser's purpose closely parallels my own. "In examining the nature of Pater's ideas," he explains, "we shall not merely be interpreting but will also be striving after an analysis of the aesthetic. Indeed, since Pater's writings are representative examples of aestheticism, we shall be aiming for a definition of the aesthetic whose validity will extend beyond Pater" (5). Given his finding, however, that "Human life . . . orientated by art will experience the insecurity of this basis through continually changing moods which will only resolve themselves in death" (4-5), one can no longer conceive of "striving after an analysis of the aesthetic" on the assumption that intrinsic and extrinsic forces can be separated.

The aesthetic response is a response. To understand it one must really probe what it is a response to. To be satisfied with words and phrases like Heraclitean flux, disorder, chaos, change, pedestrian life, temporality, or even death--which seems so absolute an event as to bear no further probing, but insofar as it is actually feared, as the ultimate form of dissolution, compels a good deal more probing--is to be complicit in the process of denial the response represents.

The very recognition that, in Pater's "representative examples of aestheticism," "Art and real life joined hands" precludes the possibility of blotting out the "external references" informing the "inherent problems," much less that of "freeing literature from being taken as evidence of anything other than itself." The insecurity of a life "orientated by art" derives not only from the absence of sanction or legitimation, as Iser suggests, but from the futility of the impulse to deny the external forces which threaten its fragile internal integrity.

What the aesthete fears most is dissolution of self, of identity, and if identity is socially constituted, it is not ladies on the lawn at Oxford that Pater fears, as such, but the threat they pose to his socially constituted self. The modes of relation enforced by capitalist production make reciprocity, mutually constitutive relations, impossible except to a limited degree within classes and smaller formations. But there, too, one is ever in danger of falling out of self, as it were, from one class or group to a lower. The fear of death and the fear of becoming *déclassé* are deeply connected. Becoming *déclassé* is, for many, a fate worse than death, to which actual death, suicide, is preferable.

Not only must one compete for material and social survival, but one must also become a commodity oneself in order to be allowed to compete, the constitution of which must continually be adjusted. That necessity encourages, in fact enforces, a continual process of narcissistically turning in on oneself, not just to reenact a fixation, but actually to reconstitute oneself as an appealing social commodity. The more marginal to the mainstream of flourishing social exchange one is, perhaps, the more intense, obsessive, this defensive, and to a large extent compensatory, mechanism becomes.

Central to Iser's analysis of the problem of aestheticism is his reading of the way in which Pater's fictional aesthetes are unable to enact their vision of a heightened reality. Marius, Watteau in "A Prince of Court Painters," Denys l'Auxerrois, Sebastian van Storck, and

Duke Carl of Rosenmold are the figures Iser takes up. None can negate social reality with sufficient force to realize or sustain his vision of a heightened reality. Already one can hear the voice of Gudrun in the opening paragraphs of *Women in Love*: "Nothing materialises! Everything withers in the bud . . . everything--oneself--things in general." And to Iser's catalogue one should add Emerald Uthwart. He will become the paradigm for Woolf's vacant, and finally absent, hero in *Jacob's Room*. Of Pater's *Imaginary Portraits* Iser writes,

If 'portrait' denotes a picture of a person, 'imaginary' makes it clear that the picture does not aim at likeness, but is fashioned by an overmastering fantasy, which is bound to reveal a good deal about the 'artist' himself. This is all the more remarkable as Watteau, Dionysus and an eighteenth-century duke are historical figures and not purely invented characters. Since these are portrayed to the dictates of Pater's imagination, the moment of crisis into which all of them are plunged must be seen as a paradigm of the aesthetic existence. The outcome of this crisis may be one of two possibilities: either life is experienced as suffering--in which case the account will lay bare the nature of suffering--or there will be an attempt to act by leaping into the dark in order to gain what suffering denies. Both tendencies are discernible in *Imaginary Portraits*. As suffering, however, prevails, failure inscribes itself into the aesthetic attitude. Yet failure, in turn, has to be given expression, and it is here that Pater's fantasy finally triumphs, not by making the characters fall short of what they had envisioned as the ideal, but through the ensuing mood of deep melancholy. A mood--whatever its colouring--indicates that the split between subject and object is obliterated, opposites have interpenetrated and are thus dissolved. For once the subject can be at one with itself. Pater, however, leaves no doubt about the price to be paid if the aesthetic attitude is sustained; it finds its paradoxical fulfilment in continual failure. (154)

The mood, "whatever its colouring," is the emotional resolution of the conflict in which the aesthete has been defeated. Of course the "split between subject and object" is not really "obliterated." In the mood of the subject a vestige of the object is incorporated. The aesthete's "sense of" it is savored, but only as a residue, as sorrow is the residue of pain or grief the residue of loss, those emotions being all that is left of contact with the object. In the emotional resolution the aesthete finds a way to convert failure into a "kind of" triumph.

Again, however, "opposites" have not really "interpenetrated" or been "dissolved." The dualism Iser has left in place prevents him from

pushing beyond the level of abstraction here. Having failed in his attempt to make contact or engage with, much less subdue, an object or another subject, the aesthete is simply returned to himself. If he feels riven by the experience, his emotions are the glue with which he melds the pieces of himself back together, his mood the complement of his sense that he has reestablished integrality. Agitation subsides into more comfortable quiescence as the effort to derive satisfaction of the pleasure principle from interaction with an unyielding reality is abandoned.

But all this talk of subject and object obscures the process we are actually investigating. The "continual failure" in which the "aesthetic attitude . . . finds its paradoxical fulfilment" can't be understood within the confines of subjectivity. We can't know what the failure is unless we get at the interaction between the aesthete and the "pedestrian life" he turns from, defeated but with identity intact, and so "melancholy" but in "a sense" triumphant.

Iser rightly observes that the "moment of crisis into which" Pater's fictional aesthetes are "plunged must be seen as a paradigm of the aesthetic existence. The outcome of this crisis may be one of two possibilities: either life is experienced as suffering--in which case the account will lay bare the nature of suffering--or there will be an attempt to act by leaping into the dark in order to gain what suffering denies." What is all this suffering? Do Pater's accounts, or Iser's readings of them, in fact "lay bare the nature" of the suffering? Why does the aesthete find "pedestrian life" so painful? Why does he appear to feel that to live in the actual world is to be forced to tolerate the intolerable? That is the question one must bring to a subsequent reading of Pater's portraits.

The abstractions which have been allowed for so long to stand in this sphere of inquiry seem to indicate that more than a handful of effete aesthetes have agreed to obscure it with something akin to what T.E. Hulme disparaged in Romanticism as so much "circumambient gas."

The extent to which any really probing inquiry has been avoided is evident in the prevalence of just such metaphors as "pedestrian life." It is a feature of the legacy of Paterian aestheticism that the whole of the real world, as opposed to the world of art or the history of art, is so frequently and unregretfully dismissed as "pedestrian." Similarly, in the discourse of that arch-humanist, Harold Bloom, the world of actual men and women is shrunk down to a word, "embattled," and quickly elided so that the humanist can get on with his investigation of that imaginatively more compelling figure, the "central man" or "crystal man," dreamt of, his every nuanced facet explored, by the likes of Emerson, Nietzsche, Ranke, Dilthey, and Collingwood. If the actual world is dismissed as "pedestrian," and the actual people living and working in it are dismissed as "embattled," what are we to make of the condition Iser gathers up into the word "suffering"? Scattered references to the condition may clarify the nature both of the suffering and of the evasion.

Writing an appreciation of Pater's career as an art critic, Buckler speaks of "art's manifestations of the capacity of the human spirit to master its environment by creating for it an ideal form that was rooted in matter but infinitely more significant." Such "aesthetic reconstructions," as Carolyn Williams calls them, or "supreme dénouements," as Pater calls them, are, he continues, "formal artistic proofs of man's ability in each age to create unified, self-validating alternatives to a life otherwise lacking in any substantial solace." These "artistic proofs" were the "objects of study" Pater "found worthiest of devotion" (Buckler 1).

The nonchalance with which Buckler dismisses all the possible sources of solace in a human life is as remarkable as the ease with which he condenses the sources of pain and trouble into a single phrase taken up from Pater. Pater's "imaginative creations," Buckler explains, "show through mythic example how the spirit enmeshed in the 'bewildering toils' of modern life can find at least the 'equivalent for a sense of

freedom.'" What those "bewildering toils" are, or how they are specific to "modern life," Buckler does not pause to consider. One surmises that that is because, following Pater's example, he is inclined to believe that "Only by attaining for his life in this world some degree of the distance from the chaos of detail, some degree of the ideal modeling, that form or style in art symbolizes can modern man experience some equivalent to the sense of freedom that he needs."⁴ The implications of the distancing are obvious, and one need not belabor them. Buckler construes it as one of Pater's great merits that "From beginning to end . . . [he] showed the keenest awareness of the spiritual condition of man in his modern situation; he acknowledged it as his own situation and accepted it as the 'environment' within whose imperatives he had to work" (6). The habit of distance wears too comfortably to stimulate effort to discern what sort of order the "chaos of detail" might actually compose.

Of course that is not Buckler's purpose. His object of study is the ideal orders art has composed. But because his object is so limited, the connection between Pater's "modern situation," between the "'environment' within whose imperatives he had to work," and "man's

⁴The language of Buckler's Introduction, written in 1986, is reminiscent of the discourse, and the ideology, of New Criticism. One hears echoes in that last passage of Blackmur in "A Critic's Job of Work": "The arts serve purposes beyond themselves; the purposes of what they dramatize or represent at that remove from the flux which gives them order and meaning and value; and to deny those purposes is like asserting that the function of a handsaw is to hang above a bench and that to cut wood is to belittle it." Clearly, however, Blackmur does not limit the critic's job to appreciation of form. "But the purposes are varied and so bound in his subject that the artist cannot always design for them. The critic, if that is his bent, may concern himself with those purposes or with some one among them which obsess him; but he must be certain to distinguish between what is genuinely ulterior to the works he examines and what is merely irrelevant; and he must further not assume except within the realm of his special argument that other purposes either do not exist or are negligible or that the works may not be profitably discussed apart from ulterior purposes and as examples of dramatic possibility alone" (380). Nor does Blackmur at any time confuse "dramatic possibility" or formal realization with actualization. Blackmur is not interested in loose equivalences. Nevertheless, he is more attentive to dramatic achievement than to ulterior purposes, and his emphasis upon the "limits appropriate" to any "given approach" (379) stems from a respect for the art object limiting the "sum" of the critic's "best work" to the "pedagogy of elucidation and appreciation" (378).

spiritual condition" is simply not examined. That it isn't examined is not remarkable; all studies are selective. What is remarkable is that the connection seems to have been entirely forgotten. The habit of ignoring it has become so confirmed that the capacity to recognize it has been seriously diminished.

Likewise Bloom is not inclined to consider what conditions dispose Wallace Stevens to see the actual world as populated by "things," nor why he reduces things to "appearances," much less why he finds it "dehumanizing" to live only with the "'ordinary, proper, and true appearances of things to us'" (xii).

As a Positivist with a progressive social agenda, Morley sees in the "doctrine of 'art for art's sake'. . . no impediment to positive social change." Nor does his interpreter, Franklin Court. As Buckler follows Pater, and Bloom follows Stevens, Court follows Morley in supporting the idea of "art for art's sake." Says Court, "It was an idea that . . . [Morley] thought should be supported for it was, like the Oxford Movement out of which he believed it grew, 'equally a protest against the mechanical and graceless formalism of the modern era . . . and . . . a craving for the infusion of something harmonious and beautiful about the bare lines of daily living'" (78). As a myth of "the modern" enlarges, it obscures the world it disparages. Hardy's sense of the "coming universal wish not to live" (*Jude the Obscure* 266) recorded in the episode of "Father Time's" suicide--Baudelaire tells a similar tale in *Paris Spleen* ("The Rope," dedicated to Edouard Manet)--has referents that phrases like "mechanical and graceless formalism" and the "bare lines of daily living" simply do not address.

As "modernity" envelops its inhabitants, it becomes less not more visible. Neither Pater nor Morley nor Court can "protest against" forces they too steadfastly wish not to see. In Forster's *Howards End*, on the other hand, the Schlegel sisters are finally forced to see the new apartment building in which Mr. Wilcox takes a flat. They can in fact no longer see anything else because the new building, with its

utilitarian and "graceless" form, blocks their view of both the surrounding neighborhood and the sky. Woolf is critical of Forster for failing to achieve symbolic integration of subjective state and objective environment. The soul is caged in a red brick villa, she wants us to perceive, but in writing a prose which creates beautifully irradiated objects--red brick villas so charged with subjective energy that they are transfigured--she obscures our vision of the bricks. Forster looks at the bricks. Moreover, he knows that they exist independent of his gaze, as bricks.

Pater wished to see only enchanted bricks when he wrote "The Child in the House." He wrote it partly to seek "self-understanding," Iser comments. Posing the question, "What is to be obtained from this self-understanding," Iser replies that "'A sense of freedom' is Pater's answer." That "sense of freedom," he observes, is the means by which the "subject disentangles itself from the enchanted web of necessities in which it has been trapped" (75). He is absolutely on target. His understanding of the subjective process by which "art contradicts vulgar experience" is wonderfully acute (60). But he is only just willing to acknowledge the exigency of the bricks. Bricks are vulgar. To describe the realities which both define and trap the subject as an "enchanted web of necessities" is already to retreat from contact with such vulgar trivialities as bricks.⁵ Iser's abstractions leave the enchantment undispeled. What the "web of necessities" consists of remains as much a mystery as the question why anything as solid and binding as the word "necessity" implies should be called "enchanted."

The distancing such abstractions effect prevents one from exchanging metaphors for vulgar material facts. The import of the most straightforward statements of fact is obscured, as in Pater's confession in "The Child in the House" that with the "desire of physical beauty

⁵Even Hawthorne, from his peep-hole under the eaves of his mother's and sisters' house, saw not an "enchanted web" but an "iron tissue" of necessity when he imagined the enigmatic movements of a fellow he called Wakefield, having read an account of his strange behavior in the newspaper.

mingled itself early the fear of death--the fear of death intensified by the desire of beauty." In these lines as in much of Pater's intricate prose, a literal reading is the most revealing. Pater was an unattractive boy. His father operated a surgery in East London before he died of a fever, while Pater was yet a young child. Hence Pater was made early conscious of the realities of disease, morbidity, and death. That he was said to resemble a frog did not ease his departure from the house of his mother and sisters in the "enchanted" suburb of Enfield to the village near Canterbury where he began life as a day boy at King's School. That the family had very modest means did not mitigate the entrapment Pater felt at King's School, with its religious and patriotic traditions, rigid discipline, and codes of manly behavior which allowed for such forms of bullying as the vicious kicks to Pater's lower back which caused permanent damage to his spine and added slight deformity to ugliness.

Poor, physically unappealing, and homosexual, unlike Maurice in E.M. Forster's own most confessional work, Pater had no alternative to scholarship. He would have to succeed at school or forfeit any hope of rising in the world. Seen in this context, the fact that he invented a familial connection with the French painter, Jean-Baptiste Pater, is not in the least surprising. The candor with which he responded, when asked whether the lineal connection did exist, "I think so. I always say so," indicates how habitual it was for him to blur the line between reality and wish. Pater would have to use his imagination to disentangle himself from the "web of necessities" he was placed in. But it wasn't the necessities that were "enchanted." Nothing material was going to break the spell of ugliness and limited means, kiss the frog with good fortune, and turn him into an aristocratic prince.

Pater was not fit to be a soldier, as his brother William became, for a brief period. Given his temperament--strong odors, crudity, vulgar commotion made him feel sick--he was hardly likely to view the prospect of becoming a doctor, as his brother William did, also dying at

a relatively young age, with anything short of revulsion and panic. Deeply fond of religious ritual, he was disposed to take orders in spite of his student forays into skepticism. But that avenue was closed when one of his more scrupulous friends at Oxford denounced him as an agnostic in a letter to the Bishop of London. His ungainliness made attempts to cut a figure, such as wearing an "apple-green" silk tie, apt not to come off, nor did he have the money to play the dandy on a grand scale. Again, his lack of physical beauty made romantic encounters unlikely. It is not hard to see that Pater took just about the only tolerable course open to him.

So entrapped by his circumstances, Pater became a peculiar cross between a dandy and a don. Whatever bohemian impulses he may have had he had no scope for acting out. It's no wonder he was envious when his aesthetic perceptions--appreciation of Botticelli's peculiar excellences, for example--were attributed to Ruskin, or that, feeling himself unfavorably compared to Ruskin, he made the impatient protest: "I cannot believe that Ruskin saw more in the Church of St. Mark than I do." Sensations, ideas, perceptions, appreciations: they were all his store of worldly possessions and prospects. People who remarked with surprise on the plainness of his rooms at Oxford, the house on Bradmore Road he later took with his sisters Hester and Clara, or the modest little house they occupied for a few years in London apparently overlooked the minor detail that small means do not purchase large displays of aesthetic taste. The experience of art provided the means of transfiguration; criticism offered the means of social ascent.

Simple recognitions such as these put Pater's influence on succeeding generations of aesthetes in a mildly and sadly ironic perspective. Pater asked much of art largely because he had so little else. The "lines of his daily living" were in fact so "bare." It was left to others more gifted⁶--with artistic talent, good looks, or money

⁶See Baudelaire's prose poem in *Paris Spleen*, "The Faeries' Gifts."

--to act out the existential mode of Pater's aesthetic hypothesis in a more voluptuous way.

Works such as Lionel Johnson's poem, "The Dark Angel," which Harold Bloom in his characteristically insistent way pronounces "Johnson's masterpiece, both the most representative and the best poem of the 'Nineties" (720), bear witness to the failure of the existential mode of Pater's hypothesis for those more amply equipped or well positioned to test it out. With the example of aesthetes like Johnson and Ernest Dowson before him, Yeats had sufficient intellectual force, and discipline, to recognize that "one must choose," between "perfection of the life and perfection of the work." For the legatees of Paterian aestheticism who escaped the "disaster" of Yeats' friends--the fate of those who had found it impossible to walk with their "feet upon a swaying rope in a storm"⁷ (Keefe 119)--the emphasis shifted back from the life to the work. The aestheticism of Pater's criticism, which turned for its support to history and myth, rather than his fiction, which sought sanction in the plenitude of heightened experience itself, became the enduringly operative mode, of which Flaubert was the supreme exemplar.

Crucial to a deeper analysis of that mode is a recognition of the implications of one of Pater's favorite metaphors: economy, in particular the economy of means and ends. Ms. Williams' book testifies to the inadequacy of the critical techniques Pater's own language invites. In a disheartening extension of Pater's conservative economy, Williams uses, to borrow a phrase from Thoreau, "improved means to unimproved ends." Her methods of inquiry do not incline her to consider that Pater's economy appoints style the most efficient means to an unimproved end: the grandeur of a world erected to contradict the existing world, a world transfigured by aesthetic vision; in short, the "grandeur of nothingness" (*Renaissance*, "Joachim Du Bellay" 144).

⁷Pater himself had no such difficulty, cloistered as he necessarily was.

Pater's aesthetic economy, by which means and ends are identified,⁸ substitutes the artifact of contemplation, or aesthetic reconstruction, for the object of actual sight. The end *is* the means: style. The "relative spirit" "registers an expansion of things and an obliteration of dividing lines" (Iser 15), but these are circumscribed by style, which effects formal unity.

Thus we arrive at the worst of all possible literary critical worlds: indeterminacy within the closed system of the stylistic construction, meaningless form, form pregnant with potential meaning but no outlet, no expectation of issue. The greatest feat of this aesthetic economy is that it elides, seals over, the necessity of action. It is, however, as precarious as it is apparently effortless.

As the experience of Pater's fictional aesthetes reveals, moreover, it is instituted at great cost, at the cost of death. For those who adopt the existential mode--dandies and bohemians--death is literal. For those who revert to the literary mode, death is social. Using the *askesis* of a rigorous style to forge matter into art, the aesthetic writer dies to the existing world in order to construct a transfigured world. The humanist, then, he who "possesses the complete culture"--and because it must be a scholar and scholarship has only been possible for men, it must be a "he" (*Appreciations* 397)--can dwell in that world, shrunk now, in the city which is its habitation, to the size of a house: "House Beautiful," as Pater imagined it. Thus the nightmare of history is transfigured and contained by the conservative aesthetic economy. Artifacts representing its ideal moments are installed in appropriate niches of the beautiful house, the views from which are framed by windows.⁹

But woe unto him who actually ventures out of doors. Duke Carl of Rosenmold, having clarified through much scholarship the terms of a

⁸"Justify rather the end by the means," Pater writes in his essay on Wordsworth; whatever may become of the fruit, make sure of the flowers and the leaves."

⁹See Baudelaire's "Windows" in *Paris Spleen*.

cultural renaissance in Germany, is trampled to death on the doorstep of his cottage retreat and the threshold of his new cultural order by a battalion of soldiers rushing forth to do battle in the "war-torn life of the present." The moment was not propitious. It is typical of the Paterian aesthete that he achieves internal harmony only by escape or transcendence and so is eventually shocked to discover his complete disjunction with the external order of things. The price of aesthetic success is confinement, and confinement breeds a terrible and constant anxiety.

The price of living in an illusory world is, of course, a vague fear of anything and everything which might break into it, or shatter it from within, not least of which one's own consciousness or one's own body. As Gilles Deleuze observes in his Foreword to Jacques Donzelot's *The Policing of Families*, "'Having a room of one's own' is a desire, but also a control. Inversely, a regulatory mechanism is haunted by everything that overruns it and already causes it to split apart from within." An unpleasant thought, a bad memory, a painful sensation can send the aesthete reeling. Like a grain of sand in the oyster's shell, there is always the tension caused by the dim awareness of discrepancy between illusory and actual, ideal and real. Inasmuch as the aesthete figures in his own fictions, the insecurity of his mode of existence reaches deep into the recesses of his own psychosomatic life. The insecurity which drives the aesthete to seek what Iser calls sanction or legitimation for the artistic experience, which is supposed to be an end in itself, is more pervasive and profound than Iser allows.¹⁰ It necessitates continual reassurance, continual denial, incessant construction of the transfigured world. It is that tension which drives the aesthete to go on making pearls.

¹⁰See Baudelaire's *Journaux Intimes*: "Many friends, many gloves-- for fear of the itch" (38); "The Dandy should aspire to be uninterruptedly sublime. He should live and sleep in front of a mirror" (56).

The stylus of the aesthete's pen becomes, as Harold Bloom's bit of etymology only suggests, not so much a finger in the dyke holding out the world but a magic wand with which he tries, obsessively, to fix the materials of his life and work--both "aestheticized." The impulse to fix leads to another obsessive impulse, a response to the isolation which is the result of aestheticization. That response is the impulse to intersect, to touch, to make contact with a world of people and activity which the artist has frozen himself out of. The hand that has fixed is the hand that longs to touch. One hears the voice of D.H. Lawrence in his "Song of a Man Who Has Come Through": "If only I am keen and hard like the sheer tip of a wedge/Driven by invisible blows,/The rock will split, we shall come at the wonder, we shall find the Hesperides."

But precisely because it longs to touch, to trace as it were the outlines of the world it has frozen out, it is rendered incapable of a genuinely creative literary activity. It desires to touch, not to engage with, the living forms it perceives. As a desire to touch what it has first stilled, it is not only a form of fetishization but also a form of necrophilia.

Conversely, having removed himself from the impact of external forces which might threaten his fragile internal reconstruction, the aesthete forgoes fecundation and becomes sterile. Having identified means and ends, ritualistically making "sure of the flowers and the leaves," the aesthete cannot produce fruit. He has sacrificed ends for means, can conceive no real ends: no outlet, "no exit," no future. Hence the aesthete's decadent reconstructing of the past, on the one hand, his somewhat more shocking subliminal longing for violent penetration, on the other.

If Lawrence dreams of coming through, in *Plato and Platonism* Pater's defensive and compensatory desire for an order that will fix the "flux" becomes so obsessively rigid that it betrays itself to a more deeply repressed desire for violently intrusive sensation. Bloom has

made reference to a strain of sadomasochism in Pater, but never offered an explicit rationale for the suggestion. Robert and Janice A. Keefe's excellent reading of the Lacedaemon chapter of *Plato and Platonism* provides the basis for a systematic analysis of that element.

It is significant, however, that as the Keefes point out, in Pater's last essay, "Apollo in Picardy," violent penetration exceeds Pater's apparent pleasure in the flogging routinely inflicted on the young men of Sparta. The mind of the aesthete is overwhelmed by disordered flashes of psychotic insight. Mind and body together are invaded, as Pater nears his own death, by forces which can no longer be shut out. Among them are wildly prophetic glimpses of the future. But the revelations are naturalistic and apocalyptic, and confined to the monastic cell of Prior Saint-Jean. To the end of Pater's work, the social world is eclipsed; and Pater's impulse to keep it walled out is overwhelmed by forces he cannot even bring himself to name.

Chapter II. Wall-Building: Bricks and Mortar

The Dark Angel

Dark Angel, with thine aching lust
To rid the world of penitence:
Malicious Angel, who still dost
My soul such subtile violence!

Because of thee, no thought, no thing
Abides for me undesecrate:
Dark Angel, ever on the wing,
Who never reachest me too late!

When music sounds, then changest thou
Its silvery to a sultry fire:
Nor will thine envious heart allow
Delight untortured by desire.

Through thee, the gracious Muses turn
To Furies, O mine Enemy!
And all the things of beauty burn
With flames of evil ecstasy.

Because of thee, the land of dreams
Becomes a gathering-place of fears:
Until tormented slumber seems
One vehemence of useless tears.

When sunlight glows upon the flowers,
Or ripples down the dancing sea:
Thou, with thy troop of passionate powers,
Beleaguerest, bewilderest me.

Within the breath of autumn woods,
Within the winter silences:
Thy venomous spirit stirs and broods,
O master of impieties!

The ardour of red flame is thine,
And thine the steely soul of ice:
Thou poisonest the fair design
Of nature, with unfair device.

Apples of ashes, golden bright;
Waters of bitterness, how sweet!
O banquet of a foul delight,
Prepared by thee, dark Paraclete.

Thou art the whisper in the gloom,
The hinting tone, the haunting laugh:
Thou art the adorning of my tomb,
The minstrel of mine epitaph.

I fight thee, in the Holy Name!
Yet, what thou dost, is what God saith:
Tempter! should I escape thy flame,
Thou wilt have helped my soul from Death:

The second Death, that never dies,
 That cannot die, when time is dead:
 Live Death, wherein the lost soul cries,
 Eternally uncomforted.

Dark Angel, with thine aching lust!
 Of two defeats, of two despairs:
 Less dread, a change to drifting dust,
 Than thine eternity of cares.

Do what thou wilt, thou shalt not so,
 Dark Angel! triumph over me:
Lonely, unto the Lone I go;
Divine, to the Divinity.

--Lionel Johnson (1893)

Materialism must insist on the irreducibility of the real to
 discourse. . . .

--Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin: Or Towards A
 Revolutionary Criticism* (51)

Lionel Johnson's poem "The Dark Angel" recounts a history which aptly serves to introduce a history of the work into which Pater sublimated the existential hypothesis of aestheticism, first in his criticism, then in his fictions. Because he *did* sublimate passion into the work of writing, Pater arrived at the destination of Johnson's poem directly, avoiding the dangerous passage between: "*Lonely, unto the Lone I go; Divine, to the Divinity.*" The source of the poem's tag has been noted by Harold Bloom as well as Ian Fletcher. It was Fletcher who identified its source in Plotinus' *Enneads* VI, ix, the passage which translates: "This, therefore, is the life of the Gods, and of divine and happy men, a liberation from all terrene concerns, a life unaccompanied with human pleasures, and a flight of the alone to the alone."

What the poem opens up at this juncture is a startling proliferation of deaths. It is important to note at the outset the presence of so many forms of death, and to bear it in mind as one observes--at no great risk of oversimplification, I think--that those concluding lines of Johnson's poem sum up the history of Pater's life and work. Pater began in loneliness and inclined toward divinity. He was at work on an essay on Pascal in the months before his death in July 1894, at the age of 55. His grave in Holywell Cemetary, Oxford, was marked with a large marble cross. The epitaph he had chosen was "In te, Domine, speravi." In between is a history of possibilities explored through discourse and foreclosed in discourse. What those possibilities were is the stuff of Pater's aesthetic hypothesis. How and why they were foreclosed, and what sorts of deaths the foreclosures entail, is the stuff of this history.

One additional point should be kept in mind as one makes one's way through Pater's discourse. For various reasons which I trust will become apparent, Walter Pater had in his youth and retained in maturity extremely self-referential habits of mind. He was often as oblivious of his impact on other people as he was of the extent to which his

perceptions were distorted by his own physical, emotional, and psychological needs. More sharply to the point here, Pater was unaware of the extent to which his utterances were expressions of his insecurities.

When once one understands how habitually Pater projected his subjective states as empathetic observations, one has found the key with which to unlock the secrets of his discourse. All of Pater's writing was confessional; even his critical appraisals were projections. Iser remarks of evolving aestheticism itself, "Seeing is no longer perceiving, but is projecting." With respect specifically to Pater, he quotes Somerset Maugham's "gently ironic words, 'Walter Pater is the only justification for Mona Lisa'" (45).

Harold Bloom observes that Pater found in Darwinian and historicist theories of evolution a "justification for projecting his temperament into a general vision of his age's dilemmas" (*Selected Writings* xvii). Bloom argues that Pater turned from "so deep a self-exposure" as characterized his essays in *The Renaissance*, where the "personal projection is more direct," to a "less personal reverie" of a "consciously fictive kind" in the imaginary portraits. It "hardly helps," he says, "to see 'Sebastian van Storck,' or 'Denys l'Auxerrois' or 'Hippolytus Veiled' as being essays or veiled confessions" (xvii, xxii). He prefers to call the imaginary portraits "reveries" because he is more concerned to find a way of characterizing their genre than he is to ascertain what they reveal about the material process of aesthetic production. He is also disposed to call them reveries, however, because he recognizes that, as dreams," their "power and precariousness alike . . . are related to their hovering near the thresholds of wish-fulfillment" (xxii).

"See the "Conclusion": "Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world" (195-96).

Citing passages from Pater's essays on "Style," "Wordsworth," and "Aesthetic Poetry," Bloom holds that a "critic who understands the dialectic of style, as Pater magnificently did, is in no need of psychoanalytic reduction" (xxviii). By dialectic of style Bloom means the dynamic of compensation at work in the interaction between artist and actuality, what Yeats called the "daily antithesis" that art effects and Wallace Stevens called, defining poetry, the "daily necessity of getting the world right." As evidence of Pater's understanding of that dialectic Bloom instances Pater's implication in "Aesthetic Poetry," which Pater "suppressed" as his "most unguarded vision of poetic experience" (xxvii), that the "heightened intensity of Morris and Rossetti . . . compensates for a destructively excessive sexual self-consciousness" (xxviii). Bloom's vague phrasing backs away from that particular dynamic, however. What he means by "destructively excessive sexual self-consciousness" is anybody's guess. Given Bloom's critical preoccupation with the insights he attributes to Pater, especially the suggestion that "sodomasochistic yearnings and the anxiety of being a late representative of a tradition are closely related" (xxviii), I am inclined to think Bloom gives Pater some credit properly belonging to Bloom.

Bloom is more concerned with death--the only necessity he is inclined to recognize--than he is with life. He is too narrowly focused on the dialectic of literary structures erected against the necessity of death to contend with the necessities of life and living. His willingness to probe the implications of Freud's theory of the sexual origins of human thought is limited in this context. Recognizing that Pater's work may indeed represent a "compulsive, endless brooding in which all intellectual curiosity remains sexual" rather than a "successful sublimation, in which thought, to some extent, is liberated from its sexual past" (xviii-xix) need not involve one in psychoanalytic reductions. It may, on the other hand, enable us to decipher the material meaning of such gestures as Pater's definition, in "Leonardo"

and the "Postscript (Romanticism)" to *Appreciations*, of Romantic art as a coupling of "curiosity" and the "love of beauty" which leans toward the "grotesque" when not kept in balance; *askesis*, or self-curtailment, a principle of restraint, serving always as the corrective to imbalance, or excess. Bloom's reading of literary history as a history of successful sublimations may impose premature limits on our understanding of the process by which sexuality, especially a sexuality of which the "outlets are sealed," drives and directs intellectual curiosity.

It is a matter of interesting conjecture whether Pater consciously knew how confessional, or transparent, his writing was; and to what degree he felt he could rely on the obtuseness of his readers for protection. His wry complaint, "I wish they would not call me a hedonist. It gives such a wrong impression to those who do not know Greek," was either a perverse evasion or an indication that despite his continual self-probing, he remained in some ways more veiled to himself than to others. Defenders of Pater, Bloom among them, do not want readers to "underestimate an immensely subtle mind" (xix). Pater did indeed have an immensely subtle mind. More often than not, I think, however, contemporary readers took his meaning all right, letting the refining subtleties fall away. Wordsworth's grand-nephew, John Wordsworth, has been scorned for writing Pater a letter expressing his distress with the "Conclusion" that "no fixed principles either of religion or morality can be regarded as certain, that the only thing worth living for is momentary enjoyment and that probably or certainly the soul dissolves at death into elements which are destined never to reunite" (xxi). One may not be in sympathy with John Wordsworth's dogmatic indignation, but one cannot fault his comprehension. The same can be said of those who called Pater a hedonist.

When readers grasped his meaning only too clearly, Pater went underground, so to speak, eventually resurfacing with elaborately refined modifications. How the refining subtleties elaborated more than they sharpened Pater's perceptions this study aims to explore. What

they were elaborated to deny, contradict, or resolve is what we seek to determine. That the process by which they were elaborated cannot be understood in narrowly phenomenological, textual, or psychoanalytic terms is a fundamental premise.

Pater's "Conclusion" to the series of essays he initially titled *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* is, of course, his signature piece. Drawn from the 1868 essay-review of William Morris' poetry which was retitled "Aesthetic Poetry," published in the first (1889) edition of *Appreciations*, and excluded from all subsequent editions during Pater's lifetime, it was the manifesto that was to resonate down the '70s, '80s, and '90s into the new century. That Pater understood the work of those essays to be historical studies reflects the predominance of Hegelian and Diltheyan versions of historicism¹² in his conception of history. His alteration of the title to *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* for the second, 1877 edition was a concession to Emilia Pattison's criticism of his impressionist method, one which her own Positivist assumptions, acquired from her husband, the rector Mark Pattison, whose scholarly rigor she sedulously emulated, precluded her recognizing as any sort of method at all. Pater altered his title rather than his method, however. His method never substantially changed. What did change was the situations he used it to explore, as the problematic implications of his aesthetic hypothesis made themselves felt over the course of his career at Oxford. It was a career characterized by a peculiar mixture of celebrity, opprobrium, and obscurity.

Many readers of Pater have concluded that since neither his method nor his basic set of preoccupations changed very much, the order in which one reads his work doesn't matter very much. Iser remarks that since "aestheticism is not an ordered phenomenon" and his own readings

¹²Aside from the classics, Pater was most widely read in German philosophy and Romantic literature. Of the three national literary traditions, English, German, and French, he was most deeply drawn to the French simply because it was the most profoundly Romantic.

"deal successively with ideas that preoccupied Pater simultaneously," the chronology of Pater's writings is of "minor significance" (5). What interests Iser is the *Gestalt* he discerns in the total textual record of Pater's aesthetic impulses.

Perry Meisel makes much the same claim in *The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater*. He holds that since the thought of neither Woolf nor Pater underwent any significant development, one should concentrate on the drama of influence in which Woolf appropriated Pater's dispersal of self, or as Meisel calls it, "deindividuation," so as to reconstitute herself as the preeminent practitioner of a Paterian literary aesthetic. What that drama reduces to is "finally, only a myth or fable of identity" (xix).

More traditional literary historians such as Gerald Monsman have provided very useful chronologies of biography and literary production. Robert and Janice A. Keefe have taken a large step toward closing the gap between those parallel chronologies, integrating matters of biography, literary production, theme, and social history in such a way as to open up new prospects of knowledge in *The Gods of Disorder*.

Others have abstracted materials pertaining to such features of Pater's discourse as Hellenism, Positivism, empiricism, historicism, the influence of French literary and philosophical traditions, and so forth from the larger body of his work for the purpose of analyzing those elements in relation to Victorian cultural history. Some, such as Paul Barolsky, have noted, in very unsystematic gestures of appreciation, scattered evidence of Pater's pervasive influence on modern poets, novelists, and art historians--Kenneth Clark preeminent among the last group.

In his Introduction to a collection of essays on Baudelaire, Bloom names Victor Hugo as Baudelaire's "Romantic precursor." In focusing on the relation between Baudelaire and Hugo, Bloom points to a possibly significant consideration: that Pater and Baudelaire have in common, if not a single Romantic precursor, the nonetheless profound influence of

Hugo. The impress of a long procession of French writers on Pater goes deeper than John J. Conlon's book, *Walter Pater and the French Tradition*, penetrates to. Yet many of Pater's writings seem to skim the surface of that tradition. Why the influence of Rousseau,¹³ Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, Gautier, and Baudelaire, among others, is only obliquely expressed in Pater's work is a question the extant criticism of Pater does not fully address.

It is possible, as Bloom's insights suggest, that Pater made oblique, tangential references to French writers in the process of avoiding reference to Ruskin and more contemporary rivals among the Pre-Raphaelites in England. But it is more likely, I think, that fuller confrontations with the French *hommes des lettres* whom Pater picks up at crucial turnings in his own discourse would have overwhelmed the aesthetic defenses against a world teeming with flesh and color, motion and breath, adventure and social shiftings that his own etchings kept out.¹⁴ The answer can only be determined by a genuinely historical reading of Pater's discourse: one which attempts to close the gap between material forces and literary production.

The place to begin a historical reading is Pater's own account of his origination. In "The Child in the House" Pater purports to trace the process of "brainbuilding" by which his personality was created. If we situate that process in a larger material history, we can begin to see the bricks and mortar that went into construction of the manifesto in which Pater succeeded--triumphantly, ecstatically, momentarily--in walling out the world. That achievement was, precisely, an attitude. It allowed Pater to celebrate his life in a world from which all impediments to self-realization had been purged. Of course, it could not be sustained.

¹³The early chapters of Rousseau's *Confessions* must have had a disturbing resonance for Pater, in particular Rousseau's confession of a masochistic fixation on spanking as his earliest (conscious) source of sexual pleasure.

¹⁴Woolf says, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, "one scratches on the wall" (293). Oscar Wilde says, "one abandons the surface at one's peril" (Keefe 10).

In "Emerald Uthwart" (as well as *Gaston de Latour* and *Plato and Platonism*), Pater explored the process not of brainbuilding but of social selving, the two of which, at the crucial transition from home to school, were at odds. By way of "Child in the House" and "Emerald Uthwart" we can come at the question of who it was that matriculated at Queen's College, Oxford, was elected to a classical fellowship at Brasenose College and membership in the "radical" Old Mortality Society, shocked its members with his first two papers,¹⁵ had the audacity to call S.T. Coleridge "sick" ("Coleridge's Writings," 1866), wrote a seminal essay-review of "Poems by William Morris" (1868), and went on to shock a larger audience with his "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance* in 1873.

The rest of our history will probe how Pater's discourse, in working out the problematic implications of the infamous manifesto, reveals a continual foreclosure of possibilities and a proliferation of deaths. Though effected in and by Pater's discourse, those foreclosures and deaths are in fact enforced by Pater's situation during the years between 1858, when he went up to Oxford on a King's School scholarship (60 pounds a year for three years), and his death of a heart attack on 30 July 1894.

"The Child in the House" (1878)

I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

. . . . Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁵The essay on J.G. Fichte's "Ideal Student" and "Diaphaneité" were both written for and delivered to the Old Mortality Society in 1864. It was founded by John Nichol, flourished during the decade 1856-66, and numbered among its thirty-five members Algernon Charles Swinburne, John Addington Symonds, Thomas Hill Green, Edward Caird, and James Bryce; also Ingram Bywater and Charles Lancelot Shadwell, Pater's two closest friends in the group (Monsman 26).

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

I John 2: 12-13, 15-17

Walter Horatio Pater was the second son and the third of four children born to Maria Hill and Richard Glode Pater: William, Hester, Walter, and Clara. He was born Sunday, 4 August 1839, at No. 1 Honduras Terrace on Commercial Road in Stepney. What Sir Thomas More had 300 years earlier called the "pleasant prospect" of Stepney was in 1839 a slum grown up around the docks of East London. Commercial Road was a broad route cut from the docks to the city in the first decade of the nineteenth century. On the south side of Commercial Road, Honduras Terrace was the most respectable neighborhood in the district, but the "rim" dividing it from the stench and squalor of Vinegar Lane was a "thin" one (Levey 26).

It was the rapid development and concomitant need for medical treatment in Shadwell that probably prompted John Thompson Pater to move from Highgate and set up as a surgeon and male mid-wife there some time prior to 1808. "T. Pater . . . Surgeon" died young, but that was not unusual. By 1842 statistics had been collected showing the average life expectancy in Stepney to be twenty-two for laborers, servants, and their families; twenty-seven for tradesmen and their families; and forty-five for professional men and gentlemen. Both Pater's father, Richard Glode Pater, and his uncle, William Grange Pater, followed their father's example and became surgeons. They were, that is to say, general medical practitioners, a cut above apothecary but below the rank of physician, and the title of Doctor reserved to it. Living a few doors down at 6 Hardwick Place, William shared his older brother's practice. Both men died, at their residences in Stepney, at the age of forty-five: Richard on 28 January 1842, William on 19 September 1845. The cause of Richard's death was certified, probably by his brother, who was in

attendance, as "affection of the brain" (Levey 29). William's death was caused by a "shock to the system" sustained in a fall down stairs (Levey 30).

Pater was three and a half when his father died. His mother, left with four children under the age of ten and an estate valued at 5,000 pounds, sold the Stepney House and moved with her mother-in-law and sister-in-law to the village of Enfield eleven miles north of London. It was the same country village in which Charles and Mary Lamb had lived up until ten years before. There the family remained, making periodic visits to Fish Hall near Hadlow in Kent, the home of Pater's godmother, Mary Susanna May, until 1852. Though their inheritance was not paltry--twice what Pater would leave at his own death some fifty years later--it was probably all there was to support four children and three women for the rest of their lives (Levey 33). Theirs was a modest, quiet life. Its placidity was disturbed by simple, elemental events: the deaths of Pater's uncle, William, news of which rent the household, and on 21 February 1848, his grandmother, Hester Pater, aged 84. If we can take Pater's comment in *Gaston de Latour* as a reflection of his own remembrances, it was she "to whom he had always turned for an affection, that had been as no other in its absolute incapacity of offence" (Levey 38). The Enfield house was vacated in 1852 and what was left of the family--Pater's elder brother William having gone off at the age of fifteen to take a clerk's job by 1851--removed to the village of Harbledown near Canterbury so that Walter could enroll as a day boy at King's School, probably on the advice of the Enfield Grammar School headmaster.

The Pater family was of Dutch descent. There is no evidence to support the notion of French descent--from Jean-Baptiste Pater, only pupil of the French court painter Watteau, or any other French folk. The connection was purely associational; nor was the surname which gave rise to it as uncommon as the Pater family supposed. Richard Pater's grandfather, Thompson Pater, had married Mary Church, daughter of a

Roman Catholic family in Norfolk. Hence Thompson Pater's children were baptized as Roman Catholics, and though the majority of the members of that branch of the family may have stayed in the Catholic Church, Pater's father--possibly like his father before him--made a break with that tradition. He had no particular church affiliation when he married Maria Hill, but all of their children were brought up in the Anglican Church. The vicar of St. Andrew's, Enfield, had High Church leanings which caused hot dispute in the parish a few years after the Paters had left. Pater attended the Enfield Grammar School, where his classmates called him "Parson Pater" (Levey 46). His brother William had left school and taken a clerk's position in a merchant's office by 1851, either in Enfield or, more probably, in London. He may have been aided in that move by members of the extended family descending from Pater's great-grandfather and the younger brother of his grandfather, John Church Pater. Trading, mercantile, and financial interests characterized that branch of the family, some of whom held clerkships in the Bank of England, others of whom settled in Liverpool and became prosperous merchants (Levey 39). It was a vocational tradition which John Thompson Pater had broken with when he pursued a career as a surgeon, establishing that tradition for his own descendants. His was a tradition to which Pater's brother William eventually returned, gaining admission to the Royal College of Surgeons at Canterbury in 1857. By 1859, when Pater was an undergraduate at Oxford, he had joined the army, probably as a medical officer, but he didn't remain there. There was some talk of his going out to Brazil with a Liverpool cousin, but in the end he found his place as assistant medical officer at the Fareham Lunatic Asylum, eventually being promoted to a more senior post in the asylum at Stafford (Levey 39, 45).

Pater enrolled at King's School, Canterbury, 3 February 1853, on Candlemas morning during an unusually severe winter frost. His mother died only a year later, 25 February 1854, while away on a visit to Fish Hall and when Pater was not yet fifteen. She had made her will in 1851,

appointing three trustees for her children: her sister-in-law, Hester Elizabeth Maria (Bessie) Pater, a Stepney surgeon named Charles Sturges, and a lawyer, John Pendergast, in Commercial Road (Levey 49). When Pater went up to Oxford in 1858, his Aunt Bessie took Hester and Clara to Heidelberg to complete their educations. She died in Dresden in 1862, leaving them to shift for themselves for several years in Germany, possibly finding work as governesses. Hester and Clara outlived both of their brothers. Suffering from heart disease and dropsy, William died in his rented rooms in Paddington, where he had come to be looked after by his sisters during their residence in Kensington, in 1887. He was fifty-two.

Pater wrote "Imaginary Portrait. The Child in the House" when he was thirty-nine. First published in *Macmillan's Magazine* in August 1878, it does indeed offer the "largest clue" to Pater's work, his "criticism and imaginary portraits alike" (Bloom 15). Bloom is right about that. All of Pater's defining predilections are present.

Even a cursory reading, however, makes it hard to understand why Bloom would choose to see in Pater's imaginary portraits "successful sublimation" rather than a "compulsive, endless brooding in which . . . intellectual curiosity" remains deeply rooted in its sexual origins. The reverie is, moreover, less a "hovering near the thresholds of wish-fulfillment" than a brooding which, though hardly factual, is necessarily confessional. How "veiled" the confession is depends on how conscious Pater was of the process he was reproducing.

Dreamlike though the portrait is, it is tightly structured and not hard to schematize. Pater's brooding shapes itself around five crucial elements. First is the sealed enclosure which is home. Second is the road outward, from which come hints of both pleasure and pain. Third is the death of the child's father. Fourth is the discovery that children, also, sometimes die. That discovery is accompanied by a realization that the dead do not figure abroad as sublime, protective bodies, but moulder in the ground, and may not rest, but may come back to menace

those who remain, loving the world which has been lost to the dead. Fifth is a subsequent impulse to sanctify the "love of the world," for "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

The fundamental opposition in the portrait is that between the house and the road outward. How Pater resolves it is determined by the other key forces bearing in upon it. Unlike the schoolboy portrayed in "Emerald Uthwart," the child growing up in the charming old house which stood "not far beyond the gloom and rumours of the town, among high garden-wall, bright all summertime with Golden-rod, and brown-and-golden Wall-flower," experiences what will constitute ever after his "ideal, or typical conception, of rest and security" (3, 5). There as nowhere else he enjoys a "sense of harmony between his soul and its physical environment," which becomes, "for a time at least, like perfectly played music." The life he "led there" is "singularly tranquil and filled with a curious sense of self-possession" (5). The "love of security" it engenders comes to act as a "salutary principle of restraint in all his wanderings of spirit" (6).

Sensations of pleasure and pain disturb the peace and provoke "wanderings of spirit." Although the "sense of security could hardly have been deeper, the quiet of the child's soul being one with the quiet of its home, a place 'enclosed' and 'sealed,'" wanderings of spirit are stimulated by "streams of impressions" which drift insidiously into the small suburban citadel. "There came floating in from the larger world without, as at windows left ajar unknowingly, or over the high garden walls, two streams of impressions, the sentiments of beauty and pain." The responsive child develops an "almost diseased sensibility to the spectacle of suffering" and a "more than customary sensuousness, 'the lust of the eye,'¹⁶ as the Preacher says" (6). He would recoil from the spectacle of suffering--as he may have done earlier in the rooms

¹⁶See Baudelaire, "Mon coeur mis à nu," XCV: "Even when quite a child I felt two conflicting sensations in my heart: the horror of life and the ecstasy of life. That, indeed, was the mark of a neurasthenic idler" (88).

attached to his father's surgery in Stepney--and revel in the sheer absence of pain, as he did when the "passion of sudden, severe pain" (10) inflicted by a wasp's sting subsided into blessed relief. As for the other "sentiment," "beauty" being an abstraction of the more basic feeling of pleasure, it would lead him far down the road away from home, that "fascination" with "bright colour and choice form--the sweet curvings, for instance, of the lips of those who seemed to him comely." But the way would be a "weariness": "Could he have foreseen the weariness of the way!" (6).

The child in fact was not "comely." Pater's own mouth had a "curious malformation" (Monsman 20), and at Oxford he was advised to grow a mustache to cover it. His form was not "choice." Pater was "slightly humpbacked" and developed a "peculiarity of gait" after getting a "dreadful kick" from one of a small gang of boys who attacked him at school. It may have caused an "acute slip of the femoral growth plate and consequent bone degeneration" (Monsman 21). Personal accounts, drawings, portraits, and photographic representations vary, and allowances must be made for the fact that Thomas Wright, collaborating with Pater's old schoolmate, John Rainier McQueen, seemed determined to portray the subject of his two-volume biography as grotesquely ugly. Simeon Solomon's drawing of Pater at Oxford in 1872 brings out the resemblance between Pater and his strikingly beautiful sister, Clara. It does not agree with McQueen's description of the boy he first met at King's School, whom he recollected as having a "prematurely whiskered, impassive, froglike face"; an "overhanging forehead, brown hair, deep-set mild eyes near together, a nose very low at the bridge, a heavy jaw, [and] a square chin" (Monsman 20). Neither does it agree, however, with other drawings of Pater less expressive of idealized sentiment. Though Pater's sense of his own physical deficiencies was undoubtedly heightened by unfavorable comparison with the dashing good looks of his older brother and by the thoughtless comments of schoolmates inclined to exaggerate any feature out of the

ordinary, by far the bulk of the evidence supports the conclusion that Pater learned early to overcome matter with manner. Unfortunately, even the ingratiating mannerliness was off-putting to some, such as the Reverend George Wallace, headmaster at King's School, for whom Pater's earnest scholarship and hard-won honors did not compel the sort of unreserved affection elicited by more ordinary, artless, unself-conscious boys. But the fact of the matter is that Pater's unpleasing appearance was a social impediment which he had to negotiate all his life. A drawing by William Rothenstein produced for publication in March of 1894 forced him to negotiate the issue once again. To the artist he was generous, calling the drawing a "clever likeness." To his close colleague, the Rev. Frederick W. Bussell, he expressed exasperation, bursting out with the question, "Do I look like a Barbary ape?" Hester and Clara came to his support and vetoed publication of the drawing. Though he necessarily came to terms with his social face and figure, and was able to joke to a friend's sister coming to Oxford to see a performance of Aristophanes' *Frogs* that she must come to see him--and "Look on me as one of the Frogs"--they were clearly a cross that he had heavily to bear at every step of the way (Levey 201).

It is impossible to tell to what extent his own deformities aroused the "pervading preference in himself for a kind of comeliness and dignity, and urbanity literally, in modes of life, which he connected with the pale people of towns, and which made him susceptible to a kind of exquisite satisfaction in the trimness and well-considered grace of certain things and persons he afterwards met with, here and there, in his way through the world" (3-4). But it seems clear that a compensatory identification with the stylish appearance of sophisticated city dwellers is at work here. "In music, sometimes," moreover, the "two sorts of impressions"--of beauty and pain--"came together, and he would weep, to the surprise of older people" (6). It seems likely that at least some of Pater's precocious *Weltschmerz*s came from grief over his own unloveliness, even though, in the security of home, he had not felt

yet more sharply the disharmony between what he was, in the flesh, and what he most desired, and desired to be one with: the beauty, and narcissistic pleasure, of the flesh as well as the "eye."

It was his fate, surely, to observe the movements of those trim and stylish figures--from the garden gate or, later, his "Spartan" rooms at Oxford, which he could not afford as an undergraduate to decorate--not to fall briskly in step with them, or to mingle with them comfortably in elaborately gracious surroundings, much less to wrestle with them in the "sweetness and strength" of embrace he so admired in Michelangelo's art. As a don he enjoyed the spectacle of undergraduate escapades, never reprehending the more privileged young men's lack of seriousness and affecting himself a certain flippant insouciance. For him, of course, they remained a spectacle. There was no question of his being able to participate, though he did try, on occasion, to put off the cloak of the don, showing up at a Royal Academy function in a top hat and "apple-green" silk ascot.¹⁷ Not long after he was made a junior fellow at Brasenose in 1864, he was asked whether he found his college duties burdensome. As the story goes, he replied, "'Well, not so much as you might think. The fact is that most of our young men are fairly well-to-do, and it is not necessary that they should learn very much. At some Colleges I am told that certain of the young men have a genuine love for learning; if that were so here, it would be quite too dreadful'" (Monsman 27). If that were so, one may surmise, they would be rivals in the one area where he could successfully compete, and maintain superiority. It's interesting that when he lectured he apparently did not look at his listeners, but kept his forehead pressed against his hands. Conversely, it was generally the good-looking, sporting undergraduates that he and his colleague Frederick Bussell

¹⁷That icy shade of green seems to have been one of his favorite colors; it's the color he had the walls of his sitting room at Brasenose painted. The other favorites were red and blue. He liked blue pots filled with red rose petals.

entertained, enjoying their contact along with a slightly malicious mockery of their presumed stupidity.

That the child of the portrait was enticed by the lust of the flesh to wander beyond the wall and out upon the roadway a feverish dream makes manifest. Having walked out and then beheld, through a neighboring garden gate usually closed, "a great red hawthorn in full flower," a "plumage of tender crimson fire out of the heart of the dry wood," he dreams of "loiter[ing] along a magic roadway of crimson flowers which seemed to open ruddily in thick, fresh masses about his feet, and fill softly all the little hollows in the banks on either side" (8). Thereafter, summer upon summer, the "blossom of the red hawthorn . . . seemed to him absolutely the reddest of all things." He never forgets the "flame in those perishing little petals," nor their perfume, nor the "inexplicable excitement" they aroused in him. The excitement is disturbing. It mingles with "regret or desire" and a "longing for some undivined, entire possession of them" (9). The impulse to satisfy desire, aroused within his small circle of "perishing little petals" but leading outward toward a greater profusion, is thwarted by the pressure of other forces.

The world of sense is so much with the child, he cannot--as is true of children generally--conceive of abstractions except as embodied. Hitherto he has imagined the resurrected body of his father, whose "death in distant India" is announced by a "cry on the stair, sounding bitterly through the house, and struck into his soul for ever" (7), as "still abroad in the world, somehow, for his protection--a grand, though perhaps rather terrible figure, in beautiful soldier's things, like the figure in the picture of Joshua's Vision in the Bible" (11). One summer's day, however, while walking with his mother in a fair churchyard, he comes upon a grave freshly dug for a child's burial. He realizes then that children as well as fathers sometimes die, and that the dead, laid in the ground with "black mould" heaped upon them, do not figure sublimely abroad for his protection. They may in fact, he hears

people say, come to call the living hence. They may become *revenants*,¹⁸ leading a "secret, half-fugitive life in their old homes, quite free by night, though sometimes visible by day, dodging from room to room" and with "no great goodwill towards those who shared the place with them" (12).

Enjoying the tender ministries of his grandmother, aunt, and mother, the child no longer feels the lust of the flesh without something more intense than "regret." Of the father what lingers now is "No benign, grave figure in beautiful soldier's things . . . abroad in the world for his protection! only a few poor, piteous bones, and above them, possibly, a certain sort of figure he hoped not to see." From Pater's brooding sentences the figure emerges somewhat more distinctly: "All night the figure sat beside him in the reveries of his broken sleep, and was not quite gone in the morning--an odd, irreconcilable new member of the household, making the sweet familiar chambers unfriendly and suspect by its uncertain presence. He could have hated the dead he had pitied so" (12).

Florian's reveries are broken and take a "soberer tone" now that the "uncertain presence" has installed itself in the "sweet familiar chambers," making them feel "unfriendly and suspect." This is not a figure of abstract death. Pater has told us that the child could not conceive of abstractions except as embodied in real men and women. It is worth recalling here, therefore, that Pater's father had worked with great dedication among his patients in East London. Having built up, in partnership with his brother, a busy medical practice, he had refused to follow the advice of friends and relatives that he move to a more fashionable neighborhood. Only after his death was a move made, if not to a more fashionable at least to a more genteel suburb.

Florian--and if there is any wish-fulfillment going on in the portrait, it is precisely there: Walter Pater was no flower of English boyhood--"could have hated the dead he had pitied so." A conflict

¹⁸An idea Woolf takes up from Pater in her story, "A Haunted House"

appears to have opened up between the two "sentiments," of pleasure and pain. As the boy progresses from an Oedipal phase of sexuality toward a period of latency, pity reasserts itself with a vengeance, turning from "regret" to guilt and dread. Anxiety is now mingled with "regret or desire"--Pater's ambivalence is recorded in the phrase--and the longing for "entire possession" of those flame flowers blooming in such profusion, absolutely the reddest of all things. At "any time or place, in a moment, the faint atmosphere of the chamber of death would be breathed around him, and the image with the bound chin, the quaint smile, the straight, stiff feet, slid itself across the air upon the bright carpet, amid the gayest company, or happiest communing with himself" (12).

Under that darkening influence, the bright things of the world undergo a transformation. "Love of the world, and the things that are in the world": "human life and its familiar or exceptional incidents, birth, death, marriage, youth, age, tears, joy, rest, sleep, waking," are sacralized. A "constant substitution of the typical for the actual" is effected in the child's thoughts. Religion serves as the mirror in which the vanity of earthly pleasures is idealized, transforming even "daily meat and drink" into a "kind of sacred transaction." The vanity is not renounced but transfigured, for without its stimulus there would be only dullness. Under the pressure of guilt and dread, Florian uses religion to sanctify his natural hedonism. Religion becomes for Florian "what it ever afterwards remained" for Pater: a "sacred ideal," a "mirror, towards which men might turn away their eyes from vanity and dullness, and see themselves therein as angels, with their daily meat and drink, even, become a kind of sacred transaction--a complementary strain or burden, applied to our every-day existence, whereby the stray snatches of music in it re-set themselves, and fall into the scheme of some higher and more consistent harmony" (13). That way the "stray snatches" of "music" are not only "re-set," transposed from an illicit to a legitimate key, but "more consistent." They can be sustained,

prolonged. Satisfaction is deferred, but excitement is maintained in modes consistent with the demands of daily life. The rituals of domestic life are eroticized.

As the pleasures of the flesh are transformed into "sacred transactions," the figure which has aroused the child's anxiety--a tension between the pleasure principle and the reality principle--is also transformed. From a revenant with a "secret, half-fugitive life" and maybe "no great goodwill towards those who shared the place" with him, the figure of the father--a composite in the child's mind of all who make undeniable counter-claims to that of his sole satisfaction--is converted into a "sacred double":

A place adumbrated itself in his thoughts, wherein those sacred personalities, which are at once the reflex and the pattern of our nobler phases of life, housed themselves; and this region in his intellectual scheme all subsequent experience did but tend still further to realise and define. Some ideal, hieratic persons he would always need to occupy it and keep a warmth there. And he could hardly understand those who felt no such need at all, finding themselves quite happy without such heavenly companionship, and sacred double of their life, beside them. (13)

That the composite image of the father, uncle, and elder brother, who had not died in their sensuous beds but of sickness allied to their soldierly struggles against disease and its conditions, would indeed be the "reflex and the pattern" of the "nobler phases" of Pater's life other "fictions" bear out. So does Pater's lifelong vacillation between the claims of Dionysus and Apollo, Romanticism and Classicism, and his final grappling with Plato and Platonism. It is at the bottom of the split, in the essay on "Style," between the fascination with form and the ultimate concession to great matter as the primary constituent of great art.

For now, however, in the phase of Pater's development "Child in the House" seeks to trace, religion has become, not a belief system undergirding ethical imperatives, but a palliative of a particular kind: a defense against guilt in the conflict between hedonism and the demands implied by confrontation with reality. An "ideal, hieratic person" now

presides over the sanctified life of the household. In the house of the child's thoughts, anxiety is kept at bay and warmth is restored as feverish heat is subdued.

Thus the sins of the child are expunged, the wicked one is overcome, and the father is "reconciled" to the household. Having seemed to submit to the internalized will of the father by sanctifying his pleasures, the child may abide unharmed. But already a substantial price has been paid for a provisional security. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," has been subdued. Primary colors have been brushed with dust or frost: crimson turns to dusty rose, vibrant green to a cooler shade; blue is the color of sky, approaching either to light of day or midnight, depending on its depth. The father abides as a "heavenly companion" and the child abides as an "angel."

The first of many small deaths has occurred. By the time the child actually leaves home and sets forth on the roadway, he is already overwhelmed, not with excitement at the prospect of pursuing his desire, gathering the red blossoms along the way, but with sickness over his loss. Running back to collect the pet bird left behind in its cage, in a turmoil of pity for the bird's imagined distress, Florian is overcome with homesickness. The vacant white rooms reflect the loss of unalloyed pleasure and vitality he has sustained. They are the sepulcher of his lust, which has been sealed up in the purified, ghostly chambers. The will of the father has prevailed.

In five years, at Oxford, Pater will begin to defy that will. Writing in "Aesthetic Poetry" of Morris's progression from *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858) to *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867) and *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70), Pater notes the "change of manner wrought in the interval . . . almost a revolt" (194). He identifies, then, the "transition which, under many forms, is one law of the life of the human spirit, and of which what we call the Renaissance is only a supreme instance." "Complex and subtle interests," Pater observes with great

insight, "which the mind spins for itself, may occupy art and poetry or our own spirits for a time; but sooner or later they come back with a sharp rebound to the simple elementary passions--anger, desire, regret, pity, and fear" (195). They will for him. For now, however, the child has been well prepared to submit to the more austere discipline of the King's School, to which a larger, and for the most part higher, class of fathers has traditionally banished its sons. "[L]ife-long imprisonment" and "banishment from home," Pater notes in "Child," are "a thing bitterer still" than death (5).

Pater was in the habit of making notes on small scraps of paper. One of them read, "Child in the House: voilà, the germinating, original, source, specimen, of all my imaginative work" (Monsman 80). The terms used indicate the influence of Darwin and Huxley on Pater's thinking about human development. At King's School he would be immersed in the study of culture--and indeed the culture itself--that would inform his critical work and enlarge the matrix of his imaginings. At King's School his sensibilities would be, not too successfully, socialized.

Readers who focus on the cultural order they assume Pater to be constructing see in his resolution of the tensions explored in "Child" an enlarging movement from the confining world of the senses to the liberating and ultimately empowering world of culture, Wordsworthian escape from the "tyranny of the eye" into a mastery exerted by the collective mind. The Wordsworthian echoes in "Child" are certainly loud and clear. I think it is more useful, nevertheless, to view the transition as one from family structure, in which sexual forces are mediated by physical environment and family history, to larger social structures, in which sexual forces are subsumed in the workings of more complex material forces.

That physical forces are active in a fundamental way a passage from the Lacedaemon chapter of *Plato and Platonism* makes clear:

A young Lacedaemonian, then, of the privileged class left his home, his tender nurses in those large, quiet old

suburban houses early, for a public school. . . . If a certain love of reserve, of seclusion, characterised the Spartan citizen as such, it was perhaps the cicatrice of that wrench from a soft home into the imperative, inevitable gaze of his fellows, broad, searching, minute, his regret for, his desire to regain, moral and mental even more than physical ease. (220-21)

Of course Pater had not enjoyed complete seclusion at Enfield. But attendance at Enfield Grammar School had not exposed him so completely and relentlessly to the "broad, searching, [and] minute" "gaze of his fellows," driving a wedge of self-consciousness into the "self-possession" and "harmony" he had experienced there. If there a conflict had opened up between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, at King's School another split opens up: that between his idealized, narcissistic self-image and the reality of how he is seen by others.

Even at Enfield, looking out upon the "coming and going of travellers to the town along the way" and the "great church, with its giddy winding stair up to the pigeons and the bells," the child had seen in the bell-tower a "citadel of peace in the heart of the trouble" (3). All the life of London, "the town," is reduced to three words: "gloom," "rumours," and "trouble." "Gloom" refers, presumably, to darkness, dinginess, and squalor. "Rumours" are talk about "trouble." While admiring the trim forms of travellers coming and going to the town, Pater wants to be well out of it.

Pater cites a passage from Hugo's *Les Misérables* in the "Conclusion," as well as the episode of Rousseau's bout with fear of mortal sickness in *The Confessions*. Together, they allude to conditions to which Pater had had some exposure: poverty, squalor, disease, and death. Escape from those conditions may have made him as content with the relative peace of Enfield as he imagines Charles and Mary Lamb to have been with the quiet aftermath of catastrophe. But other passages from Rousseau and other works by Victor Hugo spoke to Pater's experience also, in ways which make it surprising that he could bring himself to allude to them at all. A boy who, on the one hand, avoided successful

resolution of Oedipal conflict by sanctifying his desires¹⁹ and thus neutralizing his fears, playing at being a priest, and was, on the other hand, better fitted to the role of Quasimodo than that of a Florian or an Emerald, was not likely to figure as the dashing lover of any exquisite damsels (though it is interesting that Marius the Epicurean shares his name with the lover of Cosette in *Les Misérables*). Fearing the demands of a menacing world--Violet Paget remembered Pater as a man admittedly "afraid of just about everything"--and feeling himself unable to negotiate them on terms gratifying to himself, he was more likely to fixate on a desire to be the exquisite one: flower, jewel, lovely and beloved; victim of a hopelessly frustrated narcissism; divided beauty and beast. Pater cites both Quasimodo and Gwynplaine, as well as Rousseau's "strangeness or distortion" (215), as examples of French Romanticism's tendency to run to an excess of curiosity in the desire of beauty. For one so constituted as he, they were bound to exercise an appeal, but also to provoke recoiling denial. Drawn as he was to their experience, he would not want to court their fates. The "love of security" acted as a "salutary principle of restraint" on his "wanderings of spirit."

In the "Postscript (Romanticism)" to *Appreciations*, Pater displays a profound understanding of Romanticism in general, French Romanticism in particular. Of Rousseau's relation to history he writes: "A storm was coming: Rousseau, with others, felt it in the air, and they helped to bring it down." By 1815, he observes, the "storm had come and gone, but had left, in the spirit of 'young France,' the *ennui* of an immense disillusion." In the two books cited in Edgar Quinet's *Revolution Française* as "characteristic of the first decade" of the nineteenth century, Pater "detects" both the "disease and the cure" of the modern Romantic period: the "indifference" suffused throughout Senancour's *Obermann* and the impulse active in Chateaubriand's *Génie du*

¹⁹Not an uncommon story, especially familiar to Irish Catholics, as Joyce's "Araby" recounts

Christianisme to take "refuge from a tarnished actual present, a present of disillusion, into a world of strength and beauty in the Middle Age" (215).

Given Pater's own attraction to French Romanticism, one is bound to read his interpretation of its appeal as indicative of his own situation. "It is to minds in this spiritual situation," he writes, "weary of the present, but yearning for the spectacle of beauty and strength, that the works of French romanticism appeal." Pater's own way was a "weary" one, we know. That it confined him, for the most part, to the role of spectator, we also know. Although he equivocated about setting a "positive value on the intense, the exceptional," as he goes on to say the works of French Romanticism did, he was drawn to it in part because a broader, more ordinary *via media* was not open to him. He comments that a "certain distortion is sometime noticeable" in those works, as in "conceptions like Victor Hugo's *Quasimodo*, or *Gwynplaine*, something of a terrible grotesque, of the macabre, as the French themselves call it" (215).

Style was a means of curtailing that impulse. The qualities of intensity, "the exceptional," and grotesque distortion, he is quick to add, are "always combined with perfect literary execution, as in Gautier's *La Morte Amoureuse*, or the scene of the 'maimed' burial-rites of the player, dead of the frost, in his *Capitaine Fracasse*--true 'flowers of the yew'" (216). The language in his reference to Gautier's *Capitaine Fracasse* is evocative of "Emerald Uthwart." It too contains "maimed" burial-rites. Its players too die, in a strange way, of the frost. It too is a literary "flower of the yew."

The influence of Gautier on Pater has been well documented. Pater and Swinburne, contemporaries at Oxford, shared a high regard for *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. When one remembers that Sainte-Beuve's *Portraits contemporains* may well have offered the precedent Pater needed to write in a mode suited to his literary abilities, as Montaigne's *Essais* were the handsel of his critical writings, one begins to see how

pervasively the French tradition informed his projects. One can also begin to identify a particular configuration of mentors common to Pater and Baudelaire: Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, and Gautier. One might further venture to suggest that nearly all of Pater's writings were attempts to discover what Baudelaire called for celebration of in the *Salon de 1845*, the heroism of modern life. The difference is that whereas Baudelaire discovered the anti-hero, in a movement from flowers of yew to *fleurs du mal*, Pater could only describe defeated heroes, more pitiable than fierce. That is surely what he describes in "Emerald." The story he spins in that portrait can explain the peculiar process by which the conflicts opening up in Pater at home and at school determined the course that would lead him to seek out those mentors.

"Emerald Uthwart" (1892)

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
 It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
 It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
 Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
 Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
 And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
 And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell; the soil
 Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
 There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
 And though the last lights off the black West went
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--
 Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
 World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.
 (1877)

--Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur"

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
 Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
 And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
 His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
 If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
 Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
 Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
 Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,--
 My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
 To children ardent for some desperate glory,
 The old lie: *Dulce et decorum est*
Pro patria mori.
 (1917)

--Wilfred Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est"

And do the fathers bid the sons be either
 soldier or priest? Out of the heart of the dry
 wood, crimson flowers flame, shine for one
 brief moment, and then bleed.

The extent to which scholars have been disposed to follow out Pater's idealizations is astonishing, especially since Pater was very much aware of the morbid realities festering beneath bright dreams of synthetic, "renaissance" culture; culture burdened with the weight of death and rebirth, illusions died out and resuscitated: weariness of the way of cultural reincarnation.

In "Emerald Uthwart" we can follow the weariness of the way outward from the not quite perfectly sealed enclosure which was home. A thoroughgoing if repressed Romantic, Pater was fond of that image of the road. The first place it led him to, however, would abruptly challenge him to "systematise" his "vagrant self" (349).

"If at home there had been nothing great," at King's School "one seem[ed] diminished to nothing at all" (350). Amidst the placidity of domestic life, almost vegetable in its stillness, there had been only one token of greatness: the gravestone of Emerald's father. "Sunday after Sunday," Emerald had read, "wondering, the solitary memorial of one soldierly member of the race, who had,--well! who had not died here at home, in his bed." To the boy, youngest son but not the youngest child and feeling at times neglected, it had seemed "wretched" yet "fine," his father's fate; "inconceivably great and difficult," but "not for him!" (345). That exception, "but not for him!" would be sounded again and again.

We know from "Child in the House" how "rumours" of the father's death had been threaded into the boy's consciousness: "The child had heard indeed of the death of his father, and how, in the Indian station, a fever had taken him, so that though not in action he had yet died as a soldier; and hearing of the 'resurrection of the just,' he could think of him as still abroad in the world, somehow, for his protection--a grand, though perhaps rather terrible figure, in beautiful soldier's

things, like the figure in the picture of Joshua's Vision in the Bible-- and of that, round which the mourners moved so softly, and afterwards with such solemn singing, as but a worn-out garment left at a deserted lodging" (11).²⁰ As the child had eventually realized that the father had not escaped the grave, there is now no escape for him. Having come from a place so small to a place so large, amid "'great matters,' great stones, great memories out of reach" (347), the impressionable child is not merely aroused by sensations of pleasure and pain, so intense and disturbing that at times he "half longed to be free" of them, but positively invaded by forces whose authority is unchallengeable. On the contrary, they challenge him: "to make moral philosophy one of [his] attainments, if [he] can, and to systematise [his] vagrant self; which however will in any case be here systematised for [him]" (349), as the phrasing of that clause confirms. The first of the Uthwarts to pass under the yoke of a classical education, he will never throw it off.

Resistance is unthinkable. Emerald "yields wholly from the first" (349), so wholly that "it was reported, there was a funny belief" about him, as there was about Pater, that he "had no feeling and was incapable of tears" (351-52). Monsman writes that Pater "enjoyed a temperamental placidity unruffled by depression" and quotes Samuel Wright's report that he was "absolutely and always the same" (37). It's an ironic characterization of someone aware of "Heraclitean flux" in himself to the verge of ego disintegration. Emerald's apparent impassivity is a mask.²¹

²⁰The figure threaded into the portrait is a composite of Pater's own father, who had died of a fever in the course of his duties as a surgeon among the population grown up around the docks which launched the East and West India trade, his Uncle William martyred in the same cause, his brother William, who had hopes of becoming an army surgeon while Pater was at King's School, and his friend McQueen's father, an officer stationed at the Canterbury garrison and on active duty in the Crimean War, which was fought and won during Pater's years at King's School (1854-1856).

²¹As Pater's two friends at King's School, John Rainier McQueen and Henry Dombrain, could have testified. They called themselves The Triumvirate and "spent their time talking incessantly and playing boisterously in the ancient forest between Canterbury and Faversham" (Monsman 20). Of the two, Pater had the greater affinity with McQueen.

"Submissiveness!" Pater writes, "--It had the force of genius with Emerald Uthwart" (355). It "made him . . . unlike those around him; was a secret; a thing, you might say, 'which no one knoweth, saving he that receiveth it'" (355-56). It's a response typical of someone trapped in oppressive circumstances, reminiscent of Hamlet's guarded protest: "I have that within which passes show." "Thus repressible, self-restrained, always concurring with the influence, the claim upon him, the rebuke of others, in the bustle of school life" (356), Emerald protects and preserves his vagrant self. So outnumbered and overwhelmed, he avoids any clash with invading forces and lies low.

In his seventeenth year, however, in those protected fibres of the self, a new passion germinates, intellectual as well as sensuous. Emerald finds out, "almost for himself," the "beauty and power of good literature, even in the literature" he "must read perforce." And he knows, because though lying low he has been awake, that "this, in turn, is but the handsel of a beauty and power still active in the actual world" (356).

It is "one of the effects we look for from a classical education," Pater writes: the "sense of authority, of a large intellectual authority over us, impressed anew day after day, of some impenetrable glory round 'the masters of those who know' . . . --that, and a full estimate of the preponderating value of the manner of the doing it in the thing done; which again, for ingenious youth, is an encouragement of

On Speech Day, 5 August 1858, both he and Pater received prizes and commendations from the headmaster, Reverend George Wallace. Pater had won his exhibition at Oxford and matriculated at Queen's College in June. McQueen was also going up to Oxford, to Balliol. In "Emerald" James Stokes is drawn from elements of McQueen, Joseph Haydock, an aristocratic, handsome, rough boy whom Pater was said by McQueen to have "almost adored" and who may have been associated in Pater's mind with his older brother. However that may be, the significance of the twins and *doppelgangers* in Pater's works derives less from their resemblance to real attachments--such as Charles Lancelot Shadwell, whom Pater admired later at Oxford, made the subject of his Old Mortality essay, "Diaphaneitè," and toured Italy with in the summer of 1865--than from their identity as alter egos. Apparitions of what Pater admired and longed to be, they are first incorporated and then killed off. As alter egos, they remain secondary to Pater's prior ego, the distinctness of which, in writing, Pater manages both to preserve and to assert as ultimately superior.

good manners on its part: --'I behave myself orderly.'" And it is "Just at those points" that "scholarship attains something of a religious colour" (355).

For Emerald, however, the burden, "But not for me!" such greatness "too high for me!" which has kept him low, serves as a means of eluding the claims of a classical education. Submissiveness has the force of genius with Emerald because it leaves him, potentially, free to pursue another course. The Romantic in Emerald evades a delimited place in the order which would "systematise" his "vagrant self," whether it be the system of Horatian utterance or religion. "What he felt in Horace was the sense, original, active, personal, of 'things too high for me!'" But that sense was "not really unpleasing to him." Likewise the sense that religion, "as a thing immeasurable," was "surely not meant for the like of him" allows him to resist its "high claims, to which no one could be equal; its reproaches" (355). Thus though his "intellectual capacity" is discounted by the "'masters of those who know,'" it is relatively unfettered, and free, at last, to waken with a "leap" something like the "coming of love" (356).

For now, however, the second passion, of the mind as well as the eye, the intellect as well as the flesh, is subdued. With intellectual passion kindles intellectual ambition; "ambitious thoughts . . . sweeten [his] toil," but

he is frankly recommended to put them aside, and acquiesces; puts them from him once for all, as he could do with besetting thoughts and feelings, his preferences, (as he had put aside soft thoughts of home as a disobedience to rule) and with a countenance more good-humoured than ever, an absolute placidity. It is fit he should be treated sparingly in this matter of intellectual enjoyment. He is made to understand that there is at least a score of others as good scholars as he. He will have of course all the pains, but must not expect the prizes, of his work; of his loyal, incessant, cheerful industry.

The pleasure of intellectual work must be subjected to the pains of scholarly competition. The "status of a freeman in the world of intellect can hardly be for him" (356). The will of the fathers again

prevails, and the boy plods on under the yoke: placid, good-humored, loyal, incessantly industrious.

"But only see him as he goes." Something besides "plod" makes "plough down sillion shine." The sense of access to a beauty and power still active in the actual world makes this boy radiant. "It is as if he left music, delightfully throbbing music, or flowers, behind him, as he passes, careless of them, unconsciously, through the world, the school, the precincts, the old city" (356). By the genius of submission he has successfully defied the limits of his humble origins. Only the "foolish" and the "ignorant," mere pedants, "who have pigeon-holes for their impressions," thought of him as a "Young Apollo!" (357). He resists classification. He is better than that, more like a real young Greek.

His handsome face is "ennobled now, as if by the writing, the signature, there of a grave intelligence, by grave information and a subdued will, though without a touch of melancholy in this 'best of play fellows'" (357). Through knowledge he has acquired access to the father's greatness. A subdued will has purchased him the information buried in the father's grave: how to rise. Melancholy has been shuffled off. Surmounting a sense of loss of the mother, he begins to feel that the inconceivable greatness of the father is not beyond the likes of him.

Oblivious of the social world which might gainsay this new-found sense of upward mobility, the young man has succeeded in reconstructing his self-image and rewriting his social identity. By appropriation of the texts which have awakened both his intellectual passion and his intellectual ambition, he is rewriting himself. His is not that of the "somewhat unmeaningly handsome facial type of the Uthwarts, moulded to a mere animal or physical perfection through wholesome centuries" (357). Though not yet a freeman in this imperial city of culture, he hopes to exceed the mere yeoman status of his brother, already independent and vigorously active in the actual world. Not yet come into a "wholesome,"

robust manhood, he has nevertheless acquired distinction. His face has been redrawn by all the diverse "touches, traces, complex influences from past and present . . . crossing each other in this late century" (358).

Like the culture in which he lives, he is undergoing a complex transformation, already becoming what Pater will later perceive in Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*. But his face is not contorted by the changes it is registering. It is not grotesque, for it is unified by the "simple law of the system to which he is now subject" (357). "A school is not made for one," after all. "The aim of a veritable community, says Plato, is not that this or that member of it should be disproportionately at ease, but that the whole should flourish; though indeed such general welfare might come round again to the loyal unit therein, and rest with him, as a privilege of his individual being after all" (350). Though "some of his own tendencies and inclinations" might "die out of him through disuse," no drop of his sublimated passion will be spilled in this "system of fixed rules" (351). There is a place for everything and everything is in its place. Regardless of his actual place in this civic scheme, this "loyal unit" has become, in his "individual being," the vortex of the cultural cross-currents here unified as the ideology of empire. Not the flower at his mother's breast but the jewel in Victoria's crown, he is well on his way to becoming Fichte's "Ideal Student" and the diaphanous hero of the history of art. The unity of the system by which his own integrality is upheld is more fragile, however, than the solid grey stone walls would suggest. It is both subject and alert to threats. The jewel will not sit easily in place.

We will track Pater's history. The question here is, what becomes of Emerald? In this imaginary portrait, blend of wish-fulfillment and not so very veiled confession, even not so very covert protest, how does Pater conceive of Emerald's fate? What way from the stone citadel of moral and intellectual authority opens outward into the actual world,

where the pleasure and power active in great literature may also be felt and exercised?

Because the boy submits, he is allowed to rise.²² Meanwhile, his "soldier-like, impassible self-command" and "sustained expression of a certain indifference to things" awaken "all the sentiment, the poetry" hitherto latent in the prefect James Stokes, Emerald's "immediate superior." "[S]omething of genius" emerges in that "seemingly plodding scholar" too, and "therewith also something of the waywardness popularly thought to belong to genius" (352). Emerald acquires in this young ruler, James, who, drawn to Emerald's flame, in turn stokes it, a new "celestial companion." He is admired and sought after. Family and friends find in the loss of his presence cause for regret. And he is marked for a soldier. "They tell him, he knows it already, he would 'do for the army.'" Once the identification is made, it "defines also the vague outlook of James Stokes, who will be a soldier too" (358).

Evading the "reproaches" of religion, the two young geniuses, flowering out of the heart of the dry flint, set themselves toward the path to shining glory. After all, "uniforms and surplices were always close together here," where a "military tradition had been continuous" from the "days of crusading knights" (358). Still yoking genius to discipline, they undergo final preparation for the University and carry off the prizes. At the end of the term they are "found bracketed together as 'Victors' of the school, who will proceed together to Oxford" (359).

College is merely a "strange prolongation of boyhood." The "veritable plunge from youth into manhood," Emerald discovers, would not

²²Unlike Baudelaire, whose life as a *déclassé* began with his "sudden expulsion from the Lycée Louis-le-Grand in 1839," the year of Pater's birth in Stepney. The headmaster accused Baudelaire of "sneering" when he ripped up and swallowed rather than surrender a note passed to him by a classmate. The master wrote to General Aupick that "though the boy was 'certainly endowed with outstanding abilities' he was being dismissed for his bad influence on school discipline" (Scarfe 15). According to La Forge, with his sledgehammer psychoanalysis, and Sartre, with his free-floating existentialism, this was a fate Baudelaire brought on himself, much as he deliberately got himself infected with syphilis, as a punishment for his foul Oedipal desires.

come until "one passed finally through those old Gothic gates, from a somewhat dreamy or problematic preparation for it, into the world of peremptory facts." Though the "contrast between his own position and that of the majority of his rivals already at the business of life impressed itself sometimes with an odd sense of unreality in the place around him," his "schoolboy's sensitive awe for the great things of the intellectual world" was nonetheless "at its height here amid this larger competition" (360).

He is still reading books "prescribed for him by others." A tutor notes that when he reads, "He holds his book in a peculiar way . . . holds on to it with both hands; clings as if from below . . ." (360). But also now he has some leisure to indulge his preferences. He reads other books of his own choosing. What he likes most are accounts of the history of the place where he now finds himself and of the "military life that [had] intruded itself so oddly, during the Civil War, into these half-monastic places, till the timid old academic world scarcely knew itself" (361).

In these quarters too, as they would for Prior Saint-Jean in "Apollo in Picardy," scents and glimpses of an antecedent natural revelry come to Emerald from "beyond the Oxford meadows," carrying "thoughts from the garden at home" which are "half-repellent." It is a male world Emerald occupies now, and though the "scheme of black, white, and grey" to which the ancient buildings are attuned sometimes seems hard and forbidding, it is neither softness nor placidity he yearns for. What relieves the stark setting is any incident discovered in his unprescribed reading which "connects a soldier's coat" with a feature of the place. The beauties peculiar to the place count for less now. His attention is drawn to the dry flowers, fritillaries, growing alongside the streamlets where the oarsmen splash. Rude people call them snakes'

heads, "for their shape."²³ To Emerald they seem to grow "from some forgotten battlefield, the bodies, the rotten armour" (361).

Like Emerald himself, the blossoms flanking the road leading to and away from home have undergone a transformation. The color of "rusted blood," they are yet "delicate, beautiful, waving proudly." Each contains a "drop of dubious honey." They appeal to Emerald with an immediacy and intensity that the black, white, and grey beauties of Oxford cannot hold for him. Though the "memory of Oxford made almost everything he saw after it seem vulgar," he feels that its local pride is not proper to him. It is proper "only for those whose occupations are wholly congruous with it: for the gifted, the freemen who can enter into . . . [and] possess the liberty" of the place. There is a "reproach in it for the outsider, which comes home to him" (361).

As he has ducked the reproaches of religion, he dodges the reproach in this stronghold of intellectual authority. Though clinging with both hands, as if from below, to his classics, he seeks a distinction unsullied by reproach and uniquely proper to him. Occupying a small place in the scheme, he does not feel secure in it. His "own quaint rooms on the second floor just below the roof" (361) offer him the spectacle of Oxford life, with its "slim, quaint, black, young figures" crossing the green square on the way to chapel, but neither access to what he actually seeks nor inviolable sanctuary. What, as aestheticism, Iser identifies as an "in-between state" is in material fact Emerald's condition, as it was Pater's.

Pater's occupation was, to say the least, not wholly congruous with the institutional life of Oxford. Pater took a second class B.A. in *Literae Humaniores* (in 1862) largely because his classical studies were dissipated by extracurricular reading. What he in fact liked best was contemporary French literature: works by Sainte-Beuve, Flaubert

²³As a child Pater developed a horror of snakes. Knowing of his fear, his brother William (four years older) had once wrapped a snake around a door-handle and, as recounted by Thomas Wright, Pater "nearly died of fright" when he realized what he had grasped (Levey 45).

(*Madame Bovary* came out in 1857), Gautier, Baudelaire, and later, Hugo. After his friend McQueen betrayed him, intervening to block his access either to ordination and a London curacy, on the one hand, or to a clerical fellowship (he had received prizes in Latin scholarship and ecclesiastical history at King's School), on the other, his only remaining alternative was to try for a classical fellowship. He twice unsuccessfully competed for a clerical fellowship, first in January 1863 at Brasenose and again in the summer of 1863 at Trinity, before he was chosen in February 1864 from among a group of twelve candidates who presented themselves for a classical fellowship at Brasenose. Wright suggests that his knowledge of German philosophy was a deciding factor. Certainly there were others whose classical erudition was superior. Even the character of the college where he found the niche he needed to survive was out of Pater's character. The atmosphere of Brasenose was traditionally "hearty and sporting"; Pater appeared "quiet and retiring" (Levey 93). There installed as a classical fellow, Pater had, finally, no particular aspiration to classical scholarship.

In relation to his ostensible functions, classical tuition and moral guidance, he was a second-class citizen. Aspiring to a distinction necessarily outside of his proper sphere, the actual sphere of his aspirations was wholly incongruous with the functions of the institution which housed him. The distinction he sought could not but bring him further reproach--as it happens for Emerald--even though it was the only sphere in which he could aspire to real distinction, first-class citizenship undegraded by reproach. That was the concrete contradiction in which Pater was to remain locked for the rest of his "career."

"Emerald Uthwart" is an imaginative exploration of that dilemma, shedding light both on how Pater conceived of its outcome and on the question of what sort of "distinction"--shining--it was that he aspired to from deep within the only partially understood wellsprings of his desire. In this portrait as in all of Pater's writing, whether critical

or imaginative--the distinction is ultimately unsustainable--he is trying to understand himself by projecting himself into situations that can clarify the prolonged crisis that was his life. What, then, does he find out in the process of writing "Emerald Uthwart"?

In a bid to participate in a beauty and power still active in the actual world, Emerald's "vagrant self" keeps its shining link with his "celestial companion," James Stokes, and takes once again to the road. His instinct, "original, active, personal," is to try the one course to greatness for which there is, irreproachably, a precedent in his yeoman family.

Sudden outbreak of war with Napoleon's imperial France precipitates the young men's departure. Their departure is cause for regret: Stokes for his "high academic promise," Uthwart for a "quality, or group of qualities, not strictly to be defined." It is immeasurable because it is varied and vague, a potential. It's what the headmaster at King's School had sensed in Pater, what Jowett had sensed as his tutor at Oxford, what had prompted the selection committee at Brasenose to award him the fellowship: unusually wide reading, a certain acuity and originality of thought, an imaginative seriousness that seemed to imply maturity of mind; but an elusive quality that could bode well or ill, suggest the promise of distinction or rouse suspicion of some less wholesome potential. Whatever it is, since it eludes measurement or definition, it can be felt by its possessor to be "indispensable" (359). So far from feeling a little neglected by a somewhat languid mother at home, the boy, breaking past the Gothic gates into manhood, has achieved--subjectively--a condition of indispensability to the entire Oxford community.

Of course an important aspect of the drama being imagined here is Pater's tracing out of what Leo Bersani identifies in Baudelaire as the "discovery of psychic mobility, of unanchored identity." The same psychic process which enables Emerald to elude classification and reproach produces the anxiety symptomatic of the extent to which his

sense of secret inner sanctuary is unbuttressed by solid social supports. But if Emerald's impulses--to withdraw, lie low, submit in order to rise while preserving the potential for revolt (a leap something like the coming of love), cling from below or fling himself out--belong to a system of psychic movement symptomatic of a more general structuring of experience in terms of binary oppositions, as Bersani argues in his deconstructive study of Baudelairean and Freudian texts,²⁴ it will not produce much in the way of real knowledge to explore the "tensions produced by an opposition between certain realities presumed to be 'given' and a heroic effort to go beyond the limits of a centered, socially defined, time-bound self" from the premise that the "antagonism between social reality and individual aspiration is itself one of the dualities formulated by the idealistic imagination" (2).

It is the peculiar idiosyncrasy of this sort of thinking that it resists confrontation with historical and empirical realities only "presumed" from within the prison-house of language to be "given." It wants to put reality in quotation marks, confined as it is to the "ontological floating" it seeks to analyze. Its *reductio ad absurdum* can perhaps be most readily exposed if applied to the psychic process giving rise, say, to the American vernacular phrase "in the house," which is understood by the African Americans who use it to mean "Everything's cool." The excluded middle term of the metaphor is the social reality that in America's urban ghettos people who leave their houses or apartments stand a good chance of getting blown away by a bullet. If users of that phrase were informed by the "masters of those who know" that the "antagonism between social reality" and their individual and collective aspirations not merely to survive but to feel relaxed, secure, comfortable, and happy was a "duality formulated by their idealistic imaginations," they might respond with sufficient force

²⁴Bersani calls them texts, but it's ideas he's actually working with, ideas anchored only in "textuality," applied to textuality from a metaphysical position prior to textuality.

to convince their interpreter of the practical reality of certain "givens." Occlusion of the middle term, the social ground, is a no less reductive procedure when applied to other metaphors of place or position, lateral as well as vertical, common to the speech of people living at different points in the socioeconomic class structure (split-level houses, say, in suburban tracts). And if Jimi Hendrix, feeling unable to move, moans, "Oh there ain't no life nowhere," it's no use telling him, oh yes there is, there is life everywhere, if only he's willing to decenter himself; diversify his personal portfolio, so to speak.²⁵

Were it not for the faithfulness to social reality with which Pater tracks the movement of Emerald's desire, the portrait would reduce to an exposition of adolescent and regressively infantile fantasies. Bersani argues that though the opposition between social reality and individual aspiration does in fact exist, and may even serve as a basis for revolutionary social action, the "type of heroic individuality most familiar to us has frequently been doomed to a romantic impotence" because "such transcendental yearnings obliquely express a cultural compulsion regarding coherent structures and intelligible limits" (2). The logical consequence of that argument, however, is abandonment to the very impotence it seeks to address. Psychically displacing oneself, one alters one's psychic relation to an obstacle; the obstacle remains in place. Bersani's procedure dismisses from view the material reality, and rigidity, of the structures impeding the effort to move--literally--out of impotence into effective action.²⁶ One cannot talk meaningfully about effective action--as distinct from "effective desire"--except in relation to something real the absence of which impels movement. What

²⁵Which is what the more cheerful Beatles advised: "When you find yourself in the thick of it/Help yourself to a bit of what is all around you, silly girl" ("Martha My Dear," The Beatles' White Album, Part 1).

²⁶See Pater's comment, in *Marius*: "We need some imaginative stimulus, some not impossible ideal such as may shape vague hope and transform it into effective desire, to carry us year after year, without disgust, through the routine work which is so large a part of life" (Levey 130).

that is in the context of Pater's discourse is something so far identified only as access to a beauty and power still active in the actual world. How it is thwarted in "Emerald Uthwart" and continues to be thwarted in Pater's other portraits, critical and imaginary--perhaps the most accurate term for all of Pater's essays is identifications--will help us to discern more clearly what it is. Suffice it to say here that when alternative structures are not extant or accessible, sustained movement is not conceivable.

There's a folk saying: Sometimes you just have to get off the train even if all you do is get on another train. But if all trains depart from the same cosmopolitan station, and all lines in fact lead back to it, the only conceivable escape from the "coherent structure" those lines lay down in iron, is to fling oneself off once and for all. Short of that, one may keep changing trains. Or one may choose to stay on one of them, ignore its actual course and concentrate instead on one's private, psychic movement--"ontological floating" (Bersani 4). It is to break out of the condition of ontological floating to which Emerald has resorted in order to resist the limits imposed by the structure of moral and intellectual authority rigidly operative at Oxford that he propels himself past the Gothic gates. Sadly, what he attains as a result of his journey down the road along which crimson blossoms have been transformed into dry flowers the color of rusted blood and metal, containing a single drop of lethal sweetness, is only more reproach, then a whispered glory which comes like an after-thought, inseparable from defeat and death.

There is, of course, one more alternative: subversion of the system. And Bersani is right that whereas "Baudelaire's work gives us images of . . . psychic fragmentation," it does "at the same time document a determined resistance to all such ontological floating." That tension does account for "much of the interest of Baudelaire" (4). It's also the difference between the interest of Pater and the interest of Baudelaire. In Pater all desire moves toward defeat. Baudelaire

meets all movement toward defeat with "determined resistance." Through resistance he is able to assert himself in defiance of his antagonist, and to subvert the system which constrains him even if he cannot annihilate it as tidily as deconstructionists "annihilate" the "coherent structure" of a text.

But to do so one must recognize one's antagonist. Baudelaire knows who and what ("Hypocrite lecteur") his antagonist is and coopts the terms of its religious ideology to fire back at it. Pater never penetrates to the economic system which the system of moral and intellectual authority supplies the governing ideology for. His fellowship--literally, his rooms--keeps him insulated from the immediate effects of that economic system. Hence he identifies the governing ideology itself as his antagonist, and without systematic terms of his own, he cannot fire back--only insinuate, undermining not the system which constrains him but only his position in it. Unarmed, he must conciliate and eventually capitulate.

Baudelaire is not so insulated. If Pater's rooms are not impervious to the anxiety generated by the necessity of conciliating the masters, his landlords, Baudelaire has to vacate his again and again, running one step ahead of his creditors. He also has to sell himself and his wares on the open market--a situation giving new meaning for the poet to the word *agoraphobia*. When Pater sent the manuscript of what he at first called "The House and the Child" to the editor of *Macmillan's Magazine* (in April 1878), he called it a portrait and explained that it was meant to "prompt in its readers the sort of speculation that might be prompted by seeing a painted portrait: 'what came of him?'" (Levey 159). The conclusion of "Emerald" gives us one of Pater's speculative answers to that question; one vision of his own fate should he attempt to abdicate his dubious sinecure.

Joining a regiment in Flanders which has just seen successful action, the twin stars of Oxford are promptly embraced by the camaraderie of what is still for them an unearned glory. They chafe

under the weariness of waiting for the next advance. As once before, at King's School, Emerald is seduced from entire submission into dereliction of duty by his friend but social superior, James Stokes. Having flamed out of the great grey stones of Canterbury with a secret passion, they shine now in an act of vagrant heroism. Though their skirmish²⁷ is successful, they return to their posts to find that the regiment has moved on. Apparently, they were not indispensable.

Stokes is summarily executed for desertion. Uthwart is spared, but dishonorably discharged and left, quite destitute, to make his way back from Flanders to the rose garden from whence he had long ago come. For a time there he is the center of the family's attentions. They've been sent word of his disgrace, but also of the mitigating circumstances. When the war ends, the case of the modern day *Dioscuri* is reviewed, and they are exonerated. But, somewhat ironically, it was Emerald not Stokes who had actually been wounded in honorable action. A bullet has been lodged in the heart muscle. Though Emerald attains briefly to an erstwhile wholesome freshness, he dies of "lingering

²⁷"Skirmishing" is what The Triumvirate used to call its games in the woods on the rim of Canterbury. McQueen liked to play ruler of imaginary kingdoms and indeed better enjoyed lording it over people the older and more substantial a figure he became. He once summoned a carriage and ordered his wife to depart the premises of his domestic kingdom. It was as self-appointed protector of Anglican Christendom that he alerted Dombrain and the Reverend John Bachelor Kearney, a King's School master, among others, of the impending travesty of an agnostic being ordained as an 'Anglican deacon.' McQueen consulted Henry Parry Liddon, a rising young High Churchman who was later to decline Arthur Penrhyn Stanley Dean of Westminster's repeated invitations to preach in Westminster on the grounds that Stanley had previously permitted the Socialist F.D. Maurice to preach there. Liddon, in residence at Christ Church as was Stanley at the time, advised McQueen to write to the Bishop of London, since it was a London curacy Pater intended to apply for. He did so, referring the Bishop to Kearney for clerical corroboration; Kearney apparently did so as well. The upshot of McQueen's busy-bodying was that the Bishop, Archibald Campbell Tait, soon to become Archbishop of Canterbury, received two letters of "denunciation about an obscure candidate for ordination who--it emerged--had not so far applied to be ordained." McQueen also wrote to Pater to inform him of what he had done. Sadly, that shock was soon followed, in December of 1862, by the news of his Aunt Bessie's death in Dresden. Bereaved, homeless, Pater was now "fearfully uncertain of the future--except that to try for a curacy in London would now be to risk a humiliating rebuff" (Levey 91).

sickness, in disgrace, as he fancied, while the word glory came to be softly whispered" of him and his "celestial companion" (353).

Though he is still beautiful in death, his burial-rites are "maimed" by autopsy. A surgeon extracts the musket-ball from his heart. Having left the rose garden to pass into the imperial city, on a frosty morning, Emerald has glimpsed a way to equal his father's greatness, even perhaps to surpass it. He winds up dying of heartsickness, ministered to by a "celestial companion" whose enduring presence displaces that of Stokes; a surgeon not a gallant soldier. He is mourned as his father was mourned. His departure is now permanently regretted. He has never gathered the red passion flowers; has made instead a trail of "red footsteps" "side by side" with those of his fate--one of the number of *Krip*, the Destiny of people who will have an "extraordinary and sanguinary death" (352).

The polyvalence of this discourse is not susceptible to biographical or psychoanalytic reduction. The second to last of Pater's completed portraits, "Emerald Uthwart" was begun after Pater paid a visit to King's School on Speech Day, 30 July 1891, and published, in two parts, in June and July 1892 (Levey 190, 193). It was composed with ample benefit of retrospection as well as introspection. Michael Levey calls it less a prophecy than a summing-up. Perhaps it is both. Either way, as Levey says, it is "personal and indiscreet" (194). Moving from autobiographical reverie to existential hypothesis, the richness of nuance sedimented into its brooding sentences gives one an appreciation of what Pater had in mind when he said to the young Oscar Wilde, "Why do you not write in prose?" The autobiographical component, confession of how things were interwoven with how he wished them to be--and how fearful might be the consequences of wishes actively fulfilled--is not easy to sort out.

This much one may venture. One more possibility has been foreclosed, another death incurred. First the lust of the flesh was subdued and sacralized, in deference to the prior claims and imagined

reproaches of the malingering father (who had had a mission but no religious calling). Sublimating his desire for sexual pleasure, the boy unites the idea of mission and manly social responsibility with the desire for heightened, ritualized, sensuous experience in the figure of the priest: someone who cares for both bodies and souls. The goal of priesthood sustains him during the difficult days at school, and serves as the link between him and his classmates--Dombrain and McQueen at King's School, Stokes in the portrait. But the element of sexual desire is still strongly present in that link, as is the fact of social inferiority, both sources of reproach. The claims and reproaches of religion and scholarship are resisted as intellectual passion awakens with a leap like the coming of love. Finding in the Greek classics precedent for a passion both sexual and intellectual--and both heterodox--the hero of this intensely subjective drama begins to throw off both hitherto defining roles: that of manly healer and that of priest. What that passion implies is access to a world of pleasure and power still active in the actual world. What the hero actually aspires to is the "condition of music": pure, strong, unsullied sexual lyricism. But that "vague hope," to have outlet, must be shaped into "effective desire" by a course of action. Soldiering appears to offer a way of giving definition to the hero's desire. It defers to the priority of three models: that of the father, that of the brother--who combines sexual appeal, manly mission, and soldierly vigor--and that of the priestly comrade.²⁸ Given the fact that what is actually desired--sexual lyricism--is by no means necessarily linked to any of those defining roles, the course tried is bound to disappoint. For in each of the defining roles, the actual desire must be sublimated if the role is to be played successfully. To deviate from what the roles require is to risk precisely the fate Emerald incurs. Having resisted the yielding to colorless conformity demanded by the role, Emerald is seduced by desire

²⁸As the suite of music to the film *Henry the Fifth* bears out, it is a tremendously seductive ideal.

to shine with his comrade, share a moment of ecstatic potency, into dereliction of duty, the consequence of which is heartsick disgrace and one long dying. When the consequences of the seduction are seen, Emerald reverts to a safer persona, his first defense against guilt for hedonism, identification with the father. But by this time it is too late to reclaim the role of the father. McQueen has blocked the path to a London curacy, and Pater is stuck with himself.

It is impossible to determine whether McQueen's action was motivated by a sense, however deeply repressed, of sexual rejection by Pater, who had made himself aloof from McQueen as he tired of McQueen's efforts to lord it over his spiritual welfare, the state of his soul. What is clear is that if McQueen had not written to the Bishop of London to prevent Pater's ordination, Pater would probably have followed the precedent set by his father and taken a London curacy. When McQueen barred that path, Pater, requesting from Pendergast, his executor on Commercial Road, the last 30 pounds of his share of his mother's estate, was forced to apply for the sinecure at Brasenose which would keep him trapped in an aesthetic "in-between state" for the rest of his life.

"Sinecure" is precisely the right word: "without care/cure: a church office that pays a salary without involving cure (care) of souls." It is probably just as well that McQueen "did his duty." Pater had ever more care for bodies than for souls. On the other hand, he would never push past the Gothic gates into an independent professional life. He understood, moreover, that souls are lodged in bodies. He might have found a way to integrate his love of beauty with the call to minister to the needs of embodied souls, fulfilling the role of priest cum physician. His fringe existence at Oxford was the sort of life Jowett--himself a "bold and non-conforming figure . . . suffering under 'Establishment' suspicion of his religious orthodoxy" before he became Master of Balliol (Levey 66)--spoke of with disapproval. In the months preceding Pater's election at Brasenose, John Addington Symonds was also, like Pater, living in lodgings while seeking a fellowship. He

noted that Jowett "talked about fellowships and . . . staying up at Oxford." "He calls it living in a hothouse," Symonds wrote, "and says men get braced in London" (Levey 92).

Of course that was easy for Jowett to say, and Pater had nowhere else to go. Having escaped from the intractable realities of Commercial Road at the age of three and a half, Pater would never get "braced" by a return. Androgynous, longing both for a mother's generous affection and for a father's approval, he would fester in a hothouse of flowering and forbidden fruit. His desire for a sensitive and sensuous but nonetheless vigorous masculinity in his life would never find an outlet. It would never blossom into a mature "sweetness and strength." Instead it became increasingly perverted, sweetness turning sickly, strength turning severe: necrophilia at one extreme, sadomasochism at the other; a yearning narcissistic boy in between.

Disgusted by foolish infighting between High and Low Church factions, repelled by blockhead Establishment orthodoxy and the absurd scrupling of its repressive Hebraism, Pater was attracted to the sweetness and witty, urbane light of Matthew Arnold's Hellenism rather than the moralistic thunderings of Ruskin's art *qua* religion *qua* social reform. Pitting an Apollonian persona against an overbearing Hebraism, he would discover the inadequacy of Arnold's liberal Victorian conception of that ideal to the depths of human experience.

Chapter III. House Beautiful

The aim of criticism is to see the object as in itself it really is.

--Matthew Arnold

The first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly.

--Walter Pater

The primary aim of the critic is to see the object as in itself it really is not.

--Oscar Wilde

I saw life as it really was and it turned my heart to stone.

--Oscar Wilde from Reading Gaol

Poetry runs the risk of no longer being poetry, if it does not constantly contradict fact.

--Charles Baudelaire

Soon after Pater's election to the fellowship at Brasenose in February of 1864, he took occupancy of the two modest rooms on the first floor of the college, "with a direct view of the Radcliffe Camera and an oblique one of St. Mary's Church" (Levey 93), which were to be his for the rest of his life. As Michael Levey observes, his career had begun and "in certain official university ways it had--as a career--already ended." For Pater "there was to be no progress to a professorship, not even the Slade Professorship of Fine Art, and no college preferment" (93). As with Baudelaire, the defining circumstances of Pater's life were early set. Given the incongruity of his aspirations--"original, active, personal"--with his institutional role, the role itself could hardly serve as a vehicle for the realization of those aspirations. Pater was never to have, Levey notes, "a secure, still less a great, reputation as a scholar." He had "been searching, it might seem, merely for a retreat" (94). In fact he had sought a livelihood and acquired a small sanctuary, but he was soon to discover how uncomfortable the condition of sanctuary must necessarily be. His life was to be that of the sheltered fugitive. Two modest rooms offered but a thin buffer between himself and the entrenched forces of moral and intellectual authority.

Similarly, after Baudelaire's return from the voyage to Mauritius in 1843, the conspiracy between General and Mme. Aupick and Baudelaire's half-brother Claude to deny him access to his inheritance (some 75,000 francs) combined with the forces enmeshed in its consequences to assemble by the middle of 1844 "all of the elements of Baudelaire's future torment." The "web of circumstances" by then "woven round him by himself and his family was only broken with his death" (Scarfe 17).

Enjoying the pursuits of his bohemian friends in the Latin Quarter (among them the poets of the so-called "Norman School"), indulging his extravagant tastes, writing impressive poems, displaying an acute if erratic and immature critical appreciation of all the arts, expecting to cultivate the favor of editors and publishers with his social status and

prodigality, exploring the ecstasies and degradations of his adventurous liaison with Jeanne Duval, he seemed to be advancing with heady momentum toward the proverbial "brilliant career" when he was "suddenly flung into a poverty from which he was never to recover" (Scarfe 17-18) and forced to earn his living by his pen. Dogged by debts, without access to capital, he was reduced to the status of wage-slave and faced with the prospect of having to become a hack. He was probably also already infected with syphilis. Two years before his death in 1867, he told Catulle Mendès that he had earned from his writing, over the course of his entire life, only fifteen thousand, eight hundred and ninety-two francs, sixty centimes (Scarfe 11).

Pater's sanctuary may have been both confining and insecure, but Baudelaire was to have recourse to no sanctuary at all. Obligated to "flit" to escape his creditors, he was unable to occupy the same lodging for more than a few weeks or months at a time. If Pater's precarious situation was that of a sheltered fugitive, Baudelaire was a fugitive without shelter. At Oxford Pater could avert his eyes to avoid the reproachful glance, but Baudelaire had always either to fight or to flee: to fight with the reading public, the publishers, and the courts on which his ability to earn francs depended; to flee the creditors to buy his freedom from which francs were needed. If Pater insinuates his aspirations into his discourse, Baudelaire by turns flattered, deceived, mocked, bludgeoned, and vituperated his readers--cultivating the paradox which Pater also used to baffle and undercut in conversation, though not in his tensely controlled and serious writing, and which Wilde was to exploit outrageously in his own writing. By no means as cloistered, Baudelaire's life was, like Pater's, one protracted crisis.

Pater's university career may have ended in some respects when it began, but his career as an aesthete--a sequestered fugitive--was about to take off. Rumours got about that, as Humphry Ward (come up as an undergraduate at Brasenose in October 1864) put it, Pater had a "new and daring philosophy of his own, and a wonderful gift of style". (Levey 95).

Intimations of that "philosophy" were first made public at meetings of the Old Mortality Society to which Pater was elected in 1863 or 1864.

Founded in the mid-1850s by John Nichol, a Balliol undergraduate who later became a professor of English literature at Glasgow, it was, according to Gerald Monsman, in "literature, art, politics, and religion . . . avowedly 'radical.'" Its members were "dedicated to social amelioration, liberty of thought, and the ultimate validity of human reason in matters secular and sacred" (Monsman 26). Michael Levey interprets its name as indicative of its founder's concession to death as the "governing fact of human life" and speculates that it carried "rationalistic, free-thinking overtones" as well as reference to its original members' "fragile health" (100).

Both emphases would, clearly, have appealed to Pater. The Society appears to have been an important forum for him. It provided the occasion for formulation of his aesthetic hypothesis, not only in his first two papers, some of the language of which was incorporated in later work, but also in the first three essay-reviews²⁹ he later published anonymously in John Chapman's *Westminster Review*. The journal's Positivistic materialism constituted a challenge to Oxford orthodoxy.

Pater's dissatisfaction both with rationalism and with death as the "governing fact of human life," however, and his impulse to escape, transcend, or countermand the limits of both, is already evident in the first essay he read to the Society, two weeks after becoming a fellow, on 20 February 1864. The essay itself has been lost. Reconstructions of its import are varied, based on the documented reactions of Pater's listeners, who confided in others outside the Society as well, provoking wider comment.

S.G. Brooke wrote in his diary that Pater's paper was "one of the most thoroughly infidel productions it has ever been our pain to listen

²⁹"Coleridge's Writings" (1866), "Winckelmann" (1867), and "Poems by William Morris" (1868)

to" (Levey 100). He was sufficiently outraged by Pater's rhapsodies on the theme of "Subjective Immortality" evoked by the topic, J.G. Fichte's "Ideal Student," to present a rebuttal the following week and then withdraw from the Society. It is significant of Pater's procedure that the essay has in effect two titles: one that of his ostensible scholarly subject; the other reflecting his personal impulses. Pater scholars refer to it by one or the other title depending on their own agendas. My aim is to integrate the two elements interwoven in Pater's essay.

Aside from its patent denial of the immortality of the soul, what disturbed Brooke was Pater's advocacy of a "self-culture" founded "upon eminently selfish principles, and, for what to us appeared, a most unsatisfactory end" (Levey 100). "To sit in one's study all [day] and contemplate the beautiful," Brooke concluded, "is not a useful even if it is an agreeable occupation, but if it were both useful and agreeable, it could hardly be worth while to spend so much trouble upon what may at any time be wrested from you. If a future existence is to be disbelieved the motto 'Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die,' is infinitely preferable" (Monsman 30). Exactly so; but of course, not being an aesthete, Brooke could not understand the impulse to valorize just such an existence: that of a sequestered and sublimated hedonism in part a defense against death, in part a defense against life's pleasures, desire to partake of which was thwarted by the "fell clutch of circumstance."

Michael Levey infers from Brooke's reactions that what members of the Society actually heard was a first draft of the language Pater later used to conclude both the essay on Morris' poetry and *The Renaissance* (101). He may be right, but in leaping to that summary conclusion he dismisses the matrix out of which that language emerged as expressive of Pater's aspirations. Pater's extracurricular reading had included works by Winckelmann, Lessing, Schiller, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling, and Goethe. Holidays spent in Germany with his sisters and aunt had stimulated

interest in German culture and strengthened his knowledge of the language. Whereas Brooke heard an "infidel production" whose argument for the idea of subjective immortality he found an unconvincing hedge against annihilation, Edward Caird remembered Pater's first paper as a "hymn of praise to the Absolute" (Monsman 26). If Pater had denied the immortality of the soul, he had done so in the context of Fichte's metaphysical speculations, set forth in a series of lectures on "The Nature of the Scholar," that

. . . the Divine Idea lies concealed behind all natural appearances [and that] a certain part of the meaning of this Divine Idea of the world is accessible to, and conceivable by, the cultivated mind. . . . In every age, that kind of education and spiritual culture by means of which the age hopes to lead mankind to the knowledge of the ascertained part of the Divine Idea, is the Learned Culture of the age; and every man who partakes in this culture is a Scholar of the age. . . . The true-minded Scholar will not admit of any life and activity within him except the immediate life and activity of the Divine Idea which has taken possession of him. . . . His person, and all personality in the world, have long since vanished from before him, and entirely disappeared in his effort after the realization of the idea. (Monsman 32)

What Pater meant by subjective immortality was simply the idea that one lives on in the minds of one's friends. Clearly, he had personal grounds for supporting such an idea. Though Pater's father had died when Pater was only three and a half, his memory had been kept alive as an integral part of the atmosphere of the somewhat conventual household in which Pater's consciousness developed. As his brooding in "Emerald Uthwart" makes clear, he often himself, "feeling a little neglected," hoped to be so remembered and "regretted."

His "hymn to the Absolute," then, is a characteristic effort to assuage personal pains and longings using the medium of cultural products to which he had gained access with his education. Having early defended against anxiety generated in the conflict between "regret" and "desire" by sacralizing his desire, he was not as comfortable with agnosticism as his witty jibes at the smugly orthodox suggested. If one has renounced the both comforting and threatening thought of a loving and just father-god whose omnipresence is emotionally interpreted as a "celestial companion," one will both feel the loss and celebrate one's

independence. Pater typically incorporates what is lost or unavailable to him, thereby consolidating his autonomy, celebrating himself as that which unites and contains all.

"The Divine Idea," Monsman comments, "is accessible through the culture of an age, and he who is most truly cultivated is most perfectly possessed of the divine. This explains the significance of 'self-culture' in Pater's essay" (33). It is precisely this habit of abstraction accruing to the practice of idealist historicism which allowed the Modernists to develop a cult of personality at the same time that they scrupulously, fastidiously, and utterly disingenuously made critical currency out of the program of refining themselves out of existence in a universe consisting of nothing other than their own omnipotent subjectivities. In the context of Fichte's metaphysics, Pater substitutes what is for him now the more intellectually respectable "Divine Idea" for the more emotionally appealing orthodox Christian father-god. Since what he in fact desires is not in fact accessible through the culture of his age and no amount of cultivation will enable him to come into perfect possession of it, he will execute a maneuver common among aesthetes and Romantics. He will project what he most desires into select instances of cultural production and then refashion them as his own. That is the autoerotic reward of the aesthete's study about which the sturdily rational Mr. Brooke could not have known.

Pater's next essay, "Diaphaneité," will be a more transparent exercise in such autoeroticism. Having incorporated what he imagines Charles Lancelot Shadwell to be, Pater will make love to himself and give birth to the aesthetic hero which Harold Bloom has been extolling ever since.

Monsman observes, "That Pater may have been trying to compel Positivist and Idealist views to tentative levels of correspondence by an insistence upon the continuity of the self-cultured mind within the empirical context of history doubtless escaped Brooke." His attempt so

to situate Pater's impulse to carve out a place for an aesthetic hero rivaling "Carlyle's tyrant and Nietzsche's superman in significance," and to defend Pater against charges of hedonism, however, leads him to the wholly indefensible position that the "perfection of the moral life through the idealization of sensuous beauty" which was the "goal of Pater's humanism" constitutes a "sounder ethical basis than the moralistic theories" of Ruskin (33).

In the Fichtean version of historicism, Pater found a prop and a cover for his own peculiar aspirations as a "Scholar." What Edward Caird heard as a "hymn to the Absolute" was an encomium to Pater's own expanding personality. Eager to chart his own vagrant course in the "Learned Culture of the age," Pater could substitute a "Divine Idea" for a deity in which to submerge his passion.

In the language of Fichte's proposition that the "true-minded Scholar will not admit of any life and activity within him except the immediate life and activity of the Divine Idea which has taken possession of him" one can hear a harbinger of Pater's proposition in the "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance*:

The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of . . . [our] experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or of what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us. (198)

It inverts Fichte's proposition, giving ultimate priority to the aesthetic experience of the individual personality, from which any so-called Divine Idea is no longer distinguishable. Likewise the effort to realize personality takes precedence over Fichte's self-effacing "effort after the realization of the idea."

Now that Pater has found a sinecure (without care/cure of souls) and a secular pulpit, "a certain part of the meaning of . . . [the] Divine Idea of the world is accessible to . . . his cultivated mind" all right. In the process of reconstructing his self-image and rewriting his social identity as the "focus where rays . . . unite and begin to burn" (*Renaissance* 179), he seems, at the outset of his "career," to

stand on the threshold of an intoxicating freedom: the "liberty of the place" at Oxford, access to a "beauty and power" active in the world of "Learned Culture," psychic mobility, perhaps even social currency. Is he not holding his listeners spellbound with a prose in which his "speculative imagination seemed to make the lights burn blue"? (Monsman 26)

His next paper focuses with even more incandescence on that "certain part of the meaning of the Divine Idea" to which his "cultivated mind" craved access, giving an even more elevated status to the personality of which the Modernists who came after would make a cult. He will kick away the Fichtean metaphysical prop: "Coleridge's Writings" will not be susceptible to interpretation as a hymn to the Absolute. He will lower the cover as well, subtly but unmistakably adverting to homosexuality in "Winckelmann." "Poems by William Morris" will place the "condition of music" to which "all art aspires" in the nervous system at the same time that it traces to the Renaissance the resurgence of elementary passions which is the true meaning of "the modern spirit" for Pater, and the source of whatever appeal Positivistic materialism may have held for him. Pater is not interested in the evolution of the species or the progress of human society. It is the evolution of the passions that compels his curiosity. Pater's tour of Italy with Charles Shadwell during the summer holiday of 1865 will kindle a search in *The Renaissance* for facets of Pater's imaginative experience not accessible in the culture of his age. To coopt the language of Bersani, "desire travels" might have been its most accurate subtitle. It was dedicated to Shadwell. In its "Conclusion," the language of which had been sequestered among his small circle of friends at Oxford for almost ten years, Pater would go public with his true aspirations. Its reception would reduce the rest of his "career" to a slow burn.

Delivered to the Society in 1864, "Diaphaneité" was included in the volume of *Miscellaneous Studies* published a year after Pater's death

by Shadwell, who acted as Pater's literary executor. Shadwell inserted it there, as he wrote, "'with some hesitation . . . as the only specimen known to be preserved of those early essays of Mr. Pater's, by which his literary gifts were first made known to the small circle of his Oxford friends'" (Levey 102). Presumably, Shadwell had the manuscript to produce because Pater had presented it to him at some point after its delivery (the MS. is dated "July 1864" and initialled "W.H.P.").

Also a member of the Society, Shadwell was only eighteen months Pater's junior and among his first pupils. He became a fellow himself in 1864, at Oriel, and "grew into . . . almost a caricature of an old-style university don: a bachelor, fond of chess problems . . . devoted to every detail of the history of his college, of which he became provost and a munificent benefactor, dignified, rather forbidding, and expecting from his juniors a deference which even pre-1914 undergraduates were no longer accustomed to accord" (Levey 103). He is another of the figures of which Emerald Uthwart is a composite. Thomas Wright reports that those among Shadwell's acquaintance declared him to be "'undoubtedly the handsomest man in the University--with a face like those to be seen on the finer Attic coins'" (Levey 102).

In identifying him (after A.C. Benson) as the "real subject" of "Diaphaneité," Levey supplies a useful corrective to the more scholarly interpretations of Pater's crystalline aesthetic hero as the "perfected outcome of what for Fichte was a continuous struggle by which the self transcends its lower forms and identifies the external world as no longer foreign, but as its own and as that in which its life consists" (Monsman 34). As with Pater's essay on Fichte's "Ideal Student," however, Levey ignores the way in which Pater appropriates the language of "Learned Culture" to achieve personal ends. Nor does he attend to the dynamics of desire by which Pater appropriates Shadwell as well. Though the language drawn from the discourse of Fichte, Schiller, Carlyle, and Arnold certainly informs the substance of Pater's advocacy of the ideal of the artist as a "Renaissance man" whose "refusal to be

'classified' by any narrow, one-sided philosophy or discipline makes him a 'reconciler of opposites, a harmonizer'" (Monsman 35), the dynamics of the argument are unintelligible apart from the material conditions of the essay's composition.

At the time of its writing, Pater had identified in Shadwell the object of his desire for an ideal companion. Essential to an understanding of the dynamics of Pater's desire for Shadwell is a recognition of what was for Pater the defining attraction. Shadwell appeared to be the antithesis of himself. Once one grasps that simple fact, one can discern in the essay an attempt to harmonize, to hold in equipoise, the libidinal life instincts and the death instinct. Monsman does not know what tip of the iceberg he has glimpsed when he observes that "Although contrasting the violence of Carlyle's Charlotte Corday with the harmonious revolutionism of the Aesthetic hero, Pater finds in Carlyle's heroine that intensity-death equation that his later work will characterize as the prelude to renewal" (35).

This is the radical conservatism to which Ms. Williams' discourse pointed: "harmonious revolutionism" is a contradiction in terms; the only renewal it allows for is resurgence of the desiring self through the endless process of evasion and imaginative self-reincarnation; the reshaping of "vague hope" into "effective desire." Confinement to that process, which can terminate only in defeat and death, is what Iser's recognition of the aesthetic life as an "in-between state" points to. The only means of escape from confinement to that weary way is intersubjective engagement, a possibility declined by the attitude that any interest, idea, or theory "into which we cannot enter" or which "we have not identified with ourselves . . . has no real claim upon us." The absolutely compelling question is why that possibility is so fraught with difficulty that it seems to be unthinkable.

The Apollonian ideal Pater articulates in "Diaphaneité" is a forged resolution of the conflict between the two antithetical forces he later discovers to be present in a unity which the cultivated Victorian

mind has split into two poles: Dionysus and Apollo. It corresponds to the split between Satan and God in the mind of Baudelaire in the Paris of the Second Empire. Thinking he can choose the latter by affirming the Arnoldian values of humane liberal culture, the cultivated Victorian scholar ignores the "beast" which is, of course, present and active in his own quarters, but which he will not be compelled to recognize until it erupts in such a way as to threaten the integrity and viability of the entire nation-state in 1914. For the time being it is thought merely to prowl the "gloom" of city streets, which is, like the red death in Poe's "Mask," shut out both in the citadels of enlightenment and by the "sweetness and light" of culture there produced. In fact it does prowl the city streets, where predation is unsweetened by the polish of genteel civility. And of course the cultivated mind is not untroubled by suspicions that the beast is closer than it would like to think, but those suspicions only fortify its vigilance. The voices of prophets like F.D. Maurice can be silenced simply by demotion.

Pater had flirted with Broad Church Socialism during his undergraduate days. He learned early what became of people who were not "harmonizers," who ran to "extremes" and moved among the peripheries of Adam Smith's commodities and behavioral exchange. Sympathetic understanding, which Smith posits in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*³⁰ as the basis of human morality, did not extend to marginal figures. Like

³⁰Melville's critique of which is appropriately set in Wall Street in "Bartleby, the Scrivener," an allegory of Melville's preference not to write for a public whose capitalized Christian values are embodied in the narrator. (Its actual tastes ran to travelogues offering thrills not unlike those offered by *Indiana Jones in the Temple of Doom*: tales of missionaries being cannibalized in which their own baser appetites were projected onto South Sea islanders, as in *Typee* and *Omoo*.) For Bartleby too there is no escape but death. He could no more go home with the lawyer-narrator than Baudelaire could become the sort of son General Aupick would approve. Like Baudelaire, Melville knew his readers, though they could not--did not want to--know him, because they were unwilling to be entertained by any interest, idea, or theory they could not identify with their own interests. The story has remained a conundrum for readers because the class consciousness of the narrator can conceive of no world into which Bartleby's interests might enter and so offers no solution. Unwilling to partake of the lawyer's interests if the cost is commodification of himself, Bartleby "lives without dining." The story makes a curious companion piece to Kafka's "The Hunger Artist.")

fathers who refused to move to the suburbs, and like aesthetes who did not sublimate their passion--Simeon Solomon's fate was the warning to Pater's and Swinburne's generation that Wilde's was to the next--they died, either literally or effectively. They were rendered inactive, inert, like the figures in Pater's portraits as well as Baudelaire's "Tableaux parisiens" in *Les Fleurs du mal* and the prose poems in *Paris Spleen*.

The Dionysian "beast" is a life-preserving libidinal instinct which has been contorted by the culture of acquisition and accumulation. (Anthropologists confirm that sexuality becomes an instinct subject primarily to control--"thou shalt not"--at the time when human societies are forming around agricultural enterprises.) Useful as Bersani's insights are into the dynamics of desire, they acknowledge no other context than the originary family: the original constellation of "objects" from which the subject's desire moves outward into fantasy. Bersani does not consider the interpenetration of the economic system within which the family drama of desire is enacted and interpreted, or the propelling value of that system within which the proliferation of fantasy consumption is set in motion.

Apollo is the god of light and order, a static radiance which can momentarily quell the restlessness of desire and induce a state of quiescence akin to the inorganic oblivion for which Baudelaire at intervals so longs.

There is, however, another god, conspicuous by his absence. The absent god is a principle of generosity: generous sharing out of self as opposed to relentless pursuit of all that the self is made to feel it lacks, let alone consolidation of all that it has acquired. It is the absence of that god, or the marginalization of that god to the fading aristocracy (with its tradition of *noblesse oblige*), which forces Baudelaire to return again and again to Satan, looking for the source of energy he cannot find in God as a principle of light and order because it has been coopted by the generals of the bourgeoisie; General Aupick,

for one. Even in Baudelaire's mother, Caroline Archimbaut-Dufays, affection is withheld because it needs to be reinvested in General Aupick for a better return; since step-father and son are rivals for that measured resource, the boy must be shipped off to lycées, pensions, *en voyage*. He who pays commandeers affection.

Plumbed as he is by Bersani's psychoanalysis, Baudelaire intuited something Bersani doesn't find "interesting" or "worthy of our attention" because it doesn't satisfy his own traveling desire for ever more complex psychic conversions, transactions, exchanges: one construct exchanged for and absorbed by another till the whole complex ganglion of psychic transactions becomes a huge conglomeration of psychic agency which contains all instincts and explains none. In a society captured by the bourgeoisie--its culture dominated by the interests of the bourgeoisie, its cultural practitioners having their recourse to other interests and values slowly sucked out of the atmosphere in which they live and breathe and work (like oxygen withdrawn from a flame) by the naturalization of bourgeois interests--"God is a prostitute" because generosity, the practical consciousness of the idea that "God is love" (a holy spirit, if you will), is despised by the bourgeois.

Henceforth, one can never give, or receive, without having a price put on the transaction. Pater and Baudelaire are both trapped because they are prevented from sharing out of themselves without reprobation. The libidinal instincts are to expend energy; the death instinct is to cease expenditure once and for all, achieve a condition akin to that of a capital fund to which dividends may accrue, like worms or ornaments on a dead, undesiring body. Baudelaire was denied access to his inheritance because it had become apparent to General and Mme. Aupick that he was disposed to spend it. Henceforth he could not commit the sin of spending without incurring the guilt of debt. Having sinned in his youth, spending not only francs but semen, he had early incurred the "wages" of sin in both debt and syphilis. So weighted, he could aspire

no longer to the bourgeois ideal of capital investments yielding voluptuous returns, but only to the petit bourgeois ideal of a sort of static solvency, a balanced budget; equilibrium: so much coming in, so much going out, with hopes of making a modest profit sufficient to maintain an Individual Retirement Account. As a wage-slave receiving irregular supplements insufficient to meet the costs of living, he was to find even that lowered expectation impossible. In his reduced circumstances, the ideal of the dandy as the embodiment of extravagant liberality is converted into a principle of conservation ("Many friends, many gloves: for fear of the itch"): trimness; order; hygiene.

Without Satan he had recourse to no other ideal than the ennui and vacuity of such a condition. Only Satan could redeem him from that fallen state, the beast reawakening in him with sporadic "leaps" something like the "coming of love," urging him to revolt and sin again.

As Benjamin observes,

Baudelaire could have adopted Flaubert's statement, 'Of all of politics I understand only one thing: the revolt.' It could then have been understood in the sense of the final passage in a note which has come down to us together with his sketches on Belgium: 'I say "Long live the revolution!" as I would say "Long live destruction! Long live penance! Long live chastisement! Long live death!" I would be happy not only as a victim; it would not displease me to play the hangman as well--so as to feel the revolution from both sides! All of us have the republican spirit in our blood as we have syphilis in our bones; we have a democratic and a syphilitic infection.'

(13-14)

What such expressions of Baudelaire's "mystery-mongering" amount to is what Benjamin calls the "metaphysics of the provocateur" (14). The key question they pose Benjamin is astute enough to ask: "what impelled Baudelaire to give a radical-theological form to his radical rejection of those in power" (24). It is the crucial question raised by an inquiry into the relation between Pater and Baudelaire. However the answer may finally be determined, it holds the key to the difference between Pater's defeat and Baudelaire's more than Pyrrhic victory.

Pater desires Shadwell because he is different from himself: rich, handsome, of distinguished family. Beyond that, as Levey puts it,

Shadwell was "simple where [Pater] was complex, innocent and untroubled where he was only too aware not merely of death but of ambiguous desires and that 'tension of nerve' he wrote of as arising from frustrated emotions. Above all . . . [Shadwell] was physically different from [Pater], yet as he longed to be: perhaps also as his brother William was and conceivably as he supposed their father to have been. Handsome, healthy, animal-like schoolboys and good-looking if intellectually null undergraduates cannot have done much to satisfy a yearning to give and receive affection" (103-04). Yet Pater desired them, desired Shadwell, because Shadwell appeared neither to need nor to need to give affection: self-sufficient; autonomous; steady as a rock, innocently radiant as crystal.

Pater's "Diaphaneité" is not, as Levey suggests, a hymn to Shadwell, but a hymn to Pater's idealized self. Having incorporated the qualities he finds attractive in Shadwell, Pater makes love to that persona in order to possess himself of that deadness which has all the appeal of the commodity and none of the pain of his own restless, desiring life. Pater desired corpses because he wished to have their Apollonian beauty untroubled by signs of Dionysian life. The fruit of his union with the corpse he desires in Shadwell is the aesthetic hero who holds in equipoise, like a balanced budget, the life and death instincts. That is the significance of Pater's "self-culture."

The essential characteristic of the ideal type Pater creates in "Diaphaneité" is "neutrality." That crystalline quality is not a reflection of the "colourless uninteresting existence" of the man who has been neutralized by "suppression of gifts," but the prismatic radiance of those among whose talents there is a "just equipoise." In such individuals, Pater writes, "no single gift, or virtue, or idea, has an unmusical predominance." Only by absorption can such "gifts" elude definition and classification and be preserved for the purposes of lyricism, by which they are transfigured. "The proper instinct of self-culture" projects itself into every form of genius and

. . . struggles with those forms till its secret is won from each, and then lets each fall back into its place, in the supreme, artistic view of life. With a kind of passionate coldness, such natures rejoice to be away from and past their former selves, and above all, they are jealous of that abandonment to one special gift which really limits their capabilities. (Monsman 34)

Levey notes that, as was typical in Pater's life, the friendship with Shadwell cooled, though no definite break occurred (102). In Pater's "Winckelmann" essay, his first Renaissance study, written three years later, in 1867,³¹ the aesthetic hero is further developed and refined as the personality which responds to "the modern age's" demand for "life in the whole" by living "not only as intense but as complete a life as possible." One may surmise that after Pater's trip to Italy with Shadwell in the summer of 1865, having "won" from him the "secret" of his "genius," Pater let Shadwell "fall back into place." Having wrested from Shadwell the coldness in the "passionate coldness" attaching to the "supreme, artistic view of life"--one in which the spectral personality of the "eye" recoups the totality of human society splintered by industrial processes into divided streams of forms and figures coming and going about their separate businesses and disciplines--Pater turned his attention elsewhere, as Shadwell no doubt had already more casually done.

Shadwell could not have known the "intensity of Pater's concentration on him" (Levey 103). The very unresponsive dignity and enigmatic reticence which had been part of Shadwell's appeal for Pater kept him "harmonized as by distance," in the language of "Diaphaneité." If Pater had done the unthinkable and communicated his feelings to Shadwell, he would have received a rebuff that would have put him back in his place in no uncertain terms, giving the lie to the illusion of unlimited capabilities or "gifts."

Identifying with Winckelmann as an instance of the Renaissance man "whose refusal to be 'classified' by any narrow, one-sided philosophy or

³¹The year of Baudelaire's death in Paris

discipline³² makes him a reconciler of opposites, a harmoniser" (Monsman 35), Pater again eludes both definition and reproach by retreating to the inner sanctum. There, in the isolation of his rooms, as in "Winckelmann," he reconstructs his self-image and rewrites his social identity by reinscribing the mission ("effective desire") of the aesthetic hero. His purpose is "to define, in a chill and empty atmosphere, the focus where the rays, in themselves pale and impotent, unite and begin to burn." Unable to engage or align himself, at the deepest levels of sexual or intellectual passion, with anyone at Oxford, he compensates for his alienation by defining his aesthetic mission as the cultivated ability to "pass swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy." Connecting with none, he will incorporate all, and "burn with a hard, gemlike flame." Only his all-encompassing self is the "focus where the rays, in themselves pale and impotent, unite and begin to burn" (Monsman 35).

It must be a refining fire, however, if it is to be creative rather than consuming. Hence Pater's effort to appropriate Heraclitus' transmuting fire for an ethic of aestheticism. It is a "supreme moral charm" which emanates in the aesthetic hero from that "fine edge of light, where the elements of our moral nature refine themselves to the burning point" (Monsman 35).

The difficulty of demonstrating such an ethic is evident in the dissonances of Pater's next essay. In "Coleridge's Writings" he wanted to justify his impulse to celebrate the aesthetic hero as the "embodiment of the transmuting fire" and the "epitome of harmonious, musical transition within history itself" who is as such the "herald of 'renaissance'" and renewal. But the claim that "A majority of such would be the regeneration of the world" (Monsman 35) will be impossible to prove. The desire to do so and the difficulty of doing so are recorded in "Coleridge's Writings." There, for the first time, really,

³²Shadwell's discipline was law.

he grappled with the relation between art and morality in "the modern age." What he wanted to see in the modern age is what he yearned for in his own lifetime: that rebound to the "elementary passions" which he equated with renaissance and renewal. Nowhere is his failure to confront what elicited Baudelaire's radical-theological critique more evident or more crucial. On that failure turns the ultimate defeat of the aesthetic hero echoed in Wilde's lament in *De Profundis*: "I saw life as it really was and it turned my heart to stone."

"Coleridge's Writings" was published anonymously in John Chapman's *Westminster Review* in January 1866. Like the *Fortnightly Review* edited by John Morley, the *Westminster Review* was a leading "liberal" magazine, and Chapman, a self-styled "radical," was more than willing to give Pater space for the deconstructive exercises in self-justification³³ he needed to clear the ground for his aesthetic hero. An example of Pater's "harmonious revolutionism," his sympathetic renunciation of Coleridge as metaphysician was nicely consonant with the predominantly Positivist philosophy of the *Westminster Review*.

Pater wrote "Coleridge's Writings" during the same year in which Arnold published his *Essays in Criticism*. It was a time when Pater was cultivating what Levey aptly terms a "moral dandyism" (113). Pater's friend and fellow Society member, Ingram Bywater, remembered it as a "period of . . . great unrest at Oxford." The "famous Oxford movement had spent itself," Bywater wrote, "and the *Essays and Reviews* [of the Broad Church seven, including Jowett, written in 1860] were influencing the minds of the young men, who were immersed in Herbert Spencer and Mill and Hegel" (Monsman 25).

Gerald Monsman suggests that the empirical-scientific strain in Pater's earliest published essays "owe[d] much to his reading of J.S. Mill, Sir William Hamilton, and G.H. Lewes on Comte, as well as T.H. Huxley, Herbert Spencer, John Tyndall, St. G. Mivart,

³³Kenneth Clark neatly assessed Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* as a "prolonged piece of self-justification" (Monsman 156).

W.K. Clifford, and any number of other scientific contributors to the more intellectual and progressive periodicals" (28). He also speculates that "owing to the abstractions of its subject," the Coleridge essay was "stylistically not far from the arid and complicated prose of Herbert Spencer" (156). He rightly qualifies his inference of Positivist influence on Pater's writing, however, with a recognition that Pater himself "qualifies somewhat Positivism's mechanistic and necessitarian conception of natural law not by positing some teleological explanation of reality, but by utilizing the empirical authority of Darwinian evolution to confirm as the central historical fact the continuity of a conscious, purposeful process of cultural change and growth" (29).

The "central historical fact" for Pater, however, was Pater, and the continuity of his "change and growth." It was not "ideas as such that he wrote about," Levey remarks, "but personalities." Turning from Shadwell to the historical literary figure of Coleridge, Pater found in the subject of his first article an opportunity to "practise, there still tentatively and vaguely, a form of identification --the more patent parts of which were, significantly, to be struck out when he reprinted an expanded, heavily revised version of it" (Levey 127). The revised version was written in 1880 and included in the volume of *Appreciations* published in 1889. *Appreciations* was reviewed, at Pater's suggestion, by Wilde in 1890.

One need not belabor the points of Pater's identification with Coleridge. Pater was twenty-five when he was preparing the article, the same age as the Coleridge with whom he identifies. That Coleridge, he wrote, "left Cambridge without a degree, a Unitarian. Unable to take orders . . . he determined to devote himself to literature. When he left Cambridge there was a prejudice against him which has given rise to certain suspicions" (Levey 127). Both had had a childhood of "delicacy . . . sensitiveness, and passion." Both had been "driven from life in motion to life in thought and sensation" (Pater, *Appreciations* 433).

There, however, the two begin to diverge. "Thrust inward upon himself," Pater wrote, Coleridge was "driven from 'life in thought and sensation' to life in thought only" (*Appreciations* 437). Despite Pater's attraction to Coleridge's voluptuousness, eloquence, capacity to charm, alternating intellectual restlessness and lassitude, aspiration toward "something fixed where all is moving" (456), and ultimately the brilliance of his "failure"; for Coleridge the emphasis fell on life in thought, for Pater on life in sensation. Pater's exaggeration of those qualities--"inexhaustible discontent, languor, and homesickness, that endless regret" (455)--with which he identifies but wishes to throw off for a more "Greek spirit"--with an "engaging naturalness" that is "simple, chastened, debonair" (456)--leads him to characterize Coleridge as a "true flower of the ennuyé" (455).

He blames that disposition on Coleridge's "hunger for eternity." The *ennui* of an insatiable hunger he attributes to Coleridge's heroic but doomed "struggle against the relative spirit." From his "strong native bent towards the tracking of all questions. . . . to first principles" (432), Coleridge failed to come back with a sharp rebound to the stuff of art. "What constitutes an artistic gift," Pater wrote in a passage dropped from the later version, "is first of all a natural susceptibility to moments of strange excitement, in which the colours freshen upon our threadbare world, and the routine of things about us is broken by a novel and happier synthesis" (Levey 127). Coleridge's imaginative vision, drawing as it does on idealizing principles to impregnate what it sees with meaning, has not yet been reduced to the Paterian version of aesthetic vision. In demystifying the aesthetic vision as a "novel and happier synthesis" of images, Pater anticipates Henri Bergson and T.E. Hulme.

In trying to "'apprehend the absolute,' to . . . attain . . . 'fixed principles' in politics, morals, and religion . . . refusing to

see the parts as parts only"³⁴ (455), Coleridge "limited the operation of his unique poetic gift" (432). Pater's characterization of that gift reads like an exoneration of his own: "A warm poetic joy in everything beautiful, whether it be a moral sentiment, like the friendship of Roland and Leoline, or only the flakes of falling light from the water-snakes . . . such is the predominant element in the matter of his poetry, as cadence is the predominant quality of its form" (454). In reaching via German transcendental philosophy after a comprehensive system of knowledge, however, Coleridge's thought sickened with a disease which T.S. Eliot would trumpet as the "dissociation of sensibility" for which a new classicism would supply the cure in the "mythical method" first "adumbrated by Mr. Yeats" and pursued by Mr. Joyce.³⁵ That the art of Plato, whom Coleridge "claims as the first of his spiritual ancestors," was also directed toward discovery through thought (*dianoia*) of a comprehensive system of knowledge (*episteme*) Pater manages to dismiss with a gesture toward Plato's blithe nonchalance. Plato was a "true humanist" who held his "theories lightly" and whose "classical feeling" (433) Pater reconstrues as a sort of eighteenth-century intellectual dandyism.

Pater's impulse to liberate himself from the entrenched forces of moral and intellectual authority has already begun to take a reactionary turn. Levey surmises that Pater "wanted the freedom of travelling lightly, if not positively with levity, unburdened by any luggage of moral preoccupations, political or philosophical systems, or speculations on the nature of art" (115). In the atmosphere at Oxford described by Ingram Bywater, Pater does indeed appear to have absorbed the Spencerian lessons of social Darwinism. In the environment where Pater had to compete for literary and intellectual currency, "fittest"

³⁴The rearranging of parts into a "novel and happier synthesis" is a prescription for Modernist aesthetic practice, the ordering principle being association.

³⁵See Eliot's review of *Ulysses* for the *Dial* (November 1923).

meant best equipped to defend against attack. At twenty-five Pater did not want to be a brilliant failure; he wanted to shine. The best defense, then as now, was a good offense, and Pater's weapon was wit.

To preserve the "freedom of travelling lightly," he may have "unburdened" himself of the "luggage of moral preoccupations, political or philosophical systems, or speculations on the nature of art" which ran counter to his own aspirations and impulses, but he picked up the luggage of Regency dandyism. There was one lesson he had learned at King's School which he would exploit for his own ends: mannerliness, the "preponderating value of the manner of the doing it in the thing done." His impulse to kill off that aspect of Coleridge with which he did not want to identify because it did not advance his own interests, and indeed may have spoken to his weaknesses in the area of systematic thought,³⁶ prompted him to begin the essay with a facile criticism of Coleridge's excessive "seriousness" which, adding supercilious insult to injury, he faulted for its "misconception of the perfect manner" (432).

Lacking, amidst the "great unrest" at Oxford, systematic terms with which to make a case for his interests, Pater avoided argument. Levey says that Pater's "ancien régime interpretation of good manners and good-mannered dissent" avoided pushing to extremes, mitigating the "sting of criticism with raillery," and "avoided argument, as it avoided earnestness" (115). But it cuts both ways, that observation. Paradox is a shield as well as a weapon. Epigrammatic wit excludes an opponent. Only those who understand its terms can enter into the joke; others are simply put off. Though Pater seemed to hold a liberal political stance, he never stated his political opinions, let alone systematic grounds for them. His attitude toward Napoleon III appears to have been received from the "enthusiastic hatred of the emperor expressed by Swinburne and Victor Hugo." His foppish comment on the political situation in France, "I hope we shall soon arrive at a time when no one will be so vulgar as

³⁶Though Brasenose made him a lecturer in philosophy, his lectures were known for the dubious distinction of seldom so much as naming a single philosopher.

to want to go and live at the Tuileries" (Levey 116), is indicative of the extent to which he required protection from the thrust of criticism delivered with a force of argument he could not parry. Mr. Brooke had had no difficulty exposing the fallacy in Pater's argument for "subjective immortality" by observing, simply, that since one's friends die, the memory of oneself dies with them. Logic was not Pater's forte; understandably, since the force of his art was directed not toward analysis or enunciation of positions derived from demonstrated conclusions, but toward the achievement of "novel and happier syntheses" assembled to obscure fundamental premises.

Pater accuses Coleridge of diminishing the complexity of human life by seeking to "arrest every object in an eternal outline, to fix thought in a necessary formula, and the varieties of life in a classification by 'kinds,' or genera" (431). The delicate and fugitive details which the inductive sciences are capable of distinguishing would, under the influence of a mind like Coleridge's, be lost in "vague scholastic abstraction" and reduced to some mystic absolute, some "colourless, formless, intangible, being." Pater holds up Goethe as the alternative model for the aesthetic hero. Goethe, as one "to whom every moment of life brought its contribution of experimental, individual knowledge; by whom no touch of the world of form, colour, and passion was disregarded," is a "true illustration of the speculative temper" (432). Man is the "most complex of the products of nature." His "physical organism is played upon" both by the "physical conditions about it" and by "remote laws of inheritance." He is not defined solely by those forces, however, "for the mind of the race, the character of the age, sway him this way or that through the medium of language and current ideas." It is the "truth of these relations," then, "that experience gives us, not the truth of eternal outlines ascertained once for all" (431). Experience "bids us," by a "constant clearing of the organs of observation and perfecting of analysis," to "make what we can" (432) of these relations.

What Pater makes of these relations, however, reduces from "subtleties of effect" and "intricacy of expression" to the "colour or curve of a rose leaf" (432). That Pater derives so little from such expanding possibilities of knowledge--the "spirit" invading "moral philosophy from the ground of the inductive sciences" to generate "new analysis of the relations of body and mind, good and evil, freedom and necessity" (431)--sheds some doubt on the credibility of his protest, "I cannot believe Ruskin saw more in the Church of St. Mark than I do" (Levey 116).

The terms by which he clings to High Church ritual in "Coleridge's Writings," moreover, cast doubt on Pater's grasp of what Arnold's *Essays in Criticism* were driving at. If the aim of Arnold's criticism was "to see the object as in itself it really is," without the mystifications of Christian dogma, Pater's rendering of the suggestion that faith in dogma might be replaced by cultural affirmations of certain humane values offers grounds for further doubt that his impulse to "discriminate" his impressions was in fact a "first step" toward that aim or already a perverse adherence to an intention which Wilde correctly interpreted: "to see the object as in itself it really is not." This is what Arnold's cultural agenda shrinks down to in Pater's terms:

There are aspects of the religious character which have an artistic worth distinct from their religious import. Longing, a chastened temper, spiritual joy, are precious states of mind, not because they are part of man's duty or because God has commanded them, still less because they are means of obtaining a reward, but because like culture itself they are remote, refined, intense, existing only by the triumph of a few over a dead world of routine in which there is no lifting of the soul at all. If there is no other world, art in its own interest must cherish such characteristics as beautiful spectacles. Religious belief, the craving for objects of belief, may be refined out of our hearts, but they must leave their sacred perfume, their spiritual sweetness, behind. (Monsman 24)

Arnold's Apollonian ideal of cultural sweetness and light may have been inadequate to the real totality of human experience in the industrialized, imperial nation-state. As Pater's impulse to see the object as in itself it really is not was submerged in the stated

intention to discriminate his impressions, so the impulse to harmonize the interests and claims of a class antithetical to one's own was submerged in the intention, stated with curious frequency over the course of a century, "to see life steady and see it whole." But Arnold's cultural activity did not go so far as to reduce art as "criticism of life" to incense.

In the discourse of Pater's 1866 essay, the epistemological possibilities offered by Positivism reduce to the precious "colour or curve of a rose leaf," and the epistemological possibilities offered by historicism reduce to "precious states of mind" which allow a select "few" to savor the refined and chastened residue of a "craving for objects" of sublimated desire.

Pater's aesthetic hero is a victim of *bovarysme*. His claim that "A majority of such would be the regeneration of the world" is so absurdly out of touch with the truth of determining relations, it is indicative of just how defenseless its adherents must be. So far from effecting a "harmonious revolution," such a hero is likely, if he is lucky, to fade with a certain pitiable debilitation into a "flower of the yew." Or, if he is audacious enough to make a counterclaim on such illusory grounds, he is likely to get himself sentenced to hard labor in Reading Gaol.

Pater's turn to history for support for his ideal of the aesthetic hero in "Winckelmann" reveals a denial of the forces undermining that ideal which is at work in all of the essays collected in *The Renaissance*. Only that denial allows Pater to preserve the illusions evident in his move to cap the whole sequence of "visions" with the aesthetic manifesto first written in his most unguarded "vision" of all: "Poems by William Morris."

Ultimately positioned as the last of the studies published under the rubric of Renaissance in the volume dedicated to "C.L.S." in February of 1873, "Winckelmann" was the first to be written. Its composition in 1867 followed Pater's exposure to Italian art during his

tour of Italy in the company of Shadwell. Together they had visited Ravenna, Pisa, and Florence. The extent to which Pater sublimated his "sympathy with a certain aspect of Greek life," as Ingram Bywater phrased his intimation of what might be "noticed" in the essay on Winckelmann, may be inferred from Pater's characterization of Winckelmann's "romantic, fervid friendships with young men." "Such attachments," Pater wrote, contained "of passion, of physical stir," "just so much as stimulates the eye" (Levey 99).

That stimulus received in Italy was shaped into a larger response in 1866, when Pater read Otto Jahn's biography of Winckelmann. Pater had known of Winckelmann from his reading of Goethe and Hegel, but the power of identification was not released in him until he became more intimately acquainted with Winckelmann's life. As Gerald Monsman puts it, Pater "recognized in the career of this German humanist sojourning in Italy the pattern of his own quest for an ideal beauty revealed in physical form" (48).

Given the Positivist-historicist method Pater ostensibly brings to his inquiry into the life and work of Winckelmann, it is important to note how Pater's private longings in fact inform the project. The first paragraph of "Winckelmann" adverts to the intellectual priority of Hegel's lectures on the *Philosophy of Art*. From the citation of Hegel's work, Pater proceeds to frame the substance of his inquiry with the questions identified in "Coleridge's Writings" as definitive of the "relative spirit's" epistemological procedures: what sort of man was Winckelmann and under what conditions did he make his peculiar contribution to culture? Keyed to the intention of discovering the defining relations evident in Winckelmann's work, the questions do not so much lead to inductive analysis as they become the pretense for idealizing distortions predicated on Pater's desire. The antique spirit Winckelmann is singled out as having intuited Monsman describes as one that "liberated the religious-moral side of man by subordinating it to the artistic world of the senses" (48).

Despite Pater's impulse to articulate an ethic of aestheticism, he is unable to conceive of a morality which is not primarily a matter of sentiment infused with religious mysticism or mythos. No imperative other than that of conscience--truth to self--is acknowledged in "Winckelmann." Winckelmann's one sin against the private law of conscience in making a false conversion to Roman Catholicism so as to gain access to the libraries of Rome is readily forgiven for the sake of the larger imperative of cultural renewal: "a spirit that liberated the religious-moral side of man by subordinating it to the artistic world of the senses." Mystic love of God is thrown off so as to liberate profane sexual love. No other sort of love seems conceivable to Pater; where a larger human love is approached, it is always through the sentiment of pity.

The claims of sensibility and sentiment take such absolute precedence that no other claims can be acknowledged. The conundrum such a condition represents is one into which Monsman's discourse also enters. How is one to explain the obtuseness of his assertion of a Hellenistic spirit liberating the religious-moral side of man by subordinating it to the artistic world of the senses? Clearly, "liberation" cannot be effected by "subordination."

Arthur Symonds' comments in his Introduction to *The Renaissance* are relevant here:

Pater liked people to be enthusiastic, but, with him, enthusiasm was an ardent quietude, guarded by the wary humour that protects the sensitive. He looked upon undue earnestness, even in outward manner, in a world through which the artist is bound to go on a wholly "secret errand," as bad form, which shocked him as much in persons as bad style did in books. He hated every form of extravagance, noise, mental or physical, with a temperamental hatred: he suffered from it, in his nerves and in his mind. And he had no less dislike of whatever seemed to him either morbid or sordid, two words which he often used to express his distaste for things and people. He never would have appreciated writers like Verlaine, because of what seemed to him perhaps unnecessarily "sordid" in their lives. It pained him, as it pains some people, perhaps only because they are more acutely sensitive than others, to walk through mean streets, where people are poor, miserable, and hopeless. (xvi)

One can only surmise that, apart from a genetic component, the frustrated sexuality which led Pater to interpret the artist's quest for perfection of form as a "secret errand" enforced such a tension of the nerve that he simply could not bear to take in any horrors that would further strain his already overwrought condition.

Hence, for Pater, sexual liberation becomes an absolutely essential prerequisite to any larger human liberation. Such liberation not being accessible through the culture of his age, the prerequisite was never met, and a larger humanism not conceivable because not possible. A situation comparable to that played out in Forster's *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, it is a peculiar confinement to one's own "interests." It makes the difference between Pater's art for art's sake and Lawrence's art for life's sake; though Lawrence's art, for all its thrustings toward sexual liberation, is a much more exclusive world than that of Hardy's *Arabella* in *Jude the Obscure*, whose crude sensuality he was so taken by. Where one cannot spend, conservation becomes the only conceivable ideal.

Monsman writes that "Those qualities of Winckelmann's character worthy of emulation also could be found, Pater realized, in the artists of the Renaissance. From this time onward, he appears to have thought of the Renaissance as that period when aesthetic, religious, and practical concerns were harmoniously balanced, when wholeness and unity of spirit were restored after the limits imposed by the asceticism of the Middle Ages on the heart and imagination had been destroyed" (48). In so conceiving of the Renaissance, Pater was engaging in a good deal more wish-fulfillment than historical analysis. Like Buckler's distinction between the literally historical and the metaphorical, Pater's nods toward the historical facts of Winckelmann's experience are made only to get them out of the way.

Despite Pater's sympathetic identification with various aspects of Winckelmann's life--its poverty, gloom, lack of access to scope of opportunity, the constraints of routine teaching duties on personal

scholarly aspirations, a repressive Protestantism in Germany and an inquisitorial imperial Catholicism in Rome, among others--he but glances at those conditions so as to gain access to Winckelmann's projections. To Winckelmann, Pater writes, "closely limited except on the side of the ideal, building for his dark poverty 'a house not made with hands' . . . [the antique world] early came to seem more real than the present." What Winckelmann sought in the antique world Pater interprets as "rather a wistful sense of something lost to be regained, than the desire of discovering anything new" (*Renaissance* 149). The assessment applies as much to Pater as to Winckelmann and belies the ostensible purpose of his Positivist-historicist procedure.

Part of what interests Pater in Winckelmann is his injection of a strain of French literature into the German. Of the early French revolts against mysticism and asceticism in which Pater correctly locates the beginnings of the Renaissance, Pater exclaims: "On a sudden the imagination feels itself free. . . . How mistaken and roundabout have been our efforts to reach . . . [a more liberal mode of life] by mystic passion, and monastic reverie; how they have deflowered the flesh; how little have they really emancipated us!" (153).

That a distinction must be made between freedom and freedom of the imagination, however, Winckelmann's long-desired arrival in the Eternal City rudely confirms. It is not what his imagination had configured. In Rome Winckelmann was "perplexed with the sense of being a stranger in what was to him, spiritually native soil." "'I have come into the world and into Italy too late'" (157) is Winckelmann's lament.

Nevertheless, he is able to pursue his excavations of the antique spirit and to give expression, in a way Pater never could, to his temperament. Not "merely intellectual," Winckelmann's "affinity with Hellenism" was interwoven with a temperamental susceptibility to "romantic, fervid friendships with young men" (159) which, despite a tempestuousness that makes Winckelmann resemble a homosexual Heathcliff, Pater manages to rationalize in aesthetic terms. For a Hellenist such

as Winckelmann, Pater asserts in terms reminiscent of Baudelaire's misogynist aesthetic, the ideal of male beauty is that of a more than mere natural beauty. Responsiveness to male beauty is a sign of susceptibility to art, not nature; and the "beauty of art, like tears shed at play, gives no pain, is without life, and must be reawakened and repaired by culture" (160).

In this aesthetic, the supporting ideology of which is the apotheosis of an autonomous individuality undisturbed by "interests not [its] own" (183), the "eternal problem of culture--balance, unity with one's self" (190) is solved by production of an ideal of "sexless beauty": fetishization of the commodity. It is the same ideal Pater elaborated in "Diaphaneité," some of the phrases of which he savored again in "Winckelmann": the "sexless beauty" of Greek statues; the "moral sexlessness" of the aesthetic hero who is possessed of a "kind of impotence, an ineffectual wholeness of nature, yet with a divine beauty and significance of its own" (Levey 101).

That Pater finds in Winckelmann the materials for production of such an ideal flies curiously in the face of Goethe's judgment that the works of Winckelmann "are a life, a living thing, designed for those who are alive" (161). But it is not surprising, if what the "intellectual" in "the modern world, with its conflicting claims, its entangled interests . . . so bewildering" (189), "demands" is "completeness"--the artifice of unity, a contrived totality. He prefers the *ennui* of an ideal attainable only by the imagination to the painful conflict of "rival claims" (185). And he embraces an aesthetic which "excludes that bolder type of [art] which deals confidently . . . with life, conflict, evil" (186). Such an exclusive "conception of art" is what Pater will sing in "Aesthetic Poetry" and what Eliot will celebrate in Yeats' and Joyce's "mythical method."

Art is a poeticization of any and all aspects of life the purpose of which is "to produce [happy literary] effects":

The basis of all artistic genius lies in the power of conceiving humanity in a new and striking way, of putting a

happy world of its own creation in place of the meaner world of our common days, generating around itself an atmosphere with a novel power of refraction, selecting, transforming, recombining the images it transmits, according to the choice of the imaginative intellect. (178)

Unfortunately, art so conceived by design insulates the artist--and the consequences as opposed to the "effects" of his work--from the determining relations which are the conditions of his life and work.

Winckelmann is so busy excavating the "true spirit" of antiquity in eighteenth-century Rome that he is oblivious to the less noble forces by which his own life is suddenly strangled out of him. Ingenuously displaying his gold medallions to a fellow traveler on the journey from Rome back for a visit to Germany, Winckelmann is robbed and murdered. Even his death is aestheticized. More importantly, entire civilizations are aestheticized. Pater observes that since Winckelmann lacked access to authentic artifacts of earlier Greek culture, his "conception of Greek art tends . . . to put the mere elegance of the imperial society of ancient Rome in place of the severe and chastened grace of the *palaestra*" (162).

It is important to note that Pater does concede that Winckelmann's "conception of art excludes that bolder type of it which deals confidently and serenely with life, conflict, evil" (186)--as in Greek tragedy--but the limits set on Pater's powers of insight and analysis by the Positivist-historicist ideology of empiricism and relativity confine him, even in the sphere of a "bolder type" of art, to "natural laws" (193). It's a confinement we are well acquainted with in the works of George Eliot, against which Emily Brontë, in her fevered isolation, revolts.

Such "natural laws," Pater writes in the concluding passage of "Winckelmann," "we shall never modify, embarrass us as they may." So determined, the aesthete has no alternatives but the *ennui* of yearning in the ideal world and inevitable defeat in the real world:

Natural laws we shall never modify . . . but there is still something in the nobler or less noble attitude with which we watch their fatal combinations. In those romances of Goethe

and Victor Hugo . . . this entanglement, this network of law, becomes the tragic situation, in which certain groups of noble men and women work out for themselves a supreme *Dénouement*. Who, if he saw through all, would fret against the chain of circumstance which endows one at the end with those great experiences? (193)

If the only alternative to fatalism is escape, one must fly the "conditions of time and place" (165)--moving, in Pater's case as in Joyce's and Eliot's, from historicism and naturalism to mythos.

Pater is no more ripe for fatalism at this early stage of his life than was Joyce when he fled Ireland. He is ripe for the only sort of revolt of which he can conceive. Poised to leap free of the restrictions of Christianity in pursuit of artistic rejuvenescence, he is after a "true freedom . . . in the life of the senses and the blood--blood no longer dropping from the hands in sacrifice . . . but . . . burning in the face for desire and love." As Levey remarks, "What began with Winckelmann's revolt ends with Pater's" (133). It is revolt taking the form of escape which constitutes the appeal of William Morris' poems for Pater.

In Pater's third *Westminster Review* essay, it was not the personality of the artist whose work comprises the subject of study that engaged Pater's "imaginative intellect." The author of the poems is not confronted; on the contrary, he does not emerge from the poems at all. Pater does not ask, who is this man and what are the conditions under which his work has been produced? The pretense of using a Positivist-historicist method to discover new possibilities of knowledge is dropped until the end of the essay, when the paragraphs later shaped into the "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance* are adduced. In the essay-review proper, Pater's emphasis shifts from Positivism to historicism as he charts in the "change of manner wrought in the interval" between Morris' *Defence of Guenevere* (1858) and *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70) a course which "illustrates one law of the life of the human spirit" (*Appreciations* 524-25).

What Pater identifies with in Morris' poems is precisely that course. Having elaborated in "Winckelmann" an aesthetic defining the "basis of all artistic genius" as the power of "putting a happy world of its own creation in place of the meaner world of our common days," Pater was bound to be receptive to the poetry of Morris, for the "atmosphere" on which its happy effects depend "belongs to no actual form of life, but to a world in which the forms of things are transfigured." In Morris' expression of a late Romanticism those already idealized forms are elevated into "another, still fainter and more spectral world, which is literally an artificial or 'earthly paradise.'" The secret of its appeal is the "inversion of homesickness": the "incurable thirst for the sense of escape" (520).

What distinguishes Morris' *Defence of Guenevere*, Pater argues, is its appearance as the "first typical specimen of aesthetic poetry." As such it is a refinement upon the imaginative medievalism which evolved with Victor Hugo in France and Heine in Germany. The substance of Morris' refinement on that medievalism which "recreates the mind of the Middle Age" in the same way that Winckelmann recreated the mind of antiquity is the "mood of the cloister taking a new direction" (521).

As a mood of reverie sets in in the cloister, the medieval mind takes the art of "directing towards an unseen object sentiments whose natural direction is towards objects of sense" (522), which it has learned from religion, and bends it "as by miracle or magic to the service of human passion" (523). A "fatal descent" is set in motion: from reverie, to illusion, to delirium. A "love defined by the absence of the beloved," and "full of the forms of vassalage"--among them the "subtle luxury of chastisement" (522)--begets a "wild, convulsed sensuousness." In the body of the dreamer, a "passion of which the outlets are sealed, begets a tension of nerve" and a consciousness "in which the sensible world comes to one with a re-enforced brilliancy and relief" (523).

There is even less attempt to locate the subjective processes Pater describes in a network of clearly discernible relations here than there was in "Winckelmann." The vagueness of the subjects of Pater's sentences allows his own consciousness to define the boundaries of his discussion. Likewise, his own consciousness directs the shift of focus from the "atmosphere" evoked by *The Defence of Guenevere* to that evoked by *The Earthly Paradise*. What the "change of manner wrought in the interval" signifies for Pater is both "characteristic of the aesthetic poetry" and characteristic of Pater's identification with it: escape from the cloister into experience of the "great primary passions under broad daylight" (524).

Gone for the moment is the aesthetic of artifice, rationalization of desire for beauty in the flesh as desire for the more than merely natural--exquisite refinements the artistic beauty of which, "like tears shed at play, gives no pain, is without life, and must be reawakened and repaired by culture" (*Renaissance* 160). The shift from the "sombre atmosphere of [the monk's] cloister" to the "natural light," and with it the rebound to "simple elementary passions," makes, Pater remarks, a "strange contrast to the sought-out simplicity of Wordsworth." "Desire here is towards the body of nature for its own sake, not because a soul is divined through it" (525).

One might translate that statement into a comment on Pater's discourse here, which is directed toward the desire embodied in poetry for its own sake, not because the craftsmanship of a sensibility other than his own can be analyzed through it. What had aroused Pater's response to Morris' medievalism was the "mood of the cloister taking a new direction, and winning so a later space of life it never anticipated" (521). Using Morris' poems as a point of departure for his exploration through discourse of the possibilities opened up by pursuit of that new direction, Pater has won for himself a space of life he had anticipated but was unable to realize except through discourse: escape

from the sombre atmosphere of his cloister into the broad daylight where desire is directed simply toward the natural body for its own sake.

He has no further need of, or use for, Morris. As the subject providing the next vehicle for a desire so directed, he will turn to Leonardo da Vinci, whose *Mona Lisa* he had seen at the Louvre during his trip to Paris with his sisters over the summer vacation of 1866, when he may well have gone to the Morgue as well. Gracefully returning to his ostensible subject, Pater closes off his appreciation of Morris' poems: "It is precisely this effect, this grace of Hellenism relieved against the sorrow of the Middle Age, which forms the chief motives of *The Earthly Paradise*" (527).

The aesthetic poetry to which Pater's next observation refers is his own. "One characteristic the pagan spirit has, which is on its surface--the continual suggestion, pensive or passionate, of the shortness of life. This is contrasted with the bloom of the world, and gives new seduction to it--the sense of death and the desire of beauty: the desire of beauty quickened by the sense of death" (528).

Having cleared the ground of those "complex and subtle interests which the mind spins for itself" and made his way forward through the discourse which is the sole route of access to a desire cleanly viewed in the light of day--as opposed to the morbid light of the Paris Morgue--Pater winces with a thrill of anxious urgency. Life is short. Father and uncle having died at forty-five, Pater at twenty-seven may well consider that half of his lifespan is already behind him. In the teeth of the odds, the limits, the opposition, he will have his ecstasy; break into pagan song and issue his proclamation.

In the paragraph which made the transition from the appraisal of Morris' poems to the rhapsodic search for a way out of his predicament that became the "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance*, Pater forged a link between the discoveries of the inductive sciences and his own aesthetic impulses. Whereas the modern spirit demands that poetry apply scientific principles to pressing social problems, modern science has

demonstrated the impossibility of arriving at any fixed principles. Given that state of affairs, Pater responds, "Let us accept the challenge, see what modern philosophy, when it is sincere, really does say about human life and the truth we can attain in it, and the relation of this to the desire of beauty" (Monsman 57).

As Levey comments, the final paragraphs of the 1868 essay, some of the substance of which may first have found expression in Pater's 1868 essay on Fichte's "Ideal Student," "no longer deal with Morris or with poetry; they ask what modern philosophy tells about human life" (96). They answer that the elements of which we are composed receive some clear outline only as an image of the fleeting perceptions to which all our experience is reduced. "To such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream . . . what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off--that continual vanishing away, that strange perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves" (*Renaissance* 196).

In the 1868 essay that sentence is followed by a paragraph omitted from the 1873 "Conclusion":

Such thoughts seem desolate at first; at times all the bitterness of life seems concentrated in them. They bring the image of one washed out beyond the bar in a sea at ebb, losing even his personality, as the elements of which he is composed pass into new combinations. Struggling, as he must, to save himself, it is himself that he loses at every moment. (Monsman 156)

Strangely, the language borrowed from the discourse spawned by the Positive sciences is used both to analyze and to obscure Pater's real predicament, as determined by the defining relations between his material self and the conditions of time, place, and culture. "Struggling, as he must, to save himself, it is himself that he loses at every moment." It is a formulation that might aptly be applied to Clive Durham's condition in Forster's *Maurice*. Pater's "analysis leaves off" with a modern scientific version of Heraclitean flux because, given the

culture of his age, it can go no further without trespassing the limits of what is not only acceptable socially, but thinkable and speakable.

In fact he had already gone too far. Pater was not in a position to exercise the freedom with which Swinburne, who could retreat to his villa, flaunted his contempt for prevailing codes of sexual and religious thought, speech, and behavior, as in the "medieval carol" he sent as a Christmas greeting to Rossetti: "Hark, the herald angels crow/Here's a boy--but not for Joe!" (Levey 110) Pater dropped the version of the 1868 essay retitled "Aesthetic Poetry" from the second and all subsequent editions of *Appreciations* because, as Lionel Johnson reported Pater's explanation, "'There were things in it which some people, pious souls! thought profane, yes! profane'" (Levey 185). Though with his next essay, on Leonardo, Pater began publishing in John Morley's *Fortnightly*, which printed the names of its contributors--including Swinburne, J.A. Symonds, Meredith, and Morris--Pater made public his defiance of the claims of any creed requiring the "sacrifice of any part of [our] experience" at greater risk than many of the other contributors.

Given the constraints of his position at Oxford, struggling to save himself from dissolution on the threshold of self-realization as one of Voltaire's "children of this world," Pater embraces art perforce as the medium of his being. Lest "all redness turn to blood, all water into tears," art will be the outlet for release of that "tension of the nerve" in which the "sensible world comes to one with a re-enforced brilliancy and relief" (Levey 96).

"I don't say you are it but you look it," Lord Queensberry would say to Wilde (Levey 19). In his first "conclusion," Pater articulated the *apologia* for a life on the threshold of self-realization. In choosing art as the medium by which passion could come, "professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to [his] moments as they pass[ed], and simply for those moments' sake," he could celebrate his life in a world from which all impediments to self-realization had been

purged because he had traded a menacing world for a beautiful house. He had exchanged the natural world--that space in the light of day at which he had struggled to arrive in the 1868 essay--for the artifice, not of eternity, but of a sequence of moments "with no before or after" except as an idealized history could contrive. The cruel irony of that celebratory moment is that at the instant the proclamation is issued, it is also a cry of self-denial and imprisonment: I say I am but I am not; simultaneous self-liberation and self-negation. The aesthetic hypothesis is false at its originary foundation. In the instant of its articulation, art for life's sake becomes art for art's sake, for life is confined to art.

Monsman argues that what Pater set out to prove in the "Conclusion" he formed out of the final paragraphs of the 1868 essay was that the "Aesthetic life can actually be a life lived in accord with scientific formulations and that *l'art pour l'art* is premised on the most up-to-date theories" (57). If that were so, the 1873 "Conclusion" would already have been a *dénouement*, for it is quite beside the point. Pater does not care about theories; he cares about the "fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness" (*Renaissance* 198).

The move to embed his desire for the fruit of a quickened consciousness in the language of empirical and cultural relativity does not prove liberating. As the unfolding discourse of *Marius the Epicurean* reveals, the choice of a life in which "Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end" (*Renaissance* 197) confines one to a weary way along which multiplying assaults upon a quickened consciousness trying vainly to prolong the happy effects of the synthetic moment, but unable to sustain its denial of what resists synthesis, make one prey to anxiety, paranoia, and desolation.

The desolation experienced as the result of prolonged solipsism finally drives Marius to seek the comfort of community. The "community" of Christians--fined down to Cornelius and the woman, Cecilia, to whom Marius' intimacy with Cornelius is forfeited--in which Marius seeks to

slake his thirst for human companionship is a counterhegemonic force in the imperial Rome governed by the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. But the party of Christians to which Marius' adversion is a conciliating, though sincere, concession on Pater's part is entrenched in the hegemonic forces governing imperial Britain. Misunderstood where he is not censured, censured or ridiculed where he is understood, a disappointment to more "radical" disciples who could not know the restraints under which he had labored to clear a space for them, Pater reverts--mildly in *Marius*, with greater severity in *Plato and Platonism*--to that imperial system which had upheld his fragile ego integrality at King's School rather than give up the only consolation and *modus vivendi* he has ever known and throw in his lot with the counterhegemonic forces with which Morris aligned himself. By the 1880s, their directions had radically diverged, Pater moving toward *Plato and Platonism*, Morris toward *News from Nowhere*.

Despite Pater's really painful confessions in the *Sunt Lacrimae Rerum* chapter (XXV) of *Marius*, his failure as a poet of prose is, ironically, a failure of identification. The passion of other relations than that between his precarious social identity and his desire of beauty never awakens in him with a "leap" something like the "coming of love." Like Marius, Pater dies still never having crossed the threshold of desire for personal realization into a mature capacity for human intercourse and solidarity. Trapped by his own frustrated interests, as an artist he could only project and incorporate; he could not admit the interests of others and make the connection between his oppression and theirs which would have offered neither sanction nor sanctuary, but access to human community.

Turning away from what did not please--"life, conflict, evil"--Pater failed to see his interests in others who stood in different relations to the modes of production for which the moral and intellectual authorities provided cultural sanction. Nor did the ideologies of Positivism and historicism teach him to look. Historicism

directed him to consider cultural "laws" unanchored in material conditions. Positivism directed him to consider natural laws determining social conditions. Consideration of natural laws brought him to naturalism, and naturalism disposed him to pity.

Not finding his interests addressed in those aspects of Morris' work which might have won for him a new direction closing the gap between Hegel and Comte, he failed to gain access to a system which could have supplied him with the terms of effective revolt. Lacking those terms, he found the pity too painful to bear without recourse to counterhegemonic action. Unable to join ranks with the pitiable, he became merely pitiable himself; like Quasimodo, bewildered and wondering, "why?"

House Beautiful turns out to be Baudelaire's "hospital where every patient is obsessed by the desire of changing beds" (*Spleen* 99) and "appetite, be it for real or ideal" (*Marius the Epicurean* 341) grows cold. "For a moment the whole world seemed to present itself as a hospital of sick persons" (341), Marius writes in his diary.

At last, out of a long suffering, Pater's "moral sense"-- "something new and true, fact or apprehension of fact"--is "educed" in Marius as compassion. The "power of sympathy" is "something to hold by, even in the dissolution of a world, or in that dissolution of self, which is, for every one, no less than the dissolution of the world it represents for him." Pater's account of how Marius arrives at the one "principle, perhaps, to which we may always safely trust"--the capacity for suffering and the capacity for sympathy with it--reveals in very poignant confession just how weary the way has been:

Nearly all of us, I suppose, have had our moments, in which any effective sympathy for us on the part of others has seemed impossible; in which our pain has seemed a stupid outrage upon us, like some overwhelming physical violence, from which we could take refuge, at best, only in some mere general sense of goodwill--somewhere in the world perhaps. And then, to one's surprise, the discovery of that goodwill, if it were only in a not unfriendly animal, may seem to have explained, to have actually justified to us, the fact of our pain. There have been occasions, certainly, when I have felt that if others cared for me as I cared for them, it would be, not so much a consolation, as an equivalent, for what one has lost or

suffered: a realised profit on the summing up of one's accounts: a touching of that absolute ground amid all the changes of phenomena, such as our philosophers have of late confessed themselves quite unable to discover. (349)

At long last a middle ground between mystic love of God and profane sexual love has been touched. Pater has even come so far as to glimpse, as it were from a window, that "To some, perhaps, the necessary conditions of my own life may cause me to be opposed, in a kind of natural conflict, regarding those interests which actually determine the happiness of theirs" (344). Like Lear exposed, Marius begins to sense that he has taken too little heed. Yet still the limits of Positivist thinking are in place; the conflict is conceived as both natural and necessary. And Marius, again like Lear, is too full of pain himself to fling open the door and seek egress from the tragic conditions of his own life.

"On the alert now" for scenes of suffering, he "yet of necessity pass[es] them by on the other side," prays that a "stronger love might arise in [his] heart" (344), and hopes that in some great divine heart "behind the vain show of things" all the suffering might find refuge and recompense. Marius' conviction of "man's radically hopeless condition in the world" (350) leads him to interpret the one imperative of human society as a "standing force of self-pity":

For there is a certain grief in things as they are, in man as he has come to be, as he certainly is, over and above those griefs of circumstance which are in a measure removable--some inexplicable shortcoming, or misadventure, on the part of nature itself--death, and old age as it must needs be, and that watching for their approach, which makes every stage of life like a dying over and over again. Almost all death is painful, and in everything that comes to an end a touch of death, and therefore of wretched coldness struck home to one, of remorse, of loss and parting, of outraged attachments. Given faultless men and women, given a perfect state of society which should have no need to practice on man's susceptibilities for its own selfish ends, adding one turn more to the wheel of the great rack for its own interest or amusement, there would still be this evil in the world, of a certain necessary sorrow and desolation, felt, just in proportion to the moral, or nervous perfection men have attained to. And what we need in the world, over against that, is a certain permanent and general power of compassion--humanity's standing force of self-pity--as an elementary ingredient of our social atmosphere, if we are to live in it at all. (348)

Again a fatalism reflecting Pater's own defeats--possibilities foreclosed and a series of incremental deaths--drives him to seek transcendent escape from the "griefs of circumstance" in an aesthetic *dénouement*.

Finding in the fact of compassion a point of contact with "the eternal," Marius' "moral sense" is satisfied in the moment it is touched. The fact of compassion "removes that appearance of unkindness in the soul of things themselves, and assures us that not everything has been in vain" (349-50). That thought recalls the synthetic moment when "by some gracious accident--it was on a journey--all things fell into a more perfect harmony than is their wont. Everything seemed to be, for a moment, after all, almost for the best" (350).

This is the Modernism of Henri Bergson, and it comes very close to returning to the ideology of High Romanticism. It is a vertiginous place, a tightrope of moments strung out in time and space with dizzying chasms in between. The anxiety it breeds is ultimately unbearable. The human "unit" so suspended must needs be borne up, finally, collapsing out of sheer nervous exhaustion, by the net of things as they are. Terrified of falling, the tightrope walker clings at bottom to the very net from which he has sought to escape.

. . . it was of perfection that Marius . . . had been really thinking all the time: a narrow perfection it might be objected, the perfection of but one part of his nature--his capacities of feeling, of exquisite physical impressions, of an imaginative sympathy--but still, a true perfection of those capacities, wrought out to their utmost degree. . . . He too is an economist: he hopes, by that "insight" of which the old Cyrenaics made so much, by skillful apprehension of the conditions of spiritual success as they really are, the special circumstances of the occasion with which he has to deal, the special felicities of his own nature, to make the most, in no mean or vulgar sense, of the few years of life. . . . He has a strong apprehension . . . of the beauty of the visible things around him; their fading, momentary, graces and attractions. His natural susceptibility in this direction, enlarged by experience, seems to demand of him an almost exclusive pre-occupation with the aspects of things; with their esthetic character, as it is called--their revelations to the eye and the imagination: not so much because those aspects of them yield him the largest amount of enjoyment, as because to be occupied, in this way, with the esthetic or imaginative side of things, is to be in real contact with those elements of his own nature, and of theirs, which, for

him at least, are matter of the most real kind of apprehension. As other men are concentrated upon truths of number, for instance, or on business, or it may be on the pleasures of appetite, so he is wholly bent on living in that full stream of refined sensation. And in the prosecution of this love of beauty, he claims an entire personal liberty, liberty of heart and mind, liberty, above all, from what may seem conventional answers to first questions. (218-20)

This illusory liberty, what Conrad identifies in *Lord Jim* as the "longer scope of cable in the uneasy anchorage of life" reeled out to "your imaginative people" (168), is a prescription for insanity. Lest the cable break and the psyche snap, Pater hangs onto the ropes of empire just as Clarissa Dalloway does:

But, without him there is a venerable system of sentiment and idea, widely extended in time and place, in a kind of impregnable possession of human life--a system, which, like some other great products of the conjoint efforts of human mind through many generations, is rich in the world's experience; so that, in attaching oneself to it, one lets in a great tide of that experience, and makes, as it were with a single step, a great experience of one's own, and with great consequent increase to one's sense of colour, variety, and relief, in the spectacle of men and things. The mere sense that one belongs to a system--an imperial system of organization--has, in itself, the expanding power of a great experience, as some have felt who have been admitted from narrower sects into the communion of the Catholic church; or as the old Roman citizen felt. . . .

A wonderful order, actually in possession of human life! --grown inextricably through and through it; penetrating into its laws, its very language, its mere habits of decorum, in a thousand half-conscious ways: yet still felt to be, in part, an unfulfilled ideal; and, as such, awakening hope, and an aim identical with the one only consistent aspiration of mankind! In the apprehension of that, just then, Marius seemed to have joined company once more with his own old self; to have overtaken on the road the pilgrim who had come to Rome, with absolute sincerity, on the search for perfection. It defined not so much a change of practice, as of sympathy--a new departure, an expansion, of sympathy. It involved, certainly, some curtailment of his liberty, in concession to the actual manner, the distinctions, the enactments of that great crowd of admirable spirits, who have elected so, and not otherwise, in their conduct of life, and are not here to give one, so to term it, an "indulgence." But then, under the supposition of their disapproval, no roses would ever seem worth plucking again. The authority they exercised was like that of classic taste--an influence so subtle, yet so real, as defining the loyalty of the scholar; or of some beautiful and venerable ritual, in which every observance is become spontaneous and almost mechanical, yet is found, the more carefully one considers it, to have a reasonable significance and a natural history.

And Marius saw that he would be but an inconsistent Cyrenaic, mistaken in his estimate of values, of loss and

gain, and untrue to the well-considered economy of life which he had brought with him to Rome--that some drops of the great cup would fall to the ground--if he did not make that concession. . . . (220-21)

Recognizing that in the "perfection of but one part of his nature" is no "wholeness," no "harmonious balance" of "aesthetic, religious, and practical concerns," Pater shifts his focus from what Bergson would call the intensive to the extensive manifold of perception, seeking to achieve, not unity of being, but homeostasis. He will be a well-adjusted part of the whole.

At the moment of complete capitulation and incorporation, a firmer sublimation is forced than Pater had ever before felt constrained to achieve. Submitting to the "manner, the distinctions, the enactments of that great crowd of admirable spirits" who have, after all, civilized Europe in the cultural evolution "identical with the one only consistent aspiration of mankind"--the preservation and propagation of the species in a reasonable "natural history" of social progress--Pater consents to sublimation of the libidinal instinct in the drive toward imperial conquest. Accepting for the moment the authorities' denial of "indulgence," he is prepared to trade in an economy of scale: "under the supposition of their disapproval, no roses would ever seem worth plucking again."

Marius' "apprehension" of a "wonderful order" defines "not so much a change of practice, as of sympathy," however. In exchange for "some curtailment of his liberty," he receives, not access to the system to which he belongs, but only an increase to his "sense of colour, variety, and relief, in the spectacle of men and things." It is merely a larger world through which he moves as a spectator. He has traded a smaller for a larger sublimation, and acquired merely a larger self-negation, a larger abnegation of capacities, a larger and more complex confinement. "Struggling, as he must, to save himself," he only loses more of himself; more of experience is sacrificed to the system which claims entire possession of him.

This reconsidered economy by which repressed desire finds the receptacle for unspent energies not in art but in the great cup of an imperial system does not yield an increased profit, a larger fruit of experience, or a greater potency. The "great tide of experience" let in by Marius' decision to accept his place in an "imperial system of organization" is not experience, but a spectacle in which he is unable to participate except as a functional unit: in himself incomplete, impotent, and dehumanized. These are the terms of Pater's defeat; likewise the terms of Baudelaire's "determined resistance."

In the *Sunt Lacrimae Rerum* chapter of *Marius*, Pater records the foreclosure of possibilities and proliferation of deaths consequent upon the limitations of the aesthetic mode of life in view of the insurmountable "griefs of circumstance." The threshold discovered in the discourse of "Poems by William Morris" is never crossed. Lacking systematic terms with which to battle the "pedestrian world" which confined him, Pater could only suffer under its weight. In retreat, he could not muster a determined resistance to a world--"life, conflict, evil"--he declined to be "braced" by. He forfeits the *puissance* of Romantic irony unleashed by the fierce tension which both ravaged Baudelaire's life and informed the triumph of his work.

Drawing support precisely from unrelenting confrontation of historical reality, Baudelaire's poetry triumphs where Pater's fails because its force is sustained by positive resistance. Reactionary, and idiosyncratic, as Baudelaire's Catholicism is, it signifies his retention of the categories by which to identify the *mal* underlying the malaise and to write a poetry that contradicted fact in such a way as to release the revolutionary potential of the aesthetic mode of perception.

Pater has forfeited those categories to the Positivist-historicist ideology by which the philosophers, "amid all the changes of phenomena," confess themselves "quite unable to discover" any fixed principles or "absolute ground" of critique. Unable to discover and get hold of a principle in history to support his yearning for emancipation of the

life of the body, Pater's aesthetic hypothesis, tested out in his imaginary portraits, collapses under the weight of a historical reality the ground of which he has been unable to find in the ideology of empirical and cultural relativity.

In each of their lives, for one brief period, both Pater and Baudelaire touched the threshold of a materialist aesthetic: Pater in "Poems by William Morris," Baudelaire much more fully in his Preface to Pierre Dupont's *Chants et chansons*. Given the chastening and subduing backlash Pater felt, however, and Baudelaire's experience of the backturn of a once militant bourgeoisie on the proletariat in the face of whose "rival claims" it compromised its revolutionary principles, turning hypocrite under the régime of Louis Napoleon, both retreated to an aesthetic of the artificial, the *inutile*, and the sterile: *l'art pour l'art*. Following Napoleon's coup d'état of December 1851, in March of 1852, Baudelaire wrote to his guardian, Ancelle, that the "second of December had physically de-politized" him (Hyslop 50). It had the same effect on his aesthetic.

But for a few years, catching fire from the rhetoric of Proudhon and the revolutionary activity upsurging around him, Baudelaire was able to locate his aesthetic in the life of a vigorous body politic. He met Pierre Dupont, son of a Lyons blacksmith, through his friend the painter, Emile Deroy, and wrote the Preface for the 1851 edition of Dupont's *Chants et chansons*. There he identifies the importance of Dupont's poetry in the "public sentiments" of which it "is a symptom, and of which Dupont has become the echo." Briefly, he credits the "Romantic School" with the performance of certain services. "It brought us back to the truth of the image, it destroyed academic conventions," and it made linguistic innovations undeserving of the pedants' scorn (Hyslop 51). But, he goes on quickly to say, "by its very principle, the Romantic insurrection was doomed to a short life," for by "excluding morality and often even passion the puerile Utopia of the school of art for art's sake was inevitably sterile" (Hyslop 52).

In contradistinction, Dupont's is the work of a poet "who is in continuous communication with the men of his time" (Hyslop 52) and "must make a living with his tools." Dupont's first book of poems, *Les Deux anges*, for which a subscription was got up, was used to buy a replacement for him in the infantry. "Thus," Baudelaire writes, "Pierre Dupont began what may be called his public life by buying himself out of slavery with his poetry" (Hyslop 55). Thereafter Dupont wrested his freedom from the Academy "as he had done with the banking establishment" where he had been imprisoned in employment. When he went on to publish *Les paysans, chants rustiques*, says Baudelaire,

Everyone was grateful to the poet for having finally introduced a little truth and naturalness in these songs destined to delight many an evening party. It was no longer that indigestible mixture of sugar and cream with which uneducated families indiscreetly stuff the memories of their young daughters. It was a truthful mingling of naive melancholy and boisterous, innocent joy with, here and there, robust accents of working-class virility.

And when Baudelaire heard *Le Chant des ouvriers* which was published in 1846, he was "awed and moved": "We had been waiting so many years for some solid, real poetry!" (Hyslop 56)

Having heard in *Le Chant des ouvriers* "that sighing and languishing throng to which the earth owes its marvels, which feels flowing in its veins an ardent red blood, which looks long and sadly at the sunshine and shadows of the great parks and, for its only comfort and consolation, bawls at the top of its voice its song of salvation: *Let us love one another . . .*" (Hyslop 56), Baudelaire finds there "Dupont's great secret" and an answer to the question, "what explains the admiration that surrounds him?" They are his "love of virtue and humanity," his "boundless enthusiasm for the Republic," and "something else." The "something else" is a quality Baudelaire never celebrated in his poetry or his criticism except during the few short years between 1846 and 1852: "It is joy!" (Hyslop 59)

With these qualities, the substance of his "great secret," Dupont "first broke open the door." "Axe in hand," he "cut the chains of the drawbridge of the [academic] fortress" and made "popular poetry

acceptable." Under the influence of the public sentiments of which Dupont's poetry was a symptom and an echo, Baudelaire is not an *ennuyé*. He is inspirited to bid Romantic melancholy be gone:

Take flight then, deceptive shades of René, of Obermann, and of Werther; vanish into the mists of nowhere, monstrous creations of idleness and solitude; like the Gadarene swine, go and plunge yourselves, sheep attacked by the romantic vertigo, into the depths of enchanted forests, whence you were drawn by enemy faeries. The spirit of action no longer leaves room for you among us. (Hyslop 60)

Three years after he had stood on a street corner brandishing a rifle and shouting, "Down with General Aupick!" Baudelaire still has sufficient energy to defy the killing will of the father. He is still sufficiently emancipated to feel that "Loud imprecations, deep sighs of hope, cries of never-ending encouragement are beginning to create hope," and that "All this will turn into literature, poetry and song, in spite of all resistance." It does in Baudelaire's Preface, and the aesthetic it engendered there:

Great is the destiny of poetry!

Joyous or sad, it always bears in itself a divine Utopian character. It runs the risk of no longer being poetry, if it does not constantly contradict fact. In prison it becomes revolt; in the hospital window the burning hope of being cured; in the dilapidated and dirty attic it adorns itself like a faery of luxury and elegance; it not only records, but it redeems. Everywhere it becomes the negation of iniquity.

Go singing into the future, providential poet; your songs are the luminous reflection of popular hopes and beliefs! (Hyslop 61)

Far cry from the aesthetic of a prismatic autonomy Pater articulated in "Winckelmann," what Baudelaire sings here is an aesthetic of revolutionary practice. Though the second of December "physically depolitized" him, and other voices and sentiments than those of Dupont's *paysans* and *ouvriers* were echoed in his reversion to a residual ideology of aristocratic Catholicism, that fall-back position can be traced to the "something else" emerging here.

As the dominant "men of his time" changed, and the "popular hopes and beliefs" were diverted from the course of the 1848 Revolution, the ideals sung by Dupont lost their sway. The course of Baudelaire's

aesthetic was diverted from a visionary realism to a visionary idealism. An aesthetic of revolutionary practice precluded a realism limited to "servile imitation of nature" which was "not a new method of creation, but a minute description of trivial details." Under the conditions of Napoleon III's *régime*, Baudelaire was forced to redefine poetry as "what is most real, what is completely true only in another world. This world [is] a hieroglyphic dictionary" (Hyslop 21).

The crucial question raised by that redefinition, of course, is "where?" Where is the other world: in the past, the future, or an eternal present transcending historical time? Baudelaire was too much the realist, the analyst, the critic, to be satisfied with Hugo's facile confidence in human progress. Seeing in his lifetime after the second of December no evidence of real progress as he understood it--"diminution of the signs of original sin"--he yet sought the stuff of poetry in all three realms: the lost Eden of the past; a future reached for by unquenchable desire; and a spiritual transcendence made possible by the tenacity of the imagination. Despite the redefinition he was forced to make, however, his commitment to the heroic possibilities of modern life reflected an inescapable drive to find it, as well as its "hieroglyphs," in the present world too.

Baudelaire's commitment to the epic as well as lyric possibilities of modern life kept him alert to the "great secret" of poetry everywhere. In the *Salon de 1846* he had encouraged the artists of his day to emulate the brilliant visionary realism of Balzac. If for Baudelaire "dandyism was a means of cultivating beauty in 'natural' and hence imperfect man," and "art was a means of transforming the banalities and ugliness of the natural world into beauty" (Hyslop 14), both were more than a defensive social posture or a reactionary throwback to strutting, or strolling, aristocracy. They were the idealist revision of the revolutionary aesthetic which enabled Baudelaire to say to the city of Paris in his unfinished epilogue to *Les Fleurs du mal*: "You have given me your mud and I have turned it into

gold." That the poet who had done that was reduced, by the time of his brief exile in Belgium, when he was writing *Mon coeur mis à nu*, to a state of mind defined by the sacrament of the toilet and the rosary of francs, testifies just how murderous to the aspirations of a lyric poet the Second Empire was.

Having lost all points of reference outside his own stream of consciousness except the system which both confined and ultimately defined him, Pater clung to the ropes of empire. Baudelaire retained in a theological system the points of reference--a transcendent vantage within history--by which to resist confinement to a merely psychic mobility. Thus he retained also the strength to look steadily at the horrors which resisted synthesis in happy literary effects, no matter how violent or shattering the psychosomatic shock.

Enraged by the pain of the conflicts by which he was torn, he was able to identify his own suffering, anger, and interests in the other figures moving through the crowd. Though he speaks of the intoxication of the crowd, that intoxication is only the arousal of desire to overcome the overwhelming sense of isolation felt in the crowd. Deformed, befouled, weary, but also eloquent, courageous, resourceful, the bodies and faces of the proletariat remain visible to him. *Sparagmos* of the bourgeoisie, the members of the proletariat are emblematic of his own division and dismemberment.

Symptomatic of that division is the splitting of his theology into two gods: the one who redeems from original, "natural" sin, and the one who instigates crime. If the first is the savior he ultimately clings to, final refuge in poverty and sickness, the latter becomes the alternative muse to the *Chants et chansons* of Dupont. In the years of *ennui* setting in after the second of December, Baudelaire's aesthetic finds its symbolic embodiment in Satan--"as Milton conceived him." As the desire for escape is an inversion of homesickness for a lost Eden, Baudelaire's visionary idealism is an inversion of the materialist aesthetic which came briefly into being around 1846. When the ideals of

Dupont are forced underground by the bourgeoisie, as the proletariat was forced underground beneath the gratings of the Tuileries dungeons, they become Satanic. When the god of love is usurped by a murderous order, he must be recouped by the god of revolt.

Chapter IV. Hospice: The Immense Nausea of Advertisements

Life is a hospital where every patient is obsessed by the desire of changing beds. One would like to suffer opposite the stove, another is sure he would get well beside the window.

--Charles Baudelaire, "Anywhere Out of the World," *Paris Spleen*

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table. . . .

--T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

I have lost my passion: why should I need to keep it
Since what is kept must be adulterated?
I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch:
How should I use them for your closer contact?

These with a thousand small deliberations
Protract the profit of their chilled delirium,
Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,
With pungent sauces, multiply variety
In a wilderness of mirrors. What will the spider do,
Suspend its operations, will the weevil
Delay? . . .

--T.S. Eliot, "Gerontion"

What will the aesthete do when the beautiful house of an idealized history turns out to be a hospital where every patient is obsessed by the desire of changing beds? Suspend the operations of his desire? It was Goethe who first diagnosed the problem in those terms. Irving Babbitt factored it into his penetrating analysis of "Romantic Melancholy." "All these poets," Goethe confided to Eckermann of the Romantics writing in 1830,

write as though they were ill, and as though the whole world were a hospital. . . . Every one of them in writing tries to be more desolate than all the others. This is really an abuse of poetry, which has been given to make man satisfied with the world and with his lot. But the present generation is afraid of all solid energy; its mind is at ease and sees poetry only in weakness. I have found a good expression to vex these gentlemen. I am going to call their poetry hospital poetry. (Babbitt 793)

That Goethe should call for the exercise of "solid energy" (much as Arnold would do at the end of the century) in the creation of poetry understood as a *donnée* whose purpose is to make man satisfied with his lot in the world is indicative of the extent to which the project of disseminating culture has not yet been raised "infinitely above the Athenian level," to echo John Morley. Firmly ensconced in the state apparatus as well as the artistic and intellectual life of Saxe-Weimar, Goethe cannot yet conceive of the project in terms of democratization. What he observes in the Romantics of 1830, however, from his own position in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, is telling. Hospital poetry issues from poets who "write as though they were ill," representatives of a "generation . . . afraid of all solid energy," a collective mind which is "at ease and sees poetry only in weakness." It is the work of a generation of poets who, like Pater, have been chastened and subdued. They are writing at a time when the so-called principle of legitimacy has been reconstructed as the principle governing the disposition of the several states of Europe.

It is worth remembering here that Goethe has been claimed by both Romantics and would-be neo-Classicists. As everyone knows, Goethe was himself a reluctant Romantic, who had to be revealed to himself as a Romantic by Schiller. Like the Modernists, he started out as a Romantic, producing in *The Sorrows of Young Werther* one of the most virulent strains of hospital literature ever let loose, then defined himself as an anti-Romantic over the course of his career. His criticism of hospital poetry comes just two years before his death in 1832. His reconstruction of a Classicism toppled less than half a century before, along with the heads of the *ancien régime* in France, testifies just how relative to the machinations of the state the autonomy of culture really is. That is the feature of historical dialectic which Pater's Hegelian conception of history as a harmonious revolutionism, a blending of opposites, fails to recognize. "The best

of the poetry of [Goethe's] maturity tends," Babbitt writes, "like that of the ancients, to elevate and console" (793).

At the beginning of the century, Goethe had done what T.E. Hulme called for at the end, and what Eliot signalled in the work of Yeats and Joyce. Pater had read Goethe as well as Winckelmann. He took the same course Goethe took: away from the sorrows, disappointments, and languorous discontentments of lived experience; toward the power of myth and myth-making to "elevate and console." The turn was not a renunciation of what Babbitt aptly phrases "infinite indeterminate desire" (792), however.

The turn toward myth which Pater makes in his imaginary portraits is driven by the same frustrated search for satisfaction that had directed his quest for the "superlative thrill" of the heightened moment he had sought to situate in an idealized history. Still suffering from "homolepsy," failing in "pursuit of the 'impossible he'" (Babbitt 792), Pater *cum* Marius capitulates to the march of the weevil. Imperial legions overtake him like a plague. He sickens and dies.

Having died in history, Pater is resurrected in myth. It is not death as such that he dodges, however, but the death of "effective desire." In myth he seeks renewed vitality of desire. That possibility is also foreclosed, and with results more disastrous than mere fever, weakening, and death.

Eliot had no use for Pater. He dismissed Pater as incapable of sustained reasoning. Had he read Pater's forays into the "mythical method" with more insight, he might have injected a cautionary note into the November 1923 review of *Ulysses* which he issued in the *Dial* as an advertisement for his own Modernist version of neo-Classical restoration. "In using the myth," Eliot wrote,

in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. . . . It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. It is a method already adumbrated by Mr. Yeats, and of the need for which I believe Mr. Yeats to have been the first contemporary to be conscious. It is a

method for which the horoscope is auspicious. Psychology (such as it is, and whether our reaction to it be comic or serious), ethnology, and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art, toward that order and form which Mr. Aldington so earnestly desires. And only those who have won their own discipline in secret and without aid, in a world which offers very little assistance to that end, can be of any use in furthering this advance.

As Robert Langbaum explains,³⁷ Eliot is "[t]aking issue with Richard Aldington's condemnation of Joyce as a 'prophet of chaos.'" Langbaum wishes to emphasize that Eliot calls *Ulysses* "the most important expression which the modern age has found" precisely because Joyce has shown us how to be 'classical' under modern conditions. He has given us the materials of modern disorder and shown us how to impose order upon them" (10-11).

The break with narrative method, then, coincides with a departure from history for myth as metahistory. The mythical method amounts to systematic distortion of history so as to make it expressive--not of the collective experience of a human community, its hopes, fears, and shared knowledge of how to negotiate the conditions of its survival--but of an order won by the discipline of an individual talent whose quest for perfection of form is a "secret errand." The Modernists cannot be said to have been going, in the secret of their disciplines, on the same errand. Certainly one cannot confuse Eliot's errand with Joyce's.

What we are concerned with here is the errand which led Pater out of the march of imperial history back to a very different sort of rose garden from the one Eliot finally chose to enshrine as the ultimate order of human experience. That order would serve as a paradigm both for what R.P. Blackmur would call the "rationally constructed imagination" and for a social order endorsed as the objective correlative of Eliot's conservative, Anglo-Catholic ideology.

³⁷In *The Poetry of Experience: The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition* (U of Chicago P, 1985).

Beyond that, and more importantly, we are concerned with the fact that Pater's search for liberation from a repressive order brought him to the brink of holocaust. From that brink he recoiled in horror to the safety of his monastic cell. Finding no poetry in a weakness so extreme as to make him susceptible to complete ego disintegration, he fell back in step with a Dorian mode in *Plato and Platonism*.

The implications of his failure to find in myth or myth remaking a ground for any other resolution of the conflict raised by frustrated desire than protofascism are of enormous consequence for Modernism. Irrespective of their diverse errands, none of the Modernists was able to discover, in private metahistory, a ground for any other outcome in history than fascism.³⁸ In other words, all flights of private fancy lead to Rome: the imperial self as mirror of the imperial center.

The spider spinning his web of desire becomes a weevil consuming the objects of desire. Art as projection--the mythical method--becomes the basis for an aesthetic of fascism: desire unrestrained, degenerating only too quickly into sadomasochistic perversion. There is no way out of the vicious circle of mutual exploitation but emergence from the infantile, imperial self into a community of shared interests, intersubjective engagement in the processes of human provisioning. Unless or until those shared interests are recognized, one man's gratification will be another man's objectification, commodification--even consumption.

All this Pater trembles on the verge of understanding by the time he writes "Apollo in Picardy" in the fall of 1893, less than a year before his death in July 1894. But to comprehend how Pater arrived at recognition of the futility of using the mythical method to restore vitality and coherence to modern experience, one must track the history of his discourse in the imaginary portraits.

The first of Pater's portraits, of course, was the piece originally titled "The House and the Child" which Pater sent to Sir

³⁸Futurism is a case in point.

George Grove, editor of *Macmillan's Magazine*, in April 1878. In it, we know, Pater saw the "germinating, original, source, specimen of all [his] imaginative work." It appeared five years after *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* had been received, to Pater's surprise and dismay, as the work of a "demoralising moraliser," in the phrase attributed to Jowett.

The insidious power of Pater's dark poems in prose stemmed from their expression of his longing for certain features of experience discernible in the culture of the Renaissance: "the care for physical beauty, the worship of the body, the breaking down of those limits which the religious system of the middle age imposed on the heart and the imagination" (Levey 136). Previous to their publication, as Levey neatly observes, "Only occasional flashes of exasperated wit or repartée [had] hinted at how violently [Pater] rejected almost everything to which the routine of his existence constrained him" at Oxford (137). With the revelation of just what sort of freedom Pater preferred to the conventional morality of Victorian Christendom, Oxford was scandalized and Pater was mortified. Though he published numerous essays and reviews in the interval, among them the pieces comprising *Greek Studies* and *Appreciations*, no other book saw the light of day for twelve years.

In "The Child in the House," however, Pater had found a way both of exploring why he was the way he was and of writing about what fascinated him without giving offense. Despite the freedom afforded by the rubric of imaginary portrait, Pater wished his first imaginary portrait to be published anonymously. Having made that first delicate probe in "Child," he was able to bring the germ to full development in *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas*.

Even as *Marius* recorded his own death--first in the person of Flavius, then in the person of Marius--it effected his social redemption. Published in 1885, the book was a success, running to a second edition after only four months. The battle won with himself in completing it gave Pater the confidence to leave Oxford for London. He

kept his fellowship (having earlier resigned his lectureship), however, and the necessity of shuttling back and forth between London and Oxford served as an excuse for avoiding unwanted social engagements during his residence at No. 12 Earl's Terrace, Kensington. He retained the Kensington house for eight years, until the summer of 1893.

Oddly enough, Pater's second imaginary portrait, "A Prince of Court Painters," was published only a few months after Pater's move to the city where he might, for the first time, actually cut a figure resembling the trim forms he had admired as a boy at Enfield. Many people remarked the difference between his appearance in London and at Oxford, and especially the faintly military look about him in his top-hat, dog-skin gloves, and gold-topped umbrella. I say oddly, though, because the portrait does not bode well for Pater's new life in the metropolis. Of the court painter Antony Watteau, Pater has the sister of his student write in the journal by which his story is told,

Himself really of the old time . . . he dignifies, by what in him is neither more nor less than a profound melancholy, the essential insignificance of what he wills to touch in all that [gallant world of powdered ladies and fine cavaliers], transforming its mere pettiness into grace. . . . For in truth Antony Watteau is still the mason's boy, and deals with that world under a fascination, of the nature of which he is half-conscious methinks. . . . You see him growing ever more and more meagre, as he goes through the world and its applause. . . . He will never overcome his early training; and these light things will possess for him always a kind of representative or borrowed worth, as characterising that impossible or forbidden world which the mason's boy saw through the closed gateways of the enchanted garden. Those trifling and petty graces, the insignia to him of that nobler world of aspiration and idea, even now that he is aware, as I conceive, of their true littleness, bring back to him, by the power of association, all the old magical exhilaration of his dream--his dream of a better world than the real one. (*Imaginary Portraits* 256)

At the very outset of his London residence, Pater seems to have brooded over the futility of an attempt to escape his condition. "He has been a sick man all his life," the portrait concludes. "He was always a seeker after something in the world that is there in no satisfying measure, or not at all" (262).

Though the success of *Marius* repaired Pater's reputation, consolidated his position as a man of letters, gave him the courage to

quit Oxford, and stimulated the continuous literary activity by which he quietly became famous over the next five years, it did not avert the blow that came when he was passed over for the Slade Professorship of Fine Art after Ruskin finally resigned. Sir Hubert von Herkomer, a German-born Associate of the Royal Academy who had founded the Herkomer School of Art, held the Professorship for the duration of Pater's life. But while Sir Hubert was occupying the Professorship, Pater was using his new-felt freedom to visit the National and other art galleries.

Levey notes that "virtually a rush . . . of interest in painting . . . seems to follow the move from Oxford" (175). According to Thomas Wright, it was a visit to the Dulwich gallery, where the single work by Watteau accessible to public view in England, *Les Plaisirs du ball*, was on exhibit, which prompted Pater to write the portrait. But as the mentor of Jean-Baptiste Pater, Watteau had long been a part of Pater's imaginative life; and the portrait offers another occasion for Pater to indulge in a mixture of reverie, wish-fulfillment, and confession like that which characterized his first.

Coming as it does at the beginning of Pater's stay in London, it makes for a disturbing prophecy. "A Prince of Court Painters," subtitled "Extracts from an Old French Journal," is indeed a piece of hospital literature. With it we exchange Baudelaire's metaphor of life as a hospital where every patient is obsessed by the desire of changing beds for the metaphor of life as an issueless, captive, circling flight. Jean-Baptiste Pater's sister writes in her journal:

I am just returned from early Mass. I lingered long after the office was ended, watching, pondering how in the world one could help a small bird which had flown into the church but could find no way out again. I suspect it will remain there, fluttering round and round distractedly, far up under the arched roof, till it dies exhausted. I seem to have heard of a writer who likened man's life to a bird passing just once only, on some winter night, from window to window, across a cheerfully-lighted hall. The bird, taken captive by the ill-luck of a moment, retracing its issueless circle till it expires within the close vaulting of that great stone church--human life may be like that bird too! (244)

With that central metaphor of the portrait, too, we are given Pater's corroboration of the critique offered by Baudelaire's "determined

resistance" to "ontological floating." Pater cites both Watteau and his student, Jean-Baptiste Pater, for their inability to produce truly great art. The student never equals the master. Except in moments quite literally of panic, when J.-B. Pater is animated by sudden fear of poverty, he is capable only of mimesis:

He approaches that [delicate] life [of Paris], and all its pretty nothingness, from a level no higher than its own; and beginning just where Antony Watteau leaves off in disdain, produces a solid and veritable likeness of it and of its ways.
(252)

But the master is dissatisfied with his own work as well, because in it he has idealized the images of a world he despises. Despite the purity, the light, and the grace with which he has infused his scenes of aristocratic life, his visions are revealed as inadequate, though they are all the rage in Paris and at court.

Watteau is the son of a provincial mason. From the beginning his talent was a "marvellous tact of omission . . . in dealing with the vulgar reality seen from one's . . . window." Born and raised in the now French but once Flemish village of Valenciennes, he had a knack for sketching a scene "to the life, but with a kind of grace." With remarkable ease, he can make "trite old Harlequin, Clown, and Columbine seem like people in some fairyland" (238). J.-B. Pater's sister notes in her journal, however: "he has, my father thinks, too little self-approval for ultimate success. He is apt, in truth, to fall out too hastily with himself and what he produces." It is the very "tact of omission" that makes his work facile--graceful, but lacking in real vitality. Watteau sketches what he desires, for the "rudeness of his home has turned his feeling for even the simpler graces of life into a physical want, like hunger or thirst," which, the diarist considers, "might come to greed" (239). He "overvalues these things" perhaps.

The obscure village and its quiet ways cannot hold him long. Watteau's knack for ornamenting the world gains him access to the "delicate enjoyments of the . . . wealthy and refined." When he writes his parents, he tries to soften the contrast between his new life and

"that bald existence of theirs in his old home." But the diarist discerns that what the letter "really discloses" is a "life, agitated, exigent, unsatisfying!" As Watteau's "gift expands," so does his "incurable restlessness." It seems the only real gratification afforded by his success is the "thought of the independence it has purchased him so that he can escape from one lodging-place to another" (246).

When Watteau returns home for a visit, he stays not with his old parents but with the Pater family. It is apparent that he "hasn't yet put off . . . his distant and preoccupied manner." Pater is at pains to clarify that that reserve, "the same to every one," is "certainly not through pride in his success." It is "rather as if, with all that success, life and its daily social routine were somewhat of a burden to him" (247).

What he values, after all, is not the "dainty world" he has been "privileged to enter." And he has "but little relish for his own works," which J.-B. Pater's sister has "so thirst[ed] to see" (246). When he undertakes to ornament the walls of her family's sitting room, she is at last able to understand "what it is he enjoys, what he selects, by preference, from all that various world we pass our lives in." Aside from that "wonderful lightness which is one of the claims of his work," she is struck by the "purity in the forms and colours of things" (249). She has misgivings, however, about whether the actual life of Paris can be as pure as its relish for Watteau's work would suggest.

The message conveyed by the presence of the *Monseigneur le Prince de Cambrai* at vespers in the Cambrai cathedral seems to confirm her doubts. "Omnia vanitas! he seems to say, yet with a profound resignation, which makes the things we are most of us so fondly occupied with look petty enough" (249). By "natural gift and the favour of heaven," the monseigneur is a "true *grand seigneur* or *grand monarque*." Though he might have "made his own all that life has to bestow" (250), he has passed his life in a quiet dignity of provincial exile. He was

never to be seen at court, and the diarist speculates that "Great King Lewis" himself might have been jealous of him as a natural superior.

Likewise she wonders whether Watteau might have been happier--as might she--if he had stayed at home. For his "discontent with himself . . . keeps pace with his fame." His fame has come of his talent for painting "so excellently" what he despises. Like the grand ecclesiastical *seigneur* in exile, Watteau has a natural grace transcending rank. It allows him to understand the "delicate life of Paris." "Those coquetries, those vain and perishable graces, can be rendered so perfectly," J.-B. Pater's sister writes, "only through an intimate understanding of them." But for Watteau, "to understand must be to despise them." The trouble is, "he nevertheless undergoes their fascination. Hence that discontent with himself, which keeps pace with his fame" (251).

As with "Child in the House" and "Emerald Uthwart," it is impossible to separate the strands here of deliberate fiction, brooding reverie, autobiographical confession, and existential hypothesis--wonderings not only what became of Watteau, but what will become of Pater. Suffice it to say that the identification between Pater and the characters in the portrait is strong. Again, how veiled the confession is depends on how conscious Pater was of the process he was describing. When he has his narrative persona pinpoint Watteau's problem--"For him, to understand must be to despise them; while . . . he nevertheless undergoes their fascination"--he inserts a parenthetical suggestion: "(I think I know why)" (251). He does not enlarge upon it, however, which leads one to wonder whether he actually does, though it should be obvious.

Why Watteau undergoes the fascination of those petty graces and coquetries of high society is as obvious as the popularity of *Lives of the Rich and Famous*: the appeal of beauty, the money which protects it, and sex. It's the appeal of Brideshead and Sebastian Flyte for the moneyless artist, Charles Ryder. (Waugh's father was among Pater's

admirers during the London period.) Even F. Scott Fitzgerald, no mental giant, was able to figure out what the gold in Daisy Buchanan's golden voice quite literally was. But neither Pater nor his narrator seems quite able to name the fact of class envy. Pater needs to mystify it because he cannot bring himself to expose so baldly what keeps him captive in flight: desire for a "vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty."

Like the court painter with whom he identifies in the portrait, Pater endeavors to transcend it with those infusions of light, purity, and grace. Just so Lady Marchmain endeavors to justify and transcend it with injections of light, purity, and grace filtered through her stained-glass theology; elements which sanctify it at the same time that they suck the real, pleasurable life out of it. (A "real femme fatale," Sebastian calls her; "she killed whatever she touched." The combination of piety, wealth, and power gave her the Midas touch.) The result of those endeavors for Watteau is art comprised of idealizing distortions which, however appealing, are false. Its "tact of omission," moreover, generates the old anxiety. What is left out makes for a peculiar feeling of menace: reality may break in and shatter the artifice of tranquility.

Pater's narrator seems only partially conscious of that dynamic when she writes in her journal,

Only, as I gaze upon those windless afternoons, I find myself always saying to myself involuntarily, 'The evening will be a wet one.' The storm is always brooding through the massy splendour of the trees, above those sun-dried glades or lawns, where delicate children may be trusted thinly clad; and the secular trees themselves will hardly outlast another generation. (255)

Pater cannot escape from aesthetic confinement, or rid himself of the anxiety it breeds, because he cannot bring himself to name the forces whose fascination he undergoes. To do so would be to shatter his defenses against an insidious shame. He reverts to the aesthetic formula which represents the limits of his own art as well as Watteau's.

Close as his narrator comes to exposing it, she cannot shake herself free of it, at last snaps back to reaffirmation:

Yes! Besides that unreal, imaginary light upon these scenes, these persons, which is pure gift of his, there was a light, a poetry, in those persons and things themselves, close at hand we had not seen. He has enabled us to see it: we are so much the better-off thereby, and I, for one, the better. The world he sets before us so engagingly has its care for purity, its cleanly preferences, in what one is to see--in the outsides of things--and there is something, a sign, a memento, at the least, of what makes life really valuable, even in that. There, is my simple notion, wholly womanly perhaps, but which I may hold by, of the purpose of the arts. (255)

In an afterthought, Pater tries to factor into that formula a historical component; to give his "dream of a better world than the real one" social substance as well as "cleanly" form. Unable to resolve the contradiction she has identified as Watteau's problem, the diarist attempts to find justification in a progressive social impulse reminiscent of John Morley's. Puzzling how contempt can be a "condition of excellent artistic production," she tries to write herself out of the problem:

People talk of a new era now dawning upon the world, of fraternity, liberty, humanity, of a novel sort of social freedom in which men's natural goodness of heart will blossom at a thousand points hitherto repressed, of wars disappearing from the world in an infinite, benevolent ease of life--yes! perhaps of infinite littleness also. And it is the outward manner of that, which, partly by anticipation, and through pure intellectual power, Antony Watteau has caught, together with a flattering something of his own, added thereto. (255)

But the argument is unconvincing. Immediately she reasserts that Watteau is "himself really of the old time." He "dignifies" by melancholy the "essential insignificance" of all that to which he lends a "fallacious grace." He is "in truth . . . still the mason's boy who deals with that world under a fascination, of the nature of which he is half-conscious" (256). There is, moreover, already the fear that with a larger "ease of life" the grandness will be diminished. It's the fear of so many Modernists who can conceive of no alternative to nations of shopkeepers--or worse, as in *Brideshead*, Hoopers--once the last vestiges of aristocratic hegemony have been torn down by bourgeois capital.

Pater's diarist acknowledges that there is in her brother's *fêtes champêtres* "more real hilarity" because "more truth to life," but concludes that there is "therefore less distinction." She is very ready to sacrifice real hilarity for the distinction of a dream--all its "power of association" and "magical exhilaration." "Yes!" she affirms to her lonely end,

the world profits by such reflection of its poor, coarse self, in one who renders all its caprices from the height of a Corneille. (256)

That is her way, and Pater's, of compensating for the absence of real pleasure and vitality in their lives--an absence that the move to London would not fill for Pater or his two chaste sisters, Hester and Clara. "That is my way," she writes, "of making up to myself for the fact that I think *his* days, too, would have been really happier, had he remained obscure at Valenciennes" (256).

The Pater family had not been able to remain at Enfield. They had moved to accommodate Walter's advancement. The children's mother had died not long after the move, and the two young women had been taken to Heidelberg, first to "finish" their educations and then, probably, to take jobs as governesses--something about which they never spoke at Oxford. Their Aunt Bessie had died while Walter was still an undergraduate. Their home had been broken up early, and the three of them had had to make their way precariously balanced between frightening poverty and literal homelessness, on the one hand, upward mobility by means of acquired refinements, on the other. Their dream of home would always be colored by certain social requirements. They compensated for the lack of opulence with obsessively exquisite taste. Hester's and Clara's experience would depend on Walter's, and he would "never overcome his early training." Those "light things" he'd been exposed to at school and in wealthier boys' homes would "possess for him always a kind of representative or borrowed worth, as characterising that impossible or forbidden world" which the surgeon's widow's boy had glimpsed "through the closed gateways of the enchanted garden." Seeking

access to an impossible world transfigured by his imagination, Pater would discover that the social world no longer inaccessible to him only made him uncomfortable. What he actually sought was something he had only really enjoyed at home, something there, in the larger social world beyond, "in no satisfying measure, or not at all" (262).

Though he understands so much, what Pater fails to grasp is that what makes for genuinely creative art is a genuinely potent interaction between the artist and the world: neither "servile imitation" nor increasingly decadent refinement, let alone outright denial, but the force of a visionary realist such as a Hugo, a Balzac, a Baudelaire--or a Ruskin. The creative product of such an interaction is a synthesis. What the visionary realist produces is not notes toward a supreme fiction, but the negation of a negation. In the process, a revolutionary consciousness is forged.

Pater's failure of understanding was deeply rooted in his temperament. The diarist of the portrait identifies in herself a "certain immobility of disposition . . . to quicken or interfere with which is like physical pain" (252). But it is that failure of understanding which keeps Pater locked in flight between the Apollonian and Dionysian extremes, circling back and forth like the bird in the cathedral. To put the problem in terms of Pater's metaphor, it must at least occur to the observing artist that with sufficient effort and a marshaling of available forces, the bird could be rescued. With such a realization, the artist is released from enthrallment to such piteous scenes and symbols of hopeless, helpless suffering. As filmmaker Antonioni realized in the making of *Blow-Up*, however, he must rouse himself to active intervention, and that is difficult when the artist's own sense of helplessness is a function of the forces which keep him immobilized.

Like Watteau, Pater is initially entranced by the images borne in upon his mind from the natural and social world. At a distance, he idealizes them, and incorporates them in the "brain-building" process by

which he evolves an idealized ego-identity. But when he draws closer to them, he discovers the gap between his vision and the original forms which inspired it. On discovering the banality of the empirical and social reality, his impulse is to retreat, to redistance himself from the imperfect world so that he can reconstitute the idealized version. He is dependent on the original, however, and the necessity of "correcting" it without ever actually acting upon it is what exhausts his mind and debilitates his body. Again, this dynamic is a prescription for insanity. If the conflict between ideal and real becomes too unremittingly intense, the mind will be driven to flee the site of conflict altogether, and cut itself loose from the intolerable irritant reality.

Peter never draws support from "bracing" confrontation. He has, perhaps, "too little self-approval." But having surrendered all moral and cognitive categories to the modern, relative spirit, he also lacks the terms by which to articulate a resistance. He has tried to find those terms in art and failed. A fragile vessel in which material forces converge, all sensibility, he lacks the moral and cognitive sinews that might bind him together as a stable force in his own right. Lack of determinate substance keeps him fixated on form. When beauty of form is corroded by ugliness of substance, he can only recoil. He can identify no definite course of action by which to restore beauty to form.

Yet the tension caused by the discrepancy between reality and idealized form drives him, obsessively, first to reconfigure the deformed reality and then, out of sheer exhaustion, to seek stasis. It is to "absolute zero" that Sebastian van Storck is irresistibly drawn. Then, terrified by the void in "Sebastian," Pater is driven to the opposite extreme, a Dionysian excess of vitality, frenzied activity, wildly centrifugal energy.

A Pythagorean *via media* of balance between Parmenidean oneness and Heraclitean flux eludes Pater because he is not in harmony with a social

world which declines control by aestheticization. A "marvellous tact of omission" will not actually remove any blight upon the scene viewed from the window, though a picturesque window box may obscure it. The dynamics of power relations contaminate form. Indeed, they defeat Pater by his own measure. His own form does not please. The forms of his domestic establishment are not sufficiently stylish or imposing to exert compelling appeal. In short, the will to beautify is subjugated by the reality of power, and the wealth that wields it.

Having entered at 12 Earl's Terrace, Kensington, the threshold of a "life, agitated, exigent, unsatisfying," Pater recoils from all activity in "Sebastian van Storck," seeking relief from "incurable restlessness" of mind in absolute stasis. Published in May 1886, the portrait opens on a winter scene. Its subject, Sebastian van Storck, has returned from studies abroad to his home in seventeenth-century Holland. After its long struggles with the sea and its warfare with Spain, the country is enjoying a "hard-won prosperity" and a "short period of complete wellbeing" (*Imaginary Portraits* 282-83). The family mansion of the Storcks is, "in its minute and busy wellbeing, like an epitome of Holland itself with all the good-fortune of its 'thriving genius' reflected . . . in the national taste" (284). Sebastian the elder is a prosperous landowner and statesman. He admires those who "get on" in the world and has been himself "almost from boyhood in contact with great affairs" (283). His son has not returned to play an influential role in affairs of state, however.

Sebastian is a young man driven "more by curiosity than by care for truth." He suffers from a "searching quality." In his presence people feel an "agitation of mind" at variance with his outward composure. Given a certain "intellectual rectitude or candour" in his character, it has become apparent to his mentor at university that "theorems will shape life for him, directly." He will "always seek the effective equivalent to his line of thinking" (282).

Sebastian has come home to recover a "certain loss of robustness" resulting from too strenuous wrestling with intellectual questions. The winter landscape to which he has returned in Holland suits him. He likes the winter season best "for its expression of a perfect impassivity, or at least of a perfect repose." Winter is preferable to summer for Sebastian because summer sets "free a crowded and competing world of life" (281) which Sebastian finds suffocating.

Artists hang about the Storck family mansion. "Creatures of leisure--of leisure on both sides--they [are] the appropriate complement of Dutch prosperity." But whereas Sebastian the elder could "almost have wished his son to be one of them: it was the next best thing to being an influential publicist or statesman" (284), the arts are a matter Sebastian the younger can "but just tolerate." Though he is a connoisseur of the arts by virtue of the fact that he is surrounded by them, any impulse on his part to be an artist is frustrated by a plaguing question: "Why add, by a forced and artificial production, to the monotonous tide of competing, fleeting existence?" (285).

Like Pater, Sebastian finds himself compelled instead to determine which art best suits his own "characteristic tendencies." Though he refuses to travel, his most basic tendency is a love of the distant. He enjoys the "sense of things seen from a distance, carrying us, as on wide wings of space itself, far out of one's actual surrounding." Hence his preference for "those prospects à vol a'oiseau--of the caged bird on the wing at last--of which Rubens had the secret, and still more Philip de Koninck." Four of de Koninck's "choicest works" hang on the four walls of Sebastian's chamber. They are "visionary escapes, north, south, east, and west, into a wide-open though . . . somewhat sullen land" (285).

Sebastian seeks his freedom from the "whole talkative Dutch world" in a "kind of empty place." In a room remote from the activity of the household, he finds a space where he can feel that "all had been mentally put to rights by the working-out of a long equation, which had

zero is equal to zero for its result." In this monastic cage, "one did, and perhaps felt, nothing: one only thought" (286).

In the simplicity of Sebastian's increasingly ascetic existence there is "certainly nothing democratic" (286). Nor is there any concern for the theological disputes that will break into civil strife in Holland. Sebastian is unmoved by them "as essentially a strife on small matters." His indifference to them anticipates, Pater notes, a "vagrant regret" that the "old, pensive, use-and-wont Catholicism" had been taken from the country (290).

That wistful regret is but a minor tendency, however, in one whose "mortal coldness of . . . temperament" and "intellectual tendencies" seem to "necessitate straight-forward flight from all that [is] positive" (291). Sebastian, in fact, seems in love with death. Indeed, he loves it with a resolute fixity amounting to passion.

So peculiar does his rejection of "all the elegant conventionalities of life in that rising Dutch family" (291) seem to the members of his social set that he is suspected of treason. Their suspicion intensifies the desire to withdraw in one "who was so anxious to expose no writing of his that he left his very letters unsigned" (292). While a slight flirtation leads to presumed courtship, Sebastian is "coming to an estimate of the situation" and recognizing that it is the "ideal of a calm, intellectual indifference" of which he is the "sworn chevalier" (293). There will be no wedding for him.

Under the influence of Spinoza's philosophy, Sebastian is working out the implications of the idea, which "pure reason affirmed," that "the world is but a thought, or a series of thoughts" and that "it exists, therefore, solely in mind." Though he cannot shake himself out of obsessive reasoning, he is aware that something other than "pure reason" is at work in him. On the one hand, pure reason "showed him, as he fixed the mental eye with more and more self-absorption on the phenomena of his intellectual existence, a picture or vision of the universe as actually the product . . . of his own thinking power--of

himself, there, thinking: as being zero without him: and as possessing a perfectly homogeneous unity in that fact" (295). On the other hand, he is partially conscious that he is not drawn to "the oneness of which all things beside are but passing affections"; rather, "by some inherited satiety or fatigue in his nature, to the opposite issue of the practical dilemma" (296). The opposite issue is not oneness; it is nothingness.

The alternative to a life "agitated, exigent, unsatisfying," and fatiguing is, in this next portrait, a "restoration of equilibrium," a retreat into the "calm surface of the absolute, untroubled mind," and a return to *tabula rasa* "by the extinction in one's self of all that is but correlative to the finite illusion--by the suppression of ourselves" (296). The alternative, then, is not liberation but death: suppression of self and denial of "all impediments" to a perverse negation of desire. For Sebastian, the "one abstract being" is like the "pallid Arctic sun, disclosing itself over the dead level of a glacial, a barren and absolutely lonely sea." In his seeking to lose himself in that "one abstract being," the "lively purpose of life" is "frozen out of it." Himself but a passing thought in the mind of this abstract deity, even should he love it, Sebastian "cannot expect to be 'loved in return'" (296-97).

The impulse to extinguish oneself in some metahistorical order or theorem or abstraction becomes in turn a self-absorption in which one neither loves nor is loved in return. All affections are seen as attempts to assert one's own identity. If one's consciousness is all that exists, then all response to "passing affections" is but a "trying to be, to assert [oneself], to maintain [one's] isolated and petty self, by a kind of practical lie in things" (297). And if one's "proper function [is] to die," then, as it seems to Sebastian, "the world and the individual alike [are] divested of all effective purpose" (298).

Though Sebastian is "actually proud at times of his curious, well-reasoned nihilism" (298), he knows that he has become the victim of a

disease. The crowded, competing, and fleeting yet monotonous world of life subjected to a forced and artificial production has made him sick. He is aware, too, that the treatise he has been closeted away writing is the product of an unhealthy mind. His writings fall within the genre of hospital literature.

Pater intimates with a curiously incidental interpolation that this fanaticism of Sebastian's--this "adherence to a duty to restore the equilibrium of consciousness," or the "restoration of the primary consciousness to itself"--is all really a "vehement assertion of his individual will" (298). This resolute flight from the positive to a condition of absolute negation is an impulse "to forget." Its consequence, however, to be forgotten, is not so appealing.

Like so many of Pater's writings, the portrait describes a course of infantile regression in its subject. Sebastian is like a child who shuts himself in his room when he cannot have his way. But just how Sebastian has been thwarted is not disclosed, for he is given all that Pater lacks--youth, beauty, wealth, social currency, suitors, and great prospects--and yet he throws it all away.

The motivation Pater supplies for that renunciation is pride. "The moralist," Pater writes, "might have noted that a meaner kind of pride, the morbid fear of vulgarity, lent secret strength to the intellectual prejudice, which realised duty as the renunciation of all finite objects, the fastidious refusal to be or do any limited thing" (299). Sebastian has been sinking deeper and deeper into the condition Lukács terms "bad infinity." Unable to realize his ideal self-image, Sebastian disdains to undertake any endeavor which might give proof of his limitations or imperfections. But at the root of the pride is shame: the pride is a morbid fear of vulgarity. It makes Sebastian, like Mr. James Duffy in Joyce's *Dubliners*, a "painful case."

It also keeps Pater uncomfortable amidst the "thriving genius" of London life. Pater's resolution of this "practical dilemma" is telling. Sebastian's body follows the lead of mind and will. Intellectual breeds

physical consumption. Sebastian flees to a desolate house on the seashore. There he could "make 'equation' between himself and what was not himself, and set things in order, in preparation towards such deliberate and final change in his manner of living as circumstances so clearly necessitated" (300). Seeking to extricate himself from the net of circumstances which have effected an intolerable disequilibrium in a once happy child, Sebastian retreats to an even greater distance. It is a last-ditch attempt to wall out the world and restore an original equilibrium. But a storm rises, the rain comes, and the walls of Holland are threatened. As Pater writes, the effect of the storm "was a permanent one; so people might have fancied that an enemy had indeed cut the dykes somewhere" (300). The storm which Pater's *Renaissance* had unleashed had cut a permanent gash in his defenses.

When the storm subsides, Sebastian is found dead in an upper room of the house, with a living child swaddled in his heavy furs. The reader is given to understand that Sebastian lost his life in saving the child. Typically, Pater does not bother with the realistic details of how Sebastian could have carried the child to safety if he had himself been drowned in the flood. He ends with an equally mysterious smear of pathos worthy of Gautier. The family doctor comforts Sebastian's mother that her child would have died anyway, ere many years had passed. He'd have been consumed by a "disease then coming into the world . . . begotten by the fogs"--waters "not in their place" but displaced "above the firmament"--on "people grown somewhat over-delicate in their nature by the effects of modern luxury" (300).

Again, how much of Pater's brooding he fully understood is impossible to say. Bloom's remark that anyone who understood the dialectic of style as magnificently as Pater did needs no psychoanalytic reduction is worth recalling here. The frequency with which Pater alludes to the "transmutation of forces" would seem to bear Bloom out. Pater's wide-ranging knowledge of the French tradition, moreover, his reading of Swinburne and Rossetti, and his exposure to the writings of

his own more daring disciples might argue for a very subtly crafted consciousness in such polyvalent language. Again, however, I am inclined to think that Pater's elaborate refinements functioned as much to obscure as to probe his intuitions. To that extent, they do indeed hover at the threshold of wish-fulfillment. But to admit into consciousness the full significance of such phrases as "waters not in their place" but displaced "above the firmament" would be to allow for precisely the sort of inundation Holland's dykes are constructed to prevent. The symbolic point of the portrait's conclusion is not self-discovery, I think, but self-preservation: the salvation of the child from the rising tide of competing forces, both sexual and social, that no amount of distance or defensive reasoning could effectively shut out.

Certainly the point is not, as Iser asserts, that inasmuch as all of the subjects of Pater's portraits who act to end their suffering die in the moment of taking action, action offers no effective solution to the problem of aesthetic alienation. On the contrary, the insight which emerges from the portraits is that no amount of thinking, imagining, or reconfiguring alone can release the aesthete from confinement. As Sartre's existentialism would confirm, it is only by acting that the aesthete ceases to be passively defined by forces outside himself and begins, positively, to realize a determinate identity in response to those forces--come what may. The aesthete must act either to extricate himself from oppressive circumstances or to save himself from the void of isolation. Sebastian's action is both evasive and, ultimately, effective. Not quite the gratuitous action which liberates, it is rather the necessary action which frees him from obsessive self-absorption and realizes a bond of human affection and responsibility that cannot be reduced to self-assertion. Though it kills the diseased Sebastian, it liberates the healthy child.

That the fears which consumed Pater, and against which he erected his intricate walls, have not been killed his next portrait makes abundantly clear. Published in October 1886, "Denys l'Auxerrois" begins

with a questioning of the value of any attempt to restore a mythical consciousness to people who, after all, must live not in myth but in history, and are in fact defined by their historical consciousness. Though Pater begins by questioning the "advantage of the return to us of a condition of life in which, by the nature of the case, the values of things would, so to speak, lie wholly in their surfaces, unless we could regain also the childish consciousness, or rather unconsciousness, in ourselves, to take all that adroitly and with the appropriate lightness of heart" (*Imaginary Portraits* 263), the qualified phrasing of the question anticipates the answer. Quite aside from the fact that Pater is perpetuating a modern misapprehension of pagan myth as a matter of "unconscious" surfaces, in the case of Denys l'Auxerrois, the return, after a brief interlude of rejuvenation, has catastrophic results. Pater's exploration of the possibility of return betrays both a longing for release from the constraints imposed by historical consciousness and a deep fear of the rising tide of sexual and social forces which the coming of Dionysus swells to rupture the feudal order in thirteenth-century Auxerre. Turning from history to myth for a legitimizing principle to support his yearning for heightened experience, Pater's aesthetic hypothesis, tested out in the portraits, collapses under the weight of historical reality. In the discourse of "Denys l'Auxerrois," Pater seeks and forecloses yet another possibility. Circling back from an Apollonian ideal of quiescence which has proved arid and entropic rather than radiantly static, Pater is driven to the opposite extreme in Dionysian activity. But just as stasis gives way to entropy, since no condition can escape the law of change, Dionysian energy devolves into frenzy, satiety, and finally melancholy. The social forces released in that devolution, however, prove fatally dangerous.

If the impulse to extinguish all vexatious energies and affections in the one, absolute, untroubled light of mind has frozen the lively purpose out of life in "Sebastian," Pater's narrator in "Denys" first encounters the figure of Dionysus frozen in a "large and brilliant

fragment of stained glass" (266). The fragment is part of a series of scenes also depicted in a set of tapestries owned by a priest in a neighboring village. They include the building of an organ, and the figure of Dionysus is that of the organ-builder, called Denys. He is introduced as a "flaxen and flowery creature, sometimes wellnigh naked among the vine-leaves, sometimes muffled in skins against the cold, sometimes in the dress of a monk, but always with a strong impress of real character and incident from the veritable streets of Auxerre" (267). From the beginning, Pater means to keep his mythic figure firmly situated in history. That is the point of the portrait: to test out the Dionysian possibility in history.

Even before the narrator pieces Denys' story together, we are given one salient fact. The figure is a tortured one. From the notes in the priest's library and study of the tapestries, the narrator is able to reconstruct the events which took place in Auxerre at the time of the god's return. Those events coincide with completion of the building of the cathedral of Saint Étienne. The reliefs which adorn its western portals display a "feeling for reality . . . caught . . . from the ardent and full-veined existence then current in [the] actual streets and houses" of Auxerre. What they reflect is a political movement breaking out in various French towns and threatening to turn "their narrow, feudal institutions into a free, communistic life." This political stir is closely connected with the "assertion of individual freedom" and long after associated with the figure who "was the very genius . . . of that new, free, generous manner in art, active and potent as a living creature" (268). From the unearthing of a Greek flask redolent with the "riotous and earthy heat of old paganism itself," a sort of golden age begins. The triumphant completion of the church coincides with a series of remarkable wine seasons. Even in "poor men's cottages," "fine and abundant" wine is stored up. A new beauty and gaiety branch out from the arts into a "reign of quiet, delighted labour" (268-69).

Pater equivocates about whether the arrival of the god is a cause or an effect of the renaissance in Auxerre. Clearly, however, it is into a receptive atmosphere that he comes. The child of a country girl impregnated by the Count of Auxerre who flees the manor during a storm, gives premature birth, and is killed by a strike of lightning, Denys makes his appearance at an ecclesiastical ceremony in the church. With his arrival and participation, the ceremony turns into a spirited game. Men and women, old and young alike, catch Denys' spirited playfulness and freewheeling charm. A "revolution in the temper and manner" of the individual citizens of Auxerre concurs with the movement then afoot "for the liberation of the *commune* from its old feudal superiors." Gradually, Denys turns the "grave, slow movement of politic heads into a wild social license" (271).

An "unrivalled gardener," Denys keeps a stall in the town and heads up processions in which, eventually, the "little people," the "discontented" and the "despairing," speak their minds. As "one man engaged with another in talk in the market-place," a "new influence came forth at the contact; another and another adhered" until "at last a new spirit was abroad everywhere" (271).

At the height of a social scene suggestive of utopian socialism, however, this *agent provocateur's* troubles begin. We are told that his sympathy for odd, misshapen children and animals of all kinds turns upon him, though we are not told how exactly. The fairness and freshness preserved by simple living are corrupted by an appetite for "dark wine and brown meat" (273). Denys makes strange disappearances, flees briefly to Marseilles when winter approaches, and returns the more corrupt for his exposure to port life there among the sailors. Though the artists of Auxerre have learned from him an "art supplementary to their own,--that gay magic, namely (art or trick) of his existence" (274), over him a darkness has grown. He has lost something of his gentleness, and there is speculation that he will make himself Count of Auxerre, by marriage to the widowed Countess.

A wise monk of the town remembers reading about how the wine-god has his "dark or antipathetic side; was like a double creature, of two natures, difficult or impossible to harmonise"--like the wine of Auxerre, at its best *Chainette*, at its worst *Migraine* (274). As Denys becomes, for "all his flaxen fairness," more and more "manifestly a sufferer," the townspeople degenerate into coarseness, satiety, and savagery. Crimes occur of which Denys is suspected. The monk, Hermes, now recalls that the wine-god was said to have been in hell. After the fat years, lean years come. In a "time of scarcity" now, the "working people might not eat and drink of the good things they had helped to store away" (275).

At last a plot is contrived to ambush and kill Denys for a sorcerer. He eludes capture, but another remedy is concocted by the clergy. A neglected patron saint is to be exhumed and a shrine provided for it. Important church dignitaries gather and King Lewis himself arrives for the exhumation. Sight of the shrunken body shocks the madness out of Denys, but he is left a "subdued, silent, melancholy creature" and retreats to sanctuary among the monks of Saint Germain (276).

The craftsmanship of the monks reflects the three successive phases of Denys' "humours." There is first "wild gaiety, exuberant in a wreathing of life-like imageries, from which nothing really present in nature was excluded" (276). That gives way to "obscure regions of the satiric, the grotesque and coarse." And from that second phase emerges, "with no loss of power or effect, a well-assured seriousness, somewhat jealous and exclusive, not so much in the selection of the material . . . as in the precise sort of expression that should be induced upon it" (277).

That characterization might as well be applied to the course of Pater's writing. On his own descent into those "obscure regions of the satiric, the grotesque and coarse" Pater had imposed a sort of "well-assured seriousness" which maintains "jealous" control of the impression

it will give. In Pater's discourse as in the monks' embellishments of the church facade, it is "as if the gay old pagan world had been *blessed* in some way" (277). The blessing is all effect, however, and the synthetic result is precisely what the monks are crafting: a facade.

Again, erotic impulses--along with social "licentiousness"--have been sublimated and sacralized. While the monks are crafting their refinements, Denys is working to "attain the instruments of a freer and more various sacred music than had been in use hitherto" (277). Though it is in a sacred music that Denys seeks to combine the three "humours" or "modes," it is still a condition of musical fluidity that the god aspires to. And it is still the music of reeds and pipes--the music of nature, not of disembodied mind or spirit as in the music of strings. Indeed, Apollo, "lord of the strings," seems to "look askance on the music of the reed, in all the jealousy with which he put Marsyas to death so cruelly" (278). In building his organ, Denys combines "first, the simple and pastoral, the homely note of the pipe . . . [and] then, the wild, savage din, that had cost so much to quiet [in] people . . . [and had driven] excitable people mad." These he "composes" to "sweeter purposes" (277), creating an unmistakably new music. It's the music of Modernism, sublimated impulses to sexual and social liberation, "all the various modes of the power of the pipe, tamed, ruled, united" (278). Out of potential anarchy, this Dionysian figure has constructed harmony. The "obscure regions" have been safely submerged in a new cultural order. And now the progress of the town can advance unimpeded.

Thus occupied, Denys has seemingly been forgotten by his enemies. In the town, the bishop has come to bless the foundation of a new bridge. In the midst of this enterprise, the skeleton of a child is uncovered as a vestige of the superstitious belief that, "by way of vicarious substitution, its death would secure the safety of all who should pass over." It prompts those present at the invocation to look for a similar "pledge of security," which is found just then in the sight of Denys on a rock above the river. He plunges to safety in the

river, and though the townspeople think him now gone forever, he is in fact back at work "upon his house of reeds and pipes" (278). When the old "fits" come on, he digs graves and is sometimes glimpsed weeping over his work.

Meanwhile, with the marriage of the Lady Ariane of the house of Auxerre to the heir of the house of Chastellux, the feudal order is restored and assured. Unbeknownst to the people, Denys makes the organ's debut in the church. Author and performer are forgotten in the people's delight with the music. A civic festival follows the religious ceremony and Auxerre welcomes its new lord.

In a "rude popular pageant" which is to conclude the festival at nightfall, Denys takes upon himself the part of Winter, to be hunted blindfold through the streets. Though his identity is unknown to the people, the narrator interpolates, "It might restore his popularity: who could tell?" In donning the rough clothes, however, Denys scratches his lip on a "point of haircloth." The "sight of the blood trickling upon his chin transports the spectators with a kind of mad rage." He must be the scapegoat for the impulses released and then frustrated. Denys is torn to pieces. Shreds of his flesh are stuck in the men's caps, fixed by hairpins borrowed from the women. Thus a piece of that figure long after associated with the movement to turn "their narrow, feudal institutions into a free, communistic life" is appropriated by the various individuals. All that is left is his heart, brought by some sympathetic person to the monk, "still entire." Hermes buries it "under a stone, marked with a cross, in a dark corner of the cathedral aisle" (280).

Such is the fate of the mythic wine-god resituated in a French town at the beginning of the Renaissance. Expelled in the interests of civic order, agricultural prosperity, and commercial progress, his sacrifice contemplated as a "pledge of security," he is finally devoured by the "evil passions" earlier unleashed by his influence on the people. The moral is clear: better to forgo liberation for oneself than to

legitimize the impulse to throw off the constraints imposed by historical consciousness in the people. "So the figure in the stained glass explained itself" (280).

Another possibility has been foreclosed, another death incurred. The tone of Pater's conclusion is wistful. "To me," the narrator confesses, "Denys seemed to have been a real resident at Auxerre." Like Sebastian van Storck, Pater has always lived out his ideas--if only in his writing. "On days of a certain atmosphere . . . I seemed actually to have seen the tortured figure there--to have met Denys l'Auxerrois in the streets" (280). Pater has never written about any figure with whom he did not deeply identify. In projecting himself into those streets, he has reconfigured his own drama. He is the tortured one; he has known the torment of one accused of misleading the young men of the nation.

For the sake of harmony and stability, moreover, he has in the end been sacrificed. Though Denys is not buried alive entire, like the child of an earlier time, his dismemberment is a "pledge of security" inasmuch as it expels the threat of anarchy from the community. Though a piece of him has indeed been dispersed among the young men about to cut a figure in the artistic scene of the 1890s, Pater has in fact been torn apart by his own conflict: between the "fitful" desire to escape his confinement, on the one hand, a "morbid fear of vulgarity" and of the vulgar masses, on the other. All that has been left intact is the yearning heart. It, very sadly, is buried away under a stone, its pagan joy marked with the heavy cross of chastened suffering, and secreted in a dark corner of the cathedral aisle, for "pedestrian" feet to walk upon. And in the end, his entire figure is frozen in stained glass.

Again, now in the realm of myth, Pater's aesthetic hypothesis collapses under the weight of historical reality. In the fourth portrait written during the first two years of Pater's residence in London, Duke Carl of Rosenmold will be unearthed to try one more avenue of escape: enlightenment and cultural renewal in eighteenth-century Germany. What the discourse of that portrait discloses, however, is

that programs for cultural renewal conceived in the secret discipline of the private study are not effective, let alone transformative.

With foreclosure of that last possibility, Pater's interment will be sealed. A "passion of which the outlets are sealed" will indeed, by the law of the "transmutation of forces," become perverted. Pater's necrophiliac tendencies are fully evident in the subjects who linger long and lovingly over the corpses of young men beautiful in premature death. The most overt expression of that tendency appears in "Emerald Uthwart," not written until 1892. In the Lacedaemon chapter of *Plato and Platonism*, as in the unfinished *Gaston de Latour* and several other essays and reviews, Pater's sadomasochistic tendencies are clearly discernible as well.

In his last portrait, "Apollo in Picardy," however, something even more disturbing emerges. Those "obscure regions" triumphantly submerged in "Denys" erupt again, this time in the "Northern Apollo" whose light Duke Carl had been unsuccessful in spreading. The idea of a mythical method by which order can be imposed on the materials of modern disorder is exposed as profoundly problematic. Under the influence of the "Northern Apollo," the repressive order erected against the Dionysian potential for sexual frenzy and social anarchy is shattered. Fear of anarchy unleashes the demon of fascism. Licentiousness breaks forth not in the vulgar masses, but amongst the watch-dogs of the people. Fearsome desires projected onto the people are unleashed among those licensed to keep the people in line. Again, art as projection--the mythical method--becomes the basis for an aesthetic of fascism: desire unrestrained, degenerating into sadomasochistic perversion.

Having undergone a reactionary conversion, Pater at last explodes. The facade of "well-assured seriousness" is finally ruptured with destructive rather than liberating force. The spider spinning his defensive web becomes the weevil consuming the objects of repressed desire. Reaction gives way to regression, and Pater's infantile, imperial self emerges to mirror the imperial center with which he has

come to identify, though it has been his tormenter. Fear of the masses drives him into the embrace of the iron master. Unable to escape the torturer, he identifies with it and in turn becomes the torturer as well as the tortured.

Nor is there any sight to shock the madness out of Prior Saint-Jean. Though his defenses are shattered, his visions are too frightening to allow for lucidity. The last alternative to death--actual, sexual, or social--the future, is inconceivable. The will to blindness fractures insight. The totality will be denied.

"Duke Carl of Rosenmold" was published in *Macmillan's Magazine* in May of 1887. It is not one of Pater's more successful efforts. The conclusion reads like an addendum explaining what he had meant to do. He had "tried to embody in the portrait" the aspirations of all those obscure precursors to Goethe whose desire for the "Aufklärung" was a sort of "forecast of capacity" awakening others to the "permanent reality of a poetic ideal in human life" (*Imaginary Portraits* 320-21). But as he reduces Arnoldian cultural ideals to incense in "Coleridge's Writings," he reduces the "age of genius . . . centered in Goethe" to an "amiable figure." The figure is admired in a scene witnessed by Goethe's mother and related to a friend:

There, skated my son, like an arrow among the groups. Away he went over the ice like a son of the gods. Anything so beautiful is not to be seen now. I clapped my hands for joy. Never shall I forget him as he darted out from one arch of the bridge, and in again under the other, the wind carrying the train behind him as he flew.

Pater is simply hovering there on the edge of wish-fulfillment, enjoying the prospect. His last sentence reads, "In that amiable figure I seem to see the fulfilment of the *Resurgam* on Carl's empty coffin--the aspiring soul of Carl himself, in freedom and effective, at last" (321).

"Duke Carl," then, is a portrayal of longing, not free and not effective. What keeps Carl's aspirations fettered and ineffective is his incapacity to act beyond the realm of surfaces. Carl imagines that he can transform the oppressive duchy of Rosenmold by altering its cultural accoutrements. The disposition of his remains, uprooted

together with a great tree in a storm, tells a different story. It confirms the fate of the young duke who had tried to bring the *Aufklärung* to Germany at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He had disappeared from the world "when a great army passed over those parts, at a political crisis, one result of which was the final absorption of his small territory in a neighbouring dominion" (301).

Carl's story is that of a quest. A Sapphic ode discovered in Conrad Celtes' 1486 work, *Ars Versificandi*, gives expression to Carl's aspiration: "*Ad Apollinem, ut ab Italis cum lyra ad Germanos veniat*" (303). Celtes' verses bring for Carl a "beam of effectual daylight to a whole magazine of observation, fancy, desire, stored up from the first impressions of childhood" (304). Carl's mission is to be the instrument of Apollo's coming. The medium is art. With respect to art, however, Carl has a "large appetite and little to feed on" (306).

Initially, he feeds on the florid, artificial, and "perhaps third-rate" art of France and the court of "Lewis the Fourteenth." In the music of Sebastian Bach he hears the first notes of an art not borrowed from France. Though he "gladdens others by an intellectual radiance" and displays his cultural ideal in an operatic production featuring the "hyperborean Apollo, sojourning, in the revolutions of time, in the sluggish north for a season," the borrowed light ceases to "mean warmth or animation for himself" (309). It is still to be sought--in France, in Italy, above all in Greece. Longing to travel thence prompts him to ever more wide-ranging expeditions into the German countryside. Despite its wholesome influence, Carl has fits of gloom caught from the funereal court. "Yes! people were prosaic," he feels, "and their lives threadbare" (310).

As his discontent deepens, people begin to think him a little mad and he grows suspicious of flatterers, wishing to test their sincerity. That impulse engenders a scheme to fake his own death and witness his own funeral. An elaborate charade is staged. "The lad, with his full red lips and open blue eyes, coming as with a great cup in his hands to

life's feast," revolts from the heavy trappings of death "as from suffocation" (311). Death seems to him the enemy that dogs his footsteps; not death simply, however, but death "from assassination" (312).

To elude that enemy, he undergoes the artifice of death and is thus free to pursue his cultural ideal. The faked death has a real consequence, however. The young duke "would never again be quite so near people's lives as in the past." Thereafter he would be a "fitful, intermittent visitor--almost as if he had been properly dead" (313). In awakening to the elusive ideal, he has died to the real people around him. In going underground himself, Pater had cut himself loose to roam the precincts of his imagination.

Fleeing the world from which he has thus alienated himself, Duke Carl gets no farther than the Rhine country before he realizes that, for him, the light of France, of Italy, and Hellas is "here!"--in his own country--and in the recognition of its own "untried spiritual possibilities." The "ideal land" is transferred "out of space . . . into future time, whither he must be the leader." The real need is for an "interpreter--Apollo, illuminant rather as the revealer than as the bringer of light" (315).

Carl thus comes into Pater's vocation as critic. And Pater here defines the role John Morley saw him as playing in Victorian society. The way to be instrumental in ushering in a new classicism is by the

action of informing thought upon the vast accumulated material of which Germany was in possession: art, poetry, fiction, an entire imaginative world, following reasonably upon a deeper understanding of the past, of nature, of one's self. To understand, would be the indispensable first step towards the enlargement of the great past, of one's little present, by criticism, by imagination. (316)

Carl's aspiration now is to find in those cultural materials the "historic soul of Germany" and to create a new *national* culture. He suffers for want of "coadjutors," however, and is as yet unaware of the central tenet of Pater's aesthetic historicism: that any "historic soul" he might discover would be "but an arbitrary substitution, a

generous loan of one's self" (316-17). Thus history is again reduced to projection of the art historian's own desires. He will find what he is looking for in himself, and project it into history.

The same will be true of his efforts to interpret the "mystic soul of Nature," the next task to which Carl turns. While thus engaged, out upon the mountain slopes, he is met by court functionaries carrying the news of his grandfather the grand-duke's death. Already on his way home spiritually, he hastens home for real now, with real longing for the "homeliness of true old Germany!" (318).

He returns also to the true German "wild-grown beauty" and "natural majesty" of the beggar-maid he will make his consort in a gesture toward his "new poetic code: 'Go straight to life!'" Thus he has found his way to Pater's own aesthetic hypothesis. The new classicism is, after all, yet another romanticism. Life and love are the "real adventure," in comparison with which his previous efforts at artistic renewal "seemed childish theatricalities, fit only to cheat a little the profound ennui of actual life" (318-19).

Testing out his new code, Carl puts his betrothed to a little love-test taking her out to a supposedly haunted grange, where he joins her to await the priest who will marry them. Meanwhile, however, some of those people from whose real lives he had removed himself are involved in quite other plans. In "actual life," "traitorous old councillors" at court are "discussing terms for the final absorption of the duchy" with the commanders of a "victorious host making its way across Northern Germany" (320).

Time passes. What comes at last to the grange is not the priest and certain select companions to witness the ceremony. What comes is the "storm of the victorious army." Out of their "intolerable confinement and suspense," the lovers "flee into the tumult . . . dead-set upon them" (320). The values which Pater had in common with the Bloomsbury Group--pursuit of intellectual truth, aesthetic emotion, and interpersonal relationships--prove inadequate to the situation, as the

children of Bloomsbury found them to be when Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia in 1938. The weight of history not factored into Carl's cultural equation quite literally crushes the lovers to death, mangling their comely forms. Not looked for, it was not foreseen. As Pater's final portrait confirms, the consequences of such selective vision can be catastrophic.

It is important to be aware that "Apollo in Picardy," published in November 1893, follows completion of Pater's *Plato and Platonism: A Series of Lectures*, published in February 1893. The four portraits written between 1885 and 1887 were collected and published as *Imaginary Portraits* in 1887. Pater moved back "home" to Oxford in 1893. *Plato and Platonism* earned Pater congratulations and a degree of acceptance from Jowett, the man who had labeled him a "demoralising moraliser." The book ends with a recommendation to love the "intellectually astringent, well-drilled, patiently achieved 'dry beauty' that it shows Plato himself to have recommended and, against the instincts of his temperament, achieved" (Levey 197). The emphasis on patience is an allusion to Flaubert's definition of genius. Pater referred to it often. The recommendation is that mode of Pater's aesthetic hypothesis taken up by the Modernists in the wake of the disastrous experience of the aesthetes of the '90s.

It is ironic, however, that a work such as *Plato and Platonism* should have been condoned, if not acclaimed as a piece of classical scholarship, whereas *The Renaissance* had unleashed a storm of reprobation. Its very austerity might be said to represent the apex of perversion in Pater. The repressive order it sanctions is what had driven Pater to the brink of frenzy in "Denys l'Auxerrois." Sanction it as he did in *Plato and Platonism*, Pater nevertheless found it unendurable.

From its imperial center, Pater was driven back to the garden which was his personal and spiritual home but which truly was inaccessible to him except in the most violently distorted forms

conceived by a diseased imagination. Roses are displaced by mangled bodies and blue hyacinths. The Dionysian potential erupts in the "Northern Apollo" who must rather slay than love the desired Hyacinth. Revealing him as still locked in violent conflict between the Apollonian and Dionysian extremes, Pater's discourse also reveals that protofascism and frenzy are but two sides of the same coin, as are Eliot's order and Lawrence's "hysteria." A repressive order nurtures the very desires it is intended to constrain.

The lecture on Lacedaemon included in *Plato and Platonism* represents the moment when capitulation and defeat for Pater become the absorption of his little duchy by a larger and more powerful dominion. The walls of his sanctuary have become thin and porous. He has begun to identify with the imperial forces ranged against him at Oxford. Outsiders--women and "Hoopers"--pose a greater threat to the polity than the masters do to the slaves who labor there. Oxford is, Pater seems to say, an ideal order after all, really resembling the "Platonic City of the Perfect."

Plato's City of the Perfect, Pater asserts, would have begun where Lacedaemon had left off. And so he invites the reader to see Lacedaemon for himself, the better to "realise . . . the physiognomy of Plato's theoretic building" (*Plato and Platonism* 202). House Beautiful is undergoing yet another, and more alarming, transformation--from hospital into imperial fortress. Unfortunately, it bears a strong resemblance to Victorian England in general, the English public school system in particular.

The country in which Lacedaemon is centered, Laconia, is a "country carefully made the most of by the labour of serfs." It is a land where the slavery is "far more relentlessly organised according to law than anywhere else in Greece" (203). The slaves are not foreigners but Greeks, countrymen, and they enjoy "that kind of well-being which . . . [comes] of organisation, from the order and regularity of system." In fact, they thrive, "under something of the same discipline which had

made [their] masters the masters also of all Greece" (204-05). Thriving is a risky business, though, since the young nobles of Lacedaemon, who seldom see the slaves otherwise, have a tradition of making night-time expeditions into the countryside to murder any slave who, "under a wholesome mode of life, was grown too tall, or too handsome, or too fruitful a father, to feel quite like a slave" (205).

This sort of thing is to be excused, however, inasmuch as the young lords are as hard on themselves as they are on the slaves. The polity itself is

before all things an organised place of discipline, an organised opportunity also, for youth, for the sort of youth that knew how to command by serving--a constant exhibition of youthful courage, youthful self-respect, yet above all of true youthful docility; youth thus committing itself absolutely, soul and body, to a corporate sentiment in its very sports. (205-06)

Although a self-denying humor prevails among Lacedaemonians with respect to sensuous experience and hence to aesthetic influences, it is not because they are insensitive to such pleasures. Rather, they subject the aesthetic response to a Doric mode which is both martial and religious. Thus all deities here "put on a martial habit" (213). This Doric style reflects the polity's geographical situation. Though the landscape is perhaps the "loveliest in Greece," the "expression of a luxurious lowland is duly checked by the severity of its mountain barriers" (207). A "half-military, half-monastic spirit" prevails in this "so gravely beautiful place" as a result of its formerly beleaguered position (218).

Now that the polity has grown strong, however, and no longer feels threatened by outside forces, it maintains its Doric mode of life--its "moral and political system," its slavery, "its discipline, its aesthetic and other scruples, its peculiar moral *ἦθος*"--as an "end in itself," in short, as "an ideal" (218). That ideal informs Lacedaemon's educational system in particular. It is a "strictly public education," one with a "very clearly defined programme, conservative of ancient traditional and unwritten rules, an aristocratic education for the few,

the *liberales*--'liberals,'" Pater says, "in that proper sense of the word" (219). This education aims "aesthetically at the expression" and "ethically . . . at the reality" of "reserved power" (221). In line with that aim, the youth are taught to govern themselves. In a system of government by monitors, whips and rods have a great part. The pain thus inflicted is "dignified by rules of art." The effect of ritualized flogging is a kind of refinement. Pater's phrasing here is also characterized by a kind of refinement. Pain dignified by rules of art makes the young aristocrats "observant of the minutest direction in those musical exercises, wherein eye and ear and voice and foot are all alike combined" (206). Presumably, then, it sharpens the sensitivity required for delicate coordination. Elsewhere, however, Pater speaks of "pain-fugues" played on the nerves.

Even so, this Doric ideal, maintained like an art, for its own sake, belongs to a "cheerful" as well as a martial and religious people. "More closely even than their . . . scrupulous neighbors," they associate that state which the educational system serves with a "religious sanction" (226). And their religion is "above all a religion of sanity," sanity consisting of a "harmony of functions." Hence Apollo, "sanest of the national gods," is the tribal god of Lacedaemon (227). The Lacedaemonian Apollo is one whose mental powers are exalted. Youthful and unmarried, he is also the god of a people whose unsurpassed beauty is a distinctly male beauty, "far remote from feminine tenderness" (222). What Apollo's worship amounts to for the citizen of Lacedaemon, Pater concludes, is "Honour, friendship, loyalty to the ideal of the past, [and] himself as a work of art!" (232-33).

It's an encomium worthy of Charles Shadwell as provost. It's a harmony Pater rescued from the threatening undercurrents of "Denys." It's a worship of "proportion" that drove Septimus Smith out of a window and Clarissa Dalloway to a chaste, narrow privacy in a room of her own. It's a sanity that nearly drove Pater mad. And it's an ideal that Pater could not endure.

Yet endure it he did. In enduring it not only, but submitting to it and identifying with it--largely out of fear, fear of character assassination within the citadel, fear of coarseness and vulgarity without--he laid himself open to precisely what the "Northern Apollo" experiences in "Apollo in Picardy." That last portrait takes a good look at the "northern sun-god" revered by the Lacedaemonians when he travels northward in actuality, carrying within himself a "titanic regret." What the Apollo in Picardy portrays is a god with "titanic revolt in his heart, and [a] consequent inversion at times of his old beneficent and properly solar doings." "For his favours," Pater writes in the opening paragraphs, "his fallacious good-humour, which has in truth a touch of malign magic about it, he makes men pay sometimes a terrible price, and is in fact a devil!" (*Imaginary Portraits* 373) Behind the facade of a martial mode tempered by religious sanctity and cheerfulness, a malign magic lurks.

In this final portrait, Pater abandons the surface, indeed at his peril; really descending into the depths of his prolonged neurosis. The blaze of new light this Apollo brings reveals "a hundred truths unguessed at before, yet a curse . . . to its receiver." From the moment of Apollo's approach, the Lacedaemonian ideal of sanity is threatened. The truths revealed are a curse to their receiver "in dividing hopelessly against itself the well-ordered kingdom of his thought" (374). And the doubts cast on the treatises being written in a medieval recess doubly fortified by town and monastic walls read like a commentary on Pater's own lectures in *Plato and Platonism*.

From the summit of the monastic tower, one can glimpse the "green breadth of Normandy and Picardy," feel on one's face the "free air of a still wider realm beyond what was seen," and catch sight of the flowers. Though some ordinary monkish souls are stirred with desire to be sent on duty there, Prior Saint-Jean shudders at the view and is glad he has never been exposed to the "tricks of nature" written about by the "whole

crew of miscreant poets" such as Ovid (375). Thither, however, he is sent, and he does indeed undergo metamorphosis.

Sent to Picardy to repair his health, taxed by long devotion to the abstract sciences, the Prior takes with him Hyacinth, pet of the monastic community, and together they descend into the valley. Though it is November, the scent of "surviving summer blossoms" is in the air, and the pair's arrival is marked by thunder and northern lights which seem to score the sky with brilliant music. Unable to sleep, the Prior climbs a stair to the solar where the farm produce is stored and discovers the sleeping form of a "lordly" serf, roughly dressed but accoutred also with harp and bow.

A sense of holiday irregularity releases in the Prior a boyish health and gaiety. A tonsured porter explains that the remarkable peasant is not a bond-servant, but a hireling who comes and goes as he pleases. His name is Apollyon, and the music of his harp keeps the "hard taxed workmen literally in tune" (379). Superintending completion of a great monastic barn, the Prior finds his taste in architecture changing under the influence of Apollyon. The structure of his body changes too. The temple which had "housed his cunning, overwrought and excitable soul" acquires both health and, beyond that, a "positive force" (380-81).

"Regulars," "creatures of rule," the Prior and young Hyacinth have in fact for the first time in their lives "come into contact with the power of untutored natural impulse" and "natural inspiration" in Apollyon (381). For his part, though he abhors the spectacle of distress and demonstrates healing powers, Apollyon is nevertheless also a thief, a "homocide," and a spreader of infection. The touch of his hand is deathly cold. His healing powers are unnatural. The villagers have seen him scattering seeds of disease till his serpent-bag is emptied.

Under his influence, Hyacinth acquires a boyish appetite for sport. With Apollyon's silver bow, he shoots a bird on the wing,

shedding blood for the first time. Apollyon also enjoys such sport. He plays roughly with the wild creatures, and breaks them when he tires of his play. Though a marvelous shepherd, he is too wild to resemble the "good shepherd"--too much a part of the "irredeemable natural world" (383) the Prior had earlier dreaded exposure to and is now coming to terms with.

When Apollyon wantonly, savagely, and cruelly kills the birds in the monks' pigeonhouse--leaving "broken backs, rent away limbs, pierced . . . wings" and his silver harp "lying broken . . . on the sanded floor, soaking in the pale milky blood and torn plumage" (383)--the Prior frees the great bell and summons the devout to midnight Mass. The sanctuary is filled with unnaturally blooming flowers, however, which later seem to have grown into and over the Prior's brain, "degrading the scientific and abstract outlines of things into a tangle of useless ornament" (384). Though Apollyon comes as a penitent, he brings a lamb for an offering and his harping of the *Gloria* is so seductive that the Prior breaks off the service, leaving the sacred office unconsummated.

Prior Saint-Jean and his young assistant get back to work on the final book of his twelve-volume treatise. When Apollyon joins them in the scriptorium, however, he astonishes them by leaping ahead of their thoughts: "from facts to luminous doctrine" (385). He knows the classical language as living speech. Now all the Prior's abstract laws desert him. He begins to see phenomena directly in the physical universe, unmediated by canonical concepts. Trying to get down his insights in writing, he finds the lightning flashes too intense. They flit capriciously, are baffling strokes, flashes of blindness--giving wings to flowers and human limbs and faces to stars. He is transported to the point of exhaustion.

Meanwhile, the heat of summer has come on suddenly. In the hands of a dead villager Hyacinth finds a discus. "Devil's penny-pieces" the people call them (387). Apollyon knows their use. He challenges Hyacinth to strip in the night heat and sport with him. As the dead

villager is carried to his grave, the night changes, growing moonless and cold. The discus, let fly in the night, "saws through the boy's face, uplifted in the dark to trace it," and crushes in the "tender skull upon the brain." For a moment, the boy's "immense cry" seems to restore the immense power of the "half-extinguished deity" (388).

Fearing suspicion himself, Apollyon departs the next day, leaving the Prior to bear the suspicion. Blue flowers after the night's rain are like "remnants of the blue sky itself" fallen into the valley. Officers of justice come to apprehend the Prior. He is accused of murdering Hyacinth in a fit of mania induced by dissolute living. "One hitherto so prosperous in life would, of course," Pater interpolates, "have his enemies" (389). Monastic authorities intervene, however, and treat the Prior for madness in a cheerful apartment from whence he can still see the country. Despite the tragic course of events there unfolded, the one desire which occasionally reanimates the Prior is to return to the scene of "his" crime.

Ostensibly at work on the final volume of his great work, the Prior never again sets pen to paper, for he is "consistent and clear now on nothing save that longing to be once more at the Grange, that he may get well, or die and be well so" (389-90). Some of the brethren liken him to the "damned spirit . . . saying 'I will return to the house whence I came out.'" "Gazing thither daily for many hours," Pater concludes the portrait,

he would mistake mere blue distance, when that was visible, for blue flowers, for hyacinths, and wept at the sight; though blue, as he observed, was the colour of Holy Mary's gown on the illuminated page, the colour of hope, of merciful omnipresent deity. The . . . permission [to return] came with difficulty, just too late. Brother Saint-Jean died, standing upright with an effort to gaze forth once more, amid the preparations for his departure. (390)

Having, through the borrowed agency of Apollyon, slain Hyacinth in an orgiastic moment of brutalizing desire, the Prior dies in effect saying "Give me my sin again." Having identified with the Lacedaemonian lords in *Plato and Platonism*, both as rulers and as receivers of the refined pleasure of whips and rods, Pater has reached an extreme of

wish-fulfillment taking him to the verge of manslaughter here. Eight months before his death in July 1894, the course of his imaginative explorations has run from desire for liberation to culmination of the sadomasochistic tendency: identification of torturer and tortured. For the dull ache of longing is substituted the sharp thrill of pain.

It is not a pretty conclusion to the history of Pater's aspiration to dwell in the House Beautiful of art. House Beautiful has become, by turns, a hospital, an imperial fortress, and at last an asylum for the criminally insane. There is lodged a "damned spirit . . . saying 'I will return to the house whence I came out.'" But though Pater had ventured that far in "Apollo in Picardy," he could still see no more than his own torturously frustrated desire.

Baudelaire understood the dynamics of sadomasochistic desire in a way that Pater never could and never would. Whereas he met the logic of ontological floating, outward from subject to endlessly displaced object, with a determined resistance rooted in theological categories, Pater's relativistic "modern spirit" left him "consistent and clear . . . on nothing" save longing tempered by insipid hope in the color of Mary's blue gown, whilst he wept with more self-pity than remorse.

It is a pathetic conclusion to a sadly thwarted life. Had Pater, the aesthete--one who perceives--been able to see more than his own endlessly deferred desire, the desire he tracked so obsessively to its twisted conclusion, he might have become more aware of how the forces emanating from the imperial center had directed, thwarted, and perverted his desire from childhood onwards. He might have been able to escape aesthetic confinement and find his way out of what Lawrence calls the "narcissus-masturbation enclosure" into that larger breadth of a world he had always been impelled to seek. He might have been able to make himself at home in that world had he not been locked in the conflict that made his own body a prison and a place of torment.

The important point now, however, is that the imperial centers a century later have more invasive and more pervasive media than classical

studies and art by which to manipulate desire and keep the subjects of that manipulation so uncomfortable with themselves as they are or could be--potent forces in their own right--that they are unable to see just how they actually figure in a world of competing politics and corporate bodies. It is the culmination of Pater's fixation on forms and surfaces in our own contemporary history that makes his history important.

Chapter V. The Worst of All Possible Worlds: Indeterminacy
within a Closed System and a Discourse of Impotence

He was so foolish, so wasteful, never at peace with himself. And now where would he go? And what did he care that he wasted her? He had no religion; it was all for the moment's attraction that he cared, nothing else, nothing deeper. . . .

He shook hands and left her at the door of her cousin's house. When he turned away he felt the last hold for him had gone. The town, as he sat upon the car, stretched away over the bay of railway, a level fume of lights. Beyond the town the country, little smouldering spots for more towns--the sea--the night--on and on! And he had no place in it! Whatever spot he stood on, there he stood alone. From his breast, from his mouth, sprang the endless space, and it was there behind him, everywhere. The people hurrying along the streets offered no obstruction to the void in which he found himself. They were small shadows whose footsteps and voices could be heard, but in each of them the same night, the same silence. . . . He could not bear it. On every side the immense dark silence seemed pressing him, so tiny a spark, into extinction, and yet, almost nothing, he could not be extinct. Night, in which everything was lost, went reaching out, beyond stars and sun. Stars and sun, a few bright grains, went spinning round for terror, and holding each other in embrace, there in a darkness that outpassed them all, and left them tiny and daunted. . . .

"Mother!" he whispered--"mother!"

She was the only thing that held him up, himself, amid all this. And she was gone, intermingled herself. . . .

But no, he would not give in. Turning sharply, he walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence. His fists were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly.

--D.H. Lawrence, "Derelict," *Sons and Lovers* (1913)

I say, wonderful are the hellish experiences,
Orphic, delicate
Dionysos of the Underworld.

A kiss, and a spasm of farewell, a moment's orgasm of rupture,
Then along the damp road alone, till the next turning,
And there, a new partner, a new parting, a new unfusing into twain,
A new gasp of further isolation,
A new intoxication of loneliness, among decaying, frost-cold leaves.

Going down the strange lanes of hell, more and more intensely alone,
The fibres of the heart parting one after the other
And yet the soul continuing, naked-footed, ever more vividly embodied
Like a flame blown whiter and whiter
In a deeper and deeper darkness
Ever more exquisite, distilled in separation.

So, in the strange retorts of medlars and sorb-apples
 The distilled essence of hell.
 The exquisite odour of leave-taking.

Jamque vale!

Orpheus, and the winding, leaf-clogged, silent lanes of hell.

Each soul departing with its own isolation,
 Strangest of all strange companions,
 and best. . . .

--D.H. Lawrence, "Medlars and Sorb-Apples" (1921)

Never trust the artist, trust the tale.

--D.H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923)

In *Pornography and Obscenity*, written in 1929, a year before his death in 1930, D.H. Lawrence comes very close to forestating my thesis. He identifies there the problem of enclosure within the "narcissus-masturbation circle." At the center of the circle is the "dirty little secret" of sex which afflicts "perhaps the most fatally and nervously," Lawrence suggests, the "most high-flown sex-emancipated young people today." Many people do not want to get out of the "vicious circle of self-enclosure," Lawrence argues, for if they did "there would be nothing left to come out" (459).

For those who do, Lawrence urges two ways. The first anticipates comedian Lenny Bruce. One must "fight the sentimental lie of purity and the dirty little secret" wherever one meets it, inside oneself or in the world outside. The second is, in the "adventure of self-consciousness," to discover the limits of oneself and become aware of something beyond oneself. "A man must be self-conscious enough to know his own limits," Lawrence writes, "and to be aware of that which surpasses him" (459).

Here Lawrence and I begin to diverge, for Lawrence identifies that which surpasses the self as a mysterious life force urging him to "smash up the vast lie of the world" so as to make the "very great reality" of freedom possible. Lawrence is right: freedom is a very great reality; and it does mean "freedom from lies." But the vast lie of the world is not so easily smashed, no matter how strong Lawrence's infantile

impulse. More importantly, Lawrence does not fully confront the historically specifiable forces in the social world which perpetuate the lie of oneself and of one's "all-importance." Kill the vast lie of the social world, Lawrence argues, the "lie of purity and the dirty little secret," and all the other monstrous lies which lurk under the cloak of that "one primary lie" will be disarmed, including the "lie of money" (460).

What Lawrence does not reckon with here is just how profitable the lies are. In a time when the names of popular magazines reflect a narrowing of consciousness from *Life* to *People* to *Us* to *Self*, we have seen the lies perpetuated by their enormous profitability and the expanding network of communication systems available to extend their profitability. *Bovarysme* has become the stuff of paranational industries. Even as I wrote that sentence, the telephone rang and a strange man, purporting to have dialed the wrong number twice, intimated his frustration at having to defer satisfaction yet a third time. Clearly, in some ways--albeit distorted and often indirect--the "dirty little secret" is out. Killing the "purity lie" has not rendered the "money-lie" defenseless.

Despite Lawrence's determination to fight the fight for freedom, moreover, he was himself unable to escape the vicious circle of self-enclosure. The only alternative he could conceive to the "intoxication of loneliness" was one in which he would remain the privileged term in the binary opposition of man and woman, both reduced to mysterious life forces essentially indistinguishable from the great life force which surpasses them--and into which each, having fused, lapses out again. Here we must let Lawrence go. He is part of the problem, not the solution.

At the end of *Sons and Lovers*, picking up quite where Pater's aesthetic historicism leaves off, Lawrence *cum* Paul Morel sets himself walking toward the "city's gold phosphorescence." There, he too offers a determined resistance to the lure of ego disintegration in Heraclitean

flux or ontological floating. He will not float off into space, but walk resolutely and "quickly" toward the town, its "humming" activity as well as its "glowing" lights.

He does not find there, however, the kinds of connections he had lost when he made the turning from his family home and Miriam's door. He will find only what he is looking for: a mate, a complement to his searching psyche desiring to ground itself not in the social world but in his own body and, beyond that, the great life force. He and Frieda will "come through" the boundaries of their two selves to maintain a dynamic "twin star equilibrium" like that of the *Dioscuri* Pater looked to in "Emerald Uthwart." The two of them together will play house in various settings, but never cease to be "derelicts," twin stars in traveling exile.

Neither their marriage nor Frieda's tolerance of Lawrence's theoretical adventures will cure him, however, of the addiction he shares with other Modernists going on different adventures in different forms and styles: that impulse to follow down the "strange lanes of hell, more and more intensely alone." To Pater's manifesto in the "Conclusion" Lawrence gives but a small twist when he yearns to journey on alone, his "soul . . . ever more vividly embodied/Like a flame blown whiter and whiter/In a deeper and deeper darkness/Ever more exquisite, distilled in separation." As we have seen, to embrace loneliness is to elude definition. It is also indicative of the sort of discomfort with oneself displayed in Lawrence's split self-portrait in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the wheelchair-ridden Clifford giving the lie to Lawrence's idealized self-image in *Mellors*. If Lawrence is seeking escape from self-enclosure, he is going the wrong way.

In the work of Lawrence too, then, where the "obvious marks of modernism" (310) are absent if one construes it as Frank Kermode does mainly in terms of technical innovations, the "physical embodiment of a decisive modern consciousness" (Raymond Williams 2) is present. Kermode remarks that Lawrence's "poems are not like Eliot's, he knew but did not

imitate the Futurists, he largely ignored the kind of experiments with presentation and time sequence found in Conrad, and he hated Joyce." Whereas the "revolutionary tactics of Dada and the dream images of Surrealism had no effect on him," he "made his own innovations, and discovered his own tradition." *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* are "closer to George Eliot and Hardy than to the other great experimental fiction of the time--Joyce's, Proust's, Kafka's" (Kermode 310). Though of course it is necessary to discriminate modernisms, a myopic focus on form and stylistic innovation tends to make critics insensitive to all but the most "radical" breaks with the narrative method native to Realism. In privileging stream of consciousness over defining social and historical circumstance, Lawrence takes enormous liberties with presentation and time sequence, as does Virginia Woolf.

Lawrence figures among the other great names of Modernism, moreover, in the shift defined by Herbert Read as that from representational to perceptual or conceptual order. In that shift, marked by Pater in particular, Impressionism in general, two of the fundamental features of Modernism are present: the break from historical time to metahistorical temporality; and the preoccupation with a fractured inner space which is the subjective correlative of the discontinuities enforced by the conditions of modern city life, on the one hand, the conscious repudiation of tradition, on the other.

"There was no Time, only Space," Lawrence writes in that concluding passage of *Sons and Lovers*. What is left of time is what space has become there: an extension of consciousness. Both spatial and historical frameworks are swallowed up in consciousness. And time specifically is reduced from history to temporality or duration experienced as variable intervals of consciousness. Again now, not only history but phenomena existing in space, and indeed human beings themselves, have been obviated by projection. Consciousness is all. The mimetic as well as the narrative method has been exchanged for a mythical method amounting to projection: a rearranging, necessitating

an erasing, of the details of actual life so as to record the highly selective or express the highly exclusive needs of consciousness: "what did he care that he wasted her?"

As Raymond Williams has long reminded us, it is in the experience of the modern city that that decisive modern consciousness has its beginnings. Repudiation of that experience as one of "struggle, indifference, loss of purpose, loss of meaning" takes an anti-bourgeois stance in discursive modes destabilizing the "fixed forms of an earlier period of bourgeois society" (Williams 239, 130). The "haunting ideal of a poetic prose" which was born, for Baudelaire, out of the "exploration of huge cities, out of the medley of their innumerable interrelations" (*Paris Spleen* x), gives way to frustration, disgust, alienation, and *ennui*. The intoxication of the crowd yields to the intoxication of loneliness: each soul traveling the strange lanes of the city, fusing in moments of recognition or identification and unfusing again in its own isolation, "strangest of all strange companions, and best." The impulse to seek defining and upholding connections embodied in Paul Morel's resolute movement toward the town is thwarted by that crowded, competing, and fleeting yet monotonous surge of life subjected to a forced and artificial production which so repelled Sebastian van Storck.

Baudelaire's resistance to the destabilizing intoxication is evidenced perhaps in the tight formal structures by which he turned mud into gold, *mal* into *fleurs*. Destabilization of such fixed forms may have expressed radical rejection of a life "agitated, exigent, unsatisfying," but no such resistance. From Rimbaud (and Malcolm Lowry) to T.S. Eliot, resistance gives way to abandonment, defeat, retreat, finally outright denial and the Pyrrhic triumph of transfiguration: a "higher and more consistent harmony," in Pater's words, the order achieved by what Blackmur calls the "rationally constructed imagination." Thus art as myth yields to a new Classicism by which order is imposed on the materials of modern disorder. Using the

materials of art and art history, the new Classical or mythical method is "simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance" to contemporary history dismissed as an "immense panorama of futility and anarchy."

The irony of the Modernist discontinuities, of course, is nostalgia: after the turning away from home and the repudiation of tradition, the yearning backwards, and that "aesthetic reconstruction" of the past to which we have been referring as aesthetic historicism. That tightrope stretched by the *avant-garde* between moments with no before or after makes, as we have seen, for an insupportable vertigo. Fear of falling makes the Modernist cling--if not, as in Pater's case, to the net of things as they are, albeit idealized--to the net of things as they were, also idealized. Hence the "cultural pessimism" that Raymond Williams identifies arising from "a conviction that there is nothing but the past to be won" (124).

Hence too the process by which the practitioners of "radical" critique revert to conservative fatalism even as their "radical" innovations and *avant-garde* attitudes stabilize as a new orthodoxy. As we have seen in Pater's case, however, the reversion is often more extreme than the lame sort of "conservative radicalism" Carolyn Williams demonstrates in her commendation of Pater's "radical conservatism." The *avant-garde*, insulated from the worst shocks of economic crisis, is seldom forced to confront let alone to engage in "active struggle with the concrete problems" of social and economic survival (Caudwell 317). It is not surprising, then, that as Christopher Caudwell saw more clearly than Raymond Williams, the Modernists could not take the "difficult creative road--that of refashioning the categories and technique of art so that it expresses the new world coming into being and is part of its realization" (319).

When real conflict erupts, as Bernardo Bertolucci demonstrates so clearly in his epic film *1900*, the *avant-garde* will simply go home again, there to take up the rights and privileges it has traditionally

enjoyed. It will seek the sanctuary of its own real defining interests. That is what Marx's theory of history as the history of class struggle means. Caudwell ought well to have predicted that, as Victor Paananen observes in his review of Williams' *Politics of Modernism*, "Modernism would give birth to a body of critical theory that would stop progress toward new art--and thereby impede progress toward 'the new world'--both by being canonized as the new orthodoxy in the universities and by generating a socially blind or even consciously reactionary body of critical theory" (499). Thus the practitioners of "radical" critique fall back from the *avant-garde* not merely to "cultural pessimism," but to reaction and retrenchment.

That is how we have arrived at the impasse which Modernism as a literary mode and the "non-historical fixity of post-modernism" in critical theory have represented, and which Williams has attempted to remove in *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (35). Victor Paananen's review provides a useful recapitulation of Williams' argument. Picking up where he left off in *The Country and the City*, Williams explores the history of Modernism as a literary mode produced by writers who, having left behind "relationships in depressed, declining and narrowing communities" (Williams 131), arrived in the city as exiles and recorded in their work the experience of the City as a "loss of belief in the possibility of any meaning or hope for the future" (Paananen 496). The techniques which they used to record that experience, initially innovative and radically anti-bourgeois, stabilized both as the "most reductive versions of human experience" ever purveyed and as a "determined refusal of any genuinely alternative social and cultural order" (Williams 130, 124). Given their position as exiles, or simply as marginalized bourgeois, the Modernists were not inclined to see the very real networks of relationship being forged in neighborhoods, work places, and community centers of all sorts. Their solipsistically distorted visions, however, ultimately gave rise to a

body of critical theory which has dominated thinking in the academy for several decades now. Williams discriminates that body of theory as

a version, now increasingly false and misleading, of Saussure in linguistics; a version of individualist human sources and intentions from Freud and psychoanalysis; a rationalized abstraction of autonomous systems, which had been the theoretical defense of those bourgeois dissidents who had primarily constituted the avant-garde, against not only bourgeois society but the claims of any active, self-making (including revolutionary) society. (171)

The effect of Althusserian Structuralism, then, and of Derridean Deconstruction, as practiced in the academy, has been to preclude the claims of human agents active in history. What the critical techniques given currency by the academic industries of Structuralism and Deconstruction have excluded, Williams argues, is the "socially and historically specifiable agency of [the] making" of a text (172).

That is what I have tried to include in my own history of Pater's discourse because, as I have argued, the problem of aesthetic historicism there disclosed is too large and too consequential to be addressed by a discourse of impotence disseminated by academic theorists "unified," like Weimar intellectuals, "only by [their] negations" (Williams 175). The way out of aesthetic confinement and back onto a historical ground where effective human agency is again acknowledged cannot be forged by critics whose techniques render them socially blind.

That a way out be found is imperative, however, for the consequences of Paterian aestheticism can be seen and need to be articulated in shocking terms. Children living on the margins of flourishing social and sexual exchange are driven to kill each other for a pair of brand-name tennis shoes. Using the techniques of *avant-garde* cinema, Madison Avenue advertising producers rearrange the details of modern life to substitute an idealizing distortion for the reality of a ghetto basketball court and invade their young viewers' minds with the viciously seductive message: "You've got the love [of the game], all you need is the shoes." Women are willing to lose all sensation in their breasts so as, by means of implants, to simulate perfection in the eye of the perceiver. By comparison, adulteration of the *Verdi Requiem*

to accompany a gentrified suburban jogger who assaults the viewer thus--
 "I'll make it real simple. These cushions [in her shoes] get rid of
 these cushions [on her thighs]"--is a very minor deformation. What is
 at stake here is not high or bourgeois culture, but human agency.

Technology privately owned by shareholders united by their very
 positive and very effective resolution to profit by such manipulations
 quite literally has the power to control people's minds and possess
 people's bodies. Having deconstructed the categories by which to resist
 such invasions, academic theorists, playing indiscriminately with
 techniques properly specific to Structuralism, Deconstruction, Freudian
 psychoanalysis, or even Marxism, leave human beings defenseless against
 the onslaughts of technology privately held hostage to the profit
 motive.

We cannot even know what is happening to us, let alone how to
 fight back. For, as E.P. Thompson writes in his vigorous polemic
 against Althusserian Structuralism, *The Poverty of Theory*,

the advances of historical materialism, its supposed
 "knowledge," have rested--it turns out--upon one slender and
 rotten epistemological pillar ("empiricism"); when Althusser
 submitted this pillar to a stern interrogation it shuddered
 and crumbled to dust; and the whole enterprise of historical
 materialism collapsed in ruins around it. Not only does it
 turn out that men have never "made their own history" at all
 (being only Träger or vectors of ulterior structural
 determinations) but it is also revealed that the enterprise of
 historical materialism--the attainment of historical
 knowledge--has been misbegotten from the start, since "real"
 history is unknowable and cannot be said to exist. (194)

As if the annihilation of history by ideology were not a sufficient
 negation, Deconstruction pushes us one step further toward the abyss by
 assuring us that as a linguistic construct ideology is in fact no more
 than textuality and is, like a text, undecidable. T.S. Eliot need fear
 no more: no human voices will wake us; we can drift in peaceful
 oblivion. We are all determined by linguistic systems any expression of
 which means too much to be deciphered with any determinacy. We are
 determined by that which is indeterminable. It is a sad pass to which
 the history of Western thought has come--one which looks very much like
 a rationale for doing, and indeed saying, nothing.

It is the factitiousness of that impasse which Williams seeks to reveal in *The Politics of Modernism* and which Thompson explodes in *The Poverty of Theory*. In identifying the consequences outside the academy of the canonization of a reductive version of Modernism within the academy, Williams both clarifies the problem and points the way toward a solution. As Paananen summarizes those consequences,

The great cities which produced the Modernist consciousness became the centers for the creation and transmission of television programming; what had been the practice and content of the art of the few major figures of Modernism has, with the endorsement of the educational system, become the norm for the media industry. . . . What had been avant-garde practice in the cinema has returned in the highly effective manipulative techniques of advertising. What is billed as the "global village" of television is nothing of the kind; it is the domination of a few centers which transmit the modernist outlook for large profits. (497)

What that Modernist outlook is should require no restatement here.

As for the way beyond it, one must look not only to the theoretical resources provided by Voloshinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Bakhtin's and Medvedev's *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*, but to the example of critics who, refusing to be hobbled by chimerical restraints, simply attempt to do what the New Conformists say cannot be done. The challenge is not to participate in what Thompson aptly calls "revolutionary psychodramas (in which each outbids the other in adopting ferocious verbal postures)" (195). There is no such thing as a revolutionary criticism. The challenge is, as Paananen puts it, "to write an applied Marxist criticism" (498). What that means, Williams says, is "to see how, in the very detail of composition, a certain social structure, a certain history, discloses itself" (185). What that implies, let me add, is that literature has something to tell us about our shared historical experience: how we can both confront and surmount the limits it has placed upon us.

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