"WALTER PATER AS CRITIC"

(submitted as M.A. Thesis)

by

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

The aim of this thesis is to gain some insight into Walter Pater's critical approach. The title, "Walter Pater as critic", involves not only an appreciation of Pater's achievement as a critic but of his critical attitude to life, his continual search for some higher ideal, and his constant evaluation of the relationship between art, morality, life and himself.

In order to avoid any initial preconceptions of Pater's work, the usual procedure of beginning with a chapter examining the author's background and biography has been reversed. Pater, the man, and his milieu is examined in the Final Section of the thesis by which stage it is hoped that such a discussion will confirm the estimate of Pater's aspirations and achievement rather than prejudice it.

Section A is a chronological survey of the development of Pater's aesthetic ideas. We show how the empiricism of "The Renaissance" (which nevertheless did have moral undertones) is resolved in the "aesthetic moment", where art for Pater represents a sublimation of life rather than, as is generally supposed, an escape from it. Pater, by closer integration of form and matter attempts to achieve a greater intensification of this "moment", which is his idea of "truth" in the flux of relativism. By means of the "Mona Lisa" symbol he attempts the perpetuation of this "moment", which, he feels, is perhaps capable of accumulating all the experience of

history, of death in life, of humanity. In this chapter we see that Pater's concepts of the "aesthetic moment" and of "anders-streben" have been approximated by other artists at various times, while the Mona Lisa symbol is part of a "femme fatale" tradition that was evolving in the Nineteenth Century.

After the publication of "The Renaissance" in which he had formulated the above ideas, Pater, perhaps disconcerted by the misinterpretation of his ideas, embarks on a period of experiment. We see how, during this period of his life, from 1873 to 1885 Pater was attempting new forms of literature such as the Imaginary Portrait, in which he could express himself imaginatively within a controlled aesthetic form.

In "An English Poet", there is a unique representation of a young man's physical awakening of an emergent awareness of life which is never repeated by Pater. On the other hand, the young man's devotion to language marks what is to become Pater's predominant interest. This emphasis on language is further developed in "Marius, the Epicurean" "Gaston de Latour", "Style", and "Plato and Platonism".

The "Houghton MS.", Pater's other unpublished work of this period expressed most concisely Pater's integration of morality and aesthetics; for in the intolerance of the Victorian Age he aspires to a state with ideal moral and ethical standards which is pervaded by a fusion of "Logos", language, man's only permanent possession, and the Hegelian "Zeitgeist" or "Time-Spirit".

The consciousness of morality that was latent in "The Renaissance" is seen emerging in the essays on "Wordsworth" and "Measure for Measure", where Pater emphasizes humanity, sympathy and the importance of a code of ethics involving greater flexibility in the consideration of the individual circumstance.

In "Marius the Epicurean", set in the Rome of Marcus Aurelius, Pater indirectly equates the "temper" of the time, its religious insecurity coupled with material wealth, its intolerance with that of the Victorian Age and uses Marius, as his mouthpiece in an attempt both to seek a solution to his religious doubts and, like "An English Poet", to aspire to a perfect utilization of the precious gift of language.

The doubts of Marius are the doubts of Pater, and one wonders whether the excuse given for his non-committal to Christianity, the ratiocination of the suspension of judgement fundamental to Platonic Dialectic and Hegelianism is not a rationalisation of Pater's own temperamental tentativeness.

This "suspension of judgement" is crucial in Pater's attitude to criticism. The belief that nothing except man's individual perceptions can be valid in the flux of relativity lead to the argument that no opinions or judgements are ever finally irrefutable.

In "Style" and "Plato and Platonism" Pater connects this concept to the "essay". It is in literature, in the essay form that Pater finds some compromise combining the formal aesthetic discipline of art and the warmth and sympathy of humanity to an ideal of Style.

Thus in Pater's mind, art and the problems of life are inextricably connected. Here is no "hedonist", no adherent to the "art"for art's sake" creed. In the development of Pater's aesthetic ideas we see the emergence of an implicit moral attitude of the critic, continually evaluating the standards of art, life and himself, ever searching for some higher ideal.

In Section B, an examination of Pater's theories of criticism reveals that, contrary to the accepted criticism of Pater, he has evolved definite aesthetic criteria. Furthermore, his subjectivity is conscious and controlled. In conformity with his Hegelian beliefs he insists that only the subjective impression is reliable and refuses to judge since no conclusions are ever finally valid.

We see how Pater's historicism and his attempt to form a cultural appreciation in his reader by creating an atmosphere, or a "temper" are particularly valuable, how Pater's subjectivity is indeed part of a sincere desire to present to the reader his own "inner vision".

Pater's art criticism is not art criticism in the accepted sense, but "cultural" evaluation; for his aim is to promote not visual appreciation but a "cultural feeling" for the painter and his milieu. Indeed, Pater's work plays a significant role in the evolution of this Nineteenth Century tradition of art-culture criticism which is manifested today in the work of Bernard Berenson.

Pater's literary criticism is distinguished by his tolerant approach, his breadth of vision seen in his appreciation of authors as dissimilar as Sir Thomas Browne and Prosper Merimee, in his modern approach to "Measure for Measure" and even in his high regard for Wordsworth who, as Matthew Arnold points out, had not yet received his just "deserts". Certainly, Pater's work is uneven; he seems to be unable or unwilling to appreciate the mystic strangeness of Coleridge's poetry and writes a most mundane essay on Feuiller's "La Morte". Yet, the atmosphere evoked in the essay on Wordsworth, the insight displayed in the "Measure for Measure" and "Love's Labour's Lost" essays have not perhaps been sufficiently recognised. And Pater's qualities are particularly evident if we compare his work to that of other critics.

In the last Chapter of Section B, we examine the "Essay on Style", pointing out that there was a definite awareness of style in Pater's time, possibly as a concrete security in the world of doubt. Pater's style is the incarnation of his attitude to art, life and criticism. Besides its intense sincerity which sometimes results in those interminable sentences in which Pater seems bent on recapturing every nuance, every shade of meaning, Pater's style also reveals a fine poetic sensibility to verbal texture. His consciousness of verbal texture is, of course, allied to Pater's adherence to the concrete, symbolic of his desperate hold on life, fearing, yet fascinated by the looming advent of death. This morbid preoccupation with death pervades

his work. Pater fears the abstract, yet he is continually moving in its direction. His empiricism expressed in "The Renaissance" contrasts with the abstraction ideal of music, or the Mona Lisa symbol, while in "Style" the "mot juste" is not absorbed by the ideal of Style; there are often moments where the abundance of images challenges the architectonic aspect of Style, resulting in an atmosphere of hazy confusion.

Subjectivity versus "impersonality" is another conflict which pervades Pater's work. The sincere aspiration of the artist to present his inner vision as closely as possible vies with the impersonality of the aesthetic moment in "The Renaissance' and in "Style". Somehow Pater resolves the conflict by the merging of individualism with the ideal.

In order to illustrate both the virtues and defects of Pater's style, we have analysed certain passages and also compared Pater's style with that of Ruskin and Matthew Arnold.

What emerges, we hope, is a clearer understanding of Pater, the critic, the stylist and the moralist, for Pater's style merges all these aspects into a coherent, if sometimes tortuous, sincere attempt to convey to the reader his appreciation of the finer values and beauties of life and art.

In Section C, we describe on the one hand the main trends of the Victorian Age, its materialism, its insensitivity, its insecurity and its intolerance, while on the other hand, we present a portrait of Pater as seen by his contemporaries.

In "A Final Estimate" we show how T.S. Eliot's judgement is indeed accurate that Pater, far from being an adherent to the "art for art's sake" creed, believed like Matthew Arnold in "art for life's sake". He was, like Arnold, a critic not only of literature and art, but of life and its more profound issues. Pater, however, displays more sensitivity than Arnold, a far greater awareness of language and of life.

His significance in the English Critical Tradition is not only due to his influence on Moore, Hopkins, Symons, Johnson, Wilde and Yeats, but to his anticipation of modern introspection and of the versatile flexibility of prose seen today in the works of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. What is most important, is Pater's critical consciousness, his constant desire to present to the reader his inner vision and to induce in the reader an appreciation of beauty and the finer values of life.

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SECTION A

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PATER'S AESTHETIC IDEAS - TOWARDS A COMPROMISE

INTRODUCTION

Walter Pater has been, without doubt, one of the most misinterpreted writers of the last century, not only because of the crippling prejudices of his age but also because of his own unwillingness to make a definitive statement of his beliefs and aspirations. Today he is still misunderstood because of our tendency to "label" ideas, ideals, eras and personalities - a tendency which Pater wisely avoided if, at times perhaps a little too strenuously.

Pater has acquired the label of "aesthete" or of "impressionist critic". His name is associated with Pre-Raphaelitism, and with the English Aesthetic or Decadent Movement.

In the Victorian Debate Raymond Chapman comments:

> The British public were having a holiday from the idea that art was full of moral seriousness. It was encouraged by Walter Pater (1839 - 94), a Fellow of Brasenose College, who was making himself a hierophant of art. He was an oddity even for Oxford; an ugly man who admired physical beauty; an admirer too of Ruskin and Arnold; but opposed to their views on art and society.[1]

This statement is characteristic of the generalization and exaggeration enveloping Pater, which can only be overcome by a thorough examination of all his work. For it is only by examining all his work that one becomes aware of the fact that underlying

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[1] Raymond Chapman: "The Victorian Debate" - English literature and society 1832-1901, (London, 1968), p. 237.

Pater's thoughts on the Renaissance, on Greek Mythology and Plato, underlying his "semi-autobiographical quasi-philosophical fiction of "Marius, the Epicurean" and "The Imaginary Portraits" was a search for some higher ideal, for some solution to the dilemma of Pater, the Victorian.

It was in literature that Pater saw a possible answer, not as an escape but as a means of evaluating and tentatively defining not only art but the relationship and reconciliation of art (in a general sense) and life with himself and his own ideas. This is the attitude of a critic.

Pater the aesthetician is Pater the critic attempting to formulate his ideas on artistic creation, on art and the critic, on art and religion, on art and morality, on art and history and on art and himself.

An important part of life for Pater was history which passes, and yet remains in our cultural tradition; the historic estimate was vital to criticism and it was therefore essential for the personality to be considered in relationtto his age.

Historic criticism postulates that

> Ages have their genius, as well as the individual; that in every age there is a peculiar ensemble of conditions which determines a common character in every product of that age ... that nothing man has projected from himself is really intelligible except at its own date, and from its proper point of view in the never-resting 'secular process', the solidarity of philosophy, of the intellectual life, with good common or general history.[2]

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[2]Walter Pater: Plato and Platonism, p.9-10.

A knowledge of the man and his milieu is certainly necessary in order to appreciate his artistic creations or his ideas on art, religion or criticism; but it is often more beneficial to use as a starting point, the man's work involving his artistic creation and the expression of his ideas. For if the reader, whilst still unaware of other considerations approaches the writer's work directly, he can only be impeded by his own prejudices and misinterpretations.

It is for this reason that I have reversed the usual procedure and placed my consideration of Pater and his milieu at the end of this work, rather than at the beginning. For the sake of convenience, the thesis has been divided into three main sections, Section A, examining Pater's ideas on art, and its relation to life, his aesthetic ideas; Section B, examining Pater's criticism and style in theory and practice; and Section C, a consideration of the man and his milieu as it affects our final estimate of Pater's achievement and his significance as critic.

It is, of course, most difficult to separate Pater's ideas on art and criticism, for in fact, his ideas on art and its relation to life fall within the evaluatory sphere of criticism. I have, however, attempted such a separation in order to trace clearly the chronological development of his ideas in Section A, for an awareness of the evolution of these ideas on life and art is essential to an understanding of his aspirations and enables us in Section B to concentrate completely on

Pater's theories of criticism and style and his achievements in these fields.

It is only after we have related his work to the temperament of the man and the atmosphere of his environment in Section C, that we will be able to arrive at an adequate understanding and estimate of the ideas, aspirations and significance of Walter Pater as critic.

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CHAPTER I

GENESIS

In 1864, Walter Pater, aged twenty-six, was elected to a fellowship at Brasenose College, Oxford. Up to this time there is little indication of the thoughts and ideas fermenting in the mind of the shy reticent intellectual young man who, in 1862, had taken only a second-class pass in the Final Classical Schools. The illustrious Professor of Greek, Jowett, seemed to recognise some promise in him when he commented: "I think you have a mind that will come to great eminence,"[1] while the fact that Pater was elected in 1864 to the "Old Mortality", a cultural group founded by John Nichol, (later Professor of English Literature at Glasgow University) testifies that he was held in high regard; for he was elected in the company of brilliant young intellectuals who were later to become distinguished leaders of English culture and thought, Ingram Bywater who succeeded Jowett as Professor of Greek in 1893, Dicey who later became Professor of International Law at Oxford, T.H. Green and Nettleship, eminent philosophers, and Swinburne.

It was to this "Old Mortality" that Pater in the year of his election presented "Diaphaneité", his first extant literary piece which, with other essays written in this period of his life seems

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[1] A.C. Benson: Walter Pater (London, 1907), p.9.

to form a group in which we see the genesis of his ideas on art and life - ideas which he was to pursue as his life's vocation, ideas which were to become the beginning and end of his very existence.

Referring to this group of essays, Germain d'Hangest in his treatise on Pater, observes:

> Si nous lisons dans leur ordre ces quelques textes, ils nous apparaissent, aux differences d' occasion près, comme les étapes d'une méditation unique.....[2]

Indeed, a chronological examination of all Pater's work reveals a definite development in his aesthetic and critical ideas and their relation to life.

The word, "Diaphaneité", is intended to convey an impression of transparency, neutrality and absence of colour - the predominant tone of the essay itself. This tone partly represents our "colourless uninteresting existence,"[3] so dreary because of the pressing demands of everyday life. The problem of making this dull existence more meaningful is to become one of the springboards of Pater's aesthetic aspirations, and the type of character in "Diaphaneité" who "crosses rather than follows the main currents of the world's life"[4] is an idealisation of the reaction which Pater considers to be most valid

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[2] Germain d'Hangest: Walter Pater L'Homme et L'oeuvre I (Paris 1961), p. 89.

[3] Walter Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 252.

[4] Walter Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 248.

at this stage of his career, a reaction which is, in fact, a retreat from the challenge of life.

This unworldly young "man-spirit", through his unsophisticated intellectual strength has been able to overcome - even in his characteristically passive manner, the tribulations of life which he treats "in the spirit of art."[5] The desire to treat life in the spirit of art is to be one of the principal themes in "The Renaissance", Pater's important volume published in 1873; for it is by such a mode of existence that Pater hopes to make life more meaningful.

"Diaphaneité's" protagonist is the first of many typical Paterian youths, aesthetic, intellectual, beautiful, "like a Greek statue", wistful, controlled and with a quality of "moral sexlessness"[6] which is reinforced by Pater's continued reference to him as "it".

> Such a character is like a relic from the classical age, laid open by accident to our alien modern atmosphere.[7]

This idea of a character from antiquity reborn in an alien modern atmosphere is developed in later works into mythical "god-characters"

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[5] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 249.

[6] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 253.

[7] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 251.

such as Denys l'Auxerrois and Apollo. Although John Smith Harrison examines Pater's debt to Heine's "Gods in Exile" which Pater mentions in his essay on Leonardo da Vinci (via a reference to Gautier's "Guide de l' amateur au Musée du Louvre Suivi de la vie et des oeuvres de quelques peintres,") he does not seem to have noticed that already in "Diaphaneité" this idea of a god reborn in the modern age was latent in Pater's mind.

Indeed, this pale, wistful, veiled priestly figure "who is ever looking for the breaking of a light he knows not where about him"[8] and "who notes with strange heedfulness the faintest paleness in the sky"[9] resembles Marius the Epicurean, anticipating his quest for some final perfection and his reluctance to involve himself in life.

Pater turns from the idealised figure in "Diaphaneité" to Coleridge in his review of Coleridge's writings published anonymously in the "Westminster Review" in 1866.

D'Hangest calls this essay - "en quelque sorte une théorie de l' assentiment à rebours."[10]

Here, for the moment Pater seems to have solved the problem of dull existence, to have triumphed over the dead world of routine

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[8] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.251.

[9] Ibid.

[10] D'Hangest: p.95.

and he contrasts his new ideas with those of Coleridge who, he feels has reached an impasse in a blind search during which he was always

> restlessly scheming to apprehend the absolute; to affirm it effectively; to feel it acknowledged.[11]

It is essential to realise that Pater's aesthetic ideas are so closely integrated with his critical and literary ideas, indeed with his attitude to religion, morality and existence, that to separate these aspects of his thought is almost impossible. Indeed, Pater's ideas on art are his ideas on life; for even at this stage of his career Pater is hoping to solve his problems in life through art.

The dilemma confronting both Coleridge and Pater was the result of the deluge of new philosophical and scientific theories sweeping over Victorian England and with these ideas came not only changes in theological outlook but also vast economic and social changes.

Evolutionary theories like those of Darwin caused perhaps some of the most fundamental and extensive changes in thought by challenging the traditional idea of an Absolute Deity, creator of a fixed universe, with the idea of continual change and development.

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[11] Pater: "Coleridge's Writings", English Critical Essays of the Nineteenth Century, ed. Edmund D. Jones, (Oxford, 1950), p.449.

"To the modern spirit" writes Pater, "nothing is, or can be rightly known except relatively under conditions..... The idea of 'the relative' has been fecundated in modern times by the influence of the sciences of observation. These sciences reveal types of life evanescing into each other by inexpressible refinements of change."[12]

Pater found inspiration and some confidence in the works of Goethe and Hegel. He had probably also read the two volumes of Goethe's Life by Lewes. It is known that Pater's sisters borrowed these volumes from the Taylorian Library in Oxford,[13] although the mere fact that Lewes was editor of the Westminster Review in which Pater's first essays appear makes it extremely likely that he had read the life of one whom he considered to be:

> The true illustration of the speculative temper....Goethe, to whom every moment of life brought its share of experimental, individual knowledge, by whom no touch of the world of form, colour and passion was disregarded.[14]

In the same way it seems obvious that Pater should have been imbued with the ideas of Hegel. His friend T.H. Green of the "Old Mortality" published an edition of Heine from a Hegelian standpoint while Caird wrote a monogram on Hegel; and Jowett,

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[12] Pater: Coleridge's Writings, p.423.

[13] See Anthony Ward: Walter Pater, The Idea in Nature (MacGibbon and Kee, 1966), p.27.

[14] Pater: Coleridge's Writings, p.423.

one of Pater's most influential lecturers, was a confirmed Hegel enthusiast. The Hegelian description of evolution maintained that the world was in the process of change, "neither random nor mechanical", that in this change or flux the "World Spirit" or "Geist" was continually revealing itself more fully, that this "flux" was necessary for the release of the 'Geist' and indeed, that the "flux" was part of the spirit itself.

"The description of change that Hegel gave, therefore, was doubly comforting to the Victorian" as it "effected a reconciliation between the idea of the 'flux' and the longing for security, for though the moment was fleeting, it carried in it 'the accumulated capital of the whole experience of humanity.' "[15]

In a world such as this, the most efficient means of finding truth is by cultivating the ability to discriminate and perpetuate "delicate and fugitive details."[16] Pater predicts a reaction against "hard and abstract moralities"[17] towards a "more exact estimate of the subtlety and complexity of our life."[18] This greater insight will result in more detailed and more subtle literary expression balancing the exactness of technical form.

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[15]Anthony Ward, p.46. Who quotes Pater in "Plato and Platonism", p.159.

[16]Pater: Coleridge's Writings, p.422.

[17]Ibid

[18]Ibid

It would be fallacious to assume that Pater means to diminish the importance of form. What he is aiming at is a more intense, more exact and more concrete use of words.

While Coleridge's artistic aim had been an attempt to order and to classify his ideas concerning life and art, Pater maintains that in the relative spirit 'one must hold ideas loosely';[19] dogmatism must be avoided. And so it is also that Pater objects to Coleridge's theory of the "esemplastic imagination". In fact, Coleridge's "esemplastic imagination" has a great deal in common with Pater's creation of aesthetic experience, as we shall see later, but it is the "almost mechanical, almost organic" aspect of the artistic assimilation to which Pater takes exception. This stage should be, according to Pater, "the most luminous and self-possessed phase of consciousness."[20]

To Pater, the ideal artist is a consummate craftsman, whose art involves the processes of analysis and painstaking refinement in order to achieve clarity. The importance of the intellect is concisely stated, and Pater also makes explicit the qualities which, he considers, differentiate the artist from the non-artist - the natural sensitivity to "moments of strange excitement" as well as the ability to combine or synthesize these moments into a

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[19] Pater: Coleridge's Writings, p. 427.

[20] Pater: Coleridge's Writings, p. 443.

balanced aesthetic whole through a projection of these concepts into external concrete form. This is, in fact, similar to Coleridge's own theory of the esemplastic imagination, only, Pater envisages the act of artistry as being conscious and intellectual rather than organic and spontaneous.

> Doubtless the idea, the intellectual element is the spirit and life of art. Still, art is the triumph of the senses and the emotions; and the emotions must not be cheated of their triumph, after all.[21]

As important as the intellect may be, one must not underestimate the role of the senses and the emotions in the final synthesis. Indeed, Pater points out that there are some distinct similarities in aesthetic experience and religious ecstasy. They are "the same yet different."[22]

Yet Pater feels that conventional religion, Coleridge's belief in Absolutism is "no longer congruous with the culture of the age." The only basis on which Pater can accept religious dogma is on the historical-cultural basis; for its significance has been nullified by the findings of science. What remains important for Pater is not the dogma itself but the aspiration of the creators of that dogma towards perfection. "That struggle is the substance, the dogma only its shadowy expression."[23]

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[21] Pater: Coleridge's Writings, p. 445.

[22] Pater: Coleridge's Writings, p. 449.

[23] Pater: Coleridge's Writings, p. 452.

Pater is certainly confident in 1866, even arrogant, but his own individual quest was just beginning. In his semi-autobiographical portrait, "The Child in the House", written in 1878, Pater, describing the young child's growing fascination for beauty and his promise of talent, comments, "could he have foreseen the weariness of the way!"[24]

Pater's vocation was to be a quest for the perfect ideal in life and art and the adjustment of the one to the other. It was to be a quest fraught with loneliness, a quest in which Pater was totally involved, which integrated his writing, his ideas on religion, art, literature, criticism and life, which in 1866 was, for Pater the "threadbare world" of dull routine.

d'Hangest comments that in Pater's work "Coleridge represent le passe dont on se detourne et Winckelman e'avenir auquel on aspire."[25]

Indeed, it will be noticed, as we have already indicated, that there is a definite pattern of development in Pater's aesthetic ideas. From the tentative idealism in "Diaphaneité", through the emphatic negation of absolutism in the essay on Coleridge, we see in this essay on Winckelmann the appearance of ideas which Pater is to develop most fully in "Studies in the Renaissance."

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[24] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 181.

[25] d'Hangest: Walter Pater, p. 90.

The tone of "moral sexlessness" in "Diaphaneité" is evident again in Winckelmann, who is presented as a figure similar to the "Diaphaneité" character but more defined, "ever jealously refining his meaning into a form" - an objective form."[26] To Winckelmann as to "Diaphaneité's" protagonist, "the antique world seemed more real than the present".[27] Pater here introduces his historicism which is closely linked with the idea of relativism. The past remains an integral part of our culture. As time shifts, so we leave history behind us "with a wistful sense of something lost"[28] and yet, the "accumulated experience of humanity" remains part of us.

It is ironical that T.S. Eliot should have developed this same idea in "Tradition and the Individual Talent", where he, Pater's severest critic, states:

> No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists.....What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them..... [therefore] ..... the past is altered by the present as much as the present is altered by the past.[29]

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[26] Pater: Renaissance, p.220.

[27] Pater: Renaissance, p.79.

[28] Ibid.

[29] T.S. Eliot: "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in The Sacred Wood, (Methuen, 1960), p.49.

But for Pater the past is infinitely richer than the "threadbare" existence of the present and this is where he differs from Eliot. What is important is the artist's attempt to recapture the past (an idea which is developed further in the essay on "Aesthetic Poetry".) The past is wistful with nostalgia, "a feeling of home-sickness" which Pater traces back to the primitive emotion evoked by the fear of death which brings in its wake a feeling of home-sickness and nostalgia for the perfection of this world.

These are not, of course, exclusively Paterian sentiments. A large proportion of Victorian poetry testifies to "la recherche du temps perdu" - the "Lady of Shalott", "Idylls of the King ", by Tennyson, "Tristan and Iseult" by Matthew Arnold, "The Ring and the Book" by Browning, as well as the very aspirations of the Pre-Raphaelite poets and painters such as Rossetti and William Morris - they all looked back with regret to the days "when wits were fresh and clear and life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames".[30] And they regarded the present world "where ignorant armies clash by night" as having "neither joy, nor love, nor light."[31]

Pater, looking to the ideal art of the Greeks, asks, "Can we bring down that ideal into the gaudy perplexed light of modern life?"

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[30] Matthew Arnold: The Scholar Gypsy 201-2, p.236 in The Poems of Matthew Arnold, (Oxford) 1922.

[31] Matthew Arnold: Dover Beach 33 and 37, p.402 in Poems.

For Pater, Hellenism extends beyond Matthew Arnold's idea of using Greek civilization as a cultural inspiration. It represents rather an ideal attitude towards life by successfully merging art and religion into concrete forms.

"The thoughts of the Greeks about themselves and their relation to the world generally" comments Pater, "were ever in the happiest readiness to be transformed into objects for the senses."[32]

At this point, Pater makes one of his most concise statements concerning art and the artist, a statement which he is to repeat at later stages in his career, without much modification.

> All art has a sensuous element [whether it be] colour, form, sound....in poetry a dextrous recalling of these, together with the profound, joyful sensuousness of motion.[33]

> The artist's medium is partly determined by chance but

> Different attitudes of the imagination have a native affinity with different types of sensuous form....The arts may thus be ranged in a series which corresponds to a series of developments in the mind itself.[34]

Pater considers painting, music and literature as romantic arts - arts suitable for the more complex mentality while sculpture, a more

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[32] Pater: Renaissance, p. 204.

[33] Pater: Renaissance, p. 209.

[34] Pater: Renaissance, p. 210.

objective form, indeed "pure form", is a more compatible medium for Hellenic culture, which is characterised by "breadth, centrality, blitheness and repose"[35] - profundity, unity, vividness and a certain element of tension within the form of stasis.

This is, of course, the ideal form to which the artist should aspire, but how can he achieve this ideal? Pater refers again to the process of precise selection, constant refinement and discipline which he had described in his essay on Coleridge.

> The base of all artistic genius is the power of conceiving humanity in a new striking, rejoicing way, of putting a happy world of its own creation in place of the meaner world of common days, of 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.[36]

This phrase "imaginative intellect" emphasises the intellectual power of the artist in creation, his conscious technique and his preoccupation with the formal aspect of his art. At the same time, however, there is a striking resemblance to the Coleridgean imagination in the selecting, ordering and synthesizing characteristics of Pater's creative act.

Coleridge in "Biographia Literaria" describes the ideal poet as one who

> brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative

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[35] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 227.

[36] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 213.

> worth and dignity. He diffuses the tone and spirit of unity that blends, and (as it were) fuses each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which it would exclusively appropriate the name of Imagination. That power, first put into action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though, gentle and unnoticed central 'laxis effertur habenis' reveals itself in the balance or reconcilement of opposite or discordant qualities; of sameness with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order.[37]

The difference between Pater and Coleridge is certainly not in the imaginative act, for Coleridge's selection, ordering and transforming, controlled by "the will and understanding" is just as conscious as Pater's"refraction, selecting, transforming" by the imaginative intellect. The difference is merely a matter of subordination. Pater has not yet arrived at his famous testimony of faith, but when he does, in the "Studies in the Renaissance", he will not subordinate "art to nature" and "the manner to the matter" as does Coleridge.

To Pater, the ideal in sculpture and poetry is to capture "the sharpness and reality of suddenly arrested life."[38] And he gives as an example of sculpture

> that line of youths [of the Panathenaic Frieze] on horseback, with their level glances, their proud patient lips, their chastened reins, their whole bodies in exquisite service.[39]

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[37] Coleridge: Biographia Literaria (Dent, 1908), p. 166.

[38] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 209.

[39] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 218.

In the same way, Browning is able to create "ideal" poetry because of his talent (shown in "Byron de nos jours") of perceiving his characters, throwing them into some situation and apprehending them "in some delicate pose of life in which for a moment they become ideal."[40]

The apprehension of this ideal moment in the flux is to become central to Pater's commonly accepted aesthetic creed.

> But to discriminate that moment,... what a cobweb of allusions, what double and treble reflexions of the mind upon itself, what an artificial light is constructed and broken over the chosen situation; on how fine a needle's point that little world of passion is balanced.[41]

Yet, in spite of its complexity, that captured "moment" "has the clear ring of a central motive."[42]

The tension in repose of the aesthetic "moment" is a balance of emotion and intellect held in check by form, which unifies it and gives it shape. For a while, the aesthetic experience will prove a temporary solution to Pater's search for "ideal perfection" in this gaudy world.

It is not without significance that Pater, mentions, even though disapprovingly, Winckelmann's statement that "the beauty of art, like tears shed at a play, gives no pain."[43] He comments later, concerning Marius the Epicurean:

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[40] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 214.

[41] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 215.

[42] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 214.

[43] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 192.

> It had always been his policy, through all his pursuit of 'experience' to take flight in time from any too disturbing passion, from any sort of affection likely to quicken his pulses beyond the point at which the quiet work of life was practicable.[44]

Is this not perhaps why the "aesthetic moment" was important for Pater, as a refuge from threadbare life and its pressures?

Oscar Wilde in "The Critic as Artist", repeats this argument, saying that we must go to art for everything

> because art does not hurt us. The tears that we shed at a play are a type of the exquisite sterile emotions that it is the function of art to awake.[45]

- a passage truly reminiscent of the sterile beauty that Pater finds so pleasurable in "Diaphaneité" and "Winckelmann".

The implication of art being an escape from life (although it certainly does not embrace Pater's complete attitude to art - even at this stage) tends to bring in its wake several criticisms of Pater's aesthetic creed, one being that this creed negates any fixed criteria or standards in art. Surely the examples Pater quotes of ideal sculpture, (the young men on the frieze) and of ideal poetry, (Browning's "Byron de nos jours") are self-evident criteria. Indeed, it is precisely the "element of permanence, a standard of taste which genius confesses"[46] that makes Greek art so significant for Pater. He even quotes examples of "blitheness and

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[44] Pater: Marius, the Epicurean, p.189.

[45] Oscar Wilde: Works. (Collins, 1963), p.977.

[46] Pater: The Renaissance, p.199.

repose" in modern literature - the romances of Goethe and Victor Hugo. Pater believes, however, that it is possible for the artist to progress further -

> Let us understand by poetry all literary production which attains the power of giving pleasure by its form, as distinct from its matter.[47]

Henceforth, we find Pater positively committed in a more active struggle, which is to be one of the predominant themes of his "Renaissance" - the struggle of

> the intellect to see into the laws, the operation, the intellectual reward of every divided form of culture; but only that it may measure the relation between itself and them. It 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.[48]

This strenuous attempt to create perfect artistic form, and to impose it on life plays a major role in Pater's work. We have already noted Pater's comment in "The Child in the House", - "could he have foreseen the weariness of the way!" - and we shall see later how the weariness of Pater's struggle was to manifest itself in his style in a hesitancy and tentativeness, weariness and "ennui" similar to that which he identifies in Leonardo da Vinci as being evidence of

> the struggle between the reason and its ideas, and the senses, the desire of beauty.[49]

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[47] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 230.

[48] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 229.

[49] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 112.

It would appear that Pater, as confident as he seems at this stage of his career, as arrogant as his attitude was towards absolutism in the essay on Coleridge was, in truth, unable to free himself from the shackles of traditional religion (in this respect Charles du Bos finds himself on common ground with Pater - "il s'accorde avec mon impossibilité de rejeter.")[50]

Whatever the reason may be, Pater's work is characterised by an indecision, by the lack of any positive committal, which, although it may be characteristic of the Hegelian ratiocination, or of the "suspension of judgement" ideal in Montaigne's essays and the Platonic Dialectic as described by Pater, seems to point to a tension or conflict haunting all his work - from which he may have wished to escape as strongly as he may have wished to escape from "the modern world, with its conflicting claims, its entangled interests."[51]

The essay on "Aesthetic Poetry" certainly implies that Pater was attracted by the concept of art as a refuge from life; for he calls the world of aesthetic poetry an "artificial earthly paradise" which is the title of a poem by William Morris, whose poetry is the subject of this essay. Morris described the Earthly Paradise as -

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[50] Charles Du Bos: Journal Vol. I. (Paris, 1946), p. 230.

[51] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 227.

a shadowy isle of bliss
Midmost the beating of the steely sea
Where tossed about all hearts of men must be;
Whose ravening monsters mighty men shall slay,
Not the poor singer of an empty day.[52]

Here there is no relation with life; for this place is more sublimated, "fainter and more spectral"[53] than even the distant world of Greek or medieval poetry. The desire to recapture the past, mentioned in the essay on Winckelmann, this "inversion of homesickness", this incurable thirst for the sense of escape which no actual form of life satisfies",[54] Pater again identifies with the primitive fear of death. This fear, which intensifies the "continued suggestion of the shortness of life"[55] is often the cause of an urgent desire for beauty, particularly the beauty of bygone ages, and Pater sees it exemplified in the Hellenism of the Victorian Age.

He also repeats his thesis that the "composite experience of all ages is part of each one of us,"[56] explaining that while it is impossible to "deduct from that experience", to actually go back in time, it is possible for us to isolate a cherished period of the past, to throw it into relief and to "be divided against ourselves in zeal for it."[57]

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[52] William Morris: The Earthly Paradise in the London Book of English Verse edited by Herbert Read and Dobree.

[53] Walter Pater: Aesthetic Poetry in Selected Works (Heineman, 1948), edited by Richard Aldington.

[54] Walter Pater: Aesthetic Poetry, p. 83.

[55] Ibid

[56] Walter Pater: Aesthetic Poetry, p. 82.

[57] Ibid

On the other hand, it is also possible for the artist to create a symbol which becomes an incarnation of "the composite experience of all ages." The very medieval Medea in "Jason" by William Morris, described by Pater as having "a hundred touches of the medieval sorceress....her mystic charges are Christabel's,"[58] seems to anticipate Pater's symbol of the Mona Lisa, "The idea of humanity...scoring up in itself, all modes of thought and life."[59]

Pater's lurid appreciation of the poet's account of King Arthur's Tomb

> diffused with the maddening white glare of the sun and the tyranny of the moon ... the sorcerer's moon, large and feverish[60]

his description of the monastic love cult and the attenuated "Diaphaneité" - figures, the "frail somnambulistic androgynous beings"[61] wandering through the "Earthly Paradise" indicate a strange delight in the bizarre and, if not a momentary indulgence in erotic fantasy, certainly an understanding of this type of experience; for the first time we glimpse strange forces at work under the apparently imperturbable finesse of Walter Pater.

The main problem raised in this essay is, however, life in relation to art. Must life be reconciled with art or subordinated

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[58] Walter Pater: Aesthetic Poetry, p.83.

[59] Walter Pater: The Renaissance, p.126.

[60] Walter Pater: Aesthetic Poetry, p.79.

[61] Ibid

to it? Can art not perhaps capture the fleeting moments of the flux, perpetuate them into something enduring and at the same appease the gnawing nostalgia, the yawning cavern of death awaiting everyone and everything swept along by the "flux"?

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CHAPTER II

MUSIC AND THE SYMBOL - THE CULMINATION OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

> La Renaissance ... apparait surtout a Pater comme un elan vers la vie totale, vers le complet epanouissement de toutes les forces de l'etre.[1]

In 1873, Pater published "The Renaissance, Studies in Art and Poetry," a volume of great significance, in which he states his attitudes to criticism, to art, to history and to life - attitudes which are so integrated that to separate them would effect a fundamentally different tone in Pater's ideas. The Renaissance is a symbol for Pater of life in full bloom vibrantly involving man's total being.

In the Preface and Conclusion to The Renaissance, Pater comes to a temporary decision concerning life and art. In the "flux" of life nothing matters except the attempt to catch the evanescent moments of beauty and to enjoy them to the full; for they pass all too quickly and it is only in art that they can be intensely, passionately experienced and held, even if only for a short time. It is pointless to waste the very time which could be spent experiencing beauty in evolving abstract theories about its nature -

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[1] d'Hangest: Walter Pater Vol. I, p.164.

> for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass and simply for the moments' sake.[2]

"The love of art for art's sake" is the hope for the future. The tragic alternative is that these experiences will be "ringed around by" that "thick wall of personality" and imprisoned in the "narrow chamber of the individual mind."[3] Pater has the foresight to anticipate the dilemma of the artist who, escaping into art, retreats into a lonely "ivory tower" of subjectivity. This dilemma, he suggests, can be avoided by approaching art in as empirical a manner as possible.

It seems obvious if only from the urgency of Pater's style that his creed of "art for art's sake" was genuinely and sincerely conceived. Yet, perhaps because these ideas were not explained and presented in as detailed a manner as was necessary for the Victorian reading-public, Pater was misinterpreted as being hedonistic, and his ideology was condemned as bearing all the implications of immorality and decadence.

We shall examine these criticisms in periodicals such as "Blackwood's Review" and the "Quarterly" as well as Mallock's parody on Pater in his novel "The New Republic" and a letter from

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[2]Walter Pater: The Renaissance, p. 239.

[3]Walter Pater: The Renaissance, p. 235.

John Wordsworth[4] to Pater concerning the "Renaissance" - but in a later section, for they seem to be particularly indicative of the Victorian mental climate, which remained suspicious and hostile in spite of John Morley's (editor of the Fortnightly) recognition that Pater had

> no designs of interfering with the minor or major morals of the world; but only of dealing with what we may perhaps call the accenting portion of life.[5]

This statement is confirmed by Pater's grateful thanks

> for your explanation of my ethical point of view, to which I fancy some readers have given a prominence I did not mean it to have.[6]

Nevertheless, Pater was not selected as was his due by seniority as proctor of Brasenose College. John Wordsworth was selected instead, possibly - but not necessarily under pressure from Jowett, who had grown suspicious of Pater's moral character and teaching. The election certainly seems to suggest how many of his colleagues felt about "Studies in the Renaissance."

It is significant that in his second edition of the volume Pater ommitted the Conclusion -

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[4]John Wordsworth (1843-1911) Ecclesiastic and theological Scholar, grand-nephew of the poet, ex-pupil of Pater, Fellow of Brasenose - Bishop of Salisbury in 1885.

[5]John Morley: Mr. Parker's Essays the Fortnightly Review, Vol. XIII April 1873, p.476.

[6]Hirst: Early Life and Letters of John Morley (London 1927) Vol. I, p. 246.

> as I conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall.[7]

In the third Edition, Pater

> thought it best to reprint it ... with some slight changes which bring it closer to my original meaning,

and adds

> I have dealt more fully in "Marius the Epicurean" with the thoughts suggested by it.[8]

Jerome Bockley, in his article, "Pater and the Suppressed Conclusion" suggested that by withdrawing his conclusion in the second edition, Pater was "expressing a reluctance to subscribe to a thorough-going 'art for art's sake' creed."[9]

Pater certainly seemed embarrassed by the implications attributed to his creed. In his review of "A Novel by Mr. Oscar Wilde", Dorian Gray, Pater in 1891 complains of the book's "dainty Epicurean Theory" and continues

> a true Epicurean aims at a complete though harmonious development of man's entire organism. To lose the moral sense, therefore, for instance the sense of sin and righteousness ... is to lose, or lower organisation, to become less complete, to pass from a high to a lower degree of development.[10]

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[7] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 233.

[8] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 233.

[9] Bockley: Pater and the Suppressed Conclusion in Modern Language Notes, Vol. 65, April 1950, p. 221.

[10] Pater: A novel by Mr. Oscar Wilde in The Bookman, Vol. I, Nov. 1891, p. 60.

In "Marius the Epicurean" (1885) Pater states his opinion conclusively, remarking

> Yet there was some among his acquaintance who jumped to the conclusion that with the 'Epicurean style', he was making pleasure - pleasure as they so poorly conceived it - the sole motive of life

and he comments on their use of words like "hedonism" -

> Terms of large and vague comprehension - above all when used for a purpose avowedly controversial, have ever been the worst examples of what are called "question-begging terms", and in that late age in which Marius lived, ... the air was full of them.[11]

What indeed were the problems evoked by the tenets of the Introduction and Conclusion to "The Renaissance"?

Bosanquet in his Preface to "A History of Aesthetik" notes - "Aesthetic theory is a branch of philosophy and exists for the sake of knowledge and not as a guide to practice."[12]

Except for the fact that Pater is, in addition, emphasising the relation of beauty's evanescence to the flux, he is expressing the same idea as Bosanquet when he comments -

> Beauty is relative and the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless in proportion to its abstractness.

Beauty must therefore be defined in the most concrete way; for it dissolves so quickly that concrete savouring of it is far more

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[11] Pater: Marius the Epicurean I, p. 154.

[12] Bosanquet: A History of Aesthetik (London, 1892), p. IX.

important than abstract theorizing which is meaningless even as beauty is disappearing.

Pater's view of the role of the critic will be examined later, but we must not lose sight of the fact that the critic and the artist are, in Pater's creed almost one and the same thing. They must both experience perception, selection and imaginative integration. However, while the artist will be concerned with refracting, selecting, transferring, recombining and then projecting the synthesis into concrete form, an imaginative act which transforms extrinsic form into intrinsic form, the critic is concerned with recognising, analysing and discriminating those elements in the work of art which are conducive to aesthetic pleasure.

So, while it is true that Pater nowhere gives an abstract definition of beauty, that he states "all periods, types, schools of taste are in themselves equal", or "beauty is relative", his use of the word "discriminate" in connection with the critic, his examples of an ideal standard of beauty in the "Winckelmann essay" and his choice of the period of Greek art as maintaining "an element of permanence, a standard of taste, which genius confesses"[13] testify that there were in his mind aesthetic criteria to which the artist should aspire.

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[13] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 199.

In his essay on the Sonnets of Michelangelo, Pater, in fact, states conclusively,

> The qualities of the great masters in art or literature, the combination of these qualities, the laws by which they moderate, support, relieve each other, are not peculiar to them, but most often typical standards or revealing instances of the laws by which certain aesthetic effects are produced ...
>
> Once we have succeeded in defining for ourselves these characteristics and the law of their combination, we have acquired a standard of measure which helps us to put in its right place many a vagrant genius, many an unclassified talent.[14]

Pater's ideal examples of sculpture and poetry in the essay on Winckelmann were representations of "arrested life". "Arrested life" is indeed the crux of Pater's aesthetic creed as he defines it in "The Renaissance"; for the work of art is the result of "the sharp apprehension of that moment", that focus, "where the greatest number of vital forces (are) united in their purest energy."[15] "The clear perpetual outline" is a subjective conception, "but an image of ours"[16] derived from a

> flood of external objects pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate realization calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action.[17]

What is most important is that "these moments are in perpetual flight". "A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated

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[14] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 96.

[15] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 236.

[16] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 234.

[17] Ibid.

life"[18] and 'failure in life is to form habits'[19] - to reduce our intensity of vision, to degenerate into a dull apathy where a "roughness of eyes" clouds over all individuality with uniform drabness.

Success in life for Pater, on the other hand, is "to burn always with this hard gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy",[20] this summit of aesthetic pleasure which is expressed at the focus "where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy".

One must emphasize at this point that Pater's is an empirical philosophy, that it is the experience that matters, "not the fruit of experience",[21] that what is now important for Pater is the aesthetic experience, the pleasure itself, which is bound up with the aesthetic object which itself is moving in the flux whilst being apprehended, perceived and projected.

The ideal aesthetic experience is described as "to burn always with a hard gem-like flame" (note that the ideal situation for Pater is a continuous state of intensity - one wonders how long he would manage to endure it!!)

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[18] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 236.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

"Hard gemlike flame" implies a concreteness and a luminosity which although vibrant retains within itself a quality of artificiality and impenetrability, of impersonality, lacking all suppleness and warmth. Although Pater mentions life, the aesthetic experience is certainly not a warm human experience, as Pater had demonstrated before in his Essay on "Winckelmann" where the "supreme artistic view of life" is apprehended with "passionate coldness".[22]

> The passion,
>
> the strongest feeling shows an intense concentration on the objective of experience while the repose is testimony to the fact that the feeling projects the person into the object of experience where it remains at rest.[23]

For Pater then, personality becomes submerged in the aesthetic experience, the most intense, most refined synthesis of the moments of life that pass and therefore, life in its highest state. Whereas in the essay on "Aesthetic Poetry" art was suggested as an escape from life, in "The Renaissance art becomes a sublimation of life. It is the duty, the purpose of the artist to savour the aesthetic delight to the full; for is this not his glimpse of truth?

It is indeed tragic when the artist is unable to submerge his personality in art, if he cannot synthesize these impressions and himself with them and if these "impressions, unstable, flickering,

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[22] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 229.

[23] Max Schoen: Pater on the place of Music among the Arts. The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. 6, 1942, p. 18.

inconsistent"[24] which constitute experience swarm in a mass upon his consciousness.[25] The result will be the subjective introspection and isolation of the man thrown back upon himself in the flux, an inability to communicate; for then the artist will have erected around himself "that thick wall of personality"[26] and "the whole scope of observation" will be "dwarfed to the narrow chamber of the individual mind,"[27] so that

> every one of these impressions [will be] the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world.[28]

Pater's aesthetic ideals as represented in the Preface and Conclusion to the Renaissance are not unique in literature. When Keats praised

> the excellence of every art, its intensity, capable of making all evaporate from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth,[29]

he was regarding art, in the way Pater does, as a sublimation of life purging it of all its unpleasantness. Keats also seems to have a similar attitude to the artistic process. He mentions -

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[24] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 235.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 233.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Keats: Letter to G. and T. Keats in "Poetry and Criticism of the Romantic Movement", ed. Campbell, Pyre and Weaver (New York, 1947), p. 617.

> the innumerable compositions and decompositions which take place between the intellect and its thousand materials before it arrives at that trembling, delicate and snail-horn perception of beauty which overcomes every other consideration or rather obliterates all considerations.[30]

Like Coleridge, however, (whose imaginative process has already been examined), Keats believes that that subject of the poem is its most striking, characteristic. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive ... and does not startle ... [the Soul] or amaze it with itself but with its subject.[31]

It is in his theory of "negative capability" that Keats comes closest to Pater. "A poet", according to Keats, "is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence, because he has no identity. He is continually filling out some other body."[32]

This negative capability is not quite the same as Eliot's depersonalization of the artist whose progress is a "continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality",[33] for Eliot's poet is submerging in a process of history similar to that flux of which Pater was so conscious.

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[30] Keats: Letter to Benjamin Robert Haydon in Campbell, p. 621.

[31] Keats: Letter to John Hamilton Raymond, Campbell, p. 619.

[32] Keats: Letter to Richard Woodhouse, Campbell, p. 625.

[33] T.S. Eliot: "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in The Sacred Wood, p. 53.

A concern with the aesthetic unity of the aesthetic impact seems to be fundamental to the concepts of "inscape" and "instress" which we find in the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins. W.H. Gardner in his book on Hopkins comments on

> the undoubted but not clearly defined impact of Walter Pater upon a pupil [and friend] so avid of aesthetic doctrine as Hopkins.[34]

Hopkins coined the word "inscape" for that "individually distinct form (made up of various sense-data) which constitutes the rich and revealing "one-ness" of the natural object - the aesthetic concept; and for that natural (but ultimately supernatural) stress which determines an inscape and keeps it in being - he coined the name "instress". "Instress" is, in fact, the sensation of inscape - the aesthetic experience which involves emotion - "not only the unifying forces within the object but the impact from the aesthetic conception",[35]

In some lecture notes on Poetry and Verse (1874) Hopkins writes -

> Some matter or meaning is essential to [poetry] but only as an element necessary to support and employ the share which is contemplated for its own sake;[36]

and in a letter to Coventry Patmore he states -

> Fineness; proportion of feature, comes from a moulding force which succeeds in asserting itself over the resistance of cumbersome or restraining matter.

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[34] W.H. Gardner: Gerard Morley Hopkins (Oxford University Press), Vol. I, p.5.

[35] W.H. Gardner: Introduction to Poetry and Prose Hopkins (Penguin Press), p.XXI

[36] W.H. Gardner, Hopkins (Oxford University Press), Vol. II, p.7.

In "Poetry and Verse" Hopkins almost dismisses the content for the form, whereas in his letter, form strives with the burden of matter to achieve a satisfactory aesthetic whole.

Thus Pater and Hopkins had a similar attitude to the aesthetic concept and the aesthetic experience. The essential difference between them lay in the Jesuit Religion of Hopkins which was obviously a vital force in his work; for "feeling" to Hopkins is no abstract aesthetic emotion as it is to Pater. To Hopkins, according to Gardner, "feeling' is a sense of value - of nearness to or remoteness from God".

Even closer to Pater's "aesthetic moment" is that of Conrad who, in his introduction to the "nigger of the Narcissus" writes that

> to snatch in a moment of courage, from the remorseless rush of time, a passing phase of life is only the beginning of the task ... [which is] to hold up unquestioningly ... the rescued fragment ... to show its vibration, its colour, its form; and through its movement, its form and its colour, reveal the substance of its truth ... the stress and passion within the core of each convincing moment.[38]

It is in Virginia Woolf and James Joyce that we find the ultimate resolution of the aesthetic moment at two opposite poles, subjective and objective, both of which were anticipated by Pater.

Woolf in her essay on "Modern Fiction" describes in a way curiously reminiscent of Pater the

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[38] Joseph Conrad: Four Tales (Worlds Classics), p.6.

> myriad impressions - trivial, fantastic, evanescent or engraved with the sharpness of steel which come ... from all sides ... an incessant shower of innumerable atoms ...[39]

Her solution, unlike Pater's, is to avoid any synthetic or ordering process but to

> record these atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall; let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance.[40]

The result is the "stream of consciousness" novel, introspective and very often "surrounded by that thick wall of personality" within which as Pater warns, "each mind keeps as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world."[41]

James Joyce, on the other hand, certainly in "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man", poses an aesthetic experience closest to that of Pater's ideal in "The Renaissance", an experience called the "epiphany", which results in the dissolution of the artist's personality in his art. Joyce describes his formulation of an aesthetic creed after having broken away with great difficulty from his national and religious tradition, and his aesthetic attitude to religious ritual is very reminiscent of Pater.

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[39] Virginia Woolf: "Modern Fiction", in Twentieth Century Essays (Worlds Classics) p.393.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Pater: The Renaissance, p.235.

> He had seen himself, a young and silent mannered priest, entering a confessional swiftly, ascending the altarstep, incensing, genuflecting, accomplishing the various acts of the priesthood which pleased him by reason of their semblance of reality and of their distance from it.[42]

We are reminded of Pater's remark in the essay on "Coleridge" that the aesthetic ecstasy and religious ecstasy are very similar - "the same - but different."

Joyce's aesthetic credo is steeped in the Scholasticism of St. Thomas Aquinas. Yet, although we have no reason to believe that Pater was familiar with the work of this famous medieval schoolman, there is a distinct similarity in their aesthetic ideas. Joyce demands three requisites from beauty - "integritas", "Consonantia" and "Claritas".

"Integritas" is the "wholeness" of the aesthetic image, its unity. "Consonantia" implies its concrete complexity

> you apprehend it as complex, multiple, divisible, made up of its parts, the result of its parts and their sum[43]

and "claritas" is

> The supreme quality ... felt by the artist when the artistic image is first conceived in his imagination ... the instinct wherein that supreme quality of beauty, the clear radiance of the aesthetic image is apprehended luminously by the mind which has been arrested by its wholeness and fascinated by its harmony, is the luminous silent stasis of aesthetic pleasure.[44]

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[42] James Joyce: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Penguin Books) p. 158.

[43] James Joyce: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, p. 212.

[44] James Joyce: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, p. 213.

Thus Joyce's recognition, apprehension of the aesthetic situation, followed by the refinement, synthesis, analysis and combination which involves imagination, and results in the creation of the aesthetic experience is simultaneously the resolution of all these tensions into a state of aesthetic repose - which, he calls an "epiphany."

> In the "epiphany", the personality of the artist
>
> finally resolves itself out of existence, impersonalizes itself, so to speak. The aesthetic image ... is life purified and re-projected from the human imagination ... The artist ... remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence.[45]

Joyce writes of Stephen Daedelus, the artist -

> His destiny was to be elusive of social or religious order ... He was destined to learn his vision apart from others,[46]

and he describes the bird-man symbol of the artist, Daedelus,[47] -

whose life was spent

> forging anew out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable being.[48]

In his Conclusion to the Renaissance, Pater quotes Victor Hugo as saying that

> we are all under sentence of death, but with a sort of indefinite reprieve[49]

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[45] Joyce: Portrait of the Artist, p. 215.

[46] Joyce: Portrait of the Artist, p. 162.

[47] Stephen is, in fact a reincarnation of Daedelus who, in the myth made wings so that his son Icarus could fly.

[48] Joyce: Portrait of the Artist, p. 169.

[49] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 238.

a statement which is repeated in Pater's last essay, on Pascal - "Nous sommes tous condamnés."[50] Recalling the "growth of an almost diseased sensibility to the spectacle of suffering"[51] in Florian, the "Child in the House", remembering that Pater in his essay on Winckelmann traced the feeling of nostalgia and home-sickness back to a primitive reaction to the fear of death, one wonders whether within Pater himself this was not a very real obsession - which accounts for his urgency when he concludes -

> Our one chance lies ... in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time ... great passions may give us this quickened sense of life ... Of his wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake has more; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass and simply for these moments' sake.[52]

Does the artist who loses himself in the sublimation of art not isolate himself behind the thick wall of art's ivory tower - because ultimately the individual is submerged in his art by virtue of having concentrated his whole personality in his art to the exclusion of everything else?

Is this artist not doomed to fail as tragically as did Daedelus, when Icarus was unable to soar above life using his artificial wings or as Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna" who cried,

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[50] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 87.

[51] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 181.

[52] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 239.

> I am weary of the solitude
> Which he who bears all (art) must abide:
> Of the rocks of Parnassus...[53]

It does seem, however, that fundamental in the "Renaissance" is a distinct ambivalence in Pater's thought. One of his main motives in writing on this subject is a humanistic one.

> Here, artists and philosophers and those whom the action of the world has elevated and made keen, do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts.[54]

(- an atmosphere reminiscent, surely of Matthew Arnold's "high seriousness!)

Earlier in the Preface Patel had written -

> The fifteenth century can hardly be studied too much, not merely for its positive results in the things of the intellect and the imagination, its concrete works of art ... but for its general spirit and character, for the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type.[55]

Pater is struggling to find a means of emancipation for the artist - maybe in aesthetic experience. But he cannot himself "burn with the hard gemlike flame" of the pure aesthetic experience; for Pater does not, or is unable to ignore ethical considerations.

In fact, when he writes of Leonardo da Vinci that the problem of aspiring to those divinations of a humanity too wide for it [in these

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[53] Matthew Arnold: on Etna, l.199-201, in Poems, p.119.

[54] Pater: The Renaissance, p.XIV.

[55] Pater: The Renaissance, p.XIII.

narrow media ... this agitation, this perpetual delay gives him an air of weariness and ennui"[56] - it sounds almost as if Pater is referring to himself.

Nevertheless the "Renaissance" is primarily a search. "Le theme de la Renaissance", says d'Hangest

> n'est ... separable chez Pater de la quête essentielle de l'esthétisme: celle d'une formule harmonieuse de vie[57]

and throughout these essays Pater is attempting to formulate some solution, hoping desperately to find something enduring in art.

As if somehow to increase the "mystique" of art, Pater notes in his essay on Michelangelo that a "certain strangeness, something of the blossoming of the aloe, is indeed an element in all true works of art," and there are several parallels of this sentiment in the works of Poe, Hopkins, and Baudelaire.[58]

It is, however, in the essay on the "School of Giorgione" that we find Pater's attempt to go beyond mere aesthetic experience, to intensify the moment by a closer union, indeed an identification of form and matter. Pater introduces the essay by proclaiming the individuality of each art medium which appears in its own special

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[56] Pater: The Renaissance, p.113.

[57] d'Hangest: Walter Pater, Vol. I, p.120.

[58] See Edgar Allen Poe, Essay on Horne in Selections from his Critical Writings (New York, 1946), and Baudelaire: "Le Beau est bizarre" in "Exposition Universelle de 1855, p.957.

way, through its own particular sense to "imaginative reason" (called imaginative intellect in the Winckelmann Essay).

In painting it is the pictorial impact, the elements of draughtsmanship and colour which create the pictorial appeal rather than the content or subject matter. It is the initial visual impression which is important rather than the details.

Yet there are occasions when one art medium may assume some of the characteristics of another art medium. This is known as "Anders-streben", a process which involves a "partial alienation" "for the artist "from the limitations"[57] of his own medium. Pater discounts the fact that in this process some individual quality of this medium must be sacrificed or lost; for his real aim is to generate what he hopes will prove to be the ultimate aesthetic experience the union of form and matter in art; "for all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music".[58]

The implication is not that all art becomes music but that all art reaches a stage comparable to music where it is impossible to separate the form from the matter.

This is, after all the supreme aesthetic experience of the Conclusion to the Renaissance, the "epiphany" of Joyce and Conrad's "rescued fragment". In fact, Conrad goes on to state emphatically

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[57] Pater: The Renaissance, p.134.

[58] Pater: The Renaissance, p.135.

that

> fiction must strenuously aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the colour of painting and to the magic suggestions of music - which is the art of arts.[59]

This theory of the culmination of poetry in music, is of course one of the tenets of Symbolism in Poetry. But the idea was already manifesting itself in England and France before Pater reached Oxford. Melvin Friedman in his book on the "Stream of Consciousness" suggests that De Quincey's "success with so complex a form" as the "Dream Fugue" (in his essay "The English Mail-Coach") a veritable fugue in prose, may have inspired Pater.[60]

Edgar Allan Poe (who certainly influenced Baudelaire, stated that it is in

> music, perhaps that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the poetic sentiment, it struggles - for the creation of supernal Beauty. It may be indeed that here, their sublime end is now and then attained.[61]

There are several references in the works of Baudelaire to the "anders-streben" towards music in poetry and painting. In fact, Baudelaire's theory of "Correspondances" has within itself the essential concept of "anders-streben". In "De la Couleur", he notes, "on trouve dans la couleur l'harmonie, la melodie et le contrepoint,"[62] in "Le Serpent Qui Danse" we see the integration

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[59] Joseph Conrad: The Nigger of the Narcissus (in Four Tales), p.5.

[60] Melvin J. Friedman: Stream of Consciousness, A Study in Literary Method (Yale University Press, 1955), p.146

[61] Edgar Allan Poe: Marginalia in Works, ed. by S.H. Ingram Black Vol. III, p.457.

[62] Baudelaire: "De La Couleur" in Oeuvres Completes (Pleiade), p.881.

of musical rhythm in poetry, and one cannot ignore the "Lettre Sur la Musique" by Wagner which Baudelaire quotes admiringly -

> L' arrangement rythmique et l'ornement - (presque musical) de la rime sont pour le poete des moyens d'assurer au vers, à la phrase, une puissance qui captive comme par un charme et gouverne à son gre la sentiment. Essentielle au poete cette tendance la conduit, jus qu' a la limite de son art, limite que touche immediatement la musique; et par consequent, l'oeuvre la plus complete devrait etre celle qui dans son dernier achevement, serait une parfaite[63]

Gautier in his poem, "L'Art", aspires to the forms of the plastic artist -

> Sculpte, lime, cisèle;
> Que ton reve flottant
> Se scelle
> Dans le bloc résistant![64]

His aim like that of Pater is integration of form and subject and in 1856 in the Preface to "Mademoiselle de Maupin", this aim is stated explicitly -

> Nous n'avons jamais pu comprendre la séparation de l'idée et de la forme, pas plus que nous ne comprenons l'âme sans le corps. Une belle forme est une belle idée, car que serait-ce qu'une forme qui n'exprimerait rien? [65]

In England, Swinburne subscribes to the idea of "anders-streben". Praising Blake's "Poetical Sketches", he writes - "They have a fragrance of sound, a melody of colour".[66] Certainly his own poetry has a lyrical quality which seems to aspire to music although it is very often spoiled

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[63] Baudelaire: Oeuvres Completes Vol. III (Paris, Canard), p. 217, quoted by D'Hangest I, p. 350 note 27.

[64] Gautier: L'Art l. 53-6 in the Penguin Book of French Verse, Vol. 3, p. 139.

[65] Gautier: Mademoiselle de Maupin, quoted by Enid Starkie in From Gautier to Eliot (London 1960), p. 29.

[66] Swinburne: Poems and Prose (Everymans Library), p. 320.

by a deficiency of subject matter.

In "On the Origin of Beauty", Hopkins, who went as far as to study music in his quest for poetic perfection, developed a theory that

> beauty consists in the judicious blending of regularity with variety, evenness with oddness[67]

and he employed the musical terminology of Diatonic beauty to apply to emphasis and intensity (probably meaning the positive qualities of the primary harmonies) and Chromatic Beauty, to apply to tone and expression (probably implying the more subtle modulating qualities of Chromatic harmonies).

It is of interest that Mr. Humphrey House mentions -

> I have seen a suggestion somewhere that the Dialogue was written for Walter Pater.[68]

It seems, in any case, that this leaning towards lyricism was prevalent both in England and in France. Many of Tennyson's poems "The Lotus Eater", "The Lady of Shalott", parts of "In Memoriam", whether they "aspire to music" or not, certainly achieve a lyricism closely allied to music, as is pointed out by Edgar Allan Poe who comments that Tennyson "seems to see with his ear",[69] while in the poetry of Rossetti and Morris there is a lyrical, rich sensuous onomatopoeic quality which seems close to the ideal in literature positted by Pater.

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[67] W.G. Gardner: Gerard Manley Hopkins, I, p.7.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Poe: Works, p.1045.

This ideal, then, is an intensification of the aesthetic experience by the integration of artistic form and content. For a level of aesthetic projection such as this, the subject according to Pater, cannot be too definite. He suggests "landscape which has little salient character of its own"[70] as suitable subject matter - particularly a French river-side with its vague simplicity far more easily "modulated to the dominant tone."[71]

In the same way Pater notes that "a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject"[72] is often necessary to enable lyric poetry to reach perfection.

Pater has, in effect, relegated subject matter beneath form and seems to move in the direction of the symbolist tenets, hoping that a vagueness or tenuousness of projection will actually cause the poetry to pass "for a moment into an actual strain of music"[73] - which is almost the illusion caused by Verlaine in his poetry. "Art Poetique" approximates perhaps most closely to Pater's tenet, not only in manner of expression but also in the idea expressed.

> De la musique avant toute chose,
> Et pour cela prefere l'Impair
> Plus vague et plus soluble dans l'air,
> Sans rien en lui qui pèse ou qui pose[74]

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[70] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 136.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 137.

[73] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 138.

[74] Verlaine: Art Poetique L 1-4 in Penguin Book of French Verse, p. 224.

For Verlaine, as for Pater the burden of subject matter must not be allowed to interfere with the final musical effect which is the more successfully achieved when a vague and nebulous subject is involved.

Pater concludes his argument by reinforcing the aspiration of art to rid itself of the burden of subject or material which would ideally be

> So welded together, that the material or subject no longer strikes the intellect only; but form and matter, in their union or identity present one single effect to the "imaginative reason", that complex faculty for which every thought and feeling is twin-born with its sensible analogue or symbol.[75]

For the first time we notice, Pater has used the word "symbol".

Pater considers Giorgione's work typical of

> that aspiration of all the arts towards music ... towards the perfect identification of matter and form.[76]

The "brief and wholly concrete moment" which Giorgione creates retains

> all the motives, all the interests and effects of a long history [which] have condensed themselves and which seem to absorb past and future in an intense consciousness of the present ... in which we seem to be spectators of all the fullness of existence, and which are like some consummate extract of quintessence of life.[77]

Pater repeats his example of "arrested life" as the ideal subject for a concrete distillation of the "aesthetic moment" -

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[75] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 138.

[76] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 142.

[77] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 150.

a mere gesture, a look, a smile.[78]

He is surely alluding "Mona Lisa" in his essay on Da Vinci (1869), Lady Lisa who embodies

> the [old] fancy of a perpetual life sweeping together ten thousand experiences ... and the modern ideal of humanity as wrought upon by and summing up in itself, all modes of thoughts and life.[79]

In Lady Lisa, Pater had already expanded the aesthetic moment into a more enduring more evocative symbol, which is considered by Yeats in his introduction to the "Oxford Book of Modern Verse" to "have dominated a generation".[80] It is significant that Yeats should have set the passage describing Lady Lisa in "vers libre" to illustrate how Pater permits "a poem to arise out of its own rhythm",[81] implying that the prose was, in fact poetry, that the piece has reverberations beyond those of the prosaic idea and image.

Mario Praz in the "Romantic Agony" traces very thoroughly the divergent influences in the creation of the Mona Lisa image, showing that Pater's Lady Lisa was a factory in the development of a "Femme Fatale" image which was incipient long before Pater's time and, (as Kermode shows in "The Romantic Image") is very prominent in Yeats' own work.

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[79] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 125-6.

[80] Yeats: Introduction to Oxford Book of Modern Verse (1892-1933) (Clarendon Press, 1936) p. viii.

[81] Ibid.

We see the mysterious eternal woman in Gautier's 'Caerulei Oculi"

> une femme mystérieuse
> Dont la beaute trouble mes sens,
> Se tient debout silencieuse
> Au bord des flots retentissents[82]

who in the depths of her misty eyes holds treasures of history.

The Guinevere of William Morris, Rossetti's Lilith (first wife of Adam) who sits

> young while the earth is old,
> and subtly of herself contemplative,
> draws men to watch the bright net she can weave[83]

and Swinburne's "Cleopatra", who

> hath under those low lids of her
> ... the history of all time stricken years[84]

contain remarkable resemblances to the Mona Lisa image of Pater.

In a letter to Lord Morley (1873) Swinburne mentions that Pater

> replied to the effect that he considered them [his own works] as owing their inspiration entirely to the example of my own work in the same line.[85]

Certainly both the sketch of a woman in "Notes on Designs of the Old Masters in Florence" "sketched and re-sketched in youth and age, beautiful always beyond desire, cruel beyond words..."[86]

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[82] Gautier: Emaux et Comees, p. 64.

[83] Rossetti: Lilith in Poems edited by Doughty (Dent 1957) p. 142.

[84] Swinburne: Cleopatra, quotdd by Mario Praz in "The Romantic Agony" (trans. from Italian by Angus Wilson) Fontana Library, p. 269.

[85] Swinburne: Letters edited by E. Gosse and T.J. Wise (London 1918) Vol. I, p. 124-5.

[86] Swinburne: Essays and Studies, 1875.

and the description of "women's faces" in Swinburne's essay on Leonardo (1864) foreshadow Pater's Mona Lisa.

Before we examine the passage, we must note that after Pate, the echoes of Mona Lisa continued to reverberate and were developed by O'Shaunessey in "Idle Tears". Oscar Wilde in "Salome", by Huysmans who presents a most sensual Salome in "A Rebours", D'Annunzio, and Conti, Italian aesthete, admirer of Pater who, in his study of Giorgione makes mention of the smile of Mona Lisa "which transcends all other experiences of the human smile."[87]

In the poetry of Yeats we find the Herodiade symbol, Salome herself, "symbol of the cultural equilibrium preceding the Christian revelation",[88] the transcendental woman-type in the "Sphinx" with woman breast and lion paw",[89] the Ledean figure in "Among School Children" -

> Her present image floats into the mind -
> Did Quattrocento finger fashion it
> Hollow of cheek as though it drank the wind ...[90]

and the death-in-life and life-in-death figure of Byzantium.

No doubt the tradition of the "Femme Fatale" was a convention of the late Nineteenth Century, no doubt other influences were at work,

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[87] Conti: Study of Giorgione (1894) quoted by Praz, p. 279.

[88] Kermode: Romantic Image (London 1961), p. 75.

[89] Yeats: The Double Vision of Michel Robertes, p. 193. Collected Poems (London 1958).

[90] Yeats: Among School Children in Poems, p. 193.

particularly in the evolution of Yeats' images, but the Paterian influence is marked, if only by the emphatic indication of Yeats in his Introduction to the "Oxford Book of Modern Verse."

Wellek notes that Pater's Mona Lisa description, this "fantasy", contains one of his most important ideas - that of "humanity summing up in itself all modes of thought and life." He stresses that "fantasies of this type, too well-known for the good of Pater's reputation" are really not representative of "his methods or his philosophy."[91] Perhaps this is the case because it was rare that Pater released the leashes of self-control and that on some of the other occasions when he did so, as in Apollo in Picardy or Denys l'Auxerrois, the resultant figure was too disparate, too loosely conceived in form and language, too bizarre to cohere into a symbol.

We have already noticed Pater's Medea-passage in "Aesthetic Poetry". Although it is rather a cursory reference than a symbol, it already contains within itself the germ of the idea of a symbolic figure, the culmination and incarnation of history, culture and mystery.

In the essay on Leonardo da Vinci itself, it is noticeable how Pater gradually introduces and emphasizes various ideas which eventually link up and cohere in the final aesthetic impact, "an impact which is quite out of touch with the work of art itself."[92]

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[91] Wellek: A History of Modern Criticism (London 1966), p.382. (Vol. IV)

[92] Ibid.

At this stage only Pater's aesthetic ideas are relevant (for the essay will be analysed later). Therefore it will be sufficient to note that throughout the essay the elements of "beauty and terror", which, according to Pater are revealed in "his childhood studies of "the smiling of women and the motion of great waters",[93] in images of birth and death - "the unveiled structure of man in the embryo and the sketches of the skeleton",[94] even in Leonardo's Medusa picture (which he alone realises to be the head of a corpse,) all combine in the final Symbol.

The actual Lady Lisa figure is vague and misty - "a presence" - almost spiritual, silent, almost primeval, and yet a figure of desire. Here, perhaps Pater is conforming to the conventional characteristic of Mona Lisa's sexual allure. Although his Lady Lisa is certainly not as sexual as the figures of Swinburne, Gautier, Yeats or any of the other authors who utilized the "femme fatale" symbol, Pater remarks:

> Set it (her beauty) for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its melodies has passed.[95]

Somehow one detects a faint note of prudery!

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[93] Pater: The Renaissance, p.104.

[94] Pater: The Renaissance, p.105.

[95] Pater: The Renaissance, p.125.

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> beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions[96]

the eyelids which are "a little weary" with typical Paterian "ennui" all contribute to a peculiar anatomical "death-in-life" effect. Mona Lisa is the culmination of all the pagan passions, but she has been dead many times, and is essentially evil like the vampire, forever preying on humanity. Here Mona Lisa except for her decadent morbid tone is reminiscent of "La Belle Dame sans Merci" by Keats. Not only is she an embodiment of the life-long and deathly experience of humanity and its thoughts, of its history, of its sins, but she is also the incarnation of something which is part of the flux and yet wrought by art, beauty with a strangeness which is part of beauty, yet intrinsically evil - the enduring "symbol of the modern idea."[97]

Kermode relates Pater's treatment of dead faces - such as in "The Child in the House", in Emerald Uthwart, to the "life-in-death" element in the Mona Lisa image. But we find the same preoccupation with the dead figure in the essay on Michelangelo, where he says of the Florentine masters -

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[96] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 125.

[97] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 126.

> They must often have leaned over the lifeless body when all was at length quiet and smoothed out. After death it is said, the traces of slighter and more superficial dispositions disappear.. the lines become more simple and dignified... They come thus to see death in all its distinction; and following it perhaps one stage further, dwelling for a moment on the point where all that transitory dignity must break up, and discerning with no clearness a new body.[98]

This "one stage further", an ultimate reality beyond life, approximates for Pater to the ultimate reality in art, the repose in the tension of the aesthetic experience. These elements are implicit in the "Mona Lisa" which is in fact an "aesthetic moment" of "arrested life" - extending into a symbol of life-in-death, death-in-life.

Although Kermode states that

> it is remarkable ... that a female figure with a passionless face can be asked to do so much ...[99]

it obviously does achieve the tremendous significance attributed to it by Yeats; for

> on this point of the paradox of making a dead face stand for what is most 'vital' in art, Pater provides early types of the kind of emblem Yeats was later to seek.[100]

Ironically, this symbol, although enduring in the tradition of English literature was not to prove enduring for Pater. "Leonardo da Vinci" was written in1869, and it was only in 1873, with the publication of the Renaissance and in 1877, with the publication of

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[98]Pater: The Renaissance, p. 93-4.

[99]Kermode, p. 63.

[100]Kermode, p. 65.

the "School of Giorgione" that Pater actually formulated his aesthetic credo. The "aesthetic moment", Pater's empirical aesthetic canon "to burn always with this hard gemlike flame", his attempt to intensify this moment by closer integration of form and matter and to expand it into the enduring ecstasy of a reverberating symbol, did not seem to either enhance life or make it more meaningful. Pater's search for some ultimate perfection was to continue.

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CHAPTER III

TOWARDS HUMANISM

Pater, in a passage entitled "moral philosophy", one of the manuscripts at Harvard, discusses the possible consequences of trying to attain the highest possible standard in one's general conduct in life. One of the hazards of pursuing one's obligation to "custom in the highest sense" is that of being misinterpreted and misunderstood which might possibly result in the termination of

> some happy general understanding between himself and all worthy men, living and dead ... There, I say, is the principle of custom raised to the level of heroism ... what actually deters is the thought of those averted or saddened forces grown suddenly strange to us, refusing their recognition of us in what was not their way.[1]

We have already noted the misinterpretation and the disapproval with which Pater's Renaissance met and his consequent suppression of the Conclusion. In 1878, Mallock published "The New Republic" in which he satirized prominent figures such as Arnold, Ruskin and Pater. "The Observer" warmly recommended this work, claiming that it had a -

"clever artistic dialogue, above the usual novel",

while the "London Review" claimed that "Mr. Rose [the caricature of Pater] is worth gold."[2]

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[1] "Moral Philosophy" apparently designed as a lecture (unpaginated) in Pater MSS. Harvard: quoted by Lawrence Evans, Letters of Walter Pater (Oxford, 1970), p.XXI (Introduction).

[2] Quoted in "Blurb of Mallock's Republic".

Certainly, Mallock's sketch was not fraught with diplomacy. Mr. Rose is represented as a pathetic figure who "spoke somewhat low"[3] and who confused Lady Ambrose by the verbosity, illustrated in his comparison of a man of culture

> to an Aeolian harp, which the winds at will play through a beautiful face, a rainbow, a ruined temple, a deathbed, or a line of poetry wandering like a breath of air among the chords of his soul, ...[4]

But even though the passage is reminiscent of Pater's style at its worst,the parody is not really malicious. Yet, in 1882, Vernon Lee saw Pater as a "very simple amicable man avowedly afraid of almost everything."[5]

Is it because Pater feared these averted or saddened faces grown suddenly strange to us "that he in the years between 1873 and 1885 published relatively few works and began to show more pronounced humanistic leanings, a concern for the welfare of humanity, for ethical attitudes$ sympathy and love? Or was it a genuine dissatisfaction with his former aesthetic ideas?

D'Hangest speaks of these years as "retour sur soi"[6] and states that -

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[3] Mallock: The New Republic (London, 1877), p.193.

[4] Mallock: Ibid, p.193.

[5] Vernon Lee: Letters p.109 quoted by Lawrence Evans in Letters of Pater, p.XXVI

[6] Title of Chapter II Part III, Vol. I of Walter Pater by D'Hangest.

> si les etudes de la Renaissance portent dans leur ensemble la marque d'une sorte d'épanouissement lyrique; celles qui leur succederent nous paraissent, sans transition aucune, avoir ete concues dans un climat mental tout autre que le leur: partout ce percoit au cours de ces annees qui commencent le besoin d'approfondir une doctrine afin de la mieu exprimer; et partout, dans un air soudain refroidi, se sent la chute d'un enthousiasme, peut-être même, à certain moments, le frisson plus secret encore de quelque souffrance intime. Dans la vie, dans l'oeuvre de l'ecrivain, ce fut alors comme le désenchantement d'un reveil.[7]

Although D'Hangest perhaps exaggerates their tonality, the essays on Wordsworth and on "Measure for Measure" certainly express a changing attitude to art and life.

In his essay on Wordsworth, Pater emphasizes the role in the "conduct of life"[8] of "impassioned contemplation",[9] of "being rather than doing".[10] For the first time we notice Pater using words like "conduct of life", implying a "rectitude of behaviour".

Wordsworth's poetry is "a continual protest" against the "predominance of machinery in our existence,"[11] against the end justifying the means. As in the Renaissance, Pater emphasizes the impact of the experience, not the fruit of the experience. The change of terminology is most important; whereas in "The Renaissance" the experience implied something pleasurable and beautiful irrespective of its moral value, in this essay Pater is moving towards the intrinsic value of one's actions or thoughts.

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[7] D'Hangest: Vol. I, p. 223-4

[8] Pater: Appreciations, p. 59.

[9] Pater: Appreciations, p. 60.

[10] Pater: Appreciations, p. 61 - compare the idealized attitude in "Diaphanéite".

[11] Ibid.

Pater, in his conclusion to "The Renaissance" had stressed the importance of treating life "in the spirit of art", here he extends his statement -

> 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.[12]

The word "moral" by its mere presence, re-echoes in the background in spite of the fact that Pater insists that the work of the poet is

> not to teach lessons, or enforce rules, or even to stimulate us to noble ends, but to withdraw the thoughts for a little while from the mere machinery of life, to fix them, with appropriate emotions on spectacle of those great facts in man's existence which no machinery affects.[13]

Indeed, the mere fact that Pater turns from the "machinery of life" not to art but to "men's existence" however vague[14] and universal is an indication of the emerging moral tone in Pater's thinking.[15]

This becomes even more apparent in the essay on "Measure for Measure" where the choice of the particular play with its particular problems is significant in view of the misinterpretations to which Pater and his work have been subjected; for the play deals with the idea of justice due to each person in -

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[12] Pater: Appreciations, p. 62.

[13] Pater: Appreciations, p. 63.

[14] Ibid - Pater here quotes Wordsworth "Preface to the second edition of several of the foregoing poems, published, with an additional volume, under the title of Lyrical Ballads" (p. 139 in Oxford Ed. of Wordsworth poems).

[15] We shall see later that this moral tone was implicit in "The Renaissance"

> the recognition of that which the person in his inmost nature really is; and as sympathy alone, can discover that which really is in matters of feeling and thought, true justice is in its essence a finer knowledge through love.[16]

"Sympathy" and "love"[17] are words which we shall see Pater using more frequently and in this essay his interest in "the very intricacy and subtlety of the moral world itself",[18] is indicative of a shift from art and the self-sufficiency of the artist who chooses to ignore the moral duties and obligations of life. But Pater, as usual, leaves us on a note of indecision -

> It is not always that poetry can be the exponent of morality; but it is this aspect of morals which it represents most naturally, for this true justice is dependent on just those finer appreciations which cultive in us the power of making, those peculiar valuations of action and its effect which poetry actually requires.[19]

He concludes, therefore, with the bald statement that the same ability is required to appreciate the subtleties of poetry as is necessary to make fine discriminations and evaluations in justice and morality.

Again, examining "Romanticism and Classicism" in the Postscript to Appreciations, Pater continuing along this well-balanced path, admits that art always incorporates elements of both classicism and romanticism, whether to a greater or lesser degree. Pater expresses the same irritation (as is expressed in his essay on Prosper Merimee) at the

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[16] Pater: Appreciations, p. 183.

[17] Used here for the first time by Pater.

[18] Pater: Appreciations, p. 182.

[19] Pater: Appreciations, p. 184.

French decadent school with its "ennui" stemming from an immense disillusion, setting a "positive value on the intense, the exceptional".[20] These

> minds, weary of the present, yearn for the spectacle of beauty and strength.[21]

This attitude is so reminiscent of Pater's former position, of his own weariness of "threadbare" life, of his own yearning for art as a sublimation of life that Pater's disapproval of the decadent school can perhaps be interpreted as a conscious rejection of his former aesthetic standpoint. Pater, however, gives us no positive indication of this.[22]

The main argument of the Postscript, is presented with remarkable perspicacity; for Pater contends, concerning Romanticism and Classicism, that

> these two tendencies are really at work at all times in art, moulding it, with the balance sometimes a little on one side, sometimes a little on the other, generating, respectively as the balance inclines on this side or that, two principles, two traditions in art and in literature so far as it partakes of the spirit of art.[23]

Pater recommends a similar balance of classicism and romanticism for the literary art of "our curious, complex aspiring age" in order

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[20] Pater: Appreciations, p. 253.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Pater: Appreciations, p. 247. Note Pater's disapproval of the poetry of Pope.

[23] Ibid.

> to induce order upon the contorted proportionless accumulation of our knowledge and experience, our science and history.[24]

He suggests, in addition, that his contemporaries develop a language-consciousness like that of the Latins and the French, a scholarly precision and awareness of words and the elements of language. These qualities are, of course, the elements of classicism which need to be balanced in this eclectic age by "a unity of as many diverse elements as may be".[25]

The pure aesthetic experience has been abandoned. Art is no longer a sublimation of life but a complement to life, and is itself complemented by life.

> "What is important", concludes Pater, is not the struggle
>
> of one age or school of literary art against another, but of all successive schools alive, against the stupidity which is dead to the substance, and the vulgarity which is dead to form.[26]

Pater seems to have reached a point where the poem is no longer supreme; there is now a balance between form and matter.

It seems that these years of Pater's life were indeed years of searching and experiment in various directions. In a letter to F. Furnivall, Shakespearian scholar, in May 1875, he mentions: "I should like very much to edit a play of Shakespeare".[27] (Although

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[24] Pater: Appreciations, p. 260.
[25] Pater: Appreciations, p. 261.
[26] Pater: Appreciations, p. 261.
[27] Pater: Letters, p. 15.

he was never to do this, he did write his essays on "Measure for Measure", "Love's Labour's Lost" and "Shakespeare's English Kings") He also turned his attention Greek mythology and in 1876 published three essays on this subject.

Pater's Hellenism has already been apparent in his essay "Diaphaneite" and even more marked in the essay on Winckelmann, while the final volume written by Pater, "Plato and Platonism" is again an aspiration to the Greek ideal. The tone of these three essays which were later included in the posthumous volume, 'Greek Studies' is certainly more evocative than most of Pater's other work, rising at times to an epic quality. In his essays on Dionysus and on Demeter and Persephone, Pater considers the importance of the two myths in our cultural tradition, in poetry, drama and painting, particularly Renaissance painting.

Pater is here again attempting to build up enduring symbols similar to the Mona Lisa. "Dionysius" states Pater, "as we see him in art and poetry, is the projected expression of the ways and dreams of this primitive people, brooded over and harmonised by the energetic Greek imagination".[28]

He develops more fully the description of Persephone, "the lady of sorrows", with her characteristic double-facedness, in whom there is the simultaneous presence of "the fullness of the experience" of the ancient world which links her strongly with the Mona Lisa symbol.

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[28] Pater: Greek Studies, p. 29.

Indeed, in

> the fascinating, but enigmatical figure, 'sitting ever in her cave, half-veiled with a shining veil, thinking delicate thoughts' ... we seem to see the subject of some picture of the Italian Renaissance.[29]

The main emphasis is, however, on the relationship between Greek art and Greek religion of pure ideas, of

> conceptions which, having no link on historical fact, yet, because they arose naturally out of the spirit of men and embodied, in adequate symbols, his deepest thoughts concerning the conditions of his physical and spiritual life, maintained their hold through many changes and are still not without a solemnising power even for the modern mind, which has once admitted them as recognised and habitual inhabitants.[30]

Pater is still searching: Will a religion of "pure ideas", (man's deepest thoughts concerning the condition of his physical and spiritual life) not perhaps provide an enduring symbol of truth for humanity? The humanistic tone in his work is certainly fairly defined by now. In these essays, however, it seems that beneath the intellectual cloak, Pater is releasing his imaginative urges with an erotic freedom similar to that manifested in parts of the Essay on "Aesthetic Poetry". Yet one must by no means underestimate his erudition and accuracy (pointed out by Harrison in "Pater, Heine and the Old Gods of Greece") or his ability to project as it were on a moving screen of nature the elemental yet mystic qualities of Greek religion and mythology merging into our culture.

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[29] Pater: Greek Studies, p. 116-7.

[30] Pater: Greek Studies, p. 151.

Indeed, at this time Pater is in the process of experimenting with a new form of literature, the "Imaginary Portrait" in which he hopes to a achieve greater freedom beneath the formal framework. In 1878, "Imaginary Portraits I - The Child in the House" appeared in "MacMillan's Magazine". In a letter to George Grove, editor of "MacMillan's Magazine", Pater writes

> It is not ... the first part of a work of fiction, but is meant to be complete in itself; though the first of a series, as I hope, with some real kind of sequence in them, and which I shall be glad to send you. I call the M.S. a portrait, and mean readers, as they might do on seeing a portrait, to begin speculating - what came of him?[31]

On a scrap of paper among the Harvard MSS is a comment by Pater

> "Child in the House": voilà, the germinating original source specimen of all my imaginative work.[32]

The "Child in the House", perhaps best described as "fictionalized self-portraiture", traces the development in Florian Deleal of [illegible] traits which are characteristic in Pater's work -

> The wistful yearning towards home in absence from it ..., a yearning and regret he experienced afterwards towards he knew not what ...[33]

Pater mentions also

> the growth of an almost diseased sensibility to the spectacle of suffering, and, parallel with this, the rapid growth of a certain capacity of fascination by bright colour and choice form ...[34]

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[31] Pater's Letters, p.30.

[32] Quoted by Lawrence Evans, p.XXIX of Pater's Letters.

[33] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.180.

[34] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.181.

The recurring idea of nostalgia and the search for beauty is prominent in the evolution of the young boy's attitudes,

> for with this desire of physical beauty mingled itself early the fear of death - the fear of death intensified by the desire of beauty.[35]

And this preoccupation with the relationship between life and death predisposed the child to an interest in religion.

> He yielded himself easily to religious impressions, and with a kind of mystical appetite to sacred things ... he began to love, for their own sakes, church lights, holy days, all that belonged to the comely order of the sanctuary, the secrets of its white linen and holy vessels and fonts of pure water.[36]

This passage reminds us that in his "Coleridge" essay Pater had indicated a similarity between religious and aesthetic ecstasy.[37]

From contemporary reports and from his own writing it seems conclusive that the "Child in the House" is autobiographical and it was maybe because Pater feared that he would become too emotionally involved in his subject that he moved away from the fictionalized self-portrait towards the most objective kind of fiction he created in the "Seven Portraits" published (and presumably written) after "Marius, the Epicurean".

It is pointed out by D'Hangest that

> Rattaché par des liens étroits, d'une part a L'Enfant dans la Maison, de l'autre à Marius l'Epicurean, et chronologiquement très proche de chacune de ces oeuvres, un Poete Anglaise jette ainsi entre elles une sorte de pont.[38]

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[35] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.189-90)

[36] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.193.

[37] Pater: "Coleridge's Writings" in Nineteenth Century Essays, p.449.

[38] D'Hangest: Walter Pater, Vol. I, p.367, note 5.

"Imaginary Portraits II - An English Poet" was unfinished either because the last page was destroyed, or because as D'Hangest points out, the piece obviously had not yet received a "definitive form" and was possibly abandoned. In this piece, Pater's quest for literary perfection is projected onto the youth to whom

> the good book would be like an actual place visited, and to which one might return again and again at discretion.[39]

He had

> elected to be an artist in the English tongue which had revealed itself to him as a living spirit of mysterious strength and sweetness[40]

and we see how his writing

> compressed truly by many shaping, to some delightful inward pattern or ideal, which yet had weighed on him like a burden

come to assume

> a certain hardness like that of a gem or cameo ... (note the reverberations of Gautier) it was like portraiture outlined in severe relief, though in itself a wonderful fancy work in a manner somehow not altogether unlike that of the metal honeysuckle.[41]

Was this perhaps not what Pater was attempting to do in his "Imaginary Portraits" - to create an enduring defined artistic form which would contain and unify his exotic fanciful imaginings?

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[39] Walter Pater: Imaginary Portraits II An English Poet. ed. May Ottley in the Fortnightly Review, April 1, 1931, p. 443.

[40] Pater: An English Poet, p. 444. Notice in this passage an anticipation of the Logos idea which Pater is to develop later.

[41] Ibid.

What is perhaps most significant in "An English Poet" is a movement, a sense of development. The young man travels south with his friend and

> that intellectual life within life which had involved for him, so far, a certain better self-reliance and a somewhat sad sort of walking by faith, enlarged now rapidly to something ripe and full, like the sudden enrichment of the youthful body itself in its propitious year ...[42]

- a physical exhilaration. The beauty of nature and its sudden impact on the young man

> seemed to unseal his sense of the actual life of men as passionate or graceful. Forces, divinations of a real experience as a thing that might be refulgent with ideal light and satisfy a poetic soul, germinating rapidly in him a warmth, a souffle, almost like love towards the friend who was coming ...[43]

For the first time the young man is aware of the capacity in life for vital passionate experience as there grows within him a powerful warm yearning towards his friend. The implications in this passage are certainly sexual, the anticipation of "real" experience, of love in life as opposed to the coldness of art.

In the actual description, we find a far more defined and warmer imagery than hitherto seen in Pater -

> long black and white jetties printed clearly on the warm background of sky and sand ... the sands of a warm yellow colour ... rillets of blue water ...[44]

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Pater: An English Poet, p. 448.

[44] Ibid.

One feels that this is an awakening of a far more physical nature than Pater would perhaps have chosen to reveal - which is perhaps why he did not complete the work.

Allied to this new awareness is the movement towards life, towards humanity that we have noted in "Wordsworth" and "Measure for Measure" and even in the "Child in the House", the interest in the development of the child into the man is indicative of a new human concern. Indeed, in "An English Poet" we also find an aspiration towards a broader but stringent definition of style and the exact correlation of word to idea that anticipates passages in "Marius the Epicurean" and Pater's essay on "Style". In works such as "Denys l'Auxerrois" Pater becomes bizarre and erotic while releasing his weird dionysiac fantasies; in "An English Poet" we see Pater freely expressing his desire for homosexual love, unburdened by conventional prejudice opening out with a fresh lyrical ecstasy which is not at all artificial or morbid.

Strangely enough, it is in another unpublished work also written at this stage, that Pater expresses himself most coherently concerning the relationship between life and art. Graham Hough notes with some irritation that Pater is

> frequently guilty of that tiresome kind of reticence that consists in not following out the implication of what he says; or that even more tiresome kind that consists in giving reasons for what he says other than the fundamental ones.[45]

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[45] Graham Hough: The Last Romantics (University Paperbacks) p. 139.

As we have already noticed Pater was worried about those "averted or saddened faces grown suddenly strange to us", which is probably why he suppressed the conclusion to "The Renaissance", which may have been why he used the form of the Greek Studies and which is probably why he did not complete "An English Poet".

Whether the movement away from art as a sublimation of life was prompted by Pater's desire for public approval, or whether it was (as seems more likely) a genuine yearning for humanity, love and sympathy we shall never know.

"The Houghton MSS" which is in essay form, seems to have been written between 1880 - 1885, while Pater was writing "Marius, the Epicurean"; for in a scribbled note at the top of the first page, he says

> Might this sound as an independent essay. If incorporated in Marius - would follow on "thoughts" - wherein he gets the sense of the claim beauty, strength so far as one is part of it - of a great external order.[46]

It is towards this "great external order" that Pater is moving and he begins by stating the contemporary problems -

> 'first the weakened hold of religious authority' and secondly the doctrine of the relativity of human knowledge which have affected the 'view of the world'.[47]

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[46] Anthony Ward: Walter Pater, The Idea in Nature, p.59 - Ward explains in footnote 1 - Thoughts 1 and 2 - part of the MS entitled "Art and Religion" by the Houghton Library, numbered No. 11 CMS Eng. 1150, Houghton Library, Harvard.

[47] Ibid. Leaf 2-3 quoted by Ward, p.60.

Pater, affirming his belief in relativity both as a result of scientific proofs and of his own thinking, posits the consequent dilemma of man thrown upon himself, a solitary prisoner, (as in the Renaissance Conclusion) within his own mind.

To Pater, the Nineteenth Century is in a state of moral anarchy and the hope for the future seems to lie in "custom" (a word which Pater has used before in his essay on Wordsworth) in some form of systematized authoritative creed. But he goes further; he integrates "sympathy" and then "humanity" in his creed. As in the "Measure for Measure" essay Pater claims that the "experts in the moral order" have not been the theorists but those trained in discriminating the subtleties of poetry - "poets and higher novelists".[48]

This idea of poet-judges seems to echo Shelley's "Defence of Poetry", while in Matthew Arnold's essay "Bishop Butler and the Zeitgeist"[49] a simtiar "super moral" society is envisaged.

Pater, however, develops this idea far more clearly and explicitly, again as in "Measure for Measure" expressing the need for a more flexible approach to morality.

> What we are looking for, is a common or abstract principle of m morals, wide enough to include all right notions, subtle enough to include expressively the most exceptional of these notions and wi th sanction, with self-evidence, enough to take from modern life as realized by the individual, its caprices and subjectivity.[50]

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[48] Ibid. Leaf 12 quoted by Ward, p. 61.

[49] Matthew Arnold: Last Essays on Church and Religion (London 1877) p. 90 f. f.

[50] Ibid. Leaf 19, quoted by Ward, p. 62.

And his solution is a sort of "Logos" - expressed later in the volume "Plato and Platonism", a "logos" related to Hegel's "Geist" and also called "vrai verité". Pater emphasizes the importance of language

> that great gift of the ages to the individual, which he has not made for himself, which comes to him so mysteriously, yet so surely, with such an overwhelming force to determine his thoughts, tastes, feelings, capacities, for receiving things without, diverting into them like a strong tide the whole concurrent experience of other men under various conditions in many generations.[51]

Language is certainly a less artificial, more enduring, more human symbol than the "Mona Lisa".

> Language and custom now represent for Pater the 'incarnation of the impersonal reason' which is 'part of the body of humanity, that great subtle impalpable spirit.[52]

This is one of the few occasions where Pater affirms his debt to Hegel, stating directly his hope for a relativism integrated with a spirit, a sort of universal reason dependent on the flux, which is reciprocally dependent on this force.

> "It is clear", states Ward,
>
> that Pater's high regard for the literary activity, his religious attitude towards art, comes from the aspiration to contact the impalpable spirit at large in the world, to discover the principle of authority, of coherence, the principle of logos underneath the flux.[53]

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[51] Ibid. Leaf 25, quoted by Ward, p. 63.

[52] Ibid. Leaf 26, quoted by Ward, p. 63.

[53] Anthony Ward: p. 63.

Certainly, Pater is to develop an almost "religious" devotion to language,and style itself is to become his symbol of an ideal truth.

As we have noted, this, the only definitive statement Pater makes, is unpublished. We know also that Pater planned and abandoned several other works at this stage. Notes for a study based on Moroni's "Taylor" entitled "Il Sartore", and nineteen pages of a portrait called "Tibalt the Albigense" have been found among the Harvard manuscripts, suggesting an

> experimental, tentative and uncertain quality in Pater's literary career, that has not been generally acknowledged.[54]

Even "Marius, the Epicurean" was, as Pater wrote to Carl Wilhelm Ernst,

> designed to be the first of a kind of trilogy, or triplet of works of a similar character; dealing with the same problems, under allied historical conditions.[55]

Gaston de Latour, (unfinished portrait) identified by Pater as a sort of "Marius in France"[56] is almost definitely the second part, whereas the third may be extant as "Thistle" - part of the Harvard MSS.

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[54] Lawrence Evans: Introduction to Pater's Letters, p.xxxi ... see also p.xxx for the information concerning the unpublished and unfinished projects of Pater.

[55] Walter Pater: Letters, p.65.

[56] Walter Pater: Letter to William Canton (22 January 1892), p.126 in Letters.

Whether the trilogy would have proved a work with ideas as clearly defined as the Harvard MSS it is difficult to know. What we do know is that Pater considered it "to be a sort of duty"[57] to write Marius: In his reinstatement of the conclusion to "The Renaissance" in 1877, Pater mentions that he has reprinted it "with some slight changes which bring it closer to my original meaning." He continues,

> I have dealt more fully in "Marius, the Epicurean" with the thoughts suggested by it.[58]

This statement implies that Pater has returned full circle to the conclusion of "The Renaissance", an implication which cannot be refuted strongly enough. By examining "Marius, the Epicurean" by supplementing information from the later "Imaginary Portraits" and from "Gaston de Latour", by integrating these ideas with Pater's position in "Style" and "Plato and Platonism" we shall understand how Pater retains both his interest in humanity and his devotion to art in his final aesthetic position, which, when blended with the concept of "suspension of judgement" derived from Platonic Dialectic will become the Paterian compromise.

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[57] Walter Pater: Letter to Viola Paget (22 July 1883) in Letters of Walter Pater, p. 52.

[58] Walter Pater: "The Renaissance", p. 233.

CHAPTER IV

THE PATERIAN COMPROMISE

"The motive of Marius", states Benson

> is the tracing out of the history of a highly intellectual nature with a deep religious bias, through various stages of philosophy to the threshold of Christianity.[1]

The fact that Marius was an unpleasant duty does not seem to have affected Pater's using the book as a means to "write out" his quest, as a sort of catharsis or self-purgation during which Pater through Marius, the young Roman living in the time of Marius Aurelius, almost expresses himself completely and almost reaches a solution in a mental climate very similar to that of the Victorian Age. Again, as in all Pater's work, the aesthetic and critical ideas are closely integrated, even identified with the ideas on life so that they are almost inseparable from the continuity of the narrative text. Nevertheless, I am going to attempt to separate them with the purpose of clarifying both the ideas and their development.

Art becomes significant in the life of Marius after his meeting with Flavian, the slightly decadent young man who, indeed, in the eyes of Marius is almost a creator-symbol.

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[1] E.C. Benson: Walter Pater (MacMillan, 1907), p.90.

Flavian and Marius are greatly influenced by the euphuistic verbal dexterity in Golden Book of Apuleus and Marius comments on the style of Apuleus

> What words he had found for imaging with a single touch, the sense of textures, colours incidents. Like jeweller's works.

One is reminded again (as in the English poet) of the hardness of texture and form required by Gautier in 'Emaux et Camées'. Of course, the atmosphere of the original version of Apuleus, in its ironical, highly flowered and highly un-Victorian sexual vigour is certainly not conveyed by Pater.

The Gautier-like images of gold and the jeweller intensify the formal polished quality of this literature. The story of Cupid was to represent for Marius.

> the ideal of a perfect imaginative love, centred upon a type of beauty entirely flawless and clear ... the hiddenness of perfect things, a shrinking mysticism, a sentiment of diffidence like that expressed in Psyche's so tremulous hope concerning the child of the husband she had never yet seen ... the fatality which seems to haunt any signal beauty, whether moral or physical, as if it were in itself something illicit and isolating; the suspicion and hatred it so often excites in the vulgar.[3]

Do we not detect a note of bitterness in Pater's last reference, a disillusionment with the "Philistines" of his age who were unable to understand his love of beauty?

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[2] Pater: Marius, the Epicurean I, p.95.

[3] Pater: Marius, p.96.

We note the more positive influence of Apuleus on Flavian whose attitude is reminiscent of the attitude of "An English Poet".

> He would make of it (language) a serious study, weighing the precise power of every phrase and word as though it were precious metal.[4]

What is important

> is to re-establish the natural and direct relationship between thought and expression, between sensation and the term; to restore to words their primitive power.[5]

In this passage a Wordsworthian tenor is maintained which is confusing in view of the fact that Flavian, according to Pater, is really attempting to emulate the Euphuistic tenets in literature which are

> symptomatic of that deeper yearning of human nature towards ideal perfection, which is a continuous force in it.[6]

Because of his sincerity, Flavian manages to avoid the superficialities inherent in Euphuism.

After Flavian's death, Marius influenced by the Heraclitean Philosophy of Flux becomes an adherent of Cyrenaicism, the empirical philosophy formulated by Aristippus. With not a little irony, he remarks that

> in the receipt of metaphysical formulae, all depends, as regards their actual and ulterior result, on the pre-existing qualities of that soil of human nature into which they fall.[7]

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[4] Pater: Marius I, p. 101.

[5] Pater: Marius I, p. 99.

[6] Pater: Marius I, p. 101.

[7] Pater: Marius I, p. 139.

He is implying, of course, that his ideas have been misrepresented, for it is not the intrinsic idea which is finally significant but the interpretation by the reader, irrespective of his intellectual capacity. Pater emphasizes the flux of relativism as he had done in "The Renaissance" and decides through Marius -

> to exclude regret and desire and yield himself to the improvement of the present with an absolutely disengaged mind.[8]

The "moment" for Marius, far from being a visionary aesthetic experience has to be utilized in a practical fashion. The ideal of Pater's philosophy in the Renaissance, he explains, was

> not pleasure but a general completeness of life - a practical ideal ... Life as the end of life.[9]

Even if this was what Pater meant, it certainly was not what he conveyed to his readers.

At this point he indirectly reprimanded the critics of his volume "The Renaissance" by referring to those "acquaintances" of Marius who have not only misinterpreted his ideas but themselves are guilty of superficial arguments and misuse of high-sounding terms such as "hedonism".

In a tone reminiscent of Matthew Arnold, possibly even referring to Arnold's ideas, Pater suggests that,

> pitched to a really high and serious key ... the precept of 'culture' as it is called, or of a complete education might at least save him (Marius) from the vulgarity and heaviness of a generation, certainly of no grand finesse of temper, though with a material well-being abounding enough.[10]

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Pater: Marius I, p. 144.

[10] Pater: Marius I, p. 149.

In a rather un-veiled reference to the materialism and insensitivity of Pater's own contemporaries Pater offers the solution of Matthew Arnold - culture.

At this stage Marius is concentrating on perfecting his mastery of expression -

> Could he but arrest for others also, certain clauses of experience, as the imaginative memory presented them to himself! In these grand hot summers he could have compressed the very perfume of the flowers.[11]

These words are almost the same as those expressing the aspirations of the English Poet, and anticipate Pater's most important tenet of "Style" the exact approximation of the word to the artist's inner vision.

Pater's use of the phrase "imaginative memory" rather than "imaginative reason" implies that he wishes to emphasize an associative quality in the imagination rather than the ordering power of reason.

His passionate ambition is,

> To create, to live, perhaps a little while beyond the allotted hours, if it were but in a fragment of perfect expression.[12]

Can art (or some alternative process) not serve both to enrich the moments of life and to prolong them?

Once Marius arrives in Rome,"the most religious city"[13] (where he is to be the amanuensis of the Emperor, Marcus Aurelius), he becomes influenced by the Emperor Marcus Aurelius with whom he, in the course of his duties comes into intimate contact.

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[11]Pater: Marius I, p. 159.

[12]Ibid.

[13]An ironical reference to the proliferation of religious factions in Victorian England.

The Emperor's attitude to the flux is the antithesis of the attitude of Cyrenaic philosophy which proclaimed to Marius,

> the world within me and without flows away like a river, therefore let me make the most of what is here and now.[14]

The philosophy of Marcus Aurelius was rather that

> The world and the thinker upon it, are consumed like a flame, therefore will I turn away my eyes from vanity; renounce; withdraw myself alike from all affections.[15]

Marius notices the excessive pride and endurance of Stoicism. He notes how the Emperor accepts death and suffering with passive philosophical resignation and how he shields the enigmatic Faustina, his Empress with her dubious reputation -

> the most beautiful woman in the world who was also the great paradox of the age.[16]

She is a mysterious symbol, a fusion of good and evil like the Mona Lisa.

Yet it is not long before Marius is repelled by the Emperor lack of humanity in viewing the gladiators in the amphitheatre. Marius feels that

> he at least ... [is] aware of a crisis in life, in obscure existence, a fierce opposition of real good and real evil around him, the issues of which he must by no means compromise or confuse; of the anagonisms of which the 'wise' Marcus Aurelius was unaware.[17]

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[14] Pater: Marius I, p. 205.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Pater: Marius I, p. 222.

[17] Pater: Marius I, p. 245.

For the first time the moral issue in life becomes important to Marius, so important that he feels he can no longer remain uninvolved or disinterested.

In the speech of the philosopher Cornelius Fronto the idea of ideal "conduct" (which has already been expressed in the Houghton MS) is again discussed. Fronto, although admitting "no moral values at all," suggests that "there is a remnant of right conduct" in men's actions, not as a voluntary gesture but

> as from a deference, an 'assent', entire, habitual, unconscious to custom.[18]

Evil actions are avoided not because of their lack of morality but as being essentially "a failure in good taste."[19]

He proceeds to

> expound the idea of humanity - of a universal commonwealth of mind, which becomes explicit and as if incarnate in a select communion of just men made perfect ... whose actual manners, whose preferences from of old, become now a weighty tradition as to the way in which things should or should not be done[20]

- a sort of vast Academie Francaise which should decree as a matter of taste, not of morality the standard of conduct and behaviour of its adherents.

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[18]Pater: Marius II, p.11.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Pater: Marius II, p.11-12.

But Marius is already beyond this -

> Where might Marius search for all this as more than an intellectual abstraction? Where were those elect souls in whom the claim of Humanity became so amiable, winning, persuasive ... whose faces averted from his would be more than he could bear?[21]

We might recall that Pater used this image of "averted faces" in the Harvard MS as symbolic of the disapproval of contemporaries (in a hypothetical situation) at an action or at conduct which the protagonist himself sincerely believes to be correct. In "Marius" Pater again contemplates an ideal world where the criteria of conduct are so high and worthy of such esteem, that he would willingly endure any criticism or disapproval of his own behaviour because of his respect for those standards. This attitude implies, of course, a refutation, a disapproval by Pater of contemporary values. Pater, through Marius is still searching for "that comely order, to which, as a great fact of experience he must give its due; to which he must, for his own peace, adjust himself."[22]

In the chapter "Second Thoughts" Pater explains that the Cyrenaic Philosophy is suitable for the young man who, has "an inward need of something permanent in character",[23] and who, impelled by the "Sturm and Drag" of his youthful temperament, grasps at

> the ideal of a rich experience ... in the ripeness of the receptive, if not of the reflective powers.[24]

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[21] Marius II, p. 14.

[22] Marius II, p. 14.

[23] Pater: Marius II, p. 20

[24] Pater: Marius II, p. 20.

This empiricism which focusses on the apprehension of the "ideal now", involves for its adherents, according to Pater,

> the sacrifice of a thousand possible sympathies, of things only to be enjoyed through sympathy, from which they detach themselves, in intellectual pride, in loyalty to a mere theory that would take nothing for granted and assent to no approximate or hypothetical truth.[25]

Cyrenaicism can no longer be satisfactory; there is, in Marius, Pater's mouthpiece, a yearning for humanity, for sympathy, qualities which he now feels are too important to be lost in any empirical philosophy. This is certainly the antithesis of the contention in the Conclusion to "The Renaissance" that :

> The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter or some abstract theory, we have not identified with ourselves, or has no real claim upon us.[26]

Although there is a glimmer of hope in the words of Cornelius Fronto, Marius does not find Stoicism compatible either. Distressed by the inhumanity of a Roman triumph sanctioned by Marcus Aurelius, by the Emperor's impassive reaction to the barbarism of the Gladiatorial show, Marius has also seen the Emperor disintegrate with grief at the death of his son - a negation of all that Stoicism is reputed to stand for - self-control, endurance and resignation.

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[25] Pater: Marius II, p. 24.

[26] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 237-8.

Yet Marius had gleaned some wisdom from the Emperor - for instance, the maxim 'Tis in thy power to think as thou wilt.'[27] In a previous passage Marius

> had considered the shortcomings of the stoic type of self-communion deciding that it lacked significance - unless there were indeed some one else aware of our actual thoughts and feelings, pleased or displeased at one's disposition of one's self.[28]

In a mood of depression, he entertains the

> cheerful, sociable, restorative ... hypothesis of an eternal friend to man, just hidden behind the veil of a mechanical and material order, but only just behind it ... was it after all really only a matter of choice, dependent on some deliberate act of volition on his part?[29]

In these passages we see the emergence of the Dialectic Pattern of reasoning, the necessity for a second party, for the dialogue to replace 'self-communion' in the thrashing out of truth. Even more significantly, we see Marius moving more definitely towards the idea of a Supreme Sympathetic Being. The act of Volition, of voluntary assent is, in fact of primary importance, for one of the most striking of Pater's characteristics is that he never becomes finally committed to any 'large cause'. Indeed, as we shall see, he subscribes to the theory of 'suspension of judgement'. Whether this is a rationalisation or not, Pater, as Benson notes, only arrives at the threshold of Christian belief.

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[27] Pater: Marius II, p.51.

[28] Pater: Marius II, p.49.

[29] Pater: Marius II, p.65-6.

At the House of Cecilia, approached through the Catacombs where Marius finds a feeling of peace seeing the tombs of martyrs and inscriptions of hope on the tombs of little children, he is inspired by the ideal of the sympathy and generosity of the family. Yet Pater is hesitant,

> He was aware that new responsibilities also might be awakened - new and untried responsibilities - a demand for something from him in return. Might this new vision, like the malignant beauty of pagan . . . Medusa, be exclusive of any admiring gaze upon anything but itself?[35]

These lines seem to be a reflection of the tentativeness, the hesitation of Pater (through Marius). He is unwilling to shoulder responsibilities which demand the disintegration of his own "wall of personality", to surrender himself to something which he fears will come in time to demand his complete attention and devotion. He is searching for sympathy, tolerance and love, but is he able to return sympathy and love?

In his diary Marius writes,

> I find it hard to get rid of a sense that I, for one, have failed in love. I would that a stronger love might arise in my heart.[36]

This, perhaps, is the real dilemma of Pater, the inability to communicate with his fellows on a plane other than the intellectual plane.

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[35] Marius:II, p. 108-9.

[36] Marius II, p. 178.

In fact, Christianity interpreted by Pater seems to have a far more intellectual, cultural significance than a religious emphasis.

> Indeed, the idea of the Church in Pater's mind seems to be very similar to his ideas of the myth of the Mona Lisa image, or the essay ... We may take it that Christianity as he expresses it here repeats yet a further effort in the structure of his thought to that constant and demanding search for organic correctness which gives rise to all the similar figurations in his writing.[37]

So, in fact, Pater's Christian aspirations are more aesthetic than religious by nature, not only his attitude to the idea of Christianity but also his predilection for the aesthetic aspects of divine worship which had attracted him even as a boy when he had worshipped the ancient religion of Numa.

It is in the dialogue between Lucian, a sceptic and Hermotimus a young stoic, that Pater explains his theoretical reasons for not accepting Christianity and, in a sense we feel him returning to his position in the Coleridge essay, where his belief in the flux precludes him from sympathising with Coleridge's aspiration towards the absolute.

> Yet the chapter ends on a note of regret,
>
> Do they never come down again from the heights to help those whom they left here before? ... and we too desire, not a fair one, but the fairest of them all. Unless we find him we shall think we have failed.[38]

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[37] Ward: p. 171-2.

[38] Marius II, p. 172.

In the realization of his own deficiency of love Marius turns to compassion,

> What we need in the world against that ... evil ... of a certain necessary sorrow and desolation ... is a certain permanent and general power of compassion.[39]

Finally Marius returns to the home of his fathers, "the resting place of the dead", where, in a curious way he seems to re-establish a rapport with "the father he had scarcely known", a blinding rush of kindness as if two alienated friends had come to understand each other at last."[40]

Marius dies of the plague after he and Coriolanus, his Christian soldier friend, have both been captured. Marius bribed the guard to release Coriolanus in the belief that he is not a Christian and, in a voluntary act of martyrdom Marius himself remains. As he lies dying "in an atmosphere of home",[41] Marius contemplates Christianity, which he feels has established

> ... a permanent protest in the world, a plea, a perpetual after-thought which humanity henceforth would ever possess in reserve against any wholly mechanical and disheartening theory of itself and its conditions.[42]

Marius dies as a martyr taking the last sacrement and the mystic bread "like a snowflake" only half-eaten. Yet he is still not totally committed to Christianity.

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[39] Marius II, p. 183.

[40] Marius II, p. 206-7.

[41] Marius II, p. 216. (paraphrase)

[42] Pater: Marius the Epicurean, Vol. II, p. 221.

> It had been always his policy through all his pursuit of experience to take flight in time from any too disturbing passions, from any sort of affection likely to quicken his pulses beyond the point at which the quiet work of life was practicable.[43]

And so Pater, who through Montaigne is to say later, "I have no other aim in writing but to discover myself"[44] retreats again from the encounter with committment.

Pater's second mouthpiece, Gaston de Latour, "a sort of Sixteenth Century Marius in France" covers much the same ground as did Marius. The inspiration of the sensuous, euphuistic quality of Ronsard's poetry corresponds to the influence of the Golden Book of Apuleius on Marius and Flavian, while the sceptical introspection of Montaigne conveys Pater's own reaction to relativism as seen in "The Renaissance". It is -

> the recognition over against or in continuation of, that world of floating doubt, of the individual mind ... which is only true unto itself[45]

which motivates Montaigne's idea of "suspension of judgement"; for if no opinion is ultimately valid, one cannot ever reach a valid conclusion.

It is this idea which, allied to the Platonic Dialectic is to become fundamental to the Paterian Compromise in "Style".

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[43] Pater: Marius the Epicurean, Vol. II, p. 188.

[44] Pater: Gaston de Latour (in Imaginary Portraits), p. 265.

[45] Pater: Gaston de Latour, p. 265.

The movement in "Gaston de Latour", as in "Marius, the Epicurean" is again towards a tentative moral outlook. Contemplating the pantheistic doctrine of Bruno, the ex-monk of the Dominican Order, Gaston finds it unacceptable because of its lack of discrimination "of fine nuances, or proportion in things."[46] For Gaston could no longer be indifferent to

> the distinction ... between the precious and the base, aesthetically between what was right and wrong in the matter of art.[47]

In the "Imaginary Portraits" some unattainable standard seems to be implied in the fruitless and tragic quests of these beautiful strange young men.

Watteau, in a manner typical of these characters

> was always a seeker after something in the world that is there in no satisfying measure, or not at all.[48]

Denys l'Auxerrois is another of Pater's Dionysiac conceptions of a "god returned in another age", in which he gives free rein to his fantasy with rather strange morbid results. Carl, Duke of Rosenmold, "with his full red lips and open blue eyes"[49] reminiscent of Dorian Gray, is allied to the Dionysiac god reborn and in a sense to the Duke in "Measure for Measure".[50]

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[46] Pater: Gaston de Latour, p. 321.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Pater: Imaginary Portraits, p. 44.

[49] Pater: Imaginary Portraits, p. 137.

[50] Only in the sense of a sort of disguised "probe" among his people without the moral implications of "Measure for Measure".

For, in a strange way, to test the flatterers who called him the "Northern Apollo",[51] he decides to give it out that he had died. In fact, he went as far as to "assist at his own obsequies."[52] It is, however, in Carl's unreal search for "enlightenment" and for a poetic ideal not at all integrated with life, that the tragedy arises.

And in the same way, Sebastian van Storck in his search for some "higher reason" loses all sense of sympathy, love and humanity, although it seems that his death which occurs while rescuing a child is a kind of redemption.

These characters are symbols, enchanting, fixed and enduring of the "aesthetic man", symbols of the tragedy which befalls him because of his unbalanced attitude to life; for, as Pater implies in Marius, it is necessary to make an adjustment to life. Indeed, Pater's whole life was a struggle to make this adjustment. The "Imaginary Portraits" seem not only to incarnate the dilemma of Pater but also to envisage the terrifying prospect of failure, the failure of the idealist, destroyed by an age with which he can find no rapport.

It is in the essay on "Style" that Pater develops a rapport between art and life. D'Hangest states:

> Il est de prime abord significatif que Pater ait fait choix d'un tel titre pour nous presenter la doctrine litteraire qui fut pendant toute sa carriere l'un des grands themes de sa pensee.[53]

On the other hand, it was a natural choice of title for what is the establishment of the Paterian compromise.

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[51] Pater: Imaginary Portraits, p. 128.

[52] Pater: Imaginary Portraits, p. 136.

[53] D'Hangest: Walter Pater II, p. 165.

Art and aesthetic ideas, criticism and critical theories have always been an integral part of Pater's attempt to adjust to life, to find an enduring solution in the flux. As we have seen, the aesthetic ecstasy of "The Renaissance Conclusion" and the attempt to intensify this aesthetic experience by the closer integration of form and matter in the "Giorgione Essay" were means by which Pater aspired to give some meaning to the threadbare life of the flux, to sublimate life in art, whereas the symbol of the Mona Lisa is an attempt to expand this aesthetic "moment", to make it more enduring by means of its evocations of history, culture and mystery.

When Pater abandoned the idea of the aesthetic experience as a sublimation of life either because it was no longer a satisfactory solution or because of his sensitivity to criticism, when he began to emphasize the aspect of morality and ethics, it was still within a framework of aesthetic expression. The "Harvard MS." and "An English Poet" which seem to record more directly than Pater's other works, his real aspirations, posit their solution in the close relationship of art and life. In the former, the Hegelian Geist is integrated with language, a form of "logos", while in "An English Poet", the young new literary evolution is closely linked up with a physical awakening and exodus out of his former introspection into a more vibrant awareness of life. Even in "Marius" and "Gaston" we see how the aesthetic ideas of these Paterian young men are profoundly integrated with their search for meaning in life, while,

as we have noted, the tragedy of the young men in the "Imaginary Portraits" is precisely their inability to integrate their aesthetic aspirations with life.

It is thus in "Style" that Pater, not shifting in any way his allegiance to the importance of words, form and the refinement and intensification of these aspects of literature, establishes a rapport, a compromise with life bearing a new emphasis (not a new awareness, because this has been emerging gradually) on sympathy and humanity in art and life. So, although we shall examine this essay more closely at a later stage, it is essential to relate it to Pater's aesthetic development.

Pater has already discussed the competence of Goethe and Victor Hugo's handling of the "modern situation" in his essay on "Winckelmann". They were writers of prose, and in "Style" Pater concludes that

> imaginative prose may be thought as being the special art of the modern world.

This is because, having none of the restraints of verse, it is able to accommodate "the variety and complexity" of its contemporary interests ... as well as the "all-pervading naturalism a curiosity about everything whatever as it really is".[54]

In the essay form (which Pater will later relate with the Platonic Dialogue which is "co-extensive with life")[55] the artist will thus be able to establish a successful alliance between life and art. And we

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[54] Pater: Appreciations, p.11.

[55] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p.185.

remember that Marius "although he remained 'of a poet's temper',[56] turned from poetry to prose.

When Pater discusses the importance of the "mot juste", of exact word usage, of avoiding verbosity in achieving artistic success we are reminded of the aspirations and strenuous attempts to achieve literary perfection of Flavian and "An English Poet".

The emphasis on the role of unified structure in producing the impact "of a single almost visual image" indicates that the "aesthetic moment" is still Pater's fundamental aesthetic objective, but it is an aesthetic moment expanded, intellectualized and humanized and Pater still considers a conscious process of refinement of language to be important in attaining this unity; for Flaubert, his literary idol is only virtuoso of the "mot juste" by virtue of his continual travail.

Flaubert writes in a letter in 1857,

> La forme et l'idee cest comme le corps et l'ame; pour moi c'est tout un; c'est inseparable et je ne sais pas ce qui est l'un sans l'autre.[57]

A closer approximation to the aspirations of the "Giorgione Essay" would be difficult to find. So it is, according to Pater, that, although the "style is the man" because of his "absolutely sincere apprehension of what is most real to him", when he merges

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[56] Pater: p. 157.

[57] quoted by Enid Starkie in "From Gautier to Eliot", p. 63.

this apprehension with ideal form the result will be impersonal. Whereas, in the Giorgione essay Pater had asserted - "all art must aspire to the state of music", now we read,

> music and prose literature are in one sense the opposite terms of art,[58]

since the art of literature is

> presenting to the imagination through the intelligence, a range of interests as free and various as these which music presents to it through the sense.[59]

Music and literature both incorporate the imagination but music emphasizes the sensual element while literature emphasizes the intellectual element. Thus, although music does indeed fuse form and matter into intense aesthetic unity,

> literature is equally powerful by finding its specific excellence in the absolute correspondence of the term to its import.[60]

But this in itself is no longer the supreme aspiration for Pater. This is merely "good art".

> Great art involves more than just perfect aesthetic form -
>
> It is on the quality of the matter it informs or controls, its compass, its variety, its alliance to great ends, or the depths of the note of revolt, or the largeness of hope in it, that the greatness of literary art depends.[61]

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[58] Pater: Appreciations, p.37.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Pater: Appreciations, p.38.

It is indeed on the success of its relationship with the profundities of life, sympathy and humanity, that art "finds its logical, its architectural place in the great structure of human life".[62]

Art is part of life and cannot be divorced for life; for it has "something of the soul of humanity in it"..

As Ward points out,

> this last phrase of the essay on style is not the arbitrary afterthought some critics have supposed it to be.[63]

Pater has reached a compromise between life and art and the essay on style

> defines the beginning of the last phase of Pater's work and serves to focus the new direction his literary thought is taking.[64]

In "Plato and Platonism" we find the culmination of Pater's aesthetic ideas in what d'Hangest calls "l'aboutissement d'une existence entiere",[65] where Pater makes it as clear as it has always been in his work that aesthetics, life and criticism cannot be separated.

Pater begins by clarifying his method of criticism which has always been historical. The man and his milieu cannot be separated and Pater places Plato, the man, in his milieu where philosophers are

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[62] Pater: Appreciations, p. 38.

[63] Ward, p. 176.

[64] Ibid.

[65] d'Hangest II, p. 192.

obsessed with the idea of the Heraclitean flux. Besides the fact that the style of these essays is much more relaxed than Pater's other works, (perhaps because they were originally lectures), it is also notable that Pater's attitude in this work is far more positive than it has been hitherto. There is no feeling of despair, for there is another side to this theory, a side which Pater has spoken about in the Houghton MS. This is an attempt of Plato

> to reduce that world of chaotic mutation to cosmos, to the unity of a reasonable order[66]

which is further evolved, states Pater, in the modern idea of development.

> Plato, of course, is opposed to the flux
>
> Everywhere he displays himself as an advocate of the immutable. The Republic is a proposal to establish it indefectibly in a very precisely regulated, a very exclusive community, which shall be a refuge for elect souls from an ill-made world.[67]

Disapprovingly Pater explains the idea of "Pure Being", of Parmenides, an idea which inspired Plato and which can after all only be defined as "Pure Nothing', that colourless, formless, impalpable existence".[68] Yet, the genius of Plato gives to this "black and white light of one"[69] a new dimension of colour and vividness.

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[66] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p. 17.

[67] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p. 22.

[68] Pater: Plato, p. 32.

[69] Pater: Plato, p. 47.

It was Pythagoras, however, who, setting "the frozen waves in motion"[70] again, brought in his Doctrine of numbers the recognition of

> unity in variety ... cosmos ... in the dominion of number everywhere, the proportion, the harmony, the music into which number as such expands.[71]

Plato's Theory of Ideas, is, in fact

> an effort to enforce the Pythagoras unity in variety of concerted music - eternal definition of the finite upon the infinite, the indefinite, formless brute, matter of our experience of the world.[72]

And this theory extends even to the spheres, integrating them in this harmonious order of the universe.

The Pythagorean theory of transmigration even imposes a direction and order on death in the flux, a concept of a continuing human spirit.

> It is humanity itself now - abstract humanity - that figures as the transmigrating souls accumulating into its "colossal manhood" the experience of ages; making use of, and casting aside in its march, the sould of countless individuals, as Pythagoras supposed the individual soul to cast aside again and again its outworn body.[73]

This idea fits neatly with Pater's concept of the "Zeitgeist" and he explains how man is "shrouded" in heredity, in past customs and traditions of culture, race and species.

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[70] Pater: Plato, p.51.

[71] Pater: Plato, p.52.

[72] Pater: Plato, p.60.

[73] Pater: Plato, p.73.

Significantly, Pater illustrates these ideas by the "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality" by Wordworth where the poet expresses the idea of metempsychosis of the soul and "The Retreat" by Henry Vaughan who was able to blend the Pythagorean doctrines with Christian belief.

Thus Pater is maintaining this idea of order, unity amidst variety not only in his concept of art and literature, but also in his philosophical ideas, which indeed, cannot be rigidly separated from his aesthetics.

It is even fundamental in the chapter "Plato and the Sophists" where Pater discusses how the versatility of the Athenian mind is able to reconcile the two opposing tendencies of Greek mind, the Ionic tendency,

> flying from the centre, working with little forethought straight before it in the development of every thought and fancy; throwing itself forth in endless play of undirected imagination delighting in colour and brightness...[74]

asserting individualism and originality, and the Doric centripetal tendency, - unity

> of a strictly composed self-conscious order, in the universal light of the understanding.[75]

For Pater

> the essence of all artistic beauty is expression, which cannot be where there's really nothing to be expressed; the line, the colour, the word, falling obediently and with minute scruple, the conscious motions of a convinced intelligible soul.[76]

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[74] Plato, p. 103.

[75] Plato, p. 105.

[76] Plato, p. 120.

This is what Pater calls "la vraie verite" here and "intimité" in his essay on Della Robbia. Once it was the "aesthetic moment", but now it has the added implication of "universal worth" in addition to mere beauty. Pater emphasizes this aspect by juxtaposing it with the attitude of the sophists who state:

> It is not necessary for one who would be a master of rhetoric to learn what really is just, for instance, but rather what seems just to the multitude who are to give judgement, nor again what is good or beautiful, but only what seems so to them. For persuasion comes of the latter; by no means of a hold upon the truth of things.[77]

There is now for Pater, an intrinsic "truth of things", even if it has not yet been apprehended, and Pater proceeds to show how Plato in his personality, ideas and ideals concerning literature, aesthetics and life is an incarnation of the aspiration to this "vraie vérité: ".

Pater's conception of the Platonic temperament is the ideal of a rounded personality full of humanity, sympathy and love - qualities which were singularly lacking in the young men of the "Imaginary Portraits". (We will recall that Marius himself admitted to a deficiency in love). Plato's is a "richly sensuous nature"[78] and his austerity, his temperance,

> is attained only by control and discipline [although] ... his mind is a storehouse of all the liveliest imageries of men and things.[79]

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[77] Pater: Plato, p. 117.

[78] Plato, p. 126.

[79] Plato, p. 127.

He is a perceptive observer of character and individual psychological characteristics and "there is plenty of humour in him and something of irony."[80]

The central characteristic of Plato is his capacity for love which is revealed not only in his apprehension of the material phenomena of the natural world but also in his treatment of intellectual abstractions.

> And his style, because it really is Plato's style, conforms to, and in its turn promotes in others that mental situation[81] -

that capacity for love, that aesthetic sensibility, because "the style is the man" - in the most profound sense.

Plato's style is not only one of vibrant aesthetic sensibility - "he breaks as it were visible colour into the very texture of his work"[82] but it combines

> for him all the gifts of sense and intelligence, courage in one supreme faculty of theoretic vision, the 'imaginative reason'"[83] -

which involves the "mind" and "soul" mentioned by Pater in the essay on "Style". Indeed, Plato is the ideal stylist, for he is able to approximate the word to the thought and has that "gift of sounding by words the depths of thought:"[84] which Flaubert only managed to achieve after much travail. (The implication here is that Plato achieved this easily, but we are not told directly.)

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[80] Plato, p. 132 - Pater develops the appreciation of "humour", a human quality which leads to a more balanced sympathetic attitude to life in "Appreciations" - as we shall demonstrate in the chapter on Pater's literary criticism.

[81] Plato, p. 140.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

Because of his personality, in fact, Plato almost in spite of himself instead of obliterating concrete phenomena from his Theory of Ideas

> enriched it, with the joint perspective, the significance, the expressiveness of all other things beside.[85]

Simultaneously these ideas developed attributes of humanism, "abstract ideas themselves become animated, living persons almost corporeal";[86] so that Beauty becomes the central idea for Plato as

> the permanently typical instance of what an idea means; of its relation to particular things, and to the action of our thoughts upon them.[87]

And as visible beauty "is the clearest the most certain thing in the world";[88] it is also closest in this concrete form to its eternal ideal form, pattern or prototype - to the eternal abstraction of Beauty .

The Platonic Dialogue is Plato's method of searching for truth "by means of question and answer, primarily with one's self". And according to Pater, "the Platonic Dialogue in its conception, its peculiar opportunities is essentially an essay"[89] which he later hails as

> that characteristic literary type of our own time, a time so rich and various in special apprehension of truth, so tentative and dubious in its sense of their ensembles and issues.[90]

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[85] Plato, p. 159.

[86] Plato, p. 176.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Plato, p. 171.

[89] Plato, p. 170.

[90] Plato, p. 174.

The essay form invented by Montaigne and eminently suited to his scepticism, is, Pater contends, also the ideal medium for the nineteenth century,

> where the truth is not a general conclusion, but the elusive effect of a personal experience to a mind which ... must needs content itself with suspension of judgement, at the end of the intellectual journey, to the very last asking: Que scais-je?... in the very spirit of that old Socratic contention that all true philosophy is but a refined sense of one's ignorance.[91]

Non-commitment is, of course, one of the most striking characteristics of Pater's own work, and as neat as this formula of "suspension of judgement" may be, one is only partly convinced that his hesitancy is entirely due to a belief that "all true philosophy is but a refined sense of one's ignorance", or that his tentativeness is deliberately intellectual.

Indeed, it is true that the essay form was ideally suitable for Pater; for within the capacity of the essay form he was able to create such diverse (and yet similar) studies as the essay on Style, the essay on Coleridge, Denys l'Auxerrois, "The Child in the House"; even Marius the Epicurean is really an extended essay, a long monologue, a sort of self-trial.

The word "Essay" is derived from "essayer", "to try", or "to attempt", and certainly all Pater's essays are part of his attempt to find himself and some higher truth, an attempt which rarely attains a satisfactory conclusion, in the manner characteristic of Platonic

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[91] Plato, p. 176.

Dialectic. The very fact, however, that Pater was able to give a coherent reason for the non-commitment of Marius, for his non-acceptance of Christianity, the very fact that Plato's very nature was indeed the antithesis of that of Marius seems to indicate that Pater's tentativeness was probably far from deliberate.

Pater's description of the dialogue as "a movement of thought"[92] as an intellectual "journey"[93] where the final step unites

> all those various successive partial apprehensions of the difficult way - only at the summit, comes the intuitive comprehension of what the true form of the mountain really is,[94]

is almost identical to his discussion of the artistic structure in "Style", where the conclusion has a strength of its own. The writer comes to it inspired

> and becomes delivered of it, leaving off, not in weariness and because he finds himself at the end, but in all freshness of volition.[95]

One must not overlook Pater's emphasis that the dialogue is for Plato

> A life, a systematized, but comprehensive and far-reaching intellectual life, in which the reason, may, the whole of man, realises all it was designed to be, by the beautific 'vision' all time and all existence.[96]

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[92] Plato, p. 179.

[93] Plato, p. 180.

[94] Plato, p. 180.

[95] Pater: Appreciations, p. 24.

[96] Plato, p. 183.

This process of mind which includes man's complete experience, which involves his total personality at all stages of its development is indeed an integration of art, the intellect and life. For those who

> prosecute it with thoroughness, it is co-extensive with life itself, a part of the continuous company we keep with ourselves through life

and thus will embrace its vicissitudes, its unhappiness and "above all, its final insecurity".[97] Indeed, its progress, like that of life, is almost like a voyage of discovery.

Pater compares the dialogue with the treatise which begins with an axiom which is then developed and explained systematically. The essay or dialogue on the other hand, connected with life as it is, does not even necessarily have an applicable conclusion.

> It does in truth little more than clear the ground ... it does not provide a proposition, nor a system of propositions, but forms a temper.[98]

The attitude formed during the development of the dialogue, the clearing up of misunderstandings, the intellectual and emotional communication in the dialogue is perhaps more significant than the dialogue itself; for the immediate outcome of the argument is not as far-reaching in its effect as the potential influence of the dialogue's actual mental climate on the experience or capacity for experience of those involved.

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[97] Plato, p. 185.

[98] Plato, p. 188.

The dispute is "rather to the profit of the disputant than of the dispute".[99]

Pater has thus presented to us Plato his ideal artist, his ideal stylist, who is able to combine men's intellectual quest, indeed man's whole being into an artistic form which is "co-extensive with life". Indeed Plato, Pater's ideal personality because of his love for all things material and abstract and his tremendous imaginative power is even able to integrate the philosophical ideas of Parmenides and Pythagoras into a meaningful concept of the musical harmony of the universe, of a pervasive humanity, even able to invest the "Theory of Ideas" with a vital significance.

Finally Pater considers Plato's aesthetic ideals, the ideals Plato wishes to implement in the Republic. And here we find how close ethics and aesthetics have become for Pater.

Plato's whole aim is to discourage the "centrifugal aspect" of the Greek mind and to induce unity, order, and the sovereignty of "imaginative reason". Form, the discipline and the intellectual rigour of form is more conducive to a higher ethical and moral standard than mere undisciplined unselective intuition. To achieve this ideal in his Republic, Plato, the "remorseless idealist" is prepared to merge, to suppress male and female family life in order

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[99]Plato, p.187.

> to cultivate those qualities which will secure mastery over ourselves, the subordination of the parts to the whole, musical proportion.[100]

Pater seems to approve, although here it would seem that Plato in his ruthless coldness is a very different figure from the "lover" which Pater describes earlier. Plato's aim then, is to integrate the principles of aesthetics with life, and the concept of the masculine aspect of art, "the spirit of construction, of purpose", as opposed to the feminine incoherence in art. These concepts which were broached by Pater in "Style" are now applied to life by Plato in his "Republic".

> It is life itself, action and character, he proposes to colour; to get something of that irrepressible conscience of art, that spirit of control into the general course of life, above all into its energetic or impassioned acts.[101]

It is the discipline, the ethical significance which is now important in art and life. Although Pater has already remarked on the impossibility of attaining any form of absolute or immutable security with our modern temperament, he believes that Plato may nevertheless inspire

> a habit, namely, of tentative thinking and suspended judgement ... may yet promote in us what we 'call ideals' - the aspiration towards a more perfect justice, a more perfect beauty, physical and intellectual, a more perfect condition of human affairs...[102]

that concept of perfection "to which experience is constantly approximating us, but which it does not provide".[103]

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[100] Plato, p. 273.

[101] Plato, p. 282.

[102] Plato, p. 195.

[103] Ibid.

At last Plato seems reconciled that the perfection which he seeks is an ideal, that it is part of our very existence to aspire to perfection and since we are human, this porfection must embrace life, morality, ethics and love. For Pater art is still a supreme ideal, but it is now inextricably and voluntarily connected with life.

Pater's search will continue, but he will now derive pleasure from the mere process of searching satisfied by the fact that his tentativeness, now formulated into the concept of "suspension of judgement" can be said to be deliberate and even profitable.

Pater's last essay, on Pascal deals significantly with the man who withdraws from life into religion, whose style involved

> a wonderful natural facility a dire ce qu'il voulait en la maniere qu'il voulait[104]

whose "Penseés" are very similar in form to the Platonic Dialogue. His tragedy is that

> he is not a sceptic converted, a retired infidel, but is seen ... as if at the very centre of a perpetually maintained tragic crisis holding the faith steadfastly, ... amid the well-poised points of essential doubt all around him and it.[105]

It is a state of perpetual agony, not even redeemed by a predilection for religious rites and intensified by fear of death.

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[104] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.67.

[105] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.77.

Besides this conflict, there seems to be within Pascal a conflict between "his suspicion of visible beauty[106] which leads him to "an inversion of what is called the aesthetic life"[107] and the tremendous power of his imagination, of which he was either unaware or which he suppressed. He does, however, remark, concerning the imagination,

> Elle fait la beauté, la justice, et le bonheur qui est le tout de mond. L'imagination dispose de toute.[108]

In typical Paterian fashion Pascal has an accident which predisposes him to frightening hallucinations of precipices yawning open beside him, symbols of death, which, according to Pater he feared so greatly.

We are told,

> Vanity; nothingness : these are his catch words! Nous sommes incapables et du vrai et du bien; nous sommes tous condamnés,[109]

Do these words not recall Pater's quotation of Victor Hugo in the Conclusion to "The Renaissance":

> Well! we are all condamnes, as Victor Hugo says : we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve.[110]

- which is precisely why the passing moments of life must be intensifed, sublimated, expanded (if possible) and made more meaningful in art.

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[106] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 80.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 88.

[109] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 87.

[110] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 238.

In this section on Pater's aesthetic ideas, we have emphasized the close relationship between art and life in Pater's thought. We have shown how Pater, in a search for some meaningfulness, some higher truth amidst the fleeting moments of the relativistic concept of life first resorted to art, by means of which he hoped to effect a sublimation, an expansion of these moments.

This did not prove satisfactory and Pater seemed to move towards a more humanistic approach, where art, embracing human values, ethics, sympathy, love and humour became the complement of life.

In the Houghton MS. we saw how Pater contemplated a form of humanistic religion based on "custom". Indeed, the urge for a religion, a unifying sympathetic "being", brought Marius to the threshold of Christianity.

At the root of this aspiration towards some higher ideal lay the gnawing consciousness of flux of time bringing death in its wake. We noticed how in the "Child in the House",

> this desire of physical beauty in the young child was mingled early with the "fear of death"[111]

and how

> religious sentiment ... presented itself to him as a thing that might soften and dignify, and light up with a 'lively hope', a melancholy already deeply settled in him,[112]

a melancholy occasioned by a fear of death.

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[111] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.169.

[112] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.193.

Pater, we will remember, attributed his non-acceptance (it was not a rejection) of Christianity to the "suspension of judgement" ratiocination of Platonic Dialectic, of Montaigne and indeed of Hegelianism; for relative ideas proliferate relative opinions - nothing is definite or finite. In the essay form, the approximation of the Platonic Dialogue, he reached a compromise between life and art by involving sympathy, love and the higher ethical ideals of humanity into a unified artistic form, while Plato, the ideal character, the supreme artistic and critic symbolized for Pater this compromise; for he

> may yet promote in us ... (ideals) - the aspiration towards ... a more perfect condition of human affairs, than any one has ever yet seen[113]

In the next section, examining Pater's criticism, we shall see, in the application of his aesthetic ideas to criticism that there is a definite ambivalence in his thought between the abstract idea and the concrete image; for while Pater is involved in a very definite struggle to maintain a hold on concrete life and form, there is always a tentative leaning towards abstraction. And the unknown insecurity of abstraction fascinated him and yet troubled him, posing implications perhaps similar to those of Christianity:

> He was aware that new responsibilities ... might be awakened ... a demand for something from him in return.[114]

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[113] Pater: Plato, p.195.

[114] Pater: Marius the Epicurean II, p.108.

Was this simultaneous fascination and fear of abstraction not allied to the terror of death manifested in the essay on Pascal?

Death, as we have seen, was one of the springboards of Pater's aesthetic ideas. Criticism, in itself an art for Pater, was not only an evaluation of art but of life itself in the same way as it not only examined aesthetic criteria but itself incorporated aesthetic criteria. Therefore, just as Pater's aesthetic credo was partly precipitated by a fear of death following on the heels of the flux of time, just as the fear of death, as Pater himself emphasized evoked the nostalgia in his work and the work of his contemporaries, so we find lurking behind Pater's choice of subject, and in his attitude to his subject this morbid, obsessive preoccupation with death.

In the essay on Pascal, written shortly before Pater's death, the Paterian compromise seems to be ignored; it seems to be forgotten. One wonders whether here Pater was not revealing something of his own terror of death, his own inability to commit himself to religion which both attracted and frightened him and his dread of the power of his own imagination and pressures within himself which were perhaps difficult to control and dangerous to reveal.

SECTION B

PATER'S CRITICISM - IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

CHAPTER V

PATER'S CRITICAL TENETS

In a rather derogatory article on "Pater's Critical Canon", Paul West comments,

> He is apt to confuse religion with culture, art with morals and himself with his subject.[1]

The merging of religion, culture, art, morals, Pater and his subject is certainly characteristic, but as a matter of principle not of confusion, for as we have stressed throughout his thesis, all aspects of life and thought, whether concerning art or literature, criticism or aesthetics were inextricably bound up with one another and with Pater's view of life.

This interrelationship is evident the moment one glances at the Preface to "The Renaissance", a Preface which is, in fact, the centralization of Pater's critical tenets.

"Beauty is relative", states Pater. Therefore defining it in abstract formulae will

> help us very little to enjoy what has been well done in art or poetry, to discriminate between what is more and what is less excellent in them...[2]

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[1] Paul West: "Pater's Critical Canon" in English Vol. XIV, Summer 1963, No. 83, p.185.

[2] Walter Pater: The Renaissance, p.VII.

The concept of the Hegelian flux is the springboard both of Pater's critical ideas and of his aesthetic ideas. Because all things are changing, because beauty is changing and because we ourselves are changing, the object which is itself in a state of flux must be apprehended most carefully.

Pater quotes Matthew Arnold's statement from his essay the "Function of Criticism":

> 'To see the object as in itself it really is;' has been justly said to be the aim of all criticism whatsoever.[3]

Matthew Arnold at a later stage in his essay says that the critic's function is to communicate "fresh knowledge",

> letting his own judgement pass along with it - but insensibly, and in the second place, not the first, as a sort of comparison and clue....[4]

Pater on the other hand, believes that because of the flux

> our knowledge is limited to what we feel... Of other people we cannot truly know even the feelings... But our own impressions!...How natural the determination to rely exclusively upon the phenomena of the senses, which certainly never deceive us about themselves...[5]

Therefore, in aesthetic criticism,

> 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.

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[3] Matthew Arnold: "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time", in Critical Essays (Dent), p. 1. - quoted by Pater in "The Renaissance" p.VIII.

[4] Matthew Arnold: Critical Essays, p. 24.

[5] Pater: Marius I, p. 142.

Through the years Pater has come to be known as an "impressionistic critic", the epitome of the subjective critic. West remarks, "He is much too personal to be a trustworthy critic",[6] while Eliot calls the work resulting from this approach to criticism "an interpretation, a translation; for it must itself impose impressions upon us, and these impressions are as much created as transmitted by the criticism."[7]

It is Lord David Cecil who, in "The Fine Art of Reading" gives the most accurate interpretation of Pater's words, -

> Our first aim must be to see the work as it is. This means accepting the limitations by which the individuality is defined. There is the limitation of the personal vision.[8]

It seems to me that Pater is justified in this emphasis on the "personal vision". After all, what he is saying is that the critic must not only recognize and admit his subjective approach but also examine its validity. Matthew Arnold, certainly, in spite of his distinction between the "personal estimate" and the "real estimate" in criticism, generally seems to have adopted the "personal estimate", as did T.S. Eliot. Indeed, the mere fact that criticism involves "approach" or "opinion" is an indication of a degree of subjectivity, which is, of course, a factor even in the mere perception of an object.

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[6] Paul West: Pater's Critical Canon, p.186.

[7] T.S. Eliot: "The Perfect Critic" in "The Sacred Wood", p.3.

[8] Lord David Cecil: "The Fine Art of Reading" in "Twentieth Century Essays, 2nd Series, p.184.

The prime requisites in the successful apprehension of the aesthetic object, are the concreteness of the object in the movement of the flux and the acuteness of the perceiver's sensibility, which, like that of Plato, Pater's ideal critic, carries

> an elaborate cultivation of the bodily senses, of eye and ear, their natural force and acquired fineness... into the world of intellectual abstractions.[9]

Pater rightly accepts that the first result of perception will be a response, and it is his concern to analyse this response.

> What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence and under its influence?[10]

In the essay on Botticelli Pater again mentions this aim,

> What is the peculiar sensation, what is the peculiar quality of pleasure which his work has the property of exciting in us, and which we cannot get elsewhere? ... this is always the chief question which a critic has to answer.[11]

This is, of course, particularly important where the critic recognizes

> over against, or in continuation of, that world of floating doubt, of the individual mind, as for each one severally, at once the unique organ, and the only matter, of knowledge, - the wonderful energy, the reality and authority of that, in its absolute loneliness, conforming all things to its idea without witnesses as without judge, without appeal, save to itself.[12]

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[9] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p. 140.

[10] Pater: The Renaissance, p. VIII.

[11] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 51.

[12] Pater: Gaston de Latour, p. 265.

Pater, we may have noticed, omits the distasteful, the ugly or the evil, remarking on the essay on "Measure for Measure" that "the embodiment of pure evil is no proper subject of art".[13]

Pater emphasizes the primary aspect of this initial perception by drawing the analogy with the physicist, the moralist or the mathematician, empirical scientists whose personal apprehension or experience of their data is fundamental to their task. Thus the empirical aspect is just as vital to Pater's critical creed as it was to his aesthetic theory, and Pater's ideal critic is not the man with a flair for abstraction but the man with a "certain kind of temperament, the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects,"[14] not a theoretician but a man of acute perception and sensitivity with a bent for analysis and discrimination. We will remember that in "Plato and Platonism" Pater considers Plato as the ideal "artist and critic at once", showing how personality and perceptiveness in observing character through concrete characteristics is necessary both in the creative act of the artist and the interpretative act of the critic (an act which simultaneously involves creation).

In addition, he must be a man capable of development within himself and of inducing development in others; for in the same way as the critic himself expands his personality, in the same way as he develops a greater sensitivity to aesthetic stimuli, so he can induce this process in others. Thus, when R.A. Scott-James states:

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[13] Pater: Appreciations, p.77.

[14] Pater: The Renaissance, p.X.

> The primary data of criticism, and their value must by the premises of the situation depend on the total personality of the critic, not only or even primarily on his experience with art, because they involve his peculiarities, wisdom and talent as produced by all his past experience,[15]

he is concurring with Pater's emphasis on the temperament of the critic.

Once the critic has analysed his own responses to the aesthetic object, he must proceed "to distinguish, analyse and separate from its adjuncts the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is and under what conditions it is experienced.

To Pater then, one of the most important functions of the critic is to analyse the reason for his own response to the aesthetic object, which, in the Preface to the Renaissance is not necessarily painting or literature, but anything that is beautiful, whether a living personality, a landscape or a piece of art. In "Marius the Epicurean", Pater discusses the viewpoint of Plato, who in "Phaedrus" recommends the reader

> to discriminate ever more and more fastidiously, select form and colour in things from what was less select.[16]

In this world where everything is positive, where "the individual is unto himself the measure of all things,"[17] there emerges, of course,

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[15] R.A. Scott-James: The Making of Literature (London), p. 111.

[16] Pater: Marius I, p. 137.

[17] Ibid.

the problem of how we are to analyse and discriminate "the more select from the less select".

The supreme aesthetic experience for Pater, stated in the Conclusion to "The Renaissance" is

> to burn always with this hard, gemlike flame... at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces write in their purest energy.[18]

Although Pater does not expressly differentiate between the aesthetic apprehension and its representation in art, we have already pointed out his examples of supreme ideal art in the essay on Winckelmann, the examples of "arrested life" of "arrested passion" in the sculptured frieze of the Panathenaic youths and in the monologue "Byron de nos Jours" by Browning.

Both examples demonstrate how the artist projects the character into some situation,

> or apprehends it in some delicate pause of life in which for a moment, it becomes ideal.[19]

In sculpture this type of pose

> allows passions to play lightly over the surface of the individual form, losing thereby nothing of its central impassivity, its depth and repose,[20]

so that

> in spite of this intricacy, the poem (or work of art) has the clear ring of a central motive; we receive from it the impression of one imaginative tone, of a single creative act.[21]

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[18] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 236.

[19] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 214.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 215.

We will remember that in "The School of Giorgione" Pater considers the perfect condition of such an aesthetic achievement to be

> a certain interpenetration of the matter or subject of a work of art with the form of it, a condition realised absolutely only in music, as the condition to which every form of art is perpetually aspiring.[22]

He then explains how "dextrous choice of subject,"[23] as exemplified by the Giorgione School can be conducive to such unity -

> The sudden act, the rapid transition of thought, the passing expression ... a look, a smile ... some brief and wholly concrete moment - into which, however, all the motives, all the interests and effects of a long history, have condensed themselves, which seem to absorb past and future in an intense consciousness of the present.[24]

Certainly Pater's description of the Mona Lisa is an example of his ideal in art.

As examples of lyrical poetry which he considers to be "at least artistically" the highest forms of literature because of its subordination of subject to form, Pater singles out "some of the most imaginative compositions of William Blake" and that "Song" of Mariana's page in "Measure for Measure" (in which, in fact, the subject is not at all vague). It is notable that he juxtaposes these examples with

> all things that partake in any degree of artistic qualities, of the furniture of our houses, and of dress, for instance, of life itself....[26]

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[22] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 149.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 150.

[25] These poems certainly do achieve a unity of form and matter, but by integration of subject and form, rather than by subordinating subject to form.

[26] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 138.

Criticism for Pater is not limited to literature and art; it involves the whole experience of the critic.

He emphasizes in spite of his interest in "Anders-streben" that it is "one of the functions of aesthetic criticism" to define the relationship of the artistic product to its medium,

> to estimate the degree in which a given work of art fulfils its responsibilities to its special material;[27]

for one of the first steps in aesthetic criticism is the cultivation of a precise awareness of the individual capacity of the various art forms.

In the essay on Winckelmann, we will remember that Pater has related the development of the art-forms to the development of the human mind:

> As the mind itself has had a historical development, one form of art, by the very limitations of its material, may be more adequate than another for the expression of only one phase of its experience.[28]

And for Pater the art most congruous with the contemporary world would be an art capable of conveying a sense of freedom from the modern concept of necessity, which is not the old idea of a God but

> a magic web woven through and through us, like that magnetic system of which modern science speaks, penetrating us with a network, subtler than our subtlest nerves, yet bearing in it the central forces of the world,[29]

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[27] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 131.

[28] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 210.

[29] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 231.

- the idea of the universality of natural law.

Pater's artistic criteria are integrated with his ideas and problems in life; for Pater these criteria should be applied to all spheres of life as a possible solution to Victorian man's vital concern with the order of the universe.

Yet, in spite of the pressures of the flux, Pater is still able to say:

> There is an element of change in art ... but besides these conditions of time and place ... there is also an element of permanence, a standard of taste which genius confesses...[30]

And he states categorically in the essay on Michelangelo's Sonnets:

> The qualities of the great masters in art or literature, the combination of those qualities, the laws by which they moderate, support, relieve each other are not peculiar to them; but most often typical standards, or revealing instances of the laws by which certain aesthetic effects are produced...[31]

Once the critic has defined and clarified these characteristics he will have acquired a standard by which to evaluate "many a vagrant genius", many a minor talent.

In the first section of this thesis we have traced a development in Pater's aesthetic ideas, a development which obviously involves a modification of Pater's aesthetic criteria. While in the essay on Winckelmann Pater was looking to art, by realizing the aesthetic ideal of "The Renaissance" "to give the spirit" or at least an equivalent for

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[30] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 199.

[31] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 96.

the sense of freedom from the modern world, with its conflicting claims, its entangled interests,[32] in his essay on Wordsworth, Pater states that although the function of the poet is not a didactic one, "to teach lessons or enforce rules", poetry should induce contemplation on

> the great and universal passions of men, the most general and interesting of their occupations, and the entire world of nature.[33]
>
> (Wordsworth's words)

Pater is moving towards humanism. The critic must now consider human issues as well as artistic form. In "Measure for Measure", the ethical aspect is introduced into art, for one of the main themes of the play is the problem of true justice which is dependent on those

> finer appreciations which poetry cultivates in us the power of making, those peculiar valuations of action and its effect which poetry actually requires.[34]

Pater is actually inferring that the acuteness and sensitivity derived from a literary training can be applied to ethical or moral problems in life. This concern with life and this link between aesthetics and ethics is again evident in "Plato and Platonism" while the suggestion of the practical educative effect of

> colouring, cheerful or otherwise of the walls of the room where children learn to read ... or the possible moral effect of the beautiful ancient buildings[35]

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[32] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 227.

[33] Pater: Appreciations, p. 63.

[34] Pater: Appreciations, p. 184.

[35] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p. 269.

is again indicative of Pater's changing aesthetic ideal.

Yet the change is really one of emphasis. Even in "The Renaissance" Pater talks of the

> unity of spirit ... this participation in the best thoughts which that age produced

and he considers its value and interest to reside in

> its general spirit and character ... the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type.[36]

T.S. Eliot is perhaps justified in aligning Pater with Arnold; for the moral aspect in Pater's critical and aesthetic ideas is undeniable, according to Kermode.

> For Pater, 'sensibility' - the power of profoundly experiencing what is significant in life and art - does for the artist the work done by a coarser apriorist morality in society at large.[37]

In "The Renaissance", the aesthetic ideal implied a sublimation of life; it also implied a sublimation of the moral aspects of life.

On this level Pater cannot avoid being a moralist. What Eliot has failed to consider, however, is the ambivalence in Pater's attitude, the fact that he is not a didactic moralist as is Arnold, and that, because his critical creed involves the idea of "suspension of judgement", in Pater's eyes nothing can be finally right or wrong. Yet even on this point Pater contradicts himself; for one aspect of Gaston's dissatisfaction with Bruno's ideas is that Gaston

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[36] Pater: The Renaissance, p.XIV

[37] Kermode: Romantic Image, p. 20.

> could never by a possibility become 'indifferent' ... to ... the distinction mainly, between what was right and wrong in the matter of art.[38]

Perhaps Eliot was right after all!!

In the essay on "Style" we approach far nearer to Matthew Arnold's definition of the criticism as the

> disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.[39]

Certainly he has not the precision of Pater to whom even in "Gaston de Latour" the aspect of "selecting, distinguishing and refining" in the artistic and in the critical process is still important. But Pater also distinguishes between "good art, but not necessarily great art". The latter is dependent on the matter, the content, not the form.

> It is on the quality of the matter it informs or it controls, its compass, its variety, its alliance to great ends, or the depth of the note of revolt, or the largeness of hope in it, that the greatness of literary art depends ... it has something of the soul of humanity in it, and finds its logical, its architectural place in the great structure of human life.[40]

Thus, because of its eclectic possibilities Pater considers imaginative prose as being able to embrace the "chaotic variety and complexity of interests in the modern world."

Whereas Arnold vaguely states, "a literary and intellectualised language is ... well-suited to grand matters", Pater explains his ideal style as follows -

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[38] Pater: Gaston de Latour, p.321.

[39] Matthew Arnold: Lectures and Essays in Criticism by R.H. Super, (University of Michigan Press, 1962), p.283.

[40] Pater: Appreciations, p.38.

> The style, the manner would be the man, not in his unreasoned and really uncharacteristic ... caprices, involuntary or affected; but in absolutely sincere apprehension of what is most real to him.[41]

And the writer or critic will subdue his impression to merge in the ideal that is style.

Although Pater's ideal in art has changed to embrace humanity and morality, form is still a vital component of 'good art'.

Certainly Pater's critical approach does not change, for in his essay on "Notre-Dame D'Amiens" (1894) published posthumously, the leading question, "the salt of all aesthetic study", is still, "What, precisely, what is this to me?"[42]

Pater has just reminded us that we must inevitably regard the great churches of the Middle Ages with an attitude completely different from that of "those who built or first worshipped in them"[43] particularly in view of the fact that the atmosphere of antiquity makes up for what has been lost in the passage of time.

Twenty years after "The Renaissance", Pater's main concern is to isolate and analyse the intrinsic aesthetic characteristics of the object examined and to analyse the precise response of the critic in the flux of time.

"One of the results of this relativism, this flux", states Meineke, referring to German historicism,

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[41] Pater: Appreciations, p.36.

[42] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.117.

[43] Ibid.

> is that everything in history now took on a different appearance from before; things no longer lay in the same place open to uniform scrutiny, but stood in perspective with a background that could not be fully measured and it was no longer the same things which eternally recurred, as had formerly been supposed, but an eternal process of newborn, unique, and incomparable events.[44]

Also referring to historicism, Acton, the famous English historian commented that man

> did not exist in vacuo, but he bore within him certain very numerous characteristics of his time and environment, from which he could not be abstracted.[45]

This is precisely the attitude that Walter Pater considered to be fundamental in criticism.

In "Plato and Platonism" he classifies criticism into three types - the dogmatic method - justifying thought by set dogmatic criteria of a particular school of the critic's preference, the eclectic or syncratic method which selects ideas from various schools of thought, and historic criticism which is the result of the Hegelian "Time-spirit" or "Zeitgeist". The fundamental proposition of historical criticism is that

> ages have their genius as well as the individual; that in every age there is a peculiar ensemble of conditions which determines a common character in every product of that age, in business and art, in fashion and speculation, in religion and manners, in men's very faces; that nothing man has projected from himself is really intelligible except at its own date...[46]

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[44] F. Meineke: from Die Idee der Staatsrason Werke T 1963. quoted in "The Romantic Movement" by A. Thorlby. (Longmans 1966). p. 84.

[45] L. Koch: Acton on History (1954), C. II. quoted by Thorlby in "The Romantic Movement".

[46] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p. 9-10.

In the essay on Pico Della Mirandola, Pater draws attention to the Fifteenth Century scholars who as yet, had not developed this historic approach, commenting,

> They lacked the very rudiments of the historic sense which by an imaginative act throws itself back into a world unlike one's own, and estimates every intellectual creation in its connexion with the age from which it proceeded.[47]

Indeed, this attitude is pervasive in all Pater's work. His characters are almost always discussed in relation to their cultural backgrounds while periods are discussed in relation to their representative personalities. But the question arises in this ever-moving pattern, a question posed by Flavian in "Marius the Epicurean,"

> Was poetic beauty a thing ever one and the same, a type absolute; or, changing always with the soul of time itself, did it depend upon the taste, the peculiar trick of apprehension, the fashion, as we say, of each successive age? Might one recover that old earlier sense of it ... Had there been really bad ages in art or literature? Were all ages ... in themselves equally poetical or unpoetical?[48]

Pater has already answered this question in his Preface to "The Renaissance" where he states,

> All periods, types, schools of taste are in themselves equal. In all ages there have been some excellent workmen and some excellent work done.[49]

The main problem is to select the most talented and representative artist of the age; for although Pater does find the Age of Hellenism most compatible, although he calls the Renaissance an age of

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[47] Pater: The Renaissance, p.34.

[48] Pater: Marius the Epicurean, I, p.103.

[49] Pater: The Renaissance, p.X.

> positive results in the things of the intellect and the imagination ... valuable for its general spirit and character, for the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type,[50]

there are indeed works of quality and interest in every age.

Pater warns against the danger of evaluating art merely on its "antiquarian effect" -

> The first condition ... must be a real, direct, aesthetic charm, in the thing itself .. unless some purely artistic quality went to its original making, no merely antiquarian effort can ever give it an aesthetic value, or make it a proper subject of aesthetic criticism.[51]

His "historic approach" involves an eagerness to indicate the complexity of cultural patterns which are present at any given time. Consequently, he stresses the superficiality of "trenchant and absolute divisions" in history where two movements, for instance Pagan and Christian art movements are opposed which, in fact, were co-existent at times. In the same way, Pater points out in "Two Early French Stories", how the revival of classical antiquity was but a "symptom" of

> the many-sided yet united movement, in which the love of the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, the desire for a more liberal and comely way of conceiving life, make themselves felt.[52]

It is then against a vital cultural background that Pater juxtaposes his characters

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[50] Pater: The Renaissance, p.XIII

[51] Pater: The Renaissance, p.19.

[52] Pater: The Renaissance, p.2.

> Abelard...connects this liberty of heart with the free play of human intelligence around all subjects presented to it with the liberty of the intellect, as that age which made much of manner, and carried it to a high degree of perfection.[53]

The essays on Prosper Merimee, Coleridge and Sir Thomas Browne number among those which exemplify Pater's insight into different cultural backgrounds, an insight which enhanced most of his work.

It is notable, however, that Pater tends to select periods in which he can trace the processes of the transition and merging of old and new ideas. For he considers an understanding and appreciation of certain periods of this type to be valuable in expanding the reader's preconceived narrow notions.

> Theories which bring into connexion with each other modes of thought and feeling, periods of taste, forms of art and poetry, which the narrowness of men's minds constantly tend to oppose to each other, have a great stimulus for the intellect, and are almost always worth understanding.[54]

But for Pater, even though history is so illuminating and conducive to a greater breadth of vision, the intrinsic aesthetic qualities are still supreme to the critic. In the Postscript to "Appreciations", where, utilizing his historical outlook he points out how romanticism and classicism are usually present in some balance or other at all times in all works of art, he concludes that although one of the functions of the critic, is to -

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[53] Pater: The Renaissance, p.3.

[54] Pater: The Renaissance, p.3.

> discriminate schools of literature, the legitimate contention is not of the age or school of literature one against another, but of all successive schools alike against the stupidity which is dead to the substance, and the vulgarity which is dead to form.[55]

It is, after all the aesthetic value of the artistic product which overrides all other academic considerations.

In fact, the understanding of personality, the psychological estimate, is, in fact, more important for Pater than the historical aspect. Certainly, the historical estimate is a vital first step.

> But a complete criticism does not end there ... It might even be said that the trial-task of criticism in regard to literature and art, no less than to philosophy, begins exactly where the estimate of general conditions, of the conditions common to all the products of this or that particular age - of the 'environment' - leaves off, and we touch what is unique in the individual genius which contrived after all, by force of will, to have its own ... way with that environment.[56]

It is the significance of the individual genius, and more so, the complexity of his mind that intrigues Pater, who comments on the early Renaissance period as being perhaps the most interesting period in the "history of the mind". The relationship of the mind of the artist with the trends of his contemporary culture is one of the focal points of Pater's criticism.

Again Pater emphasizes the importance of intrinsic aesthetic quality which should bear the stamp of the artist's individual talent.

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[55] Pater: Appreciations, p. 261.

[56] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p. 128-5.

> It is not enough for a poet to have been the true child of his age ... it is necessary that there should be ... in his work something individual, inventive, unique, the impress there of the writer's own temper and personality.[57]

Very often we find that Pater's characters are in part projections of himself and his own taste and therefore slightly distorted from the traditional interpretation. Wordsworth is perhaps more delicate than one would wish, while the Paterian "ennui", the Paterian preoccupation with "diseased sensibility" seems to envelop the large majority of his characters.

> If we look below the surface of a very equable and even smoothly accomplished literary manner, we discover, in high degree of development, that perplexity or complexity of soul ...[58]

Is Pater not perhaps also referring to his own soul more complex than that of many a character of his?

In his treatment of character, Pater uses a definite method; he devises a "formula", a motive which imposes a unity on his essay. This "formula" is usually a pungent summary of Pater's interpretation of the character. Thus Raphael's formula is

> "genius by accumulation; the transformation of meek scholarship into form - triumphant power of genius."[59]

while

> "Prosper Merimee is the enthusiastic amateur of rude, crude naked force in men and women wherever it could be found; himself carrying ever, as a mask, the conventional attire of the modern world."[60]

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[57] Pater: The Renaissance, p.172.

[58] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.39.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.14.

It is perhaps significant of his insight, sensitivity and self-knowledge that Pater is most aware of the incongruity between superficial appearance and the inward mental complexities.

Sometimes the formula presents the two conflicting forces within a character such as "strength and sweetness"[61] in Michelangelo, while the conflict between "the reason and its ideas, and the senses, the desire of beauty"[62] is the key to an understanding on Leonardo's life in Milan, for it is this conflict which causes weariness and "ennui" pervading this artist's life.

Pater's psychological approach is certainly not very subtle, but it is valuable in the juxtaposition of artist and milieu, in the perceptive isolation of important characteristics of artists, in Pater's relating the conflicts and aspirations of his subjects to the dilemma of modern life, and in his "sincere apprehension of what is more real to him".[63]

Indeed, he is signally aware that what is most real to him is often a biased representation of his characters and their work.

"Imaginative criticism", Pater comments,

> ... is itself a kind of construction or creation as it penetrates through the given literary or artistic product into the mental and inner constitution of the producer, shaping his work.[64]

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[61] Pater: The Renaissance, p.73.

[62] Pater: The Renaissance, p.112.

[63] Pater: Appreciations, p.36.

[64] Pater: Essays from "The Guardian", p.29.

So Pater, anticipating Oscar Wilde, recognizes in criticism a strong creative element which may even occasionally supplant the element of discrimination and analysis in criticism.

In "Marius the Epicurean" Pater remarks concerning Flavian,

> It is this very scrupulous literary sincerity with himself which saved his ephuism, even at its weakest, from lapsing into mere artifice.[65]

And it is this sincerity which saves Pater's sometimes too subjective vision from making his characters "unacceptable, which saves his style (on occasions far too tortuous and verbose) from being unreadable. For Pater's psychological insight is essentially directed to focus upon the "vrai verite" of his subject, the essential truth (perceived by Pater) beneath the facade, the essential truth which, Pater hopes will endure through the flux.

This sincerity is an integral component of the critic's style which is just as important as the style of the artist, being both his instrument and his expression. "The style is the man", the critic, "not in his unreasoned and really uncharacteristic caprices, involuntary or affected,"[66]
but as the enduring record of that which he has sincerely apprehended with his only vehicle or gauge of the phenomena passing by - his senses. If he can initiate a "new sense", if the critic can expand

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[65] Pater: Marius, the Epicurean I, p.106.

[66] Pater: Appreciations, p.36.

our perspective of art or view it in a new dimension, he would achieve "the highest that can be said of any critical effort."[67]

Graham Hough comments that one of the primary tenets of impressionist criticism is "the denial of all dogmatism, the abandonment of all Johnsonian claims to be a judge of art and letters;"[68] Pater "permits himself to express wishes, leanings, preferences, but not judgements".[69] In "Gaston de Latour", Pater discusses the notion of 'suspended judgement", the result of relativism, which implies

> that we are not bound to receive every opinion we are not able to refute, nor to accept another's refutation of our own, these diversities being themselves, ultimate, and the priceless pearl of truth lying, if anywhere, not in large theoretic apprehension of the general but in minute vision of the particular; in the perception of the concrete phenomenon at this particular moment and from this unique point of view."[70]

Thus no opinion can ever be final, enduring or ultimate and the only solution seems to be

> a sapient, instructed, shrewdly ascertained ignorance, suspended judgement, doubt everywhere.[71]

Pater dwells on the aesthetic quality of the

> very delicate balances; ... that image of equilibrium ... the spectacle of that keen-edged intelligence, dividing evidence so finely like some exquisite steel instrument with impeccable sufficiency, always leaving the last word loyally to the central intellectual faculty in an entire disinterestedness.[72]

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[67] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 178.

[68] Graham Hough: The Last Romantics (Methuen, 1961), p. 160.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Pater: Gaston de Latour, p. 253.

[71] Pater: Gaston de Latour, p. 264.

[72] Pater: Gaston de Latour, p. 264.

It seems as if the very critical process ending without drawing a definite conclusion, without committal, is regarded by him as an aesthetic act, with all the refinements, analyses within the mind after the initial perception ending in a repose which is maintained simultaneously with the tension of the suspended judgement.

This is, in effect,the process of the Platonic Dialogue, "a paradox or a reconciliation of opposed tendencies" which Pater also approximates to the essay. In "Plato and Platonism" Pater compares the essay and the dialogue with the treatise,

> the treatise as the instrument of dogmatic philosophy begins with an axiom or definition: the essay or dialogue, on the other hand, ... does not necessarily so much as conclude in one.[73]

Pater is thus comparing the Johnsonian dogmatic type of criticism to "impressionistic criticism" which is, in fact, the essay, which for Pater is representative of the "modern temper". The intention of Pater's criticism is, therefore, not to form judgements. We have already noted Pater's comment on "imaginative criticism". This, as we have seen, is a frank admission that the critical process involves aesthetic creation, that he strongly imposes his own personality on his characters and on their work. Furthermore, he does not pretend to judge.

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[73] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p. 188.

The essay or the dialectic process

> 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 not provide a proposition, nor a system of propositions, but forms a temper.[74]

It is thus perfectly justifiable that Pater should employ his creative talent, particularly if it helps create a suitable atmosphere or "temper", for all Pater is aiming to do is to induce an attitude or a state of mind in his reader; not to persuade him to adopt any rigorous theory or principle.

To Pater the dialectic process, or the essay is "co-extensive with life."[75] For the essay, the dialogue and life all involve a form of dialogue

> like that whole life-long endless dialogue, which dialectic in its largest scope does but formulate

and in which

> truly the last, the infallible word after all, never gets spoken.[76]

A dialogue involves two parties and the essay involves the author and his reader. As usual, Pater is cautious. We have seen that it is his aim to encourage an "attitude" in his reader by creating an "atmosphere" which involves the subjective perception or implied

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[74] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p. 186.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p. 192.

viewpoint of the critic. Paradoxically, the very subjectivity of impressionistic criticism because of its undogmatic manner, seduces and persuades the reader, so that, in fact, Pater replaces dogmatism by an attitude so insistently pervasive that it excludes and stifles the generation of any opposing ideas.

It seems that this aspect of Pater's critical technique is often missed because of his "suspension of judgement" and his rather "gentlemanly" manner. We must, however, emphasize that Pater's ambivalence and tentativeness did not deter him from firmly maintaining ideas and attitudes which, although they formed a Paterian tone which was difficult to evade, nevertheless remained inconclusive. Pater's caution lies not in his mistrust of his own ability to present his ideas, but in his concern as to how these ideals will be received and interpreted.

> In the reception of metaphysical formulae, all depends, as regards their actual and ulterior results on the pre-existent qualities of that soil of human nature into which they fall - the company they find already present there, on their admission into the house of thought.[77]

Pater continues by stating that the acceptance or non-acceptance of an idea is voluntary, a matter of will. Thus it seems obvious that if the critic is so dependent on his own individual impression, if the critic or artist considers himself to be the only true gauge, this will also apply to the reader, who, even while accepting an idea, will interpret it subjectively. Pater, ironically considers this to be dangerous.

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[77] Pater: Marius, the Epicurean I, p. 139.

> The receiver may add the falsities of his own nature to the truth he receives.[78]

- a statement which is, of course inconsistent with Pater's scheme of things where nothing is true or false except in relation to the individual perceiver. In spite of this inconsistency, Pater believes that in order to avoid the danger of misinterpreting the ideas of the critic, the reader must remain as passive as possible.

It is surprising that Pater as critic should have been dismissed so easily. Certainly he was not a critic of the calibre of Coleridge. In many respects, however, he is more perceptive than Matthew Arnold who seems sometimes to have gained his reputation more by the grand universal ring of his utterances than by their profundity.

> Eliot deprecatingly refers to Pater's views as having
>
> propagated some confusion between life and art which is not wholly irresponsible for some untidy lives.[80]

He regards "Marius, the Epicurean" as being symptomatic of "the dissolution of thought" in the nineteenth century, symptomatic of "the various chimerical attempts to effect imperfect syntheses" between religion and morals, religion and art, science or philosophy. Indeed, Pater and Arnold both attempt to effect some cultural or aesthetic substitute for religion - which accounts for Eliot's derogatory attitude.

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[78] Pater: Marius, the Epicurean I.

[79] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p. 189.

[80] T.S. Eliot: "Arnold and Pater" in "Victorian Literature" ed. by Austin Wright (Oxford, 1961), p. 247. (First published in Selected Essays by Eliot, 1932).

Although we must not lose sight of his interest in "Imaginative Criticism" Pater belongs not only with Lemaître and Anatole France in the tradition of impressionist subjective critics but with German Historicism and with Matthew Arnold himself. Arnold's main critical tenet, as we have already noted, claimed that

> Poetry is a criticism of life, under the conditions fixed for such a critic by the question of poetic truth and poetic beauty.[81]

For Arnold, then criticism, aesthetics and life are as inextricably connected as they are for Pater. Arnold admits that in spite of his aspiration towards a "real estimate" in criticism, he himself is bound to encroach on the historic and personal estimates. The "personal estimate", one's own impression, according to Pater, is the only valid approach in the flux of relativism and it is the critic's function to be aware and critical of his own attitude.

We do, however, frequently find Arnold's criterion of "high seriousness" (whatever that may mean), infiltrating into Pater's usually more concrete attitude, whereas it would seem that Arnold's use of "touchstones", (quoted examples of poetic value) approach the more empirical attitude of Pater. This is, of course only a superficial similarity, for the utilisation of "touchstones", although theoretically consistent with Pater's empirical critical approach, involves a superficiality which is most un-Paterian. So indeed, does the idea of the critic's function as primarily

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[81] Matthew Arnold: Essays in Criticism. 1st Series, p.3.

> a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world...[82]

Thus, although this type of sentiment is occasionally used by Pater, it neither echoes the very dogmatic preaching tone of Arnold, nor is it defined as the critic's function.

After conscious awareness and critical examination of his viewpoint it is the critic's function, states Pater, to discriminate the aesthetic qualities in the art which give him pleasure, or the "active principle" in the artist's work which is responsible for its aesthetic value. In spite of Pater's contention that "beauty is relative", his aesthetic criteria are real and consistent. It seems then that Pater's tenets are perhaps clearer and more relevant to art than Arnold's.

Richard Ellman sees three critical phases in English criticism in the nineteenth century, represented by Matthew Arnold, Pater and Oscar Wilde. When Arnold said in 1864 that

> 'the aim of criticism is to see the object as it really is', the critic is on his knees before the work he was discussing.

Pater's addition,

> 'the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's impression as it really is', subtlely altered the original proposition; it shifted the centre of attention from the rock of the object to the winds of the perceived sensations. It made the critic's own work more important as well as more subjective. If observation is still the word, the critic looks within himself as often as out upon the object.[83]

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[82] Matthew Arnold: Essays in Criticism, p. 12.

[83] Richard Ellman: The Critic as Artist or Wilde - in "The Encounter", July 1967, Vol. XXIX, No. 1, p. 30.

The next step, states El man, is Oscar Wilde, who believes that

> the critic occupies the same relation to the work of art that he criticizes as the artist does to the visible world.[84]

He regards the work of art "simply as a starting-point for a new creation". For Wilde the temperament of the critic is as important as it is for Pater. The critic must be "exquisitely susceptible to beauty."[85]

Wilde, then, carried Pater's "impressionism" further. The critic and the artist are synonomous (as one infers from Pater) but the work of art becomes merely an inspiration for the critic. Wilde quotes Pater's description of the Mona Lisa as an example of this type of creation

> which does not confine itself ... to discovering the real intention of the artist and accepting that as final.[86]

Ironically Pater's symbol, his attempt at perpetuating the aesthetic "moment" in an evocative symbol becomes the stimulus for a new development in criticism which can no longer be called criticism but a type of reverberation of artistic elements, a fantasy in a new work of art. Certainly Pater's Mona Lisa is an example of this type of art, although it is not representative of Pater's work, and although we have seen its significance in his aesthetic thought.

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[84] Oscar Wilde: Works, p. 966.

[85] Oscar Wilde, Works, p. 968.

[86] Ibid.

For Wilde, art and criticism are purely subjective expressions, the "record of one's own soul"; for Pater the analysis and discrimination of the aesthetic quality which gives us pleasure is the most important function of the critic.

Scott James in "The Making of Literature" considers that the critic's role involves many various aspects, - that of "the reader's imaginative response", a quiet just appreciator, the interpreter, or the censor,

> He may be the artist's discovery about himself and his kind. He may be the elucidator ... the definer ... the historian ... the literary propagandist.[87]

Wellek defines criticism as being aimed

> at a theory, at a formulation of criteria and standards of description, classification, interpretation and finally, judgement.[88]

T.S. Eliot in "The Frontiers of Criticism" has decided that the function of the critic is to

> promote the understanding and enjoyment of life.[89]

In this chapter we have examined Pater's critical theory, his formulation of criteria while we have briefly discussed his standards of description, classification, interpretation and suspension of final judgement.

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[87] R.A. Scott-James: The Making of Literature.

[88] Rene Wellek - A History of Modern Criticism, Vol. IV (1750-1950) (Jonathan Cape, 1966), p. 466.

[89] T.S. Eliot: The Frontiers of Criticism in English Critical Essays. Twentieth Century, 2nd series, ed. Derek Hudson, p. 49.

Pater's critical tenets, although diffused through his work are clearly defined with a singular awareness of the limitations of the critic, and of the complexity of the artistic work and the artistic personality.

"His mind is a little languid", writes Lord David Cecil,

> his style a little mannered and himself a little over-serious ... but to a degree unparalleled among English writers he combined the two qualities essential for critical appreciation - common sense and uncommon sensibility ... as never before he made its first principles [of critical appreciation] clear ... He laid foundations on which anyone who works in the same field should build.[90]

In the following chapters when we examine Pater's application of these tenets in his own criticism, we hope to demonstrate that Pater was indeed a critic with many facets who certainly succeeded in "promoting the understanding and enjoyment of art" as an integral part of our cultural heritage.

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[90] Lord David Cecil: The Fine Art of Reading in Twentieth Century Essays, p. 182.

CHAPTER VI

PATER'S ART CRITICISM

C. Robert Stange defines art criticism as

> a writer's attempt to give a prose account of the aesthetic values and effective qualities of a work of visual art[1].

In the nineteenth century this was a new prose genre; for before, writers had either concerned themselves with biography and art cataloguing or, as in the case of Sir Joshua Reynolds examined the general nature of art or the principles of painting.

In Germany after the Romantics Schelling and Schlegel began to look to art as a "liberating element", it was Schlegel who conceived of the new "poetic critic" whose function was to go beyond commenting and analysis, to illuminate the work he discussed by creating something equivalent to it - a type of "anders-streben".

Pater in his essay on Lamb speaks admiringly about his art criticism. Indeed, in the few passages of art criticism which Lamb wrote, as well as in some of Hazlitt's work we see an anticipation of the approach Pater was to develop.

Pater's art criticism is a distinct reflection of his individual approach and a landmark in his critical and aesthetic development.

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[1] G. Robert Stange; Art criticism as a prose genre in "The Art of Victorian Prose" ed. George Levine and William Madden (Oxford, 1968), p.40.

But we must not lose sight of the fact that it is part of an evolving tradition of prose art criticism in nineteenth century Europe, an art criticism which in Victorian England directly through Ruskin and less directly through Pater offered an aesthetic and cultural education to the rising middle class.

In a strangely Paterian passage Ruskin writes:

> But what we want art to do for us is to stay what is fleeting, and to enlighten what is incomprehensible, to incorporate the things that have no measure, and immortalize the things that have no duration. The dimly seen, momentary glance, the flitting shadow of faint emotion, the imperfect lines of fading thought ...[2]

He continues, however, in a Ruskinian vein stating that

> the great natural world is infinite and wonderful having in it that spirit and power which men may witness, but not weigh..

Although the aim of art for both critics was to capture evanescent beauty, Ruskin's passing moments meant simply "time passing" whereas Pater's moments were those of the Hegelian flux, which cast its shades of relativism over everything including beauty and threw man back on his own individual sense perceptions as his only reliable gauge of experience.

We will remember that Pater, having asserted that the aim of criticism is "to see the object as in itself it really is" continues in line with his Hegelian formula that the

> first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's impression as it really is.[3]

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[2]Ruskin: Stones of Venice, Vol. III, p.21.

[3]Pater: The Renaissance, p.VIII.

Ruskin considers that

> the whole function of the artist in the world is to be a seeing and feeling creature,[4]

and in an article on "Truth and Nature", he states that

> constant and eager watchfulness ... are worth more to the painter than the most extended optical knowledge[5]

- (in a scientific sense).

Thus Ruskin's eye is always on the object while Pater retreats within himself and dissects his own response to the aesthetic object. The difference between Ruskin and Pater were not merely differences of temperament and philosophical attitudes but also differences in visual power.

Graham Hough, stating Ruskin's achievement of "opening the eyes of an age by whom the sense of sight was left uncultivated as it had probably never been before,"[6] relates this "uncultivated vision" to the ugly mid-Victorian domestic interiors which were hardly meant to be looked at by a

> visual sense ... so thickly overlaid with association and reflection that it hardly contrived to function in its own right at all.[7]

Although Pater was so fastidious about the neat, Morris-inspired interiors of his rooms at Brasenose College and the house at Bradmore Road, the reader of his art criticism is very often left with the impression

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[4]Ruskin: Stones of Venice III, p. 49.

[5]Ruskin: Modern Painters I, p. 508.

[6]Graham Hough: The Last Romantics, p. 9.

[7]Ibid.

of a visual sense so cluttered with Paterian associations and reflections that the image of the picture or work of art is barely visible.

Of course the reason for this is partly that it was not Pater's intention to look at his picture in the manner of the conventional art critic who "sits in judgement".

Vasari, in the Preface to the second part of the Lives wrote,

> I have endeavoured to distinguish between the good, the better and the best ... I have tried as well as I know to help people who cannot find out for themselves how to understand the sources and origins of various styles.[8]

Later in the 1550 edition he hoped that

> the example of so many able men ... will be no little help to practising artists as well as pleasing all those who follow and delight in the arts ...[9]

Pater, on the other hand was interested only in isolating the precise pleasure-giving element in the work of art. Furthermore, it seems that Pater was more concerned with presenting a cultural "atmosphere" to his readers than with evaluating and describing the works of art.

In "Plato and Platonism" we will recall Pater description of the essay "which does not provide a proposition, nor a system of propositions, but forms a temper,"[10] a reasonable compromise in the flux where all things,even judgements,are relative.

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[8]Vasari - Lives of the Artists (Penguin) translated by George Bull, p.14.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Pater: Plato and Platonism, p.186.

Pater's attitude is very similar to that of Burkhardt, the author of "The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy" who wrote in 1874,

> I never dreamed of training scholars and disciples in the narrower sense but only wanted to make every member of my audience feel and know that everyone may and must appropriate those aspects of the past which appeal to him personally, and that there might be happiness in doing so.[11]

Berenson, one of Pater's most distinguished successors in the field of art criticism stated his aim as not to

> give an account of the painters' domestic lives or even of their specific techniques, but of what their pictures mean to us today as works of art, of what they can do for us as ever contemporary life-enhancing actualities.[12]

Certainly, like Burckhardt, Pater wants to engender in his reader a deeper feeling for and appreciation of the past, and like Berenson his aim is to relate art to life and to enhance life by art. Pater also hopes to cultivate in his reader a greater awareness, a greater responsiveness like that of Plato to aesthetic impressions. Indeed, we are reminded of Ruskin's admonition that it is our duty

> to bring every sense into that state of cultivation in which it shall form the truest conclusions respecting all that is submitted to it, and procure us the greatest amount of pleasure consistent with its due relations to other senses and functions.[13]

We must thus consider the essays in "The Renaissance" rather as "cultural-appreciation" essays than as art criticism particularly

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[11] Jacob Burckhardt. The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy. (ed. by Irene Gordon). (Mentor, p.XXI). [Pater probably had not read Burckhardt's work which was not known outside Basle till the late 1870's. (See Introduction to "The Renaissance" by Sir Kenneth Clarke. (Fontana), p.15.]

[12] Bernard Berenson: Italian Painters of the Renaissance (Phaidon), p.XII.

[13] Ruskin: Modern Painters III, p.6.

as Pater was so concerned with examining the cultural-historical trends of the time. In the Preface Pater remarks that the subjects of his "Studies in the Renaissance".

> touch what I think are the chief points in that complex, many-sided movement[14]

and in the first essay, "Two Early French Stories," he defines the Renaissance as

> not merely that revival of classical antiquity which took place in the fifteenth century ... but a whole complex movement, of which that revival of classical antiquity was but one element or symptom ... a many-sided but yet united movement in which the love of the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, the desire for a more liberal and comely way of conceiving life, make themselves felt ...[15]

We have already discussed Pater's historicism. At this point it is sufficient to point out that this attitude was strongly prevalent in nineteenth century Europe in the work of Sainte-Beuve, Taine, and Michelet, to mention only a few participants in this trend.

Burckhardt, another "historicist" states in a Lecture on Gothic Art (1860),

> a past age expresses its political character very clearly in reports and documents; its customs and morals in its literature and religious beliefs; but the deepest hopes and ideas are entrusted to future generations perhaps only in the guise of art ...[16]

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[14] Pater: The Renaissance, p.XI.

[15] Pater: The Renaissance, p.2.

[16] Burckhardt: The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy, quoted on p.VII. of introduction.

Both Symonds in his "Renaissance in Italy" and Berenson define the relationship of the arts with the main motives of Renaissance culture. And together with Pater they demonstrate their allegiance to Historicism.

Thus, because it is Pater's aim to render to his reader the atmosphere of the Renaissance, he introduces the "Two Early French Stories" to illustrate the continuity between the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, Pico Della Mirandola for his attempt to reconcile pagan art and Christianity which were, in fact often co-existent and Du Bellay's poetry as representative of what

> was once poetry a la mode, that it is part of the manner of a time - a time which made much of manner, and carried it to a high degree of perfection.[17]

Indeed, although Winckelmann lived in the Eighteenth Century he is included in this volume because

> He is to be regarded as one of those who, in the sphere of art, have known how to initiate a new organ for the human spirit .. the highest that can be said of any critical effort,[18]

for Winckelmann was indeed one of the first 'historicists' with his vibrant almost 'physical' awareness of Hellenism and of the capacity of Greek religion to transform itself into an artistic ideal, Pater's ideal of arrested life. Winckelmann's role was to emblazon this Hellenism with a new freedom, with a new absence of inhibition.

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[17] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 166.

[18] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 177.

> He fingers those pagan marbles with unsinged hands, with no sense of shame or loss.[19]

It is this freedom (which inspired Goethe) that seems to Pater to promise something brighter in the modern world,

> with its conflicting claims, its entangled interests.[20]

Perhaps Pater in "The Renaissance" hopes to emulate Winckelmann's eloquent representation of an era in history.

In spite of his historical emphasis, it is essential to include in any discussion of the Renaissance a consideration of Pater's methods and achievement as art critic, because his definition of the function of the critic in the Preface to "The Renaissance" implies that this is partly the role he wishes to play in the chapters that follow. For convenience I shall also briefly include in the examination Pater's other essays on art, the essay on Raphael which, though written later and published in "Miscellaneous Studies" is closely connected with that on Michelangelo; "Art notes of Northern Italy" and Pater's two essays on architecture.

In Chapter V, we considered Pater's general critical ideas, his aims and his aesthetic criteria. Here we shall examine to what extent Pater's method and theories of criticism are consistent with one another - in his art criticism.

"True historicism" states Welleck, "is not simply a recognition of historical conditioning, but a recognition of individuality along with and even through historical change".[21]

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[19] Pater: The Renaissance, p.222.

[20] Pater: The Renaissance, p.227.

[21] Welleck: A History of Modern Criticism III, p.37.

In Pater's criticism we see how the characters are always placed in relief, almost as a foil against the milieu; Botticelli and Della Robbia against the dawning flight of the earlier Renaissance and Michelangelo, an old man during the High Renaissance in Rome

> a ghost out of another age, in a world too coarse to touch his faint sensibilities too closely; dreaming, in a worn-out society ... on the primitive form of man.[22]

We notice in the above passage how Pater in a few words establishes the atmosphere of the age and the maladjustment of the old man. We notice, too, how Pater brings the atmosphere of Venice, the luxury, the "feverishly tumultously coloured life" in the subjects of Giorgione's painting. We see how Leonardo da Vinci represents the return to nature - aspect of the two-fold movement in the Fifteenth Century, a boundless curiosity, while Raphael is contrasted with the rich tapestry of the High Renaissance with its dubious morality.

Pater comments in the Preface to the Renaissance how important it is to find

> the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation[23]

In his presentation of the artist Pater confronts us with a formula, almost a slogan, for the striking characteristics of the particular painter. Botticelli's morality is all sympathy which makes him, "visionary as he is so forcible a realist"[24] and Pater's justification for the examination of "secondary", minor artists (which was what Botticelli was considered to be at the time).

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[22] Pater: The Renaissance, p.90.

[23] Pater: The Renaissance, p.VII and VIII.

[24] Pater: The Renaissance, p.56. (See Ruskin's Works, Vol. IV, p.355 for evidence of Pater's having influenced Ruskin on the status of Botticelli.)

is reminiscent of Saint Beuve who said,

> secondary men and works interest me much in many circumstances. It is for me really a matter of justice.[25]

Giorgione becomes

> a sort of impersonation of Venice itself, its projected reflex or ideal, all that was intense or desirable in it thus crystallizing about the memory of this wonderful young man,[26]

while Michelangelo's "strength and sweetness" defines the conflict within him of his own brooding cynicism and the inherent sweetness inbued from Hellenism.

These formulas tend to establish the keynote, the motive of the essay. Although this method is contrary to the modern inductive process it does strike a note of definition in what sometimes is a vague accumulation of details, while Pater's habit of constantly focussing our attention on a character's vital intellectual conflict or problem by references scattered throughout the essay serves to counteract any nebulousness or diffuseness in Pater's style.

Pater's aim, is to "see the object as it really is", "to know my impression as it really is". Consequently he asks the questions,

> How is my nature modified by its [the object's] presence, and under its influence?[27]

The question should very often be "How is its nature modified by my presence? For frequently Pater's characters assume the "ennui" and self-consciousness of Pater himself.

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[25] St. Beuve: quoted in Welleck's "History of Criticism, III", p.41.

[26] Pater: The Renaissance, p.148.

[27] Pater: The Renaissance, p.VIII.

Botticelli's genius, Pater tells us,

> is the type that usurps the data before it as the exponent of ideas, moods, visions of its own; in this interest it plays fast and loose with those data, rejecting some and isolating others, and always combining them anew ... To him ... the outward image or gesture ... awakes ... a mood ...[28]

Is this not also characteristic of Pater's type of artistry?

Pater also notes Botticelli's interest in beautiful characters, "men and women in their mixed and uncertain conditions,"[29] tragic, because of their inability to come to terms with life. Are not these attractive people reminiscent of the characters in "Imaginary Portraits"?

In the same way one can perhaps trace Pater's interests, problems and conflicts in Winckelmann's homosexual tendencies and in Michelangelo's preoccupation with Death manifested in the innumerable Pietas. Indeed, Pater's contention that Michelangelo's sonnets were written to escape "from the stress of sentiments too strong for him"[30] seems to be most suggestive of to Pater himself. Individual "temperament" plays just as important a role in the work of Pater's characters as Pater's temperament plays in his own work.

Certainly the work of art itself becomes Pater's personal interpretation; very consciously associated with the formula of the painter, with the essential atmosphere or set of cultural circumstances,

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[28] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 53-4.

[29] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 55.

[30] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 85.

although, in practice, Pater's ostensible aim of isolating those particular aesthetic characteristics which give pleasure is rarely prominent.

Indeed, it is only when we compare the manner in which the same works are described by other art critics that we notice the precise attributes of Pater's impressionistic method.

Whereas J.A. Symonds, also an impressionist, accepts Botticelli as

> representing the interminglement of antiques of modern fancy at a moment of transition;[31]

- a typically Paterian concept, the difference between his description of the "Birth of Venus" and that of Pater seems to lie in the fact that Symonds relies on the visual aspect while Pater emphasizes the intellectual impact. Symonds' "Birth of Venus" is represented with her luxuriant hair and roses "falling upon the ruffled waves".[32]

Pater's description of this picture emphasizes its muted "imaginative colour","the cold light, the grey water and the embrowned roses", basically a more accurate description of the actual painting. But the visual details are drowned in the long account of Botticelli's first apprehension of the Greek spirit.

Yet when we read Vasari's description of the "Birth of Venus" with her Cupids being wafted to land by the winds and zephyrs"[33]

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[31] J.A. Symonds - Renaissance in Italy - The Fine Arts. (Smith-Elder, 1909), p. 184.

[32] Symonds - Renaissance in Italy, p. 184.

[33] Vasari - Lives of the Artists, p. 225.

or even Berenson's

> Throughout the tactile imagination is roused to a keen activity, by itself almost as life-heightening as music. But the power of music is even surpassed where, as in the goddess's mane-like tresses of hair fluttering to the wind, not in disorderly rout but in masses yielding only after resistance, the movement is directly life-communicating.[34]

We realize that Pater has left us with an atmosphere, a feeling which is perhaps more powerful than mere objective visual description, which in any case, is not Pater's objective.

Unlike Ruskin who mentions Botticelli's graphic ability and his subtle sense of colouring, and the comment of Symonds concerning Botticelli's "sensibility to the refinements of drawing", the painter's technique is of no interest to Pater whose description of Botticelli's imaginative colouring becomes subordinated to an abstract account of the initial apprehension of the significance of classicism during the Renaissance.

Pater describes Botticelli's Madonnas as "peevish-looking". For they "shrink from the pressures of the divine child and plead in unmistakable undertones for a warmer, lower humanity."[35] When Symonds confessed,

> I cannot bring myself to accept Mr. Pater's reading of the Madonnas' expression,[36]

did he not realize that Pater's main focus was not on the Madonna's but on the cold inhumanity of theological dogma?

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[34] Bernard Berenson: Italian Painters of the Renaissance, p. 67-8.

[35] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 56.

[36] Symonds: Renaissance in Italy, p. 185.

In his essay on "Raphael", Pater states categorically,

> I have abstained from anything like description of Raphael's pictures in speaking of him and his work, have aimed rather at preparing you to look at his work for yourselves ...[37]

He commends "in particular to your imagination or memory" the Ansidei Madonna, remarking,

> I find that there at first sight with something of the pleasure one has in a proposition of Euclid, a sense of the power of the understanding, in the economy with which he has reduced his material to the simplest terms, has disentangled and detached its various elements ...[38]

Amidst all the words one loses sight of the picture itself although Pater mentions the

> blue hills and brown towns ... in the familiar Apennine background

and contrasts the jewelled cup, the painted book in Mary's hand and the chaplet of red coral with the "cool, pearl-grey, quiet place."[39]

Although Pater has drawn our attention to Raphael's technical prowess, his talent for selection which accounts partly for the success of this painting, he does not analyse; he merely indicates. And his indications are so diffused by the parenthetical statements and qualification that their focus is lost.

Symonds in his Preface to "The Renaissance in Italy" states:

> In this part of my work I feel that I owe less to reading than to observation ... What I have written in this volume ... has always been first noted face to face with the original,[40]

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[37] Pater: Imaginary Studies, p.59.

[38] Pater: Imaginary Studies, p.60.

[39] Ibid.

[40] J.A. Symonds: Renaissance in Italy, p.IX.

The elements of observation, selection and unification although not unduly emphasized in Pater's consideration of art are mentioned where Pater considers they have contributed to the unity of the aesthetic impact, for instance, in the case of Botticelli who

> plays fast and loose with ... data, rejected some and isolating others, and always combining them anew[45]

into a peculiarly individual and evocative mood.

Pater comments in the same way on Raphael's transition to realism:

> Henceforth to the end, he will be the analyst, the faithful reporter, in his work, of what he sees. He will realise the function of style ... selecting from, asserting one's self in a transcript of its veritable data;[46]

And he indicates the unity of the Madonna del Gran Duca;

> Observe the veritable atmosphere about it, the grand composition of the drapery, the magic relief, the sweetness and dignity of the human hands and faces, the noble tenderness of Mary's gesture, the unity of the thing with itself, the faultless exclusion of all that does not belong to its main purpose; it is like a single, simple axiomatic thought.[47]

One is left with no visual image, only the concept of unity. "The veritable atmosphere", the "grand composition of the drapery", the magic relief; convey no meaning beyond that of a vague, abstract dignity which is reinforced by "the sweetness and dignity of the human hands and faces, the noble tenderness of Mary's gesture".

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[45] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 53-4.

[46] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 50.

[47] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 57.

All these aspects of the painting form a unity, but Pater does not explain how or why this effect is achieved in the way Berenson does,when describing the same picture he asks,

> Has it ever occurred to you to note that the whole of her figure was not there? So perfect is the arrangement that the attention is entirely absorbed by the grouping of the hands, the balance of the virgin's draped arm and the Child's body. You are not allowed to ask yourself how the figure ends. And observe how it holds its own, easily poised, in the panel which is just large enough to contain it without crowding, without suggesting room for aught beside.[48]

Berenson analyses the way in which these visual characteristics achieve the aesthetic balance. Pater merely employs the details as vague referentsd to substantiate his statement that the picture is unified.

To Pater this picture is a "consummate example of what is meant by style, which, if we recall Pater's essay by that name, had connotations of unity, of individuality and of sincerity in the reproduction of the inward vision. This is precisely what Pater is referring to when in a passage in the essay on Botticelli he describes how

> the outward image or gesture ... awakes in him ... by the subtle law of his own structure, a mood which it awakes in no one else, of which it is the double or repetition, and which it clothes, that all may share it, with sensuous circumstance.[49]

This is style, another aspect of which Pater calls "intimité" in the essay on Lucia Della Robbia -

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[48] Berenson: Italian Painters of the Renaissance, p.133.

[49] Pater: The Renaissance, p.54.

> the impress of a personal quality, a profound expressiveness, what the French call intimite by which is meant some subtle sense of originality - the seal on a man's work of what is most inward and peculiar in his moods and manner of apprehension.[50]

Style also applies to the individual qualities of each art form, "untranslatable into the forms of any other."[51]

One of the functions of the aesthetic critic, according to Pater, is to determine exactly to what extent this level of style is utilized,

> to estimate the degree in which a given work of art fulfills its responsibilities to its special material.[52]

Indeed, Pater is often surprisingly aware of the individual problems and limitations of the various media. In the essay on Giorgione he points out that

> in popular judgements on pictures ... that false generalisation of all art into forms of poetry is more prevalent.[53]

Although Pater ironically enough is perhaps more guilty of this "offence" than more writers, he insists on definition by the critic of the particular pictorial qualities of drawing, and colouring. The "imaginative colouring" Pater described in the essay on Botticelli: as a sort of unifying expressive spirit in natural things. In the essay on "Giorgione" he explains how the light or shadows in a picture can contribute to its unity of mood.

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[51] Pater: The Renaissance, p.131.

[52] Pater: The Renaissance, p.131.

[53] Pater: The Renaissance, p.131.

[50] Pater: The Renaissance, p.71.

> Sometimes a momentary tint of stormy light may invest a homely or too familiar scene with a character which might well have been drawn from the deep places of the imagination.[54]

As an illustration of this technique he describes a "sudden inweaving of gold thread through the texture of the haystack",[55] reminding us of the haystack where Marius and Flavion are to read the Golden Book of Apuleius.

Discussing Botticelli's illustrations of the "Divine Comedy", Pater notes that

> the words of a poet, which only feebly present an image to the mind, must be lowered in key when translated into form...[56]

Botticelli has not expressed the exact nuances of the poem because his representation of words in graphic form by virtue of its inherent concrete quality has transformed the quality of the scene to a vividness which was not present in the original.

Pater also shows a distinct awareness of the particular qualities of the architectural medium although as in his criticism of painting he subordinates all details to create a mood or abstract idea. Notre Dame D'Amiens almost becomes a symbol of the anonymous work of the "labourers of the commune", while Pater's description of

> that sustained equilibrium of oblique pressure on all sides which is the essence of the hazardous Gothic construction.[57]

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[54] Pater: The Renaissance, p.136.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Pater: The Renaissance, p.52.

[57] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.113.

seems almost to be a symbol of the pyramid of feudalism, the tension held in check by the power of the forms.

> Vézelay too, resembling a "nun's coif" seems a symbol of the monastic middle age, of a very exclusive monasticism, that has verily turned its back upon common life, jealously closed inward upon itself ...[58]

Yet in both these essays there is an awareness of the building. In "Vézelay", Pater gradually approaches the building from afar. We enter after Pater has described the exterior. At the end of the essay, Pater draws us up from

> the dark crypt ... through the gloomy 'lower' church into the height and breadth, the physical and symbolic 'illumination' of the church above.[59]

The final view of Notre Dame D'Amiens seen from outside, is a beauty strangely incongruous with the bleak surroundings - a "radix de terra sitienti: 'a root out of a dry ground',"[60] - a symbol of hope.

Pater it seems, however, is most aware of the problems of the sculptor. In his essay on Winckelmann, Pater, discussing the evolution of sculpture from being "merely decorative and subordinate to architecture" to pure form which although inferior to music, poetry and painting in expressing human subtleties,

> unveils man in the reposes of his unchanging characteristics... reveals not what is accidental in man, but the god in him...[61]

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[58] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 141.

[58] Ibid.

[60] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 125.

[61] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 213.

It is, however, to avoid

> the special limitations of sculpture - a limitation resulting from the material and the essential conditions of all sculptured work ... the tendency of this work to a hard realism, a one-sided presentment of mere form[62]

that the Tuscan sculptors of the fifteenth century developed the technique of "relief". The Hellenic idea of "Allgemeinheit" as expressed in the Winckelmann essay, the attempt

> to seek the type in the individual, to abstract and express only what is structural and permanent,[63]

involved to an extent, ... the "sacrifice of ... expression," and Pater describes in this essay on Luca Della Robbia how Michelangelo

> secured for his work individuality and intensity of expression while he avoided a too hard realism[64]

by a type of "impressionistic" sculpture which, although it seemed incomplete, forcibly conveyed a tone or atmosphere.

Symonds objects to "a contemporary interpretation" of Michelangelo's sculpture as having been deliberately unfinished. Yet Pater's approach certainly points to an awareness of the limitations of sculpture and the possibility of a solution in abstraction, which is incongruous in the context of the Preface and Conclusion to "The Renaissance".

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[62] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 65.

[63] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 66.

[64] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 67.

Pater had stated in the Preface:

> to define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not a universal formula for it, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that specific manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics.[65]

In the Conclusion we read:

> the theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience has no real claim upon us ...

In "The Renaissance", as we have seen, Pater is continually building up abstract ideas or concepts at the expense of conveying a clear visual image. Furthermore, in his theory of the approximation of art to music and the merging of subject and form he formulates an abstract concept which, in fact demands a less concrete, a less defined aesthetic subject. Certainly the solution of Michelangelo posits a retreat from concrete form into abstract almost symbolic representation, the antithesis of Pater's aesthetic and critical theories at this point.

Concluding Leonardo da Vinci, Pater speculates

> how he who had been always so desirous of beauty but desired it always in such definite and precious forms as hands or flowers or hair, looked forward now into the vague land and experienced the last curiosity.[66]

This seems to indicate not only the anticipation and curiosity about death as being an abstract conception in contrast to the concrete

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[65] Pater: The Renaissance, p. VII - VIII

[66] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 129.

aesthetic objects to which Leonardo (and Pater) attached such importance but a link with the symbol of the Mona Lisa which is really an abstraction of the "aesthetic moment", an abstraction which Pater hopes will perpetuate his art.

This essay is one of the most successful essays in "The Renaissance". In it Pater subtly and gradually, by accumulating details, builds up his framework to the presentation of the Mona Lisa, which is a reverberation of all the ideas which we have glimpsed in a perfunctory manner throughout the essay.

The man, rather like Pater in some ways, is placed against the background of Renaissance Italy, the atmosphere of which Pater evokes effectively in his vignettes, while the work of Da Vinci is used to point the way to the "La Gioconda" and to Da Vinci's nebulous attitude to religion.

One cannot consider this essay as "art criticism"; for Pater is merely interested in forming a "temper", in evoking an atmosphere, which, if successful, might generate an appreciative attitude in his reader. The work of Da Vinci is secondary to Pater's desire; not to portray the genius against the background of the Renaissance, butto suggest the idea of the genius and his conflicts in an age which suspected his genius, a genius whose art created a culmination of history and life in the flux by means of a symbol which perpetuated the sublimation of life.

Before concluding this account of Pater's art criticism, I intend to examine the essay on Leonardo da Vinci briefly, indicating Pater's method of evoking atmosphere, of treating the main character against this background, of combining all his data into a meaningful unity.

The structure of Pater's other essays in "The Renaissance" is not particularly tightly-knit or effective. He tends to describe the lives of the artists chronologically and often juxtaposes contrasting ideas such as the old Tuscan sculpture and the "new solution" of Michelangelo, in'Luca Della Robbia". The man and his work is followed by an account of the significance and origin of his interests, in the essay on Michelangelo, while in the essay on Giorgione, Pater prefaces a discussion of the painter's successful artistry with an examination of his artistic aspirations and concludes with a definition of the artistic qualities of that particular school.

In the essay on Da Vinci, however, we find a sense of coherence of working towards a climax which Pater had declared as his ideal in the discussion of Platonic dialectic and in his essay on "Style". The examination of Leonardo is chronological, but because of the repetition at various points of details anticipating characteristics of the Mona Lisa, we feel a sense of mounting tension.

The tone is established at the beginning of the essay where Pater notes Vasari's first interpretation of Leonardo -

> the painter who has fixed the outward type of Christ for succeeding centuries ... as a bold speculator ... setting philosophy above Christianity.[67]

Pater has a habit of broaching an idea which he then abandons, leaving it to reverberate until taken up again. In precisely this way this religious aspect of Da Vinci "was changed into something familiar and more conventional".[68] But the mystery remains and the slight doubt regarding Leonardo's religious leanings lies latent, stirred now and then by his interest in the mysteries of science and reason, perhaps by the inherent hesitation and doubt in his temperament, until it is reawakened at the end of the essay where Pater raises the "question of the precise form of" Leonardo's religion.

Leonardo is, in fact, in many ways a very Paterian figure. Pater emphasizes a certain mystery in his work, something enigmatical,[69] and suggests that a "lover of strange souls"[70] may, on analysis of Leonardo's manuscripts attain an understanding of the quality of Leonardo's genius.

Pater proceeds to describe the life of Da Vinci chronologically. Like almost all Paterian figures except Michelangelo, Leonardo was beautiful. And it is noticeable how Pater, in describing his habits enhances the feeling of strangeness which he has initiated.

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[67] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 98.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 100.

Vasari notes many of Leonardo's habits, for instance, that of buying caged birds and setting them free, his habit of constructing models in relief of smiling women. Yet, in the Paterian context these details assume a strange significance in an atmosphere totally absent from Vasari's chatty, prosaic account.

Leonardo's interest in nature, his brooding over the stars is used by Pater as a means of expanding the canvas, as is his awareness of

> the power of an intimate presence in the things he handled and his inventions seen by
>
> > later writers ... as ... an anticipation of modern mechanics.[71]

Pater, however, interprets this awareness of Leonardo as "dreamers thrown off by the overwrought and labouring brain", and continues by stating:

> Two ideas were especially fixed in him, as reflexes of things that had touched his brain in childhood beyond the measure of other impressions, the smiling of women and the motions of great waters.[72]

What was before a reference tinged with slight mystery has now become expanded and Leonardo"s interest becomes ' an obsession "a reflex of things that had touched his brain,"[73] offset by the reference to the

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[71] Pater: The Renaissance, p.104.

[72] Pater: The Renaissance, p.104.

[73] Ibid.

"overwrought and labouring brain" in the previous sentence. Pater further deepens the intensity of this image by commenting on the "interfusion of the extrdmes of beauty and terror,"[74] which shaped itself as an image that might be seen and touched in the mind of this gracious youth.

The pace quickens as Pater describes how da Vinci "followed till sunset" people in whose strange eyes or hair he caught glimpses of beauty and terror. The "beauty and terror" become a primeval image of death as Pater ends the paragraph commenting on the elements of scorn mingled with sorrow in De Vinci's depiction of the grotesque in nature,

> the rent rock, the distorting light of evening on lonely roads, the unveiled structure of man in the embryo, the skeleton.[75]

This image of death is further intensified by Pater's reference to Da Vinci's treatment of the Florence Medusa

> as the head of a corpse exercising its powers through all the circumstance of death.[76]

Our attitude to the painter at this stage is surely not without some apprehension which is increased by Pater's account of Da Vinci's almost "sorcerer-like" interest in science, which during that period was

> all divination ... seeking in an instant of vision to concentrate a thousand experiences.[77]

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[74] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 104.

[75] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 105.

[76] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 106.

[77] Ibid.

This phrase, dropped at this point, is to be taken up in a different form. Later when Pater, building up the symbolic impact of the Mona Lisa contends that

> the fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences is an old one.[78]

The versatile Leonardo coming to Milan, ostensibly to model a statue of the Duke, had already offered to tell him "strange secrets in the art of war" and yet he came as a harp player. At this point Pater mentions Leonardo's physical strength yet another facet of this many-sided genius.

For a while, Leonardo becomes a "celebrated designer of pageants"[79] amidst the gay, ruthless artificial life in Milan.

Now Pater begins another build-up to the symbol of the Mona Lisa. He describes Leonardo's interest in science, again, touching on the primeval aspects of Leonardo's knowledge, his interest in the fact that the sea had once covered the mountain, his preoccupation with bizarre landscape,

> hollow places full of the green shadow and bituminous rocks, ridged reefs ... all the solemn effects of moving water.[80]

For the third time Pater has mentioned "moving water" the presence of which he now proceeds to trace through various of Leonardo's paintings.

> It is the landscape not of dreams or of fancy, but of places far withdrawn, and hours selected from a thousand with a miracle of finesse. Through Leonardo's strange veil of sight things reach him so;[81]

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[78] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 125.

[79] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 109.

[80] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 110.

[81] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 111.

Pater's mention of Leonardo's precise selection of his data is filtered through the vague mist of dusky imagery which anticipates the atmosphere of the Mona Lisa. The subjects of Leonardo's portraits, the mistresses(including the poetess Cecilia Galerlani)of the Duke Ludovico, Beatrice d'Este

> in whom Leonardo seems to have caught some presentiment of early death,[82]

present aspects of womanhood which the Mona Lisa image is to enfold, the sensual mistress, our cultural heritage, and the element of death in life.

The mother and child, the sorrowful young man, whose temporal anguish like the "pale anxious face of Ludovico" is contrasted with eternal resignation of the women, the two figures in the Louvre of youth and age, the strange, clairvoyant daughters of Herodias continue this process of building up the anticipation of Mona Lisa symbol, her youth and age compared to the evanescent desires of mortal men, her mysticism.

At this point Pater brings out the "Pater" which he sees in Leonardo, the young man Andrea Salaino, "beloved of Leonardo for his curled and waving hair", one of Leonardo's usual choice of pupils, "men of some natural charm of person",[83] Leonardo's predilection with the novel impression "as an end in itself - a perfect end",[84]

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[82] Pater: The Renaissance, p.112.

[83] Pater: The Renaissance, p.116-7.

[84] Pater: The Renaissance, p.117.

and the resemblance of the "St. John the Baptist" picture to Bacchus which recalls to Pater Gautier's reference to "Heine's notion of decayed gods who, to maintain themselves, after the fall of paganism, took employment in the new religion."[85]

Certainly,

> we recognise one of these symbolical inventions in which the ostensible subject is used, not as matter for definite pictorial realisation, but as the starting point of a train of sentiment as subtle and vague as a piece of music[86]

to be as characteristic of Pater as of Da Vinci; for this is precisely the procedure of the Mona Lisa and to a lesser extent in Pater's reference to the faint shadow of the head of Christ in the "Last Supper" as

> the image of what the history it symbolises has more and more become for the world, paler and paler as it recedes into the distance.[87]

The Mona Lisa was painted in the last period of Leonardo's life, after he had left Milan when Sforza was conquered by the French. Having already given us glimpses of the qualities he is to combine in this symbol, Pater emphasizes that, in spite of Leonardo's great success with his St. Anne,

> his work was less with the saints than with the living women of Florence.[88]

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[85] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 118.

[86] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 119.

[87] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 121.

[88] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 123.

It is indeed his deliberate intention to use his imaginative invention, his flair for fantasy, in order to sublimate "one of these languid women" to a "Leda, or Pomona, Modesty or Vanity"[89].

The supposition that the Mona Lisa was perhaps the incarnation of Da Vinci's ideal woman, seen in all his childhood sketches of "smiling women". "From childhood we see this image defining itself on the fabric of his dreams,"[90] contributes to the creation of the dreamy, misty atmosphere. While the nebulous quality of the language almost assumes a musical refrain.

Although we have commented on the difference between Vasari and Pater in the manipulation of the facts, at this point it would be instructive to glance at his description of the Mona Lisa.

> "If one wanted to see how faithfully art can imitate nature, one could readily perceive it from this head; for here Leonardo subtly reproduced every living detail.[91]

He describes the natural lustre and the moistness of her lips and "all those rosy and pearly tints that demand the greatest delicacy of execution",[92] a consideration that is of no significance to Pater. At all times Vasari's focus is on the picture except when he tells a story which is rather human gossip than subjective fantasy. For him the smile of the Mona Lisa was -

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[89] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 123.

[90] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 124.

[91] Vasari: Lives of the Artists, p. 266.

[92] Ibid.

> so pleasing that it seemed divine rather than human; and those who saw it were amazed to find that it was as alive as the original.[93]

Even Symonds who seems to follow Pater fairly closely in his account of Da Vinci, although he describes

> this smile, this imaginative revelation of a movement in the soul, this seductive ripple on the surface of the human personality which was to Leonardo a symbol of the secret of the world, an image of the universal mystery[94]

does not deliberately evoke an atmosphere of mystery and there is no ulterior aesthetic motive in his relation of Vasari's strange anecdotes despite his detailed description and emphasis on visual impact.

Although the Swinburnian connotations in the Mona Lisa have already been examined, one wonders whether there is not also some memory of Lamb's description of the "Rake" in the asylum scene of Hogarth's "The Rake's Progress". Pater alludes to Lamb's art critidism in his essay on this author and certainly the Mona Lisa has similar evocations to the face of the Rake "

> which no one that has seen can easily forget. There is a stretch of human suffering to the utmost endurance.[95]

Swinburne, we will remember in his essay on Leonardo describes

> Fair strange faces of women full of dim doubt and faint scorn touched by the shadows of an obscure fate,[96]

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[93] Vasari: Lives of the Artist, p.267.

[94] Symonds: Renaissance in Italy, p.231.

[95] Charles Lamb: Works (Edward Mason MDCCCXL), p.51.

[96] Swinburne: Essays and Sketches (London 1875), p.316.

while in the essay on Michelangelo he describes a head which has been sketched while young and resketched in old age,

> beautiful always beyond desire and cruel beyond words[97]

Nowhere is there any comment on the style of the painter or his artistic skill.

Praz comments concerning Swinburne:

> It is hardly necessary to point out how little Swinburne's imagination sticks to the drawings he is discussing: Michelangelo is translated into terms of Gautier.[98]

In the same way, Da Vinci is translated into terms of Pater. It is when we look at Ruskin's descriptions, even his notes on the background of Leonardo's "Virgin on the Rocks" that we realise how far Pater wanders from the picture itself.

> In the distance, a whole range apparently of blue icebergs, seen against horizontal light, and I think water below. Above, the dark rocks ... are rounded off into a kind of haystack shape ... The blue, however, is not so blue as Titian's, nor the brown so brown.[99]

In a footnote to another account of Leonardo's landscape Ruskin notes:

> Recent researches make it appear probable that Leonardo's landscape was studied from fantastic rocks actually seen and noted by him in his explorations among the mountains; see passages cited in E.T. Cook's Popular Handbook to the National Gallery..[100]

While in one of his lectures Ruskin examines Leonardo's chiaroscuro technique: "You will often indeed see in Leonardo's work and in

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[97] Swinburne: Essays and Sketches, p.319.

[98] Praz: The Romantic Agony, p.268.

[99] Ruskin: Works, Vol. XII, p.460.

[100] Ruskin: Works, Vol. XII, p.113.

> Michelangelo's shadow wrought laboriously to an extreme of fineness; but when you look into it you will find that they have always been drawing more and more form within a space, and never finishing for the sake of added texture but of added fact ... [Leonardo's] ... shadows ... look as if they were exhaled or breathed on the paper.[101]

Certainly, no description, not even more notes can be absolutely objective. Nevertheless Ruskin shows an awareness of concrete visual details and an interest in the painter's technique which is of little significance in Pater's approach.

After the evocative "Mona Lisa" passage (which we have already examined in Chapter II,) Pater described how Leonardo, the genius, (always suspected because he is different from ordinary men) is accused of collaborating with the French.

> The [Paterian] hesitation which had haunted him all through life, and made him like one under a spell, was upon him now with double force,[102]

and like Marius, Da Vinci does not choose to become involved; so he flees to France, and dies like Marius amidst religious ceremony but leaving a doubt as to his genuine faith.

Pater's art criticism is thus not only the attempt to establish a cultural attitude, an appreciation of the significance in his readers but a way of relating "those adventures of his soul amongst masterpieces."[103]

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[101] Ruskin: Lecture 158 quoted by Robert L. Herbert in "The Art Criticism of John Ruskin" (New York), p. 43.

[102] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 127.

[103] Anatole France: La Vie Littéraire (1888) quoted by Wellek in "A History of Modern Criticism" IV, p. 24.

Oscar Wilde states Pater's position most succinctly when he asks -

> what Leonardo would have said had any one told him of this picture ... he would probably have answered that he had contemplated none of those things, but had concerned himself simply with certain arrangements of lines and masses ...[104]

It is, however, only in the Mona Lisa symbol that Pater "treats the work of art simply as a starting point for a new creation." Even then we must not lose sight of the significance of this symbol as a landmark in Pater's aesthetic ideas. G. Robert Stange approaches closer to Pater's general effect when he calls his descriptions of art "expressive imitations", a phrase which includes the aesthetic object in the word "imitation", and the personality and individual vision of the critic in "expressive". "Expressive andersstreben" might also be an effective term for Pater's technique; for, after all he is transforming the visual image into a verbal image which is modified by his own personal interpretation.

Although Pater is aware of the aesthetic criteria he has formulated there seems to be in his work an ambivalence, a conflict between his ostensible concern with the concrete and his abstract aesthetic formulations, between the concrete empiricism of "burning with a hard gem-like flame" and the art relinquishing matter to "aspire to the (abstract) state of music", between the cumulation of concrete details in his descriptions and the overwhelming atmosphere which is Pater's prime concern.

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[104] Oscar Wilde: Works, p. 968.

This atmosphere is the result and the record of Pater's constant concern with individual expression in art and with the individual personality (which does not always refine itself in art as Pater intends). It is indeed an example of the "intimite" in Pater's style, of his search for "vraie verite" within himself and in his subject. Although Pater fails to evoke a visual appreciation he does induce in his reader a sympathetic response to the "feel of the age".

"Da Vinci", perhaps the most successful example, not of art criticism but of "atmosphere"- evocation , is the Paterian essay at its best. Unity of aesthetic impact is achieved by a tightly-knit structure, exact word-selection contributing to the build-up of the general tone and "temper". It is the "tone" of a man who "knows his own impression as it really is" and conveys to his readers not a dogmatic judgement or statement but an evocative symbol and cultural atmosphere vibrant with inquiry - the man's sincere approximation of his inner vision.

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CHAPTER VII

PATER'S LITERARY CRITICISM

> ... here, in the quiet of holiday afternoons, in the westward light of the long windows of the bare white-washed room ... a passion for reading came to him ... But a virile critical power ... was awake too, and with a canon already very distinctly ascertained, of the measures and values to him of matters in the literary order.[1]

Even if "An English Poet" is not autobiographical, there is a distinct similarity between the dominant aspects of the boy's awakening awareness of literature and Pater's fundamental literary attitudes which were to dominate his life and his work.

Although Pater modifies his aesthetic and ethical emphasis during his development, we have seen that his basic critical tenets did not change. Furthermore, in his devotion to literature and his sincerity coupled with a responsible critical consciousness is to be found the means and the end of his search for some higher truth in life.

We will remember that Pater's essay on Coleridge although partly a piece of "anti-absolutism" propaganda, also examined Coleridge 's literary ideas, his ideas on literary criticism, and of course, his poetry. In "The Renaissance" Pater examined literary trends of that period in "Two Early French Stories" in "Joachim Du

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[1] Walter Pater: "Imaginary Portraits II, An English Poet", p. 442.

Bellay" and to an extent in "The Poetry of Michelangelo", while in the lives of Marius the Epicurean and Gaston de Latour literary and critical attitudes are, in fact, fused with the protagonists' search for higher ideals.

"An English Poet" is a conscious assertion of the connection between literature and life, whereas in the Harvard MSS, literature affects a solution to the search for higher truth in the form of the "Logos". In "Plato and Platonism", Plato, the ideal stylist, artist, critic and personality crystallizes in literature in the form of the "Dialogue" a critical perceptiveness and scepticism together with an aware sympathy for human issues which to Pater is the solution most satisfactory after actual apprehension of truth, which he now realises is unattainable.

While Pater's literary attitudes form an inseparable part of all Pater's work, he did collect and publish his major essays on literary topics (dating from the essay on Coleridge, written in 1864) in one volume "Appreciations", published in 1889.

Referring to the essays in this volume, D'Hangest comments:

> ...Elles restent pour nous les seules qui revues et rassemblees par ses soins, aient accede a la forme definitive, les seules qu'il ait lui-meme jugees dignes de figurer parmi ses oeuvres permanentes. D'autre part, il a concentre la l'essential de sa reflexion sur l'esthetique particuliere des lettres. A cinq annees du terme de sa vie, on peut donc considerer ce volume comme le couronnement d'une de ses activites majeures.[2]

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[2] D'Hangest: Walter Pater V, p.138.

As we know, there was no change in Pater's critical creed from the ideas expressed in "The Renaissance" in 1873. The importance of the aesthetic object, the conflict between the concrete and the abstract, are evident but not as marked in Pater's literary essays as in his essays on art, possibly because as a result of his training and temperament words were more meaningful to Pater than visual images.

Again, Pater's consciousness of his own subjectivity is fundamental to what, in 1886, he calls "imaginative criticism"

> that criticism which is itself a kind of construction, or creation, as it penetrates through the given literary or artistic products into the mental and inner constitution of the producer, shaping his work.[3]

The extent to which the imagination affects criticism is, of course, a matter of degree. Oscar Wilde, we will recall, considered the work of art as the "starting point for a new creation" which is, to an extent, the role of the "Mona Lisa" in Pater's essay on Da Vinci. In "The Renaissance", we noted how Pater adapts the work of art not necessarily by misinterpretation to conform with his general aim.

Anatole France was not far from the truth when he stated:

> There is no more an objective criticism than there is an objective art;[4]

for criticism certainly does involve creation even in the mere perception of the primary data, while its very basis implies a subjective attitude.

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[3] Pater: "Amiel's Journal Intime", in Essays from the Guardian, p. 29.

[4] Anatole France: "La Vie litteraire" quoted by Wellek in "A History of Modern Criticism IV, p. 24.

Pater's awareness and admission of his own subjective attitude testifies to his sincerity, as he asks again in the essay on "Notre-Dame d'Amiens" (1894) "What precisely, what is this to me?"[5]

Coleridge noted that

> In order to form a good style, the primary rule and condition is, not to attempt to express ourselves in language before we thoroughly know our own meaning.[6]

Because style is fundamental to his literary, aesthetic and ethical existence, since it is also an assertion of the validity of the individual response amidst the flux, it is perfectly natural for Pater to consider his subjective impression as important as the aesthetic object, if not more so.

One of the other functions of the critic is to trace the particular pleasure-giving qualities of the work of art,

> that active principle, to disengage it, to mark the degree in which it penetrates[7]

the work of the artist or writer.

As we have seen in "The Renaissance", Pater is perhaps most interested in the work as it reflects the problems, conflicts and personality of the artist seen against his milieu. Often, however, Pater seems to agree with Saint-Beuve that biographical and psychological details are necessary to penetrate -

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[5]Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.117.

[6]Coleridge: Lectures on Shakespeare etc. (Dent), p.323.

[7]Pater: The Renaissance, p.XI.

" to the man at the bottom of the poet."[8]

Again, these biographical details are often exaggerated for the purpose of maintaining the desired atmosphere.

It is characteristic, perhaps, of Pater's reluctance to "become involved" that he avoids treating major contemporary literary figures like Dickens and Thackeray, both of whom he mentions generally in his work. He prefers the minor (if controversial) figures like Rossetti or Amiel, individualists like Sir Thomas Browne or Lamb, Shakespeare's lesser known plays like "Measure for Measure" and "Loves Labour's Lost."

In his essay on Botticelli, Pater comments that besides the great artists,

> there is a certain number of artists who have a distinct faculty of their own by which they convey to us a peculiar quality of pleasure which we cannot get elsewhere ... who ... are often the objects of great diligence ... just because there is not about them the stress of a great name and authority.[9]

Even Pater's choice of Wordsworth testifies to his predilection for minor writers for, as we shall see later, Wordsworth's poetry was not popular with Pater's contemporaries and Pater was to play as positive a role in reviving interest in the great Romantic poet as he did in the revival of interest in Botticelli's art.

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[8]Saint-Beuve: Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism III, p. 39

[9]Pater: The Ronaissance, p. 61.

In "Plato and Platonism" Pater commented:

> 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.[10]

It is striking that Pater's essays very often do begin with an axiom, although he rarely arrives at definite conclusions apart from a strongly defined atmosphere or temper.

The "active principle" or "formula" of the artist or writer almost assumes the role of a musical motif in the essays whether it be the underlying tragic madness in the life of Charles Lamb, the ambivalence in the thought of Sir Thomas Browne or the violent undercurrents beneath Prosper Mérimée's urbanity. The man and the inmost workings of his mind is most important, but Pater's characters are never presented in a cultural vacuum. Pater's historicism which is evident in "The Renaissance" always remains an active element in his critical procedure.

As we have already seen, Pater's aesthetic criteria do not change very much either, except for the growing emphasis on ethics and morality. The concept of "arrested life", always regarded highly by Pater is illustrated in Rossetti's poetry and in the vignettes of Charles Lamb, while the essential unity of the aesthetic object even to its aspiration to the fusion of form and matter in the "abstractness"

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[10] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p. 188.

of music is still vitally important for Pater who indicates Browning's "Abt Vogler" and a "Toccata at Galuppi's" as excellent examples of this quality.[11]

Most often, however, Pater is aware of the specific craft of literature with its

> own peculiar and incommunicable sensuous charm ... its own special mode of reaching the imagination, its own special responsibilities to its material.[12]

The essay on "Style" is, in fact, a translation into literary terms of Pater's general aesthetic criteria. The emphasis on the approximation of the word for the inward image is identical to the duty of every artist to present in aesthetic data the most accurate representation of his own impression while the exact usage of words is, after all, the artist's fundamental responsibility to his material. The architectonic unity which Pater demands in the essay is the aesthetic unity Pater admired in the "Madonna del Gran Duca" by Raphael or "The Concerto" by Giorgione except that the aesthetic impact in literature is more diffuse than it is in painting.

> The necessity for profundity of subject matter -
>
> It is on the quality of the matter it informs... that the greatness of literary art depends[13]

is, of course the antithesis of Pater's demand for more vagueness of subject in the essay on "Giorgione". Yet, even in "The Renaissance",

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[11] In review on "An Introduction to the Study of Browning" by Arthur Symonds in Essays from the Guardian, p.46-7.

[12] Pater: The Renaissance, p.130-1.

[13] Pater: Appreciations, p.38.

Pater has commended the qualities of humanism in the work of Pico della Mirandola.

In considering Pater's literary criticism it seems most convenient to examine the essays in compatible groups, drawn mainly from the volume "Appreciations", which, as D'Hangest suggested, contains Pater most valuable achievements in this genre.

Tragedy is the keynote in the lives of Lamb and Coleridge, who, together with Sir Thomas Browne were still adherents to the traditional faith, in spite of the ideological changes which were manifesting themselves in contemporary thought. In Robert Elsmere, by Mrs. Ward (which is reviewed by Pater in "Essays from the Guardian" and Amiel, (whose Journal is reviewed in the same volume), we find a tentative attitude to religion reminiscent of Pater, himself, and a direct contrast to the positive creeds of Coleridge and Browne. We are here, however, more concerned with Pater's a proach to the author's literary attitudes and aptitudes.

Though Pater emphasizes Coleridge's

> tendency to disease in the physical temperament, something of a morbid want of balance in those parts where the physical and intellectual elements mix most closely together,[14]

though Pater disapproves strongly of Coleridge's absolutism and states that the poet

> by what he did, what he was and what he failed to do, represents that inexhaustible discontent, langour and homesickness, that endless regret, the chords of which ring all through our modern literature,[15]

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[14] Pater: Appreciations, p. 83.

[15] Pater: Appreciations, p. 104.

we are still given a fair if muted appraisal of Coleridge's prose and poetic style.

Pater complains of a lack of colour, of an abstract quality in Coleridge's prose style which is intensified by his rigidity and lack of humour.

Ironically enough in Pater, least humorous of writers, there is in his essays on Browne and Lamb a definite appreciation of the distance and comparative objectivity afforded by the presence of humour.

In Coleridge's untidy bundles of notes irritably described by Pater, and in his inexact approximation of word to thought we see a direct contrast to Pater's work-procedure and verbal discipline, which were, of course closely connected. May Otway, introducing "An English Poet" in "The Fortnightly" describes Pater's work:

> written in his own exquisite handwriting in the manner peculiar to him on quarto-size white or bluish-tinted paper ... blanks left here and there to be filled in after laborious thought; ... the closely-packed leaves, each one numbered ... and tied together finally with a neat scrap of ribbon.[16]

To Pater life and art were synonymous and Coleridge's laxity in his method of work corresponds to the lack of control in his character, which Pater was apt to stress perhaps too strongly. An instance of this exaggeration occurs when Pater quotes Coleridge's confession,

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[16] May Otway: Introduction to "Imaginary Portraits 2, An English Poet" in "The Fortnightly Review, April 1931, p.433.

> I seem rather to be seeking, as it were, asking, a symbolical language for something within me, that already and for ever exists, than observing anything new. Even when the latter is the case, yet still I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phenomenon were the dim awakening of a forgotten or hidden truth of my inner nature. While I was preparing the pen to make this remark, I lost the train of thought which had led me to it.[17]

Pater comments,

> what a distemper of the eye, of the mind![18]

Surely he should rather have realised that this attempt to correlate symbol and inner vision was indeed his own aesthetic aim, and that very often in his own verbal ramblings we wonder if, after all, he has not forgotten what he was going to say in the first place!

Evaluating Coleridge's poetry, Pater again emphasizes the weakness of the poet's temperament and unfortunately dismisses "Kubla Khan" as merely an example of the effect of Coleridge's opium-addiction upon his poetry.

Later in the essay he praises Coleridge without analysing the passage he quotes in illustration of

> the identification of the poet's thought, of himself, with the image or figure which serves him.[19]

This is, of course Pater's own aesthetic ideal, the approximation of the word to the artist's inner vision.

He points out that Coleridge is capable of Wordsworth's "impassioned contemplation, and shows how a passage from "Ode to

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[17] Pater: Appreciations, p. 73.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Pater: Appreciations, p. 88.

Dejection", describing "the western sky, and its peculiar tint of yellow green", illustrates an emotional expressive interpretation of nature, rather like the "Pathetic Fallacy" of Ruskin".

While Pater's grouping together of the "Ancient Mariner", "Christabel" and the "Lines to a Young Ass" as examples of Coleridge's love for animals seems rather forced, he gives a sensitive account of the "finesse with which as by some really ghostly finger" Coleridge conveys his fantasies.

There seems to be, however, an inability or an unwillingness in Pater to appreciate Coleridge's power of evoking the mysticism of the Romantic supernatural. This is probably the reason for his use of incongruous words like "delicacy" and "dreamy grace" to convey the strange exoticism of Coleridge's poetry, and accounts too, for his dismissal of a poem of such imaginative order as "Kubla Khan" of which G.W. Knight says,

> The poem's supposed method of composition is well-known. How it comes to form so compact and satisfying a unit raises questions outside the scheme of my sway. The poem, anyway, needs no defence. It has a barbaric and oriental magnificence that asserts itself with a happy power and authenticity all too often absent from visionary poems..[20]

Pater's morbid interest in the unstable mind is again evident in his essay on Charles Lamb in whose work is reflected

> such a union of grave, of terrible even, with gay ... in the circumstances of his life.[21]

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[20] G.W. Knight: "Coleridge's Divine Comedy" in English Romantic Poets, ed. M.H. Abrams (Galaxy, 1960), p.169.

[21] Pater: Appreciations, p.106.

It is significant, too, that Lamb lived in an age of transition between the Eighteenth Century and the Romantic Period. In that age of transition Charles Lamb did not choose to become involved with the new political, moral and religious movements. Instead, he devoted himself to his sister and his art,

> and working ever close to the concrete, to the details great or small, of actual things, books, persons, and with no part of them blurred to his vision by the intervention of mere abstract theories he reached an enduring moral effect also in a sort of boundless sympathy.[22]

Lamb, in fact, unifies the concrete aspirations of "The Renaissance", the empirical emphasis with the moral tenure of "Style". His art concerns realities however small and at the same time embraces sympathy and humanity.

Pater's comment that Lamb, the critic "has the scholar's way of forgetting himself in his subject" is dubious. Certainly Lamb is not as intricately subjective as Pater, but one is certainly always aware of Lamb, slightly disinvolved describing "The Duchess of Malfi" or stating that Shakespeare's plays are not enhanced by stage representation.

Again, as in the essay on Coleridge, we feel an inadequacy in Pater's vocabulary in his comment on Lamb's "Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who lived about the time of Shakespeare". Pater calls Lamb's notes

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[22]Pater: Appreciations, p.109.

> the very quintessence of criticism, the choicest savour and perfume of Elizabethan poetry being stored here, with a sort of delicate intellectual epicureanism.[23]

The evocations are more reminiscent of the arrangement of rose-leaves in Pater's rooms at Brasenose than of Lamb's slightly whimsical but brooding descriptions. Nor can one easily accept Lamb's account of Hogarth as being 'delicate, refining, daintily epicurean" although Pater does add that

> the grim humour of Hogarth, as Lamb analyses it, rises into a kind of spectral grotesque.[24]

Indeed Pater's description of Lamb's methods of criticism -

> To feel strongly the charm of an old poet or moralist ... and then to interpret that charm, to convey it to others - he seeming to himself but to hand on to others, in mere humble ministration, that of which for them he is really the creator[25]

is what Pater has called "imaginative criticism" - what one feels Pater is exercising to a large extent in this essay.

Lamb's concern with the refinements of language, "its pure sense of words, of vocabulary"[26] is, of course the maintenance of Pater's aesthetic standard defined in "Style" which Pater himself has here perhaps misapplied in sections of his writing.

Pater's references to humour are confined to "Appreciations", although he does make "humour" one of the attributes of Plato, his

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[23] Pater: Appreciations, p.111-2.

[24] Pater: Appreciations, p.114.

[25] Pater: Appreciations, p.112.

[26] Pater: Appreciations, p.113.

ideal character. Humour is, of course a very "human" element involving sympathy and a breadth of vision, and therefore compatible with the humanism permeating "Appreciations".

Indeed, Lamb's humour, far from being the rather brittle humour of the Eighteenth Century implies rather the greater mellowness of the Nineteenth Century and induces him to regard contemporary life "with that same, refined, purged sort of vision with which the average person regards the past."[27] And this gift of humour depends, Pater affirms,

> on the hushed apprehension of men's life as a whole ... and ... involves a fine perception of the congruities, the musical assurance between humanity and its environment ... of custom, society, personal intercourse.[28]

Humour then, involves a wholeness of perception, a balanced perspective, and an acute sensitivity to the finer relationships in life.

Certainly the attitude Pater attributes to Lamb of

> never judging system-wise of things but fastening on particulars, saying all things as it were on chance occasion only, and by the way of pastime ... 'glimpse-wise'...[29]

is as characteristic of Pater as it is of Lamb.

Pater is far more indulgent towards Lamb's continued adherence to the old faith than he was towards Coleridge's. Lamb was no believer in the flux, says Pater, perhaps because such tragic souls as his required the security, the peaceful stillness of religion.

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[27] Pater: Appreciations, p.115.

[28] Pater: Appreciations, p.116.

[29] Ibid.

This "genuinely tragic element" in Lamb's life lent to his work "a reserve",[30] a profundity even to his handling of "those lighter notes on the surface of life and literature."[31]

What is significant about this essay is not so much its value as a piece of criticism as the extent to which Pater finds in Lamb characteristics of Pater and his own methods of writing. Indeed, Lamb's gift of realising the "half-conscious intuitions" of the author under scrutiny is typical of Pater, although in this essay one feels that Pater has perhaps exaggerated both the pathos and the talents of Lamb.

Augustine Birrell, introducing the Essays of Elia states:

> My belief is that Lamb, feeling his own mental infirmity, and aware of the fearful lifelong strain to which he was subjected, took refuge in trifles ... and played the fool in order to remain sane.[32]

What he does not say is that because of his "omnipresence" in the society of the Romantic poets, it is possible that Lamb's work has been over-rated, that his art and literary criticism although occasionally perceptive is fairly pedestrian, while his attitude to the acting of Shakespeare's plays is unacceptable. Pater could not say that of Lamb, nor was it possible for him to perceive these weaknesses; for he was far too aware of his temperamental affinity with Lamb. He liked him too much.

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[30] Pater: Appreciations, p. 121.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Augustine Birrell: Introduction to Essays of Elia, Everyman edition, p. XVI.

He also liked Sir Thomas Browne, another adherent to traditional religion amidst an age of change, of whom Basil Whilley said:

> Perhaps no writer more truly represented the double-faced age in which he lived, an age half scientific and half magical, half sceptical and half credulous.[33]

Indeed, Pater presents us with a sympathetic and perceptive picture of the man and his age, a man, the contemporary of John Donne who was in the manner of the "metaphysical poets" able to integrate in his life the old and the new, the old unquestioning faith in God and the new empirical concepts of Reason and Science in a happy, harmonious rambling life.

The style of Sir Thomas Browne is certainly not Pater's ideal with its

> unevenness, lack of design; and caprice;[34] its need of technique, a forced taste in literature of a literary architecture.[35]

But it has the "charm of absolute sincerity", its own sense of calm dignity and "full confidence in the 'friendly reader'".[36]

It is Browne's picturesque concrete vocabulary which in his scientific works "helps to keep his eye and the eye of the reader on the object before it."

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[33] Basil Willey: "Sir Thomas Browne" in "The Seventeenth Century Background" (Peregrine), p. 44.

[34] Pater: Appreciations, p. 125.

[35] Pater: Appreciations, p. 127.

[36] Ibid.

This, we will remember, was one of Pater's preliminary but oft-forgotten critical tenets and in spite of his roughness of style, his particular flair for words affords

> those unpremeditated wildflowers of speech we should never have the good luck to find in any more formal kind of literature.[37]

Sometimes, as in "Hydrotaphia" this flair for words deepens

> in his manner conceiving things, [to] something not wholly analysable, something that may be properly called genius, which shapes his use of common words to stronger and deeper senses.[38]

Browne too, is capable of approximating the word to the inner vision, but Pater, although he refers to Browne's use of the words "thin" and "dark" in this respect, does not delay to analyse or explain how or why these words are effective.

Pater here again, raises the subject of the humorist, who in the manner of Montaigne is able to regard the contemporary world as

> a spectacle in which nothing is really alien from himself, who has hardly a sense of the distinction between great and little,[39]

an attitude which is useful because of its sense of balance, its sense of perspective in an age of fierce passions and vital issues.

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[37] Pater: Appreciations, p.128.

[38] Pater: Appreciations, p.154.

[39] Pater: Appreciations, p.128.

Although Browne's mind

> has much of the perplexity which is part of the atmosphere of the time[40]

he is a firm monarchist and a staunch adherent to Catholicism. For him religion is not an escape from the "darkness of the world" but rather evidence of the "light of the word". This, an attitude which Pater because of his own religious doubt is incapable of understanding, is the reason why he calls the "Religio Medici"

> "a contribution not to faith but to piety."[41]

On levels other than the religious, Pater builds up a sympathetic portrait of Browne's

> "half poetic, half scientific turn of mind",[42]

of his interest in

> "transmutation of powter dishes and forme into silver",[43]

of his vivisections, his

> " indescribable exposition of the mysteries of the quincunx"[44]

together with his intimate warm domestic correspondence and his rather gruesome preoccupation with death, typical of both the Seventeenth Century mind and the mind of Pater, himself.

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[40] Pater: Appreciations, p. 128.

[41] Pater: Appreciations, p. 138.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Pater: Appreciations, p. 139.

[44] Pater: Appreciations, p. 140.

The lesson of Browne, according to Pater, is his positive character by which, in spite of his intelligence, he is able to maintain his faith in the face of the theological changes in the Seventeenth Century -

> the force of men's temperaments in the management of opinion their own or that of others; that it is not merely different degrees of bare intellectual power which cause men to approach in different degrees to this or that intellectual programme.[45]

Willey comments in his essay on Browne that

> It is a romantic falsification to "relish" Browne for his quaintness; It is more valuable in reading him to try to recover something of his own inclusiveness in virtue of which his juxtapositions are not quaint, but symbols of his complex vision.[46]

Pater does not quite place Browne in the full context of Donne and the Jacobean Drama but he certainly conveys sympathetically the rambling diversity of the age and of a man whose literary style is very different from his own literary ideal. It testifies to Pater's literary skill that in describing Browne's scientific curiosity he creates a naivety of atmosphere which is very different from the strange mysticism convoyed by Leonardo's scientific interest. Pater, although he cannot fully understand Browne's religious attitude is unprejudiced enough to appreciate his firm unyielding adherence to his faith in an age of changes and upheavals as numerous and significant as those of the Victorian Age.

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[45] Pater: Appreciations, p. 159.

[46] Willey: Sir Thomas Browne, p. 48.

At this stage it is necessary to mention Pater's reviews of "Robert Elsmere" by Mrs. Ward and of Amiel's "Journal Intime" published in "Essays from the Guardian", both of which, in contrast to the positivism of Coleridge, Lamb and Browne express the religious doubt of the Nineteenth Century, the difficulty of choice and commital to faith, a problem of immediate significance to Pater.

Robert Elsmere, the priest, gives up his order because of his doubts about "historic Christianity". He is an interesting reflection of Pater's own state of mind.

> He was a type of a large class of minds which cannot be sure that the sacred story is true. It is philosophical, doubtless, and a duty to the intellect to recognize our doubts, to locate them, perhaps to give them practical effect. It may be also a moral duty to do this.[47]

What is more significant is Pater's reaction to Elsmere's sudden decision to quit his position.

"Had he possessed a perfectly philosophic or scientific temper" comments Pater, "he would have hesitated."[48]

This "philosophic temper" is, of course the attitude of "suspension of judgement" which Pater would have us believe is the reason for Marius's non-committal to Christianity.

In Amiel, we find a broader, more educated and more complex "Sanacour and Maurice de Guerin in one".[49]

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[47] Pater: Essays from "The Guardian", p. 67-8.

[48] Pater: Essays from "The Guardian", p. 67.

[49] Pater: Essays from "The Guardian", p. 23.

> "If...we look below the surface of a very equable and even smoothly accomplished literary manner, we discover, in high degree of development, that perplexity or complexity of soul..."[50]

of which Pater is so conscious in others and in himself.

According to Pater and to Matthew Arnold (who published an essay on Amiel in 1886), Amiel's forte is literary criticism. Unlike Matthew Arnold who quotes "touchstones" of Amiel's criticism at length and without explanation, Pater suggests that Amiel's temperament would have been ideal for "imaginative criticism" and comments on his unconventional but excellent criticism of Quinet that he

> criticizes in this fearlessly equitable manner only because he is convinced that his subject is of a real literary importance.[51]

What is of far greater significance to Pater, is Amiel's personality and his religious conflicts which are perfunctorily glossed over without comment by Matthew Arnold. Here indeed is a spirit compatible with Walter Pater, a man who could admit,

> I have always avoided what attracted me, and turned my back upon the point where secretly I desired to be,[52]

or

> I feel a terror of action and am only at ease in the impersonal disinterested and objective line of thought.[53]

Certainly Amiel's confession,

> I miss something, common worship, a positive religion, shared with other people. Ah! when will the church to which I belong in heart rise into being?[54]

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[50] Pater: Essays from "The Guardian", p.22.

[51] Pater: Essays from "The Guardian", p.30.

[52] Pater: Essays from "The Guardian", p.32.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Pater: Essays from "The Guardian", p.34.

is reminiscent of Marius who "also stopped short at a faith". Indeed in this review of Amiel's "Journal Intime" the confession of Pater's own lack of faith through Amiel dominates any balanced appraisal of Amiel's literary achievement.

The essays we have examined up to this point demonstrate how Pater's own interests and conflicts directed his choice of subject, how literary criticism and Pater's immediate problems were so very closely integrated and how in spite of this basic subjectivity, Pater was generally still able to maintain a balanced view of the author under scrutiny, a reasonable evaluation of his work and the "active principle" therein and, in many cases an appreciation of the cultural atmosphere in which the author lived and worked.

The essays in the second group have in common an attitude which is at the opposite pole of religion; for the authors all contemporaries of Pater are linked by their "aesthetic" if not decadent interests.

Indeed, the essay on "Aesthetic Poetry" (written first in 1868 as a review of the Poetry of William Morris) and included in the first edition of "Appreciations" in 1889, was withdrawn in the second edition after the usual protests in periodicals such as the "Spectator" and "The Quarterly".

Although we have examined "Aesthetic Poetry" in connection with Pater's aesthetic attitudes it is necessary to note his literary attitudes in an essay where Pater, in contrast to his work on Coleridge, does evoke very strongly an atmosphere of strangeness. But it is a strangeness without the mystical aura of Coleridge; it is rather the delirium when

> the body and the bodily senses sleep, or wake with convulsed intensity at the promptings of imaginative love.[55]

Pater uses the medievalism of Morris as a "starting point" for a vigorous indirect protest against the medieval concept of love (possibly also implying Victorian narrow-mindedness) which resulted in so many torments, frustrations and perversions.

His comments on Morris's poetry are confined to "delirious descriptions" and to a remark on the change from "medieval reverie" "illusion" and "delirium"[56] in "Guinevere", to the

> simply elementary passions - anger, desire, regret, pity and fear[57]

of classicism in "Jason". The fact that classicism is merged with medievalism in "Jason" is disregarded by Pater. Finally, he praises the immediacy of the poetry, pointing out the Wordsworthian influence in the "sense of English scenery",[58] but showing how the simplicity of Morris -

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[55] Pater: "Aesthetic Poetry", p.81.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

> is 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.[59]

It is possible that the unfavourable reviews were not the only reason for Pater's withdrawal of "Aesthetic Poetry" from "Appreciations". For whereas in 1868 the "beauty of nature for its own sake" had attracted Pater, by 1890, it was rather the Wordsworthian emphasis, "the soul divined through nature" that held Pater's interest. In fact, even the incongruity of the highly-coloured style of this essay with the rather subdued scholarly effect of the other essays in "Appreciations" might have embarrassed Pater, who preferred to mask such errant tendencies under the cloak of "Apollo of Picardy" or "Denys l'Auxerrois."

In a last paragraph which seems to come as an afterthought, Pater connects the poetry of Morris with that of Rossetti, another "aesthetic poet", who, shows a particular awareness of one of the characteristic themes of aesthetic poetry,

> the continual suggestion, pensive or passionate of the shortness of life,[60]

which lends greater urgency to the desire of beauty.

Strangely enough this sentiment, so important in Pater's own thinking is scarcely treated in the essay on Rossetti which is an example of Pater's style at its best, a tightly-knit and well-constructed work.

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[59] Pater: Aesthetic Poetry, p.81.

[60] Pater: Aesthetic Poetry, p.83.

Of course, Pater cannot avoid touching on the sense of "mystic isolation" in the poet, for whom the lack of sleep

> became a sort of morbid and overhasty making ready for death itself.[61]

He places, however, far more emphasis on Rossetti's style, the sincere style of

> one who had a matter to present to his readers, to himself at least, in the first instance, so valuable, so real and definite, that his primary aim, as regards form or expression in his verse, would be but its exact equivalent to those data within.[62]

Rossetti thus measures up to Pater's main tenet of style in his sincere approximation of word to idea, and in his consciousness of the value of the material to the artist who "knows his own impression" and to the reader.

Thus, even though Rossetti's poetry was unconventional and his meaning occasionally obscure, his sincerity and his control of

> a style which did but abundantly shift and shape itself to the mental motion,[63]

is the testimonial of the intrinsic value of his work.

Pater is rarely a negative critic; it does not seem to have occurred to him that the reason for Rossetti's obscurity was partly a lack of control in his language. Pater points out that Rossetti's

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[61] Pater: Appreciations, p. 215.

[62] Pater: Appreciations, p. 206.

[63] Ibid.

"definiteness of imagery"[64] his sensuality in spiritual poetry although fundamental to his own poetical outlook is also the result of the influence of Dante on Rossetti's ideas, an influence which manifests itself too in Rossetti's vividness of personification. Although this emphasis on the concrete is allied to Pater's own theory of art, he does not neglect to see precisely how it relates to the medieval identification of idea and image, of spirit and matter.

This identification can become "forced" and exaggerated states Pater in a manifestation of what Plato called "poetic mania", "poetry in its weakness". Ignoring Rossetti's symbolism, Pater illustrates this "insanity of realism" by a sensual passage from "The Stream's Secret" which, although it might have discomforted Pater, is a most apt expression of the parted lover's passionate memory. It is indeed the note of passionate love which eludes Pater or which he chooses to discount in his emphasis on the beauty of the water with

> all its details for the eye of the painter[65]

and the

> subtle and fine description of the 'imaginative hold' upon all of sleep and dreams.[66]

Although these aspects are evident in Rossetti's poems, it is rather the note of passion and urgency, missed or ignored by Pater, which creates their particular poetic success.

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[64] Pater: Appreciations, p. 205.

[65] Pater: Appreciations, p. 210.

[66] Ibid.

To Rossetti "life is a crisis at every moment"[67] and in conformity with the conclusion to "The Renaissance" his susceptibility to beauty is so intense that even the apprehension of nature is suffused with emotion - shown in the vivid vignettes scattered throughout Rossetti's poems. Furthermore, love attains an immediacy for Rossetti which, together with its fusion of spiritual and material elements makes it the central point of Rossetti's existence.

Pater describes "The House of Life" series of sonnets with the same nostalgia as he had described the "House of Florian Deleal in "The Child in the House" - completely evading Rossetti's true religiously sensual atmosphere.

Yet Pater asks, perhaps recalling the rather sordid attack on Rossetti's poetry by Robert Buchanan in "The Fleshly School of Poetry"

> Have there, in very deed been ages, in which the external conditions of poetry such as Rossetti's were of more spontaneous growth than in our own?[68]

These poets, explains Pater, referring to the Pre-Raphaelites, who turn to medievalism in the world of Chaucer and Ronsard, are really seeking greater freedom for passionate expression. He quotes examples of Rossetti's ballads set not in contemporary circumstances but in past ages, ballads which Pater, perhaps finding himself on more familiar ground, tends to overestimate.

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[67] Pater: Appreciations, p. 211.

[68] Pater: Appreciations, p. 215-6.

Nevertheless it is to Pater's credit that he does attempt to understand Rossetti's poetic aims and that he recognises that Rossetti, besides unveiling

> to every eye, the ideal spirits of common things ...

contributed to poetry

> fresh poetic material of a new order of phenomena; in the creation of a new ideal.[69]

In fact Pater credits Rossetti with the same achievement as that for which he had commended Winckelmann so highly - expanding the perspective of his particular field.

When one compares this essay with Swinburne's essay on Rossetti with its bitter invective against the critics of Rossetti and its vague exaggerated exaltation such as that of "The Blessed Damozel"

> the divine admixtures of earth which harmonize its heavenly passion have the flower and bloom upon them of a modern beauty, the fine force of a pure first sunrise. No poem shows more plainly the strength and wealth of the workman's lavish yet studious hand[70]

one realises the remarkable penetration and insight of Pater.

Indeed, Doughty points out that "Rossetti's latest critic approaches the attitude of Pater to Rossetti in 1883". For while Pater praised Rossetti's awareness of mystery in life and the significance for him of translating "the shadowy world" of spirit

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[69] Pater: Appreciations, p. 218.

[70] Swinburne: Essays and Sketches, p. 83.

and emotion into concrete form, John Heath-Stubbs, the modern critic, states that

> his true merit ... lies in his gift for evoking transient and half defined states of feeling.[71]

As Doughty states,

> Despite the difference of language of the two critics, the quality they recognize in Rossetti is basically the same; 'states of feeling', and the sense of fundamental mystery that lies at the heart of romance...[72]

No firmer and more balanced revocation of decadence in literature could be found than Pater's essay on Prosper Mérimee, written in 1890 and published in Miscellaneous Studies in 1895.

Pater introduces the essay with an effective depiction of the milieu, where the generation of Obermann, the incarnation of the "ennui" characteristic of the mid nineteenth century,

> has lost that sense of large proportion in things, that all embracing prospect of life as a whole,[73]

and consequently retreated into the "narrow cell ... of subjective experience" where all attitudes are intensified, as a result of which the "exclusive and peculiar[74] aspects of life are valued.

> The vocation of the artist, of the student of life or books, will be realised with something - say of fanaticism, as an end in itself, unrelated, unassociated.[75]

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[71] Oswald Doughty: Introduction to "The Poems of Rossetti" (Dent, London), p.XVI.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.12.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.13.

'Art for art's sake' was not Pater's aspiration in 1873, nor does it attract him in 1890.

Against this background, Pater places the enigmatic figure of Prosper Merimee and seeks to reveal the man behind the mask of urbanity and self-possession; for this man's social and political eminence veiled a passionate force surprising, even to himself.

> There is the formula of Merimee! the enthusiastic amateur of rude, crude, naked force in men and women wherever it could be found,[76]

Pater's method here is deductive. Contrary to his theories of dialectic he begins the essay with an axiom which he proceeds to substantiate with the evidence of Merimee's work and interests.

Merimee's characters are very often similar to their author, people whose violent propensities are also concealed by the mask of conventionality Pater remarks with apprehension,

> You seem to find your hand on a serpent in reading him.[77]

Merimée is a cynic who retains no remnants of belief or even of half-belief.

> Almost everywhere he could detect the hollow ring of fundamental nothingness under the apparent surface of things.[78]

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[76]Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 14.

[77]Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 29.

[78]Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 14.

Consequently, for him fiction provides an escape from an empty world "into a different if not a better world," and his novels take place in Russia, Corsica, or have historical settings, the characters being people with an obsessive, almost maniacal lust for power and violence.

> Exaggerated art! You think but it was precisely such exaggerated art, intense unrelieved, an art of fierce colours, that is needed by those who are seeking in art, as I said of Mérimeo, a kind of artificial stimulus.[79]

Certainly neither decadence nor 'art for art's sake' is approved by Pater!

Merimee's style,reflecting his interest in architecture has qualities of

> structure, proportion, design, a sort of architectural coherency.[80]

Its correctness, its precise use of words, its polish and impersonality might have appealed to Pater in the days of "The Renaissance" but attract him no longer. Furthermore, there is a cold-blooded quality in his style which causes Mérimée to capture terror but not pity; there is certainly no tragic element in his work.

> In truth, Merimee was the unconscious parent of much we may think of dubious significance in later French literature.[81]

The contrast provided by the freedom, the uninhibited passion and violence reflecting the true Merimée of the "Lettres a une inconnue"

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[79] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 27.

[80] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 20.

[81] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 31.

emphasize that Mérimée consciously aimed at impersonality in his art. Pater shows how Merimee's impersonality was, in fact,

> a true representation of the true man, cold, precise and correct with pure mind ... the quality which secures flawless literary structure[82]

but has no "soul". He was, indeed incapable of soul.

In "The Renaissance", pure form was important to Pater as a sublimation of life. Now "mind" and "soul", the intellect and the emotion in the total personality of the writer are significant. It seems that Pater has realised that his former aim of impersonality in art that could only restrict the artist in his expansion towards life, which, after all, is the very substance of art.

Pater has indeed given a logical and vivid account of Mérimee, relating the man to his milieu and the work to the man, the personality of the man being the focal point of Pater's attention. Pater's attitude to Merimee's style is merely descriptive not evaluative showing how it is a reflection of the man. Here, as in many of the essays in "The Renaissance", Pater's aim is to evoke an atmosphere, to convey a cultural attitude, or to portray a man in his milieu. Indeed, he succeeds in full measure; we are left with a strong feeling of apprehension for a man who Pater has persuaded us is perhaps more formidable than he appears to be.

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[82] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.37.

Ruth Child remarks that Pater, that

> while his main aim in criticism is to define the peculiar quality of the individual artist, he always chooses an artist whose peculiar quality he considers of real worth in a right scheme of human values.[83]

Bearing in mind "Prosper Merimee", we must indeed disagree with this statement. But one wonders by his mere selection of this author whether deep down in Pater there was not a chord of sympathy, whether the Paterian mask itself did not conceal similar passions.

Finally, we come to examine Pater's Shakespearian criticism, including "Measure for Measure" which I have coupled with his essay on "Wordsworth". These perhaps Pater's two best essays, expand the horizon of art to embrace human, moral and ethical issues.

Pater's essay on "Love's Labour's Lost" is regarded by many critics as a trifle. Yet Pater is extremely flexible and "un-Victorian" in his approach to a play about which Hazlitt comments

> Its style savours more of the ... spirit of Shakespeare's time than his own genius.[84]

Salinger comments that

> the scheme of the play forms a courtly entertainment while its verbal atmosphere of wit, its rhyming and sound and the dance-like patterns of the dialogue suggest the influence of courtly writers like Lyly.[85]

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[83] Ruth Child: Is Walter Pater an Imaginative Critic? P.M.L.A. Vol. 53, 1938, p.1184.

[84] Hazlitt: Comic Characters in Shakespeare's Plays, (Dent), p.225.

[85] L.G. Salinger: "The Elizabethan Literary Renaissance" in The Age of Shakespeare ed. by Boris Ford (Penguin), p.85.

Indeed, this is exactly what Pater points out, emphasizing that

> the unity of the play is not so much the unity of a drama as that of a series of pictorial groups, in which the same figures reappear in different combinations but on the same background.[86]

Pater perceptively relates the euphuistic consciousness of language which is the subject of the play with the consciousness of fashion, the predominance in art and life

> of form over matter; of the manner of the doing of it over the thing done,[87]

a utilisation of artistic selection and refinement.

Pater explains how Shakespeare demonstrates theevolution of euphuistic language from the vulgarity of Holifernes, through the extravagant polish of Armado to Biron's real but slightly affected manner of speech. Biron is perhaps a self-portrait of Shakespeare himself in his first consciousness of language at the stage of Flavian and Marius under the influence of Apuleius, or Gaston under the influence of Ronsard who, with Du Bellay forms the French counterpart of this linguistic evolution.

The tone of Pater's essay captures the fresh spirit of Shakespeare's play just as delightfully as he had captured the silvery finesse, the lightness of the poetry of the Pleiad school in "Joachim Du Bellay".

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[86] Pater: Appreciations, p. 163.

[87] Pater: Appreciations, p. 165.

He notes that Shakespeare

> surprises us from time to time by intuitions which could come only from a deep experience and power of observation.[88]

This statement is equally applicable to Pater. Indeed, George Rylands in his criticism of "Love's Labour's Lost" remarks "I can add little to Pater's appreciation."[89] In the essay on "Shakespeare's English Kings," Pater emphasizes "

> the irony of kingship - average human nature, flung with a wonderfully pathetic effect into the vortex of great events.[90]

This contention is similar to that of Traversi, who states that

> The importance of the plays ... lies not in abstract political conception but in the study of their implications in terms of human behaviour.[91]

Pater perhaps stresses the pathos of tragedy unduly, and in the case of Richard II the essential weakness and self-pity of the king is subordinated to his physical beauty and poetic gift - which is perhaps more Pater's intention than Shakespeare's.

Nevertheless, Pater approaches very closely to the ideas of Wilson Knight when he writes:

> It follows that a play attains artistic perfection just in proportion as it approaches that unity of lyrical effect, as if a song or ballad were still lying at the root of it, all the various expression of the conflict of character and circumstance falling at last into the compass of a single melody or musical theme.[92]

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[88] Pater: Appreciations, p.167.

[89] George Rylands: "The Early and Mature Shakespearian Manner" in "Shakespeare Criticism" 1919-35, selected by Anne Ridler, (World's Classics), p.381.

[90] Pater: Appreciations, p.186.

[91] Derek Traversi: Shakespeare: The Young Dramatist in "The Age of Shakespeare" p.192.

[92] Pater: Appreciations, p.203

Traversi, in his analysis of Henry IV emphasizes the importance of the "disease image" and shows how Shakespeare "by weaving together images of this type"[93] intensifies the poetic unity of the play. This is exactly what Pater had indicated in his own intuitive way without analysis or exemplification.

"Measure for Measure" as we have already shown, illustrates Pater's movement towards humanism and the moral implications of life. But it is also an essay of considerable literary interest.

Coleridge, in his lectures had called this play, in lines quoted by Pater, "the most painful - say rather, the only painful - part of his genuine works,"[94] whereas Hazlitt, commending the "height of moral argument" states that

> there is in general, a want of passion; the affections are at a stand; our sympathies are repulsed and defeated in all directions.[95]

Pater, on the other hand, takes a different approach, the approach of the modern critic Tillyard in "Shakespeare's Problem Plays". He believes with Tillyard that in "Measure for Measure" Shakespeare has remodelled an old play based on Whetstone's "Heptameron of Civil Discourses".

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[93] Traversi: "Shakespeare the Young Dramatist" in "The Age of Shakespeare," p. 195.

[94] Coleridge: Lectures, p. 84.

[95] Hazlitt: Characters of Shakespeare's Plays, p. 245.

Tillyard mentions that "thd play is not of a piece but changes its nature halfway through",[96] whereas Pater, although he feels that the play now has "almost the unity of a single scene",[97] comments on the change in the poetry of Isabella's speeches from the noble tenour of the scene with Angelo to her more prosaic expression in the scene with Claudio.

In his discussion of the general atmosphere of the play, Pater notes that it contains within itself the characteristics of both tragedy and comedy mingeld with morality. He feels, as does Tillyard, that even now the play is not complete, that it was perhaps "the preparation only ... of a still more imposing design."[98]

> But even so, it has the qualities of "suggestive writing", which by the help of certain subtly calculated hints only brings into distinct shape the reader's own half-developed imaginings... Shakespeare had directed the attention of sympathetic readers along certain channels of meditation beyond the immediate scope of his work.[99]

Shakespeare, Pater explains, in the play intends to convey

"the sense of a strong tyranny of nature and circumstance,"[100]

which is illustrated not only in the more absolute sense of death's omnipresence, of fate and the stars, but also

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[96] E.M.W. Tillyard: Shakespeare's Problem Plays (Penguin), p.123.

[97] Pater: Appreciations, p.171.

[98] Pater: Appreciations, p.173.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Pater: Appreciations, p.174.

> in the mere caprices of man ... in the disparates of social or political order, to the chance which makes the life or death of Claudio dependent on Angelo's will.[101]

The sub-plot, Shakespeare's original work, lends a slight romantic relief with Mariana's moated grange and the description of Angelo's house with its vineyard, garden and brick walls.

It is interesting that Pater should consider the relationship between Claudio and Isabella to be of more importance than that of Angelo and Isabella and that, in fact, he dismisses any discussion of Angelo whose behaviour constitutes one of the pivots of the play. "But the embodiment of pure evil is no proper subject of art",[102] states Pater, and leaves us with the impression that he regards Angelo in the same light as he regarded Prosper Merimee, with a feeling of apprehension and shrinking fear, conscious of the unknown primitive elements residing in the inner depths of every man.

On the other hand, he perhaps exaggerates the role of Claudio, a witless young man who, although important in the plot of the play is not worthy of much consideration as a character, although his words on death do have a very human significance.

Pater comments on the slow development of Isabella's fiery reaction to Angelo's suggestion that she should yield her body to him in order to save her brother, who ironically, had been sentenced to death for lechery. And, in her unexpected transformation from a

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[101] Pater: Appreciations, p. 180.

[102] Pater: Appreciations, p. 177.

cold noviciate to al strong tiger-like angry woman, he compares her to Webster's Vittoria in "The White Devil", thus placing the play thoroughly in the context of the late Elizabethan world-picture. He notes, however, that this change in Isabella did not take place in Whetstone's version of the play.

In the concluding section of the essay, Pater extends the cultural reverberations of "Measure for Measure", further, by indicating without identifying in it traces of the old morality tradition (which are evident in Whetstone's old story).

The moral attitude of Shakespeare's play, is however, more subtle.

> Here the very intricacy and subtlety of the moral world itself, the difficulty of seizing the finer relations of so complex a material, the difficulty of just judgement, of judgement that shall not be unjust are the lessons conveyed.[103]

True justice is the solution, a justice which recognizes and considers the individual complex personality and situation,which is administered with sympathy and love.

Pater comments on Shakespeare's quality of humour, anaaspect of literature which has been touched upon by Pater in his essays on Lamb and Browne. Humour lends a perspective and a wholeness and sympathy to Shakespeare's estimate of life and Pater concludes his essay with a statement we have noted before.

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[103] Pater: Appreciations, p. 182.

> It is not always that poetry can be the exponent of morality; but it is this aspect of morals which it represents most naturally, for this true justice is dependent on just those finer appreciations which poetry cultivates in us the power of making, these peculiar valuations of action and its effect which poetry actually requires...[104]

The sensitivity of the poetic mind with its awareness of the finer gradations and subtleties of life is perhaps the best equipped to make the most valid moral judgements and evaluations.

Pater's interest in humanity finds a very different expression in the essay on Wordsworth who, it must be emphasized was not held in very high regard in the 1870's by Pater's contemporaries.

When we realize that contemporary reviews condemning "the analytical spirit of Wordsworth" were calling for "a revival of the conservative spirit of Gray",[105] when we read Francis Jeffrey's review of "The Excursion" where he states,

> The case of Mr. Wordsworth, we perceive is now manifestly hopeless; and we give him up as altogether incurable and beyond the power of criticism,[106]

it becomes clear just how novel Pater's attitude to Wordsworth must have been at the time. Even five years after Pater had published this essay, Matthew Arnold states:

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[104] Pater: Appreciations, p. 184.

[105] "Quarterly Review": On Wordsworth and Grey. Vol. 141 - 1870 p. 136.

[106] Francis Jeffroy: Review of the Excursion in "The Edinburgh Review", Vol. XXIV No. XLVII in Campbell and Weaver, p. 787.

> I cannot think, ... that Wordsworth has, up to this time, at all obtained his deserts,[107]

while in 1882, Mrs. Oliphant suggests Wordsworth has "for the best perhaps passed the height of his fall".[108]

Introducing the essay, Pater admits the uneveness of Wordsworth's work and suggests the publication of a selection of his best work (which to his delight appeared subsequently and was reviewed by him in 1889).

In considering Wordsworth's best poetry Pater's aim is to attempt a definition of the "Wordsworthian" atmosphere and to analyse attractiveness for the reader. He shows how

> an intimate consciousness of the expression of natural things, which weighs, listens, penetrates, where the earlier mind passed roughly by,[109]

is manifested in the work of Wordsworth, who combines in his personality

> a certain contentment and an inborn placidity with a powerful imagination.[110]

Pater's comparison of Wordsworth's uneventful life (he did not know about Annette Vallon!) to

> the life of one of those early Italian and Flemish painters, who, just because their minds were full of heavenly visions, passed, some of them, the better part of sixty years in quiet, systematic industry[111]

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[107] Matthew Arnold: Essays in Criticism, second series, p.126.

[108] Mrs. Oliphant: A Literary History of England, Vol. I. (London, 1882), p.312.

[109] Pater: Appreciations, p.43.

[110] Pater: Appreciations, p.44.

[111] Ibid.

strikes an incongruous note in what otherwise is a most successful evocation of the Wordsworthian atmosphere. For the subdued "aesthetic" and almost artificial implication in the lives of these painters as described by Pater is just as inapplicable to Wordsworth's rugged affinity with nature as his use of the word "delicate" in connection with Wordsworth's imagery, a little later in the essay.

Pater makes amends, however, in a passage which renders most effectively Wordsworth's individual poetic tone:

> He has a power ... of realising, and conveying to the consciousness of the reader, abstraction and elementary impressions - silence, darkness, absolute motionlessness:[112]

In the same way Pater is able to evoke the mysticism of Wordsworth's Pantheism:

> To him every natural object seemed to possess more or less of a moral or spiritual life ... An emanation, a particular spirit, belonged, not to the moving leaves or water only, but to the distant peak of the hills ...[113]

Pater's approach is descriptive, not analytical. He does not explain how Wordsworth achieves his effect but rather translates Wordsworth's achievement into his own terms very often with great success.

Wordsworth's particular gift was, according to Pater, the result of a "an exceptional suspectibility to the impressions of eye and ear"[114] a vibrant responsive capacity similar to the ideal imaginative sensitivity of Plato, described in "Plato and Platonism."

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[112] Pater: Appreciations, p. 45.

[113] Pater: Appreciations, p. 47.

[114] Pater: Appreciations, p. 46.

Wordsworth like Plato could awaken "a sort of thought in sense"[115] and at the same time, in his

> exhaltation of rural life he was but pleading indirectly for that sincerity, that perfect fidelity to one's own inward presentations, to the precise features of the picture within.[116]

His achievement and approach constituted the element of great and sincere style as prescribed in Pater's essay "Style".

Again, as so often in Pater's work we notice his accumulation of details which occasionally detracts from the unity. Pater, describing Wordsworth's scenes of pastoral poetry which is, in reality "only clearing the scene for the exhibition of emotion ... the almost elementary expression of elementary feelings", proceeds to give so many examples of such scenes of emotion that the reader, left with a kaleidoscope of shifting confused images, attaches his attention with relief on Pater's abstract evocation:

> A sort of biblical depth and solemnity hangs over this strange new passionate, pastoral world.[117]

This is the impression, the atmosphere of Wordsworth's poetry that remains after a reading of Pater's essay. Certainly, he has moments when he almost intuitively indicates the technical attributes of Wordsworth's poetry such as his statement that "metre is but an additional grace accessory to that deeper music of words and sounds"[118]

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[115] Pater: Appreciations, p.48.
[116] Pater: Appreciations, p.51.
[117] Pater: Appreciations, p.53.
[118] Pater: Appreciations, p.58.

his constant reference to Wordsworth's identification of word and idea, or his disastrous comparison of Wordsworth's imagery in "Resolution and Independence" to that in St. Agnes Eve" by Keats. He certainly manages to convey the profound "first exciting influence" of Imagination in "The Prelude"

> that joyful enthusiasm which great imaginative theories prompt when the mind first comes to have an understanding of them.[119]

And he does suggest indirectly that Wordsworth's poetry can become tedious.

It is however, the mysticism of Wordsworth, the primal quality that Pater's reader remembers. "Wordsworth's lesson" according to Pater, is the "supreme importance of contemplation in the conduct of life."[120]

This we will remember, was the basic attitude expressed in "Diaphaneite". However, whereas contemplation in "Diaphaneite" implied a withdrawal from life, here, contemplation indicates a concentration on 'those great facts in man's existence", "on the great and universal passions of man" on the more profound aspects of humanity as distinct from the merely daily routine of life.

We have already noted the significance of this growing moral emphasis, this humanism in Pater's aesthetic outlook. From a literary standpoint this essay is significant not only because it

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[119] Pater: Appreciations, p.57.

[120] Pater: Appreciations, p.59.

champions a great poet who was then unduly unpopular, but because Pater so very beautifully captures the mysterious atmosphere of Wordsworth's attitude to nature. When we read such vagaries as Swinburne's exaggerated praise of "Ode to Duty",

> But is there anything in modern poetry so Pindaric - in the order of words, is there anything at once so exalted and so composed, so ardent and serene, so full of steadfast light and the ... fire of imaginative thought as the hymn which assigns to the guardianship of Duty or the everlasting law the fragrance of the flowers on earth and the splendour of the stars in heaven?[121]

We realise that Pater's descriptive method in the essay on Wordsworth serves to illuminate the powers of the poetry, while Swinburne's emotional outpourings do not succeed in conveying the simultaneous strength and simplicity of Wordsworth's Ode.

Matthew Arnold's appraisal of Wordsworth emphasizes that although Wordsworth is neither recognised in Britain nor abroad,

> I firmly believe that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is after that of Shakespeare and Milton, ... undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time.[122]

Pater, might appraise, might evaluate but although he expresses a sincere appreciation of the poetry will never make a final statement such as Arnold's.

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[121] Swinburne: Essays and Sketches, p.377.

[122] Matthew Arnold: Essays in Criticism, second series, p.132.

In Arnold's essay we find the same acknowledgment of the uneven quality of Wordsworth's output, the same stress on Wordsworth's sincerity. In fact, Pater in his own way, has stated as does Matthew Arnold, that Wordsworth's poetry is indeed a "criticism of life" which is inseparable from morality. Pater here is just as much the moralist as is Matthew Arnold.

On the literary level, however, Pater's essay shows far more clarity and sensitivity than Matthew Arnold's discursive rather dreary account. Arnold evidently regarded "style" as an elevated verbal artifice; for he states without illustration that Wordsworth "has no style".[123] Yet,

> whenever we meet with the successful balance in Wordsworth of profound truth of subject with profound truth of execution, he is unique.[124]

Is this integration of idea and word, this successful approximation of the poet's inner vision not the most valid attainment of style, is it not, as Pater believes, style itself?

Arnold states:

> Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it.[125]

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[123] Matthew Arnold: Essays in Criticism, second series, p. 155.

[124] Matthew Arnold: Essays in Criticism, second series, p. 159.

[125] Matthew Arnold: Essays in Criticism, p. 153.

Pater is sometimes verbose, but he never succeeds in discouraging us from his subject. What Arnold says here is indeed what Pater conveys in his essay. Whereas, however, Arnold makes a dogmatic wordy and rather mundane statement, Pater creates an atmosphere of elemental mystery and passion, of the unity of man and nature which enhances the reader's appreciation of Wordsworth's work and stimulates him to turn to the poems themselves.

Indeed, Carlos Baker states:

> If we ask what the particular virtue is which gives backbone to Wordsworth's giantism, Pater provides us with an excellent starting-point.[126]

In the Postscript to "Appreciations", Pater explains how Classicism and Romanticism are

> tendencies really at work at all times in art, moulding it, with the balance sometimes a little on one side, sometimes a little on the other, generating respectively, as the balance inclines on this side or that, two principles, two traditions, in art and in literature so far as it partakes of the spirit of art.[127]

He condemns a too rigid classification of these two elements in the same way as he condemns a too rigid distinction between prose and verse in the essay on "Style".

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[126] Carlos Baker: "Sensation and Vision in Wordsworth; in English Romantic Poets", ed. by M.H. Abrams, p.98.

[127] Pater: Appreciations, p.247.

> For in truth the legitimate contention is, not of one age or school of literary art against another, but of all succesive schools alike, against the stupidity which is dead to substance, and the vulgarity which is dead to form.[128]

The keynote of "Appreciations" is Pater's definite sense of balance in appreciating literature and the personality of the writer. In his essays on art we find a definite tendency to mould the artist and his work to a preconceived Paterian formula which whether valid or not, seems to shape for his work a very subjective tone.

Pater's aim in "Appreciations" is, in fact, to appreciate his subject, and to place the author and his work in the relevant environment where there is a detectable correlation between man and milieu, as in Prosper Merimee.

Pater's estimate of literature demonstrates a new flexibility although he does not disregard his criteria of style such as unity, choice of words and aesthetic impact.

It seems, however, that Pater attaches primary significance to a human, almost a moral element. For the personality of Sir Thomas Browne, his individual manner of reconciling himself to his world overrides all deficiencies in his style, whereas Prosper Merimee's polished, architectonic style does not justify his inhuman approach to art and life.

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[128] Pater: Appreciations, p. 261.

Pater's aim is indeed to find the "active principle" in his author and to find for the men and their work a "logical ... architectural place in the great structure of human life."

What of his achievement in the field of Literary Criticism?

Pater's literary criticism does not provide him with a spring-board for his own creative urges, although sometimes Pater sheds a slightly incongruous Paterian delicacy on characters such as Coleridge and to a lesser extent, Wordsworth.

Pater uses a method of "dropping" evocative images and ideas (as we noted in the essay on Da Vinci) which finally combine themselves into an atmosphere or "temper". Unlike Matthew Arnold, Pater does not argue his attitude. He gradually wins the reader over in a subtle, indirect and leisurely manner.

Comparing his work with the generalising declamation of Swinburne, an "impressionist" critic who is particularly unsubtle and subjective, one realises that Pater, in spite of his own "impressionist" reputation is far more precise and penetrating. He does not judge nor does he condemn; he evaluates tentatively and he expresses opinions reluctantly. But he leaves us with a very distinct atmosphere and "feel" of the author and his work.

It is Pater's habit of gradually and indirectly building up the appreciation of the reader by a diffusion of details, indirect references

and hints through his essay together with his mellifluous style (with its long sentences and many parentheses) which very often detracts from his precision and penetration.

In the following chapter we shall examine Pater's style more closely, and correlate it with his essay on Style. For, as we have seen, "Style" to Pater no longer implies merely a method of expression, an individual manner of writing but a way of thinking, an attitude which lends to his literary criticism a distinct flexibility, insight and sympathy.

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CHAPTER VIII

PATER AND STYLE

> ... The more dealer in words cares little or nothing for the subject which he is embellishing, but can paint and gild anything whatever to order; whereas the artist ... has his great or rich visions before him, and his only aim is to bring out what he thinks or what he feels in a way adequate to the thing spoken of and appropriate to the speaker.[1]

These words by Cardinal Newman, quoted by Pater in the conclusion to his review of Saintsbury's "Specimens of English Prose Style" constitute a clear statement of the role of style as an integral part of the artistic creation. Saintsbury, Pater feels, perhaps denies this integration by his tendency to "regard style a little too independently of matter."[2]

If Style, which Pater in "An English Poet" called "the etherlike manner of the thing", is a way of expression "adequate to the thing spoken of" and "appropriate to the speaker," it will have a specific association with the subject, with the aesthetic form, with the artist's individual manner of perception and indeed, with his whole outlook on life. This, is, in fact, what Ian Fletcher means when he asserts that in discussing Pater

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[1] Words by Carinal Newman, quoted by Pater in "Essays from the Guardian", p.16.

[2] Pater: Review of Saintsbury's "Specimens of English Prose Style" in "Essays from the Guardian", p.15.

> one comes back, again and again ... to the idea of style, style as a mode of perception, a total responsible gesture of the whole personality rather than - for all Pater's own very notable stylistic mannerisms - a mere way of arranging words.[3]

Indeed, as we have already seen, the Paterian Compromise, was merged into the ideal of style, which also manifested itself in Pater's critical tenets, for what interested Pater was not only the artist's or writer's manner of expression but the manner as it reflected the artist's inmost attitudes and personality.

Before we examine the literary criteria in Pater's essay on "Style" and his application of these criteria to his own style, we must emphasize that the preoccupation with Style was, in fact, characteristic of the latter half of the Nineteenth Century.

Style represented some concrete ideal or security in an age gripped in the uncertainty of relativistic thought, and we find essays like Herbert Spencer's "The Philosophy of Style" (in reality a Positivist manifesto) which emphasizes the concreteness of the word and simplicity of expression and "The Principles of Success in Literature" (1865) by G.H. Lewes, which also stresses the economy of language. T.H. Wright's essay on "Style" (1877) asserted the importance of individualism in style, a concept which was supported in essays by John Dennis and John Earle. In 1892, W.H. Mallock states categorically:

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[3] Iain Fletcher: Walter Fletcher (British Council writers and their Work No. 114), p.31.

> The foundation of style, its essence, its colouring principle is not the writer's skill as a writer, but his character as a man; and this shows itself in ways with which technical skill, or even technical genius has not essentially anything at all to do.[4]

Thus, the two dominant concepts of style emphasized the concreteness of expression and the style as a reflection of the individual respectively, ideas which to an extent are combined and synthesized in Pater's essay on "Style".

Although we have already examined "Style" briefly in relation to Pater's aesthetic ideas, it is imperative to look more closely at Pater's ideas on literary expression.

Pater, at the outset of the essay, concerned with the relationship between prose and poetry, abandons the idea of metre as a defining characteristic of poetry. He explains that the true difference between the two lay in the presence or absence of the imagination, an idea which has already been expressed by De Quincey and Wordsworth.[5] Again, as in his postscript on Romanticism and Classicism, we see Pater's hesitancy to make a general rigid classification which, in this case results in an extremely flexible approach.

Artistry depends on the extent to which the writer's aim, consciously or unconsciously comes to be the transcription not of the world, not of mere fact, but of the writer's subjective impression.

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[4] W.H. Mallock: "Le Style c'est l'homme" Living Age (XCI June 11 1892) p. 66, quoted by Travis R. Merritt in "Taste, Opinion and Theory in the Rise of Victorian Prose Stylism" in "The Art of Victorian Prose" ed. by Levine and Madden.

[5] By De Quincey in "The Literature of Knowledge and The Literature of Power", by Wordsworth in "Preface" to the Lyrical Ballads.

Pater, as we have emphasized, is still the subjective artist, whose own impression is the measure of all things, and style, both in the literary art and in the critical art is an important factor in producing the most accurate presentation of the inner vision which he calls "the finer accommodation of speech to that vision within".[6]

> This was, according to Pater, precisely the gift of Plato
>
> of sounding by words the depths of thought, a plastic power literally moulding to term and phrase what might have seemed in its very nature too impalpable and abstruse to lend itself in any case to language.[7]

This struggle to produce an accurate representation of the complex inner vision is one of the fundamental aspects of Pater, the stylist, Pater, the artist and Pater the critic.

The proclamation of imaginative prose as "the special and opportune art of the modern world" reveals Pater's new compromise between life and art; for imaginative prose can both embrace the complexity of life and unify it to concrete forms, within which framework Pater maintains a consciousness of the connotations of sympathy, love and humanity. In the essay on "Winckelmann" this compromise had not yet been reached, for Pater, although he anticipates the capacity of "literary production" to deal with the conditions of modern life, envisages a "literary production"[8] which gives pleasure "by its form as distinct from its matter."

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[6] Pater: Appreciations, p. 10.

[7] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p. 141.

[8] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 230.

Indeed, Pater was adamant on the importance of prose, for in "Plato and Platonism" he again emphasizes the essays as being "that characteristic literary type of our time",[9] while he frequently encouraged his protegé's including Wilde and Symons to abandon poetry for prose.

Pater's artist is of necessity a "scholar", as acutely aware of his linguistic medium as a sculptor is acutely aware of his marble. Thus he will be both conscious of the concrete word (in the tradition of Spencer and Lewes) and punctilious in his selection of words, conscious as was Flavian, of "the precise power of every phrase and word."[8]

Indeed, the artist,

> with his peculiar sense of the world ever in view ... in search of an instrument for the adequate expression of that ... begets a vocabulary faithfully to the colouring of his own spirit, and in the strictest sense original.[9]

He will also be aware of the new resources of language which is being expanded by the development of science, art and German philosophy, and of the finer metaphorical impact of words which are currently being misused. The new eclectism of the Nineteenth Century must be incorporated in art as well as in criticism.

At this point, Pater considers not only scholars but all disinterested lovers of books who regard literature as "a sort of cloistral refuge from

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[8] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 230

[9] Pater: Appreciations, p. 15.

a certain vulgarity in the actual world",[10] in the same way as "the good book" was to an English Poet,

> like an actual place visited, and to which one might return again and again at discretion for the infallible exercise therein of a special recognized influence.[11]

Pater, even at this stage, feels the necessity to retreat occasionally from the vulgarity of life; but art is for him a temporary refuge for life, not a permanent substitute.

He advises the omission of any non-essential or ornament devices in literary practice " all art does but consist in the removal of surplusage,"[12] which obscures the structural outline of the work.

Certainly, Pater's art is heavily laden with details, but, on closer examination we will realise that the details are part of Pater's strenuous effort to reproduce the inner vision in his art as accurately as possible.

The structural outline of the literary work is the essential aim of good style,

> that architectural conception ... which foresees the end in the beginning and never loses sight of it, and in every part is conscious of all the rest, till the last sentence does but, with undiminished vigour, unfold and justify the first.[13]

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[10] Pater: Appreciations, p. 18.

[11] Pater: An English Poet, p. 443.

[12] Pater: Appreciations, p. 19.

[13] Pater: Appreciations, p. 22.

To this concept Pater attaches the term "mind"[14] and he explains how it controls the unity of words, sentences, paragraphs, indeed, the unity of the entire composition with itself and with its subject.

It cannot be said that this unity prevails in Pater's own work, not even in this essay on "Style". What Pater substitutes for the architectural design, however, is

> a single, almost visual image, vigorously informing an entire perhaps very intricate composition[15] .

the atmosphere.

This is the other aspect of "style", that of "soul",[16] "a kind of vagrant sympathy and a kind of immediate contact,"[17] a type of intuitive sense which contributes to the "unity of atmosphere".

In a rather abrupt shift of focus Pater discusses Flaubert with whose "martyrdom in style" he probably felt a kinship. Flaubert is the supreme practitioner, with Plato, of the "mot juste", the extent approximation of the word to the idea. Pater, at this point makes a tentative attempt to philosophise the "mot juste" concept in almost a Platonic way.

> One seems to detect the influence of a philosophic idea there, the idea of a natural economy, of some pre-existent adaptation between a relative, somewhere in the world of thought:[18]

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[14] Pater: Appreciations, p. 21.

[15] Pater: Appreciations, p. 23.

[16] Pater: Appreciations, p. 25.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Pater: Appreciations, p. 30.

We are at a level far removed from "The Renaissance" (in theory) when we are told:

> In literature as in all forms of art there are the absolute and the merely relative or accessory beauties, and preceding in that exact proportion of the term to its purpose is the absolute beauty of style, prose or verse.[19]

The essential beauty is, after all true, the "vrai verité" at its highest point, the artists' sincere representation of his own individual ideas, and at its lowest, the writer's imitation of the external fact.

This subjectivity of style, then, is the idea expressed by writers such as Wright and Mallock, a concept which is appropriately described in the phrase, "The style is the man".

Ideally, Pater, as we saw in "The Renaissance", had aimed at "impersonality in art, the subjection of all considerations to the "aesthetic moment", to artistic form. He had resolved the conflict of the subjective apprehension of the moment and his impersonal ideal in art by the presence of the artist merging his personality in the sublimation, the aesthetic moment. Here, the process is not very different; for although "Style" involves the subjective apprehension and expression of the literary artist, the unified, intensified concept of Style which is attained, pervades, absorbs and impersonalizes the initial subjectivity, illustrating once again that Pater, in spite of his stress on the concrete, seems to arrive at the Abstract.

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[19] Pater: Appreciations, p. 34.

Pater concludes the essay, by moving even further away from the theoretical aestheticism of "The Renaissance". He explains that although music and literature have the quality of imagination in common, the music operates primarily at the sensual level while literature operates primarily at the intellectual level.

He continues with a passage condemned by both Fraser and Fletcher as being illogical.

> If music be the ideal of all art whatever, precisely because in music it is impossible to distinguish that form from the expression, then literature, by finding its specific excellence in the absolute correspondence of the term to its import will be but fulfilling the condition of all artistic quality in things everywhere of all good art.[20]

Fraser explains:

> the logical worry is this. The indiscernible fusion of form and substance has been postulated as the ideal of all art. The absolute correspondence of the term to its import is then postulated as the specific excellence of prose: but if we can see that the term does absolutely correspond to its import we must be distinguishing between form and substance very sharply indeed.[21]

Pater, by his language, by "a music of ideas" somehow hypnotizes the reader into equating art and music as supreme arts irrespective of any reason or explanation.

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[20] Pater: Appreciations, p.37.

[21] Fraser: Walter Pater: His Theory of Style, His Style in Practice, His Influence in "The Art of Victorian Prose" ed. by Levine & Madden, p.209.

In the conclusion to this essay, Pater finally establishes his humanist position (from which, apparently, he has to retreat occasionally into the cloistral refuge of literature!)

Great art, assetts Pater, is not dependent on form alone but also "on the quality of the matter". If it manages, in addition to its qualities of style to attain to something of "the soul of humanity", an enlargement of sympathy and consideration for the oppressed, it will be great art, and

> will find its logical, its architectural place, in the great structure of ... human life.[22]

Style, then, had as its components life, art and criticism, which, in the same way incorporated the concept of style in artistic creation, in critical creation and evaluation, and in the very action of living and thinking.

Style and the struggle to achieve stylistic perfection pervades Pater's work. To Flavian, Gaston and Marius, the matter of words was as vital and immediate as life itself while Plato was the supreme personality, artist, critic and stylist.

"An English Poet" is most significant because it illustrates a physical awakening in the young man, unique in Pater's writing. But it illustrates no less powerfully his growing aesthetic and critical awareness. His desire for a literary life involves

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[22] Pater: Appreciations, p.38.

> a savour, before all things of the style - how things were said - of manner - those elements of taste or of literary production which, because they are so delicately and individually apprehended and are yet so real, resemble physical sensations and may rightly be said to be the matter of a literary sense.[23]

The apprehensions of "Style" to the young man is not only inseparable from the matter but almost as vital as life. Indeed, the intense emotion involved in his strenuous application of stylistic principles to his work does become part of life; for we are told of

> the curious sense of relief in seeing thought or fancy, housed at last in the fragment of writing compressed truly by many shapings to some delightful inward pattern or ideal, which yet had weighed on him like a burden.[24]

Even here, however, there is a yearning for the experience of life itself -

> for if your words regarding it are to be fragrant, he would say, you must have been for a time in slavish possession of the flower.[25]

Certainly the conclusion to the essay on 'Style' is no afterthought. Art, Pater implies, without life is incomplete. For Pater, style is a sincere struggle if sometimes a vain one to integrate life and art, image and ideal in literature and creation.

What type of style was it that elicited on the one hand, remarks such as Samuel Butler's -

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[23] Pater: An English Poet, p. 444.

[24] Pater: An English Poet, p. 446.

[25] Ibid.

> Mr. Walter Pater's style is to me like the face of some old woman who has been to Madame Rachel and had herself enamelled. The bloom is nothing but powder and paint and the odour is cherry-blossom,[26]

or that of Kathrine Garvin who wrote in "The Great Victorians" -

> One cannot read his work without becoming drugged or bewitched through the style, but it is not that he was a good stylist[27]

and on the other hand Bowra's appraisal:

> It has reserves of strength which become apparent on a second or third reading and may preserve it from the ravages of time when more jaunty styles are forgotten.[28]

Writing, it seems, did not come easily to Pater. It is probable that the agonies of "An English Poet" and of Flaubert are reflections of Pater's own experiences.

"If I live long enough", he told Gosse, "no doubt I should learn quite to like writing"[29] (for as he grew old, the labour seemed to become less taxing).

We have already remarked on Pater's precision (the reason for his irritation with Coleridge's untidiness) and we know also that after he had arranged his notes he would -

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[26] Samuel Butler: Notebooks, ed. Henry Festing Jones (London, 1912), p.184.

[27] Katherine Gorvin: Walter Pater in "The Great Victorians", ed. by H.J. and Hugh Massinghan, (London, Nicholson and Watson, 1932), p.366.

[28] Sir Maurice Bowra: "Walter Pater" in "The Sewanee Review", Vol.57, September 1949, p.398.

[29] Sir Edmund Gosse: Critical Kit-Kats (London, Heinemann, 1896) p.262

[30] A.C. Benson: Walter Pater (English Man of Letters, 1907), p.202.

> begin to write on ruled paper, leaving the alternate lines blank; and in these spaces he would insett new clauses and descriptive epithets. Then the whole was recopied, again on alternate lines which would again be filled.[30]

This method surely illustrates Pater's devotion to his art, his determination to find, like Flavian,

> the means of making visible to others that which was vividly apparent delightful, of lively interest to himself, to the exclusion of all that was but middling, tame or only half true even to him ...[31]

One of the most basic constituents of style is the writer's consciousness of words for which he "has winnowed and searched through his vocabulary."[32]

Pater's vocabulary has been described as precious, intense or cloudy ; "purged and scholarly but very narrow."[33] Words like "delight", "delightful", "grace", "cheer", "elegance", "fine", "fair" and "comely" tend to recur frequently in his work, words which are as neutrally representative of something which is not unpleasant as the contemporary word, "nice".

On the other hand, words with a slightly "aesthetic" flavour such as "exquisite", "dainty", "finesse", "subtle", occur in the company of "flower", the "flower-like" young man Claudio in "Measure for Measure", for instance.

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[30] A.C. Benson: Walter Pater (English Man of Letters, 1907), p.202.

[31] Pater: Marius the Epicurean I, p.99.

[32] Pater: Appreciations, p.15.

[33] Ialan Fletcher: Walter Pater, p.35.

The prevalence of words like "dreary", "nostalgia", "homesickness", "ennui", "wistful", "weary", "faint", although fundamental to Pater's temperament are also characteristic of the Nineteenth Century, where the sentiment of Senancour's "Obermann" threw a generation into a mood of self-indulgent despondency, while words such as "quaint", "remote", "vague", "dim", "obscure", "mysterious" and "hidden" have their roots in Romanticism.

Pater's vocabulary in "The Renaissance" is far more "aesthetic" than his use of words in "Marius, the Epicurean", where the prevalence of "fair", "comely" and the use of "white", "pure", "mystic" and "clean" contrasted with the profundity of "quiet", "serious", "grave" and "austere" indicate a religious purity and a fundamental seriousness.

All these words indicate that Pater was indeed not very adventurous in his use of adjectives, while very often, by their mere neutrality, they contribute to a lethargy that is sometimes prevalent in Pater's work. There are occasions, as in the essay on Coleridge where the use of unsuitable words like "delicacy", and "dreamy grace" to convey the mysticism of "The Ancient Mariner"[34] actually detracts from the effectiveness of the atmosphere. Pater's use of the word "quaintness" in his description of Botticelli's "Birth of Venus"[35] again conveys a "folk" quality which certainly was not Pater's intention, nor did

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[34] Pater: Appreciations, p. 97.

[35] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 58.

"bituminous rocks, ridged reefs of trap rock" not only capture a definite "Hopkins" quality of sprung rhythm, but the harshness both of the alliterative r's and of the sharp consonantal word-endings combined with the reverberating assonances of "o", "ee", "i", "a", "o" conveys the primeval atmosphere of Da Vinci's landscape. This is intensified by the broken alliterative "t's" in "Cut the water into quaint sheets of light."

Indeed, Pater's description further on of the sea-shore of the "Saint Anne" is just as evocative -

> that delicate place where the wind passes like the hand of some fine etcher over the surface, and the untorn shells are lying thick upon the sand, and the tops of the rocks, to which the waves never rise are green with grass grown fine as hair.[39]

The loneliness is intensified by only the wind passing over it "like the hand of an etcher," the "hand" connotating a primitive creating power, "etcher" emphasizing the stark outline and the green grass as "fine as hair", echoing the "green shadow" of the rocks of Leonardo's bizarre landscape but even more awesome because of the juxtaposition of "grass" with "hair" and "hand", the separate parts of the human anatomy half integrated with the lonely unreal landscape.

In a completely different context is Pater's "impressionistic" conclusion to the essay on Du Bellay, evoking the momentary beauty of the poetry of the French Pleiad School.

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[39] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 111.

> A sudden light transfigures a trivial thing, a weather vane, a wind-mill, a winnowing flail, the dust in the barn-door: a moment and the thing has vanished, because it was pure effect,[40]

Here the texture is lighter, more "breathy", because of the alliterative "w's" and the "f's" of "transfigure" and "flame" and because of the assonantal "i's" interspersed by "ai's" and the "u" in sudden at the beginning of the sentence reverberating in "dust" near the end.

We must not, of course, overlook the rhythmic quality in both these passages. We have already noticed the "Hopkins" quality in the first passage and in the Du Bellay passage. Here, it is notable how Pater intensifies the effect by balancing the short phrases in the middle with a longer introductory and concluding phrase.

G.S. Fraser posed an interesting question. Was Yeats aware of Santsbury's scansion-method before he put the "La Gioconda passage" in blank verse in the Oxford Book of Poetry? "

This passage has become so well-known that it has overshadowed the poetic beauty of much of Pater's other work. Indeed, even the excitement aroused by the sentiments expressed in Pater's conclusion to "The Renaissance" seem to have blinded many readers to its really poetic quality.

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[40]Pater: The Renaissance, p.176.

It is notable how Pater in the first section of the Conclusion[41] confines himself to scientific, natural and biological images which are all affected by the passing of time - water, heat, phosphorus, the blood, lenses of the eye, iron, corn. These images are glimpsed between verbs implying passing movements, processes of grouping and regrouping - "wasting", "repairing", "rust", "ripen"/which combine and recombine into "birth, . and gesture and death" and bizarre life-in-death images like "the springing of violets from the grave."

The monotonous, at times, slightly uneven rhythm of the long sentences, and Pater's inversion of emphatic phrases create a nebulous atmosphere of time passing through the universe, through man, affecting the universe, affecting man and influencing man's apprehension of images and events.

Pater's description[42] of the "impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them ..." and his image of "the narrow chamber of the individual mind ... each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world" are reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's work both in style and import. Certainly Pater's awareness of verbal texture cannot be ignored - the lightness and fast rhythm of "impressions", "unstable", "flickering", "inconsistent" contrasting with the darker, heavier

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[41] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 233-4.

[42] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 235.

"narrow chamber of the individual mind."

We must not, however, lose sight of the fact that in his theory of Style the choice of words was important in so far as it contributed to the "logical coherency" of the whole work. The essential unity of design

> may even prescribe much ... in the building of the sentence, for instance, or in the manner, argumentative, descriptive, discursive, of this or that part or member of the entire design. The blithe crisp sentence, decisive as a child's expression of its needs, may alternate with the long-contending, victoriously intricate sentence."[43]

Pater's sentences were normally of the latter type, unfortunately not always "victorious". F.L. Lucas in his book on "Style" comments -

> Again and again hearing a sentence of his read aloud, you would think it had reached its end; but instead of a full stop, there comes only a semi-colon; followed by some afterthought often in the shape of a participal or subordinate clause.[44]

Indeed, Pater, in order to prolong his sentence often resorted to the dash, or to inordinate parenthetical phrases. Not only were Pater's sentences as long as possible but he also tended to cram as much as possible in them. Richard R. Kirk in his article "A Sentence by Walter Pater", differentiates between two types of sentences -

> The sentence whose ideas are associated withoothers in the reader's mind and are loosely related to one another, and the sentence whose ideas are, so to speak, dissociated from all others and are organically or inseparably related.[45]

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[43] Pater: Appreciations, p.22.

[44] F.L. Lucas: Style (Pan Books, 1964), p.206.

[45] Richard R. Kirk: A Sentence by Walter Pater in "The Journal of English and Germanic Philology, Vol. 19, July 1920, p.365.

He calls the former type the "Expository Sentence" and the latter, which is Pater's characteristic sentence, the "Derivative Sentence." Furthermore, he comments that the absence of stressed terms in the Paterian sentence, its typically unemphatic quality implies expectation of a passive reader. This suggestion is substantiated by Pater's warning in "Plato and Platonism" that

> the receiver may add the falsities of his own nature to the truth he receives.[46]

When Fletcher states that

> the aesthetic unit, for Pater remains fixed at the sentence, if necessary, a sentence extended by parenthesis,... and qualification to paragraph length[47]

he was realising the implications inherent in the "Derivitive Sentence" which will be illustrated by examining a typical Paterian essay concerning Sir Thomas Browne:

> Something of such a humourist was Browne - not callous to men and their fortunes; certainly not without opinions of his own about them; and yet, undisturbed by the Civil War, by the fall, and then the restoration, of the monarchy, through that long quiet life (ending at last on the day himself had predicted, as if at the moment he had willed) in which 'all existence' as he says, 'had been but food for contemplation'.[48]

Although this sentence occurs in a paragraph dealing with the role of the humourist, there is no organic connection between the various separate ideas posited in the various separate sentences. The first

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[46] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p.189.

[47] Iaion Fletcher: Walter Pater, p.35.

[48] Pater: Appreciations, p.128-9.

sentence of the paragraph states the humourist's sense of perspective and objectivity in viewing the world. The following sentence states that humour is not a desirable general genre in an age of "great causes" such as the periods of turmoil during which both Browne and Montaigne lived, while in the third sentence Pater maintains that the humourist may nevertheless perform a balancing function in an age of great "issues" which is liable to become "severe or even cruel". He concludes with the sentence quoted.

There is, of course, a connection between the various sentences, but, perhaps because each sentence is so long, so closely-packed the connection is lost. Indeed, for the same reason Pater does not perhaps cannot attempt to provide any continuity in the rhythm of these sentences, or in the maintenance of a strong intellectual link between them. Thus as Fletcher states, "Pater's paragraphs are merely a set of related perceptions."[49]

In the quoted sentence we see Pater's habit of inverting his clauses:

"Browne was something of a such a humourist"

is inverted to "something of such a humourist was Browne." Of course, "such a humourist was Browne" would have been most effective.

We notice the lack of emphasis: Pater juxtaposes the two statements that "Browne was not without opinions" and, "he was undisturbed by the Civil War and the restoration." At first, we do

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[49] Ialon Fletcher: Walter Pater, p.34.

not realise in the monotony of the sentence that the Civil War was the fall of the monarchy, which was later re-instated with the Restoration.

In addition, Pater's odd form of litotes, his negative phrases used without contrast, confuse the reader by clouding an assertion which would gain definition and clarity with the addition of a concessive conjunction and the elimination of one of the negatives. Would the statement not have been clearer and less confusing if it had read something like,

> although Browne was a man of firm convictions, he was undisturbed by the Civil War?

It is noticeable that Pater only uses one main verb, "was", at the beginning of the sentence, followed by qualifying phrases, at first short phrases, then prolonged by "and then" and two parenthetical phrases to the end of the sentence. Yet, within the sentence itself, there is an organic unity, that of Browne, the humourist's firm balanced attitude to men, their fortunes and their vicissitudes through his life and theirs.

Perhaps Pater's aim in producing such a sentence is to enhance the atmosphere of the man's untroubled long life, unaffected by external turmoils. It certainly is his aim to project as completely as possible his own complex feelings about Browne. But Pater forgets his reader, who is left in a hazy blurred atmosphere, not quite sure, at first, of his exact meaning.

In the same way, although his elliptical method of "dropping hints" (very often far too many to be significant) and of working by implication is sometimes effective as in the passage concluding the essay on Du Bellay, it can be most frustrating and confusing for the reader.

Yet there are occasions where Pater, by the length and form of a sentence certainly evokes the appropriate effect. In the essay on "Style", after asserting the "true artist's tact of omission", Pater continues -

> For to the grave reader words too are grave; and the ornamental word, the figure, the accessory form or colour or reference, is rarely content to die to thought precisely at the right moment but will inevitably linger awhile, stirring a long 'brainwave' behind it of perhaps quite alien associations.[50]

Pater himself, is rarely willing to omit any nuance or idea which might amplify his meaning, whether it be the "ornamental word, the figure, the accessory form or colour of reference". Pater's expansion of, "is rarely content to die to thought" to "will inevitably linger awhile" also includes a change from the firm, steady tone of "precisely at the right moment" to the more languorous rhythm of "inevitably linger", trailing off into "long brain-wave behind it of perhaps quite alien associations" which almost creates an effect of verbal harmonics or overtones; for the concrete quality of "ornamental word, figure, accessory form ... colour ... reference" reverberates

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[50] Pater: Appreciations, p. 18.

through the abstract "brain-wave" and "associations" on the subdued movement of the verbs "linger, stirring" which follow "rarely content to die" in a "diminuendo", and the combination of the hesitant and lingering images and sounds re-echoes after the words have been read.

Saintsbury points out -

> It must always be remembered that the care of the paragraph was one of Mr. Pater's first and greatest anxieties[51]

and he adds,

> But his paragraph was not, as too many people are under the delusion that a paragraph must necessarily be brought to some deeply marked, insistent, peremptorily 'concluding' end.

Pater's "gentle glide" at the end of his paragraph, is, of course, consistent with the process of the Platonic Dialogue, the basis of Pater's approach to "Style" and to the "essay", which we remember should never be conclusive, but should form a "temper". Certainly, it would not be characteristic of a temperament such as Pater's to end a paragraph on a high note.

"If there is one thing which, more than another, can be justly urged against Ruskin, it is the absence of quiet", says Saintsbury, continuing,

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[51] Saintsbury: A History of English Prose Rhythm, p.420. He mentions that when he commented on Pater's concern with the paragraph in his essay published in "The Fortnightly", Pater "wrote to me expressing special gratification and acknowledging that it had been one of his principal objects."

> If there is one thing, more than another, that may be put to the credit of Pater, it is the presence thereof.[52]

Pater's aim is not to cajole his readers into accepting his attitude but to persuade them gently, almost to hypnotise them. Very often Pater is most successful in evoking an atmosphere. We remember in the essay on "Wordsworth" how he so successfully conveys to the reader Wordsworth's power of realising

> abstract and elementary impressions - silence, darkness, absolute motionlessness, or again, the whole complex sentiment of a particular place, the abstract expression of desolation, in the long white road, of peacefulness in a particular folding of the hills.[53]

What is the reason for Pater's success in creating "atmosphere"? We are back again at the single word. Pater's style is indeed a "set of related individual perceptions."

When his work is effective, it is because his perceptions are vivid and although not integrated, are related as in the above passage to form a unified atmosphere. When the work is unsuccessful, it is often because Pater has tried too hard to include every nuance, every detail.

Pater's unity is a unity of atmosphere, not of logic, and as strongly as he insists on the architectonic tenet in theory, he generally did not subscribe to it in practice.

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[52] Saintsbury: A History of English Prose Rhythm, p. 420.

[53] Pater: Appreciations, p. 45.

Despite his emotional limitations Pater's atmospheres do vary, from the morbid violence of Denys l'Auxerrois and the erotic suggestiveness of "Aesthetic Poetry" to the delicacy of the essay on "Du Bellay", the profundity of William Wordsworth,and the vibrant landscape through which Marius travelled on the way to Rome.

> 'Never judging ... Systemwise of things, but fastening on particulars; saying all things as it were on chance occasion only, and by way of pastime, yet succeeding thus, 'glimpse-wise', in catching and recording ... glimpses, suggestions, delightful half-apprehensions, profound thoughts ... the full knowledge of which is held in reserve.[54]

This description of Lamb, the essayist, is perhaps even more applicable to Pater.

When we consider to what extent he applied the tenets of "Style" to his own work, we discover that,as in all Pater's thinking, there prevails the conflict between the concrete image and the abstract conception, the material phenomena of life, and his yearnings for an abstract ideal,be it the aesthetic image, religion or style.

We have seen how Pater is usually unable to attain the architectonic ideal, weighed down by his tendency to clutch at every nuance or image. Theoretically in the essay on "Style", the individual word was important only in so far as it contributed to the whole unity; in Pater's own essays the individual word is important for its own sake as Pater's sincere expression of his own inner vision. Ideal architectural unity is perhaps the aspiration of Pater's long, sometimes

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[54] Pater: Appreciations, p.116-7.

tortuous sentences, but the tortuous quality caused by the heavy load of images and ideas prevents any possible link between sentences.

Indeed, the strain of Pater's writing is the result of yet another conflict -

> between the necessary subjectivity of the artist and the necessity that he should grapple with objective truth if his style is to become impersonal.[55]

The subjectivity of the artist, his sincere attempt to render his personal vision, which in the flux of relativism is the only valid apprehension of truth, must be so integrated with the unity of the whole artistic work that an impersonal objective truth, the ideal of Style is attained. Pater did achieve "Style", but his style is distinctly Paterian - perhaps because of his strenuous effort to avoid this subjectivity.

The distinctive individuality of this Paterian style, its aesthetic effect and its significance in relation to Pater himself will be best demonstrated by comparing Pater's writing with the work of other writers, preferably his contemporaries, men with similar intellectual and cultural backgrounds - Matthew Arnold and John Ruskin.

In the chapter on Pater's art criticism we drew attention to the visual quality in Ruskin's writing. This quality is most evident in

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[55] Fraser: Walter Pater: His Theory of Style, His Style in Practice, His Influence in "The Art of Victorian Prose" ed. by Levine and Madden, p. 221.

the following passage from Ruskin's defence of Turner's "Snowstorm" which had been condemned by contemporary critics as not measuring up to the tenets of Realism.

> The water from its prolonged agitation is beaten, not into mere creaming foam, but into masses of accumulated yeast, which hang in ropes and wreaths from wave to wave, and where one curls over to break, form a festoon like a drapery from its edge; those as taken up by the wind, not in dissipating dust, but bodily, in writhing, hanging, coiling masses, which make the air white and thick with snow, only the flakes are a foot or two long each; the surges themselves are full of foam in their very bodies, underneath, making them white all through, as the water is under a great cataract; and their masses being thus half water and half air, are torn to pieces by the wind whenever they rise and carried away in roaring smoke which chokes and strangles like actual water.[56]

The sentence is longer than many of Pater's and the accumulation of words as abundant. There is, however, a vital quality in the words which is often missing in Pater's writing. Ruskin's words have a powerful sweeping movement, a vibrancy and a rhythmic variety which sustains and builds up the sentence into a satisfying lyrical unity. Within this unity the description is precise and acutely visual.

Pater is more interested in accumulating nuances, finer shades which sometimes have a sense of movement as in the Conclusion to the Renaissance:

> ... experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects pressing up as with a sharp and importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action,[57]

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[56] Ruskin: Works III, p.569.

[57] Pater: The Renaissance, p.234.

but he never achieves the clarity and richness of Ruskin's vision.

This is no condemnation of Pater's style but merely an attempt at defining his individual characteristics. Ruskin is the "observer" whose aim is to present to his reader a vivid visual picture, whether subjective or objective. Pater is intent on conveying to the reader his precise individual complex inner vision with all its nuances and finesses.

Matthew Arnold is subjective in another way. Indeed, Tillotson is perhaps right in identifying Arnold's arrogance as

> more wholly wording then matter they exhibit the manner of the egoist living in an age of controversy.[58]

Matthew Arnold, the critic, is authoritarian, striking and also inclined to be vague and general.

When, in "The Function of Criticism", Arnold exhorts,

> Let us betake ourselves more to the serener life of the mind and spirit. This life, too, may have its excesses and dangers; but they are new for us at present. Let us think of quietly enlarging our stock of true and fresh ideas, and not, as soon as we get an idea or half an idea, be running out with it into the street, and trying to make it rule there. Our ideas will, in the end, shape the world all the better for maturing a little.[59]

He sounds just like a mixture between a schoolmaster reprimanding his class and a preacher sermonizing to his flock, mingling the academic-cum-religious tone in -

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[58] Geoffrey Tillotson: Matthew Arnold's Prose: Theory and Practice, in "The Age of Victorian Prose, ed. by Levin and Madden, p. 92.

[59] Matthew Arnold: Essays Literary and Critical, p. 23.

> let us betake ourselves more to the serenor life of the mind and spirit

with the colloquial,strongly deprecatory -

> not as soon as we get an idea or half an idea, be running out with it, into the street.

Pater, even if it is because of his adherence to the principles of Platonic Dialectic expressed in Montaigne's "Que scais-je?" never raises himself on a platform above his reader, never extols or reprimands; he suggests, hints, half-retreating, half-advancing, always dignified, always scholarly.

When we examine the continuation of the above passage by Arnold,discussing the role of criticism -

> In general, its course is destined for it by the idea which is the law of its being; the idea of a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world, and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas,[60]

We see words and sentences which are clear, direct, strong and even striking. What, however, do they mean? Who is to say what is the "best that is known and thought in the world"? By what criteria is "the best" to be evaluated?

One of Arnold's most distinctive characteristics is the ability to make a vague, superficial abstraction sound like a concrete reality. Pater was never superficial. In fact, he went out of his way to avoid superficiality. Unfortunately he often tried so hard that he made his accumulation of concrete realities sound like vague abstractions.

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[60] Matthew Arnold: Essays Lit. and Critical, p. 23.

An estimate of Pater's influence is best left to another place in this thesis. Nevertheless we must mention the influence of his style on Moore, Symonds, and Oscar Wilde, to each one of whom Pater made the suggestion that he abandon poetry and write prose. Lionel Johnson and Richard Le Gallienewere also "disciples" of Pater while Bernard Berenson the art critic has assimilated a great deal of the "culture appreciation" aspect of Pater's art criticism. Wilde states in his review of "Appreciations" that Pater

> has no rival in his own sphere and he has escaped disciples. And this, not because he has not been imitated, but because in art so fine as his there is something that, in its essence, is immutable.[61]

Indeed, it is in the work of Pater's minor imitators such as Frederic Myers that one becomes aware of the essential profundity and sincerity of Pater.

"In the sub-Paterians", states Fraser,

> there is no truth struggling agonisingly into exquisite verbal art; rather an elaborate verbal mannerism pursued for its own sake and creating a kind of phantasmagoria or simulacrum of thought.[62]

No style, least of all Pater's style, can be separated from its matter. A criticism such as Paul West's which condemns Pater's "hedging style" as being symptomatic of "mental impotence" rather

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[61] Oscar Wilde: Mr. Pater's Last Volume (Appreciations) in "The Artist as Critic", edited by Ellman (W.H. Allen, 1970), p.234.

[62] Fraser: Walter Pater: His Theory of Style, His Style in Practice, His Influence, in "The Art of Victorian Prose; ed. by Levine and Madden, p. 221.

than "subtlety of perception"[63] must be dismissed; for surely none of Pater's works are indicative of "mental impotence". As Ward points out, Pater's

> "temperamental need to hedge is, itself a part of a response to a complex intellectual situation,"[64]

the same situation that causes Matthew Arnold to rear his head in arrogance, the dilemmas and insecurity of the Victorian Age.

It is perhaps as difficult for us to understand the nostalgia, the intellectual traumas of the Nineteenth Century as it is for us to appreciate Pater's style which

> is not to the taste of an age (such as ours) which values sharp immediate effect.[65]

In the next section we will briefly examine the general cultural tone and attitudes of the Victorian Age in conjunction with the little we know about Pater, the personality, the effect of the milieu upon a very complex man to whom style was such a real and vital concept inextricably connected with the literary art and criticism.

In Pater's last essay written just before his death on Pascal, he condemns the insincerity of theoreticians (Pascal's contemporaries) in terms of style. Their "looseness of thought and language", their

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[63] Paul West: Pater's Critical Canon, p.185.

[64] Anthony Ward: Walter Pater, The Idea in Nature, p.27.

[65] Bowra: "Walter Pater", in "Sewanee Review", Vol. 57, September 1949, p.398.

deliberate lack of verbal discrimination and

> the insincerity with which terms are carefully chosen to cover opposite meanings[66]

are symptomatic of intellectual fatuity and spiritual insincerity.

On the other hand, according to Pater,

> The essence of good style, whatever its accidents may be, is expressiveness. It is mastered in proportion to the justice, the nicety with which words balance or match their meanings, and their writer succeeds in saying what he will, grave or gay, severe or florid, simple or complex.[67]

Certainly Pater's whole life was devoted to developing

> the control of a style which could but obediently shift and shape itself to the mental motion.[68]

As G.S. Fraser remarks,

> No other writer of the later Nineteenth Century combines in quite Pater's way the notes of ascetism and the sensuous severity, the cult of restraint and an almost alarming covert permissiveness. He gave prose a sort of inventiveness, a combination of severe discipline of form with accessibility to the expression of vague, secret and remote deep feelings that had previously been associated with the art of the poet.[69]

In order to make our final estimate of Pater, the critic, it remains for us now to trace some of the influences which must have shaped his ideas, aspirations and achievement.

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[66] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 65.

[67] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p. 67.

[68] Pater: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in "Appreciations", p. 206.

[69] G.S. Fraser: Walter Pater: His Theory of Style, His Style in Practice, His Influence, ed. Levine and Madden, p. 302.

SECTION C

A FINAL ESTIMATE

CHAPTER IX

THE MILIEU AND THE MAN

In his essay "The Genius of Plato", Pater comments:

> All true criticism of philosophic doctrine, as of every other product of human mind, must begin with an historic estimate of the conditions, antecedent and contemporary, which helped to make it precisely what it was.[1]

He continues by explaining that although, on the one hand, the milieu is important,

> there is also ... the comparatively inexplicable force of personality, resistant to the circumstances of a particular age while it is being moulded by them.[2]

Raymond Chapman, approaches the task of the critic in much the same way stating that although art cannot be regarded as the "perfect and integrated expression" of a society since this supposition implies the denial of the artist's individuality, the artist is nevertheless

> a part of his society and of his own generation : if we are to understand the literature of an age, we need to understand the main pre-occupations and assumptions of that age.[3]

In this chapter, after a brief account of the "main preoccupations and assumptions" of the "Victorian Age" we shall consider Pater, the man

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[1] Pater: Plato and Platonism, p. 124.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Raymond Chapman: The Victorian Debate, p. 3.

as his friends and acquaintances knew him, as we know him from his letters, so that the elements very often synthesized in the artist's work, his temperament and his environment will not be omitted in a final estimate of Pater's achievements.

David Thomson in "England in the Nineteenth Century", points out that during this time

> material progress seemed, as by some new law of nature to have been showered without stint on a people who rated industriousness, business efficiency and private enterprise among the major virtues.[4]

By 1870 British foreign trade was more than that of France, Germany and Italy together and nearly four times that of the United States, while factors like tremendous industtial growth, the increasing population and the shrinking of the world by the introduction of a telegraph system which, by the 1880's extended further than Bombay and South America, demanded tremendous adjustments of various kinds.

The progress, the power of mechanization, the capacity to produce materials quickly and cheaply changed the face of Britain. Ruskin condemns the railways

> twitching the ancient frame and strength of England together, contracting all its various life, its rocky arms and rural heart, into a narrow, finite, calculating metropolis of manufacturers,[5]

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[4]David Thomson: England in the Nineteenth Century (1815-1914) (Penguin), p. 101.

[5]Ruskin: Works IV, p. 31.

while in "Hard Times" (1859) Charles Dickens describes Coketown, a typical industrial town

> of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminably serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever and never get uncoiled.
>
> It had a black canal in it and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye and vast piles of buildings full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long and where the piston of the steam engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness.[6]
>
> You saw nothing in Coketown that was not severely "workful".

The practical was inevitably the ugly in that time of hasty experiment and factors such as industrialism which we take for granted today, were the more reprehensible to many Victorians because of their sudden, swift emergence.

Society and culture came to be dominated by the industrial and the commercial classes, who, having obtained political power by means of the Reform Bill (1832) came to control economic life as a result of their newly gained wealth. The materialist, moral, aggressive, religious and self-satisfied traits of this class left a decided impression on the Victorian outlook.

Their sentimentality, prudery, interest in material possessions is shown in their literary and artistic taste. Relishing photographic representations, in art, they regarded

> the domestic display of original paintings as a sign of material stability.[7]

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[6] Dickens: Hard Times (Dent) p. 19.

[7] Raymond Chapman: The Victorian Debate, p. 228.

We have already indicated their lack of visual sensibility demonstrated in their taste for heavily lacquered, heavily upholstered furniture. The books of Samuel Smiles with their fatuous moralistic counselling were bought and carefully read by the Victorian reading public who obviously appreciated such comments as :-

> without a solid sterling basis of individual goodness, all the grace, elegance and art in the world would fail to save or to elevate a people[8]

or

> Love, it has been said: in the common acceptance of the term, is folly; but love in its purity, its loftiness, its unselfishness is not only a consequence but a proof of our moral excellence.[9]

In 1851 a review in "Fraser's Magazine stated -

> If we are to make a choice between prosy and decent books and vicious books that are written with sprightliness and skill, we are, of course, bound to prefer the former ... But we cannot help regretting ... that our English novelists ... should not be able to make 'morality' a little more amusing.[10]

In an age which grew even more intolerant, men such as Dilke, Parnell and Oscar Wilde were ruined because of divorce or sex scandals and yet

> prostitution flourished to a degree that shocked foreign visitors to the Haymarket.[11]

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[8] Samuel Smiles: Character (London John Murray, 1871), p. 281.

[9] Samuel Smiles: Character p. 334.

[10] Fraser's Magazine, October 1851, quoted by Raymond Chapman in "The Victorian Debate" p. 156.

[11] Raymond Chapman: The Victorian Debate, p. 47.

The sweeping changes in society and standards brought an insecurity which reflected itself in a moral ambivalence, a theoretical intolerance contrasted with a practical depravity and lust for sensationalism.

> The peace of the home represented '... that of a rock in a rushing stream. As most traditional beliefs and institutions on which authority depends were being questioned or transformed, the Victorians clung the harder to the oldest of all traditions and stressed its ordered hierarchy and daily ritual.[12]

And yet, in 1885 W.T. Stead shocked the nation with his exposure of the organised prostitution of young girls "or even of children".[13] This was the England which John Morley denounced as

> a community where political forms, from the monarchy down to the popular chamber, are mainly hollow shams disguising the course supremacy of wealth, where religion is mainly official and political and is ever ready to dissever itself alike from the spirit of justice, the Spirit of Chastity and the spirit of truth and where literature does not as a rule permit itself to discuss serious subjects frankly and worthily - a community, in short, where the great aim of all classes and orders with power is by dint of rigorous silence, fast shutting of the eyes, and stern stopping of the ears, somehow to keep the social pyramid on its apex, with the fatal result of preserving for England its glorious fame as a paradise for the well-to-do, a purgatory for the able and a hell for the poor.[14]

George Richardson, perhaps a less biased commentator, since he was not a politician, mentions the overcrowding in towns, prisons and workhouses.

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[12] Walter E. Houghton: The Victorian Frame of Mind (1830-1870) London, 1957, p.344, quoted by Antony Ward in 'Walter Pater, The Idea in Nature", p.24.

[13] Raymond Chapman: The Victorian Debate, p.47.

[14] Morley: Critical Miscellanies (London, 1923), p.74-5, quoted by Jerome Buckley 'Victorianism", in "Victorian Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism" ed. by Austin Wright, p.6.

Pater apparently did not concern himself overmuch with political or social issues, but living in the Victorian Age he could not but have been affected by its general social atmosphere - as we shall see, later.

What concerned Pater more immediately was the change in religious ideas and philosophical attitudes. Although we have already mentioned the impact of Darwin's evolutionary theories, it is as well to emphasize the importance and significance of these ideas. Indeed, Sir Charles Lyall's Principle of Geology (1830-3) exercised just as great an influence

> replacing the orthodox theory of catastrophic change by the idea of one uninterrupted succession of physical events governed by the laws now in operation.[15]

The discovery of the first remains of the Neanderthal Man in 1857 not only showed that the earth was older than tradition had taught, but also made it more difficult ot identify man as a unique species; whereas books such as Strauss's "Leben Jesu", and Renan's "Vie de Jésus", attacking acceptance of the Gospels as divine records precipitated the collapse of man's traditional framework, intensified his doubt and his insecurity not only concerning religion but concerning his whole concept of morality which hitherto had been intricately bound up with Christianity.

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[15] Raymond Chapman: "The Victorian Debate", p. 310.

Of course, religious dissatisfaction had been rankling for some time, and already in 1845, Newman, leading the Oxford Movement seceded from the Church of England to Catholicism. The sentiments he expresses in his "Apologia" reflect the feelings which must have gripped most thinking men at this time, who, tormented by doubt were searching for some tangible security.

> Starting then with the being of a God (which, as I have said, is as certain to me as the certainty of my own existence...) I look out of myself into the work of men and there I see a sight which fills me with unspeakable distress. The world seems simply to give the lie to that great truth of which my whole being is so full; and the effect upon me is, in consequence, as a matter of necessity, as confusing as if it denied that I am in existence myself. If I looked into a mirror and did not see my face I should have the sort of feeling which actually comes upon me, when I look into the living busy world and see not reflection of its creator.[16]

Newman, at least, had faith. Pater was even more unhappy; his insecurity had an internal as well as an external basis. Wilfred Ward, one of Newman's followers expresses even more adequately Pater's feelings uttered by Marius the Epicurean when he writes to Pusey -

> The more a person feels his deficiency in the apprehension of unseen things, the more painfully he feels the want of so consoling and impressive an image of a visible Church, as even Rome displays.[17]

Writers such as Mrs. Ward, in "Robert Elsmere", Samuel Butler in "The Way of all Flesh" and William Hall White who under the pseudonym

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[16] Newman: General answer to Mr. Kingsley, p. 215 ff. quoted by Basil Whilley in "Nineteenth Century Studies", p. 96.

[17] W.G. Ward: W.G. Ward and The Oxford Movement (second edition, 1890) p. 183 quoted by Whilley, p. 107.

of "Mark Rutherford" wrote semi-autobiographical fiction, all turned from the church to a state of "agnosticism", a word coined by Thomas Huxley.

White, in "Last Pages from a Journal" emphasizes his state of anguish in a most striking passage -

> What are the facts? Not those in Horner, Shakespeare or even the Bible. The facts for most of us are a dark street, crowds, hurry, commonplaces, loneliness, and worse than all, a trembling doubt which can hardly be named as to the meanigg and purpose of the world.[18]

The agnostics felt that belief without intellectual assent would be dishonest. Therefore, if the new ideas were convincing, belief was no longer possible. There was, however, linked with the disappearance of belief, the danger of moral anarchy, since belief and morals had been so closely associated. The solution to this problem lay in some ethical system not based on revelation. This, as we have seen, was Pater's solution in the Houghton MS., a solution based on Hegel's theory of relativity and the Zeitgeist, the importance of which we have already noticed.

Even Matthew Arnold in his essay "Bishop Butler and the Zeitgeist" seems to see in the Zeitgeist the possible answer to the contemporary problem. He writes:

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[18] William Hale White: Last Pages from a Journal (posthumously published, 1915), quoted by Raymond Chapman in "The Victorian Debate", p. 279.

> The time comes sooner or later to individuals and even to societies when the foundations of the great deep are broken up, and everything is in question and people want surer holding around them, a sense of general correspondence, in any scheme of rule of human nature proposed to them with facts whereof they are conscious.[19]

This verification he notes, seems possible in the Concept of the Zeitgeist. We will remember that in "Marius, the Epicurean" Pater ironically called Rome the "most religious city". London too, was the "most religious city" as, riddled with doubt, the inhabitants of Victorian England grasped any new ideas which seemed to offer security, including "sub-Christian heresies like spiritualism and theosophy."

Indeed, Humphrey House, discussing Matthew Arnold's poem, "Dover Beach", comments -

> the more I read of the early and mid-Victorians, the more I see anxiety and worry as a leading clue to understanding. They were not complacent compromises. They were trying to hold together incompatible opposites and they worried because they failed. They worried about politics and money. They were indeed caught between two worlds.[20]

In literature, writers not only attempted to find a solution for their doubts in the realistic novel, in the way of Mrs. Ward, but also in the satire of Butler and Thackeray. Even poets such as Tennyson, in "Maud" presents the study of a basically weak and insecure personality

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[19] Matthew Arnold: Last Essays on Church and Religion (London, 1877) p. 93.

[20] Humphrey House: "All in Due Course" (Essay Collection) quoted by David Daiches in "Late Victorian Attitudes " 1969" (Deutch)

trying to assert himself, within conflicting pressures. In "The Palace of Art", Tennyson illustrates the alternate Victorian reaction to the new changing, insecure, ugly world, the reaction of "escape" into the beauty of art. We see this "escape" in a new lyricism in poetry and in an emphasis on the past, a nostalgia in which even Matthew Arnold indulges in his poetry (which he eventually abandoned, turning to criticism).

Arnold writes in an essay on "Pagan and Religious Sentiment" -

> It is natural that man should take pleasure in his senses. It is natural also, that he should take refuge in his heart and imagination from his misery. When one thinks what human life is for the vast majority of mankind, how little of a feast for their senses it can possibly be, one understands the charm for them of a refuge offered in the heart and imagination. Above all, when one thinks what human life was in the Middle Ages, one understands the charm of such a refuge.[21]

Although Matthew Arnold did not belong to the Pre-Raphaelite Movement, this passage aptly explains the reason for this neo-gothic revival lead by Rossetti, Morris and Burne-Jones, which extended from poetry and painting, to architecture and furniture design, even to fashion. Pater has been on occasion, wrongly linked to the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

There is no evidence that he was associated with the movement in any other way than sympathetic tastes, his use of Morris wall-paper, his enjoyment of Rossetti's poems, his friendship with Saul Solomon and Swinburne which Swinburne seemed to dismiss rather too casually.

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[21] Matthew Arnold: Essays Literary and Critical (Dent), p. 139.

Indeed, Pater's role in the Aesthetic Movement which merged with and succeeded Pre-Raphaelitism was only inadvertent. It was, in fact due to a misinterpretation of Pater's ideas, for he did not subscribe to the "art for art's sake" belief. His dilettante attitude to beauty belied his sincere search for some security in the flux of his world of doubt.

John Morley seemed to understand Pater's true aspirations when, in a letter to Frank Harris he wrote -

> I think it very desirable to call attention to any book like Pater's which is likely to quicken public interest in a sort of literature.[22]

Certainly the affectations of the aesthetic movement and the exciting encounter between Whistler and Ruskin (1877) brandishing "art for art's sake" and "imitative art" beliefs respectively, focussed attention on what

> was the mood of a minority, and of a minority perhaps that was concerned more about its own mood than about the meaning of life and art.[23]

Indeed, it was perhaps because of this superficiality that the movement resulted in "a few untidy lives."[24]

Morley, aware of this superficiality, remarked,

> Bric-a-brac rises to the level of religion - the right in table and the correct in legs of chairs.[25]

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[22]John Morley: Early Life and Letters (McMillan) ed. Hirst, p. 240.

[23]Holbrook Jackson (Jonathan Cape) - The 1890's.

[24]T.S. Eliot: Arnold and Pater, p. 246.

[25]Morley: Fortnightly Review, Vol. XIX, p. 475.

He was also aware that this "Aestheticism" was

> One more wave of the great current of reactionary forces which the Oxford Movement first realized ...

although less powerful because of the exclusivity of its appeal to "persons of some culture", it was, in the same way a

> protest against the mechanical and graceless formalism of the modern era.[26]

Indeed even the fantasies of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll[27] are associated with the aesthetic movement as a reaction against this "graceless formalism".

Pater was not interested in evading the issue. As tortuous as his approach sometimes is, he wished to find in or through art a system which would replace all those lost moral values, those shattered religious ideals. His aspirations, are, in fact, related to Ruskin's attempt to preach morality through art and to Matthew Arnold's belief in literature as a "criticism of life". Literature is a "criticism of life" for Pater, too, only he is more specific and less dogmatic about it than Matthew Arnold.

Buckly points out that

> the moral aesthetic was by no means a Victorian invention; it rested on the major premise of almost every classical aesthetic theory. Yet it bore special relevance to Victorian needs. Confronted with the unprecedented development of Nineteenth Century culture, an emerging middle class with the meagerest intellectual traditions behind it, it strove desparately to achieve standards of judgement.[28]

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[26] Morley: Fortnightly Review Vol XIX, p.476.

[27] See "The Darwinian Revolution and Literary Form" by A. Dwight Culler in "The Art of Victorian Prose" ed. by Levine and Madden, p.239 ff.

[28] Budkley: "Victorianism" in Victorian Literature, ed. by Austan Wright, p.11.

> This was often very difficult in view of the restrictions imposed upon art by our dominating damnable bourgeoisie.[29]

We have already mentioned the effect on Pater of the "climate of opinion" promulgated by literary periodicals, particularly "The Quarterly" which stated in 1870 -

> We must reject the analytical spirit of Wordsworth and revive the conservative spirit of Gray,[30]

and "The Edinburgh Review", whose editor, Jeffrey condemned Wordsworth for not having written more "urban poetry".

It was "The Quarterly" which expressed its indignation that the sentiments of "The Renaissance" were

> not merely indulged but justified by a considerable section of polite society,[31]

and which remarked that "The Renaissance" throws "new and attractive cobwebs and doubts on religion."[32]

"Blackwoods", in 1873, considered "The Renaissance", a "pretentious volume" and continued -

"Though there are bits of very pretty writing in it and here and there a saying which is worth quoting", it is "full of windy susperation and forced breath."

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[29] Meredith: Letters Vol. I, p. 189. (Concerning Michael Rossetti's condemnation of contemporary criticisms of Swinburne's poems.

[30] Quarterly: Vol. 114, 1870, p. 136.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Quarterly: Vol. 114, 1870, p. 133.

The reviewer states that Pater considers everything in relation to "that me who is the centre of the dilettante world."[33]

Pater was no Matthew Arnold who could ride rough-shod over society labelling some as "Barbarians" and others as "Philistines". It was no wonder that he withdrew both the Conclusion from "The Renaissance" fearing that "it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall",[34] and the essay on "Aesthetic Poetry" from the second edition of "Appreciations".

The gross misunderstanding of Pater's aspirations by writers such as these (who were most influential) even extended to men in academic circles such as John Wordsworth, who wrote to Pater in 1873 -

> No-one can admire more than I do the beauty of style and the felicity of thought by which it [the Renaissance] is distinguished, but I must add that no one can be more grieved than I am at the conclusions at which you represent yourself, as having arrived... that ... no fixed principle 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... Could you indeed have known the dangers into which you were likely to lead minds weaker than your own, you would, I believe, have paused. Could you have known the grief your words would be to many of your Oxford contemporaries you might even have found no ignoble pleasure in refraining from uttering them.[35]

Later in the letter, he asks Pater to relinquish his share in the Divinity Examination collection.

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[33] Blackwoods 1873, p. 600.

[34] Pater: The Renaissance, p. 233.

[35] John Wordsworth to Pater, 17th March 1873, in Letters of Walter Pater ed. by Lawrence Evans, p. 13-14.

It was no wonder that Pater had a fear of

> those averted or saddened faces grown suddenly strange to us refusing their recognition of us in what was not their way.

Another man would possibly have made his standpoint clear immediately, rather than explaining it later in "Marius the Epicurean". The only immediate evidence of Pater's true attitude is his letter to Morley, who, we remember, had defended him in "The Fortnightly" as having

> no designs of interfering with the minor or major morals of the world but only of dealing with what we may perhaps call the accenting portion of life.[36]

In April, 1873, Pater wrote to Morley thanking him

> for your explanation of my ethical point of view, to which I fancy some readers have given a prominence I did not mean it to have.[37]

Unfortunately this misinterpretation of Pater's ideas and aspirations lingers on today, in the work of many critics and the estimates of most books on criticism and literary history.

Pater's life was, in fact, that of a scholar, lacking the squalor and excitement in the lives of those, who to his embarrassment called themselves his disciples. His father died while he was an infant, his mother, while he was at boarding-school, and his two sisters completed their education at Heidelberg, Germany. After taking a

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[36] Morley: Fortnightly Review, Vol. XIX, p. 475.

[37] Early Life and Letters of John Morley (1900), I p. 240.

second class in schools and tutoring privately for a year or two, he was elected in 1864 a Fellow of Brasenose. Except for a few holidays abroad and university vacations spent at his London house at Earl's Terrace, Kensington, it was in Oxford that Pater remained for the rest of his life, either in his rooms at Brasenose, or the house at Bradmore Road, kept for him by his sisters.

Sir William Rothenstein, prominent contemporary artist who knew Pater and had occasion to sketch him, wrote the following description -

> Mr. Pater's appearance was unexpected; neatly dressed; slightly stooping shoulders; a thick moustache about rather heavy lips, grey eyes, a shade too close together, a little restless, even evasive under dark eyebrows.[38]

Surprise at Pater's unexpected appearance was also voiced by Mas Beerbohm who mentions how, in a print-shop in Oxford he had seen

> peering into a portfolio, a small, thick, rock-faced man, whose top hat and gloves of bright dog-skin struck one of the many discords in that little city of learning and laughter. The serried bristles of his moustachio made for him a false military air. I think I nearly went down when they told me this was Pater.[39]

Pater, with his strong awareness of beauty, must have been most conscious of his own appearance. Perhaps this was the reason

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[38] Sir William Rothenstein: Men and Memoirs 1870 (London, Faber & Faber), p.138.

[39] Max Beerbohm: Works (London 1896), p.124.

for his awkward social manner described by Gosse (who had known Pater from 1872) as

> stationary rather than recluse, not shrinking from his fellows, but unwilling to meet them.[40]

In another account Gosse explains that Paterr retired in face of "anything too vivacious" and

> the most obvious form of social retirement is what we call affectation, a sort of solemn effeminacy.[41]

His extreme shyness and self-consciousness manifested itself in this unwillingness to communicate and his painful cautious manner of expressing himself. Rothenstein remarks on

> Pater's habit of assuming ignorance on subjects about which he was perfectly informed[42]

and continues

> he was guarded in his talk, careful of expressing his own opinions and adept at inviting indiscretions from his guests,

while George Moore mentions Pater's conversational manner with

> each sentence carefully poised, many of them containing the words 'no doubt'[43]

Indeed, Walter Pater was a strange complex character, who loved cats, hated foreigners, who was not really fluent in any foreign language and who did not read Kipling or Stevenson, fearing "they

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[40] Sir Edmund Gosse: Walter Pater in Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XLIV (London 1895) p. 15.

[41] Gosse: Critical Kit-Kats (Heinemann, 1896), p. 266.

[42] Sir William Rothenstein: Man and Memoirs, p. 138.

[43] George Moore: Avowals (London, 1919), p. 180.

should come between me and my page."[44] From his letters, it seems that Pater did not read much contemporary prose or poetry although he "roared with laughter" at Pinero's "The Magistrate" which he saw in the company of Gosse.

Just as incongruous with the intellectual, scholarly aesthetic figure reflected in Pater's writing was his habit of entertaining the footballers of his college and ignoring the "precioux".

> Yet his house at Bradmore Road had
>
> Morris paper; spindle-legged tables and chairs; a sparing allowance of blue plates and pots, a framed embroidery by one of his sisters and an engraving of Botticelli,[45]

while in his room at Brasenose College there was a tree with little oranges, a bowl of dried rose leaves and a bust of Hercules which

> somewhat out of place in these prim quarters bore witness to an entirely abstract approval of the force its owner did not possess,[46]

an approval possibly implicit in his entertaining of the footballers.

Pater did love beauty, in appearance, in manner and in presentation. In his letters we read of his explicit instructions concerning the binding of one of his books to attain "the artistic appearance which I am sure is necessary for it."[47]

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[44] Gosse: Critical Kit-Kats, p. 258.

[45] Mrs. Ward: A Writer's Recollections (London, 1918), p. 123.

[46] William Gaunt: The Aesthetic Adventure (Penguin), p. 67.

[47] To Alexander MacMillan, 11th November 1872 in Letters of Walter Pater, p. 10.

He was precise in his work, as we have seen, and on one occasion when he was no longer satisfied with one of his books, for which the types had already been set up, voluntarily paid thirty-five pounds to prevent it from being printed.

What he disliked was "ugliness, crudity and violence". Arthur Symonds mentions that Pater

> hated every form of extravagance or noise, mental or physical with a temperamental hatred; he suffered from it in his nerves and in his mind.[48]

For this reason, he expressed disapproval of Rossetti's poem "Jenny", which he told Gosse was too sordid, and refused to review Moore's novel "A Mere Accident" because he felt that the artist should avoid the "crude and violent".[49]

Pater was not all priggishness, and awkwardness. Sometimes he could be quite witty, imitating the accent, of various personalities including Mark Pattison, and Mrs. Humphrey Ward recalls her embarrassment when, at a dinner party, Pater remarked to the wife of a high churchman that no reasonable person could govern his life by the opinions or actions of a man who died eighteen centuries ago.[50]

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[48] Arthur Symonds: A Study of Walter Pater (London Sawyer, 1932), p 6.

[49] To George Moore (1887) paraphrased in "Letters of Walter Pater" ed. by Lawrence Evans, p. 74.

[50] Mrs. Ward: A Writer's Recollection (Collins, 1918), p. 120.

Yet, in a conversation she had with Pater later, he was able to say,

> There are such mysterious things, like that saying 'come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden'. How can you explain that? There is a mystery in it - something supernatural.[51]

In a letter to the same writer in 1885 Pater states -

> To my mind, the beliefs and the function in the world, of the historic Church, form just one of those obscure but all-important possibilities, which the human mind is powerless effectively to dismiss from itself; the supposed facts on which Christianity rests, utterly incapable as they have become of any ordinary test, seem to me matters of very much the same sort of assent we give to any assumption, in the strict and ultimate sense, moral. The question whether those facts were real, will, I think always continue to be what I should call one of the natural questions of the human mind.[52]

Pater here certainly reveals his true confusion, his inability to reject Christianity or to come to any conclusion concerning religion irrespective of any philosophical ratiocination of suspense of judgement.

In Pater's letters we find evidence of his extreme sensitivity in his grateful acknowledgement of good reviews. The review of "Marius" in the "Academy" elicited a warm letter of appreciation to John Miller Gray,[53] the reviewer (March, 1885), while Pater's relief that Lionel Johnson had not embarrassed him by overpraising "Aesthetic Poetry" is evident in his note of acknowledgement. (February 1890).[54]

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[51] Mrs. Ward: A Writer's Recollection, p. 122.

[52] Mrs. Ward: A Writer's Recollection, p. 210.

[53] To John Miller Gray, 24th March 1885, in Letters of Walter Pater, ed. by Evans, p. 59.

[54] To Lionel Johnson (20th February 1890) in Letters of Walter Pater, p. 108.

Certainly Pater seems to have been sympathetic to many young writers; for among his letters we find many notes of encouragement displaying a genuine interest to writers such as Symons, William Sharp, Miss Paget, (Vernon Lee) Lionel Johnson and Oscar Wilde.

There was, however, always a feeling of reserve. We have various comments from George Moore and from Mr. Ward that

> even men like myself to whom Pater was personally very kind, found intimacy with him very difficult. He could be tremendously interesting in talk; his phrases, his point of view were original and always stimulating; but you never felt that he was quite at one with you in habits, feelings, preferences.[55]

Moore ascribes this lack of warmth to Pater's desire

> to present to the world, even to his friends a carefully prepared aspect - a mask.[56]

While Arthur Symons also speaks of Pater's

> whole outer mask, worn for protection and yet of courtesy.[57]

Is this "mask" not reminiscent of Pater's "formula" of Prosper Mérimée,

> the enthusiastic amateur of nude, crude, naked force in man and woman ... himself carrying ever as a mask, the conventional attire of the modern world?[58]

In his review of Amiel's Journal Intime Pater had stated:

> But if ... we look below the surface of a very equable and even smoothly accomplished literary manner, we discover, in high degree of development, that perplexity or complexity of soul ..[59]

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[55] quoted by Benson in "Walter Pater", p.26.

[56] Moore: Avowals, p.188.

[57] Arthur Symons: Story of Walter Pater, p.6.

[58] Pater: Miscellaneous Studies, p.14.

[59] Pater: Essays from The Guardian, p.22.

It would seem that Pater himself had a soul riddled with "perplexity" and "complexity." As Bertram Newman stated -

> There is much in Pater himself to suggest a nature divided against itself as well as out of harmony with its surroundings.[60]

In an age such as the Victorian Age, it is not difficult to understand why Pater, already so insecure by nature, so misunderstood because of the Conclusion to "The Renaissance" should have been "not at all amused but much pained" by the rumour that he had been party to Oscar Browning's loan of Gautiers "Mademoiselle de Maupin" to an Eton boy. He writes to Browning:

> Please give an unqualified dental to the statement that I approved anything of the kind.[61]

Oscar Browning, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge and historian was a friend of Pater's for more than ten years, and at one stage both men were also intimate with Saul Solomon. All three friends

> said and did things that called into question ... moral respectability.[62]

Indeed, an entry in Mark Pattison's diary (5th May 1878) implies strongly that Walter Pater had homosexual tendencies -

> To Pater's to tea, where Oscar Browning, who was more like Socrates than ever. He conversed in one corner with 4 feminine looking youths (paw dandling) there in one fivesome ,? while the Miss Paters and I sat looking on in another corner - Presently Walter Pater, who, I had been told, was (upstairs), appeared, attended by 2 more youths of similar appearance.[63]

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[60] Bertram Newman: Walter Pater. A Revaluation, the Nineteenth Century and after, Vol. III, May 1932, p.630.

[61] To Oscar Browning 1875, the Letters of Walter Pater, p.16.

[62] Lawrence Evans: Matters of Walter Pater, p.XXXIII - IV.

[63] Ibid.

It was no wonder that Pater expressed such admiration of the Greek youths of the Panathenaic Frieze, of Winckelmann himself, of the beautiful strange young men in the "Imaginary Portraits." Oscar Wilde had been crucified by the Victorian Age. Pater certainly would not have been able to endure the "averted faces", so he occasionally indulged in erotic fantasies and once revealed a joyful physical awakening in "An English Poet".

In such an age as his, Pater could not possibly live the life he most desired, and perhaps underlying his tortuousness, his lack of spontaneity, his obsessive concern with death, and his peculiar morbidity, at times, was the fact that he was not living a free, unfrustrated life.

In Marius, he deplores his own deficiency of love, while in "An English Poet" he writes -

> If your words regarding it are to be fragrant ... you must have been for a time in slavish possession of the flower.[64]

If the writer is to represent life in a satisfying artistic manner, he must have had a full, satisfying experience thereof.

In 1894, an anonymous acquaintance published an obituary in the "Bookman", in which he describes a conversation with Pater shortly before his death. Pater gave him some sage advice -

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[64] Pater: An English Poet, p. 446.

> 'You should learn,' went on Walter Pater playing nervously with the cigarette box ... 'in the men and women of your own immediate surroundings; their very dress, should be to you the thing that really absorbs your interest. Learn to live in and with your entourage, so that it may become to you vivid and real. To be alive to every influence around you is better far than the example of anyone in the past, however great'.[65]

In "The Renaissance" Pater had also demanded the artist's awareness of life, but only of the most vital experiences which must then be sublimated in art. At the end of his life, Pater demands, perhaps regrets that he, the artist and critic, had not experienced life more fully; for it is by living that the artist and critic can understand, discriminate, evaluate and truly reconcile himself with life. - forgetting his nostalgia, his terror of death lurking behind every wasted moment.

Contemporary critics and personalities as we have seen were not always favourably disposed to Pater. Not only the contemporary reviews and satires such as that of Mallock in "The New Republic" but men such as John Wordsworth and eventually Jowett misunderstood and disapproved of Pater.

On the other hand, Arthur Symons stated that "The Renaissance"

> opened a new world to me, or rather gave me the key or secret of the world in which I was living ... from that book I realized for the first time that there was anything interesting, or vital in the world besides poetry and music.[66]

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[65] The Bookman, Vol. 6, 1894. p.175.

[66] Arthur Symons: A Study of Walter Pater.

Gardner, in his study of Hopkins comments,

> We have also to reckon with the undoubted but not clearly defined impact of Walter Pater upon a pupil as avid of aesthetic doctrine as Hopkins.[67]

Oscar Wilde talks of the "strange influence" exercised over his life by Pater's "The Renaissance",[68] while George Moore in 'Avowals' states:

> the English language is still alive, Pater has raised it from the dead.

Finally, we have the acknowledgement of Pater's influence by Yeats who had considered the Mona Lisa passage to be "of revolutionary importance"[69] when he set it in "free verse" in the 'Oxford Book of English Verse'. In his Autobiography, Yeats affirms his debt to Pater and states of himself and his contemporaries "we looked consciously to Pater for our philosophy."[70] He adds concerning "Marius the Epicurean", however,

> I begin to wonder if it, or the attitude of mind of which it was the noblest expression, had not caused the disaster of my friends.[71]

Pater certainly has had a chequered reputation!

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[67] Gardner: Gerard Morley Hopkins, p.5.

[68] Oscar Wilde: De Profundis, in Works, p.862.

[69] Yeats: Introduction to The Oxford Book of Modern Verse, p.VIII.

[70] Yeats: Autobiography (MacMillan, 1926), p.395.

[71] Yeats: Autobiography, p.372.

We have considered Pater's milieu, his personality as seen by his friends and their regard for his reputation.

What estimate are we to make of Pater's achievement, his influence and significance in the English critical and literary tradition?

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CHAPTER X

A FINAL ESTIMATE

When T.S. Eliot stated concerning "The Renaissance",

> I do not believe that Pater, in this book has influenced a single first rate mind of a later generation,[1]

he was wrong, bigotted and dogmatic, the very opposite of what Pater himself would have been. Yet Eliot, in the basic premise of his essay, "Arnold and Pater" approached perhaps closer than most critics to the fundamental significance of Pater's ideas.

Pater was indeed a man of his age. His search for some ideal, for some significance in life was partly precipitated by the insecurity of an age shocked by the collapse of its moral and religious framework. His love of beauty was partly a reaction to the ugliness of an age trying to cope with a flood of new techniques, material abundance and changing social and cultural standards.

It was a complex age, and Pater was a complex person, sensitive and above all, sincere. Misunderstood by some of his blinkered contemporaries, buffetted by their criticisms and ridicule, Pater became a man "avowedly afraid of almost everything",[2] a man who was probably terrified to follow his natural inclinations because in

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[1] T.S. Eliot: Arnold and Pater, p. 246.

[2] Vernon Lee - quoted by Lawrence Evans, in "Letters of Walter Pater", p. XXVI.

the Victorian Age those faces already "averted" through misunderstanding could grow as vicious and cruel as when they martyred Oscar Wilde.

Thrown back upon himself, he probably was only too well aware of that "thick wall" of subjectivity isolating the individual from the world, and Pater tried very hard to convey to his readers the dream of the world which his mind was "keeping as a solitary prisoner."

Intensified by this isolation was a fear of death, which, as we have seen, precipitates the urgency of Pater's love of beauty, of his desperate clinging to the concrete, of his search for meaning in life.

Pater through his art attempted the impossible, to find life, not only the essential vitality of life which perforce eluded him intensifying his morbid consciousness of continually approaching death, but also the answer to the searing questions of the day immediate to himself and to his contemporaries!

He was not the flamboyant, dogmatic critic who, hurling condemnations at Philistines and Barbarians offered them culture in place of religion and religion as a criticism of life. Yet, to Pater, literature was as much a criticism of life as the critical art, itself. It was through literature and his critical art which, in fact, are inseparable, that he strenuously, laboriously attempted throughout his career to define, to evaluate, to discriminate for himself and for

his contemporaries the significance of life, the relationship of art and life. Pater, whether he was writing "Marius, the Epicurean", "The Renaissance", "The Greek Studies", "Sebastian van Storck", the essay on "Botticelli" or "Wordsworth", was above all, always the critic.

We have traced the development of Pater's aesthetic ideas. We have seen how theoretically he attempted to realise "truth" in life through the experience of beauty, how his was at first an empirical philosophy rejecting abstraction, hoping to grasp beauty in an "aesthetic moment" which would sublimate life and crystallize it into an enduring artistic form.

Pater attempted to intensify this "moment" further by reducing the distinction between form and matter, by aspiring to the state of music, a state of aesthetic purity "unobscured by adventitious literary meanings"[3]. He had already in the "Mona Lisa" endeavoured to perpetuate the "aesthetic moment" in a symbol, the culmination of the experience of humanity in artistic form.

Harold Osborne, the prominent aesthetician has said -

> A work of art is not a material thing but an enduring possibility, often embodied or recorded in a material medium of a specific set of sensory impressions which is characterized by what we call beauty.[4]

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[3]Susan Langer: Philosophy in a New Key (Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 261.

[4]Harold Osborne: Theory of Beauty (Routledge and Kagan Paul), p2202.

Certainly the set of sensory impressions, the beauty of art attained the significance of "onduring possibility", but this still remained art, not life, and as such, could not prove satisfactory to Pater; for already in "The Renaissance" we see implicit Pater's interest in humanity.

After the publication of "The Renaissance" Pater, it seems, withdrew even more and embarked on a period of intensive experiment, the critic desperately attempting to find an ideal artistic form, an ideal intellectual formula, a security in the contemporary turmoil of doubt and unhappiness. In the essays on "Wordsworth" and "Measure for Measure" we noted the emerging interest in humanity and the moral and ethical issues of life, while in Pater's unpublished Harvard Manuscripts we saw the formulation of a definitive solution in the fusion of the Hegelian Zeitgeist and a literary spirit prevailing over a society where the standards of conduct were so high that its members were most anxious to aspire to them, even though there were no moral sanctions.

In "An English Poet", one of Pater's other unpublished works of this period, we saw Pater emerging from his isolation, a new Pater, aware of the importance of physical participation in life rather than passive receptiveness in order to create significant art, a Pater reaching out to life and very sure of his devotion to literature, a devotion coupled with a critical awareness continually evaluating and regulating his sincere aspirations to reproduce his inner vision in words. This vision

of a dream Pater dared not, one imagines, confess to his contemporaries. Thus it was through "Marius, the Epicurean" that Pater presented to the world the official account of his aspirations in life.

In "Marius, the Epicurean" although there is no trace of the physical awareness evident in "An English Poet", there is evidence of Pater's realisation that through his mode of life, maybe even because of his innate temperament he could not possibly understand or appreciate real human love.

Pater's search is like Newman's, like W.G. Ward's, like Matthew Arnold's, a search for some tangible reality in the world of doubt and disillusion. The ideal of an emotional, cultural, aesthetic Christianity was tempting, particularly in view of Pater's life-long enjoyment of ritual and in view of the fact that he had not definitely rejected his Anglican religion. But in the absence of faith, he could not wholly accept Christianity.

In "Marius, the Epicurean", as in "An English Poet", we saw Pater's obsessive preoccupation with literature and literary form, his search for exactness in words to approximate the idea of life in literature, the examination and evaluation of the past literary tradition in order to find an ideal standard.

In his "Imaginary Portraits" Pater did not cease the continual probing and searching of the critic, for it was in these works that he revealed to himself and to his readers the tragic consequences of the situation where the man, in spite of his talent is unable to adapt to

his age, a danger of which Pater was probably constantly aware. The critic is also present in the "Greek Studies" testifying to Pater's continual evaluation of the role of the past in contemporary culture.

Pater formulated what I have called the "Paterian Compromise" in Gaston de Latour, and more significantly in the essay on "Style" and "Plato and Platonism". This was no new discovery of Pater's but a philosophical ratiocination in terms of the Platonic Dialectic and Hegelianism of what was indeed Pater's inherent intellectual and emotional temperament manifested in all his work.

This "suspension of judgement" has been much criticized, and can certainly be most irritating, but it represents an attitude which is valuable and most significant not only for the critic but for every thinking man. It is an attitude which admits breadth of vision and denies intolerance and dogmatism.

Pater's aim, he states is not to arrive at any definite conclusion which might be proved invalid, but to cultivate within the reader's mind "a temper". Indeed, if we applied this tenet to religion, the "temper" of Christianity with which Marius was imbued was surely more valuable than any abstract doctrines, for the "temper" of an awareness of beauty, even if in religious ritual, or of an awareness of moral and ethical issues, cultivates a sensitivity and a responsiveness which is significant in itself.

It is probably in his criticism that this Paterian attitude of mind has been most prominent. Pater has been "labelled" the "impressionist" critic/a term which today has acquired slightly disparaging implications. But Pater's "impressionism" is conscious. He, more than any other critic is aware of his own limitations, of his own subjectivity. Thus he is hesitant to make judgements and only permits himself to express deceptively vague wishes, leanings "and preferences",[5] which are very often extremely persuasive.

We will remember that in the Preface to the Renaissance, Pater attached special significance to the period because

> Here artists and philosophers and those whom the action of the world has elevated and made keen, do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts.[6]

The "grave dignity and influence" of Fifteenth Century art is due to

"this participation in the best thought which that age produced",[7]

an age important also for

"the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type."[8]

Here, surely is the same emphasis that we find in "Style", the importance of ethical and human considerations in a great art

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[5] Graham Hough: The Last Romantics, p.161.

[6] Pater: The Renaissance, p.XIV.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Pater: The Renaissance, p.XIV.

which can find its

> logical, its architectural place in the great structure of human life.[9]

In "Plato and Platonism" Pater implies the moral influence of beauty in life even more directly when he stresses

> the possible moral effect of the beautiful ancient buildings, of some of our own schools ... on the building of character in any way through the eye and eye.[10]

Both Pater and Matthew Arnold are interested in the moral aspect of art, in "literature as a criticism of life",[11] in criticism as a

> disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.[12]

Pater does not pretend to be "disinterested" and he is neither dogmatic nor bombastic.

When we consider his "official" critical works, the essays in "The Renaissance" the literary criticism in "Appreciations" and "Miscellaneous Studies", we realise that although Pater's work is uneven he has made a significant contribution to the English critical tradition, for Pater is strictly speaking, neither an art critic nor a literary critic, but a cultural critic, or rather, a cultural "evaluator".

In "The Renaissance" his main aim is to evoke in the reader a responsiveness to beauty, enhanced by an understanding of the particular cultural background of the painter. Pater, however vague

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[9] Pater: Appreciations, p. 38.

[10] Walter Pater: Plato and Platonism, p. 209.

[11] Matthew Arnold: Essays, Literary and Critical, 2nd series, p. 5.

[12] Matthew Arnold: Essays, Literary and Critical, p. 23.

he may often seem to be, has defined specific aesthetic criteria by which works of beauty may be evaluated but not judged. His attitude of mind is generally tolerant and unprejudiced. What he dislikes he normally omits, (except in the case of "Prosper Mérimée") and he is even prepared to appreciate a temperament and style as alien from his as that of "Sir Thomas Browne", in spite of his obvious preference for writers like Lamb with whom he had more sympathy.

We will remember Oscar Wilde's eulogy on "Mona Lisa" and his statement that the work of art in such criticism becomes a starting point for a new creation. Not only, as Wellek points out, did Pater not produce much work of this kind, but we must also regard the "Mona Lisa" within the framework of Pater's aesthetic and critical search for a perpetual artistic symbol, an "enduring possibility."

Pater's art criticism was part of a trend in the Nineteenth Century. So was his historicism. Of its type, his work shows an insight, a sensitivity and a sincerity which often raises it above other contemporary works.

Berenson followed in Pater's footsteps with a more thorough knowledge of art. But he has not omitted the "feeling for the atmosphere", the gentle persuasion of the reader's "temper" enhancing his perceptiveness and his awareness of what is beauty and how this beauty fits into the cultural tradition of the past.

In his literary criticism we have already noted the remarkable modernity of Pater's approach on occasions. In "Measure for Measure", he anticipated the approach of Tillyard, in "Shakespeare's King" that of Wilson Knight, while in "Love's Labour's Lost" because of his cultural insight he was able to indicate as much of the play's significance as any modern critic.

We cannot deny that there are moments of mediocrity - Feuillet's, La Morte", for instance, or that Pater occasionally, as in the essay on "Coleridge" and (far less so) in "Wordsworth" creates either unwittingly or deliberately, a rather more "delicate" and muted atmosphere than is appropriate.

Yet, it is in evoking a "general temper" that Pater particularly excelled. The silvery delicacy of Seventeenth Century France in "Du Bellay", the strange violent undercurrents of Merimee, the mysticism of Wordsworth all remain in the memory far longer than anything Pater said.

His particularly balanced attitude is often overlooked. What better reasoned account of classicism and romanticism could be found than that of Pater's Postscript to "Appreciations", of the relationship of poetry and prose than in the essay on "Style"?

Indeed, it is Pater's style which is both his triumph and his downfall. Pater's style is indeed Pater, the man, - complex, indirect, laboured, strained, sometimes paralysed with the effort of conveying

the precise innuendos of Pater's inmost thoughts. Yet it is sometimes so effective that we can almost pulse those doubts, those hesitations, those glimpses and echoes which are rendered with such sincerity.

Pater's prose style is the incarnation of his critical attitude, of his whole outlook on life, for in itself it incorporates the pauses of "suspension of judgement", the tentative shifts of the delicate equilibrium of precise and tolerant evaluation.

It is a style which consequently mirrors the two main conflicts in Pater's aesthetic and critical thought and in his attitude to life, the conflict between the abstract and the concrete and that of subjectivity versus impersonality in art.

The former remained unresolved, the latter, unsatisfactorily resolved, waiting for Yeats to grapple with it. We have noticed Pater's determination to hold onto the concrete while always aspiring towards the abstract as almost symptomatic of his clinging to life, however, incomplete it may be, fearing desperately, yet fascinated by the ubiquitous power of death. In his own style he could never merge images into form because he would not yield the images. His accent on the value of the word was never resolved in practice into the general concept of style, nor was his predilection with ritual resolved into a concept of religion. For Pater grasped both image

and form, word and concept, ritual and religion unable to reject, unwilling to decide.

He did resolve the conflict of subjectivity versus objectivity both in "The Renaissance" and in "Style". In "The Renaissance" the artist who sublimated his subjective impression of life in the "aesthetic moment" yielded his identity, his subjectivity in the aesthetic ecstasy; in "Style", the artist merged his inner vision, his individuality into style, which by virtue of its ideality nullified his subjectivity.

Pater's language, however, continued to be a strained attempt to project as completely as he could, his personal vision onto the reader in as muted an undertone as possible (by which he possibly hoped to "depersonalize" his style). The undertone has, in fact, become recognised as a specifically Paterian characteristic. His style, for all the abuse it has suffered seems now to be recognised as significant in the English literary tradition. Levine and Madden, introducing "The Art of Victorian Prose", comment,

> Full consciousness of the flights and circumgyrations of which prose was capable ... only arrived with Pater,[13]

while G. Robert Stange examining art criticism finds the prose of Ruskin and Pater to be

> a trying art of new possibilities for the prose that was to come. Certainly their work helped to make possible the intensity, the insights, the new sensibility which had its fullest development

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[13]Levine and Madden, introd. to "The Art of Victorian Prose", p.XI.

> in writing that was seemingly unrelated to art criticism - in those complex forms of prose fiction later evolved by Joyce, Proust and Virginia Woolf.[14]

The importance of prose in the modern world was perhaps the only subject that roused Pater to some sort of enthusiasm. We remember his advice to young poets including Symons and Oscar Wilde to abandon poetry -

> You know I give a high place to the literature of prose as a fine art.[15]

Aware of the, as yet, unexplored capabilities of this flexible medium, he anticipates not only the style of Joyce, Proust and Woolf but the introversion that is characteristic of the Twentieth Century.

Pater's introversion, however, is directed and regulated by his critical consciousness, always weighing, always discriminating, always searching for the ideal in art, in literary expression, in criticism and in life.

Language was his scale and measure, his expression, his communication, the instrument with which he could apply his evaluative criticism of life.

It is Pater's high regard for the capacities of language and his breadth of critical attitude that differentiate him from Matthew Arnold.

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[14] G. Robert Stange: Art Criticism as a Prose Genre, in Levine and Madden, p.51-2.

[15] Letter to Arthur Symons, 8th January 1888, in "Letters of Walter Pater, p.80.

Both men were searching for some ideal, both hoped to strengthen contemporary moral and aesthetic values through culture, literature and criticism. But whereas Arnold judged and condemned, Pater, equally conscious of himself and his own weaknesses, continually attempted to approximate and convey to his reader his inmost thoughts and ideas in language, man's moral instrument and man's most cherished gift which must not be abused.

Eliot, as we have seen, recognized Pater and Arnold's affinity in the Victorian Age and condemned them because in his scheme of things it was inconceivable that anything could replace the Church. Yet, as Fraser points out, Eliot has not been unaffected by Pater's attitude to literary art in modern times as "a heroic and perhaps desperate struggle with language."[16]

Pater, has to this day, been misinterpreted and misunderstood. His critical approach, his attitude of mind in literature and life have not been sufficiently recognized and appraised, nor have his critical achievements. But his influence in the English literary tradition has been acknowledged in the work of Moore, Symons, Hopkins, Wilde, Yeats, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and even Eliot himself.

In "Gaston de Latour", Pater, quoting Montaigne, writes -

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[16] Fraser: Walter Pater " His Theory of Style, His Style in Practice, His Influence" in Levine and Madden, p. 222.

> Words too, language itself and therewith the more intimate physiognomy of thought, 'slip everyday through our fingers'.[17]

Eliot in the "Four Quartets' writes,

> Words move; music moves
> Only in time; but that which is only living
> Can only die ...
>
> Only by the form, the pattern
> Can words or music reach
> The stillness ...
> Words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish ...[18]

It is a pity that Eliot did not have the insight, tolerance or perceptiveness of Walter Pater; for then he would have recognized Pater's dilemma, that of the man unable to resort to faith, clinging desperately to words and language as his only security in the flux, and battling to utilize these precious commodities exactly and beautifully in order to convey to others his tentative evaluations - so that they too, having cultivated an awareness of life, morality and art should be able to appreciate and understand something of beauty, truth and human value.

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