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**Studies in Walter Pater and Aestheticism**

**Issue 1 Spring 2016**

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EDITOR’S NOTE

Welcome to the very first issue of Studies in Walter Pater and Aestheticism, a journal which replaces the Pater Newsletter and expands the scope of the publication to include essays and reviews on matters beyond the life and work of Walter Horatio Pater. The current scholarly interest in Aestheticism generates a range of very exciting new research that needs new venues to contextualize Pater’s writings and influence more broadly in the fin de siècle. Studies in Walter Pater and Aestheticism aims to be such a venue, retaining Pater as a central figure but inviting contributions on so many other issues of the period: the visual arts, cosmopolitanism, animal studies, gender studies, reception studies, etc. Since its first publication in 1977, the Pater Newsletter has had a steady life of some thirty-eight years, gradually outgrowing the format of the newsletter. In our choice of the word ‘Studies’ for the title of the new journal we are partly, ambitiously, aligning ourselves with other serious academic periodicals like Studies in Romanticism, while hopefully also retaining a certain element of Paterian playfulness. Studies can be serious, speculative, tentative, but first of all driven by a genuine interest and curiosity, and they may well—as in Pater’s own first use of the term in Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873)—challenge existing notions of disciplines and periodization. ‘Study’ suggests both surface and depth; in artistic terms it may be synonymous with ‘sketch’, a preliminary stage of a larger finished work, but it may, of course, also be a focussed, in-depth piece displaying all existing evidence on a single complex subject.

In this our first issue, panthers, dogs, and cats people Dennis Denissoff’s essay on Simeon Solomon, Ouida, and Saki, taking us straight into the rapidly expanding field of animal studies, which is currently challenging Aestheticism and providing provocative counterparts to languid aesthetes and fleshly femmes fatales. Disturbing late-nineteenth-century transplants of simian body parts onto humans invite us into the post-Darwinian universe while raising issues of vivisection and interrelationships between humans and animals. Richard Porteous’s essay continues a certain interest in animals, this time insects, as it cleverly unpicks Pater’s use of the term ‘swarm’ in the 1873 text of the ‘Conclusion’ (‘Experience, already reduced
to a swarm of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us'). He contextualizes it within German aesthetic thought, tracing ‘swarm’ to the German Schwärmerei and leaving us all much wiser about Pater’s search for le mot juste. The essays by Laurel Brake and Joe Bristow deal with Pater’s afterlife in the context of Lytton Strachey’s Eminent Victorians (1918) and T.S. Eliot’s complicated, ongoing dialogue with Pater in the decades after the First World War. Where Brake deals with Thomas Wright’s life of Pater (1907) within the climate of early Modernism, Bristow discusses a centenary article on Pater in the Times Literary Supplement of 1939 and re-explores T.S. Eliot’s provocative statement that The Renaissance should be held responsible for the ‘confusion between life and art which is not wholly irresponsible for some untidy lives’ (‘The Place of Pater’ (1930))—which has, rightly, caused much critical controversy since it was first published. In the archival section Lesley Higgins discusses yet another unpublished letter by Pater to one of the leading figures of Aestheticism with a great influence on Pater’s afterlife: Arthur Symons. She successfully conducts the challenging detective work of dating Pater’s brief note, which in itself leaves very few clues for the editor to go by. In the review section John Stokes alerts our attention to two recently-published volumes on decadence: Kostas Boyiopoulos, The Decadent Image: The Poetry of Wilde, Symons and Dowson (2015) and the edited volume The Decadent Short Story: An Annotated Anthology (2015). I explore Victorian dust traps and the cleansing of the Old Masters in the National Gallery in my review of Eileen Cleere’s The Sanitary Arts: Aesthetic Culture and the Victorian Cleanliness Campaigns (2014), and Andrew Eastham reviews Michalle Gal’s Aesthetics: Deep Formalism and the Emergence of Modernist Aesthetics (2015). And finally, the Annotations section keeps us abreast with other recent publications in the field of Aestheticism and Pater studies.

The International Walter Pater Society has experienced a reshuffle in connection with the launch of the new journal: Dennis Denisoff (Ryerson University, Toronto), Stefano Evangelista (Oxford University) and Charlotte Ribeyrol (Sorbonne University, Paris) now constitute the executive committee of the IWPS, and we much look forward to the new energy and new initiatives they will bring to the society. I am, as always, extremely grateful for the support of the
editorial team: Lesley Higgins, my Deputy Editor, Catherine Maxwell, the Book Review editor, and Ken Daley, in charge of the Annotations section. The journal is a truly collaborative product, and without our mutual efforts there would be no issue. Sylvia Vance, our production manager, has designed the new logo for *Studies in Walter Pater and Aestheticism* and typeset the whole issue beautifully, and Thomas Grane in the English Department of the University of Copenhagen has helped design and maintain our new website: www.swpa.info. If you have not already visited it, might I suggest you do so, and that you help us keep the journal afloat by renewing your subscription or by using the donation buttons available on the site. Academic periodicals are an endangered species, and we need all the support we can possibly get to develop *Studies in Walter Pater and Aestheticism*. It is early days yet, and our acronym, *SWPa*, is in heavy competition with the Sony World Photography Awards, the South West Pony Association, and the Section on Women in Public Administration, but let us hope that the new, expansive scope of the journal will grant it a long life and increasing visibility amongst the many other competing *SWPa*s.
Decadent Animal Sympathies in Simeon Solomon, Ouida, and Saki

The Franco-Russian surgeon Serge Voronoff, a member of the prestigious Collège de France, gained extensive media coverage throughout Europe and North America for grafting monkey testicle tissue onto the scrotum of men who wished to combat the effects of aging. Voronoff had begun xeno-transplantation experiments in the 1880s, including on himself, but his most famous and lucrative work with monkey testicles occurred in the 1920s. Public reaction to this medical veneration of eternal youth ranged from contempt to comic fascination to serious investment. In Britain, anti-vivisectionists protested against Voronoff’s visit to their country and pressured authorities to refuse him permission to carry out experiments. At the same time, however, many of the thousands of men who went to France to have the operation were Britons. Satires of Voronoff’s inter-species surgery often spoke on behalf of the monkeys, usually through a humanisation of their sense of loss. A cartoonist for the magazine Le Rire depicted a sad and bandaged monkey next to a poster advertising Atelier de reparations Voronof: Accessoires et pièces détachés, and the popular French author Pierre Henri Cami wrote Le Désen glandé de la forêt vierge (1920), a comedy in which monkeys that had escaped the Collège de France for the jungle capture an explorer and demand the return of their testicles. Irving Berlin made reference to the doctor’s work in a song for the Marx Brothers’ film Cocoanuts (1929), and a drink containing absinthe, grenadine, gin, and orange juice was given the name ‘the Monkey Gland’.
More recently, a 2010 London restaurant review reports that the ‘monkey gland sauce’ for an over-priced beef filet at the opulent, orientalist Shaka Zulu apparently did not contain any monkey. What the menu item did contain, however, was the implicit acknowledgment of the grafting of Voronoff’s efforts onto the tradition of trans-species experimentation running through the British decadent movement. The range of genres, movements, and media responding to Voronoff’s efforts at synthetic virility reflects a broad cultural interest in the possibilities of complex inter-species syntheses. As the absinthe-laced drink and opulent, excessively priced restaurant suggest, however, there existed a particularly decadent tradition leading up to Voronoff that ran from the early work of Simeon Solomon to later contributions by Ouida (Marie Louise de la Ramée) and Saki (H. H. Munro). In this essay, I wish to outline the nuanced difference among these three decadents, focusing on their use of imaginative sympathy to postulate that zoo heterotopias operate as potential sites for the destabilization of humanist ethical paradigms.

Brian Massumi has recently voiced the need to consider nonhuman animals through ‘sympathy’ and ‘creativity’, even though the use of such qualitative notions tends, as he observes, to foster concerns among some scholars regarding anthropomorphism. In Massumi’s view, however, we must find ways to move beyond our anthropomorphism as regards ourselves: our image of ourselves as humanly standing apart from other animals; our inveterate vanity regarding our assumed species identity, based on the specious grounds of our sole proprietorship of language, thought, and creativity. We will see what the birds and the beasts have instinctively to say about this.

Written at the peak of the British decadent movement, Henry Salt’s Animals’ Rights (1892) makes a similar argument regarding species sympathy. Salt was engaged in addressing the problems with establishing nonhuman animals’ rights based on an assumption that humans constitute a distinct species. Such an approach, he notes, builds on the premise that humans deserve rights, and only then moves on to consider whether other species deserve any of them as well. Citing a passage from Ouida’s essay ‘Death and Pity’ (1892), in which she declares that ‘freedom of choice and act [...] is the first condition of animal as of human
happiness'. Salt argues that, 'Oppression and cruelty are invariably founded on a lack of imaginative sympathy' and a 'sense of kinship'. The key turn in Animal Rights relies on Salt's readers adopting an aesthetic perspective that does not simply take on what one thinks is the viewpoint of another animal, but that brings out the artifice of the heterotopias through which trans-species relations are mediated, a manoeuvre with which many members of the decadent movement also engaged. For this article, I have chosen to focus on examples from the works of Solomon, Ouida, and Saki. The notable differences in their identities within the decadent movement and in their approaches to human/nonhuman relations all the more effectively reveals the ubiquity of this subject within decadence more generally, each author in a distinct way reflecting recognition of most humans as captives of their own heterotopic assumptions. Imaginative sympathy may never escape the limits of the human ego, but it does signal an innate desire for such species dissipation.

In 'Of Other Spaces', Michel Foucault describes heterotopias as real places whose defining elements question or even disempower a society's naturalization of institutional structures. As 'a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live', a heterotopia points to itself as a peculiar confluence of various components, while also bringing attention to the coincidental constructions through which logic itself is assumed. Foucault offers an array of examples of such formulations, including vacation resorts, carpets, gardens, cemeteries, and 'honeymoon trips'. Zoo heterotopias, I propose, can be understood to be those places having the potential to disturb or neutralize conceptions of other animals as affirming a human ethical worldview. These places often sustain combatting ideologies, even as they become normatized as real. Examples of zoo heterotopias include farms, hunting expeditions, zoos, and testing laboratories in which nonhuman animals are abused in order to invent and produce such items as perfumes, medicines, and virility aids. The decadents were not by any stretch of the imagination a cohesive troupe of animal activists but, as major works such as Walter Pater's Marius the Epicurean (1885), Oscar Wilde's Picture of Dorian Gray (1890, 1891), and Michael Field's Sight and Song (1892) suggest, nor were they insensitive to the philosophical complexities of affective relations across species.

Decadent depictions of zoo heterotopias often focus on the ways in which human desire, emotion, aesthetics, and decorum overlap with and integrate those of other animals. In 'Baudelaire and the Decadent Movement' (1881), Paul
Bourget famously proposes that society,

like an organism, [...] may be resolved into a federation of lesser organisms, which themselves are resolved into a federation of cells [...]. If the energy of the cells becomes independent, the lesser organisms will likewise cease to subordinate their energy to the total energy and the anarchy that is established constitutes the decadence of the whole. The social organism does not escape this law. It enters into decadence as soon as the individual life is exaggerated under the influence of acquired well-being and heredity.\textsuperscript{12}

What Bourget declares dangerously decadent Carey Wolfe has recently described as a common state of species self-generation, mutual reliance, and struggle. The concern, Wolfe proposes, is not about challenging anthropocentrism in its various forms, but the bringing about of a 'fundamental change or mutation' that allows for a perspective unformulated through the lens of the human.\textsuperscript{13} As he argues, reality is always an 'ongoing, differentiated construction and creation of a shared environment, sometimes converging in a consensual domain, sometimes not, by autopoietic entities that have their own temporalities, chronicities, perceptual modalities, and so on—in short, their own forms of embodiment'.\textsuperscript{14} The implanting of simian flesh into humans, by this logic, is but a contribution to an already existing multi-species collective. The anarchic social trajectory of which Bourget warns is encouraged by Wolfe, just as it had been replicated in decadent works marked by a shift of attention from a coherent, anthropocentric reality to ones that engage the perspectival contributions of other species.

**Solomon’s Decadent Eye**

British decadent writers and artists since as early as the mid-nineteenth century proposed, in diverse ways, that species’ distinctions are fabrications, and undermined the use of such distinctions to justify segregation and abuse. A particularly sensual encouragement for earnest trans-species engagements appears in Simeon Solomon’s 1859 pen and ink drawing *Babylon Hath Been a Golden Cup* (Fig. 1).\textsuperscript{15} A member of the Pre-Raphaelites, Solomon’s style and sensuality was also part of the inauguration of the British decadent movement, preceding his friendships with Walter Pater and Algernon Swinburne in the 1860s. *Babylon was
initially envisioned as contributing to the Dalziel brothers’ ‘Bible Gallery’ of 100 or more wood engravings, but it proved ‘much too risqué for that purpose’, being exhibited on its own in 1859 at the 7th Annual Winter Exhibition of Cabinet Pictures, Sketches and Drawings at the French Gallery in London. In the gallery catalogue, the image had beneath it the biblical passage from Jeremiah 51:7 that reads ‘Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine, therefore the nations are mad’ (KJV). Gayle Seymour summarizes the passage as referring to the fulfilment of Jeremiah’s prophecy that the Jews’ captivity in Babylon would lead to ‘this whole land’ becoming ‘a ruin and a waste’ (Jeremiah 25:11), with the Jews choosing, among other things, to ‘burn incense unto Baal, and walk after gods whom ye know not’ (Jeremiah 7:10). The same image appears in Revelations, where the cup is held by a harlot personifying Babylon. The scenario echoes Bourget’s description of a decadent society as being one that has fallen into anarchy through individuals’ investment in personal sensual pleasure over the coherence of the whole.

Figure 1: Simeon Solomon, *Babylon Hath Been a Golden Cup* (pen and ink, 1859).
At the same time, the connection to idolatries, revelry, and multi-species interrelations all suggest that Solomon’s artwork can also be seen as marking the paganism associated with the demi-god Pan and the Bacchic Maenads, where individualism is sacrificed to an uncategorizable, spiritualist sensuality, rather than the collection of a society or nation. In the foreground of the drawing, Solomon offers the image of a male in ecstasy while an androgynous figure strokes the harp suggestively situated in his lap. In accord with the biblical quotation, the naked figure is Semiramis, the queen of Babylon, although in Solomon’s rendering the character’s sex is effectively obscured. Moreover, the piece is so intensely detailed and the eroticism so lush that it discourages a singular reading; desire spills beyond the fingering of the central figure’s instrument to all of the sentient members taking part in the revelry. With the various transient signifiers of the senses—the incense to Baal, the spilt wine and various grapevine motifs, diverse musical instruments, and sensuality in general—a viewer’s habitual compulsion for structured unity ultimately remains unfulfilled. Meanwhile, the use of only pencil and black and brown ink does offer an overall stylistic glazing to the piece that compels the viewer to blur together the excess of details contributing to the whole, much as one might fail to recognize the collection of species contributing to a functioning human being, with the zoo heterotopia in part sustaining, in part challenging the limitations of a humanist perspective.

The very intricacy and excess of Babylon fosters unification through its diversity of detail. Solomon reflects the viewer’s perspective in the glazed eyes of Semiramis but even more seductively in the pseudo-human eyes of the leopard lounging in the foreground with its gaze at the viewer fixed somewhere between a challenge and an invitation. The feline’s nonchalance suggests a mutually rewarding sensual experience, as if it and the harpist (and the invited viewer) were intimate familiars. Both the musician and the leopard appear connected to their physical reality but, as their eyes suggest, they also share a sensual engagement with another realm. Seymour notes that the image of the drunken leopard is often associated with Greek Orphic rites, creating a concise linkage between Solomon’s recognition of the animal’s sensual engagement and pagan spirituality in general.¹³

The inter-species intimacy that Solomon encourages through this rendering of imaginative sympathy finds a more colloquial, albeit equally intense manifestation in the writings of Ouida. An ardent animal-rights activist, Ouida wrote a number of pieces engaging her readers’ sense of humane justice in advocating
for compassion for other species. The rationale offered in her essays and other nonfiction is buttressed by novels in which she, like Solomon, works to incite the emotions of her audience through a creative engagement with the perspectives of nonhuman animals. Notably, this public display of respect and affection for other species contributed to the characterization of her in popular periodicals as being decadent and eccentric.

Ouida and Canine Sympathy

Ouida’s most original contribution to the idea of imaginative sympathy with other animals is situating the argument within the perspective of a nonhuman being, much as Solomon does with his depiction of a leopard. Nowhere is this more apparent in Ouida’s work than in the novel *Puck: His Vexissitudes, Adventures, Observations, Conclusions, Friendships, and Philosophies* (1878), in which the first-person narrator, a dog, offers a steady stream of arguments against animal abuse. “Would that more amongst you had that tender pity,” Puck declares,

> had the reverence for the wonder of existence which is as great in the tiniest fly that wings its way as in the great leviathan of the sea. All things must suffer and must think, since all things dread and trust: can there be fear without mental torture? Can there be trust without emotional power? Ay—and thrusting a pin through the beetle’s body and cutting the brain from a living pigeon, in your hideous dissecting-rooms, will not teach you this; it will only teach you to be blind to it. *(Puck, p. 326)*

As Mary Sanders Pollock has demonstrated, Ouida’s fiction repeatedly proposes that ‘cruelty toward domesticated animals also always results in disaster for the humans associated with them, in plots suggesting that humans and nonhuman animals are bound together in one living community’. Puck’s argument echoes Jeremy Bentham’s position that the abuse of nonhuman animals fosters an insensitivity to abuse in general, while Ouida’s emphasis on the minds of other species encourages readers’ sustained cross-species perspective.

Throughout much of the novel, as in the passage above, the titular canine speaks with the experience of a well-read human. On occasion, however, especially when Puck focuses on his own experiences, Ouida encourages a shift away from
this anthropocentric foundation, encouraging more forcefully the imaginative sympathy Salt would come to address. At one point, recalling having being forced to perform for numerous audiences on demand, Puck recollects:

I went through my dances and my postures trembling with terror [...], and I only costumed and capered from dread of the lash and starvation, as your men of wit coin their brain from the dread of poverty and a prison [...]. Dogs were too wise to envy me, for they knew that I was not free; and I—I envied every dog I saw that roved at large, though with a soiled coat and a hungry body; [...] You laugh! You can see no parallel betwixt a little, woe-begone anticking dog, and the men and women of genius? Well it may seem foolish; yet believe me they have nearer kindred then you think: that one close terrible kindred of woe, and solitude, and bondage, and the iron cruelty of mimicked mirth. (Puck, pp. 294–6)

In this passage, Ouida presents the view not simply that human and non-human animal pain is the same. Rather, she proposes, it is the forced performer—whether aesthete or Alsatian, dandy or Dalmatian—who suffers from the constrictions fashion and market demands place on their aesthetic liberty—their freedom to self-fashion, let alone to experience pleasure for its own sake.

One wonders how astute the cartoonist Linley Sambourne was when, for his comic portrait of Ouida, he chose to depict the dog begging for her attention as a Maltese terrier, for Puck himself is in fact a Maltese but, as the passage I just read makes clear, Ouida clearly would not have encouraged the performance (Fig. 2). The cartoon carries allusions to Ouida’s novels Puck, Under Two Flags (1867) and Bébée, or Two Little Wooden Shoes (1874). With the fan of peacock feathers it is unlikely Sambourne that is accusing the meat-eating Ouida of hypocrisy for her frequent critique of people who wear fur and ‘the spoils of tropical birds, slain for them, on their heads and skirts’. More likely, the prop was a signal of the popular affiliation of Ouida, because of her spendthrift lifestyle and bold persona (for a woman), with Aestheticism. The figure’s lounging posture, loosely flowing hair, orientalist taste in interiors, confident smoking, use of the hookah pipe, and prancing dog are similarly allusions to the author’s performance as decadent.
One reviewer noted her novels’ ‘ultra-Swinburnean fleshiness’. The echoes in Sambourne’s work of Solomon’s Babylon are striking in this regard, pointing not to an acknowledgement of the artist but to the cliche’s that had, by 1881, already come to define decadence in general for a British populist audience. The dog is, in Sambourne’s rendering, a reflection of Ouida’s public persona, but also—like Solomon’s leopard—part of a heterotopia defined by a decadent environment that identifies Ouida both as a consumer of the sensual and as a source of pleasure herself.

PUNCH’S FANCY PORTRAITS.—No. 45.

**Ouida.**

‘O fie! ’tis an unweeded garden.’—Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 2.

Figure 2: Edward Linley Sambourne, ‘Ouida’, *Punch* (1881).
Puck is presented as an autobiography written by the dog and edited by Ouida. Most blatantly in passages such as the quotation above, in which the eponymous hero articulates his fears and pain in being forced to serve others’ pleasure, the novel points to the unquestioned privileging of a human perspective on ethics and aesthetics. Puck’s issues, however, can also be recognized as paralleling those of the author compelled to market herself through a decadent persona (or some other, for that matter). While often viscerally effective, Ouida’s use of imaginative sympathy to engage the canine’s dilemma ultimately does not dislodge the humanist underbelly of Victorian ethics. And yet, one does recognize in the portrayal of Puck an intense human sympathy. Operating as an embodiment of the author herself, he captures her own vulnerability, and her inability to escape the anthropocentrism that curtails full perspectival integration.

Animalist Absorption in Saki
The same conundrum that Ouida addressed also arises repeatedly in Saki’s depictions of animals in his short stories. His acerbic satires leave little room, however, for more saccharine fare such as that found in Ouida’s novels. And yet, in pieces such as ‘Tobermory’ (1911) and ‘Music on the Hill’ (1911), Saki introduces non-human perspectives that either expose the artifice of the Edwardian heterotopia circumscribed by upper middle-class ritual or, more subtly, lead to a character’s absorption into a perspective that, appropriately, is never fully formulated or indeed understood. While Saki frequently depicted nonhumans as active agents in his stories, unlike Ouida, he did not write any declarations or even show any particular signs of interest regarding animal rights. His stories, moreover, are generally dismissive of movements, such as socialism and supernaturalism, with which the animal rights movement was often associated by the mainstream. From his collection Beasts and Superbeasts (1914), Fabianism is mocked in ‘The Byzantine Omelette’ while, in ‘The She-Wolf’, Saki derides mysticism in a story about a woman’s lupine conversion. ‘Laura’, meanwhile, pokes fun at reincarnation, with the heroine returning first—as she had hoped—as a menacing river otter and then as ‘a little beast of a naked brown Nubian boy’. And ‘Sredni Vashtar’, from The Chronicles of Clovis (1911), portrays a boy who invents a pagan religion in which his ferret stars as the unforgiving deity. ‘Tobermory’, meanwhile, makes light of the range of scientists invested in the infusion of human elements into other animals or, as in Voronoff’s case, vice versa.
"Tobermory" depicts Mr Cornelius Appin, an amateur scientist who teaches a cat to speak English, bringing to mind René Descartes's tenet that one of the key distinctions between humans and other animals is the latter's inability to speak, an argument commonly discussed and challenged during Saki's time. Notably, it is not the question of language that leads to the story's culminating crisis, but the fact that Tobermory, despite being a "Beyond-cat" of extraordinary intelligence, utterly disregards the decorum and manners used to disguise Edwardian middle-class hypocrisy. When the feline informs one of the guests at Lady Blemley's afternoon house party that he will come to dinner 'when he dashed well pleased', the group reacts with a 'Babel-like chorus of startled exclamations', the guests themselves momentarily lacking the ability to communicate (Chronicles, p. 33). This is immediately followed by 'a sudden hush of awkwardness and constraint' when the cat himself enters the room. The group's 'element of embarrassment' in addressing the animal suggests that the issue is not so much Tobermory's skill at human speech, nor the humans' ironic loss of words, but the cat's threat to expose society's usual practice of cloaking their actual views with a hypocritical decorum.

Presented with the rare chance to explore so many issues and ideas through a feline mind, the gathered acquaintances are unable to rise to the opportunity. Miss Resker can come up with nothing more imaginative than to ask the cat if the human language was difficult to learn. Mavis Pellington, meanwhile, 'lamely' throws out, 'What do you think of human intelligence?' (Chronicles, p. 34). The questions reflect the self-centredness of the guests, their inability to take the opportunity to engage with another species' perspective. This limitation parallels the tendency, in Saki's upper-crust Edwardians, to disregard the possibility that people of other classes have any useful contributions to offer to an understanding of the world. The narrator's observation that Pellington's inquiry is lame, however, does reflect sympathy with the feline, who proceeds to skewer those gathered with his knowledge of the things they have said behind each other's backs. Saki's camp approach sustains the dual perspective of satire but retains elements of sympathy for the characters he lampoons.

The gathered guests' concern over the feline's knowledge regarding their gossip quickly rises to the level of 'panic', as Tobermory recalls their descriptions of each other as 'brainless', 'feeble-minded', 'idiotic', and dull (Chronicles, pp. 36, 35, 38). Fortunately for them, the cat is soon killed by a rival in the farmyard and, to tie things up, Mr. Appin meets his end a few weeks later while experimenting
on an elephant in the Dresden Zoological Garden. As with most of Saki’s stories, ‘Tobermory’ is primarily a camp critique of social pretension, intended to be more deflationary than destructive. It also, however, evokes sympathy for the viewpoint of felines who, as Mr Appin observes, ‘have assimilated themselves so marvellously with our civilization while retaining all their highly developed feral instincts’ (Chronicles, p. 31). It is clear from his language that the scientist admires cats not only for their inter-species hybridity, but also for their unique primal qualities. Whether the esteemed qualities of another species can be incorporated by humans is something in which Voronoff was utterly invested. It is also the issue Saki addresses from a philosophical standpoint in ‘Music on the Hill’.

In the story, Sylvia Seltoun convinces her husband to move to a manor farm surrounded by forest, even though she, despite her name, ‘was accustomed to nothing much more sylvan than “leafy Kensington”’. For her, the countryside was ‘something excellent and wholesome in its way, which was apt to become troublesome if you encouraged it overmuch’. Describing the view from the morning room, the narrator tells us, ‘In its wild open savagery there seemed a stealthy linking of the joy of life with the terror of unseen things. Sylvia smiled complacently as she gazed with a School-of-Art appreciation at the landscape’ (Chronicles, p. 151). The issue for Saki is one of perspective: the question being whether humans can engage with their ecological realm via an outlook that is not always already formulated through an aesthetic or otherwise culturally sifted framework of understanding. Appearing early on in the story, this comic observation captures the heroine’s astute sensitivity to the environment as a calculating agent. Saki marks Sylvia, here, as holding a decidedly conflicted view of nature’s place in the modern world. There is an affective slippage from her conception of the leafy suburbs, to the farm and countryside, and then to ‘wild open savagery’. The heroine’s bourgeois upbringing has fostered an aesthetic appreciation and perhaps even sympathy for the natural environment that allows her to sustain an assumption of human superiority over all she surveys, and yet the sense of foreignness that the landscape imposes upon her leaves Sylvia with a constant uncertainty of the perspective with which she has always been most comfortable.

Sylvia also approaches the farm and surrounding green space with a cautious reserve that echoes the wary conceptions of nature found in decadent works such as Solomon’s Babylon or works by Joris-Karl Huysmans, Rachilde, and Arthur Machen. Her view that one can ‘encourage it overmuch’ belies a fear that the
wilderness functions as an entity with its own coherent agency. This is in fact the position that her husband Mortimer appears to assume, a claim undermined by the fact that he feels the pagan gods are appeased as long as he puts a bunch of store-bought grapes on an altar to Pan before returning to his newspaper and slippers. His self-satisfied spirituality brings to mind the vogue at the turn of the century for mostly charming depictions of paganism popularized by artists and authors such as Aubrey Beardsley, Laurence Housman, and Kenneth Grahame. Sylvia's more anxious respect for the natural, meanwhile, is a philosophical position based on her recognition of the sensual pleasure arising from her own imaginative response to a fear of the unknown. The heroine's pagan veneration accords with Edward Carpenter's articulation a few decades earlier of the way in which primitive anxieties foster imaginative distinctions between the individual ego and the Other, conceptions that 'we here and there perceive in the rites and prophecies and mysteries of the early religions, and in the poetry and art and literature generally of the later civilizations'; 29 Sylvia's developing outlook carrying the sense of co-reliance and veneration found in paganism itself. Saki offers a vision of paganism as sustaining the critical barb of decadence by encouraging humans not to try to love and nurture the wild, but to recognize their own species as but one element of a larger ecological system operating beyond human interests alone. Exploring a character who struggles to maintain control of a landscape that she fears for its self-sufficiency, Saki offers a pointed critique of efforts to enculturate the pagan as a way of alleviating anxieties regarding nonhuman agency.

Sylvia's trepidation proves justified when, in the closing paragraph of 'Music on the Hill', she is gored by a stag while an impish Pan makes music in the bushes. 'The antlers drove straight at her breast', Saki tells us in the only scene in which the narrator drops the arch tone in order to engage readers' emotions, 'the acrid smell of the hunted animal was in her nostrils, but her eyes were filled with the horror of something she saw other than her oncoming death. And in her ears rang the echo of a boy's laughter, golden and equivocal' (Chronicles, p. 159). Sylvia is not being punished for scepticism or flippancy regarding the affective force of nature, since Saki actually portrays her as distinctly wary, in contrast to Mortimer's thoughtless devotional gestures. As Saki points out, the heroine experiences a horror of something other than death, having been drawn in by an 'excited sympathy' for the stag who is the prey, it turns out, of a group of hunters (Chronicles, p. 158). In this closing scene, her compassion positions her with the
animal, herself another victim of the alienating heterotopia personified by the sportsmen. With Sylvia, Saki offers us a person who, in pagan scholar Thomas van Dooren’s terms, tries to engage ‘more “holistic” understandings of the world’ while recognizing ‘all of the ways in which we are different from one another, both those of our species and others’. While the heroine comes across as the butt of the story’s comic warning, her struggle to maintain aesthetic control of the landscape in fact reflects an awareness of its self-sufficiency. Sylvia is ultimately characterized by a pagan sensitivity to the perspectives and agency of the nonhuman, with the story portraying her moment of death as an element of the stag’s own state of panic.

The moment Sylvia shifts into the perspective of the ‘horned beasts’ (Chronicles, p. 159), she meets her death, a scenario reminiscent of other works in the decadent lineage such as Arthur Machen’s Great God Pan (1890, 1894) and E. F. Benson’s ‘The Man Who Went Too Far’ (1912). The trope of death by imaginative sympathy contributes to the general decadent critique of modern society’s efforts to construe eco-empathy as the product of unhealthy tastes and desires. As ‘Music on the Hill’ suggests, the act of aestheticization can function, counter-intuitively, not to distance but to engage the threateningly autopoeitic aspects of the environment. Like Solomon and Ouida to varying degrees, Saki addresses the weakness in conceptions of humans as having a responsibility to sustain the welfare of other sentient beings. Whereas Ouida’s essays and letters are most explicit in arguing for imaginative sympathy for other species, Babylon and ‘Music on the Hill’—and most particularly their decadent traits—discourage humans’ consideration of how to develop and sustain an environment healthy for all. Rather, they propose the dismantling of zoo heterotopias through an awareness of humans as some of what Bourget calls ‘lesser organisms’ contributing to a larger, self-forming and deforming ecological system.

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3 Miarko, ‘Si les animaux s’habillaient’, *Le Rire* (2 June 1923).


7 A proponent for animal rights and passivism, Salt was a close acquaintance of social activists such as Mohandas Gandhi and Edward Carpenter. He also corresponded with Ouida, from whom he solicited work for the journals he edited for the Humanitarian League, which he had founded in 1891. See Elizabeth Lee, *Ouida: A Memoir* (London: T. Fisher Unwin Press, 1914), pp. 161–2.

8 An argument first made popular by Jeremy Bentham in *Theory of Legislation* (1802), in which he acknowledges the visceral continuities across species—observing, for example, that ‘Cruelty towards animals is an incentive to cruelty towards men, & c.’ See Bentham, *Theory of Legislation* (London: Trübner Press, 1871), p. 425. Elsewhere, in an extension of anti-slavery logic to a consideration of nonhuman animals, he makes the famous declaration: ‘It may one day come to be recognized that the number of the legs, the villosity of the skin, or the termination of the os sacrum, are reasons equally insufficient for abandoning a sensitive being to the same fate. […] The question is not, Can they reason? Nor, Can they talk? But, Can they suffer?’ Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, 1781 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), p. 310 n.

19 Salt, p. 21.


23 Ibid., p. xxiv. From this standpoint, as Donna Haraway has demonstrated in *When Species Meet*, the human is never complete in itself and never just one species, but rather a range of sustained engagements among diverse species (including bacteria and viruses), combined with the fashioning of an organism’s self-manifestation through its sensoria—its sensations and perceptions, as well as interpretation of them. See Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).


27 Ibid., p. 49.

28 A similar perspectival manoeuvre can be found in Francis Power Cobbe, 'The Consciousness of Dogs', *Quarterly Review*, 133 (1872), 419–51. 'To realise, then, the physical conditions of a dog, Cobbe proposes, we must imagine ourselves inhabiting a diminutive and prostrate form, without hands, without speech, and destined to die of old age as we enter our teens' (p. 426). This perspectival shift will then assist the human in recognizing the continuity of sympathy between us and our humble companions' (p. 424).


31 Bentham, p. 425.


36 Saki, *Chronicles of Clovis*, 1911 (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1912), p. 31. Further references to this book are given in the text.

37 Saki, *Chronicles of Clovis*, 1911 (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1912), p. 150. Further references to this story are given in the text.
Richard Porteous

Schwärmerei: Walter Pater and the Case of the Disappearing ‘Swarm’

‘Experience, already reduced to a swarm of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without.’ — W. H. Pater, 1873

‘Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without.’ — W. H. Pater, 1893

The ‘conclusion’ to Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873) contains some of Walter Pater’s most thoroughly examined and controversial words. Having been removed in the second edition of 1877, it reappeared in the third edition of 1888. When it resurfaced in the 1893 fourth edition it appeared largely unchanged: it still portrayed ‘modern thought’ telling us that success in life is the sustained burning of a ‘hard, gem-like flame’;
that the subject is a ‘solitary prisoner’; that subjectivity is the ‘dream of a world’. An important alteration, however, has been overlooked. In the 1873 edition Pater writes: ‘Experience, already reduced to a swarm of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality...’ This phrase is identical to one in Pater’s 1868 Westminster Review article on the poems of William Morris, in which six paragraphs of the ‘Conclusion’ first appeared. In 1893, however, the ‘swarm of impressions’ becomes a ‘group of impressions’. Matthew Beaumont compares the ‘group of impressions’ in the fourth sentence of the second paragraph to the ‘swarm of impressions’ in the sixth sentence of that same paragraph. 1 Because he only consults the first edition, however, Beaumont overlooks the detail that gives so much significance to the comparison of ‘swarm’ and ‘group’: that in 1893, the ‘swarm’ itself is changed to a ‘group’. In 1873 there is a ‘group’ and then a ‘swarm’; in 1888, there is a ‘group’ and then another ‘group’. 2 Beaumont examines Milton’s usage of ‘swarm’, and explains the Old Norse etymology of the word, but decides that Pater probably had a passage from Paradise Lost in mind when he wrote the ‘Conclusion’, due to certain overlaps in the dictions of the two texts. Yet the real significance of Pater’s image lies not in Milton and Old Norse but in an alternative literary and philosophical history into which Pater subtly writes himself.

The literary and philosophical history of the word ‘swarm’, and its German cognate Schwärmer, is immense. Pater, this essay will argue, harnessed the network of meanings contained in Schwärmer to advance his own struggle to delineate a controversial idea that seemed inarticulable in the English language. The ‘swarm’ of 1873 is transvaluative; the ‘group’ of 1893 a normative retraction. For the significance of Pater’s editorial alteration to be apparent, one must be familiar with ‘swarms’ from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. We will begin, then, with a brief account of the historical contestation of the ‘swarm’.

**Schwärmer**

On 15 May 1525, between three thousand and ten thousand religious radicals were killed in Germany at the Battle of Frankenhäusen. With the support of Martin Luther they might have won the battle, but Luther had made his position clear: he was a reformer, not a revolutionary; he was not a radical and certainly not an anti-authoritarian. He was vocal in his resentment for splinter-groups that transgressed the boundaries of reason and sanity. And when Luther ‘wanted to castigate the mobs that followed self-appointed field preachers or rampaged
through churches, smashing the statues, the verb *schwärmern* was ready to hand*. ‘*Schwärmern*, derived from the noun *Schwärmerei*, connoted a lack of philosophical rigour, a sublime stupefaction in the place of logical thinking. It also suggests a lack of humanity, given its association with bees. ‘*Schwärmerei* derives from the swarming of bees’, observes Fenves: ‘The likeness between the aggregate of swarming bees and the congregations of swarming churchmen gives *Schwärmerei* its highly amorphous and irreducibly figural shape’. It is not as though Luther picked his smear-word at random: he frequently had to clarify what he meant, but insisted on it anyway. One can sense, then, in Kleinhenz and Le Moine’s words, ‘some of the difficulties Luther prepared for himself in the very word he most often used for his spiritualist and Anabaptist opponents: *Schwärmerei*. It is a description of an interior process as much as an external rabble: ‘when one *schwärmt*, it was as if bees or bats were swarming in one’s head. It could refer to the mental life of one who had fallen off the tracks’. Swarms connote transgression, unorthodox approaches to religion, and a mental life flooded with manic and uncontrollable impressions, culminating in a threatening obliviousness to objective principles. Perhaps one can begin to see why Pater would rather like the word.

The use of *Schwärmerei* in intellectual discourse increased dramatically toward the end of the eighteenth century. It became a term of opprobrium in certain German philosophical writings with which Pater would become intimately familiar as a student. By the ‘1790s, philosophical thought had become vulnerable to the charge that it [...] was dangerously *schwärmersch*’, and this is precisely what Thomas Wizenmann said of Kant. As Frederick C. Beiser puts it: ‘He [Wizenmann] argues that Kant’s defense of faith as “a need of practical reason” itself leads to all kinds of *Schwärmerei*. Kant would have been outraged on reading Wizenmann’s attack, since his own work is dedicated to ridding philosophy of *schwärmersch* thought. Justifying the rigour of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant insists that ‘pure theoretical reason’ is not given ‘the slightest encouragement to rove into the transcendent’ (the words I have italicised appearing in the German original as: ‘*zum Schwärmern ins Überschwengliche*’. Elsewhere Kant writes of the risk that un-oriented, speculative thinkers could be tempted by ‘the basic principle of *Schwärmerei* and the complete subversion of reason’. The mind of a *Schwärmerei* is the mind not of a reasoned philosopher, but of a person overly invested in swarms of impressions and speculative projection.
In a novel with which Pater had a long and troubled relationship, Théophile Gautier affords a sympathetic first-hand account of a 'swarming' mind. The troubled d'Albert of _Mademoiselle de Maupin_ (1835) reflects, in a lugubrious moment, that the 'sound of action would dispel all the swarm _[essaim]_ of lazy thoughts which flutter about in my head and dizzy me with the buzzing of their wings', with 'wings' and 'buzzing' both suggesting bees.\(^{11}\) D'Albert is a _Schwärmer_ who wants to quit _schwärmen_, who cannot get rid of the desire which flutters and hums round your head, like a bee in spring,' to the effect that 'the void in your heart is filled, and your memories are effaced by impressions'.\(^{12}\) Pater and Gautier share the project of describing the subjectivity of someone utterly effaced by impressions. The word both writers use to describe that overwhelming psychological process is 'swarm', or, in Gautier's French, _essaim_.\(^ {13}\)

D'Albert projects his desirous mind externally: 'The doves return to the dovecot, but the desires do not ever return to the heart. The blue of the sky grows white with their innumerable swarms _[essaisms]_; they fly off through space, from world to world, from heaven to heaven, seeking some or other love'.\(^ {14}\) 'This passage is remarkable for the way that it connects the 'swarm' with desire. But it is also remarkable for the way that it features the 'swarm' without explicitly criticising it. Whether or not Gautier implicitly mocks d'Albert, _Mademoiselle de Maupin_ portrays madness from an aesthetic perspective. 'Swarming' had been used by Kant and others as a smear-term, but Gautier celebrates it.

Certain late-eighteenth-century German texts had already valorised _Schwärmerei_, as if in opposition to philosophers like Kant. The countervailing 'Romantic' usage of the term, as the Duden etymological dictionary has it, was formed 'in opposition to the Enlightenment'.\(^{15}\) In _The Sorrows of Young Werther_ (1774), Goethe uses _Schwärmerei_ to characterise the poetry of Johannes Kaspar Lavater (1741–1801). A vicar's wife, whom Werther detests for cutting down a walnut tree he had long admired, 'affects to be learned [...] works hard on today's new-fangled moral and critical reformation of Christianity and shrugs off Lavater's rhapsodic effusions _[Schwärmerei]_.\(^ {16}\) For the young Werther, _Schwärmerei_ describes a kind of literary passion, one that the vicar's wife is chastised for not understanding. Gautier's romanticised and impassioned account of _Schwärmerei_, then, is not wholly unprecedented. By 1857, Charles Baudelaire was describing his 'demon nation' that 'riots in our brains' as 'swarming, like a million writhing worms' ('Serré, fourmillant, comme un million d'helminthes') in the opening 'To the
Reader’s address of Les Fleurs du mal. Patricia Clements perceives Pater ‘filleting Baudelaire carefully into his texts’ and, indeed, Pater’s ‘swarm of impressions’ might be another ‘echo’ of Baudelaire in Pater’s work, to use Clements’s phrase, although she does not make the comparison. Gautier is an equally crucial figure here, due to the emphasis he places on eros in his account of a swarming mind. ‘When I embark upon romance,’ d’Albert reveals, ‘I am not half-hearted, and I am as mad as anyone can be. It’s always so, for nothing in the world is more unpleasant than reasonable madness’. Gautier’s paradoxical flippancy may presage Wilde. But his transvaluation of swarms and buzzing subjectivities is of great importance to Pater.

Paterian swarms

Pater knew Mademoiselle de Maupin well. He was also familiar with the history of the word ‘swarm’, writing in ‘The Bacchanals of Euripides’, for example, of Coleridge’s ‘refining on the German word for enthusiasm – Schwärmerei’. Elsewhere, however, the Schwärmerei of Lutheran thought emerges, as the word comes to describe dangerous untruths: the death of Lucius Verus in Marius the Epicurean (1885) ‘awoke a swarm of sinister rumours’. The ‘swarm’ can be both an external horde and an internal phenomenon. It is both the crowd and the internal state of every member of that crowd. Here is the ‘swarm’ of the 1873 Conclusion again:

Experience, already reduced to a swarm of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without.

The ‘swarm’ suggests both a collective plurality and an isolated singularity. The ‘swarm’ is an amorphous collective, but it takes the form of impressions available only to one person in his own ‘dream of a world’. The experience of swarms is universal but not shared: it is ‘ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us’. Kant insisted he was not a philosophical Schwärmer, and Luther made it clear he was not to be associated with theological Schwärmerei. Pater, following Gautier, seems to transvalue the ‘swarm’, finding in it an irresistible play of singularity and plurality,
interiority and externality, that resonates so strongly with the representation of subjectivity in *The Renaissance*.

If Pater was familiar with the *essaim* of Gautier’s d’Albert, and wrote about Coleridge’s usage of *Schwärmerei*, he also exhibited a serious interest in Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason*, the text in which Kant uses the *Schwärmerei* epithet most frequently.24 Pater first took out this *Critique* from Queen’s College Library on 20 February 1861, and his British Library borrowings reflect more of an interest in this text than in the more famous works of Kant.25 In “The History of Philosophy”, an unpublished Pater manuscript written c.1879, Pater glosses Kant’s analysis of the mind: ‘What remained of our actual experience was but a stream of impressions over the supposed but wholly unknown mental substratum which no act of intuition or reflexion could ever really detect’.26 His reading of Kant, then, recalls his 1873 explication of ‘experience’ as a ‘swarm of impressions’, and a mental substratum that ‘no real voice’ can ever pierce. The most important point of comparison between the two very similar sentences is the subtle change in the form of impressions. The ‘stream of impressions’ Pater finds in Kant becomes a ‘swarm of impressions’ in the 1868 ‘*Poems of William Morris*’ review and the 1873 ‘Conclusion’, both written before ‘The History of Philosophy’ but also at least twelve years after Pater read Kant in Queen’s. If Kant suggested to Pater a ‘stream of impressions’ when he first studied *The Critique of Practical Reason* in the early 1860s, Pater replaces that ‘stream’ with a ‘swarm’ in 1868. And if the conception of ‘experience’ is from Kant, so too is the lexical substitution: Pater found in *Schwärmerei*, which had such dreadful connotations for Kant, a way of expressing a kind of intellectual experience that goes beyond the limits of the English language.

Pater’s quest for a language that could account for a peculiar kind of intellectual activity began as early as 1864. In ‘Diapheneite’, written in July of that year but not published until 1895, Pater describes ‘a magnificent intellectual force’ capable of bringing together sensuousness and ‘the laws of the higher intellectual life’.27 Such a force would be a corrective to the Kantian view of the intellect which, for Pater, was too quick to exclude the sensual and ‘concrete’ aspects of experience.28 Pater elaborates on his conception of this magnificent intellectual force: ‘It is like the reminiscence of a forgotten culture that once adorned the mind; as if the mind of *φιλοσοφήται* ποτε μετ’ ἑρωτοσ, fallen into a new cycle, were beginning its spiritual process over again’.29 Michael Davis, who translates the Greek phrase
‘philosophising with, by way of, or under the influence of, ἔρως’, shows that Pater’s usage of Greek at this juncture reveals him to be ‘running up against the limits of language’, turning ‘not only to Greek culture but to the Greek language to articulate what in English culture and English language is essentially inarticulable’. That inarticulable idea is of a connection between sensuality and intellectual experience. Davis’s interpretation chimes with Dowling’s conception of Pater as a ‘scholar of words’, a writer breaking down the ‘opposition between philology and literature’. But Pater was ‘steeped in German’ as well as Greek; in his struggle to articulate a mode of interpretation both philosophical and sensuous, he would later turn to one of the most contested and ambiguous terms in the German language. Pater would have encountered Schwärmen in the Critique of Practical Reason, but he finds it connected to bees in a more poetical writer. In his 1878 essay ‘The Bacchanals of Euripides’, not published until 1889 in Macmillan’s Magazine and then 1895 in Greek Studies, Pater argues that ‘Coleridge, in one of his fantastic speculations, refining on the German word for enthusiasm – Schwärmen, swarming, as he says, “like the swarming of bees together” – has explained how the sympathies of mere numbers [...] generates [...] some new and rapturous spirit. [...] Such swarming was the essence of that strange dance of the Bacchic women’. Pater’s reading of the Schwärmen is a far cry from that of Coleridge, who simply uses the idea to describe ‘weak minds’ subscribing to ‘fanaticism’. Pater places the lone ‘swarming’ between two commas following the German term, tacitly declaring that the two words are, for him, cognates. That ‘such swarming was the essence of that strange dance of the Bacchic women’ establishes an explicit connection between the swarm and the unruly, Dionysian behaviour of the Maenads. In Euripides’s The Bacchae it is said of the Maenads that ‘Pure honey (μέλισσα) spurted, streaming, from their wands’ before they descended in ‘hordes’ (τὸ πλήθος) to tear apart the flesh of a bull (ll. 711, 745). That ‘swarming’ would explicitly be the very essence of the Maenads is Pater’s own addition. Importantly, the Maenads are not sexual beings in The Bacchae: the Messenger even corrects Pentheus when he implies otherwise (ll. 686–689). In Pater’s account, by contrast, there is at least a sensuous element to the women who follow ‘that Romantic god’, and who exist always in proximity to ‘wild, unsophisticated, natural things’ (1895b, 53–54). Pater had been searching for a term capable of describing the aesthetic engagement he endorsed since 1864, one which would connote sensuousness and intellectualism simultaneously. In the swarming of the
Bacchic women Pater finds, as Yopie Prins puts it, a 'strange beauty: their rapture is the expression of an impressionability that is Pater's aesthetic ideal'. In 'The Bacchanals of Euripides', the 'swarm' unites aesthetic engagement with sensual experience.

By the time Pater publishes his October 1868 Westminster Review article, he has been immersed in German philosophy, is especially familiar with The Critique of Practical Reason, and has also read Mademoiselle de Maupin with its numerous swarms. When he imagines a 'swarm of impressions', it seems reasonable to suppose that this literary philologist, who had 'a tendency to value all things German', was aware of the German reference he was making. By the end of the 1880s there can be no doubt that Pater is conscious of the Schwärmerei, and that he has enlisted the term in his quest for a way to articulate a mode of intellectual engagement that would account for the place of eros in an aesthetic encounter. Why, then, would the 1893 edition of The Renaissance substitute 'group' for 'swarm'? Answering this question will involve examining Pater's letters and career, as well as the role of bees and swarms in certain other late-nineteenth century representations of non-normative desire.

Pater's retraction

In 1875, the historian Oscar Browning (1837–1923) sparked controversy by lending Mademoiselle de Maupin to a young Etonian named William Graham. Browning, delighted, forwarded the letters concerning the event to Pater, thinking Pater would like to share in the hilarity. Pater, though, was not amused. 'I should greatly disapprove its being lent to any boy or young man', he replied: 'I read it years ago but do not possess it'. Pater is being untruthful. Even a decade later than this Pater still owned the book: as Evans observes, 'Edmund Gosse noticed Pater's “curiously marked copy” in Sidney Colvin's lodgings in Cambridge in 1885'. Gautier not only affected the early Pater; according to Higgins, he remained a part of the 'network of associations' that would persist in Pater's writing throughout his career. So why would Pater, two years after the publication of The Renaissance, want to distance himself from the French novelist?

In fact, Pater's letter is symptomatic of a larger struggle on his part to fend off insidious accusations of sexual transgression. The retraction of the 'swarm' is a case in point. The tacitly erotic 'swarm' of The Renaissance also functions as an aesthetic term, one which distinguishes Pater from the 'stream of impressions' he found in
Kant and transvalues what had been a smear-term into a celebration of aesthetic sensuousness.

The association of ‘swarms’ with sexual desire does not originate with Gautier. That connection can be traced back at least to Christian Garve (1742–98), whom La Vopa paraphrases as having ‘no doubt’ that ‘a repressed sex drive’, along with ‘the isolation of the self-absorbed personality’, could be conducive to Schwärmerie.42 If the association of swarming with non-normative sexual orientation persists in Gautier, it does not end there, either. By 1920, in Sigmund Freud’s The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman, the homoerotic sense of ‘swarm’ has become fully operative, as Justin Clemens shows in his compelling 2013 chapter ‘Man Is A Swarm Animal’.43 As early as 1905, in the Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, Freud was using the word ‘Schwärmerie’ not in its familiar, polemical conceptual sense, but merely in passing, as an adjectival specification, to designate a transitory inversion, a momentary swerve towards an (idealised) homosexual object-choice.44 In the third of those three essays Freud cites Dessoir’s usage of ‘schwärmerischen’ to denote same-sex ‘sentimental friendships’ in his essay ‘Zur Psychologie der Vita sexualis’.45 Dessoir’s essay was published in 1894, just one year after Pater removed his own ‘swarm’.46

If by the time Pater wrote ‘The Bacchanals of Euripides’ (1878) he was using ‘swarming’ to depict the sensuous dance of the Maenads, it is also plausible that five years earlier he might have been using ‘swarm’ to allude deliberately to sexual desire. I have already established, after all, that by 1873 Pater was actively looking for a verb or noun that would denote ‘philosophising with, by way of, or under the influence of, eros’, and that in doing so he found himself ‘running up against the limits of language’.47 This is to read the ‘Conclusion’ in line with Brake’s conception of Pater as a man who, while he wrote from inside ‘a culturally dominant institution [...] wrote from the endangered position of a homosexual in such an institution, writing primarily for other men open to such homosocial readings’.48 The highly unusual ‘swarm of impressions’ phrase, then, might in 1873 have already been a way of signifying the sensual intellectualism that had previously sent Pater beyond the English language.

Why, then, would Pater replace the ‘swarm’ with the orderly ‘group’ in 1893? A footnote to the ‘Conclusion’ in the third and all subsequent editions explains that the second edition omitted the final segment because its author ‘conceived that it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall’.49
Pater was seemingly responding to the initial critics of the first edition, and most clearly to the letter John Wordsworth sent him on 17 March 1873, which warns Pater of ‘the dangers into which you were likely to lead minds weaker than your own’. The minor Wordsworth also threatens to go public with some mysterious ‘difference of opinion’ between them, both ‘openly’ and, tellingly, ‘without reserve’. The critic who most unreservedly went public was Balliol student W. H. Mallock, whose 1877 novel The New Republic caricatured Pater as ‘Mr. Rose’. Gosse reported that, while Pater was not quite distraught by the novel, ‘he thought the portrait a little unscrupulous, and he was decomposed by the freedom of some of its details’. According to A. C. Benson, the novel caused Pater ‘considerable distress’. It is not hard to see why. As Lucas puts it: ‘Mallock more than hints at Rose’s abnormal sexual tastes, and links them to his tastes in art’. Mr. Rose, like the ‘swarm’, connects Pater’s aestheticism to sexual eros. Defending the love of literature, Mr. Rose says earnestly: ‘[A]s I have been listening to the hum of the insects […] fragments of poetry have been murmuring in my memory like a swarm of bees, and have been carrying my fancy hither and thither in all manner of swift luxurious ways’. Mr. Rose’s aesthetic appreciation of poetry takes the form of a ‘swarm of bees’, which carry his ‘fancy’ luxuriously, and suggestively, ‘hither and thither’. The ‘swarm’ is central to the connection between Mr. Rose’s aestheticism and his implied homosexuality. The Bacchanals of Euripides was not published until more than a decade after The New Republic, so the only ‘swarm’ Mallock could be drawing on is the ‘swarm’ in the first edition of The Renaissance. If Mr. Rose gives ‘scandalous visibility’ to Pater, Mallock’s parody also makes brahshly obvious the subterranean play of cross-linguistic meaning in Pater’s ‘swarm of impressions’.

It was not only Pater’s detractors who gave increased visibility to the network of meanings emanating from ‘swarms of bees’. Prins argues that it was Pater’s image of the swarming Bacchic women in ‘Bacchanals of the Euripides’ that gave Michael Field ‘an imaginary alternative to the Victorian spinster’. Michael Field, a female poetic duo (K. H. Bradley and E. E. Cooper) characterised by what Marion Thain calls an ‘Apian Aestheticism’, found in Pater’s Maenads what Prins terms the ‘very embodiment of […] unruly female sexuality’. In 1892, anti-feminist Eliza Lynn Linton scornfully described a cohort of ‘wild women’ as being ‘like an angry beehive’; by 1907, Bradley and Cooper were specifically requesting that their illustrator Charles Ricketts draw them his ‘wildest bees, in swarm’ for
the cover of their *Wild Honey from Various Thyme* collection, published in 1908.\(^6^9\)

The 'swarm' was becoming at least a relatively well-known figure for describing sexuality and transgression, be it in the mocking prose of Mallock, the scathing remarks of Linton, or, a few years later, the poetic voice of Michael Field.

As Pater prepares the text of the 1893 edition, his crucial word has been exposed. George Egerton and Michael Field would both go on to use the 'swarms' and 'bees' motifs in their work, but when the 'Conclusion' resurfaces in 1893 the word is suppressed: it is too dangerous, or too obvious, or both. In 1888 Pater kept it in, but by 1893 *Macmillan’s Magazine* had published 'The Bacchanals of Euripides', which, as if confirming Mallock's suspicions about the 'swarm', connected it explicitly to sensuous Bacchanalia. Further, the reception of *The Renaissance* had begun to affect Pater's academic career. Wordsworth asked that Pater give up his 'share in the Divinity Examinations' as early as 1873, but perhaps the most significant setback Pater faced was in 1885, when Ruskin resigned as Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford. Pater offered himself for the professorship, but it went to one Hubert Von Herkomer, and not to the author of the notorious book on the Renaissance'.\(^6^3\) Pater's threatened academic credibility depended partly on his being able to separate his conception of sensuousness from his aesthetic theorem, and that the function of the 'swarm', as a cognate of *Schwärmerei*, had precisely been to engage *eros* and philosophy in a subtle unification. These are the intellectual conditions bearing upon Pater's suppression of the swarm.

The 1893 edition of the 'Conclusion', then, should in some sense be considered a censored text. Oscar Wilde's bee in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 'creeping into the stained trumpet of a Tyrian convolvulus' as Lord Henry seduces the young Dorian, made it through censorship unchanged.\(^4^2\) Pater's 'swarm', in a different sort of way, did not. The connection between 'swarm' and *Schwärmerei* raises more questions than can feasibly be answered, questions about Pater's layered usages of Kant, the scope of Pater's influence on Michael Field, and the precise nature of Pater's relation to Freud. We can confirm that Pater translated and transvalued the *Schwärmerei* to articulate a mode of intellectual engagement that harnesses *eros*. We can speculate, with strong justification, that his suppression of the 'swarm' in the fourth edition of the 'Conclusion' is likely the result of the increased textual visibility of the 'swarm', amidst his own struggles to write and work while his credibility was being cruelly called into question by critics like Mallock and Wordsworth. The 'swarm' of 1873 is transvaluative because it takes a term used by Kant and others as a smear-word...
and positively celebrates it. The 1893 substitution is a normative retraction both philosophically and in terms of sexuality, as Pater elides a word that had signified, and was coming to signify again, a mode of philosophy infused with *eros*.

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NOTES

2 Hill's scholarly edition of 'the 1893 text' acknowledges the 'swarm/group' change but makes no comment on it: see Hill p. 273.
7 La Vopa, p. 86.
12 Ibid., p. 132.
13 Gautier's original French term, *esaim*, is consistently taken to mean 'swarm' in this translation and elsewhere. Lacan would later make great punning use of *esaim* and 'swarm': see Clemens, pp. 147–150.
14 Gautier, p. 74.
15 See the 'Romantic' section of the Duden online entry for Schwärmeri. Accessed 11 Nov 2014.
17 I am using James McGowan's 1993 translation.
19 Gautier, p. 68.
24 Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pp. 94, 110, 204.
26 Cited in Inman, pp. 22–3.
McGrath, p. 83.


Pater, Greek Studies, p. 33.


The correspondence describing this event is undated, but Evans makes a convincing case for ‘Spring or Summer 1875’ in Letters, p. 23.

Ibid.

Ibid. Evans cites a letter from Gosse to Mrs. Gosse 1 Nov 1885 (Cambridge University Library MS Add. 7020).


Higgins, p. 416.

La Vopa, p. 86.


Also in 1894, George Egerton approaches what would become the ‘Freudian’ meaning in her short story ‘A Psychological Moment’ (in Discords). They are laughing and talking gaily, for the sisters are favourites and number many ‘fames’ amongst the crowd of girls filled with sickly sentiment, ‘schuammerge’, and awakening sexual instinct. They are genuinely in love’. Egerton, Discords (London: John Lane, 1894), 72.

Davis, pp. 273, 271.


Pater, The Renaissance, 186.


Ibid.

Gosse, p. 258.


Prins, p. 46.


17 September 1907, Thain, p. 131.

Evans, ed. p. 14; Bloom, p. xvi.

Laurel Brake

The Lives of Men: ‘Walter Pater’ and
Eminent Victorians

‘Those two fat volumes, with which it is our custom to
commemorate the dead—who does not know them, with their
ill-digested masses of material, their slipshod style, their tone
of tedious panegyric, their lamentable lack of selection, of
detachment, of design? They are as familiar as the cortège of the
undertaker, and wear the same air of slow, funereal barbarism.
One is tempted to suppose, of some of them, that they were
composed by that functionary, as the final item of his job.’
—Lytton Strachey

His essay considers distinctions among three types of biography
about Victorians produced by male authors in the first two decades
of the twentieth century. Two, by A. C. Benson and Thomas
Wright, treat Walter Pater, and the third, Lytton Strachey’s Eminent Victorians,
a series of subjects. Understanding the differences among them contributes to
one’s understanding of the contested field of biography at the time. Before and
after the Great War, life writing offered diverse interpretation of Aestheticism
and Decadence. Strachey’s contribution was to extend these analyses beyond the
movements to history itself, to the ‘decadence’ of the past and of the ‘Victorians’. I
will argue that a comparison of the Benson and Wright reconstructions of Pater’s
life, and those by Strachey, sharpens our response to these early biographies of
Pater. Additionally, the tripartite assessment repositions the tricky issue of the relative value of the two full-length lives of Pater that appeared in closest proximity to his death, one in the old style of biography and the other in the new.

Published in 1906 and 1907, the Pater biographies were written more than a decade after their subject’s death in 1894. Benson and Wright were strangers to Pater but, it transpires, still within the penumbra of his family and his nineteenth-century reputation. Both Benson and Wright were ‘Victorians’, about twenty years younger than their subject; by 1901 they were approximately 40 years old. While their definition and treatments of Pater’s ‘decadence’ differ, Pater’s decadence is a common problem in writing their narratives, and probably their common motive for undertaking the work: Wright because he gravitated to potential scandal, and Benson because he was drawn to Pater, perhaps because sharing with his subject his and his family’s alternative sexual orientation. Strachey was in turn twenty years younger than Wright and Benson, half their age in 1901. Born in 1880, Strachey matured in the first two decades of the twentieth century, when the ‘turn of the century’, cultural change, and the war offered firmer footing to look backward critically at the now fast-receding ‘Victorian’ age. Strachey’s pithy satire of his subjects and their historical period is part of a wider culture of critique of the adjacent past, or what has been identified as ‘negativity’ among proto-modernists and modernists. With his national and civic targets in view, Strachey’s celebrity subjects are closely affiliated with statist institutions – the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, secondary education and male schooling – and two of his figures relate to war and the state. Missing from the study of eminence is an artist or literary figure of any kind, much less someone who was part of nineteenth-century Aestheticism or Decadence. It is a telling absence or avoidance from a member of the Bloomsbury set.

If Strachey was also a stranger to his four subjects they, unlike Pater – who had largely escaped reification – were already heroes and heroines of the age, ripe for toppling, especially by an author whose generational position fostered alienation. Since no British book-length life of Pater had appeared immediately after his death, one function of both Pater lives was to help determine his place in the pantheon of ‘eminent Victorians’. There had been immediate provocations to Pater watchers: in 1903, a slim biography by Ferris Greenslet had appeared in America, which opened with an epigraph from Walt Whitman. Published by McClure, the firm behind the popular, cheap, muckraking monthly *McClure’s*
Magazine, in a year when the periodical’s editors were particularly vociferous about their determination to expose lawlessness, Greenslet’s book – with numerous hints at Pater’s queerness – was up its street (Greenslet opens ch. 12, for example, by suggesting that Pater is a representative, together with Swinburne, of the ‘New Paganism’). In 1905, John Lane published G. K. Chesterton’s Heretic, an incisive attack on the neglect of orthodoxy by contemporary culture (allegedly dominated by art for art’s sake), in which Pater is named and implicated.

Read in dialogue, Benson and Wright’s lives of Pater articulate alternative positions in an ongoing, late nineteenth-century debate about the biographical genre and its legitimacy, which may be seen, for example, in the work of Henry James, who mercilessly targeted biographers and biography. In his short story ‘The Death of the Lion’, James’s flagship tale for the launch of the Yellow Book, the biographer is responsible for nothing less than the death of the author. If biography is a legitimate genre – in the name of celebrity, consumer interest, and the justifiable circulation of knowledge – where does its primary responsibility lie: with an obliging account of its subject in the interests of ‘history’ and truth, or with ‘the family’? One characterisation of these extremities was that of Judas and the widow, respectively. These terms were circulated by Oscar Wilde in 1887 (‘It is usually Judas who writes the biography’) and by Edmund Gosse in 1901: ‘The Widow does not always boldly appear on the title-page: she often lurks behind the apparently unprejudiced name of some docile author.’

With his flag of disclosure aloft in the service of ‘history’, ‘truth’, and ‘information’, Wright trailed evidence of his investigative methods throughout his narrative; Benson, affiliated with Pater’s publisher and family, produced a more seamless and emollient text, with a sub-text that hinted at ‘darkness’ or the ‘dark’ – Benson’s words in his diary, to which he relegated discussions of his sources. In both texts Pater’s ‘decadence’ underlies the tissue of prose, but neither biographer tackles it outright as an allegation or issue. Wright’s investigative stance might have accommodated an exploration of other truths of Pater’s life, but the subject of desire and sexual orientation is avoided. In fact, Wright sporadically makes a point of cutting off such speculation. His treatment of ‘Apollo in Picardy’, for example, suppresses these matters obliquely: ‘Pater’s work is very delicate and very clean, every word having been chosen for artistic effect’.
As part of the same discussion, Wright intimates the nature of the material indirectly: 'The effect of these wonderful pieces of work has been to put almost every one who has approached them into an ecstasy. They are idylls written on mother of pearl.'

In a period marked by the simultaneous rise of the study of English literature and of new journalism, the biographies might be characterised as gravitating to the methods of belles lettres on the one hand and investigative journalism on the other. The belles lettres Benson biography was, after all, written by a son of the Archbishop of Canterbury of Canterbury. It appeared as one of the volumes in Macmillan's English Men of Letters series, renowned as the comparatively short, one-volume lives established by a mainstream publisher (who was also Pater's publisher). In an alternative production niche, Thomas Wright's exploratory Life of Walter Pater (1907), in two volumes, was packed with new information, written by a schoolmaster and published by a small, faltering publisher, Everett & Co., for which the author undertook strenuous self-publicity of his own work. Wright's volumes are lavishly illustrated; in his quest for authority based on information, he peppers the Preface with the personal names of sources he has interviewed, and attacks point by point the accuracy of Benson's biography that had recently appeared (see opposite page). The second volume has ten appendices, as part of Wright's unstinting effort to include everything Weighty and overwritten (although neither pious nor boring), and full of ill-judged (but fascinating) digressions (e.g. on how plain Pater was, and on other men who were great, and plain), Wright is an egregious example of the 'standard life' that Strachey excoriates in the epigraph quoted above.

That is not the whole story, however. The main problem of Wright's Life is its combination of hard-won and valuable facts, digressions, and 'information' of unknown status. Several of the appendices show the extent to which Wright is prepared to do the heavy lifting that scholars continue to undertake: they include an ambitious genealogical table, a bibliography of Pater's writings, extracts from parish registers, and a version of one of Pater's poems. But they also include material that no one today, in the context of scholarly work, would choose to append, such as the bibliographies of two figures Wright arbitrarily selected from Pater's life, his college tutor, W. W. Capes, and Richard Jackson, the man who claimed to have known Pater intimately and to have inspired the character of Marius. Illustrations from some of Jackson's books and manuscript collection are also included. I have scrutinised the Benson-Wright/ Widow-Judas phenomenon

elsewhere; in this essay I explore how their differences over the representation of their common subject, in close proximity, appear retrospectively in the context of Strachey and his approach to biography and decadence little more than a decade later.

The differences are crucial: Strachey's chosen subject position as biographer distances him effectively from the nineteenth century. Although a Victorian by birth, by the time he wrote and published *Eminent Victorians* (1913–18), Strachey is well into the new century — (comparable to our position vis à vis the twentieth century). His was a sense of temporal distance deepened by the abyss of the Great War. Yet he warns in his Preface that we 'still 'know too much about' the nineteenth century; we are too close to attain the necessary ignorance, which simplifies and clarifies, which selects and omits, with a placid perfection unattainable by the highest art'. Instead, he professes an indirect method 'to illustrate rather than to
explain' (my emphases). Interestingly, his methods overlap with the strengths of ignorance: a ruthless selectivity (of four people), notable brevity (a monograph comprising four quarter-length lives), and serendipitous dips into (rather than exhaustive pursuit of) his subjects’ lives.

Strachey is part of a cluster of writers and artists who identify themselves as 'modern' through their alienation not only from the 'Victorians' but also from contemporary social conventions. Unlike Benson, who is implicated in the institutions of church and university the minute he signs his name to his Life, or Wright, who publicly identifies with his school and the history of his region, Strachey identifies himself aesthetically, with an avant-garde (Bloomsbury) group (to whom he read his manuscript aloud during its gestation). So closely does Eminent Lives articulate his auditors' shared values that it was reportedly adopted as one of the group’s manifestos. Anti-bourgeois, sexually tolerant, and influenced by G. E. Moore’s notions of intrinsic worth and high valuation of human relationships, Bloomsbury ethics include, in Strachey’s case, detailed knowledge of Freudian psychology. Taken together, Strachey’s participation in the culture of 'Bloomsbury', his intimacy with Freudian psychology, and the pressures of the recent war signal the extent of his differences from the generation before him.

Strachey is a self-conscious biographer, and a knowing participant in the debates about the genre; in his Preface he laments that, 'The art of biography seems to have fallen on evil times in England'. Like others before him he limns the evils of 'Standard Biographies' while acknowledging his debt to them. His tutored, psychological perspective, with its interest in the individual mind, the unconscious, and a specific understanding of sexuality, provide him with an invigorated and refreshing approach to life-writing. The latter explains his rejection of the value of his subjects as 'mere symptoms of the past' and his insistence on the interest of individual 'human beings' whom, he claims, 'have a value which is independent of any temporal processes – which is eternal, and must be felt for its own sake'. Yet, if his reiteration of a desire to de-couple subjects' lives from an historical overview of the period is insistent, it does not convince me as a reader. In the first paragraph of his Preface, he denies any 'desire to construct a system or to prove a theory', in tandem with a later rejection of the notion of 'representative men' – 'Human beings are too important to be treated as mere symptoms of the past'. In the second paragraph, he divulges his preferred aim for a text that balances
history and biography: ‘I hope, however, that the following pages may prove to be of interest from the strictly biographical no less than from the historical point of view’. ‘Art’ sneaks in parenthetically in his throwaway disavowal of system and theory; his claim of ‘simple motives of convenience and of art’ (my emphasis) in a phrase redolent of the rhetoric of privilege in denial of any labour.

Art is an underlying element that spurs up like a geyser in a deft comparison between ‘the journeymen of letters’ who produce Standard Lives, and the ‘great biographical tradition’ of the French. In this short Preface, a long, detailed, and vehement denunciation of the style of the Standard Lives ensues, in the face of true biography which Strachey insists is ‘the most delicate and humane of all the branches of the art of writing’.20

The Preface does allow that an assemblage of ‘the lives of an ecclesiastic, an educational authority, a woman of action, and a man of adventure’ will yield ‘certain fragments of truth which took my fancy and lay to my hand’ (my emphases).21 Although Strachey trained as an historian, he appears to reject exhaustive research and scholarly process; his preferred model is aesthetic selection.22 Strachey’s plea for the importance of the biographical orientation of his project takes up the greater part of the Preface. It relegates the historical to a (neglected) equal, and barely touches on his own aesthetic, expressing it in terms of (the art of) biography. In response to the loquacious Standard Life, he vows to ‘preserve […] a becoming brevity – a brevity which excludes everything that is redundant and nothing that is significant – that surely, is the first duty of the biographer.’23 The injunction not to explain but to illustrate that opens the Preface is reiterated in its final words, which similarly claim an authorial invisibility if not absence: ‘Je n’impose rien; je ne propose rien; j’expose.’24

Strachey’s skittishness about his critique of the period is confirmed in his resolve to let the biographies ‘illustrate rather than […] explain’ even ‘a précis of the truth about the Victorian age’.25 The overall impact of Eminent Victorians is different than the sum of its parts. Its meaning is not confined to a series of individuals’ lives (Manning, Thomas Arnold, Nightingale, and Gordon); it is a strident and wholesale critique of a period, its representation, and its self-proclaimed exemplary rectitude, through corrective biographies of four of its undisputed heroic celebrities. Frequently Strachey moves from the particular to the general in the text: ‘Keble and Pusey continued for the rest of their lives to dance in an exemplary manner upon the tight-rope of High Anglicanism; in such
an exemplary manner, indeed, that the tight-ropes has its dancers still. Ironic
comments on the susceptibility of Victorians to religious beliefs are similarly
extrapolated: Arnold's 'sermons were collected into five large volumes; they were
the first of their kind; and they were received by a wide circle of pious readers.
Queen Victoria herself possessed a copy, in which several passages were marked
in pencil, by the Royal hand. 'Victorian', its suitably 'Eminent', and all resulting
claims to Eminence are under scrutiny.

That Strachey groups his biographies (he is not writing a biography of a
group), limning the lives of a series of otherwise unconnected persons, signals that
this cluster is shaped by the aesthetic of the overall text - with its implicit address
to a topic, the 'Victorians' - rather than by the dates and births of individual lives
(as biography tends to do). Although it is well-researched and investigative in
tone, Eminent Victorians combines this aspect of the 'new biography', indebted
to contemporary journalism, with the literary proclivities of belles lettres. In this
respect it addresses the tensions of the Benson-Wright alternatives by merging
them. It also calls to mind some of Pater's own practices.

While preparing this essay, it was Strachey's strategy of assembling grouped
biographies in the interest of a broader argument that alerted me that I had omitted
a fourth author and set of works from my cluster of comparisons: Walter Pater
himself - the Pater of The Renaissance (a series of lives, which together outlined a
period and its art) and Imaginary Portraits (which tipped the balance from history
to literature and fiction). Pater is also an author for whom biographies are part of
a larger argument, and subjugated to aesthetic form, rather than that of individual
lifespan or detailed historical arguments. A comparison of Pater's works with
Strachey's helps one to understand differences between Victorian criticism and
that of proto-modernism, rather than Victorian and modernist modes of biography.

The plan of Eminent Victorians faintly echoes that of Studies in the History of the
Renaissance in a number of instances. Both volumes present a series of biographies
of well-known figures, which in Strachey 'elucidate certain fragments of the
truth', a posture of the provisional that is found in the original, periodical titles
of Pater's pieces in Studies: 'Notes' on Lionardo and a 'Fragment' on Botticelli.
Strachey refers to his 'studies' in the Preface to Eminent Victorians, in a Paterian
vein, and in proximity to a disavowal of theory and system that closely resembles
Pater's famous expression of antipathy to their importance in the 'Conclusion of
Studies'.

Yet there are significant and fascinating differences: Pater’s ‘history’, which spans from the medieval age to the eighteenth century, and is continental rather than English, is apparently at a much greater distance from England and his own era than Strachey’s. While Pater’s ‘Conclusion’ began as a study of a contemporary English poet (William Morris), this contemporaneity is completely occluded in Studies. Even Johann Winckelmann, the eighteenth-century figure in Studies, is swept up into the history of the Renaissance, as Pater’s notion of the term includes the history of the idea that exceeds chronological limits.

This is one reason that Pater’s work is not as edgy as Strachey’s. Another is that Pater’s focus on artists and art is oriented to art history and intellectual history rather than the history of nations, with the result that it is apparently less topical and less politically resonant than Strachey’s book. (Pater’s subsequent characterisation of his critical method as being one of ‘appreciation’ also applies to The Renaissance). Lastly, the timing of the two works is part of their respective forms. Pater is publishing and writing Studies in the 1860s and 70s, before Froude’s biography of Carlyle (1882-4), which fuelled longstanding debates on the nature and ethics of biography that Strachey references in his Preface. Pater is also writing before the efflorescence of the new journalism, with its enthusiasm for personal and investigative work, just beginning in the new Pall Mall Gazette. So neither biography nor investigative journalism had made the inroads to which Eminent Victorians is testimony.

Pater’s project is less invested in biography than Strachey’s, and, as was observed by a contemporary reviewer, less interested in history than aesthetics and cultural criticism. When a second edition of Studies appeared in 1877, Pater dropped the word ‘History’ from its title, opting for The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry. The modesty of the biographical and research aspects of Pater’s text illuminates the robustness of these elements in Eminent Victorians, despite the almost immediate critique of Eminent Victorians to the effect that both its biography and history were bogus. Although Pater’s essays are based on research into the lives and works of artists, Pater’s ‘lives’ are primarily and evidently part of an aesthetic and critical discourse. If Pater ‘explains’ more than Strachey does, and frames the chosen lives by a Preface and a ‘Conclusion’, it is arguable that this attempt to shape his book more didactically is attributable to aesthetic motives of unifying his series of chapters with respect to literary style, and promulgating aesthetic criticism as a methodology of the day.
Two retrospective volumes are helpful in re-thinking the lives in Studies. Looking backward from Imaginary Portraits, Pater's own series of four short stories in the form of 'biographical' sketches yoked together in a volume conflating art, history, and fiction, prompts one to consider the 'lives' in Studies as 'portraits', carrying elements of character sketches as well as the historical biography of artists. Together, history and portraiture reflect and construct the aesthetic criticism framework into which they are locked. Likewise, the historical research which Eminent Victorians exudes, from which matrix character is assessed and forged by Strachey, shows the extent to which, on the one hand, Pater's narrative is suffused with 'explanation' and on the other how Strachey relies on his investigative historical research to 'illustrate' his arguments.

Comparison between Pater and Strachey's deployment of a collection of lives yields another set of differences. Pater's Renaissance 'studies' originated in a series of articles from two Victorian reviews, with the 1873 volume largely a collection of pieces published elsewhere, and fitted in and adapted to the book. Pater's lives were originally based on cultural journalism, a determined format that helps explain why Pater's first book consists of ten pieces that are the approximate length of a magazine or review article. One of the most controversial aspects of the 1873 Studies was the identification, by Pater's signature, of two of the essays, originally published anonymously in the Westminster Review: 'Winckelmann' and the 'Conclusion' (as part of 'Poems by William Morris'). The heightened prose of the 'Conclusion' was only just less controversial on the release of Studies than the re-mediation of the sexually-charged article on Winckelmann. Accepted originally for publication in a cultural environment caught up in the phenomenon of sensation literature, the two articles on Winckelmann and William Morris introduced elements of sensation into the new volume of Studies.

Strachey, who had been working steadily as a journalist for the Spectator while Eminent Victorians was gestating, did not publish his four studies individually prior to issuing the monograph. Unlike Pater, he separated what he regards as his literary work from his journalism, reflecting a self-consciousness about a difference between journalism and literature that seems, retrospectively, modernist. Nevertheless, the opinionated and investigative prose of Eminent Victorians also shows the influence of contemporary journalism in several respects: discerning the sensational topicality in its subject of the recently sloughed-off past; the choice of celebrity subjects; its new, attention-getting angle on them; and its spiky prose
(which was light on explanation and dedicated to 'illustration'). Also, the length of the portraits is significant. While they are laudably brief for biographies, they are too long to be accommodated in the early twentieth-century press; they are precisely not the standardised parcels of magazine prose of which Pater made up *Studies*. This makes Strachey’s format of grouped lives, in which he internalises a seriality redolent of collections of journalism, an aesthetic choice rather than the assemblage made by a book-making man of letters. While *Eminent Victorians* resembles a collection of articles from the press, and reflects contemporary journalism in a number of ways, it offers a text that is original and literary in structure. In his separation of literary and journalistic work, Strachey’s practice may reflect his Bloomsbury affiliations (for and by whom art was confidently produced and highly valued).

**Thomas Wright’s Investigative Biography**

One reason for a close scrutiny of Wright’s biography of Pater is to understand more clearly Strachey’s achievement and distinction of vision in *Eminent Victorians*, but Wright’s *Pater* is also of interest in itself. Moreover, despite the inherent dissatisfaction with Benson’s *English Men of Letters* volume expressed in Wright’s monograph, Wright’s life presents unresolved difficulties for scholars as well, leaving one reluctant to rely on it. I shall try in what follows to address these problems and pose some questions.

The ungainliness of Wright’s life of Pater has undoubtedly troubled scholars. Wright’s indefatigable gathering of evidence, and his commitment to including it all, make for a distended work of too many chapters – 47 – and an unselective oversupply of information, the array of which makes it difficult to decide what is credible and significant, and what is not. Wright attempts to use Pater’s acquaintances as ‘sources’, and, as an investigative reporter would, build his story on the basis of statements from named witnesses, rather than create a ‘story’ that mutes its sources in a smooth narrative based on occluded anecdotes like Benson. Wright uses two clearly ‘interested’ sources, one from Pater’s Canterbury school days and Oxford, and one possibly from Oxford and London circles. The mixed testimony of Ranier McQueen, a devoted friend while they were enrolled in the King’s School, Canterbury but someone clearly exasperated with Pater’s subsequent, languishing commitment to Christianity, is evident to readers. Instead of dealing judiciously with McQueen’s information, Wright merely incorporates
it, without processing it. It is nearly raw data. The same set of issues arises from Richard Jackson's 'witness' statements about Pater, which Wright is plainly unable to control. From the narrative of Wright's life of Pater, it is clear that Jackson's has exacted promises from Wright to include illustrations from Jackson's book and manuscript collection, and to publish a bibliography of Jackson's work, in exchange for the 'information' Jackson reveals. Jackson's status, however, is less reliable and understandable than McQueen's bias; Jackson seems obsessive and possibly delusional, and it is very hard to assess his contributions. Is any of it true? Or if some of it is credible, what and why?

It is the presence of large portions of this undigested material that makes the Wright life especially problematic, and undermines its authority. While there is clear evidence that Wright's biography is researched, it suffers from the author's earnest effort to include it all. Strachey's rule, of excluding the redundant and everything that is not significant, is everywhere broken.

The anxiety on Wright's part, visible in the high incidence of name-dropping and the oversupply of 'evidence' in illustrations and appendices, is also immediately evident in the style of the work. His tone is often combative; sentences are unshapely, weighed down with information and persuasive rhetoric. The commencement of his Preface is just one case in point: the argument waivers between tendentious overstatement in pages of 'background' and calm acknowledgment of fact. Surprisingly, the Preface begins with an attack on a rival life in its first meandering sentence: 'It is now more than twelve years since Walter Pater died, but although he was one of the most brilliant and most original writers of the Victorian era, no account of his life has yet appeared, with the exception of the meagre outline given in Mr A. C. Benson's Walter Pater, and the few details to be found in scattered magazine articles.' Preparing soon afterwards to attack Benson's book in twelve numbered objections, Wright insists that the critique is not personal. Nevertheless, he reveals that Benson recently requested permission to use Wright's information about Edward FitzGerald, the subject of an earlier shared biographical subject. Moreover, Wright ends this astonishment paragraph by suggesting that Benson's life of Pater is 'chiefly a book of criticism', which 'after the revision which it so much needs' may 'go into many editions'. It is a rollercoaster of a Preface, remarkably and uncomfortably personal. In adopting one of the innovations of the new journalism, Wright's tone echoes that of W. T. Stead's hortatory defence of it as the note of the new style. Where Strachey
obsures the shaping artist, claiming neither to impose nor propose, but expose, Wright does not hesitate to do all three. Part of the complexity of Wright’s text is its multi-vocality: many of his sources ‘speak’ in their own voice, not relegated or ordered to citation; Wright’s own voice is ever present (he paces the streets of Weston Underwood and the attics of Fish Hall, and he frequently calls on Pater) in his writings. Furthermore, he is ever anxious to ‘expose’.

Wright’s methods as well as his tone draw on new journalism, deploying as they do the recently-introduced format of the personal interview, and the prominence of factual evidence obtained by investigation. These new gathering methods are augmented by literary-critical approaches such as close reading and interpretation. This juxtaposition of discordant discourses is at the root of the reader’s problems with Wright: personal interviews, details of which are included verbatim; the tracking down and documentary illustration of parish records, the contents of which are included in detail in the body or footnotes of the book, are accompanied by the routine deployment of Pater’s writing as autobiographical ‘evidence’. The status of these readings is further complicated by Wright’s undermining of them: he disavows their reliability, noting Pater’s tendency as a writer to construct accounts of ‘home’ from a conflation of houses that figured in his childhood landscape. Moreover, Pater’s authoritative voice is in competition with Wright’s. Next to Pater’s experience, it is Wright’s own that he frequently recalls, his childhood house, village, and landscape.

Wright’s text is also routinely digressive. Whether this is to plump out the Life (to fill the two volumes) or himself is unclear, but chapters are frequently distended in several unruly directions. The first chapter is occupied by a description and genealogical account of Dutch Paters, laboriously located in seventeenth-century Buckinghamshire, ‘though whether or not Walter Pater was descended from this stock it is impossible to say’. Another cluster, on the Norfolk and Suffolk sea-board, ‘from whom Walter Pater was undoubtedly descended’, is tenuously linked to the lace trade in the eighteenth century, but a connection between Thompson Pater and lace is asserted, and probably based on hearsay, or conversations with named ‘ancestors’ in Olney. Wright also lards the chapter with a good deal on the poet Thomas Cowper (like Wright, from Olney), material which has been transferred from Wright’s recent books on Cowper, and with details difficult to follow of the buildings occupied by Cowper and some of the eighteenth-century Weston Underwood-Olney Paters. This messy matrix of
genealogical and geographical information is based on Wright's own familiarity with the byways of the district, with which he regales the reader, and on more now-conventional evidence, such as tombstones.39

Wright's life of Pater is teeming with 'information', seemingly legitimised by his indefatigable investigations and the bewildering abundance of names cited. Moreover, his recourse to significant eyewitnesses to Pater's life assures that their accounts are included among the voices of Pater's contemporaries. Despite the energy of his labours and the weight of material, however, a significant amount of the latter is uncorroborated. The reader also knows that several of the names cited respectfully, as though they were familiar to Wright and had contributed to his investigations, were most definitely unwilling to vouchsafe a shred of information. Pater's Oxford friend Charles Lancelot Shadwell is among them. So insistent were Hester and Clara Pater on this point that Wright never even mentions them by name anywhere in the narrative, or in the genealogy. He did understand the power of naming, and the authority it claimed; the whole veneer of naming in Wright requires careful examination by readers.

It might be argued that neither Pater's nor Strachey's biographies invite the careful reader to rely on their texts – in the guise of biography – as serious and reliable biographical studies. Virginia Woolf regarded the careful assemblage of information necessary in the production of biography as a 'craft' rather than as 'art', which she pronounced was the kind of (aesthetic) writing Strachey produced.40 Counter-productively for a biography, Wright's life does not instill confidence despite its aspiration to authority. It is apparent to readers from his flat, lapidary use of quotations, insinuations, and statements that Wright was fully aware of Pater's homosexual and homosocial characteristics, in sensational combination with his taste for ritual, Anglicanism, and Catholicism, and the outspoken character of much of his writing. Wright is perhaps commendably non-judgmental if not appreciative of his scandalous subject. Insofar as Wright produces a series of biographies of subjects with secrets (including Dickens), he presumably takes pleasure himself (like Strachey) in detecting and representing the decadent lineaments of well-known figures, while at the same time keeping an eye on the potential for high sales for biographies (a duality that reveals just what Henry James feared about biography: a willing partnership with the book market).41
The problem for Paterians is real. Both of Wright's main sources, McQueen and Jackson, are so self-interested and erratic in their memories and allegations that, without guidance from the biographer, readers are at a loss to assess how reliable this evidence-based biography is. Wright himself is patently unreliable, as the chaos of his narrative shows, let alone what the autobiographical elements reveal. The problem with Wright's life is not that he is a craftsman, but that he is a poor craftsman, painfully and bumblingly gathering evidence that he cannot control aesthetically, despite the apparatus of chronologically-precise chapters, fact-laden sentences, many footnotes per page, and numerous appendices. Wright's life of Pater reads as a burlesque version of the Standard Life disdained by Gosse and Strachey. It is neither a widow life like Benson's nor the Judas narrative that Strachey aspires to. If Strachey's work, like Pater's, is above all aesthetically shaped, Wright's is beleaguered by a veritable explosion of information before the reader's eyes, a realisation of the worst fear of Wright's contemporaries regarding the dangerous promiscuity of print. Although he has mastered certain elements of the craft, Wright lacks the art, which Pater and Strachey possess in abundance.

The text of Wright's biography is a map of the moment it appeared: after Benson's emollient, graceful text, Wright's book is published in the midst of sensational new journalism, with which it engages; it is also in the spirit of the new investigative biography. A decade before World War I, it inscribes the nineteenth century half-nostalgically and respectfully, and only occasionally critically, looking back to rural Britain, the monastic order of the Oxford colleges, and their men of letters. At the same time it participates in the post-*Daily Mail*, racy, new mass-media and celebrity culture invigorated in the twentieth century; it addresses the curiosity of new readers who came through the free and compulsory Board Schools created by the Education Act of 1870. Wright's book circulates in the throes of a revamped book trade resulting from the collapse of the three-volume novel in the mid-1890s, and the appearance of new novels (and books more generally) directly accessible for purchase in one-volume formats, and the first proliferation of free public libraries from which they might be borrowed. Just as the one-volume short life by Benson, in the reasonably priced English Men of Letters series, is designed to hook new readers, while its subject alone, the renowned aesthete, can be relied upon to attract longstanding followers of literature and high culture, so the plethora of photographs, tables, and statistics in Wright's two-volume study is geared to that mixed market.
Wright was also of a lower social class than the other three: than Strachey, certainly, but also of a different echelon than the Archbishop’s son, Benson, and the gentrified surgeon’s child, Walter Pater, both of whom were lodged in the two old universities. Wright is also writing from a different social, geographic, and economic location: as a middle-class, aspiring local schoolmaster who succeeds in becoming the author of a string of sensational biographies, local histories, an editor, and a novelist. 41

Notably, Aestheticism and Decadence are not terms that appear in either Benson’s or Wright’s indexes, although both words and ‘movements’ were well understood and even fashionable as part of critical parlance well before the turn of the twentieth century. These categories and discourses are available but refused by both of these Victorian biographers, who decline to do the hatchet-job that Strachey unmistakably strives to do a decade later. Strachey too avoids consideration of these terms, by governing his selection of figures to exclude fellow ‘artists’. I suspect that in addition to the other, diverse reasons suggested earlier, the poignant memory of Wilde’s utter ruin – the three trials and the penal servitude, and his ignominious death after release – was a haunting, negative example of the perils of disclosure. In the wake of Wilde (five or six years after his death, in the case of Benson and Wright, and even nearly twenty years later, in the case of Strachey), when the Criminal Law Amendment Act (of Stead’s and Labouchere’s crafting) continued to make homosexual acts illegal, the charge of Decadence per se and its attendant Hellenism and Paganism in a biographical setting remained not only uncharitable but toxic, and dangerous.

Thomas Wright’s Life of Walter Pater repays scrutiny; individual readers should make the effort to decide what aspects and proportion of this text will be relevant and useful to their specific project. As someone thinking about Pater’s life, and engaged in a biography, there are many elements of this work I draw on, gratefully, not least the eye-witness testimony of Ranier McQueen, the early poetry Wright recovers and publishes, the early attempt at genealogy, the photographs of various houses in which the Paters lived, the pinning down of dates, and the revelation of Richard C. Jackson as a possible ingredient of Pater’s biography. This is by no means an exhaustive list. Wright’s voice in the biography itself provides a glimpse, along with Benson’s, of the curiosity and anxiety with which the ‘figure’ of Pater was viewed in Britain little more than a decade after his death, as do the heated reviews of their accounts. The greatest problem for me in Wright is
not the idiosyncrasies of his own voice and his raucous combination of chaos and order, but the figure and claims of Richard Jackson, who to date remains a mysterious figure. That Wright was eventually taken over by Jackson, even stalked, is unmistakable, but to what extent Jackson figured in Pater’s life, even as he did in Wright’s, remains unclear. These two lives of Walter Pater, by the rivals Benson and Wright, are substantial contributions to the first phase of Pater’s biographies that include shorter interventions by a number of interested parties, most of whom knew Pater personally. Benson and Wright are the hub of Victorian biography about Pater, the range of which they reflect, styles which Strachey attempted to discredit and displace a decade later.

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NOTES

3 Strachey’s subjects are Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Dr. Thomas Arnold, and General Charles Gordon (‘Gordon of Khartoum’).
6 Ibid. Xs.
7 Henry James, ‘The Death of the Lion’, *Yellow Book* (April, 1894), 7–57.
11 Ibid., 95.
12 Pater probably met Jackson in the rooms of Henry Parry Lidderon in the spring of 1877. Jackson was twenty-six, and allegedly ‘an authority on poetry, sculpture, painting, and music.’ See Wright, 2: 19-22.
13 See Brake, Subjugated Knowledge, 188-215.
15 John Sutherland, ‘Introduction’; ibid., xvii-xviii.
16 Ibid., xiii.
18 Ibid., 5.
19 Ibid., 5.
20 Ibid., 6.
21 Ibid., 5-6.
23 Ibid., 6.
24 ‘I implore nothing; I propose nothing. I expose: 'This French quotation, which was until recently thought to be Strachey’s own, is derived from a mid-nineteenth-century text by Dunoüé, ‘De la liberté du travail’ (1845). While it may have been well-known by the time Strachey deploys it, it may also have ‘conveniently’ to hand, as it appeared as the epigraph of a successful and widely translated book of 1896 on Socialism and the Social Moment by Werner Sombart, a professor of political economy in Berlin (Sombart’s book appeared in its 5th edition in 1905, in a new English translation, with additional material on Marx).
25 Ibid., 5.
26 Ibid., 35.
27 Ibid., 155.
28 Ibid., 5.
29 See Pater, ‘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 morality we have not identified with ourselves, or what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.’ Pater, Conclusion, Studies in the History of the Renaissance (London: Macmillan, 1873), 211-12.
31 See Sutherland xiii-xv for an overview of contemporary criticism of Strachey’s lack of attention to history.
32 Wright, 1: vii.
33 Ibid., 1: vii.
35 For example, see Wright’s insistence on Walter Pater’s poverty, and its manifestations in his writing. See Wright, 1: 19-20.
36 Ibid., 1: 1.
37 Ibid., 1: 2.
38 See for example, Thomas Wright, The Town of Cowper: or the literary and historical associations of its neighbourhood (n. p., 1886), The Life of William Cowper (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892), and

39 Parish records of baptisms and deaths are cited in footnotes, some of which reappear in photographs or documents in the appendices.


41 James, ‘The Death of the Lion’, *Yellow Book*, 1(1894) 7-57.

42 For more on the ‘new biography’ before Strachey, see Brake, *Subjugated Knowledge*, 191-2.

43 Compare W. T. Stead: he was also rural in origins, self-made; aspiring, of the muddling class, and dedicated to writing. Ten years younger than Wright, Stead shows marked similarities (making Stead akin to Wright, if later, and in another guise). But Stead’s vehement non-Conformist zeal to castigate and denounce distinguishes him from Wright, although both men share an indefatigable curiosity and a taste for scandal.
Walter Pater’s Homoerotic Influence:
The Turning Points of the 1939 and 1994 Centenaries

Plato himself had not been always a mere Platonic lover; was rather, naturally, as he makes Socrates say of himself, ἄρρητον τῶν κυρίων—subject to the influence of fair persons.
  —Walter Pater, ‘The Genius of Plato’ (1892)

[How] lordly, or godlike, rather, in the posture! Could one fancy a single curve bettered in the rich, warm, white limbs; in the haughty features of the face, with golden hair, tied in a mystic knot across the inspired brow?
  —Walter Pater, ‘Apollo in Picardy’ (1893)

Several weeks before the outbreak of World War II, the Times Literary Supplement published a ‘special article’ of several thousand words commemorating the centenary of Walter Pater’s birth. Entitled ‘A Prose that Stands the Test of Time’, the feature is one among a handful of retrospectives published in 1939 that consider Pater’s considerable legacy to the modern era. The promising headline, however, frames a discussion that immediately raises some questions about Pater’s influence that remain—as I aim
to disclose in what follows—somewhat unsettled in our own moment. To be sure, the TLS’s anonymous critic promptly assertsthat Pater’s work ‘stands the test of time as no other prose writer of the nineteenth century’. But just before this clause appears, we are told, in wording that insinuates an unspecified aversion, that Pater ‘was unfortunate in his disciples, his biographers and some of his critics’ (Anon.). Without naming the names of those who have evidently devoted themselves to Pater for the wrong reasons, the author of this lengthy piece refocuses attention on what matters most about ‘the man the style’ (as if the two, in this unpunctuated parataxis, should be one and the same thing): afigure whose critical greatness resides in ‘his native austerity and clear-sightedness’, ‘his strong and delicate style’ with ‘its scrupulous honesty’ and ‘its faithfully authentic note’ (Anon.). Taken together, such robust (although nonetheless responsive) elements underlie the ‘invigorating salt of genuineness and exactness’ that we find in Pater’s unmatched ability ‘to combine a Latin definiteness with Northern thought’, whether he is writing authoritatively on such diverse figures as Giorgione, Goethe, or Pascal (Anon.). On this basis, the great Victorian stylist should be praised for his liberal-minded ‘catholic spirit’: ‘There never was an eclecticism more substantial or richer in content’. From this perspective, no matter which subject Pater turned his gaze upon, he exhibited great latitude in his great gift for combin[ing] the plastic sense of the Greeks with the medieval seriousness of concept and the “formal graces” of the moderns’ (Anon.). At the same time, Pater’s unstinting desire that ‘the lives of others should be enriched as he has enriched his own’ stemmed not only from the disciplined ‘restraint’ that he both ‘inculcated’ and ‘practised’; it also derived from the ‘long and arduous studies’ that informed the breadth of his distinguished essays and fictions (Anon.).

The 1939 commentary marked a turning-point in Pater’s legacy, since it brought to a head the pressure that had for some time been building up with regard to the disavowed homoeroticism that even the most diplomatic commentators found hard to repress when discussing in his career. By 1994, however, when the publication of Linda Dowling’s Hellenism and Homosexuality at Victorian Oxford coincided with the centenary of Pater’s death, the recent growth of an unapologetic queer criticism placed his interest in male same-sex desire more centrally in our critical understanding of his œuvre than ever before. In this essay I analyse some of the broader implications that are at stake in the remarkable turnabout that took place between the anniversaries of 1939 and 1994. The discussion begins
by focusing on some of the unspoken and semi-articulated misgivings that such eminent modernists as W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot maintained about the man whose palpable influence upon modern English prose induced a measure of unease. As I demonstrate, the modernist discomfort with Paterian desire becomes especially tangible in the TLS’s centenary commentary. The hesitations that we find in these writings from the 1930s, some four decades before male homosexuality was partly decriminalized in England and Wales, bear comparison with the conflicting ways in which more recent critics, especially ones who have responded to Dowling’s 1994 study, propose that Pater’s sexuality informed his attitude towards his legacy. In relation to these recent studies, I examine Pater’s own reflections on the joys and hazards of influence—a word that resonates throughout several areas of his writings—in connection with the presence of male homoerotic desire in ancient Greek philosophy and mythology: an area of academic inquiry that he treated with remarkable, though hardly muted, tact. The work of Pater’s in which influence affects male same-sex intimacy most pointedly is Plato and Platonism (1893): the series of essays, including ‘The Genius of Plato’, based on lectures that he delivered at Oxford when he was in his early fifties. Similarly, several of his imaginary portraits, notably ‘Apollo in Picardy’ (1893), turn the narrative gaze upon men’s fascination with Hellenic male beauty, though in historical settings that had long been alienated from the pagan era that acknowledged queer eroticism.

The TLS and the 1939 Centenary
If the essay in the TLS begins on a positive note to clarify why Pater’s was ‘A Prose that Stands the Test of Time’, it proves altogether less straightforward when the discussion turns to addressing ‘the enigma of Pater’s life’, which occupies the penultimate paragraph of the article (Anon.). The mystery, it seems, had much to do with his ‘dual existence, or rather many existences’ (Anon.). He lived, we learn, ‘a life of sober hard work’ that was ‘almost colourless’ (Anon.). The marked contrast between the cultural richness of his writings and his humdrum routine as the ‘simplest and kindest of men required the TLS to offer a diplomatic explanation (Anon.). Pater, we are told, had a personal orientation towards ‘a discreet light, secluded places, the splendid gloom of the sanctuary’ (Anon.). And should anyone object to the reclusive Pater’s apparent ‘semi-paganism’—which we might discern in the ‘sacred presences’ that the pre-Christian religion of Numa stirs in the protagonist of his only completed novel, Marius the Epicurean (1885)—the
appropriate response would be that his fascination with ancient rites and rituals was in itself ‘a form of faith’, a devotion that displayed ‘a deep religiousness’. Earnest, restrained, meticulous, and reverent, Pater (as the TLS reminds us) also had to his credit ‘a love of children and cheerful company’. In this pen-portrait, he is, in almost every respect, a clean-living, industrious literary man, who, no matter how oddly retiring in his person and austere in his prose, still had the makings of a benign English patriarch.

Although the strategic defensiveness of this characterization is not difficult to discern, it points to an intractable problem that recurred elsewhere in leading appraisals of Pater’s reputation before, during, and after the 1930s. As modern critics have widely recognized, the perceived antagonism between Pater’s responsibilities as a university instructor and the physicalized passion that he celebrated in aesthetic experience at times proved sensitive, particularly during his early tenure at Brasenose. Details of the suspicions and tensions that initially surrounded the publication of the ‘Conclusion’ to his first book, Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873), have been rehearsed many times. To those who had intimate knowledge of Pater’s career at Brasenose, where he took up a position as a tutorial Fellow in Classics in 1864, his personal life was also under scrutiny. Yet by the time of his death, the uneasiness around Pater’s sexuality had been largely replaced by tributes that made the following kind of claim: ‘there is not one page in Mr Pater’s writings on which the most trivial carelessness can be detected’.

When we move toward Modernism proper, however, we can see that Pater’s interest in men’s sexual attraction to other men started to make its presence known within an assertive critical framework. In a 1910 essay provocatively titled ‘The New Hellenism’, Arundell Esdaile, who developed his reputation as a leading bibliographer at the British Museum, observed that ‘[b]y far the most powerful influence in the Oxford of 1874 [when Oscar Wilde matriculated at the university] was that of Pater, and it is palpable that Wilde came under his spell’. Esdaile principally focuses on the need to cut through the ‘tide of morality’ against Wilde, who was jailed in 1895 for his homosexual intimacies, which made it hard to appreciate a once-popular writer who was undoubtedly a ‘brilliant man of letters’. In particular, Esdaile takes issue with Benson in the 1906 biography for ‘go[ing] out of his way to clear Pater from the charge of having fathered Wilde, whom he does not mention by name, but hints at not obscurely’. Boldly, Esdaile
draws attention to the echoes of Pater’s ‘Conclusion’ in Wilde’s novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which had been charged with implicitly homoerotic immorality when it first appeared in 1890. Esdaile draws attention to the passage in which Wilde’s narrator observes that the beautiful male protagonist (who appears to be forever young) aims to discover ‘some new scheme of life’, one which—through ‘the spiritualising of the senses’—might reach its “highest realisation”. This, Esdaile insists, ‘is the creed known as the New Hellenism’ that derived from Pater.

This background helps to account for the peculiar manoeuvring that appears later in the 1939 TLS article. Despite its best intentions, the TLS chose not to engage directly with the emancipating sensuality that Esdaile detected in the ‘New Hellenism’. But when the writer of the article reached out for metaphors that might typify the ways in which the reserved Pater was (at least through his vibrant imagination) ‘a multitude of persons’, the sexual element manifested itself in an awkward formulation (Anon.). ‘[H]is mystery’, we read, ‘was that of the seeds eaten by Persephone’, whose plight in classical myth is to be perpetually torn between her mother Demeter (the agricultural goddess) and her lover Hades (the chthonian god). The pomegranate seeds that Hades persuades Persephone to consume ensure that she remains for one third of the year in his sexual possession. Certainly, the seeds are mysterious to Persephone insofar as she cannot understand how they seal her fate. As Pater knew, her story—as it transmuted over the centuries throughout Greece and Rome—eventually took the shape of a fertility myth: ‘She is the last day of spring, or the first day of autumn, in the threefold division of the Greek year’. Yet the TLS reviewer’s idea that Pater might have ingested Hades’s seeds gives one pause. What is supposed to be apposite about this explanatory allusion? In the same sentence, which tries to characterize Pater’s multitudinous personality, the subsequent metaphor takes a similar turn. We learn that Pater’s ‘eyelids were “a little weary”’, a reference to his famous description of Leonardo da Vinci’s portrait of La Gioconda, which hangs in the Louvre (Anon.). (In Pater’s evocative *ekphrasis*, once he has observed that ‘the eyelids of this artwork ‘are a little weary’, he proceeds to discern the painting’s unique sensual aesthetic: ‘It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions’.) Thereafter, the article quickly represents Pater as a man who, like Watteau in *A Prince of Court Painters* (1885), sought after ‘something in the world, that is there in no satisfying measure, or not at all’. Furthermore, we are told that Pater ‘had felt the
full weight of “all the accumulated sense of human existence” through ‘the pathos of radiant lives irrevocably doomed, Marius, Hippolytus, Hyacinthus, Emerald Uthwart, Sebastian van Storek’, the protagonists of several of his finest works of fiction (Anon.).

The deathliness of Paterian desire, whether in the shape of La Gioconda or his fated males, points to the idea that male passion (in the most general sense) could never reach fulfilment.

Perhaps because the ‘special article’ in the TLS eventually strayed a little too far from the type of restraint that it set out to praise in Pater’s memory, in the same issue a forthright editorial headed ‘Walter Pater’ and placed beneath the list of ‘Chief Contents’ alerted readers to the fact that one of its leading contributions set out ‘to pay [Pater] on this anniversary the highest possible tribute—to tell the truth about him’ (Anon.). Such truth, it turns out, involves repudiating the caricature of Pater that emerges in the figure of Mr Rose in W. H. Mallock’s The New Republic (1877), an Oxonian satirical novel in which the character ‘always speaks in an undertone, and his two topics are self-indulgence and art’. More emphatically, telling the truth also requires that Pater is ‘no more to be saddled with “The Picture of Dorian Gray” than the author of the Book of Proverbs is with [Martin] Tupper’s “Proverbial Philosophy”’ (Anon.). This crushing comment, which compares Wilde’s penchant for epigram with Tupper’s sentimental phrasemaking, served as an implicit reminder that Pater’s name had emerged during Wilde’s hazardous libel suit against John Sholto Douglas, 9th Marquess of Queensberry, in early April 1895: a set of proceedings that unexpectedly revealed the extent of Wilde’s contacts in London’s homosexual subculture. Edward Carson, the leading counsel for Queensberry’s defence, made much of the ways in which The Picture of Dorian Gray had, in its first 1890 edition, contained phrases and sentiments which were so striking ‘that some people reading the book […] might reasonably think that it did deal with sodomy’. Carson contended that the extensive revisions that Wilde made to the second edition of his novel in 1891 revealed that the work ‘was modified and purged a good deal’. In response, Wilde commented: ‘I say there were additions made in one case or two—in one case, certainly. It had been pointed out to me not by any newspaper criticism or anything, but by the only critic of this century I set high, Mr Walter Pater, had pointed out to me that a certain passage was liable to misconstruction’.

To Wilde’s former lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, who was sixty-eight at the time, the TLS’s editorializing was too much to be borne. In a letter of protest
to the periodical, Douglas reminded readers that Pater’s review in The Bookman treated Wilde’s novel with ‘the highest praise; what is more, Douglas noted that ‘[t]he sneer at Wilde and his masterpiece would have caused Walter Pater the greatest indignation and resentment’.21 ‘The unfairness and rancour of the Press which pursued Oscar Wilde all through his life’, Douglas added, ‘might surely, one had hoped, be allowed to die down forty years after his death’.22 But the memory of Wilde’s sexual disgrace (1895), his brutal incarceration (1895–97), and his early death (1900) still preyed on the minds of an English society, which remained entrenched in its hostility to homosexual activity. In the end, the TLS resolved that what proved commendable about Pater’s style was its standing as the burnished work of a man who had the discipline not to put his desires into practice. And yet, by supposedly not acting on those impulses, Pater’s work still caused disquiet not only in the respected TLS but also, with much more explicit apprehensiveness, in the writings of leading modernists.

As early as 1909, Yeats committed to one of his journals the belief that the author of The Renaissance (as the study became known in 1877) had emasculated ‘some young Oxford man’ whom he had encountered at the university, an undergraduate who had presumably imbibed a model of ‘modern culture’ from Pater’s volume: ‘Surely the ideal of culture expressed by Pater can only create feminine souls’.23 Richard BIZOT has contended that the comment that Yeats immediately makes in response to this observation, ‘[t]he soul becomes a mirror not a brazier’, has much to do with the Irish poet’s attempt to ‘root out of himself—or at least counterbalance’ the ‘[p]assivity, femininity if you will’ that threatened his sense of masculine integrity.24 Nevertheless, in his journal entry Yeats appears more concerned about Pater’s corrupting influence upon others than any damage it might have inflicted on himself. Yeats’s later and better-known remarks about Pater’s disturbing influence relate directly to the broad perception that the long-deceased university don espoused ideas that brought about the ruin not just of some young men at Oxford but an entire group of poètes maudits. In ‘The Tragic Generation’ (1922), a memoir that focuses largely on the dissolute demises of Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, and Oscar Wilde in the 1890s, Yeats recalled the unsettling impact of rereading Marius the Epicurean (‘the only great prose in modern English’) several years before: ‘I began to wonder if it, or the attitude of mind of which it was the noblest expression, had not caused the disaster of my friends. It taught us to walk upon a rope, tightly stretched through serene air,
we were left to keep our feet upon a swaying rope in a storm’.25 Yeats’s startling metaphor, as Matthew Potolsky puts it, suggests that the ‘beauty of Pater’s writing’ involves a ‘[l]iterary pedagogy’ that (in the manner of a circus master) leads his unsuspecting students into performing a ‘dangerous stunt’.26 Perhaps it was in a gesture to release himself from Pater’s chicanery that Yeats decided to open *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936) with a translation (involving some slight misquotation) of the famous description of *La Gioconda* into free verse: ‘Only by printing it in *vers libre*, Yeats asserted, ‘can one show its revolutionary importance’.27 By switching its genre from prose to poetry, and by transforming Pater into a figure congruent with the modernist avant-garde, Yeats exercised a remarkable will-to-power over *The Renaissance*. Noticeably, the only other work that Yeats tampered with in his anthology was Wilde’s ‘Ballad of Reading Gaol’ (1898): he ‘plucked’ from the poem ‘its foreign feathers’ so that it might show ‘a stark realism akin to that of Thomas Hardy, the contrary of all its author deliberately sought’.28 (Numerically, Yeats ‘plucked’ seventy-one of Wilde’s stanzas, leaving a denuded thirty-eight still standing.) Once again, Yeats exercised a firm editorial hand upon a man who appeared not to have recognized the form that his work should have taken. Wilde, Yeats observes, was an individual ‘who was tricked and clowned to draw attention to himself’: a phrase that echoes the one in which he evoked Pater as an endangering circus manager.29

In 1923, Eliot acknowledged Yeats’s ‘recent Memoirs which [...] form a document of very great interest for the generation of Oscar Wilde’; ‘Mr Yeats’, Eliot noted, ‘bears explicit testimony to the influence of Pater upon his generation’.30 The descriptive comment draws no judgement about the nature of that influence. Earlier, however, as Denis Donoghue has remarked, Eliot expressed scepticism towards Pater’s ‘Conclusion’ in the only story he ever published: ‘Eeldrop and Appleplex’, a tale about two male friends lodging together in London, which appeared in the *Little Review* in 1917.31 In the second part of the story, Appleplex recalls a mysterious woman he nicknames Scheherazade, who was in fact Edith, the daughter of a piano-tuner from Honolulu. He recounts the things that she left behind before she disappeared from their lives. One such item is ‘a poem written on a restaurant bill—’To Atthis’: a title that conjures the famous fragment in which Sappho sings passionately about her desire for another woman.’32 Edith, we discover, was a devotee of Pater. Eeldrop reminds Appleplex about Edith’s beliefs:
“Not pleasure, but fullness of life [...] to burn ever with a hard gem-like flame”, those were her words. What curiosity and passion for experience!”

Appleplex, in response, is appalled by Edith’s recitation of these key phrases from Pater’s ‘Conclusion’. ‘What real person’, he asks, ‘has ever believed in the passion for experience?  To his mind, the absurdity of the idea stemmed from a tradition that dated not only to The Renaissance of the 1870s but also to further developments within aestheticism during the 1880s: ‘Marius, des Esseintes, Edith…’. Evidently it is not just Pater who has misled Edith, with her Sapphic interests; it is also J.-K. Huysmans’ anti-realist novel, À rebours (1884), the protagonist of which—the constitutionally sickly aesthete Duc Jean Floressas des Esseintes—has removed himself from Paris to suburban Fortenay-aux-Roses, where he devotes his time to contemplating beautiful and curious works of art and literature because he can no longer abide the tedium of the city. In Eliot’s fiction, it is perhaps not coincidental that the two male characters’ distrust of Edith’s predilections remind us that Huysmans’ novel, like several of Pater’s writings, resonate in parts of The Picture of Dorian Gray. Maybe, too, the idea that Pater’s ‘Conclusion’ and Marius the Epicurean influenced a passionate bohemian such as Edith (one who is rumoured to be involved with ‘a Russian pianist in Bayswater’, and who spends time ‘at the Anarchist tea rooms’ and the ‘Café de l’Orangerie’) throws light on the refrain that we find in Eliot’s famous poem that appeared in the same year, ‘The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock’ (1917): ‘In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo’. Is it that the women, whose ‘Arms that are braceletled and white and bare’ arouse sexual frustration in Prufrock, have been reading the chapter on the great Italian artist in The Renaissance? All that one can say is that for Eliot, at this time, Pater’s legacy was orientated towards femininity, and a somewhat doubtful one at that. As Lesley Higgins has shown, this is very much the gist of a cancelled passage from The Waste Land (1922) in which the speaker dwells on Fresca: a figure who ‘blinks, and yawns, and gapes, / Aroused from dreams of love and pleasant rapes’. Fresca, like Edith, suffers from ‘Unreal emotions’, since she ‘was baptised in a soapy sea / Of Symonds—Walter Pater—Vernon Lee’ (the female aesthetic theorist who acknowledged the great influence of Pater on her early work).

Yet much later, in 1930, when Eliot finally accepted Walter de la Mare’s request to furnish an essay on Pater for the Royal Society of Literature volume titled The Eighteen-Eighties, the objections to the author of The Renaissance became
more entrenched. The essay in question, ‘The Place of Pater’, was produced with some difficulty. Eliot had already told de la Mare that he felt that he was not in the best position to deliver a lecture to the Society on the broad topic of ‘Aesthetics’. And if he concentrated solely on *The Renaissance* and *Marius the Epicurean*, he would be faced with a challenge: ‘if I tackled Pater, I should feel on very uncertain ground about his art criticism’.  

By 21 April 1930, when he reluctantly turned over his essay to de la Mare, Eliot commented: ‘everything that I have said has been said before, and [I] am thoroughly dissatisfied with it’.  

If, however, Eliot felt disappointed in his own critical discussion, he was arguably much more displeased with Pater. In his essay, Eliot principally focuses on *Marius the Epicurean*, the novel that strikes him as ‘Pater’s most arduous attempt at a work of literature’, one whose significance stems from the fact that its narrative ‘represents the point of English history at which the repudiation of revealed religion by men of culture and intellectual leadership coincides with a renewed interest in the visual arts’. Such phrasing points obliquely to the idea that the study of the Great Masters, such as we find in *The Renaissance*, brought about a return to paganism, with all that such pre-Christian faith entails.

As it turns out, Eliot hardly minces his words when critiquing Pater’s ‘most arduous attempt’ in the literary sphere: ‘its content is a hodge-podge of the learning of the classical don, the impressions of the sensitive holiday visitor to Italy, and prolonged flirtation with the liturgy’ (‘The Place’, 103–4). It is almost as if Eliot thought that Pater’s novel had much the same value as a John Murray guide that satisfied the needs of the sightseers who flocked to the galleries of Florence and Rome. Yet Pater’s greatest offence to Eliot is his ignorance of ‘the essence of the Christian faith’, of which he ‘knew almost nothing’ (‘The Place’ p. 104). (Clearly, as far as Eliot is concerned, Pater’s contributions to the conservative Anglican journal, *The Guardian*, were beside the point.) To be sure, some sentiments bear a close connection with Eliot’s reception into the Church of England in 1927. But, then, it appears to Eliot that Pater’s inadequacies did not stop with a failure to grasp the teachings of Jesus Christ. In his view, Pater’s insufficiencies were so great that the Oxford don did not even have his classical chops: ‘his intellect was not powerful enough to grasp [...] the essence of Platonism or Aristotelianism’ (‘The Place’, p. 104).

On these grounds, Eliot refuses to believe that the effete Pater ‘influenced a single first-rate mind of a later generation’. At the same time, however, he admits
that there is an aspect of Pater’s influence that proves impossible to ignore:

His view of art, expressed in *The Renaissance*, impressed itself upon a number of writers in the ’nineties, and propagated some confusion between life and art which is not wholly irresponsible for some untidy lives. The theory (if it can be called a theory) of ‘art for art’s sake’ is still valid in so far as it can be taken as an exhortation to the artist to stick to his job; it never was and never can be valid for the spectator, reader or auditor. How far *Marius the Epicurean* may have assisted in a few ‘conversions’ in the following decade I do not know: I only feel sure that with the direct current of religious development it has had nothing to do at all. (‘The Place’, p. 105).

Unquestionably, Eliot’s comments set in stone the suspicion that Yeats articulated in 1922 about the ways in which Pater’s writings brought about ‘disaster’ among the 1890s generation of poets. Yet here the power of Pater’s influence—even if it came from such a seemingly inept and ill-educated source—emerges as so great that it served as successful propaganda, leading to lives that were euphemistically ‘untidy’: homosexual, alcoholic, and destitute are the more precise epithets that come to mind.

The 1994 Centenary and the Rise of Queer Criticism

Not long after the Sexual Offences Act, 1967, party decriminalized male homosexuality in England and Wales, there was a slow but sure decline in the embarrassments involved in addressing queer desire throughout cultural history. By the 1990s, there was sufficient liberalism within academic institutions to examine Pater’s commitment to exploring male homoeroticism. In 1994, Dowling went so far as to claim that Pater’s writings involved ‘a momentous move toward a genuine radicalization of Victorian liberal assumptions’ through his promotion of Hellenism.44 Dowling submits that ‘Pater chose to conduct his campaign from within the boundaries of Victorian liberal discourse, not posing any open challenge to liberal assumptions as such but devising a “coded” version of liberalism: one that appears indirectly in the ‘constantly beckoning and receding suggestiveness’ of the ‘homoerotic themes’ that we glimpse in his work.44 In this view, Pater’s
appeal to male same-sex passions subverted the liberal ethic championed by J. S. Mill’s *On Liberty* (1869) that upheld (in Dowling’s words) ‘liberty, individuality, self-development, and diversity’. Yet, although it is impossible to take issue with Pater’s unashamed commitment, in the earliest version of his essay on Winckelmann (1868), to the ‘triumphant colour’ that the German art historian found in ‘the blossom of the Hellenic spirit and culture’, the idea that the young Oxford tutor, in uttering these words, was running a campaign ascribes to him an intentionality that sought to exert influence, one that yearned to transform the future. In other words, it was through his attempts to expand the domain of Victorian liberal thought that Pater entrusted his legacy. Here, I think, we hear differently inflected echoes of Yeats’s much earlier belief that Pater’s instruction took deliberate risks.

By contrast, in the following decade Heather Love contended that when we contemplate the extensive sadness and mournfulness that pervades Pater’s writings, it is possible to extract the resonance of his ‘historical position’ from the words of Victor Hugo quoted in the ‘Conclusion’: ‘we are all *condamnés* [...] *les hommes sont tous *condamnés à mort* avec des suris *infinis*’ (‘humankind is condemned to death with a sort of indefinite reprieve’). The quotation, for Love, bears witness to Pater’s ‘experience of displacement’ as an unassuming queer man, one whose aesthetics entail ‘not only [...] a politics of camouflage and disappearance but also [...] a politics of deferral’. As a consequence, Pater remains—from his earliest work onwards—dedicated to figures who embody ‘latency, potential, and delay’. On this view, he is hardly a campaigner conducting ingenious subterfuge to transform liberalism from within. Instead, he remains unable ‘to rise up against the onset of modernity’; he responds ‘with a weak refusal: he quails at its approach’. And once we look elsewhere in *The Renaissance*, it appears that there is other evidence to uphold the belief that he recoiled from the future. In Pater’s account of Botticelli’s *Madonna of the Magnificat*, for example, he attends to the striking manner in which the infant Christ guides her hand so that she may ‘transcribe in the book the words of her exaltation, the *Ave*, the *Magnificat*, and the *Gaude Maria*’. [But], as Pater observes, ‘the pen almost drops from her hand’, since, as he sees it, she recognizes through this act how ‘the intolerable honour’ of bearing the Lord had been brought upon her. To Love, ‘we might read this passage as an allegory of Pater’s resistance to his future exaltation’.
Such a comment prompts several responses. Exactly how are we supposed to generate an allegory of Pater’s ‘weak refusal’ to confront the future out of this ekphrasis? What is at stake with his presumed identification with an unsteady female hand that cannot commemorate her glory? How might the tottering orthography compare with Pater’s finely honed prose? Assuredly, Love’s hypothesis is scarcely an attack on the superannuated idea of Pater’s queer creation of ‘feminine souls’. Nor does she in any way wish to categorize Pater’s career among Eliot’s ‘untidy lives’. But it takes what we might call the shadow form of the TLS’s assumption that the author of The Renaissance evoked ‘the pathos of radiant lives irrevocably doomed’. On this view, there was no transformative future for the erotic radiance that historical figures such as Winckelmann encountered in Hellenism. These two modern accounts of Pater’s homoerotic aesthetics—the one committed to his broadening of sexual liberalism, the other speaking of his shrinking into melancholy, fearful of political intervention—address different sides of his oeuvre. Yet both approaches of course point to his pronounced interest in articulating male same-sex desire throughout his thirty-year career. Might there, then, be some reconciliation between these contending views?

Pater and Male Homoerotic Influence:
‘The Genius of Plato’ and ‘Apollo in Picardy’

Two of Pater’s periodical contributions from the early 1890s provide an opportunity to explore the mixture of sexual liberalism and erotic despair that modern queer criticism has identified. First, let me turn to ‘The Genius of Plato’, which he published in the Contemporary Review, an Anglican journal that had not always been hospitable to discussions of male-male intimacy in ancient Greece.53 Much of Pater’s analysis, which he reprinted in Plato and Platonism, expounds his opening thesis. When, he states, we try to understand Plato, we need to appreciate not only the ways in which the philosopher expressed ‘the general character of the age’ but also what he was as a ‘person’.54 The distinction draws into focus the tension between the ‘mechanic influence’ of what we might call ‘the “environment” and the ‘unique […] individual genius’ that has ‘its own masterful way with that environment’ (‘The Genius’, p. 249). To reaffirm this point, Pater stresses Plato’s independent-mindedness through an allusion to the French author Théophile Gautier, which the Goncourt brothers recorded and Wilde echoed in The Picture of Dorian Gray. Plato, Pater observes, ‘was one, for whom, as was said
of a very different French writer, “the visible world really existed” (“un homme pour qui le monde visible existe”) (“The Genius’, p. 250). The quotation (to which, as Lene Østermark-Johansen notes, Pater alludes three times in the article) aims to capture Plato’s astonishing ability to be not only an emphatic witness to unseen [...] beauty [...] which is not for the bodily eye; Pater also reminds us that Plato’s aestheticism stemmed from the philosopher’s austere control over ‘a variously interested, a richly sensuous, nature’: a sensuality that had long been associated with Gautier’s championing of art for its own sake in the 1830s. In a flourish that hardly appears rhetorically self-disciplining, Pater celebrates the rapturous co-presence of Plato’s dialogues and the essay he is writing: ‘The visible world, so pre-eminently worth eye-sight at Athens just then, really existed for him: exists still—that’s the point!’ (“The Genius’, p. 250). And who or what energizes the embodied beauty that Plato beholds? The answer is the young men who resemble ‘Murillo’s Beggar-boys […] the scene in the Lysis of the dice-players’ (“The Genius’, p. 250). ‘There the boys are!’ Pater exclaims, as if they had been summoned before his and Plato’s eyes (“The Genius’, p. 250).

No sooner has Pater mentioned these alluring males than he recalls the figures of masculine attractiveness and vigour that test Socrates’s desires in Plato’s dialogues, notably Charmides and Alcibiades. As Pater recalls Plato’s portrayals of these young men who pass before Socrates’s eyes, there is only one conclusion to be drawn, as we discover in the Lysis: ‘Poor creature that I am’, says Socrates, ‘I have one talent: I can recognise, at first sight, the lover and the beloved’ (“The Genius’, p. 253). The lovers are of course male, the one the older, active partner (ἐρωτικύς) and the other the younger, passive one (ἐρωμένος). On this basis, for Pater it is clear that Plato was ‘unalterably a lover’, and—although he could not say it too loudly, even if the context was plain—a lover of his own sex.

There is little in ‘The Genius of Plato’ that we might consider to be marked by sexual self-censorship or queer shame. Nor is there much that is homoerotically coded. The essay proceeds to speak (also three times) of τὰ ἐρωτικά: ‘the experience, the discipline, of love’, in which such discipline necessitates ‘an exquisite culture of the senses’ (“The Genius’, p. 254). Such phrasing barely denies the body’s pleasures; instead, it speaks of regulating physical desires through rigorous study and reflection. Even the idea that Plato exercised ‘Temperance’ (which Pater capitalizes, just to remind us that it is one of Christianity’s seven heavenly virtues) over his passionate sexuality carries with it an exuberant joy. The
The virtuous restraint of Plato, a man who originally ‘was subject to the influence of fair persons’, is hardly severe (‘The Genius’, p. 255). His form of ‘Temperance’, we learn, had all ‘the charms of a patiently elaborated effect of art’, in a manner that makes such curbs appear almost as aesthetically pleasing as the unbridled sensuality that they were supposed to suppress (‘The Genius’, p. 255). Moreover, even when maturity ensured that both Socrates and his pupil Plato tempered their passions, they still looked at invisible abstractions on the basis of τὰ ἀπορτικὰ: ‘the discipline of sensuous love’ (‘The Genius’, p. 256). Unlike Aristotle, Plato was not, as Pater insists, the leader of the ‘Schoolmen’ who dedicated hours to ‘analysis and definition’ (‘The Genius’, p. 257). Instead, he was a lover who ‘made us freemen’, a lover who could at last imagine ‘an experience yet to come’: abstractions of an invisible higher world that remained dependent on ‘visible things’ (‘The Genius’, p. 258). In a sense, the Plato we find here sounds like the dissident liberal that Dowling believes that Pater wanted to be.

‘The Genius of Plato’, however, ends with the philosopher’s death, in a gesture that that suspends him in an activity that he cannot complete. Cicero memorialized this moment with the well-known tag: ‘Scribens est mortuus’ (‘he died with pen in hand’) (‘The Genius’, p. 261). Yet even if Plato expired in the act of writing, unable to finish his work, he did not, in Pater’s phrasing, do anything to ‘retard the effacement which mere time brings to persons and their abodes’. Such wording, which points to Plato’s lack of interest in exercising influence, makes one reflect on the longstanding perception of Pater’s own self-effacement: the sense that his fascination with death signals his withdrawal from embracing modernity, which critics like the journalist in the 1939 TLS have also related to his ‘colourless’ life. Perhaps, then, it makes sense to end with one of Pater’s most deathly stories, one that muses on a beautiful male body that is altogether too lethal for another man to desire.

In ‘Apollo in Picardy’, which first appeared in the popular Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, Pater’s narrator weaves an imaginary tale about the myth of the ‘Hyperborean Apollo’, whose presence resurges in the monastic world of mediaeval France. This Apollo, as we know from Heinrich Heine’s famous 1853 essay (to which Pater refers in The Renaissance), is one of the gods in exile who fled ‘north of the Alps’ from his home in the Mediterranean once Christianity had triumphed over the pagan world. The timeless beauty of this deity, whose name evokes both ‘solar fervor and effulgence’ and murderous destruction (the
verb ἀπόλλωμι means to kill or slay), presents itself before Prior Saint-Jean when the priest reaches his new home, the Grange of Notre-Dame De-Pratis in Picardy ('Apollo', p. 271). In this Christian community, the prior witnesses a young man asleep beneath the lamp-lit rafters of a barn where 'the farm produce lay stored' ('Apollo', p. 276). As Pater's storyteller slides into the prior's consciousness, the recumbent male body (equipped with a harp and a bow) proves glorious to behold. The monk can scarcely believe that the youth might be a servant:

A serf! But what unserflike ease! how lordly, or godlike, rather, in the posture! Could one fancy a single curve bettered in the rich, warm, white limbs; in the haughty features of the face, with the golden hair, tied in a mystic knot, fallen down across the inspired brow? And yet what gentle sweetness also in the natural movement of the bosom, the throat, the lips, of the sleeper! Could that be diabolical, and really spotted with unseen evil, which was so spotless to the eye? ('Apollo', p. 276)

Unquestionably such irresistibile sensuality tests the prior's ascetic faith, since he intuit that the boy's handsome frame might be treacherous. This response is not surprising. As the story has already revealed, this particular Apollo is called Brother Apollyon: a name that means not just light but also death, if not devilish destruction, as we know from Revelations 9:11. Soon, the story confirms that the good-looking young monk, who serves as a janitor at the holy grange, is hardly akin to 'the old Adam fresh from the maker's hand' ('Apollo', p. 276). Everything that comes within his influence dies a terrible death, though it proves impossible for the monastic community to comprehend his evil doing. Among the students under his tutelage, the prior is amazed to discover that Apollyon is an accomplished scholar, with an unbelievable 'familiarity (it was as if he might once have spoken them) with the dead languages in which their textbooks were written' ('Apollo', p. 286). The attractive youth embodies 'an ineffaceable memory [...] of the entire world of which those languages had been the living speech' ('Apollo', p. 286). And yet, within his sexually illuminated body, that 'entire world' of intense sensual beauty wreaks havoc on the present world of Picardy. It is when Apollyon is at his most exquisite, when 'he seemed [...] to shine from within a light of his own', that the game of playing with a 'devil's penny-piece' (one of the metal discuses that
he has found near a burial-site) results in an aesthetically-orchestrated homicide ('Apollo', p. 288). Pater’s story radically modifies the Greek myth in which Apollo, having thrown a discus for his beloved Hyacinthus to catch, accidentally kills the beautiful youth when his sexual rival Zephyrus deliberately blows the plaything off course. In Pater’s story, Apollyon lets the discus land ‘like a twirling leaf’ that ‘sinks edgewise, sawing’ his fine-looking companion Hyacinthus’s face in two, quickly ‘crushing in the tender skull upon the brain’ ('Apollo', pp. 289–90). In the prior’s world of Christian devotion, the Greek god’s homoerotic desire has transformed into an artful form of murder.

No one finds Apollyon guilty; he swiftly departs ‘northward, without saying a word to Prior Saint-Jean’ ('Apollo', p. 290). In the meantime, the monk is left under suspicion of the murder, and he is eventually convicted of killing Hyacinthus ‘in a fit of mania’ arising from ‘dissolute living’ ('Apollo', p. 290). Ultimately, the prior is detained in an apartment from which he ‘can still see the country’: the open natural spaces that roused his passions when he moved to the Grange of Notre-Dame De-Pratis. Deemed to be mad, he spends his final days urging his return to the place he loved, looking out at a fertile world where ‘he would mistake mere blue distance, when that was visible, for blue flowers, for hyacinths’ ('Apollo', p. 291). The prior expires, staring at the realm he yearns for, just after the authorities have finally granted him permission to return. The poignant ending certainly appears to be one in which he feels unquenchable longing to see once more the fine-looking young men who once captivated him. And it is, moreover, a longing subject to permanent deferral or melancholic suspension, one that remains unable to detach itself from a lost or vanished object.

Is there an allegory to be extracted from this finely wrought and extremely violent tale? How might we confront the deadly influence of male homoeroticism that Apollyon transports in a blaze of light from the Classical past into the mediaeval present? Is the story a warning about the type of undisciplined sensuality that Plato learned to subject to philosophical control? Or is it the case that the monastic world no longer had the ability to discipline the force of an uncontrollable eroticism? There are perhaps too many answers, now that we—unlike the wary TLS in 1939—can openly address the contours of male-male attraction that persist, with increasing complexity, in Pater’s oeuvre. Yet one point comes into focus when we compare these two works from 1892 and 1893, respectively: Pater defiantly continued to remind his readers that the queer past
could never be suppressed in the forbidding era that his career occupied. This was a time when men could be tried under the provisions of the Offences against the Person Act, 1861, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885. Whether male same-sex attraction would transform or remain unrealizable in the future, however, was for Pater another question. These possibilities, as far his writings are concerned, depend on how we comprehend the stories, the legends, and the dialogues that such different cultures as ancient Greece and mediaeval France wove around such intimacy. As I hope to have shown, there are divergent ways in which the homoerotic desires of previous epochs inspired Pater. Such divergence, I think, comes clearly into view once we grasp the decisive shift in critical approaches to his sexuality that took place between the centenaries of his birth and his death.

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1 Anon., ‘Walter Pater, Born 4 August 1839: A Prose that Stands the Test of Time’, *Times Literary Supplement* (5 Aug. 1939), 466. Further references to this article are given in the text.


7 Ibid., 706.

8 Ibid., 715–16.


11 Ibid., 466.


14 Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, 118. The wording is the same in the three succeeding editions of *The Renaissance*.


19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.


22 Ibid.


33 Ibid., V, 182.
34 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
47 Eliot, ‘The Place of Pater’, in Walter de la Mare, ed., The Eighteen–Eighties: Essays by Fellows of the Royal Society of Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 103. Further references to this article are given in the text.
49 Ibid., 92, 94.
50 Ibid., 94.
51 Pater, ‘Winkelman’ Westminster Review, XXXI (January 1867), 80–110 (pp. 107, 83).
54 Ibid., 63.
55 Ibid., 63.
57 Ibid., 47.
59 Pater, ‘The Genius of Plato’, Contemporary Review, 61 (1892), 249–61 (p. 249). Further references to this article are given in the text.
57 Gautier’s remark is recorded in the *Journal des Goncourt: Mémoires de la vie littéraire*, première série, 9 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1891), 1, 182. Wilde refers to Gautier’s remark in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), 22, and (1891), 192.


59 Cicero’s remark appears in *Cato Maior de Senectute (On Old Age)* (44 B.C.E.).

Lesley Higgins

Pater and Arthur Symons: Old ‘Regrets’ and New Clues

After the banquet of information about Pater, Arthur Symons, and Michael Field served up by Ana Parejo Vadillo in Pater Newsletter 65, this short item is little more than a canapé. But it is a morsel worth considering. As Paul Tucker demonstrated in his essay on Pater’s previously unpublished letter to a journalist (Pater Newsletter 64), and as Robert Seiler is certain to reveal, many times over, in his forthcoming edition of Pater’s correspondence for the Collected Works, regret for what cannot be determined about a missive may be tempered by the way in which even an oblique, undemonstrative, or dry message becomes an occasion to trace new filaments in a web of personal, literary, and cultural interconnections. A very short note sent by Pater to Arthur Symons (1865–1945) is another such opportunity. Although the small document contains only fifty words (three sentences for one fairly cliché apology), it warrants apposite conjecture. The note states:

12 Earl’s Terrace.

My dear Symons,

Many thanks for your kind thought of me. I regret extremely
not to see you on your way through London, but must inevitably be
away nearly all Wednesday. Engagements multiply upon me, just
at this time.

In great haste,
Very sincerely yours

Walter Pater.

What can be learned from the implicit request, the refusal, and the circumstances
of both?

A general, plausible date for the note – between 1886 and 1891 – can be
deduced by considering the handwriting (an example of Pater's 'later', right-
slanting penmanship) and by trying to pinpoint the possible intersections of
the men in London. On Pater's part, the address given, '12 Earl's Terrace', indicates
that the letter was written between August 1885 and July 1893, when Pater and
his sisters Clara and Hester lived in London's South Kensington area. Symons's
 correspondence with Pater began in 1886, when the aspiring writer and critic sent
examples of his poetry to 'perhaps the living English writer whom I most admire'.
That gush of praise appeared in a January 1887 letter Symons sent to his friend
James Dykes Campbell: 'Next to Browning and Meredith, [Pater] is perhaps the
living English writer whom I most admire, and whose acquaintance I should most
like to make. [...] I have always been very curious to know what sort of man he is,
in the flesh: really I can scarcely conceive him as a man in the flesh at all, but rather
an influence, an emanation, a personality, quite volatilized and ethereal!'

Pater's phrase 'your way through London' provides a different kind of clue,
albeit tenuous. From September 1885 to September 1888, Symons lived in
Nuneaton, the Warwickshire town associated with George Eliot (Mary Ann
Evans was born on the nearby Arbury Estate and grew up in Nuneaton, the basis
of her fictional Milby in *Sceens of Clerical Life*). In 1888, Symons and his family
moved to Buckingham. His first trip abroad, in September 1889, was the earliest
of several life-enriching visits to Paris. In 1891, he moved into rooms in Fountain
Court, The Temple, in London.

Symons and Pater finally met 7 August 1888, an experience which Symons
relived the next day by describing it for Campbell. 'This was my first sight of Pater.
He is a curious personage – not at all unlike what one would expect him to be – a little difficult to talk with on account of his excessive complaisance, and the dainty way in which he holds an opinion, making it seem quite gross and rude to have ever ventured a difference.' Eight months later, however (12 December 1888), Symons informed Charles Churchill Osbourne, 'The other day I luncheon with Pater at Brasenose College [...] and spent the afternoon going about Oxford with him. He is the kindest-hearted of men, and most simple and genial when one has got through the veil or mask of formal politeness and rather forbidding gravity which he ordinarily wears.' *Days and Nights*, Symons’s first volume of verse, was published in 1889 – dedicated to Pater, who subsequently reviewed the book (the knowledge of which produced in Symons a state of great exaltation). In the undated card, Pater might have been replying to an invitation extended before August 1888, but 'My dear Symons' suggests familiarity and friendship. In 1887, Pater was preoccupied with *Imaginary Portraits*, published 24 May 1887. In 1891–2, Pater was juggling a number of writing commitments: two essays on Plato had been published in February and May, and a third would appear in June ('Lacedaemon', in *The Contemporary Review*); 'Emerald Uthwart' was issued in *The New Review*, June and July; and he was completing his work on the third, substantially revised edition of *Marius the Epicurean* (published August 1892).

There is every reason to assume, however, that the note was sent in August 1889. In his Appendix to the *Letters of Walter Pater*, Lawrence Evans identifies a letter listed in Maggs Bros. Catalogue no. 349 (1916), p. 98, which reads: ‘...Many thanks for your kindly[4] thought of me... Engagements multiply upon me, just at his time...’ The ‘kindly thought’ may have been a card, letter, or gift upon the occasion of Pater’s fiftieth birthday, 4 August 1889. In that case, one can marvel that one small card has persisted through multiple transactions: written by Pater, received by Symons, sold at least twice in the twentieth century, transported in England and across the Atlantic to the United States and then to Canada.

Symons’s profound respect for Pater’s intellectual and aesthetic accomplishments and status was no mere humility topos. When Symons was young, his family moved frequently due to his father’s semi-itinerant life as a Wesleyan clergyman. Symons was formally educated, until the age of 17, at Mr. Jeffrey’s school in Devonshire – not a renowned public school, not Oxbiright. He wrote as an enthusiast, a critic, a poet, and an editor of Shakespeare, not as a don. Robert Browning’s poetry was the subject of his first book (1886); Symons made his
lasting impact on 1890s culture by editing *The Savoy* from January to December 1896. Once regarded as little more than a daring hothouse poet and author of several volumes of impressionistic criticism, a credulous imitator of the French Decadent poets and an uninspired disciple of Walter Pater, as Beckson and Munro observe, 'Arthur Symons is now recognised as perhaps the most influential critic of the 1890s'.4 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', an 1893 essay, became a fully realized study, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899) – the key word changed from 'decadent' to 'symbolist' at W. B. Yeats's behest – and its influence on Modernists as diverse as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and James Joyce was substantial.

In the course of his long and, after 1908, sometimes mentally troubled life, Symons's English circles of friends and associates included Robert Browning, Michael Field, A. C. Swinburne, and Pater, as well as Aubrey Beardsley, Oscar Wilde, George Moore, Ernest Dowson and other members of the Rhymers Club, Augustus John and Havelock Ellis, and later Joseph Conrad and James Joyce. In France, his social and cultural life included Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, André Gide, and Auguste Rodin.

Years after Pater's death, Symons would continue to refer to his writings with great approbation, and defend his mode of writing. 'Pater was personal' rather than 'impersonal' in terms of the 'qualities' of his texts, Symons explained to his future wife, Rhoda Bowser, 'because the whole of his work is a perfect transcript of his way of looking at life and art, not as a dreamer nor yet with direct emotion, but as an artist, to whom everything came as a part of aesthetics'.5 Although *A Study of Walter Pater* (1932) is a somewhat rambling book, it is never entirely unfocussed; the critical paths, however much they detour to discuss Blake or Baudelaire or Dante Gabriel Rossetti, always lead back to Pater and constitute an informal argument for him as a post-Romantic writer. Symons's praise for his much-admired mentor was always generous: 'It was through his influence and counsels that I trained myself to be infinitely careful in all matters of literature. Influence and counsel were always in the direction of sanity, restraint, precision'. Esteem, however, was offset by his sharp assessment of Pater's personal quirks. 'He wrote letters with disgust', Symons acknowledges, 'never really well, and almost always with excuses or regrets in them: 'Am so overburdened (my time I mean) just now with pupils, lectures and the making thereof;'' or, with hopes for a meeting: "Letters are such poor means of communication: when are we to meet?" or, as a sort of hasty makeshift: 'I send this prompt answer, for I know by
experience that when I delay my delays are apt to be lengthy.” These comments suggest that Symons was neither surprised nor offended when Pater wrote to explain, ‘I regret extremely not to see you on your way through London’. Symons may have confused ‘distaste’ with unease, however; Pater seems to have doubted his epistolary gifts, and would sometimes postpone writing letters in hopes of producing something more inspired. Perhaps the quickly-written and brief note was self-protective in several respects.

In his Study of Walter Pater, Symons happily refers to the ‘the sixty letters which I have from’ Pater;13 the note card that has recently come to light is only one of many fugitive texts. Symons was someone who ‘aspired first to feast Wildely with panthers and later to experience a spiritual Paterian “life at its most intense moment” in the condition of music and in the soul of dance’.14 Fundamentally, Pater not only gave Symons the confidence to pursue his creative and critical vocations, and the gift of friendship, but also proved an exemplar of how ‘everything’ of profound concern can be ‘a part of aesthetics’.

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NOTES

David Latham was both a generous resource and careful editor for this essay; Robert Seiler’s astute suggestions and corrections were invaluable.

1 The small note card measures 11.2 x 8.8 cm; Pater’s text occupies both sides. David Latham is the academic sleuth who came across the letter while searching for a copy of the second edition of The Renaissance. At his suggestion, the holograph note was purchased for publication in Vol. 10 of the Collected Works of Walter Pater, the Correspondence, and will be donated to York University’s Scott Library.


3 Ibid., pp. 39, 43.

4 Ibid., p. 34. See also the letter to James Dykes Campbell (24 March 1889), ibid. p. 46.


6 Evans is quoting the Maggi catalogue; the note I am discussing states ‘kind thought’.

7 Evans, ed., p. 163. See also p. 81, n. 2.


9 In ‘The Perfect Critic’, the first essay in The Sacred Wood (1920), Eliot is careful to distance himself and his critical project from that of Symons, who ‘suffers’ from the influence of Pater and aesthetic or ‘impressionistic’ criticism, yet nonetheless acknowledges that The Symbolist Movement in Literature was ‘an introduction to wholly new feelings and modes of writing, and thus a revelation’. Eliot, The Sacred Wood, rpt. (London: Methuen, 1960), p. 5.


12 Ibid., p. 100. Fewer than half are still extant: Robert Seiler reports that the Correspondence will include twenty-three letters from Pater to Symons, including the note card under discussion, and will list seven ‘fugitive’ items in the Appendix.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS


Readers embarking on The Decadent Image should be prepared to encounter terms such as, 'diazvugua', 'teratogony', 'dipolic', 'metapoeticity', 'gynaecomorphic', 'enthalpy', 'asynthetic', 'amphiseous' and 'sommophilic'. Several of these words are not in the OED; one or two even defeat Wikipedia and the Web. Of course, it might seem appropriate that a book about Decadent writers, some of whom cultivated recherché language, should apply such an arcane vocabulary, but, then again, they were not composing an academic monograph designed to elucidate.

Kostas Boyiopoulos might not be an especially welcoming critic but he is a dutiful one and he acknowledges precedents: Barbara Charlesworth’s Dark Passages: The Decadent Consciousness in Victorian Literature (1965), R. K. R. Thornton’s The Decadent Dilemma (1983), John R. Reed’s Decadent Style (1985), Murray Pittock’s Spectrum of Decadence (1993), and Jean Pierrot’s The Decadent Imagination; 1880–1900 (1997). All are cited, along with other scholars from Ian Fletcher and Karl Beckson, founders of modern Decadent Studies, through to more recent critics such as Linda Dowling, Joseph Bristow, and Regenia Gagnier. Boyiopoulos has
read them all and does not hesitate to pay tribute when it is due and to reprimand where he thinks fit. The challenge he faces is to bring something new to a mode and a moment that has always been said to be paradoxical: Decadence looks forward by looking back, creates energy out of lethargy, turns nature's decay into permanent art.

Fortunately, although his recondite vocabulary and zealous approach sometimes risk turning deliberate filigree into unintended philosophy, they fail to obscure the originality and interest of Boyiopoulos's ideas. Taking Wilde, Symons, and Dowson as his models – 'its high priest, its chief spokesman, and its mythologized model respectively' – he brings his own decadent paradox to the table. This, in brief, is that in a typical Decadent text mortality and the life of the senses have to contend with an aesthetic imperative to maintain formal distance. Consequently, Decadence loves liminal states both temporal and spatial, turns fragments into fetishes, is driven by what Oscar Wilde, following J. A. Symonds, called the 'the love of things impossible'. Wilde's poem 'Charmides', which is about a sexual assault on a statue ('agalmatophilia'), provides the perfect example because within it 'the Aesthetic distance between self and art has been dangerously bridged and turned into unilateral Decadent intimacy' (p. 48). Wilde's 'Sphinx' is equally apposite given the way in which it 'objectifies sexuality' through mythic imagery, offering 'a catalogue of bizarre couplings of bestiality, zoophile, lesbianism and necrophilia with a score of monsters' (p. 66). The impulse to preserve erotic attraction beyond the moment survives in the poetry of Arthur Symons if in more immediately urban and ambiguous ways. A sonnet that went unpublished in Symons's lifetime 'features a Mona Lisa-like figure that the speaker calls "Sphinx"' (p. 95). For all her sexual allure, however, she possesses 'Strange eyes, so cold, so mirror-like' (p. 95). The chapter on Dowson is the most innovative of the three since it draws attention to the whole œuvre and not simply to the much-anthologized 'Cynara'. Once again there is tension between sensual urgency and the kind of permanent fulfillment offered by art. Dowson's solution is 'attenuation', in which desire becomes a kind of endless autumn, forever fading, never quite coming to a conclusion. It is a persuasive way of reading this learned yet oddly confiding poet that, almost incidentally, neatly sidesteps the specifics of pedophilia that have made him increasingly difficult to discuss.

At his best Boyiopoulos brings out those qualities of Decadent literature that are simultaneously both brazen and concealed. The same ambiguities permeate
the hefty anthology that he has co-edited with two other emerging scholars. Their selection of some thirty-six stories and two parodies includes such classics of morbidity as Charlotte M. Mew’s ‘Passed’ and Hubert Crackanthorpe’s ‘Modern Melodrama’, homoerotic fantasies in the guise of J. F. Bloxham’s ‘The Priest and the Acolyte’ and Eric Stenbock’s ‘True Story of a Vampire’, and feminist parables epitomized by George Egerton’s excellent ‘A Lost Masterpiece: A City Mood’. Alongside these are English versions of contes cruels, compact examples of late Gothic horror, and, less horrific but still exotic, orientalist pastiches. There are bizarries of every kind. As one might expect, among them are generous portions of Wilde and Vernon Lee. Less expected, though fully justified, are uncharacteristic pieces by Joseph Conrad and H. G. Wells that show how the Decadent mood could permeate the work of writers whose personal agendas would seem to be very different. Rare birds such as Rudolph Dircks (an ‘author, playwright, editor and art historian [p. 181] about whom, nonetheless, very little seems to be known) and, better-known but still under-estimated, authors such as Frederick Wedmore and Henry Harland, are all given their due. Recurrent features include respectful parodies of A Rebus and a reliance on motifs familiar from Dorian Gray. Both texts held a lasting sway despite the puritanical backlash of the later 1890s. Editorial matter suggests connections between the place of publication – most frequently a ‘little magazine’ – and an individual story. An appendix gives brief excerpts from major influences – Pater, obviously, also Baudelaire, Huysmans – and some contemporary critical comments. Annotations are relatively light but always intelligent; the bibliographies include both websites and unpublished theses.

The effect of a good short story, it is said, should be like Lord Henry Wotton’s definition of a cigarette: ‘the perfect type of a perfect pleasure. It is exquisite, and it leaves one unsatisfied. What more can one want?’ In Lionel Johnson’s ‘Tobacco Clouds’ smoke is connected with death, although not for our modern medical reasons. It is a welcome premonition of sensual oblivion: ‘Its fair changes in the air, its gentle motions, its quiet dying out and away at last, should symbolise something more than perfect idleness’ (p. 127). Several stories, such as Symons’s ‘The Death of Peter Waydelin’, read like extended suicide notes fired perversely enough by artistic ambitions. In his monograph, Boyiopoulos cites Bataille’s insistence upon the interdependence of ‘death and beauty’, which he links to Pater’s chiastic phrase: ‘the sense of death and the desire of beauty: the desire of beauty quickened by the sense of death’ (p. 170). Regenia Gagnier has expressed
this notion particularly well with her even more paradoxical comment that ‘the most extreme Decadent literature aestheticizes the nervousness of dying as an intense form of living’ (p. 120). Rather surprisingly, it was G. K. Chesterton, cited by the editors, who provided the best contemporary connection between form and content identifying a fear underlying even the most seemingly religious texts: ‘The moderns, in a word, describe life in short stories because they are possessed with the sentiment that life itself is an uncommonly short story, and perhaps not a true one’ (pp. 418–9).

Decadent literature challenges orthodox sensibilities by playing heretical games, creating ambiguities around questions of gender and sexuality and teasing the reader’s narrative and erotic expectations. When is an ending not an ending? Answer: when it comes at the start of the story. As Simon J. James’s Foreword suggests, Pater’s edict that experience should be valued for its own sake inspired fictions that dramatize ‘moments less of epiphany […] but more of an intensely realized moment of living, of the inner life dramatized through sensory and bodily experience’ (p. xi). In other words, as the editors say about Dowson’s ‘A Case of Conscience’: ‘the open ending of the story, like a great many others of the time, focuses on a heightened sense of emotional crisis rather any definitive culmination of plot’ (p. 39). Sometimes comedy and tragedy rival one another within the same brief text and it is often hard to tell what is parody and what is its object – see, for instance, Lionel Johnson’s ‘Incurable’. Another example, less fortunate in my opinion, might be M. P. Shiel’s intolerably laboured ‘Xelucha’, the kind of short story that seems interminable despite, or perhaps because of, what the editors call, admiringly, a style in which ‘English almost morphs into an alien medium’ (p. 370). For most readers there will be limits, although it is to the credit of the editors that they have refused to respect them. More ambitious than Joan Smith’s *Femmes de Siècle* (1992), Elaine Showalter’s *Daughters of Decadence* (1993), and Bridget Bennett’s *Ripples of Dissent* (1996) – but obviously profiting from their pioneering work – this new anthology expands our sense of a distinct phase in literary history. Although at £24.99 it may be too expensive to become a set text for an undergraduate course on the *fin de siècle*, it should inspire teachers to be ever more daring in their selection of material.

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The immediate effect of my reading of *The Sanitary Arts* was a spontaneous spring-cleaning of my departmental office. With chapter headings such as ‘Foul Matter’, ‘Dirty Pictures’, ‘The Sanitary Narrative’, and ‘Victorian Dust Traps’, Eileen Cleere’s book raised my awareness of how the aesthetic interior—with its books, pictures, knick-knacks, and collectibles, gathered over decades to create a personalized working space—is a far from healthy place to be spending the better part of one’s waking hours. John Ruskin, a recurrent figure in the book, would probably have approved of the sobering effect of Cleere’s writing on the modern Victorianist. Cleere, wrongly, attributes to him the statement, ‘A good sewer is a far nobler and a far holier thing than the most admired Madonna ever painted’ (p. 9), thus making Ruskin a blasphemous sanitarian propagandist of the most militant kind. The fact that the words come from the mouth of Dr Saunders in conversation with Mr Herbert in W. H. Mallock’s satirical *The New Republic* (1877; parodies of William Kingdon Clifford and Ruskin, respectively) makes the misattribution even more interesting: by 1877 the conflation of sewers with paintings of the Madonna in the general debate had clearly become such a commonplace that Mallock could satirize it and expect his audience to connect the dots. Posterity has transferred Saunders’s words to Herbert, Mallock’s words to Ruskin, as evidence of Mallock’s mimicking powers: it sounds like Ruskin at his most outrageous, and Cleere credits Simon Schama and Anthony Wohl as authorities on the Ruskinian origin. The internet reveals how the supremacy of the sewers over the Madonna is now almost universally attributed to Ruskin.

In her book, Cleere points out how Ruskin, along with Edwin Chadwick and Charles Eastlake, spearheaded the Victorian sanitary campaign in the 1840s. His dismissal in *Modern Painters* of Rembrandt and the Baroque painters for their dark, dirty colours while praising the bright colours of Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites coincided with Chadwick’s *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Working Population* (1842) and Charles Eastlake’s soap-and-water cleansing of the Old Masters in the National Gallery, begun in 1844. Cleere conlates worlds
which have traditionally been kept apart: the discourse on sanitation, pathology, and bacteriology with the world of aesthetics, interior design, and Victorian fiction. The result is thought-provoking and stimulating reading which invites us to think of Aestheticism in the context of anaesthetics, germ theory, and the permeability of the body as an organism assailed by microbes. The aesthetic body is juxtaposed with the anaesthetic body in its state of surgical sleep: ‘if “aesthesia” signifies a state of heightened sense perception, “anaesthesia” marks the repression of those senses, a state of the body characterized by indifference to physical pain or pleasure’ (p. 89). The pulses of Walter Pater’s ‘Conclusion’ to The Renaissance are conveniently used as stepping stones to an examination of the blurred lines between ‘aesthetic’ and ‘anaesthetic’, where eighteenth-century taste confronts the pulsations registered by nineteenth-century physiology: ‘the “pure,” disinterested, moral form of aesthetic pleasure so valued by Shaftesbury, Kant, Burke and other eighteenth-century thinkers, the pleasure that repressed the more suspicious feelings of the body in favour of lofty intellectual experience, as Eagleton suggests, might itself “be more accurately described as an anaesthetic”’ (p. 91).

Cleere makes much of the Paterian pulsations and of the decadent body of Aestheticism as being ‘always potentially sick, partially shadowed, locked in a perpetual cycle of decay and renewal’ (p. 88). She demonstrates how already in 1877 Grant Allen’s Physiological Aesthetics adopted a Paterian language in a discussion of how the neurological system determines our ability to respond to beauty: ‘It is the business of Art to combine as many as possible of their pleasurable sensations, and to exclude, so far as lies in its power, all their painful ones; thus producing that synthetic result which we know as the aesthetic thrill’ (Allen, p. 36, quoted in Cleere, p. 97). The frisson of Aestheticism owes much to Pater, and it is delightful to see the language of the ‘Conclusion’ infecting other fields of writing in the very year when Pater decided to withdraw the chapter from the second edition of The Renaissance.

Cleere’s discussion of the late nineteenth-century body revolves around the opposition between the holistic, complete body of Aestheticism and the fragmented body so recently made the focus of medical science. In her analysis of Paterian views on the body, it seems to me that she ignores two very important aspects, namely Pater’s own interest in the fragmented body (the opening passages of the ‘Conclusion’ illustrate this superbly, as does the surgeon’s postscript in ‘Emerald Uphwart’) and his intense admiration for the cult of the healthy body in
ancient Greece. The Paterian body is represented as almost exclusively feeble, in need of aesthetic stimuli, and Cleere seems to forget Pater’s (inherited?) surgical gaze as well as his interest in the interplay between a healthy individual and a healthy society that we find in his ‘Lacedaemon’ essay of 1892. In her interesting discussion of the Fabian interest in exercise, vegetarianism, and physical health she highlights Edward Carpenter’s *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure* (1889) as a text rooted in a Ruskinian aesthetic, with Pater as the unhealthy, opposite pole: ‘Like Ruskin, and profoundly unlike Pater, he [Carpenter] equates beauty with health, not just the individual enjoyment of a regular heartbeat and a steady pulse, but an aesthetic pleasure in the laws, methods, and facts that regulate public vitality and produce a harmonious society’ (p. 104). Surely, Carpenter and Pater might well have compared notes on the healthy body; Pater was not only into yellow kid gloves and apple-green ties. George Du Maurier’s lanky aesthetes from the pages of *Punch* still seem to be casting unhealthy shadows on our notions of the *fin-de-siècle* body, which is unfortunate, given that the picture was much more nuanced.

Having said that, *The Sanitary Arts* should be highly recommended for the many different types of texts which it combines: art critical, social, and medical discourses with a range of interesting, little-known late Victorian medical fiction by Roy Tullet (pseud. for Albert Eubule Evans), Mary Ward, and Sarah Grand. The book covers a vast range of material; breadth in such a relatively thin volume will most often be at the expense of depth. For those of us long engaged in the discourses of aestheticism it is a healthy breath of fresh air to be invited to think about miasmic versus microbic attitudes to the physical world, and to refocus our awareness of the cross-pollination of art and science. Rethinking the visual arts and the aesthetic interior in terms of dust traps and dirty surfaces in need of a good clean by a healthy body may well make us revisit both canonical and less canonical texts with new focal lenses, and the added side effect of the spring-cleaning of our academic nooks and crannies should not be dismissed as immaterial.

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**NOTE**


The modern conception of aesthetic autonomy emerged in the 1790s, when Kant simultaneously articulated an objective concept of beauty as the object devoid of use value, and a subjective conception of aesthetic disinterest. This notion underwrote a series of manifestos for artistic freedom, including Friedrich von Schlegel’s promotion of an irony without limits, the diluted literary statement of Kant’s principles in Théophile Gautier’s preface to *Mademoiselle du Maupin* (1835), and Pater’s genealogy of autonomous art in ‘The School of Giorgione’ (1877), in which the displacement of the framed object from its architectural context is one step in a progressive emancipation, culminating in the absolute autonomy of musical form.

Pater’s musical ideal of sensuous form is frequently echoed in Michalle Gal’s study, *Aestheticism: Deep Formalism and the Emergence of Modernist Aesthetics*, in which she attempts to describe and defend a conception of autonomous art based on a series of ideas that are largely derived from twentieth-century aestheticicians, notably Roger Fry and Clive Bell. The book is for the most part an attempt to justify this formalism, beginning with a discussion of the Whistler/Ruskin trial and the aesthetics of Whistler’s *Nocturnes*, which are taken as exemplary instances of the ideal of ‘deep form’. This is the first of a constellation of ideas based around the ‘symbolic’ capacity of the autonomous artwork.

Gal does not discuss the Romantic concept of the symbol in any detail, nor does she refer to Hegel’s critique of the ‘Symbolic’ mode of art in his *Aesthetics*, so fundamental to Pater’s Hellenist aesthetics in the ‘Winckelmann’ essay, and influential for figures as diverse as Gautier, Wilde, and Vernon Lee. This is one of several surprising omissions of theoretical context. Gal’s strategy is to mobilize her own concept of the symbol as ‘opaque, introversion, non-reflective yet productive’ (p. 13). This formulation may seem opaque in itself, but Gal makes her point somewhat clearer when she argues that it will be the sensuous materiality or compositional qualities of the work that maintain the symbolic function, which will now have a capacity to ‘produce new referents’. She calls this capacity ‘productive opacity’ (p. 13).
Gal articulates this manifesto within the first three paragraphs of the book, and it is reiterated over the next seven chapters, so that it often strikes this reader that a long article or pair of articles might have been a more appropriate vehicle for her thesis, which becomes very repetitive in the monograph. Nevertheless, the central section of the book contains a discussion of Oscar Wilde’s aesthetics that is useful for scholars of Aestheticism and student readers. The key focus is Wilde’s anti-mimetic conception of art, since it is in the revolt against imitation that Gal locates the grounds of autonomous art and, crucially, the manner in which art suggests a form of freedom. Gal defines aesthetic autonomy as a mode of radical detachment defined by self-rule, internal law, and freedom from external obligations, which she calls ‘immunity to recruitment’ (p. 54). The suggestive military metaphor helps her to elucidate one of the important ways in which aesthetic autonomy had a radical promise for the culture of Aestheticism. The metaphor of the ‘unrecruitable’ work contains an anthropomorphic suggestion – that autonomous art is like the person who resists the draft, a conscientious objector who refuses to be recruited for the means of an unethical war.

The move between the artwork and an ideal soul is the most interesting aspect of Gal’s study. In Wilde’s work she finds a model of an ‘individualistic, contemplative, autonomous, and free soul’, according to these corresponding qualities in the artwork (p. 97); the essential process is a symbolic operation that goes beyond the artwork to an idealized subject. In Pater and Wilde’s work, this idealized subject might be the diaphanous receptor, the Hellenic sculptor, the Shakespearean performer, or the critical consciousness. It is appropriate, then, that Gal’s account of Wilde’s aesthetics develops into an account of his theory of criticism. But there are some notable omissions. A key problem is that Gal has continually insisted on the aesthetic quality of ‘completeness’ as a guarantee of autonomy, deducing this from Whistler’s statements rather than from Pater and Wilde’s criticism. If she had read the latter more carefully she might have noted Pater’s embrace of the incompleteness of Michelangelo’s sculpture, an aesthetic he derived from German Romantic criticism and then passed on to Wilde. In ‘The Critic as Artist’, Wilde signalled his status as a radical Paterian by deliberately bringing together Pater’s aesthetic of incompleteness with the idea of musical form in ‘The School of Giorgione’, suggesting that he was moving towards an aesthetic in which the autonomous object, and crucially the visual and plastic
forms, had already been surpassed in the promotion of an open-ended aesthetics of literary and musical suggestion.

This omission in Gal’s account of Wilde’s aesthetics of criticism is suggestive of a larger problematic in this book. Gal has only one version of the nature of autonomous art, and her only literary subject is *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), which is read as a parable of linguistic autonomy. But a very different picture emerges from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890, 1891) or Pater’s *Imaginary Portraits* (1887), or equally from Pater’s writing on Dionysus and Greek theatre, all of which either dramatize the limits of a Decadent detachment or convey a force that breaks its boundaries.

Ultimately the question of autonomy in Victorian Aesthetics demands a subtle kind of dialectical criticism. In his late masterpiece, *Aesthetic Theory*, Theodor Adorno declared that art’s autonomy still contains the promise of freedom, since ‘artworks are plenipotentaries of things that are no longer distorted by exchange, profit, and […] false needs’.¹ Crucially, however, this promise of freedom was imbricated in the very condition that made the autonomous artwork ideological – its spurious claim to be part of spiritual realm, independent from the conditions of production. A number of critical accounts of Aestheticism have followed this dialectical spirit, without necessarily referring to Adorno’s work. Linda Dowling’s important work on aesthetic democracy, *The Vulgarization of Art* (1996), emphasizes the democratic potential of Aestheticism as a gospel of freedom, before casting suspicion on its aspiration towards aristocratic detachment. In my own work, *Aesthetic Afterlives: Irony, Literary Modernity, and the Ends of Beauty* (2011) I traced a double movement in Aestheticism and its legacies: on one side a position of absolute detachment, taking the twin forms of the autonomous artwork and the cultivated personality of the aesthetic ironist; on the other side a Dionysian affirmation of sensuous life that could not be contained by the forms of autonomous art and cultivated detachment. These torn halves of aesthetic culture remained in a condition of dialectical suspension throughout the twentieth century, and modernist formalists from Fry to Greenberg failed to do justice to this conflict.

Gal’s *Aestheticism* provides some worthwhile critical commentary on Wilde’s critical theories. The problem with her book is that it promises to articulate a theory of aesthetic autonomy within Aestheticism and Modernism, but it fails to grapple with the dialectical condition of autonomous art in modernity. Rather than being
rooted in the conflicts and promise of Pater and Wilde’s idealist inheritance, Gal’s version of Aesthmetic in the twentieth follows the simplifications of Bell and Fry, which drained Pater and Wilde’s legacy of its complexity and risk. The result is that Dionysus is left in hiding.

NOTE


Andrew Eastham

Paying particular attention to Pater’s ‘sensitivity to moments of historical mutation or change’ and ‘his use of material objects with imperfect execution or problematic provenance,’ thematised in ‘Denys L’Auxerrois’ and his unfinished romance, Gaston de Latour, this article seeks to complicate the ‘residual’ reception of Pater as an ‘idealistic’ or ‘languid perfectionist’ (pp. 47–8). Cowan suggests instead that, for Pater, the shaping of aesthetic perception is always imperfect and incomplete. ‘Pater’s aestheticism and his historicism adopt an attitude of calm acceptance to inevitably frustrated creative or periphrastic purpose’ (p. 48). Cowan suggests that Pater’s historicism (or historiographical notion of the past) is based on the fragment, which Cowan illuminates by drawing on a passage from ‘Aesthetic Poetry’ in which Pater points out the impossibility of a full apprehension or restoration of the past while it is still possible ‘to isolate such a phase, to throw it into relief, to be divided against ourselves in zeal for it’ (pp. 51–2). In Gaston, Pater has to struggle with the fact that ‘every surviving fragment is mediated’ and represents ‘a changeable mind and mutable body’ (pp. 54–5). In his analysis of ‘Denys L’Auxerrois’, Cowan regards Denys as being remote both from the medieval setting in which he is represented and from ‘the restless aesthetic subject of so many of Pater’s other works’ including Gaston (p. 55). Cowan concludes, however, that despite many discrepancies between Denys and other Paterian subjects, the ‘more socially integrative’ implica-
tion of the ending of ‘Denys l’Auxerrois’ reveals how ‘Pater will not allow any subjectivity to be buried for long’, and thus validates the idea that ‘Pater’s poetic criticism examines the fragments of the past from as many aspects as his imagination allows’ (p. 58).

Daichi Ishikawa


I n ‘Winckelmann’, Pater exposes a fundamental contradiction in the discourses of Aestheticism between Hellenism and decadence, which poses a problem for the aesthetic personality and the ideal form of art. On the one hand, Pater suspends the dialectic of Kant, Schiller, and Hegel, to endorse a ‘characterless’ Hellenic ideal that is diaphanous and impressionable; while on the other, he takes up the Romantic model of aesthetic subjectivity, which is self-willed and active, thus returning to Hegel’s version of the Greek personality and making a subtle shift in the essay from the ‘characterless’ to ‘plastic character’. In light of the return of symbolism in modernity, Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray later plays out this contradiction in the Hegelian narrative of Hellenism, the ideal art of which was supposed to have been superseded by the Romantic. Both decadence and Platonic symbolism attempted to solve the same crises of ‘aesthetic autonomy, cultural democracy, and the tenuous line between hedonic consumption and artistic production’. As a means to escape this circularity, Wilde’s character of the aristocratic dandy achieves aesthetic authority by performative negations through irony and play.

Adam Lee

Gillard-Estrada describes how the word ‘consummate’, beginning with Pater’s recurrent use of the adjective in *The Renaissance*, comes to have a robust ‘afterlife’ in late nineteenth-century aestheticist discourse, becoming eventually the ‘arch-adjective of aestheticism’ (p. 42), a key term in the many satirical and parodic representations of the Aesthetic Movement. In *The Renaissance*, the word accumulates a number of different but related meanings, denoting beauty, artistic and intellectual perfection or ideal cultural form, and evoking the poetics of the perfect or epiphanic moment. The word is also associated with consummation and consumption. Gillard-Estrada identifies Frederic Leighton’s 1879 *Address delivered to the students of the Royal Academy* as an early borrowing of ‘consummate’ and the Paterian lexicon in the development of the aestheticist discourse, and she emphasizes the central role of Wilde and his lectures, essays, and *Dorian Gray*. The essay concludes with a survey of satirical representations of the Aesthetic movement—Du Maurier’s cartoons, Alfred Concanen’s lithographs, Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Patience*, F.C. Burnand’s *The Colonel*—demonstrating the different ways in which the word ‘consummate’ came ‘to epitomize a whole cultural movement in the nineteenth century’, and ‘became more associated with Pater’s disciples than with Pater himself’ (p. 38).

Kenneth Daley


Suggesting that Pater regards Plato’s historical/cultural moment as a mirror of, or analogue to, the decadent tendencies of late nineteenth-century England, Lee argues that Pater turns to
Platonism as a philosophical defense against decadence. More specifically, Lee regards Plato and Platonism as a ‘radical aspiration towards authority’ (p. 62), in which authority represents (1) an ‘ontological ground’ or ‘root’ of language and knowledge, and (2) the harmonious function of the State (and by analogy, the individual soul and the work of art). Pater’s Plato resists the ‘superficial levity’ (p. 65) of the Sophists, for their language is detached from reason or Logos, a practice that ‘threatens a writer’s authority’, and, Lee suggests, a practice that Pater connects to contemporary writers associated with the Decadent movement. Similarly, Pater follows Plato in encouraging the centripetal, Dorian tendency (p. 65) as a solution to the ‘fragmenting problems of decadence’ (p. 67), the disorderly and anarchic impulse that Pater and Plato associate with the centrifugal, Ionian temper. Lee details how, in Pater and Platonism, Pater builds on his earlier musical aesthetic theory to figure music as both the representation of and means toward discovering ‘unity in variety […] cosmos […] order [Pater]’ (p. 68). ‘Music, as it is associated in Plato and Platonism with form, Logos, or reasonable cosmos, reveals a way out of solipsism, allowing for the possibility of knowledge’ (p. 68). In closing, Lee discusses what Pater calls ‘that Platonic law of affinity’ (73), the way out of solipsism leading finally to a relationship between ‘persons’, a relationship between one mind and another. Thus the Platonic dialogue upholds ‘the person (mind) as the highest form of knowledge’ (p. 74).

Kenneth Daley


Max Weber’s 1918 phrase, ‘disenchantment of the world’, is often used to signify the Western secularization narrative. He was drawing upon Romantic literary tradition, particularly the discourse of Schiller, Heine, and Pater concerning paganism and the aesthetic. The Romantic fascination with pagan gods, and its implicit relativity, uncovers ambiguous possibilities for art to find re-enchantment. Weber, Schiller, Heine, and Pater offer different readings of the return of the Greek gods and what it means for secularization and for
Christianity. Pater’s ‘Denys l’Auxerrois’, for example, responding to Heine’s Les Dieux en exil, discourages simple literary categorization of the pagan Greek and Christian characters, suppressing mere aesthetic desire and nostalgia for the possibility of authentic re-enchantment amidst disenchantment.

Adam Lee


Budziak explores the ambiguous literary influence of decadent Aestheticism on T. S. Eliot’s ‘La Figlia Che Piange’, a poem placed by Eliot at the end of his first collection, Prufrock and other Observations (1917). In response to previous scholarly interpretations of ‘La Figlia’, Budziak understands the poem as ‘a lyric that, while standing on the brink of Modernism, was also a summation of the motifs and attitudes derived from Decadent Aestheticism’ (p. 28). Budziak offers a close reading of ‘La Figlia’ in connection with numerous late nineteenth-century aesthetic and decadent texts gathered from Pater, Wilde, Beerbohm, Beardsley, Dobson, and Dowson. Her deliberate and often dense textual analysis focuses on crucial aspects of the poem: grammar (the change of tenses and pronouns), imagery (‘the Paterian dilemma of the corporeal and the spiritual’ (p. 33)), the speaker’s liminal position (as ‘the cruel aesthete and the cognitive flâneur’ (p. 34)), irony (in a both ‘Decadent’ (p. 36) and ‘deconstructive’ sense (p. 38)), and emotion (‘vague’ rather than ‘precise’ (p. 40)). In this manner Budziak seeks to show how a poem ‘on a parting with an imaginary girl’ can simultaneously function as ‘a critique of Decadent sensibility’ (p. 41). For Budziak ‘La Figlia’, symbolically placed at the end of Prufrock, emerges as Eliot’s ‘Decadent Aestheticist valediction’ (p. 41).

Daichi Ishikawa

Despite the presence of prominent Irish aesthetes like Oscar Wilde and George Moore, Alison Harvey notes that the relationship between Ireland and Aesthetism has received little critical scrutiny. As a step to remedying this oversight, Harvey examines Irish Aesthetism at the fin-de-siècle during the volatile years preceding national independence in 1921. Two modes of Irish Aesthetism are contrasted: an Irish revivalist one (associated with Yeats), which drew on Celtic myth and aestheticist symbols to valorize national identity, and another (associated largely with female writers), which merged Aesthetism and realism to draw attention to class and gender inequities. Her article focuses on these later manifestations, in the work of Edith Somerville and Martin Ross, Emily Lawless, and Katherine Cecil Thurston. Harvey’s analysis of these writers begins with Somerville’s artistic and literary work (the latter of which constituted collaborations with Ross). In both visual and written media, Harvey observes Somerville’s turn from Aesthetism to realism, a turn occasioned by frustration with limiting feminine stereotypes in aestheticist representations and by a growing awareness of the realities of class and gender politics. Lawless’s work, by contrast, interweaves aestheticist and realist conventions. For example, in her novel Hurry, Lawless interjects an ‘impressionist’ prose passage that, Harvey notes, recalls the work of aestheticists like Pater and anticipates modernists like E. M. Forster (p. 816). This passage provides a realistic depiction of the experience of a young woman who loses sense of language and temporality in the labyrinthine, male-dominated world of legal courts (p. 816). Finally, Harvey locates an aesthetic split in Thurston’s novels: whereas those set in England are aestheticist and sensationalist, The Fly on the Wheel, set in Ireland, is realist. Harvey interprets this divide as demonstrating Thurston’s reservation about the optimism of Irish nationalist rhetoric: although the promise of Irish revivalism invigorates the young men in Thurston’s novel, the ideas informing it remain in the realm of the aesthetic and do not alter the reality of Irish women without wealth or property (p. 820). In the case of each writer profiled, Harvey argues that realist impulses function not to ‘expose’ the ‘seamy underside’ of Aesthetism, but rather to render dialogue between interior and exterior, colony and nation (p. 822).

Amanda Paxton

His essay seeks to revalue H. G. Wells's famous and famously popular novel, The Time Machine, arguing that it is fully engaged with the central epistemological preoccupations of 'high modernism' and deserving of a more prestigious place within the modernist canon. Virginia Woolf's 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown' (1923), which cites 'Mr. Wells' as the embodiment of what modernist narrative is not, unfairly relegates his work to the wrong side of 'a literary-historical rupture' that distinguishes modernism from its forbears around each era's assumptions about literature's ability (or duty) to represent empirical 'reality' and of literature's responsibility in any stable or objective way (465). 'Reality for Woolf is a subjective experience of the reader', and yet, as Hovanec shrewdly observes, Woolf 'defines 'subjective experience' in distinctly Paterian language', and thus owes her own 'modernist notions of reality and representation' to the 'Victorian Pater' (pp. 464–5). Woolf yokes Wells's novel to a bygone era that she rather mercilessly caricatures; the epitome of a pre-modernist epistemology, it is concerned only with facts and external details, overly cheerful in its imagined utopias, and uninterested in his characters' internal, subjective life. But Hovanec outlines a number of ways in which The Time Machine plumbs the depths of psychic interiors, and is more ambitious than Woolf suggests. In the way that The Time Machine relies on unreliable narration, leaving readers uncertain about where 'on the spectrum between objective record and subjective fantasy' the story belongs, Wells's fin de siècle novel has more in common with modernist classics like James's Turn of the Screw or Conrad's Lord Jim than we tend to acknowledge. All these novels draw their force from narrative uncertainties that radically 'destabilize' empiricism as a 'reliable means of knowing' (466). Although the depiction of the Eloi in The Time Machine as delicate, devolutionary creatures who 'adorn themselves with flowers, to dance, to sing in the sunlight' (462) is widely considered to be a parody of Aestheticism, Hovanec joins critics Paul Cantor and Peter Hufnagel in finding Wells's Paterian language too pervasive, too key to the story's mysteries, to be purely anti-aestheticist. Where those critics find Wells's 'Impressionist imagery' (463) evocative of Pater's 'Conclusion' to The Renaissance,
Hovanec goes further: 'Wells may not have set out to write an aestheticist work, but he reaches a position close to that of Pater through a back door by writing a book in which empiricism undoes itself' (466). Overall, however, the essay makes a better case for seeing The Time Machine as very much a product of the decade in which it was first published.

Megan Becker-Lackrone


Lovatt differentiates his definition of the ruin from other 'forces of modernity, such as contagion and fragmentation', and explains that whereas 'the fragment or transmission typify destruction in a relatively abbreviated span of time, the ruin involves longer stretches' (p. 679). For Lovatt, the ruin is something that entails 'history and memory, generational and epochal ends', and thereby 'exceeds in its existence as the benchmark of time' (p. 679). Re-examining Lionel Johnson's poetry as 'a writing of ruins that complicates the division between past and present', Lovatt argues that Johnson's ruins follow modernist patterns, serving as 'an alternative to the long running story of Decadence’s influence on Modernism' (p. 681). Lovatt regards Johnson's ruins not just as 'a poetic symbol' but also as 'a conceptual function that drives the central subjects' of his work (p. 681). Lovatt begins by discussing Johnson's poetic exploration of religious experience and his 'rejection of the direct experiences of urbanity' (p. 682), then argues that for Johnson 'the ruination of the soul constitutes an equivalent ruination of the individual body' (p. 686). Even the body of Johnson's verse forms represent ruin. Lovatt also illustrates how Johnson's aestheticised sense of sound and silence conveys 'the aural texture within the environmental and emotional experiences of ruin', by associating Johnsonian silence with the mode of confession or community, and sound with the noise of modernity (pp. 687–9). For Lovatt, Johnson's silence is nonetheless disturbed by his admiration of other artists (particularly Pater's) imaginative ability to activate the past and put the historical individuals into the contemporaneous moment.
The shadow of Johnson’s ‘literary necropolis’ or its poetic ‘heteroglossia’ (p. 693), as Lovatt suggests, extends to high modernist poems such as Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* and T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*.

*Daichi Ishikawa*

**MIRABILE, ANDREA, ‘VISUAL INTERTEXTUALITIES IN GABRIELE D’ANNUNZIO’S *LE MARTYRE DE SAINT SÉBASTIEN*, MLN, 128.1 (JANUARY 2013), 124–50.**

*Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien*, Gabriele D’Annunzio’s musical mystery play written in French during the Italian Vatì’s sojourn in France, 1910–11, and first staged in May 1911 at the Théâtre du Châtelet, was not particularly successful. With its sumptuous costumes and sets designed by Léon Bakst, Michel Fokine’s choreography, Claude Debussy’s music, and featuring Ida Rubinstein in the role of Saint Sebastian, the production was arguably designed to strike responsive chords in the initiated while scandalizing the Philistine (it was scourged by Catholic critics). D’Annunzio’s well-known posturing as a cultivated prophet, his relish for ultra-refined excess and sublime, found a poignant outlet in the choice of Rubinstein, the *Belle Époque* star (a *dansseuse juive* with a remarkably androgynous look), as the embodiment of the third-century healer and martyr.

Mirabile argues that *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* is a would-be ‘total’ work of the Wagnerian type, ‘a sort of French *Parsifal*’ (p. 125), featuring Symbolist and Nietzschean nuances, a panoply of archetypal models (from an ephabetic Sebastian to Christ and a pagan Antinous, Orpheus, Hyacinth, Adonis, Apollo), and an amazing intersection or contamination of codes, styles, ambiances, a sense of heavenly ecstasy, and a vein of languid sensuality. Divided into five paragraphs (perhaps mirroring the verse-play’s five acts or ‘mansions’, which D’Annunzio memorably compared to the stained-glass windows of a Gothic cathedral), the essay opens with a series of observations regarding the fruitful connections between the verbal and visual arts at the *fin de siècle* and the *ekphrastic* tradition. Mirabile suggests that the author’s *stylistic ciphers were supposed to go beyond the domain of decorative pictorialism to include a kind of archaeological hunt for*
icons, bordering on visual bulimia, and ‘erotic and violent overtones, as scopophilia mingles with both spiritual contemplation and sadistic eroticism’ (p. 128). D’Annunzio’s links with fin-de-siècle aesthetes such as Pater and Bernard Berenson are examined before Mirabile analyzes the coexistence of pleasure and pain in the tormented victim’s blissful death. Relevant aspects of Italian iconography (a breeding ground for the visual intertextualities of the title) are surveyed, as well as the poet’s evocative descriptions of Sebastian’s young, beautiful body—one that is not going to be rescued or eventually clubbed to death, as hagiography has it, but is made to languish in pain, half-erotically, from the wounds inflicted by the archer’s arrows, until Sebastian ascends to heaven. Mirabile also considers D’Annunzio’s long artistic and emotional involvement with the figure of the ancient martyr, then projects the reader into the very dynamics of the mystery play: from its avant-garde theatrical staging to the blending of pictorial iconographies and silent-film conventions, from its hybridization of Decadent elements with multimedia experimentation to the stunning juxtaposition of historical planes (and sources). D’Annunzio, a European intellectual as well as Italian expatriate, created a modern(ist), intermedial, and transgeneric network, a ‘fascinating experiment that both defies the classificatory barriers between the verbal and the visual arts and establishes a synaesthetic and synthetic fusion of multiple art forms’ (p. 147).

Laura Giovannelli


This essay, nominally focused on a specific encounter between Oscar Wilde and the Mormon community in Salt Lake City during Wilde’s American tour of 1882, offers a wealth of other remarkable research and analysis along with a meditation on that specific course of events. Morgan considers Wilde’s highly self-conscious presentation of himself as ‘The Apostle of the Aesthetes’, to quote the title of an 1881 feature in Hour magazine (p. 671), and surveys a wealth of other popular American commentary to show
how charged Wilde’s stance as the ‘prophet’ of Aestheticism was in the context of what was essentially a collection of very different, regional American ‘heterodoxies’ (670)—especially among Mormons, whose doctrine depends fundamentally upon prophecy as revelation given to mortals. As a context for his central argument, Morgan offers dense, perceptive reviews of existing commentaries on Wilde’s American tour, from A. J. A. Symons to contemporary transatlantic studies, as well as a synopsis of the cosmopolitan origins and resonances of ‘aesthetics’ as such. The grounding of Aestheticism in an ‘intellectual geography’ that from the beginning ‘carried connotations of foreignness’ brings clarity to the ways in which Wilde, lecturing an American audience on the so-called ‘British Renaissance’, generated a tremendously overdetermined set of ironies (not least, ‘how un-English it turns out to be’ [p. 669]). Artifacts of Wilde’s reception in America, most notably Richard Butler Glaenzer’s ‘day-by-day account of Wilde’s US tour’, never published but housed in the Wilde archive at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library in Los Angeles (pp. 665–6), enhance our understanding of this remarkable stage of Wilde’s career. The most arresting visual artifacts Morgan highlights from the Clark are the ‘series of advertising cards that mocked Wilde by clothing him in familiar stereotypes’, a grotesquely sensational, racialized, commercial obverse of Wilde’s imagined ‘postnational empire’, variously portraying Wilde as Asian, French, a mercenary Jew, a con man, and a monkey (pp. 672–3). Although it is easy to predict that the encounter between an ‘un-English’ Aestheticism and the ‘un-American Mormons was one of ‘mutual aversion’ (683), the particulars of Wilde’s visit to Salt Lake City offer fascinating revelations. ‘Wilde’s reception was locally divisive’ (p. 686); thus, ‘it is possible that few Mormons attended Wilde’s lecture’, and had relatively little to say about it. Wilde dismissed his audience as ‘the most unintellectual people I have met in America’, and Salt Lake as a ‘city of execrable architecture’ and ‘ugly women’ (p. 683). The broader dynamic within which Wilde makes such judgments, and according to which he subtly crafted his aestheticist pose, bring other uncomfortable revelations, like Wilde’s presumed affinity between his Irishness and ‘the principles for which the South fought’, and the fondest he retains for a South he regards as ‘far finer than that in the north [and] infinitely more susceptible to the influences of beauty’ (p. 676). Morgan calls for a ‘transnational’ study of ‘cultural exchange’ attuned to such localized ‘resonance’, which ‘helps us to study a moment like Wilde’s clash with Mormonism, versions of
which occurred in various iterations with various groups, from Kansas to Nevada to Texas to Illinois (p. 685). Finally, he brings contemporary ‘antagonism between Mormons and the gay community over the question of marriage’ into view as yet another context in which Wilde’s Mormon encounter continues to resonate.

Megan Becker-Leckrone


Rutherford positions John Addington Symonds ‘not as a sexual radical, but as a Victorian scholar whose subject was love’ (p. 606). The effort comes as a response to existing scholarship, which Rutherford believes neglects the intellectual bases of Symonds’s theories of homosexuality, focusing instead on broader issues of sexual identity and social context. The article takes the form of a historical narrative tracing Symonds’s growth as a theorist of love. Beginning with his roots as a classicist, Rutherford notes Symonds’s interest in male-male desire described in the Platonic dialogues, a desire that he famously termed ‘impossible love’. Drawing on marginalia that Symonds wrote as an undergraduate, Rutherford situates the writer within contemporary Oxford debates surrounding the best way to interpret so-called ‘Greek love’: whereas his tutor Benjamin Jowett considered the depiction of male same-sex desire in the *Phaedrus* to be a ‘figure of speech’, the young Symonds took it as a literal description used to wrestle with questions surrounding the nature of love (qtd. p. 609). In his later work as a historicist, Rutherford notes, Symonds would continue to view history as a meaningful guide to the present, rather than a remote record of the past. His view of history as a movement towards a ‘civilizing teleology’ informs his account of the Renaissance, which Rutherford briefly contrasts with Pater’s (p. 611). Moving next from Symonds’s 1873 *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, in which he argues that Victorian culture debased homosexual love by reducing it to carnality, Rutherford introduces Symonds’s attempt to redress this failing in scientific
discourse. Specifically, she surveys his collaboration with Havelock Ellis on *Sexual Inversion*, notable because of the conflicting views of the co-authors: Symonds objected to Ellis’s definition of homosexuality as a pathology, identifying it instead as a mere deviation from the norm; conversely, Ellis reminded Symonds that female homosexuality warranted examination. Importantly, Symonds contributed historical, cultural, and narrative components to the study, thereby adding the complexities of human experience to what would otherwise have been a mere scientific account. The move, Rutherford suggests, is emblematic of Symonds’s lifelong struggle to endow homosexual love with an intellectual and historical heritage and legitimacy, according it ‘health, morality, and a place among other Victorian values’ by emphasizing the ‘celestial’ elements attendant to it rather than merely the physical (p. 624).

*Amanda Paxton*
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