WALTER PATER AS CRITIC OF RENAISSANCE CULTURE

by

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SUMMARY

This thesis represents an effort to build up a complete picture of the development of Walter Pater's understanding of the Renaissance as a movement in European culture, by collecting together his scattered references to its leading figures, as well as considering his major essays. In doing this, such changes in taste and understanding as he underwent during the twenty-odd years of his literary life became apparent.

In his early writings on the emergence of the Renaissance from the middle ages, Pater stressed the importance of the rebellious spirit. He had at first a poor opinion of Giotto and certain other late medieval figures whom he saw as complacent and pious. In his later writings on this so called proto-Renaissance, however, Pater ceased to stress the aspect of rebelliousness, and came to think more highly of the religious artists of the time.

The treatment of the quattrocento in Pater's writings is comparable, but the change is less marked. At first Pater emphasized those figures whom he could present as amoral, anti-Christian, or at least in some matters pro-pagan. This emphasis is not found in the later references to quattrocento artists, although most of these references date from what is perhaps better considered as a

middle period in Pater's literary life. In his last years, Pater wrote relatively little about the quattrocento, apart from a few significant revisions of his estimates of certain major figures.

Most of Pater's thoughts on the High Renaissance are contained in the three major essays "Leonardo da Vinci", "The Poetry of Michelangelo", and "Raphael". In the first of these he allows imagination to overwhelm scholarship, and presents a vivid but somewhat bizarre image of Leonardo. The essay on Michelangelo is more subdued and scholarly, although designed to present Michelangelo as the type of the moody and emotional romantic artist. The essay on Raphael, written twenty years later, is very different, extolling the merits of scholarly, unsensational works.

It is in Pater's treatment of the last phase of the Renaissance, the sixteenth century, in which mannerism flourished, that the shifts in his ideals and tastes are most clearly seen. In later years he became increasingly uneasy about many aspects of this period, and he emphasized the dangers of its philosophy instead of the beauties of its poetry.

It is suggested, in conclusion, that the shifts in Pater's point of view over the years led to his works presenting, overall, a broad and relatively well balanced, if not consistent, account of many aspects of Renaissance culture.

This thesis contains no material which has been previously submitted for any other degree in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where acknowledgement is made.

Signed:

D.S. DOLAN

March 1975.

The following system of reference to the work of Walter Pater is used throughout this thesis.

Appreciations.....Appreciations. London, MacMillan, 1910.

Essays from "The Guardian".....Essays from "The Guardian". London, MacMillan, 1910.

Gaston.....Gaston de Latour. London, MacMillan, 1910.

Greek Studies.....Greek Studies. London, MacMillan, 1910.

Imaginary Portraits.....Imaginary Portraits. London, MacMillan, 1910.

Marius I.....Marius the Epicurean (vol. 1) London, MacMillan, 1910.

Marius II.....Marius the Epicurean (vol. 2) London, MacMillan, 1910.

Miscellaneous Studies.....Miscellaneous Studies. London, MacMillan, 1910.

Plato & Platonism.....Plato & Platonism. London, MacMillan, 1910.

Renaissance.....The Renaissance. London, MacMillan, 1910.

Uncollected Essays.....Uncollected Essays. Portland, U.S.A., 1903.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Walter Pater

When Oscar Wilde referred to Walter Pater's The Renaissance as "that book which has had such strange influence over my life"[1] he was including himself in a numerous company of late Victorian figures who regarded the retiring Oxford don's collection of critical essays as one of the seminal books of the century. Holbrook Jackson, in The Eighteen Nineties, stressed the importance of Pater's first volume, but he was able to see that much of its influence was in fact the result of the almost deliberate misreading of it by Wilde's generation:

> Decadence properly begins with Mademoiselle de Maupin and closes with A Rebours. In England it began by accident with Walter Pater's Studies in Art and Poetry, The Renaissance, which was not entirely decadent....[2]

T.S. Eliot, who credited Pater with doing little more than inspiring a few "untidy lives"[3], was only the most famous of

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[1] Oscar Wilde, Works, ed Maine (Collins, London, 1954), 443

[2] Holbrook Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties, (Penguin, 1939) 53

[3] T.S. Eliot, Selected Essays. Faber : London. 1972. p.442

a large number of critics who, similarly to Wilde but with a different response, saw The Renaissance as merely the context of its "Conclusion". Certainly it was as a new gospel that many readers received Pater's words. As Kenneth Clark observes:

> To a generation which had already chanted the Poems and Ballads of Swinburne, linking arms and swaying down an unencumbered High Street, this advice was irresistible.[1]

And to Eliot and others who believed in committment, it was absurd and repugnant.

Many others, however, of Wilde's generation and of Eliot's, looked upon The Renaissance as art criticism, and as such it was highly influential. Bernard Berenson considered himself a follower of Pater for much of his early life. He wrote from Florence in 1892:

> I looked at Botticelli's Venus, and never before did I enjoy it so much. I enjoyed it as I expected to enjoy it when I used to dream about it in Boston, reading Pater's description.[2]

Another important twentieth-century critic with a clear debt to Pater is Adrian Stokes. As Richard Wollheim wrote:

> Affected somewhat by Ruskin, Stokes's early style was formed upon that of Pater, a writer whose influence, once experienced, is never totally shaken off. Stokes read Pater when he first began to visit Italy, and he was, he has told me, "bowled over".

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[1] Kenneth Clark. "Introduction" to W. Pater The Renaissance, London, Fontana, 1961), 24

[2] Bernard Berenson, Selected Letters ed McComb. (Hutchinson, London, 1965), 13

> Above all, Stokes derived from Pater a certain precision in the use of language which no one earlier had attempted in the same fashion. For the precision I have in mind does not consist in the exact setting down of observable features: it is a precision not of description, but rather of presentation, as though the critic's task was to offer up, along with the object, those associations and sentiments which determine its place in our understanding or appreciation.[1]

It is interesting also to consider Virginia Woolf's estimation of Pater, which appears in "The Modern Essay". Referring to "Leonardo da Vinci", she wrote:

> He [Pater] has somehow contrived to get his material fused. He is a learned man but it is not knowledge of Leonardo that remains with us, but a vision, such as we get in a good novel where everything contributes to bring the writer's conception as a whole before us. Only here, in the essay, where the bounds are so strict and facts have to be used in their nakedness, the true writer like Walter Pater makes these limitations yield their own quality. Truth will give it authority; from its narrow limits he will get shape and intensity....[2]

Pater's influence and importance are now generally acknowledged, and recent studies of his achievement lack the defensive tone common to many of the earlier writings. There is, however, little agreement about whether or not he really knew very much at all about art. Virginia Woolf's opinion is of little value on this point, for she was not an authority on art, but spoke as one creative writer on another. While André Malraux can refer to "a

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[1] Richard Wollheim, "Introduction" to Adrian Stokes, The Image in Form, (Harper and Row, New York, 1972), 30

[2] Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader, (Hogarth Press, London, 1933), 270

writer as artistically knowledgeable as Walter Pater"[1], it is perhaps more common to find the opposite judgement. Pater's friend Ingram Bywater once said "He never had any real knowledge of art."[2]

This question has attracted little discussion, perhaps because most scholars, like Eliot, see Pater's writings as disguised autobiography rather than criticism, but unlike him accept their subjectivity as their main virtue. Iain Fletcher maintained that Pater was "not simply...a critic of art or of literature, but... something at once more or less than these things."[3] For Fletcher:

> Pater's work represents above all the triumphs and failures of a temperament. It records in his own words "a prolonged quarrel with himself".... Under many disguises, Pater is a self-explorer....[4]

Hugh Walker wrote:

> Whatever the character he depicts, it is always really Pater who appears on the canvas.... The mirror which Pater holds up to nature is one which can reflect only himself. There is nothing the least degree objective in his work; it is hardly too much to say that the whole of it...is autobiographical.[5]

Anthony Ward commented on this consensus, "What everyone does agree

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[1] A. Malraux, Museum Without Walls, (Secker and Warburg, London, 1965), 22

[2] Quoted in W.W. Jackson, Ingram Bywater (London, 1917), 79

[3] I. Fletcher, Walter Pater, (Longmans, London, 1959), 5

[4] ibid, 5

[5] H. Walker The Literature of the Victorian Era (Cambridge, 1910), 1021

on is that his writings reflect his personality--that their main subject is Pater himself."[1]

Some writers have gone so far as to say that Pater's usefulness as a critic is of no relevance to our estimation of him. Richard Le Gallienne meant this when he wrote, only two years after Pater's death, that

> Mr. Pater is to be regarded first and foremost as an artist, essentially a creative writer, choosing, for the most part, to work ostensibly through the medium of criticism.[2]

In a recent article in Victorian Newsletter, W.H. Sullivan was even more explicit:

> Neither his inclusion of curious historical information, nor, for that matter, the occasional error jeopardises his final achievement; for The Renaissance is not to be read as a contribution to art history, but as a document of the author's own artistic development.[3]

Perhaps because Pater has so long and so generally been regarded as an imaginative writer rather than a critic, much of the scholarship devoted to his work has concentrated on his use of language, themes and patterns in his fiction, and his general

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[1] A. Ward Walter Pater : The Idea in Nature (McGibbon and Kee, London, 1966), 19

[2] R. Le Gallienne, Retrospective Reviews Vol. II (London, 1896), 137

[3] W.H. Sullivan "Four Early Studies from Pater's Renaissance : The Aesthetic for a Humanist Myth" Victorian Newsletter No. 40, Fall 1971, 1

pronouncements on art, life, and aesthetics. There has been very little attention to his criticism, as differentiated from his aesthetics. A brief account of the development of our knowledge of Pater makes this clear.

In the years following his death, which occurred in 1894, several evasive biographies appeared. Neither Ferris Greenslet (1903)[1] nor A.C. Benson (1906)[2] attempted more than a superficial account of Pater's life and a résumé of his writings. They avoided facing any of the issues relating to his successes and failures as a person, a teacher, or a writer. Thomas Wright's two-volume biography (1907)[3] is more detailed and ambitious, but has a snide tone and contains innumerable unsubstantiated assertions which read like gossip. No adequate or even very useful biography of Pater has ever been written, nor does the material for one seem to be available. Laurence Evans's collection of Pater's letters[4] contains some interesting correspondence between him and his publishers, but nothing which adds to our vague picture of him. It contains mainly trivial social notes which make bland reading.

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[1] F. Greenslet, Walter Pater (Heinemann, New York, 1903)

[2] A.C. Benson, Walter Pater (MacMillan, London, 1906)

[3] T. Wright, Life of Walter Pater 2 Vols. (Everett, London, 1907)

[4] L. Evans Letters of Walter Pater (O.U.P., London, 1970)

There were only a few critical studies of Pater published in the first decades after his death. Walter Pater : A Critical Study, by Edward Thomas (1913) is as slight as the first biographies. The nineteen-thirties saw several valuable but restricted and specific studies of Pater, none of which concerned his art criticism or his understanding of the Renaissance. They were Walter Pater as a Critic of English Literature, by A.J. Farmer, Walter Pater : A Study in Methods and Effects, by J.G. Eaker, and H.H. Young's The writings of Walter Pater : A Reflection of British Philosophical Opinion from 1860 to 1890.

Ruth Child's The Aesthetic of Walter Pater (1940), although far too kind to its subject, was the first serious study of Pater as critic. Child managed to free Pater from the two stereotypes which had existed, side by side, since his own lifetime. She demonstrated that he was not Mallock's "Mr Rose, the Pre-Raphaelite", nor simply an enfant terrible who turned conservative in later life. Her comparison of the form of the concept of art for art's sake in Pater's earlier and later writings was the first account of an aspect of his changing critical standpoint.

Two small studies which appeared in 1959 and 1961 respectively, Iain Fletcher's Walter Pater and R.V. Johnson's Walter Pater : A Study of His Critical Outlook, examined Pater's writings with a full understanding of the complexity of his personality and

his developing concepts of criticism and literature. Together with Graham Hough's earlier chapter on Pater in The Last Romantics, these monographs form the foundation of much recent Pater scholarship.

None of the books on Pater published in recent years has been concerned with his criticism or with his understanding of the Renaissance, except as secondarily to other matters. Anthony Ward's Walter Pater : The Idea in Nature (1966) dealt in depth with Pater's adaptation of the ideas of German philosophers, including Goethe, Hegel, Schlegel, Schiller, Schelling, and Fichte. Pater's Portraits (1967), by Gerald Monsman, examined his use of mythic patterns in his fiction. Richmond Crinkley's Walter Pater : Humanist (1970) oversimplified or ignored many aspects of Pater's writings while establishing the undeniable fact that Pater is part of the Humanist tradition.

There have been many articles on Pater in learned journals since the late nineteen-fifties, and these have tended to reflect the same pre-occupations as the books discussed above, being most often philosophical in bias. R. Bizot's "Pater in Transition" and several other papers have examined aspects of the shifts in Pater's attitudes over the span of his literary life. One of these, "Walter Pater : Style and Text" by G. Monsman and S. Wright[1]

[1] G. Monsman and S. Wright "Walter Pater : Style and Text" South Atlantic Quarterly 71 : 1, Winter 1972, 106-23

studied the changes that Pater made to The Renaissance through four editions in his lifetime. They concluded that the general effect of these changes was to soften bold assertions, but that while making these seeming concessions to popular values, Pater never abandoned any basic or original position. Consequently, that the slightly altered versions of the early essays in the later editions of the books are true to their original mood and message.

"Four Early Studies from Pater's Renaissance : The Aesthetics for a Humanist Myth" by W.H. Sullivan, examined Pater's early art criticism and concluded that for him art was seen mainly in terms of the artist's personality, which was viewed romantically. Sullivan treated Pater as an imaginative writer rather than a critic. Of one of Pater's descriptions of a painting, he wrote:

> The technical inadequacy of his account is made irrelevant by its artistic accomplishment, assimilation of the graphic and verbal images.[1]

Richard S. Lyons's essay "The'Complex, Many-Sided' Unity of The Renaissance"[2] discussed Pater's biographical approach to criticism, and the central concept of "expression". In the opening passage of this article, Lyons referred to the trend of recent Pater studies:

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[1] Sullivan, op cit, 4

[2] R.S. Lyons, "The 'Complex, Many-Sided' Unity of The Renaissance", Studies in English Literature, 12 : 4, Autumn 1972, 765-81

> Recent studies of Pater have been mainly concerned with the Imaginary Portraits and Marius the Epicurean. The relative position of The Renaissance in Pater's writings has changed; the emphasis is now on its introduction of themes treated later in the fiction, or its exaggeration of attitudes qualified or abandoned in Marius and the later essays. This concern for Pater's fictional world and the more precise discrimination of his development are unquestionably valuable and yet it would be unfortunate if The Renaissance were really neglected, for it remains central for Pater and one of the most important books of its time.[1]

While there has been some study of The Renaissance, and some of the development of Pater's ideas, there has been none of the development of his understanding of the Renaissance, after as well as during the writing of the 1873 volume. Many of the essays and other later writings contain references to artists and personalities who had been discussed in The Renaissance, or strangely left out of it.

Pater lived and wrote in an age in which artists and the general public alike showed an interest, unequalled before or since, in past cultures. Even if Pater was, as some scholars maintain, more an imaginative writer than a critic, he was read as a critic, and his judgements insinuated themselves into many people's minds. Not only The Renaissance, but dozens of comments in other books played their part in forming the taste of the late

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[1] Lyons, op cit, 765

Victorian and Edwardian periods.

Despite his undoubted influence as a critic, there has been little study of Pater's critical opinions, as opposed to his general aesthetics. There has been no attempt to go through all of his writings to find out just how much he did know about Renaissance art and society, what specific opinions he held at what times, and how his appreciation of the Renaissance developed.

This task, which is the matter of this thesis, will be attempted as follows. A chapter will be devoted to each of four convenient divisions of the Renaissance--the Medieval Proto-Renaissance, the Quattrocento, the High Renaissance, and the Sixteenth Century and Mannerism. Within each of these chapters Pater's relevant comments will be considered in chronological order, so that the development of his thought and opinion can be traced. Each chapter will thus give a full account of the development of Pater's understanding of one generally-recognised part of the Renaissance. A brief final chapter will be devoted to summarising the patterns of change which have been seen in Pater's critical comments, and observing upon any particular interests or leanings which appear to have been consistently evident in his writings.

Finally, it can be argued that such a study of specific opinions rather than general philosophies is in keeping with Pater's own method of working--or at least with his advice in the

"Preface" to The Renaissance. There seems here to be a distinct preference for the study of works of art and of critical statements over the study of aesthetics and philosophy:

> Many attempts have been made by writers on art and poetry to define beauty in the abstract, to express it in the most general terms, to find a universal formula for it. The value of these attempts has most often been in the suggestive and penetrating things said by the way....
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> "To see the object as in itself it really is," has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression.... And he who experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the discrimination and analysis of them, has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or what its exact relation to experience--metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere. He may pass them all by as being, unanswerable or not, of no interest to him.[1]

There are a number of problems and complications involved in this undertaking. Inevitably, in view of the fact that his writings constitute a dialogue with himself, Pater was always a contradictory figure. He was not writing art history, and did not have the resources to do so. And we have very little knowledge of what books he read, what pictures he saw, and what places he visited. While these difficulties limit a study such as this, they do not make it impossible.

The statement that Pater was a complex and contradictory figure is certainly true now as it was in his lifetime, but the

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[1] Renaissance, ix.

extent to which this is a problem depends largely on the way he is to be studied. It is a major handicap if a study of his overall aesthetic is being attempted, if generalized views are being sought. The essay on "Style" is often cited as an example of Pater's tendency to contradict himself. The concluding passage of that essay embodies an attitude quite different from that which has prevailed throughout the whole. It can be argued, however, that this represents a shifting of ground or change of emphasis, rather than a self-contradiction. Nonetheless, problems are created if one is seeking to encapsulate the view of aesthetics and morality contained in such an essay.

This thesis is concerned more with specific judgements than general attitudes, and so the major concern will be with Pater's consistency or lack of it as a critic rather than an aesthetician. Although Pater's critical judgements changed over the years, as this thesis documents, he was generally quite consistent on specifics within any given piece of writing. The exceptions to this will be noted as they become apparent, and will be seen to pose no threat to the documentation of trends of change in Pater's opinions. Some scholars have cited as evidence of Pater's supposed tendency to self-contradiction, the fact that he describes both Botticelli and Leonardo da Vinci as realists in one place, and visionaries in another. In fact both these artists

were varied in the moods and aims they presented and pursued, and Pater was merely recognising as much. Although committed to determining the essence or formula of an artist's genius, he was wary of oversimplifying personalities whose complexities, after all, he found attractive.

In studying the opinions Pater expressed on Renaissance culture in his later writings, it must be remembered that his major concerns in many contexts were not at all related to the question "What was the Renaissance?" But Pater, who put everything he published through seven drafts, never recorded a careless or off-hand judgement. Any opinion to be found in his published works had certainly been carefully considered.

Pater, although a critic as well as a creative writer, was never an art historian. Others in his century attempted to write art history, but were severely limited by the lack of adequate information and techniques for acquiring it. Eastlake's History of Oil Painting (1847) and Crowe and Cavalcaselle's History of Painting in Italy (1866) were perhaps the century's best art-historical works. Other writers, such as Lord Lindsay,[1] and of course Ruskin, foundered because they allowed private morality to overwhelm historical fact--acceptable in criticism but fatal in

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[1] Lord Lindsay, Sketches of the History of Christian Art, (London, 1847)

history.

There has been a technological basis for the extraordinary changes in art history and criticism which have occurred in the last hundred years. Critics of Pater's day, if they could not see a work for themselves, depended on engravings after it. These were often only available for famous works, and were frequently misleading. Because of photography and the methodologies it has permitted, the modern writer on art has at his disposal incalculably more information than was ever available in the past. André Malraux explains in Museum Without Walls just what this means. Critics and historians now living are the only ones who have ever been able to survey the entire range of art and artifacts which mankind has produced. As the essays reveal, Pater was familiar with the major European collections which were accessible in his day, and a wide range of engravings. If he saw a painting in the Uffizi and wrote about it at Oxford months later, he depended upon memory, notes and sketches. In view of the limitations which his age imposed, he was wiser to write criticism based upon what he had seen, than attempt history, for which he was temperamentally unsuited as well as unequipped.

Finally, it can be mentioned that Pater was well aware that he was not a historian. He was told so by Mrs Mark Pattison who reviewed the first edition of The Renaissance, which was

entitled in full: Studies in the History of the Renaissance. As she said:

> The title is misleading. The historical element is precisely what is wanting, and its absence makes the weak place of the book;...the work is in no wise a contribution to the history of the Renaissance.[1]

Pater changed the title to The Renaissance : Studies in Art and Poetry for the second and all subsequent editions, and never used the word "history" in a title again, thus conceding her point.

Our ignorance of Pater's reading and travels is as great as the ignorance of the Victorians concerning so many aspects of earlier art. Few documents exist, and they have little continuity. His writings have never been properly edited, introduced, or indexed. All we can be certain of is what he wrote, and as it was through his books that he exerted his influence, the study of the development of his opinions seems best undertaken by close scrutiny of those books.

Winckelmann

Before commencing the examination of Pater's references to the medieval proto-Renaissance, there is one matter to be considered--the place of Winckelmann. The longest single chapter in The

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[1] Mrs Mark Pattison, review of, inter alia, W. Pater Studies in the History of the Renaissance (London, MacMillan, 1873), Westminster Review, XLIII, (1873), 639

Renaissance is devoted ot Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who lived from 1717 to 1768, thus falling outside the scope of this thesis, but who was nonetheless obviously important to Pater in his understanding of the Renaissance.

Winckelmann is usually regarded now as the initiator of eighteenth century neo-classicism, a movement of reaction against the grandiose and emotional Baroque style, which had drawn largely on the Renaissance as its source of images and subjects. Winckelmann led a return to antique art as a source. He argued that the only hope for modern art was in imitation of the unsurpassable antique, and the eschewing of the corrupt and iconographically impure Renaissance artists. On the whole, Winckelmann rejected the Renaissance in his writings; but in his practice he imitated the first generations of Renaissance artists, he turned to the antique.[1]

Pater justifies his inclusion of the Winckelmann essay in the final paragraph of his "Preface":

> I have added an essay on Winckelmann, as not inconsistent with the studies which precede it, because Winckelmann, coming in the eighteenth century, really belongs in spirit to an earlier age. By his enthusiasm for the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, by his Hellenism, his lifelong struggle to attain to the Greek spirit, he is in sympathy with the humanists of a previous century. He is the last

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[1] J.J. Winckelmann, Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works of art in Painting and Sculpture, 1755. History of Ancient Art, 1764

> fruit of the Renaissance, and explains in a striking way its motive and tendencies.[1]

Pater's justification for the inclusion of the essay on Winckelmann, which dated from 1867,--that the eighteenth century scholar was "in spirit" a fifteenth century humanist,--is consistent with his tendency to see the fifteenth century as a period which generated ideals not fulfilled for three hundred years:

> Much which [the fifteenth centry] aspired to do, and did but imperfectly or mistakenly, was accomplished in what is called the eclaircissement of the eighteenth century or in our own generation; and what really belongs to the revival of the fifteenth century is but the leading instinct, the curiosity, the initiatory idea.[2]

This idea is present in Pater's assertion that Blake's work was in sympathy with Italian fourteenth century art[3] and thus out of place in the eighteenth century--"a classical age of order"[4] akin to the fifteenth. Consistent too is Pater's evaluation of Victor Hugo and others as Michelangelo's "true sons."[5]

Pater believed that the spirit of the Renaissance was perceptible in much of the art and letters of later centuries. There

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[1] Renaissance, xiv-xv

[2] "Pico" Renaissance, 33

[3] "Sir T. Browne" Appreciations 1886 (1889), 153

[4] "Postscript" Ibid, 251

[5] "Michelangelo" Renaissance, 97

is no need to interpret his description of Winckelmann as the "last fruit of the Renaissance"[1] as a claim that the period lasted until the eighteenth century. Pater in fact considered, as modern scholars do, that the triumph of the mannerist style marked the end of the Renaissance, as his statement that the Renaissance began (with Abelard) and ended (with Joachim du Bellay) in France makes clear.

The essay on Winckelmann, after citing Goethe and quoting Hegel on their predecessor, begins with an outline of his life--poverty, frustration, recognition, murder. Winckelmann's homosexuality is subtly emphasized, his paganism and hypocritical Catholicism are discussed, and his appreciation of ancient art is marvelled at without his many intellectual failures being adequately noticed.

The greater part of the essay is given over to a discussion, in which Winckelmann is rarely cited, on Greek art as the standard of European taste; and the essay concludes with some thoughts on the value of art. The continuity of classical thought and art in European culture is, of course, of the utmost relevance to the understanding of the Renaissance, but Pater in this essay is more concerned with eighteenth and nineteenth century neoclassicism than with that of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries.

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[1] Ibid, xiv-xv

As the subject of this thesis is Pater's view of the Renaissance, as a movement in the history of European culture, and not a study of his book The Renaissance, the essay on Winckelmann can be left out of consideration now the facts of Pater's understanding of the relationship of the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries have been examined. The essay on Winckelmann is relevant only in that it sheds light on Pater's understanding of fifteenth century neo-classicism.

> Soon afterwards we find Winckelmann in the library at Nothenitz .... And now a new channel of communion with the Greek life was opened for him. Hitherto he had handled the words only of Greek poetry, stirred indeed and roused by them, yet divining beyond the words some unexpressed pulsation of sensuous life. Suddenly he is in contact with that life, still fervent in the relics of plastic art. Filled as our culture is with the classical spirit, we can hardly imagine how deeply the human mind was moved, when, at the Renaissance, in the midst of a frozen world, the buried fire of ancient art rose up from under the soil. Winckelmann here reproduces for us the earlier sentiment of the Renaissance. On a sudden the imagination feels itself free. How facile and direct, it seems to say, is this life of the senses and the understanding, when once we have apprehended it! Here, surely, is that more liberal mode of life we have been seeking so long, so near to us all the while. How mistaken and roundabout have been our efforts to reach it by mystic passion and monastic reverie; how little have they really emancipated us! Hermione melts from her stoney posture, and the lost proportions of life right themselves.[1]

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[1] "Winckelmann" Renaissance, 183-4

CHAPTER II

BEYOND THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL: THE CONCEPT OF A MEDIEVAL RENAISSANCE.

Romance and Rebellion

One of Pater's great strengths as a critic of Renaissance culture was his realisation of the medieval roots and early origins of the movement. He makes it clear in the "Preface" to The Renaissance that he did not accept the sharp and clear division between the middle ages and the Renaissance which was axiomatic to many of his contemporaries, involving as it did an oversimplified view of both periods. It was in these terms that he justified the inclusion of "Two Early French Stories" in his brief volume, which he organised as a series of studies rather than a continuous history:

> The subjects of the following studies are taken from the history of the Renaissance, and touch on what I think the chief points in that complex, many-sided movement. I have explained in the first of them what I understand by the word, giving it a much wider scope than was intended by those who originally used it to denote that revival of classical antiquity in the fifteenth century which was only one of many results of a general excitement and enlightening of the human mind, but of which the great aim and achievements of what, as Christian art, is often falsely opposed to the Renaissance, were another result.[1]

Thus from the very beginning of The Renaissance it is clear that for Pater the essence of the movement lay not in artistic styles

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[1] Renaissance, xii

or political changes, but in the existence of an attitude in people's minds. From this position it follows that the Renaissance began when this attitude appeared, however tentatively or infrequently, in the minds and works of some people. Pater's claim that the Renaissance had medieval roots was based on his perception of a liberating spirit in the lives and writings of certain late medieval figures:

> This outbreak of the human spirit may be traced far into the middle age itself, with its motives already clearly pronounced, the care for physical beauty, the worship of the body, the breaking down of those limits which the religious system of the middle age imposed on the heart and the imagination. I have taken as an example of this movement, this earlier Renaissance within the middle age itself, and as an expression of its qualities, two little compositions in early French; not because they constitute the best possible expression of them, but because they help the unity of my series, inasmuch as the Renaissance also ends in France....[1]

Having admitted that the two early French stories do not constitute the only, or even the best, examples of the Medieval Renaissance, Pater mentions some other embodiments of its spirit before he proceeds to a close examination of the stories. Provencal poetry and pointed architecture are cited,[2] and a study of Pater's scattered comments on them will follow the examination of "Two Early French Stories".

This essay begins with the observation that French writers have always tended to connect the beginnings of the Renaissance

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[1] Ibid, xii

[2] Ibid, 2

with their country, and

> have often dwelt on this notion of a Renaissance in the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century, a Renaissance within the limits of the middle age itself--a brilliant, but in part abortive effort to do for human life and the human mind what was afterwards done in the fifteenth.[1]

This notion is entirely compatible with Pater's desire to break down the traditional division between the two periods in question, so he follows the theme further, after a brief digression to explain again his concept of the Renaissance being basically an idea.

> This theory of a Renaissance within the middle age,...seeks to establish a continuity between the most characteristic works of the middle age,...and the work of the later Renaissance.... But it is not so much the ecclesiastical art of the middle age,...but rather its profane poetry, the poetry of Provence, and the magnificent after-growth of that poetry in Italy and France, which those French writers have in view when they speak of this Renaissance within the middle age.[2]

Pater even ventured an outline of the process by which this outbreak of the human spirit in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries led to the neo-classical Renaissance of the fifteenth. The medieval period and its art were in Pater's view characterised by an excess of strength, only occasionally leavened by a touch of colour, subtlety, or prettiness. In his view the distinctive characteristics of classical art were sweetness, delicacy, harmonious beauty. Under the influence of liberating ideas

> the rude strength of the middle age turns to sweetness; and the taste for sweetness generated there becomes the seed of

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[1] Ibid, 1

[2] Ibid, 3

> the classical revival in it, prompting it constantly to seek after the springs of perfect sweetness in the Hellenic world.[1]

Thus in Pater's opinion the neo-classicism of the Renaissance came into being to satisfy a taste men had developed in the medieval period, one which could not be adequately satisfied by the ruder art of that passing age. Instead of creating the taste by which it was enjoyed, the poetry of medieval France, according to Pater, created the taste which made itself obsolete, and ushered in the new age.[2]

> In that poetry, earthly passion, with its intimacy, its freedom, its variety--the liberty of the heart--makes itself felt; and the name of Abelard, the great clerk and the great lover, connects the expression of this liberty of heart with the free play of human intelligence around all subjects presented to it, with the liberty of the intellect, as that age understood it.[3]

Peter Abelard thus became Pater's symbol of the Medieval Renaissance.

In making Abelard his typical figure, implying that in his life and thought was concentrated the essence of French medieval profane poetry, and the desire for freedom and sweetness instead of repression and crude strength, Pater contributed to the mythologising of Abelard which has made him so difficult a figure to judge dispassionately.

> Abelard, indeed, thanks to Petrarch, to Pope, to Rousseau, to Walter Pater, to George Moore, to Miss Waddell, and to many others, has long since broken out of the historical framework into the land of myth and romance.... But even when Héloise is

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[1] Ibid, 2

[2] The same idea exactly is expressed in "Romanticism" (1876), which was adapted to become "Postscript" in Appreciations, 251.

[3] Renaissance, 4

> restored to her right proportions in Abelard's life, the story is not immediately made a simple one, for he has in the course of centuries acquired among another section of readers a second mythical eminence as the leader of free thought against...obscurantism and intolerance....[1]

Professor Dom David Knowles perhaps did Pater an injustice when he bracketed him with those who were interested in Abelard only because of his sensational love affair; but he definitely misunderstood the nature and purpose of his use of the Abelard legend in "Two Early French Stories". Pater neither sought to embroider the Abelard legend, nor to over-estimate Abelard's importance as a rebellious thinker. When he referred to the legend, he did so with full awareness that it was legend, and when he referred to the liberty of Abelard's intellect he added the phrase "as that age understood it."[2] What is significant, nonetheless, is that he chose to base so large a part of his case for a Medieval Renaissance on a legend of doubtful authenticity. Pater knew that the Abelard legend was but loosely based on fact, and admitted as much; but then he proceeded to use it as if it were unassailable.

In "Two Early French Stories" Abelard is compared to Tannhäuser, as the subject of "a legend hardly less passionate, certainly not less characteristic of the middle age,..."[3] than his.

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[1] David Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought, (London: Longmans, 1962), 116

[2] Renaissance, 4

[3] Ibid, 4

Pater gives an outline of the affair with Héloise, and mentions Abelard's vernacular songs. He then goes on to quote Michelet, and imply that whether or not Abelard was the great rebel of legend, his legend was a potent influence in shaping the future:

> At the foot of that early Gothic tower, which the next generation raised to grace the precincts of Abelard's school, on the "Mountain of Saint Genevieve," the historian Michelet sees in thought "a terrible assembly; not the hearers of Abelard alone, fifty bishops, twenty cardinals, two popes, the whole body of scholastic philosophy; not only the learned Héloise, the teaching of languages, and the Renaissance; but Arnold of Brescia--that is to say, the revolution."[1]

The comparison Pater makes between Abelard and Tannhäuser is most interesting. Tannhäuser was a real German minnesinger who lived in the late thirteenth century, a century after the French Medieval Renaissance and two centuries after Abelard. He travelled widely and wrote much amorous verse, and a legend grew up around him and finally found expression in a sixteenth-century ballad, on which Wagner based his opera Tannhäuser. In his case, the legend and the man behind it are even more separated than in Abelard's; and Pater's comparison of the two may be intended to remind his readers of the gap between truth and fantasy in these stories of legendary lovers. Whether this was his intention or not, the comparison has the effect of dragging Abelard into the world of Wagnerian dramatics, thus further from his true historical place.

Tannhäuser, in the ballad, indulged the desires of the flesh in the Venusberg, and then went to the pope to seek absolution,

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[1] Ibid, 5

which was refused. When a miracle convinced the pope that he should grant absolution, it was too late: Tännhauser had returned to Venus and the pleasures of the body. In Pater's essay, the minnesinger becomes less a disappointed penitent than a rebel against conventional medieval morality; just as Abelard is made, by association with him, more a lover than a philosopher.

At this point in the essay, having used the reference to Tannhäuser to introduce these overtones, Pater begins to voice his doubts about the truth of the Abelard legend:

> When Abelard died, like Tannhäuser, he was on his way to Rome. What might have happened had he reached his journey's end is uncertain; and it is in this uncertain twilight that his relation to the general beliefs of his age has remained.[1]

This admission, that Abelard's actual significance as a philosopher is difficult to determine accurately, is, however, followed by a passage in which he again becomes the symbol of the revolt of the individual mind against repression:

> The opposition into which Abelard is thrown, which gives its colour to his career, which breaks his soul to pieces, is a no less subtle opposition than that between the merely professional, official, hireling ministers of that system, with their ignorant worship of the system for its own sake, and the true child of light, the humanist, with reason and heart and senses quick, while theirs were almost dead. He reaches out towards, he attains, modes of ideal living, beyond the prescribed limits of that system, though possibly contained in essential germ within it. As always happens, the adherents of the poorer and narrower culture had no sympathy with, because no understanding of, a culture richer and more ample than their own....[2]

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[1] Ibid, 6

[2] Ibid, 7

Just as he seems to admit that Abelard's exact significance is indeterminate, and yet bases his argument upon it, so Pater seems to be adopting an ambiguous position with regard to the role of the Church in the middle ages. While Pater claimed that the opposition of Christian art to Renaissance art is false, the Church is clearly the instrument of repression from which Abelard and others sought to escape. This difficulty is no doubt the reason for the characterisation of the liberating humanist culture as

> beyond the prescribed limits of that [the Church's] system, though possibly contained in essential germ within it.[1]

The final reference to Abelard in "Two Early French Stories" is as a lover-cum-philosopher, with the distinct suggestion that the love affair with Héloise was the source of much of Abelard's wisdom; a suggestion refuted by a glance at the outline of his life. In view of the sustained ambiguity of the characterisation of Abelard in this essay, a mention of him in Gaston de Latour, almost twenty years later, is interesting, and worthy of examination.

Gaston, a fictional character through whose experiences Pater sought to evoke the flavour of life in the last age of the Renaissance, in sixteenth-century France, lived in the shadow and turmoil of murderous religious wars. In the uncompleted story of his life, religion often seems the enemy of civilisation, and the pagans and sceptics of the day its defenders. After a stimulating

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[1] Ibid, 7

visit to Ronsard, and an idyllic sojourn with Montaigne, Gaston reluctantly marries a Huguenot girl, Colombe, who is killed with their child in the massacre of Saint Bartholemew's Day, 1572. Pater compares Gaston to Abelard:

> Lodged in Abelard's quarter, he all but repeats Abelard's typical experience. His new Héloise,[1] with capacities doubtless, as he reflected afterwards regretfully, for a refined and serious happiness, although actually so far only a man's plaything, sat daintily amid her posies and painted potteries in the window of a house itself as forbidding and stern as her kinsmen....[2]

The comparison between the two men is interesting. Both lost their woman; in different ways, but in each case as a result of the prohibitions and violence of religion. Abelard was separated from Heloise, and castrated by her reverend uncle's thugs; Colombe was murdered in a massacre resultant from the opposition of organised Churches. Furthermore, it is clear to Gaston and the reader that the affair with Colombe was but a short phase in Gaston's life, not a major episode despite its traumatic quality. It does seem possible to see Pater as implying here that Abelard's affair with Héloise was, similarly, an episode of less real significance to him than has been generally assumed, that it was rather "an unmeaning accident in his career."[3]

Whether or not Pater came in later life to hold a view

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[1] This phrase seems to echo the title of Rousseau's novel La Nouvelle Héloise, published in 1761.

[2] Gaston, 124

[3] Ibid, 126

closer to that of modern scholars who have had access to documents unknown to him, the fact remains that in "Two Early French Stories" he used the legend of Abelard, despite his doubts as to its truth, to represent the struggle for emotional freedom and intellectual independence of the Medieval Renaissance. Of course Abelard was dead long before that movement was pronounced, but his legend was influential in its development:

> And so from the rooms of this shadowy house by the Seine side we see that spirit going abroad, with its qualities already well defined, its intimacy, its languid sweetness, its rebellion, its subtle skill in dividing the elements of human passion, its care for physical beauty, its worship of the body, which penetrated the early literature of Italy, and finds an echo even in Dante.[1]

Pater believed that, in addition to the influences mentioned above, the legend of Abelard had an effect even sooner on French prose Romance, as people's tastes were awakened to a new range of emotions, some of them almost typically classical, and thus paving the way for the classical revival that followed. Before examining this aspect further, it is interesting to note that Pater compared Abelard to yet another mythical hero, Lancelot, who although the question is somewhat vexed, is generally assumed to be of French origin. In the 1868 essay "Poems by William Morris", he referred to the "mystic passion"[2] of the middle ages, "passing here

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[1] Renaissance, 5

[2] "Poems by William Morris" Westminster Review, XXXIV (October 1, 1868), 301

and there into the great romantic loves of rebellious flesh, of Lancelot and Abelard."[1] Lancelot, like Rosamund and Tannhäuser, was condemned by the Church but according to a sign absolved by Heaven, and so perhaps, Pater may be implying, was Abelard. When this reference is considered in chronological order, earlier than "Two Early French Stories" and thus long before Gaston, a pattern emerges in the development of Pater's thought, which seems to confirm the theory that in time Pater came to place less emphasis on the affair with Héloise in Abelard's career. In 1868 Abelard was mentioned solely as a lover, in 1872 as lover-cum-philosopher, and in 1888 the implication was made that his love affair was of little real importance. But in no case was the influence of his legend questioned, and in each case it was related to the mythology and literature of France.

Despite his frequent references to rebellious flesh, Pater claimed that the rebellion of the legendary Abelard was of significance in other than amorous activities. Making light of a time lapse of a century, he wrote in "Two Early French Stories":

> Yet it is only a little later, early in the thirteenth century, that French prose Romance begins.... In one of these thirteenth century stories, Li Amitiez de Ami et Amile, that free play of human affection, of the claims of which Abelard's story is an assertion, makes itself felt in the incidents of a great friendship, a friendship pure and generous, pushed to a sort of passionate exaltation, and more than faithful unto death. Such comradeship, though instances of it are to be found everywhere, is still especially a classical motive....[2]

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[1] Ibid, 301

[2] Renaissance, 8

Thus the developing taste for sweetness instead of crude strength led to a revival of classical themes, and eventually to a revival of classical forms. The classical tradition of passionate male friendship, growing as it did out of a culture which condoned and even glorified homosexuality, has always in less permissive centuries retained an undeniable latent homosexual character. Certainly Pater's mention of it here conveys that undertone. Citing Chaucer's Knight's Tale as an example of a medieval adaptation of this theme, he bemoans

> The spoiling, already forseen, of the fair friendship, which had made the prison of the two lads sweet hitherto with its daily offices....[1]

Pater's discussion of the story of Amis and Amile conveys not so much that the freedom sought by Abelard had application to non-erotic matters, but rather that it applied also to (in this case latently) homosexual relationships. Despite the presence of the Doppelgänger theme, which so fascinated the Victorians--D.G. Rossetti's painting How They Met Themselves (1860) comes immediately to mind--the nature of the feeling which the friends had for one another, far stronger than their love of wives or children, can hardly be doubted. Similarly the obsessive interest in the twin jewelled cups, although Pater discusses it in other terms, has a distinctly decadent air. He writes of the cups:

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[1] Ibid, 9

> [They] Cross and recross very strangely in the narrative, serving the two heroes almost like living things, and with that well-known effect of a beautiful object, kept constantly before the eye in a story or poem, of keeping sensation well awake, and giving a certain air of refinement to all the scenes into which it enters.... Witness is borne to the enjoyment of beautiful handiwork by primitive people, so that they give it an oddly significant place among the factors of a human history.[1]

Despite this rationalisation, the emphasis on jewelry is reminiscent of such texts of the Decadence as A Rebours[2] and The Picture of Dorian Gray.[3] The sensuousness of the description of the cups tends to reinforce the opinion that the love of Amis and Amile was not exclusively or basically ethereal; and it is possible that Pater, while proclaiming the innocent beauty of the friendship and the primitive nature of the love of jewelry, was quite aware of the obvious alternative interpretation.

In "Two Early French Stories" Pater puts forward his basic view of the nature of Renaissance culture: that its greatness came from a blending of medieval strength, purged of all crudity, and classical sweetness. After quoting at length from the story of Amis and Amile, he explains that it has strength in its theme of sacrifice and miraculous divine healing, and sweetness in its theme of love between friends.

There, as I said, is the strength of the old French story.

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[1] Ibid, 10

[2] J-K Huysmans Against Nature, trans R. Baldick, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1959).

[3] Oscar Wilde "The Picture of Dorian Gray" Works ed Drake (London, Collins, 1966)

> For the Renaissance has not only the sweetness which it derives from the classical world, but also that curious strength of which there are great resources in the true middle age.[1]

The story of Amis and Amile illustrates admirably the qualities which Pater perceived in the Medieval Renaissance, for as he points out, not only is it a Christian story with a classical theme, but it was actually written by a monk. Nonetheless, as we read his final comment on it, we are reminded of its homosexual undertones. It seems a little strange to say of a story in which a man murdered his children, who were only saved by divine intervention, that "the harmony of human interests is still entire."[2], and Pater's description of it as "the story of the great traditional friendship, in which,...the liberty of the heart makes itself felt...."[3] does not do away with the ambiguity.

Having used the story of Amis and Amile to illustrate the curious strength of the late medieval period, Pater chose the story of Aucassin and Nicolette to illustrate

> that other element of its early sweetness, a languid excess of sweetness even....[4]

The subject of this story is the love of an aristocratic young man for a beautiful girl of unknown parentage, whom his father forbids him to marry. It is, as Pater said, a simple and beautiful story,

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[1] Renaissance, 15

[2] Ibid, 27

[3] Ibid, 27

[4] Ibid, 15

told in alternating verse and prose. Certainly, as he claimed, it has the charm of naturalism in many passages; but it is hard to avoid feeling that in his description of it, using it to exemplify the quality of sweetness, Pater exaggerated its sensuousness. Sweetness is certainly there, but hardly "a languid excess of sweetness".[1]

In this vein Pater wrote:

> All through it one feels the influence of that faint air of overwrought delicacy, almost of wantonness, which was so strong a characteristic of the poetry of the Troubadours. The Troubadours themselves were often men of great rank; they wrote for an exclusive audience, people of much leisure and great refinement, and they came to value a type of personal beauty which has in it but little of the influence of the open air and sunshine.[2]

This passage, with its evocation of a type of beauty artificial in its essence, and its reference to the tastes of a self-cultivating élite, has a distinctly decadent flavour. As he continues his comments, Pater shows by his emphasis that the sensuous aspects of the setting of the story concern him to a greater extent than they did the poet who wrote it. Making much of a few details, he gives his readers the impression that Aucassin and Nicolette is as voluptuous as Keats's "The Eve of Saint Agnes":

> There is a languid Eastern deliciousness in the very scenery of the story, the full-blown roses, the chamber painted in some mysterious manner where Nicolette is imprisoned, the cool brown marble, the almost nameless colours, the odour of plucked grass

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[1] Ibid, 15

[2] Ibid, 20

and flowers.[1]

The love of Aucassin and Nicolette is similar to that of Abelard and Héloise, in that both were forbidden by the taboos of medieval society; one for reasons of religious dogma (the celibacy of the clergy), and the other because of a rigid social hierarchy. In loving Nicolette despite his father's protests and this general social prohibition, Aucassin becomes another Abelard, distinguished by birth instead of intellect, who takes a stand for the freedom of the individual heart to follow its own inclinations. A passage which follows a lengthy quotation from Aucassin and Nicolette, has the effect of comparing Aucassin to Tannhäuser also:

> One of the strongest characteristics of that outbreak of the reason and the imagination, of that assertion of the liberty of the heart, in the middle age, which I have termed a medieval Renaissance, was its antinomianism, its spirit of rebellion and revolt against the moral and religious ideas of the time. In their search after the pleasures of the senses and the imagination, in their care for beauty, in their worship of the body, people were impelled beyond the bounds of the Christian ideal; and their love became a strange idolatry, a strange rival religion. It was the return of that ancient Venus, not dead, but only hidden for a time in the caves of the Venusberg.[2]

The most famous passage in Aucassin and Nicolette concerns Aucassin's defiant rejection of the limitations of religious morality; all the more daring because it assumes its truth while refusing to conform to it. Pater quotes it as the best expression of the antinomian spirit:

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[1] Renaissance, 20

[2] Ibid, 24

> It is the answer Aucassin gives when he is threatened with the pains of hell, if he makes Nicolette his mistress. A creature wholly of affection and the senses, he sees on the way to paradise only a feeble and worn-out company of aged priests, "clinging day and night to the chapel altars," barefoot or in patched sandals. With or even without Nicolette, "his sweet mistress whom he so much loves," he, for his part, is ready to start along the way to hell, along with the "good scholars," as he says, and the actors, and the fine horsemen dead in battle, and the men of fashion, and "the fair courteous ladies who had two or three chevaliers apiece beside their own true lords," all gay with music, in their gold, and silver, and beautiful furs--"the vair and the grey."[1]

The reader is left in no doubt that Pater, like so many of his artistic contemporaries, was intensely attracted to the romantic rebels of the Medieval Renaissance. He saw the forbidden lovers as champions of human freedom against the oppression of a tyrannical social and religious system; the fore-runners of the more liberated age which was soon to follow. In Victorian England, which officially admired the middle ages as the period of true faith before a moral decline, his sympathies must have seemed shocking and anti-ecclesiastical to many, despite his occasional reminder that religious systems were not necessarily repressive. In centring his Medieval Renaissance on the mythical and near-mythical rebels of life and literature in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, he was basing his concept of Renaissance on evidence of attitudes rather than of events. The consequence of this will be seen to be a neglect or under-estimation of those major proto-Renaissance

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[1]Ibid, 26

figures whose achievements were not morally controversial.

Giotto

The belief that there was a minor Renaissance within the late medieval period is now widely accepted, although there is disagreement about the extent to which it was related to the Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. One of the chief justifications for the belief that the Renaissance grew out of the late middle ages, rather than coming upon the world unheralded, is the proto-Renaissance quality of the painting of Giotto di Bondone (1266?--1337). Giotto has always been regarded as the founder of modern painting; Dante and Vasari had the highest opinion of him, as did Ruskin and the PreRaphaelites in the nineteenth century. Ruskin called Giotto "the first of a great line of dramatists terminating in Raffaelle;..."[1] and Lord Lindsay, in 1847, wrote "Painting indeed stands indebted to Giotto beyond any of her children."[2]

In Giotto's art, for the first time, human faces and bodies were made to express the complete range of Christian emotions. He was the first artist since antiquity whose works had,

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[1] J. Ruskin Works, 39 Vols, (ed. Cook and Wedderburn), (George Allen, London, 1910), vol XII, 212

[2] cited Ruskin, Op Cit, vol XII, 219

in Berenson's phrase, "tactile values"; and he was a master of expressive gesture and composition, one of the most original geniuses in the history of art.

It is therefore somewhat surprising to find that almost all of the references to him in The Renaissance are slighting. The earliest, in the 1869 essay "Leonardo da Vinci", is a passing comment on the smooth surfaces of his architectural works, in contrast to which the Duomo of Milan is described as "fantastic".[1] In the essay on Botticelli, written in the following year, there are several references to Giotto, all of which contrast him unfavourably and unfairly with Botticelli. The first of these comes close to sneering at Giotto's themes and subjects:

> Leaving the simple religion which had occupied the followers of Giotto for a century, and the simple naturalism which had grown out of it, a thing of birds and flowers only, he [Botticelli] sought inspiration in what to him were works of the modern world....[2]

Two pages later a similar comment appears:

> Giotto, and the followers of Giotto, with their almost childish religious aim, had not learned to put that weight of meaning into outward things, light, colour, everyday gesture....[3]

These passages reveal a number of remarkable flaws and

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[1] Renaissance, 109

[2] Ibid, 50

[3] Ibid, 52

oversights in Pater's understanding of Giotto. The first is that he is bracketed with alleged followers, when in fact he had no worthy successors for almost a century, all attempts to paint in his manner by the next few generations being markedly inferior to his original works. By speaking of Giotto and his followers, Pater is classing the master with painters who were greatly inferior to him, and thus denigrating his own art.

Pater's appreciation of Giotto must have been confused by the fact that at the time he wrote, Giotto's works and those of the Giotteschi[1] were not clearly distinguished.

The prejudice inherent in the description of Giotto's purpose as a "childish religious aim"[2] is immediately apparent, as is the absurdity of saying that this master of dramatic gesture was incapable of infusing meaning into his images. This lack of appreciation of Giotto's style is also apparent in another statement in "Botticelli":

> Giotto, the tried companion of Dante, Masaccio, Ghirlandajo even, do but transcribe, with more or less refining, the outward image; they are dramatic, not visionary painters; they are almost impassive spectators of the action before them.[3]

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[1] This collective term includes Daddi, the Gaddi, Maso, and the Orcagna brothers.

[2] Renaissance, 52

[3] Ibid, 53

The logic of bracketing Giotto with Masaccio here is made to look like a matter of chance, by the further inclusion of the inferior Ghirlandajo; and the truth in calling Giotto a dramatic rather than a visionary painter is robbed of significance by the implication that a dramatic painter is merely one who impassively transcribes what he sees, without a trace of originality being involved.

The reference to Giotto as "the tried companion of Dante"[1] is echoed by another in the 1871 essay "The Poetry of Michelangelo", in which Michelangelo is described as "the last of the Florentines, of those on whom the peculiar sentiment of the Florence of Dante and Giotto descended...."[2] This statement allows to Giotto not only the reflected glory of Dante's friendship, but a symbolic place in the cultural tradition of Florence; although in this context, where Pater is discussing the Florentine obsession with death, it seems to carry an unwarrantedly morbid overtone, and Giotto was not a morbid painter. It may nonetheless be seen as the beginning of a growing awareness in Pater's criticism of the pivotal role of Giotto's work. In the essay "Demeter and Persephone" (1875) there is a further comment of this nature, and it is more specific. Contradicting what he had written in "Botticelli", Pater firstly

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[1] Ibid, 53

[2] Ibid, 90

praised Giotto's frescoes:

> Such symbolical representations, under the form of human persons, as Giotto's Virtues and Vices at Padua, or his Saint Poverty at Assisi...are profoundly poetical and impressive. They seem to be something more than mere symbolism, and to be connected with some peculiarly sympathetic penetration, on the part of the artist, into the subjects he intended to depict. Symbolism intense as this, is the creation of a special temper, in which a certain simplicity, taking all things literally...is united to a vivid pre-occupation with the aesthetic beauty of the image itself....[1]

The real significance of this reference to Giotto lies less, however, in this excellent appreciation of his greatness as a symbolic (not merely dramatic) painter , than in the comparison of Giotto's period to the Homeric age, which follows on the same page:

> And what was specially peculiar to the temper of the old Florentine painter, Giotto, to the temper of his age in general, doubtless...was the persistent and universal mood of the age in which the story of Demeter and Persephone was first created.[2]

The distinct, although not immediately obvious, implication of this statement is that Giotto was the typical or leading spirit of an age comparable to the formative period of Greek culture. Remembering that in his "Preface" to The Renaissance Pater had ranked the age of Lorenzo with the age of Pericles,[3] he can be seen to be assigning to Giotto a place as honoured as that of Homer.

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[1] Greek Studies, 99

[2] Ibid, 99

[3] Renaissance, xiv

The rehabilitation of Giotto in The Renaissance did not take place until the inclusion of the essay "The School of Giorgione", which had been written in 1877, in the third edition, of 1888. Whereas it had been implied in "Leonardo" that Giotto's architecture was dull, it is praised for its "flawless unity"[1] in "Giorgione", only twenty-five pages later in the third and subsequent editions of The Renaissance. Another reference to Giotto in this essay mentions him in the same phrase as Fra Angelico and Botticelli, the three Florentines being cited as exemplars in art of naturalism, religious mysticism, and philosophy respectively.[2]

Marius the Epicurean, which Pater wrote in the years 1881-84, is generally regarded as piece of self-justification, undertaken to explain and moderate some of the opinions in The Renaissance which had shocked many readers. In this lengthy work, Giotto is mentioned several times, and praised in each case. Pater describes the early Christians, in two separate places, in terms of figures in Renaissance painting:

> It was nothing less than the joy which Dante apprehended in the blessed spirits of the perfect, the outward semblance of which, like a reflex of physical light upon human faces from "the land which is very far off," we may trace from Giotto onward to its consummation in the work of Raphael--the serenity, the durable cheerfulness, of those who have been indeed delivered from death, and of which the famed "blitheness" of the Greeks had

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[1] Ibid, 134

[2] Ibid, 140

> been but a transitory gleam, as in careless and wholly superficial youth.[1]

The sentiment of this passage is far more religious than aesthetic, although it grants Giotto his rightful place as the founder of the Renaissance tradition which was perfected by Raphael. Another reference to Giotto in Marius links this religious emotion to Giotto's great achievement: making his painted figures look like real people, after so many centuries in which painted figures had looked like cardboard cut-outs against gold backgrounds:

> The hand of Giotto--giving visible feature and colour, and a palpable place among men, to the regenerate race....[2]

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Marius as far as the study of Pater's view of the Renaissance is concerned is this effort, made three times at least, to link the early Christians and the figures of Renaissance painting. Read in context, these passages quoted above seem to imply that only in an age when Christianity and classicism (or neoclassicism) co-exist, can either of them be wholly satisfactory. Pater sees a certain superficiality, for all its greatness, in ancient Greek culture; and a frightening de-humanising repressiveness in those centuries when Christianity was unchallenged. In the second century A.D., and in the Renaissance, the simultaneous action of the two traditions had inspiring effect. While this viewpoint does not entirely contradict that of "Two Early French Stories",

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[1] Marius II, 53. The similar passage occurs ibid, 110

[2] Ibid, 118

it does represent a marked change to a less anti-Christian stance.

Pater made no more lengthy observations on Giotto after those in Marius, but he did mention him in passing in two of his last essays, his "Introduction" to his friend (and later literary executor) C.L.Shadwell's translation of the first twenty-seven cantos of Dante's Purgatory (1892),[1] and "Art Notes in North Italy" (1890).

The references to Giotto in the "Introduction" to Shadwell's Dante have little critical content. The first, with respect to "the general unfitness of the last century in regard to the Middle Age,"[2] cites Goethe's contempt for Giotto, and may even be an indirect allusion to Pater's own low estimate of him in the years after he wrote the essay on Winckelmann, Goethe's mentor.

> The "universal-minded" Goethe himself explains, much to the surprise of the reader to-day, why, passing through Assisi, he inspected carefully an average specimen of old Roman architecture, but was careful not to inspect the frescoes of Giotto in the church of Saint Francis, work done, it has been thought, under Dante's immediate influence.[3]

In view of the implications of the relevant passages in Marius, this may indeed be an admission that an excessive devotion to the classical tradition, with a tendency at the same time to under-rate the Christian tradition in art, can blind one to the qualities of such an

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[1] C.L.Shadwell, The Purgatory of Dante Alighieri (Purgatorio 1--xxvii) An Experiment in Literal Verse Translation, (London, Macmillan, 1892).

[2] "Introduction" to Shadwell, Op Cit, xiii

[3] Ibid, xiii

artist as Giotto. The next reference to Giotto in this "Introduction", however, attributes much of the nineteenth century's interest in him to curiosity about anything which seems strange to modern man because of its age:

> The artistic and literary work of the Middle Age, the art of Dante's friend Giotto for example, we value in large measure for its very strangeness, its unlikeness to what is nearer in date to ourselves.[1]

This sentence can, though, be interpreted as a reflection not on medieval art and Giotto's art in particular, but on the superficial nature of Man's interest in the past, which accounts for such odd judgements as Goethe's on Giotto. It is further interesting to see Giotto being used twice in this "Introduction" as a typical artist of the middle ages, rather than one who anticipated the Renaissance. The connection of his name with Dante's will be seen, after the examination of Pater's attitude to Dante, to re-inforce this judgement of him as typically medieval.

In "Art Notes in North Italy", in which Pater discusses a number of sixteenth-century artists, it is Giotto's religious faith rather than his artistic greatness, that accounts for the mention of his name. Pater observes there that in the painting of the school of Moretto

> The perfected art of the later Renaissance is to be seen in union with a catholicism as convinced...as that of Giotto or Angelico.[2]

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[1] Ibid, xvii

[2] Miscellaneous Studies, 91

The conclusion to be drawn from a study of Pater's referencesto Giotto, is that his appreciation of his art increased over the years. In the essays before 1875, Pater made disparaging remarks about Giotto's work and especially about the religious faith they expressed. The crucial point seems to be the essay "Demeter and Persephone" in which, while discussing the use of symbolic figures in art, Pater acknowledges Giotto's success in that respect. The later comments on Giotto are all approbatory, and are in general linked directly or indirectly with similar sentiments with regard to Christianity. At times Pater acknowledged Giotto's place as a proto-Renaissance artist, but more often he saw him as a genius within the medieval religious tradition. The more sympathetic Pater became towards Christianity, the more he liked Giotto's art. On no occasion did he link him with the Medieval Renaissance postulated in "Two Early French Stories", for to Pater that movement was a specifically directed effort for freedom from repression by the Church. Considering his discussions of the Medieval Renaissance and of Giotto together, it is clear that Pater felt that the roots of the Renaissance of the fifteenth century lay in the change of values symbolised by Abelard, more than in the stylistic innovations of Giotto. He does not appear to have ever realised that the movement to humanise the Church, in which Saint Francis and his followers were the leaders, was itself a revolt against the repressive and hierarchical system Abelard supposedly opposed. Consequently, neither did he realise that with his art Giotto was con-

tributing to this same humanising effort. When he painted the saints as real people in a real world, not against a gilt backdrop, Giotto was moving towards the Renaissance ideologically as much as stylistically. Thus it was Pater's inability to see the common factor in the matter and the manner of Giotto's art, which accounts for this failure ever to fully appreciate it.

Dante

Pater's "Introduction" to Shadwell's translation of the Purgatorio was the only essay or article he devoted entirely to Dante, although he referred to him more frequently in other essays than almost any other writer or artist. In studying his views on Dante, therefore, we must seek for a theme running through the scattered references which lead up to the "Introduction" of 1892. Considering the frequency and enthusiasm of Pater's comments on Dante, it seems strange that he did not devote an essay to him earlier.

In "Poems by William Morris" (1868) the "romantic loves of rebellious flesh, of Lancelot and Abelard,"[1] were cited as one element of the medieval spirit. The other element of that spirit, the counterpart to mystic passion, was "its mystic religion at its apex in Dante and Saint Louis...."[2] In his later writings Pater was often to make this com-

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[1] "Poems by William Morris", 300

[2] Ibid, 300

parison between Dante and Abelard, the spiritual and physical lovers respectively.

The essay on Botticelli, which represents Pater's estimate of Giotto at its lowest, is a little kinder to Dante, although this involves at one point something of a distortion of the chronology. Pater wrote that Botticelli turned away from the religious subjects which had been treated by Giotto and his followers, implying that these were inadequate and old-fashioned to him, and

> sought inspiration in what to him were works of the modern world, the writings of Dante and Boccaccio....[1]

If he did not know otherwise, the reader would be led to assume that Dante and Boccaccio were contemporaries, and closer in time to Botticelli, than Giotto. In fact, Dante was born a year before Giotto, and died fifteen years before him, in 1321, when Boccaccio was a child of seven. It could be argued that this passage indicates that Pater thought that Dante's ideas were in advance of Giotto's, and thus closer to Boccaccio's and Botticelli's, but that interpretation is ruled out by other comments in the same essay.

After having several times mocked at Giotto's faith, and pronounced on his inability to have been Dante's illustrator, Pater, in order it seems to stress the personal and amoral nature of the views he is attributing to Botticelli, refers to

> the conventional orthodoxy of Dante which, referring all human action to the simple formula of purgatory, heaven and hell,

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[1] Renaissance, 50

> leaves an insoluble element of prose in the depths of Dante's poetry.[1]

The effect of this statement is to indirectly admit that, in matters of religion, Dante was as conventional as Pater thought Giotto to have been, and thus to undermine what had been said about his modernity a few pages earlier. When these contradictions are taken into account, it seems reasonable to conclude that, as the very tone of the references to them implies, Pater at this time disliked Giotto because of his simple piety, while respecting Dante despite his, because of the visionary power of his imagination.

Dante's religious orthodoxy is also mentioned in "The Poetry of Michelangelo", written in 1871. There is an almost patronising tone in the observation that

> for Dante, the amiable and devout materialism of the middle age sanctifies all that is presented by hand and eye.[2]

The passage in which this occurs is a comparison of Dante and Michelangelo, which Kenneth Clark claims represents "a height which Pater never surpassed."[3] Pater admits that although Michelangelo learnt much from Dante, he was moulded mainly by the Platonic tradition, which offered another system of idealism and ideal love. But

> Above all he resembles Dante in the warmth and intensity of his

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[1] Ibid, 54

[2] Ibid, 87

[3] K. Clark "Introduction" Renaissance, (London, Collins, 1961), 17

political utterances....[1]

Another similarity between the two great Florentines lay in their attitudes to death, but Pater's choice of words makes memento mori sound like necrophilia:

> Like Dante and all the nobler souls of Italy, he is much occupied with thoughts of the grave, and his true mistress is death....[2]

Two other references to Dante in this essay particularly stress the medieval aspects of his life and work. The story of his love for Beatrice is described as "a piece of figured wood, inlaid with lovely incidents."[3], in analogy with the handicrafts of the middle ages; and his religious views are mocked, albeit in a kinder tone than was applied to Giotto's:

> Dante's belief in immortality is formal, precise, and firm, as much so almost as that of a child, who thinks the dead will hear if you cry loud enough.[4]

The overall implication of the comments on Dante in the essay on Michelangelo is clear. At that time Pater saw him much as he saw Giotto ten years later: a distinctly medieval man with all the limitations that implied, but one whose work was of great significance during the Renaissance. In this essay, as in the "Introduction" to Shadwell's Dante, Pater quotes Voltaire's supercilious explanation for the continuous popularity of Dante's works, which he rightly saw

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[1] Renaissance, 88

[2] Ibid, 88

[3] Ibid, 87

[4] Ibid, 95

as evidence of the limitations of eighteenth-century taste. In the "Introduction" he compared this contempt for Dante on Voltaire's part to Goethe's contempt for Giotto's frescoes; in "Michelangelo" he compares it to the long neglect of the sculptor-poet's sonnets.[1] In 1871 he would not have thought the comparison to Giotto exalting enough for Dante.

It seems certain that even in those periods when he had least sympathy for Dante's religious beliefs, Pater was aware that Dante had been a powerful influence on the Renaissance and was not to be despised. In the essay "Winckelmann", the subject of which was a man who joined the Church for a career while unabashedly acknowledging his true allegience to be to the pagan gods and the freedom they symbolised and practised, he describes a pair of frescoes by Raphael, in the Vatican.[2] One of them, depicting "the great personages of Christian history, with the sacrament in the midst."[3] represents the Catholic tradition. The other, featuring Apollo and "those on whom the spirit of Apollo descended, the classical and Renaissance poets",[4] commemorates the classical tradition: "Dante alone appearing in both."[5] Despite this, Pater did not make

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[1] Ibid, 83

[2] Ibid, 197

[3] Ibid, 197

[4] Ibid, 197

[5] Ibid, 197

Dante a proto-Renaissance figure, but persistently regarded him as merely a medieval influence on the Renaissance. No medieval man had more right than Dante to the unique honour of appearing in both of Raphael's frescoes; and yet Pater thought that others anticipated the Renaissance, the movement which was to unify the two traditions, more than he.

The "Introduction" to Shadwell's Dante contains the nearest approach Pater was to make to giving Dante credit for having, in this respect, anticipated the Renaissance, and the work of Pico della Mirandola:

> Dante's large-minded treatment of all forms of classic power and achievement marks a stage of progress, from the narrower sentiment of the Middle Age, towards "humanism", towards the mental attitude of the Renaissance and of the modern world.[1]

Despite this acknowledgment of Dante's intellectual generosity, as Pater termed just this quality of determination to give all creeds and traditions their due,[2] he apparently did not believe that Dante really transcended his age enough to anticipate the next. In several places in this "Introduction" he praised Dante's cosmopolitan viewpoint, only to add on one occasion:

> Though Dante's work be nevertheless the peculiar and perfect flower of the Middle Age.[3]

In the opening sentence of the "Introduction" he was similarly de-

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[1] "Introduction" to Shadwell, Op Cit, xxiii

[2] Renaissance, 30

[3] "Introduction" to Shadwell, Op Cit, xxvi

scribed as "the central embodiment"[1] of the medieval spirit. It would be logical to assume that Pater felt that Dante was too rooted in his own age, despite his breadth of intellect, to have been part of a movement which was in reaction against it. The evidence for this lies in Pater's consistent stressing of Dante's orthodoxy. This trait is insisted upon just as firmly in the "Introduction" of 1892 as it had been in the 1870 essay on Botticelli. The difference is that it is presented as a strength, rather than a short-coming, in the essay of 1892:

> He has handled on a grand scale the grandest of subjects,...that immense intellectual deposit of thirteen believing centuries.... On scrupulous orthodoxy he has impressed a deep personal originality,... The religious ideal of that age, the theoretic construction which catholicism puts on the facts of nature and history, is for him, in spite of an invading rationalism already at work about him, itself also still an authentic fact.[2]

The very aspect of Dante's intellectual make-up which had been regretted in "Botticelli"[3] has been pronounced a virtue, reflecting a change in Pater's attitude to Christianity during the intervening years. Dante's piety, and the spiritual nature of his love, did not in themselves prevent him from achieving the status of a proto-Renaissance man in Pater's mind, especially in view of the importance Pater attached to the reconciliation of the Christian and classical traditions, a task which Dante had begun. What finally

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[1] Ibid, xiii

[2] Ibid, xv

[3] Renaissance, 54

relegated him permanently to medieval status in Pater's mind was probably that his stance, admirable though it was to Pater in 1892, was actually reactionary. The passage quoted above from the "Introduction" states that he ignored completely the "invading rationalism already at work about him".[1] This invading rationalism was the beginning of the Renaissance spirit. Had Dante been as orthodox a century before, his views would have been unexceptionable; but by holding those views when he did, he effectively was holding out against the Renaissance. The fact that even when he became sympathetic towards Dante's faith, Pater considered him basically medieval and not a fore-runner of the new age, shows that he held to the opinion that it was not through developments in art or literature, but changes in personal values, that the Renaissance was brought about. As was explained in "Two Early French Stories", the change in values led people to the Hellenic culture; the love of that culture for its sake could and did exist in other periods, but it was not in itself the sign of liberation, the essence of Renaissance.

Pointed Architecture

In "Two Early French Stories", when explaining his concept of a Medieval Renaissance, Pater defined its central feeling as "the desire for a more liberal and comely way of conceiving life,"[2] and added:

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[1] "Introduction" to Shadwell, Op Cit.xv

[2] Renaissance, 2

> Of such feeling there was a great outbreak in the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the following century. Here and there, under rare and happy conditions, in Pointed architecture, in the doctrines of romantic love, in the poetry of Provence the rude strength of the middle age turns to sweetness....[1]

Before commencing his discussion of Abelard, while introducing evidence that the "rupture between the middle age and the Renaissance ...has...been exagerated"[2], he referred again to Gothic architecture and asserted that there was merit in the theory that one could

> establish a continuity between the most characteristic work of the middle age, the sculpture of Chartres and the windows of Le Mans, and the work of the later Renaissance....[3]

Furthermore, in conformity with his doctrine that the essence of the Medieval Renaissance lay in its rebelliousness, he reminded the reader that the ecclesiastical art of the middle ages was

> work certainly done in a great measure for pleasure's sake, in which even a secular, a rebellious spirit often betrays itself....[4]

It is clear that Pater believed that the Gothic style represented one aspect of the Medieval Renaissance, and was itself a symbol, at times, of the movement to greater human freedom. The reader of Greek Studies and Miscellaneous Studies cannot fail to notice the number of occasions on which Pater professes to see a resemblance between Greek (especially early Greek) and Gothic works,

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[1] Ibid, 2

[2] Ibid, 3

[3] Ibid, 3

[4] Ibid, 3

both sculpture and architecture; and an examination of some of these observations would seem a logical starting-point for an investigation of Pater's apparent belief that Gothic was, in certain respects at least, a proto-Renaissance style.

In "Demeter and Persephone" Pater discusses a statue of Persephone attributed to the school of Praxiteles, and links it to the medieval ethos:

> The Persephone of Praxiteles' school, then, is Aphrodite-Persephone, Venus-Libitina. Her shadowy eyes have gazed upon the fainter colouring of the under-world, and the tranquillity, born of it, has "passed into her face";[1] for the Greek Hades is, after all, but a quiet, twilight place, not very different from that House of Fame where Dante places the great souls of the classical world.... The image of Persephone,...has the air of a body bound about with grave-clothes; while the archaic hands and feet, and a certain stiffness in the folds of the drapery, give it something of a hieratic character, and to the modern observer may suggest a sort of kinship with the more chastened kind of Gothic work.[2]

Pater makes a similar comment about some statues found on Cyprus, which were thought to demonstrate the close connection of Phoenician and early Greek sculpture:

> In some archaic figure of Aphrodite with her dove, brought from Cyprus and now in the British Museum--objects you might think, at first sight, taken from the niches of a French Gothic cathedral--are some of the beginnings, at least, of Greek sculpture....[3]

The question which immediately arises is whether this stylistic similarity can be put down to a chance similarity of zeitgeist

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[1] This characterisation, especially in view of the reference to "grave-clothes" later, sounds like an echo of the Gioconda passage written six years earlier.

[2] Greek Studies, 149-150

[3] Ibid, 218

between the two ages, such as that which Pater asserted existed between them, when he compared Giotto's allegorical figures with those of the period which evolved the story of Persephone;[1] or whether it is the result of the continuous, if feeble, survival of classical ideals throughout the intervening centuries.

Perhaps because Giotto was so devout a Christian, Pater thought that in his case no actual influence of classical tradition could be envisaged, and therefore he used the explanation of a similar ethos. In the matter of architectural and sculptural style which appeared to show some classical influence, however, he conceded that a direct influence was indeed probable. This assumption was perhaps made possible by the perception he had of a certain secular spirit in Gothic, which he could not see in Giotto's work. If Dante, despite his orthodoxy, could cherish classical culture, surely the architects of the middle ages could have too. A passage in "Emerald Uthwart" (1892), referring to the continuous study of classical literature throughout the middle ages, and then in the public schools, deals directly with this issue:

> Horace!--he was, had always been, the idol of their school.... The old heathen's way of looking at things, his melodious expression of it, blends, or contrasts itself oddly with the everyday detail, with the very stones, the Gothic stones, of a world he could hardly have conceived, its medieval surroundings, their half-clerical life here. Yet not so inconsistently after all! The builders of these aisles and cloisters had known and valued as much of him as they could come by in their own un-instructed time; had built up their intellectual edifice more than they were aware from fragments of pagan thought, as, quite

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[1] Ibid, 99

> consciously, they constructed their churches of old Roman bricks and pillars, or frank imitations of them.[1]

This concept, of the continuous trickle of medieval classical scholarship being the reason for the occasional classical effect in a Gothic statue or building, is further expanded in the 1894 essay "The Age of Athletic Prizemen", which begins with the observation that

> it is pleasant when, looking at medieval sculpture, we are reminded of that of Greece; pleasant likewise, conversely, in the study of Greek work to be put on thoughts of the Middle Age.[2]

As an example of this, Pater refers to the Marbles of AEgina, which had been the subject of an essay he had written in 1880:[3]

> The Marbles of AEgina, then, may remind us of the Middle Age where it passes into the early Renaissance, of its most tenderly finished warrior-tombs at Westminster or in Florence.[4]

He then proceeds to a discussion of a Greek statue of Hermes, and his lengthy analysis of its similarities to Gothic sculptures is worth quoting in full, for it seems that he understood, long before the twentieth-century scholars[5] who have made so many studies of this type, that images and motifs survived longer than the styles and creeds which created and modified them for their own purposes.

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[1] Miscellaneous Studies, 215-216

[2] Greek Studies, 269

[3] Greek Studies, 251-268

[4] Ibid, 269

[5] Erwin Panofsky, enunciator of the critical system of "Iconography and Iconology", is the doyen of this school.

> A less mature phase of medieval art is recalled to our fancy by primitive Greek work in the Museum of Athens, Hermes, bearing a ram, a little one, upon his shoulders. He bears it thus, had borne it round the walls of Tanagra, as its citizens, by way of course, later images of the "Good Shepherd." It is not the subject of the work, however, but its style, that sets us down in thought before some gothic cathedral front. Suppose the Hermes Kriophorus lifted into one of those empty niches, and the archaeologist will inform you rightly, as at Auxerre or Wells, of Italian influence, perhaps of Italian workmen, and along with them indirect old Greek influence coming northwards; while the connoisseur assures us that all good art, at its respective stages of development, is in essential qualities everywhere alike. It is observed, as a note of imperfect skill, that in that carved block of stone the animal is insufficiently detached from the shoulders of its bearer. Again, how precisely gothic is the effect! Its very limitation as sculpture emphasises the function of the thing as an architectural ornament. And the student of the Middle Age, if it came within his range, would be right in so esteeming it. Hieratic, stiff and formal if you will, there is a knowledge of the human body in it nevertheless, of the promise of what is coming in that chapter of Greek art which may properly be entitled, "The Age of Athletic Prizemen."[1]

Having made so much of the Gothic quality of the work which he sees as anticipating a great age in Greek culture, Pater inevitably though indirectly implies that the Gothic style also led into a great period of artistic achievement, which was the Renaissance.

The presence of an element of subdued or diluted classicism in so much Gothic art does not in itself, however, account for Pater regarding Gothic as a proto-Renaissance style, an aspect of the Medieval Renaissance of the thirteenth century. As is demonstrated by his refusal to allow Dante more than simply medieval status, despite his acknowledged place in the classical tradition, Pater required that to be part of the "brilliant, but in part abortive effort

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[1] Greek Studies, 270

to do for human life and the human mind what was afterwards done"[1], an element of non-conformity, of rebellion against repression, had to be present, as the sine qua non of the movement. It is clear, then, that Pater did find in Gothic a measure of this spirit of revolt, strange as it might seem to those who see the style as the very symbol of the medieval Church triumphant, and the concrete parallel of scholastic thinking. The evidence for this is in the only two essays Pater wrote in the unfinished series "Some Great Churches in France", which he commenced in the year of his death, 1894. These essays, "Vezelay", and "Notre Dame d'Amiens", contain a great amount of thought on the relationship of medieval architectural styles to the ethos of their period. Pater believed that, with or without the conscious knowledge of their builders, these churches reflected the changing zeitgeist. As he exclaimed in "Apollo in Picardy", written one year earlier, in 1893:

> Yes! it must have so happened often in the Middle Age, as you feel convinced, in looking sometimes at medieval building. Style must have changed under the very hands of men who were no wilful innovators.[2]

Changes in architectural style were less significant in themselves than for the changes in attitude which they reflected, in this context. "Under rare and happy conditions, in Pointed architecture,"[3] Pater had said that the Medieval Renaissance developed; and through

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[1] Renaissance, 1

[2] Miscellaneous Studies, 153

[3] Renaissance, 2

that architecture these conditions are expounded in "Notre Dame d'Amiens", and "Vezelay".

In "Vezelay" Pater characterises the Romanesque style, from which the Gothic later emerged, as symbolic of the repressive character of the early medieval Church:

> In contrast to the lightsome Gothic manner of the last quarter of the twelfth century...the Clunaic church might seem a still active instrument of the iron tyranny of Rome, of its tyranny over the animal spirits.[1]

To this is contrasted the Gothic style, as seen in the Cistercian church of Pontigny, which is expressive of a new freedom of the spirit. Despite himself, it seems, even Abelard's enemy Saint Bernard, the notorious reactionary, was affected by the liberating forces of the age. Pater comments on the irony of such a man being the advocate of Gothic:

> Strangely enough, while Bernard's own temper of mind was a survival from the past (we see this in his contest with Abelard), hierarchic, reactionary, suspicious of novelty, the architectural style of his preference was largely of secular origin. It had a large share in that inventive and innovating genius, that expansion of the natural human soul, to which the art, the literature, the religious movements of the thirteenth century in France, as in Italy, where it ends with Dante, bear witness.[2]

This passage is interesting, because it clearly refers to the Medieval Renaissance of "Two Early French Stories", but avoids using the term, and shifts the emphasis from rebellion to expansion of the mind. Pater has thus been able to include Dante within the movement; and

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[1] Miscellaneous Studies, 131

[2] Ibid, 128

what he has described can be seen more exactly as a broader trend towards a more inclusive culture, within which the specifically rebellious Medieval Renaissance has its place.

Whereas Cistercian Gothic, and the works of Dante were strongly tied to the Church, and thus never in the forefront of change; the cathedral at Amiens, according to Pater, was basically the product of a secular spirit, and therefore represents a more radical attitude to life.

> The greatest and purest of Gothic churches, Notre-Dame d'Amiens, illustrates, by its fine qualities, a characteristic secular movement of the beginning of the thirteenth century.... In that and the two preceding centuries, a great number of... towns in...France rose against the feudal establishment, and developed severally the local and municipal life of the commune.... The people of Amiens...promoted there the new, revolutionary, Gothic manner, at the expense of the derivative and traditional, Roman or Romanesque style, of the great monastic churches.[1]

Pater finds that the revolutionary excitement, which fits so well into his concept of the essentially rebellious Medieval Renaissance, is apparent in the architect's execution as well as his concept:

> In this pre-eminently "secular" church, the execution, in all the defiance of its method, is direct, frank, clearly apparent, with the result not only of reassuring the intelligence, but of keeping one's curiosity on the alert, as we linger in these restless aisles.[2]

Here, twenty-two years after he used the phrase, Pater has given details of the "rare and happy conditions"[3] under which pointed

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[1] Ibid, 109

[2] Ibid, 115

[3] Renaissance, 2

architecture was part of a Medieval Renaissance--conditions of political freedom, the result of the desire for a new freedom in all aspects of life.

Another respect in which Amiens anticipates the Renaissance of later centuries concerns the fame of its architect. More like a Michelangelo than an anonymous early medieval craftsman, the architect in his fame seems to look forward to the day when the cult of the individual genius was to develop, and survive into and beyond Pater's own period;

> And while those venerable, Romanesque, profoundly characteristic, monastic churches, the gregarious product of long centuries, are for the most part anonymous, as if to illustrate from the first a certain personal tendency which came in with the Gothic manner we know the name of the architect under whom, in the year A.D. 1220, the building of the church of Amiens began--a layman, Robert de Luzarches.[1]

Furthermore, there is in Amiens the culmination of the stylistic similarity between pre-classical Greek and earlier medieval sculpture. Here, in the beautiful image of Christ known as the Beau Dieu, is a thirteenth-century statue reminiscent of the best classical period of Greek art. Pater sees this as, in part at least, a result of the new fame and freedom of the sculptors:

> Above all, it is to be observed that as a result of this spirit, this "free" spirit, in it, art has at last become personal. The artist, as such, appears at Amiens, as elsewhere, in the thirteenth century; and, by making his personal way of conception and execution prevail there, renders his own work vivid and organic, and apt to catch the interest of other people. He is no longer a Byzantine, but a Greek--an unconscious Greek. Proof of this is in the famous Beau-Dieu of Amiens, as they call

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[1] Miscellaneous Studies, 111

> that benign, almost classically proportioned figure, on the central pillar of the great west doorway....[1]

When Pater called Amiens "the greatest and purest of Gothic churches"[2] he was perhaps thinking less of stylistic purity, than the unqualified demonstration it provided of pointed architecture as a part of the Medieval Renaissance. In it was not only that hint of classicism, and evidence of the growing status of the artist, both aspects of the humanism of the movement; but the circumstances of its creation, out of a movement to liberation which had taken on a political dimension, made it the perfect symbol of what man could accomplish when his spirit had freed itself. And the freeing of the spirit, by open rebellion when necessary, was for Pater the signal, if ephemeral, achievement of that Renaissance within the limits of the middle age itself.

Summary

Pater's basic position, that there occured a movement to greater freedom and sweetness in art and life during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and that this was worthy of the title "Medieval Renaissance", is maintained consistently throughout his writings on the subject from 1868 to 1894. The only noticeable change in his point of view over the years is an increasing sympathy towards religion, so that in some of the later writings the feudal establish-

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[1] Ibid, 120

[2] Ibid, 109

ment, rather than the Church, became the body from whose repression the leading spirits of the age so often sought to escape.

In the early writings, sexual non-conformity like Abelard's or Aucassin's, seemed often to be the core of revolt; in the later essays this aspect was less pronounced. The later essays portray Abelard more as a philosopher than a lover, making his revolt intellectual rather than physical.

Pater never seemed to realise the significance of Giotto's art, although he became fonder of it as his sympathy with its mood grew. Similarly, he regarded Dante as an exclusively medieval man, despite his classicism, because of his religious orthodoxy. Pater always spoke with praise of Dante's works, although in the earlier essays his secure faith was occasionally mocked.

From the first, Pater considered the Gothic style a feature of the Medieval Renaissance, contrasting it with the heavy, oppressive Romanesque; but not until 1894 did he fully discuss the conection between certain examples of Gothic architecture and the rebellious spirit. He was particularly interested in the similar feeling of much Greek and Gothic work, although this was seen as the effect of the survival of classical texts, as much as a striving for Hellenic sweetness. He seemed at times to be approaching awareness of an artistic phenomenon which has only recently been identified and named--Style 1200.

Medievalist Thomas Hoving, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, identified a distinctively classical style

in art in the decades around the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in which there was an awareness and acceptance of the body unequalled since antiquity. This style, which Hoving connects to something of a small renaissance of classical studies at that time, was illustrated by an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in 1969. The identification of Style 1200 depended on a number of techniques, both mechanical and intellectual, unknown in Pater's time, but it does seem as though he was moving empirically towards Hoving's discovery. Certainly what Pater said about the art of this period, with the exception of his wilful neglect of Giotto, is admirably balanced and perceptive.

Compiling Pater's scattered comments on this Medieval Renaissance produces an impressive and consistent case for the movement. The main personal bias apparent is in the matter of religion, and this does not, excepting perhaps again the case of Giotto, undermine his edifice of facts and interpretations. The reader is left agreeing with Kenneth Clark, who pointed out that to his credit Pater "recognised more clearly than most professional historians of the nineteenth century the relationship of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages."[1]

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[1] Clark, Op Cit, 14

CHAPTER III

THE ENCHANTED REGION: THE QUATTROCENTO

Liberty without Libertinism

Stimulated as he was by the stand for human freedom taken by the bolder spirits of the twelfth century, and entranced as he was by the "refined and comely decadence"[1] of the sixteenth century, Pater had no doubts about the significance of the quattrocento:

> But it is in Italy in the fifteenth century, that the interest of the Renaissance mainly lies, in that solemn fifteenth century which can hardly be studied too much, not merely for its positive results in the things of the intellect and the imagination, its concrete works of art, its special and prominent personalities, with their profound aesthetic charm, but for its general spirit and character, for the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type.[2]

This passage from the "Preface" to The Renaissance sets the tone of Pater's treatment of the quattrocento. Presumably because by this time men no longer had constantly and consciously to defend and assert their freedom, they no longer had to be shown defying the morality of the Church, and could thus be distinguished for their ethical qualities instead of their rebellious loves. In Pater's discussion of the artists and intellectual leaders of this century, the shrill acclaim of strange idolatries has been replaced by a calmer exposi-

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[1] Renaissance, xiii

[2] Ibid, xiii

tion of intellectual generosity and unselfconscious enlightenment. To quote again from the "Preface"

> The fifteenth century in Italy is one of these happier eras;...it is an age productive in personalities, many-sided, centralised, complete. Here, artists and philosophers and those whom the action of the world has elevated and made keen, do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts. There is a spirit of general elevation and enlightenment in which all alike communicate. It is the unity of this spirit which gives unity to all the various products of the Renaissance; and it is to this intimate alliance with mind, this participation in the best thoughts which that age produced, that the art of Italy in the fiteenth century owes much of its grave dignity and influence.[1]

Whereas those people who, in the twelfth century, anticipated in their own minds the freedom of the coming age, had to fight for their vision, the fifteenth century was an age which encouraged rather than repressed the individualist. In that age, if one wished to paint or write on subjects or themes of which the Church was wary, one could do so without much fear of persecution, and with the probability of fame and acclaim. In this age a man did not have to side either with the Church or the pagans, the establishment or the rebels, but could draw strength from both. Once established, the neo-classical culture was more tolerant of Christianity than the Church had been of the "strange rival religion"[2] in the time of the Medieval Renaissance:

> But in the House Beautiful the saints too have their place, and the student of the Renaissance...is not beset at every turn by the inflexibilities and antagonisms of some well recognised

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[1] Ibid, xiv

[2] Ibid, 24

> controversy, with rigidly defined opposites, exhausting the intelligence and limiting one's sympathies.[1]

The rapsodic tone of Pater's descriptions of the quattrocento was rarely matched by any other passages in his writings. He barely stops short of making one doubt that the period ever existed, so hard is it to imagine that at any time human civilisation could have been so idyllic.

> Within the enchanted region of the Renaissance, one need not be for ever on one's guard, here, there are no fixed parties, no exclusions: all breathes of that unity of culture in which "whatsoever things are comely" are reconciled, for the elevation and adorning of our spirits.[2]

This description does not seem to fit a period dominated in many people's minds by such men as the reactionary Savonarola and the perverted Borgia Pope Alexander VI. As was often the case when he spoke in general terms, Pater here seems to contradict himself, by allowing exceptions to what he had claimed previously was an ethos without exclusions:

> And just in proportion as those who took part in the Renaissance become centrally representative of it, just so much the more is this condition the adorning of the spirits realised in them. The wicked popes, and the loveless tyrants, who from time to time became its patrons, or mere speculators in its fortunes, lend themselves easily to disputations, and,...the spirit of controversy lays just hold upon them. But the painter of the Last Supper, with his kindred, live in a land where controversy has no breathing-place, and refuse to be classified.[3]

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[1] Ibid, 26

[2] Ibid, 27

Perhaps, too, this narrowing of the bounds of the Renaissance, to exclude from its spirit many who helped in fact to shape it, was intended to qualify some of the extravagant claims Pater had just made for it, before the zeitgeist was to be brought face-to-face with the achievements of the age. For in the essay "Pico della Mirandola", which follows "Two Early French Stories" in The Renaissance, the tone is considerably subdued as Pater becomes obliged to speak less in generalities. In this essay the zeitgeist is defined in terms of the life and thought of an individual who cannot be said to have entirely succeeded in his aims, something which would hardly have been possible, one may think, in the enchanted region evoked in the "Preface".

In his review of J.A. Symond's Renaissance in Italy; the Age of the Despo ts[1], Pater moved further again from the unconvincingly idyllic image of the Renaissance he had created in the "Preface" to his own book. Here he praises Symonds for giving a detailed account of the political background to the art and literature of the Renaissance, which he had been rebuked for failing to do, but he adds tartly that Symond's characterisation of the movement as an emancipation is "not wholly novel".[2] Later in the

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[1] J.A. Symonds Renaissance in Italy; the Age of the Despots, (London, Smith, Elder and Company, 1875). Pater's review appears in Uncollected Essays, 1-12

[2] Uncollected Essays, 5

review he expands the comments he had made in "Two Early French Stories", excluding from the Renaissance those alive at the time who displayed reactionary attitudes. He had insisted in The Renaissance that the Renaissance was a movement, not a period, and he puts that view into effect here by excluding from the movement all, however influential at the time, who did not share in his concept of the spirit of the movement. This is going beyond a reasonable length in re-defining a standard and well-known historical term, and seems very dogmatic indeed when it is remembered that for many the actions of such men as the Borgia Pope were highly typical of the period, with its libertinism and decay of rigid morality. Pater is dismissing the view of those, no doubt numerous, Victorians who would have felt that the gross libertinism of Alexander VI was the logical conclusion of a movement which began with Abelard and Aucassin. "If a monk can have a mistress, why not a pope?", they could reasonably ask. It may well be that Pater was reacting to the moralists' criticisms of The Renaissance, and taking this opportunity to put on record his unwillingness to defend the most notorious libertine of the period. It may also be that he disapproved of Alexander's sins, simply because they were committed with vulgarity rather than grace. In either case, this passage does represent a significant qualification of the implications of much of The Renaissance:

> The spirit of the Renaissance proper, of the Renaissance as a humanistic movement,...is unlike the spirit of Alexander VI as it is unlike that of Saronarola. Alexander VI has more in common with Ezzelino da Romano, that fanatical hater of human life in the middle age, than with Tasso or Lionardo. (sic) The Renaissance is an assertion of liberty indeed, but of liberty to see and feel those things...which generate not the "barbarous ferocity of temper, the savage and coarse tastes" of the Renaissance Popes, but a sympathy with life everywhere, even in its weakest and most frail manifestations. Sympathy, appreciation, a sense of latent claims in things which even ordinary good men pass rudely by--these on the whole are the characteristic traits of its artists, though it may still be true that "aesthetic propriety, rather than strict conceptions of duty, ruled the conduct even of the best;" and at least they never "destroyed pity in their souls." [1]

Pater at times condoned the activities of certain criminals of the period. In the essay "Raphael" (1892), he asserts that the crimes of the Baglioni family not only were within, but even typified, the zeitgeist:

> The Baglioni who ruled there had brought certain tendencies of that age to a typical completeness of expression, veiling crime --crime, it might seem, for its own sake, a whole octave of fantastic crime--not merely under brilliant fashions and comely persons, but under fashions and persons,...which had a kind of immaculate grace and discretion about them, as if Raphael himself had already brought his unerring gift of selection to bear upon it all for motives of art.[2]

Even in this late essay, so conservative and cautious in all but this single sentence, Pater is willing to condone crime if it is aesthetically inoffensive. Perhaps when he wrote "Raphael" he felt

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[1] Ibid, 7

[2] Miscellaneous Studies, 42

secure enough to allow this brief flirtation with sin, or perhaps it can be seen as proof that there was irony intended when he condemned Alexander VI along with Savonarola, in the review of 1875.

Clearly, though, there were limitations to the tolerance and all-inclusiveness of Pater's Renaissance. Many-sided it may have been, but there was no room in it for those who offended him, or his concept of its spirit. It was, as he said, an age productive in personalities, but not all of them shared in the collective air of enlightenment. His expressed interest in the personalities, as well as the intellectual and artistic achievements of its leaders, justifies an examination of what he says about them as men, as well as artists and philosophers.

Pico della Mirandola

The essay on Pico was written in 1871, and it contains much of Pater's thought on the essential qualities of the quattrocento. It presents an idealised picture of Pico, while acknowledging that in his failure as well as his ambitions he was the type of the age. Pico attempted to unify the classical and Christian traditions, so that the rivalry between them could be prevented:

> To reconcile forms of sentiment which at first sight seem incompatible, to adjust the various products of the human mind to each other in one many-sided type of intellectual culture, to give humanity, for heart and imagination to feed upon, as much as it could possibly receive, belonged to the generous instincts

of that age.[1]

There is no hesitation in admitting Pico's failure was that of his age. No sooner has his aim been stated, followed by a lengthy quotation from Heine's The Gods in Exile, than Pater asserts:

> The Renaissance of the fifteenth century was, in many things greater rather by what it designed than by what it achieved. Much which it aspired to do, and did but imperfectly or mistakenly, was accomplished in what is called the eclaircissiment of the eighteenth century, or in our own generation; and what really belongs to the revival of the fifteenth century is but the leading instinct, the curiosity, the initiatory idea. It is so with this very question of the reconciliation of the religion of antiquity with the religion of Christ.[2]

In view of the inclusion of an essay on Winckelmann in The Renaissance, this comment could be taken to mean that the fifteenth century stood in relation to the eighteenth much as the twelfth stood to it; but it is an isolated remark which is not echoed elsewhere, and seems to be mainly a reminder of the constant inter-relating of all ideas through the ages, in itself a humanist concept.

What is of more interest is the denigration of the historical sense of Renaissance scholars. Pater correctly claims that the adoption of an allegorical, rather than historical, approach, bedevilled the attempts of Pico and his contemporaries in their ef-

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[1] Renaissance, 30

[2] Ibid, 33

fort to reconcile the rival traditions. It is, however, suprising to find him asserting that

> they lacked the very rudiments of the historic sense, which, by an imaginative act, throws itself back into a world unlike one's own, and estimates every intellectual creation in connexion with the age from which it proceeded; they had no idea of development, of the differences of ages, of the gradual education of the human race.[1]

This is an extraordinary statement, quite opposed to what many scholars consider the truth. In fact the men of the Renaissance were, in many ways, the first to have the historic sense; believing themselves to be cut off by their own greater wisdom from their medieval past, and actively reviving the styles of yet an earlier period. It would appear from a passage in the review of Symond's book that Pater came to realise this between 1870 and 1875. In that review, again as if using it to correct or qualify his own work on the Renaissance, he specifically mentioned that

> the best chapter in the book, the best because the most sympathetic, is one of the quieter ones, that on "The Florentine Historians"; their great studies, their anticipation of the historical spirit of modern times....[2]

The essay on Pico, however, is dominated not by the questions of Renaissance scholarship, but by the image Pater creates of the philosopher himself. He is introduced to the reader as he

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[1] Ibid, 34

[2] Uncollected Essays, 9

made himself known to Marsilio Ficino in 1482, arriving in the older scholar's study "where a lamp burned continually before the bust of Plato, as other men burned lamps before their favourite saints"[1], on the very day Ficino finished his translation of Plato. Pater quotes Sir Thomas More's description of Pico:

> of feature and shape seemly and beauteous, of stature goodly and high, of flesh tender and soft, his visage lovely and fair....[2]

and adds that his yellow hair was

> trimmed with more than the usual artifice of the time.... Pico, ...even in outward form and appearance, seems an image of that inward harmony and completeness, of which he is so perfect an example.[3]

Pater's paper "Diaphaneitè" reveals that he had read George Eliot's Romola when it was first published in 1862-63[4]; and there is a striking similarity between Pater's presentation of the meeting of Pico and Ficino, and the scene in Romola where young Tito Melema meets blind old Bardo Bardi. Pater even goes so far as to make a play on the work "mystic" to suggest that Ficino may have been blind. In the scene in Romola, the introduction is the beginning of a love between Tito and Romola herself; Pater makes Pico

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[1] Renaissance, 37

[2] Ibid, 37

[3] Ibid, 37

[4] See also D.L. Hill, "Pater's Debt to Romola", Nineteenth Century Fiction, 22:4, March 1968, 361-377.

so beautiful a young man and has him so overwhelm Ficino that it is hard to avoid the feeling that the scene has homosexual undertones.

> Ficino,...when a young man, not unlike the archangel Raphael,... entered his chamber,...seems to have thought there was something not wholly earthly about him.... For it happened that they fell into a conversation, deeper and more intimate than men usually fall into at first sight.[1]

This effect is not wholly dissipated by the brief comment Pater made on Pico's love life, which is brief indeed by contrast with all that he wrote about the celebrated affair of that earlier philosopher, Abelard:

> He had loved much and been beloved by women, "wandering over the crooked hills of delicious pleasure"; but their reign over him was over....[2]

The reader is tempted to agree with Kenneth Clark when he observed:

> The essay on Pico della Mirandola is more personal,...because the beautiful young man...was, like Winckelmann, a realisation of Pater's day dream....[3]

Pater's attempt to justify the devotion of so much space to Pico has the effect of reinforcing this conclusion:

> It is because this picturesque union of contrasts,...pervades, in Pico della Mirandola, an actual person, that the figure of Pico is so attractive. He will not let one go; he wins one on, in spite of oneself.... And so, while his actual work has passed away, yet his own qualities are still active, and he himself remains, as one alive in the grave,...and with that sanguine,

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[1] Renaissance, 38

[2] Ibid, 42

[3] Clark, Op Cit, 18

clear skin,...as with the light of morning upon it....[1]

In Pater's eyes, Pico was the personification of the enchanted region.

Painting: the Archaics

Under this heading it is proposed to consider Pater's criticism of those quattrocento painters who were, in one sense or another, archaic: looking back to medieval art rather than onward to the High Renaissance.

Angelico, also known as Fra Giovanni da Fiesole, formerly Guido di Pietro, (1400-1455), is the first quattrocento painter whose name appears in Pater's writings. In the 1867 essay "Winckelmann" he is mentioned in a passage on the Greek ideal, and a lengthy quotation is necessary for the implications of this passage to be clear.

> There is even a sort of preparation for the romantic temper within the limits of the Greek ideal itself.... Around the feet of that tranquil Olympian family still crowd the weary shadows of an earlier, more formless, divine world. Even their still minds are troubled with thoughts of a limit to duration, of inevitable decay, of dispossession. Again, the supreme and colourless abstraction of those divine forms, which is the secret of their repose, is also a premonition of the fleshless, consumptive refinement of the pale medieval artists. That high indifference to the outward, that impassivity, has already a touch of the corpse in it; we see already Angelico and the Master of the Passion in the artistic fu ture. The crushing of the sensous, the shutting of the door upon it, the ascetic interest,

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[1] Renaissance, 48-49

is already traceable.[1]

Angelico is here classed with the Master of the Passion as a "pale medieval artist", whose work is ascetic and anti-physical, fleshless, consumptive, deathlike even. This can be seen as an exaggeration of a well-known characteristic of Angelico's work--the weightlessness of his figures, but it may involve more than that alone. One of the great strengths of Angelico's art is his magnificent colouring, and this seems to make any suggestion that his figures are deathlike and consumptive, rather than merely weightless, evidence of a pre-occupation with death and decay.

Two references to Angelico in "Botticelli" sustain this image of him as a medieval rather than a Renaissance artist. In contrast to Botticelli's figures, which Pater found expressive of the intellectual and moral openness of the new age, Angelico's saints are described as embodiments of "untempered goodness"[2] having little in common with "men and women, in their mixed and uncertain condition...."[3] Consequently, Pater implies, they are not memorable. Botticelli's Madonnas, in contrast,

> attract you more and more, and often come back to you when the Sistine Madonna and the Virgins of Fra Angelico are forgotten.[4]

The essay on Botticelli, it will be remembered, contained Pater's

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[1] Ibid, 224

[2] Ibid, 55

[3] Ibid, 55

[4] Ibid, 56

harshest deprecation of Giotto; and it seems that at this time he regarded Angelico in much the same way as the earlier master to whom he owed some elements of his style. Pater may have disliked Angelico also because of his simple piety.

This is made to seem more likely when it is recollected that in "The School of Giorgione" Pater cited Angelico as the exemplar of religious mysticism in Florentine art[1], and in "Art Notes in North Italy" he was mentioned with Giotto, who was being praised as representing the epitome of convinced Catholicism.[2] We can therefore surmise that Pater's opinion of him may have improved over the years but this is only a supposition. All Pater's major references to Angelico occur in the early essays, which are often aggressively anti-Christian in tone.

Despite the conventionally religious flavour of his work, it is still surprising that Pater considered, or at least called, Angelico a medieval artist. In bracketing him with Giotto, he was it seems implying that his was the faith of a century and a half before his time, but even this hardly accounts for calling a man who lived his entire life in the quattrocento "medieval". In another passage from "Winckelmann", the art of the Greeks is contrasted with medieval art, and Angelico is used as a representative of the middle ages, which Pater says expressed nothing through art which helps us to know what thoughts, if any, men had then on their relationship to the world

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[1] Ibid, 140

[2] Miscellaneous Studies, 91

around them.

> The Christian middle age,...is always struggling to express thoughts beyond itself. Take, for instance, a characteristic work of the middle age, Angelico's Coronation of the Virgin, in the cloister of Saint Mark's at Florence. In some strange halo of a moon Christ and the Virgin Mary are sitting, clad in mystical white raiment, half shroud, half priestly linen. Our Lord,...sets with slender finger-tips a crown of pearl on the head of his mother, who, corpse-like in her refinement, is bending forward to receive it.... Certainly, it cannot be said of Angelico's fresco that it throws into a sensible form our highest thoughts about man and his relation to the world; but it did not do this adequately even for Angelico. For him, all that is outward or sensible in his work...is only the symbol or type of an inexpressible world, to which he wishes to direct the thoughts; he would have shrunk from the notion that what the eye apprehended was all.[1]

This is interesting criticism, provided one accepts the doubtful premise that Angelico's art typifies the medieval manner. It was a disturbing occasional practice of Pater's to typify a trend with a work which he admitted was not really a part of what it supposedly exemplified; but here he is not doing this, but rather seems to be claiming incorrectly that the Coronation of the Virgin is a medieval painting. One is tempted to conclude that when he wrote the "Winckelmann" essay in 1867, Pater was so determined to praise the Greek at the expense of the Christian, and so anxious, for reasons of his own to see figures as "corpse-like", that he overlooked the liveliness of Angelico's colour, and his sense of space, perhaps the most progressive aspect of his style. This jaundiced

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[1] Renaissance, 204-5

view of Angelico was augmented by his low opinion of Giotto, so that he relegated the progressive medieval and the conservative quattrocento painters together to an artistic plane beyond which both had actually progressed. It seems that for reasons of philosophical bias, Pater was blind to many of Angelico's achievements; while, in "Winckelmann" at least, building a bizarre and unjustified morbid image of his work. This morbid image of Angelico would at least have been consistent with Pater's observation that many of the great Florentines, from Dante to Michelangelo, were obsessed with death. Perhaps indeed they were; and in this respect at least, Pater was apparently in their tradition.

In his discussion of a work by Bennozzo Gozzoli now known as The Drunkenness of Noah, Pater again used the term medieval to refer to a quattrocento painting. As in the case of Fra Angelico's work, he is not claiming that this picture merely illustrates some medieval style, but actually calling it medieval. His description of it makes no other attempt to represent it as anything it is not; there is no straining after morbid or bizarre significance.

> We see...in Bennozzo Gozzoli's medieaval fresco of the Invention of Wine in the Campo Santa at Pisa--the family of Noah presented among all the cirumstances of a Tuscan vineyard, around the press from which the first wine is flowing, a painted idyll....[1]

In Wolfflin's words, "a typical Quattrocento narrative, full of de-

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[1] Greek Studies, 20

tail, and showing the narrator's pleasure....",[1] which Pater for some reason calls medieval. Here there is not the unmixedly religious effect which may explain the application of the term to Angelico; and furthermore this painting dates from the latter half of the quattrocento, and was thus done after the friar's death, and during the lifetime of Botticelli. As Gozzoli's dates (1421-97) are correctly given in Crowe and Cavalcasselle's A History of Painting in Italy, a work Pater often consulted, he must have known this, and so we might be led to hypothesise that unless he called the picture "medieval" out of carelessness, which is unlikely, he did so in order to imply that it was stylistically conservative for its time. Certainly the fresco was by no means in the vanguard of artistic development, so this explanation would be reasonable if it was supported by evidence that Pater was aware of the nature and direction of the progress of art at this time. The continuing analysis of his comments on other quattrocento painters indicates that this was the case, although that awareness was somewhat perplexed.

The case of Perugino (1445-1523) is significant in this context. Although no more modern than Angelico or Gozzoli, he lived much later, on into the cinquecento, and so, perhaps, Pater felt obliged to justify attaching the name of the earlier age to his art. In the essay on Winckelmann, Perugino was called "medieval", and

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[1] Heinrich Wolfflin, Classic Art, (London, Phaidon, 1952), 207

contrasted favourably with northern painters:

> The sensuous expression of conceptions which unreservedly discredit the world of sense, was the delicate problem which Christian art had before it. If we think of medieval painting, as it ranges from the early German schools, still with something of the air of the charnel-house about them, to the clear loveliness of Perugino, we shall see how that problem was solved.[1]

It was not, however, until "Raphael", twentyfive years later, that Pater fully explained why he considered so late a painter to be appropriately designated "medieval". Observing that portraiture had no place in Perugino's school, although it was predominant in Florence, he refers to a Perugino Marriage of the Virgin at Fano, only fifty-odd miles from Citta di Castello, for which town, as Pater states, Raphael painted his Marriage of the Virgin now at Milan. Most important, though, is the explanation Pater gives for considering Perugino basically a medieval artist:

> Perugino's pictures are for the most part religious contemplations, painted and made visible, to accompany the action of divine service--a visible pattern to priests, attendants, worshippers, of what the course of their invisible thoughts should be at those holy functions.[2]

Pater is stressing the religious nature and purpose of Perugino's art at the expense of the very considerable number of images of pagan gods he produced. He is here bending the truth, probably deliberately, just as he did in asserting that "portrait-

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[1] Renaissance, 225

[2] Miscellaneous Studies, 44

art had been nowhere in the school of Perugino..."[1] when in fact it had some small place.

After stating that:

> The lovely work of Perugino, very lovely at its best...is in fact "conservative" and at various points slightly behind its day, though not unpleasantly.[2]

Pater goes on to justify calling Perugino "medieval", by discussing his depiction of the pagan deities:

> In Perugino's allegorical frescoes...pagan personages take their place indeed side by side with the figures of the New Testament, but are no Romans or Greeks, neither are the Jews Jews, nor is any one of them warrior, sage, king, precisely of Perugino's own time and place, but still contemplations only, after the manner of the personages in his church-work; or say dreams--monastic dreams--thin, do-nothing creatures, conjured from sky and cloud. Perugino clearly never broke through the meditative circle of the Middle Age.[3]

This extremely astute piece of criticism makes it clear that Pater called an artist of any period "medieval" if his imagination, more than his style, was appropriate to the tradition of the middle ages. It seems reasonable to extrapolate this comment on Perugino to Angelico and Gozzoli, although it may not in all its details apply as well to them as to Perugino. In using the term "medieval" in this way, Pater was being consistent with his use of the term

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[1] Ibid, 50

[2] Ibid, 44

[3] Ibid, 45

"Renaissance", as signifying an attitude rather than a group of historical circumstances. It is a usage which must be abhorred by the historian; and one is reminded of Mrs Mark Pattison's comment on The Renaissance:

> Mr Pater writes of the Renaissance as if it were a kind of sentimental revolution having no relation to the conditions of the actual world.[1]

Pater obviously liked Perugino's art, more certainly than Angelico's, so it does not seem that the use of the term "medieval" to denote archaism in the quattrocento was necessarily perjorative. It is interesting to see that in "Raphael" he finds it possible to praise the archaic art of Raphael's father, Giovanni Santi (1435-94). The tone makes it clear that the sentiments in question were the basis of this praise for a clumsy and dull painting:

> In quiet nooks of the Apinnines Giovanni's works remain; and there is one of them worth study, in spite of what critics say of its crudity, in the National Gallery. Concede its immaturity, at least, though an immaturity visibly susceptible of a delicate grace, it wins you nevertheless to return again and again, and ponder, by a sincere expression of sorrow, profound, yet resigned, be the cause what it may, among all the many causes of sorrow inherent in the ideal of maternity, human or divine.[2]

The work which Pater found so moving is a thoroughly undistinguished and extremely awkward treatment of a favourite subject

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[1] Pattison, Op Cit, 104

[2] Miscellaneous Studies, 40

of religious painters of many centuries, which has been better done innumerable times. He preferred to consider it an "immature" work, rather than agree to the critics' descriptions of it as crude, and professed to see in that very immaturity a certain "delicate grace". His next sentence explains this:

> But if you keep in mind when looking at it the facts of Raphael's childhood, you will recognise in his father's picture, not the anticipated sorrow of the "Mater Dolorosa" over the dead son, but the grief of a simple house-hold over the mother herself taken early from it.[1]

In fact Pater's term "immature" is meaningless, a sop to those who, understandably, called the picture crude, offered in an attempt to defend a work he found moving. The early loss of one or both parents, which Pater himself suffered, was the fate of many of his characters, including Marius and Florian Deleal; and it may even be suspected to have been a cause of his own fascination with death and corpses. His praise of Santi's picture is as personal and subjective as his interpretation of Angelico's Coronation of the Virgin; and need not obscure the critical rationale, revealed in the comments on Perugino, for his terminology in discussing quattrocento conservatives.

That there was persistent medievalism during the historical period of the Renaissance is but a corollary of the fact, or concept,

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[1] Ibid, 40

that there was a Renaissance during what was historically the middle ages. Pater's strong belief in the close connection of the art and ethos of the supposedly distinct periods, which he thought of as movements, was the basis for his use of the term "medieval" in the way which has been discussed. As he wrote in "Winckelmann":

> There is a sense in which it may be said that the Renaissance was an uninterrupted effort of the middle age, that it was ever taking place.... And now it was seen that the medieval spirit too had done something for the destiny of the antique. By hastening the decline of art, by withdrawing interest from it, and yet keeping unbroken the thread of its traditions, it had suffered this human mind to repose that it might awake when day came, with eyes refreshed, to those antique forms.[1]

Painting: the Innovators

The fact that Pater described certain quattrocento artists as "medieval", meaning conservative, implies that he had a concept of what constituted modern, or progressive art at that time. The comments on Perugino in "Raphael" suggest that once Pater himself came to realise that the quattrocento was the age in which the historical spirit first stirred, he expected the leading painters of the day to show in their treatment of classical and biblical figures that they had an awareness of the development of man in the world. He did not link Perugino's popularity to the influence of Savonarola, so we would not expect him to find causes in the

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[1] Renaissance, 226

world of politics and action for the achievements of progressive artists either, but to deal with them principally in terms of aesthetic movements. It could further be expected that as this was a period in which the progressive artists used classical forms and motifs, Pater would be responsive to, and appreciative of their work, and not blind to its virtues, as he was to Giotto's technical innovation, because of his traditional Christian subjects. In fact, though, Pater's appraisal of the progressive quattrocento painters is somewhat disappointing. With the exception of Botticelli, to whom he devoted a short essay in 1870, he had very little to say about them.

Despite the brevity of his working life, Masaccio (1401-28) is considered one of the most important early quattrocento painters. He gave his figures a remarkable effect of solidity, and set them in a fully realised spatial environment. Pater refers to Masaccio only twice, and appears to have had no conception of the role he played in developing Renaissance style. In "Botticelli" he links him, appropriately, with Giotto[2]; although this was not a sign of understanding their relationship to one another, as of course he was, in this essay, demeaning Giotto.

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[1] Renaissance, 226

[2] Ibid, 53

Another reference to Masaccio over twenty years later, in "Raphael", makes it seem that Pater never came to understand him. He mentioned, in passing "the earlier naturalistic works of Masaccio and Masolino...."[1] indicating not only an ignorance of the significance of Masaccio's style, but an underestimation of his stature. Masolino was a poor and unworthy follower, and the mention of the two names together like this is comparable to the citing of "Giotto, and the followers of Giotto"[2] in "Botticelli".

A number of artists of major importance are not mentioned even once in The Renaissance: Piero di Cosimo, Andrea del Castagno, Lippi, Piero della Francesca, and Andrea Mantegna, to name a few. In the case of Mantegna, at least, this omission was later compensated for by several useful comments. In Volume Two of Marius, Pater wrote of the triumph of Marcus Aurelius:

> Andrea Mantegna, working at the end of the fifteenth century, for a society full of antiquarian fervour at the sight of the earthy relics of the old Roman people, day by day returning to light out of the clay--childish still, moreover, and with no more suspicion of pasteboard than the old Romans themselves, in its unabashed love of open-air pageantries, has invested this, the greatest, and alas! the most characteristic, of the splendours of imperial Rome, with a reality livelier than any description. The homely sentiments for which he has found place in his learned paintings are hardly more lifelike than the great

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[1] Miscellaneous Studies, 49

[2] Renaissance, 52

public incidents of the show, there depicted.[1]

The description of Mantegna's art up to this point makes it seem rather like Ghirlandajo's--a pasteboard assemblage of details and motifs. However, the concluding sentence suggests that Pater had at least some appreciation of the dignity and grandeur of Mantegna's work:

> And then, with all that vivid realism, how dignified, how select in type, is this reflection of the old Roman world....[2]

A mention of Mantegna in "Art Notes in North Italy" in the context of a discussion of Titian's religious art, reveals that Pater had by this time (1890) become aware of Mantegna's role in establishing the currency of many themes and motifs which became basic to the High and later Renaissance. A specific painting by Titian, Pater wrote

> may represent for us a vast and varied amount of work--in which he expands to their utmost artistic compass the earlier religious dreams of Mantegna....[3]

More controversial by far than Mantegna, is Domenico del Ghirlandajo (1449-94), who was popular in his day, and greatly admired by Ruskin, but whose reputation slumped badly in the early twentieth century and is only now recovering. This teacher of

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[1] Marius II, 198

[2] Ibid, 198. Pater is discussing The Triumph of Caesar at Hampton Court Palace.

[3] Miscellaneous Studies, 90

Michelangelo is praised by some for grace, scholarship, and liveliness; and condemned by others for producing unimaginative pastiches. Pater wrote at a time when, in Frederick Hartt's words:

> the quattrocento was rediscovered in ernest..[and] Ghirlandaio's meticulous and convincing view of life about him impressed a generation which never quite understood Masaccio and cast only a scornful glance in the direction of Ucello and Piero della Francesca.[1]

Pater certainly was guilty, with many of his contemporaries, of failing to understand Masaccio and ignoring Piero della Francesca; but his estimate of Ghirlandajo was probably not really as high as his comments on him would seem to suggest, if they are only read superficially. Pater's temperament did not equip him to attack an established reputation, but his references to Ghirlandajo express a dissension from the view of the time: that he was the supreme quattrocento master.

When Pater wrote "Botticelli", Giotto and Masaccio were poorly thought of, and as has been shown Pater held them in low esteem, but Ghirlandajo was considered infinitely their better. Yet he wrote:

> Giotto,...Masaccio, Ghirlandajo even, do but transcribe, with more or less refining, the outward image....[2]

The use of the word "even" is a concession to the view of the time: that Ghirlandajo was the greatest of the three painters in question;

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[1] F. Hartt, History of Italian Renaissance Art, (New York, Prentice-Hall, 1969), 304

[2] Renaissance, 53

but the classing of him with the others was nonetheless in effect a subtle denigration. The assertion that he was a mere transcriber is in accord with the beliefs of those who have in this century removed him from the eminent position he once held.

The following year, in "The Poetry of Michelangelo", Pater dismissed the great genius's teacher in a single sentence. After mentioning Michelangelo's childhood in Settignano, Pater added:

> To this succeeded the influence of the sweetest and most placid master Florence had yet seen, Domenico Ghirlandajo.[1]

When it is remembered that Pater's praise of Michelangelo was based on his intellectual power and his fusion of great strength with sweetness, it becomes apparent that in attributing sweetness and placidity only to Ghirlandajo, Pater was effectively downgrading his achievement. Pater believed that the greatness of Renaissance art came from its intellectual significance--"intimate alliance with mind",[2] and emotional power--inherited from "the true middle age."[3] Clearly he found neither of these qualities in Ghirlandajo's painting. Perhaps the clearest indication of Pater's estimate of Ghirlandajo is in the scarcity of his references to him, at the height of his prestige. Pater believed that Botticelli

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[1] Ibid, 78

[2] Ibid, xiv

[3] Ibid, 15

was in fact the greatest of the quattrocento painters, and The Renaissance started a vogue for him which has never really ended. When The Renaissance first appeared, many readers must have thought it odd that it was Botticelli, then little known, rather than Ghirlandajo, who was the subject of the only chapter devoted to a quattrocento painter.[1]

It is interesting to see Pater differing again from the accepted view in the case of Andrea de Verrocchio (1435-88). Ever since Vasari had sneered at him as less gifted than industrious, saying that

> his manner in sculpture and painting was somewhat hard and crude, as if he had learned these arts by means of infinite labour and study,[2]

he had been thought of as an artist of the second or third rank. Pater's comments on Verrocchio show that he was still influenced to a small extent by Vasari's patronising attitude, but that he definitely perceived that it was quite unfair to dismiss so versatile an artist so glibly. In the essay on his pupil, Leonardo, Pater discussed Verrocchio at length:

Verrocchio was an artist of the earlier Florentine type,

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[1] Cook and Wedderburn admit that Pater preceded Ruskin in his discussion of Botticelli in Ruskin, Op. Cit., Vol. 4, 355,n.

[2] G. Vasari. Lives of the Artists, trans. Foster, ed. Burroughs, (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1946) 150

> carver, painter, and worker in metals, in one; designer, not of pictures only, but of all things for sacred or household use, drinking-vessels, ambries, instruments of music, making them all fair to look upon, filling the common ways of life with the reflexion of some far-off brightness, and years of patience had refined his hand till his work was now sought after from distant places.[1]

This passage implies that Verrocchio's craftsmanship was of a high standard, and contributed to the aesthetic pleasure of quattrocento life, and in the next paragraph he is further credited with sharing in the vision and ambition characteristic of his time. Like Pico, though, he was unable to achieve all he sought to.

> For beneath the cheerful exterior of the well-paid craftsman...lay the ambitious desire of expanding the destiny of italian art by a larger knowledge and insight into things, a purpose in art not unlike Leonardo's still unconscious purpose; and often, in the modelling of drapery, or of a lifted arm, or of hair cast back from the face, there came to him something of the freer manner and richer humanity of a later age.[2]

Pater retold the story of Verrocchio giving up painting after realising that Leonardo's angel was "a space of sunlight"[3] in his "cold, laboured old picture"[4] of the Baptism of Christ; but softened Vasari's sarcasm with the assertion that

painting had always been the art by which Verrocchio set the

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[1] Renaissance, 101

[2] Ibid, 102

[3] Ibid, 102

[4] Ibid, 102

least store.[1]

Verrocchio was, after all, mainly a metal-worker and sculptor, and his last work, the equestrian statue of Bartolomeo Colleoni, was not only his materpiece but one of the greatest pieces of Renaissance sculpture. Pater cannot be accused of failing to recognise its significance.

> What, in that age, such work was capable of being--of what nobility, amid what racy truthfulness to fact--we may judge from the bronze statue of Bartolomeo Colleoni on horseback, modelled by Leonardo's master, Verrocchio...still standing in the piazza...at Venice.[2]

Pater has perceived in the Colleoni monument the very characteristics it shares with Masaccio's art, which he could not perceive there--the truthfulness with nobility and grandeur, rather than fussiness.

A few pages later Pater refers to Verrocchio's drawings with a tone of praise which contrasts with the denigration of his painting. He credits Verrocchio with having contributed towards Leonardo's Mona Lisa:

> As often happens with work in which invention seems to reach its limits, there is an element in it given to, not invented by, the master. In that inestimable folio of drawings, once in the possession of Vasari, were certain designs by Verrocchio, faces of such impressive beauty that Leonardo in

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[1] Ibid, 102

[2] Ibid, 121

> his boyhood copied them many times. It is hard not to connect with these designs of the elder, by-past master, as with its germinal principle, the unfathomable smile, always with a touch of something sinister in it which plays over all Leonardo's work.[1]

The Colleoni statue, now spelt Coleoni, is cited again in "The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture", an essay of 1880 included in Greek Studies. The reference here is to the technique involved, and is complimentary.

> That was the earliest method of uniting the various parts of a work in metal, a method allowing of much dainty handling of the cunning pins and rivets, and one which has its place still, in perfectly accomplished metal-work, as in the equestrian statue of Bartolomeo Coleoni, by Andrea Verrocchio....[2]

In the same year, in the essay "The Marbles of Aegina", Verrocchio is cited along with Mino da Fiesole, as sharing with the marbles, "the enduring charm of an unconventional, unsophisticated freshness...."[3] This is as fair an estimate of Verrocchio's work as any, emphasizing its distinctive honesty and clarity. As Pater wrote earlier in the same paragraph:

> As regards Italian art, the sculpture and painting of the earlier Renaissance, the aesthetic value of this naivete is now well understood....[4]

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[1] Ibid, 124

[2] Greek Studies, 232

[3] Ibid, 267

[4] Ibid, 267

Pater clearly understood, better than many of his contemporaries, and better than Vasari, that Verrocchio, in his own right and as Leonardo's teacher, was not only a good artist but an example of the Renaissance man whose greatness lay largely in exceptional versatiliy.

Pater's obvious awareness of the conservatism of the art of Perugino, Angelico, Gozzoli, and Santi suggested that he had a definite idea of the nature and direction of the artistic movement of the quattrocento. An analysis of his comments on the more progressive artists of the time reveals, however, that this awareness was not highly developed. Not only did he fail to give an account of what he understood to be the direction of the quattrocento movement, but he under-rated two of its leaders in Masaccio and Mantegna, and ignored numerous others. His late recognition of the value of Mantegna's work, and his championing of Verrocchio, along with his subtle denigration of Ghirlandajo, point to some understanding of the period, even if confusion reigned in his mind on many matters involved. Pater believed that Botticelli, almost unknown at the time, was the most significant artist of the quattrocento, and saw in his art many of the qualities, like intellectual generosity, which he valued in the culture of that century. It is therefore to the essay on Botticelli that we must turn for further elucidation of his views on quattrocento painting.

Sandro Botticelli

Ever since Pater introduced Botticelli to English art-lovers, his interpretation has been decried as sentimental and false and much has been made of the tale that Pater so delighted in the sound of Botticelli's name that he said it to himself, over and over again, like an incantation. In fact the essay, which first appeared in the Fortnightly Review as "A fragment on Sandro Botticelli", was a daring piece of pioneering criticism, and in it Pater is seen at his most confident.

Not surprisingly, he felt the need to justify devoting an essay to this then unknown painter; and he poses and answers the rhetorical question:

> But, after all, it may be asked, is a painter like Botticelli--a secondary painter--a proper subject for general criticism? There are a few great painters, like Michelangelo or Leonardo, whose work has become a force in general culture, partly for this very reason that they have absorbed into themselves all such workmen as Sandro Botticelli.... But, besides those great men, there is a certain number of artists who have a distinct faculty of their own by which they convey to us a peculiar quality of pleasure.... Of this select number Botticelli is one....[1]

Pater had opened the essay by using the authority of Leonardo's name to justify the study of Botticelli, observing that

> in Leonardo's treatise on painting only one contemporary is mentioned by name--Sandro Botticelli.[2]

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[1] Renaissance, 61

and suggesting that

> this pre-eminence may be due to chance only, but to some it will rather appear a result of deliberate judgement....[1]

It is clear, though, that neither Leonardo's reference to him, nor even his peculiar qualities, are the only reasons for Pater's interest in Botticelli. Pater thought that Botticelli, rather than Ghirlandajo or any other more famous artist, had most of

> the freshness, the uncertain and diffident promise which belongs to the earlier Renaissance itself, and makes it perhaps the most interesting period in the history of the mind: in studying his work one begins to understand to how great a place in human culture the art of Italy had been called.[2]

This thought is repeated in a passing comment in "Demeter and Persephone" (1875), where Botticelli's art is said to show the

> mingling of a quaint freshness and simplicity with a certain earnestness[3]

in a manner typical of early Florentine work.

Most significantly, perhaps, Botticelli also seemed to Pater to be showing the direction to the High Renaissance, and thus to represent the movement of the quattrocento:

> In the middle of the fifteenth century he had already anticipated much of that meditative sublety, which is sometimes supposed peculiar to the great imaginative workmen of its close.[4]

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[1] Ibid, 50

[2] Ibid, 62

[3] Greek Studies, 117

[4] Renaissance, 50

Pater's interpretation of Botticelli can therefore be seen to be of crucial significance to his whole concept of the Renaissance.

The analysis of Pater's comments on the zeitgeist of the quattrocento showed that he saw it as a charmed and enlightened age, which was secure enough in its freedom to devote its energies to scholarship and creativity. The essay on Pico revealed that, for Pater, a central trait of the zeitgeist was intellectual generosity, the desire to build a culture which excluded only grossness, and combined the best aspects of the classical and Christian traditions. It is this intellectual generosity, precluding strong loyalties and violent attachments, which Pater imagined to be the source of the distinctive appearance and expressions of Botticelli's figures.

> So just what Dante scorns as unworthy alike of heaven and hell, Botticelli accepts, that middle world in which men take no sides in great conflicts, and decide no great causes, and make great refusals. He thus sets for himself the limits within which art, undisturbed by any moral ambition, does its best and surest work. His interest is neither in the untempered goodness of Angelico's saints, nor the untempered evil of Orcagna's Inferno; but with men and women in their mixed and uncertain condition, always attractive, clothed sometimes by passion with a character of loveliness and energy, but saddened perpetually by the shadow upon them of the great things from which they shrink. His morality is all sympathy; and it is this sympathy, conveying into his work somewhat more than is usual of the true complexion of humanity, which makes him visionary as he is, so forcible a realist.
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> It is this which gives to his Madonnas their unique expression and charm.[1]

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[1] Ibid, 55-6

In ascribing this moral neutrality even to the mother of Christ, Botticelli was making as daring an application of the principle as could be imagined in a society which had not actually relinquished Christianity:

> For with Botticelli she too, though she holds in her hands the "Desire of all nations", is one of those who are neither for Jehovah nor for His enemies; and her choice is upon her face.[1]

The essay on Botticelli was written in 1870, and is full of subtle little snipings at the Church. Pater began by stating that Botticelli's preferred subject-matter was drawn from

> what were to him works of the modern world, the writings of Dante and Boccaccio, and in new readings of his own of classical stories; or, if he painted religious incidents, painted them with an under-current of original sentiment, which touches you as the real matter of the picture through the veil of its ostensible subject.[2]

He implies that it was indicative of Botticelli's intellectual power that he rejected the simple religious orthodoxy of Dante and Giotto; and facetiously states that a painting of his "had the credit or discredit of attracting some shadow of ecclesiastical censure."[3]

Vasari, despite his love of gossip, was cautious in using the story that Botticelli was an associate of Matteo Palmieri, a poet who revived the old heresy that the human race descended from the neutral

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[1] Ibid, 56-7

[2] Ibid, 50

[3] Ibid, 54

angels in the conflict between Jehovah and Lucifer. Pater took the rumour with obvious eagerness, though aware of its doubtful credibility:

> True or false, the story interprets much of the peculiar sentiment with which he [Botticelli] infuses his profane and sacred persons, comely, and in a certain sense like angels, but with a sense of displacement or loss about them--the wistfulness of exiles, conscious of a passion and energy greater than any known issue of them explains, which runs through all his varied work with a sentiment of ineffable melancholy.[1]

Similarly, when he explains that the sameness of so many of Botticelli's painted figures may be due to their having been modelled by the same woman, he delights in the irony of a courtesan having posed not only as Venus but as Mary:

> He paints the story of the goddess of pleasure.... He paints Madonnas, but they shrink from the pressure of the divine child, and plead in unmistakable tones for a warmer, lower humanity. The same figure--tradition connects it with Simonetta, the mistress of Giuliano de'Medici--appears again as Judith,...and again as Veritas,...where one may note in passing the suggestiveness of an accident which identifies the image of truth with the person of Venus.[2]

Botticelli's use of not only the same model but often the same style when painting both sacred and profane subjects indicates that he had united the traditions by the very process of absorbing them both into his personal style. Botticelli's amorality--or more correctly morality of sympathy--may seem in many ways as appropriate to the profane subjects, as it seemed unconventional or daring in the treatment of sacred subjects; but again, with a touch of irony,

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[1] Ibid, 55

[2] Ibid, 60

Pater indicates that he finds it stranger in the former:

> What is strangest is that he carries this sentiment into classical subjects, its most complete expression being a picture in the Uffizii,(sic) of Venus rising from the sea, in which the grotesque emblems of the middle age, and a landscape full of its particular feeling, and even its strange draperies, powdered all over in the Gothic manner with a quaint conceit of daisies, frame a figure that reminds you of the faultless nude studies of Ingres.[1]

Thinking perhaps, in part, of the similarities between Greek and Gothic art, as well as of the long since lost freshness with which the men of the quattrocento approached Greek culture, Pater goes on to assert that

> you will find that quaint design of Botticelli's a more direct inlet into the Greek temper than the works of the Greeks themselves even of the finest period.[2]

Not only did Botticelli combine in his philosophy whatever appealed to him from both pagan and Christian sources, and in his art a variety of motifs from both traditions, but he produced a work which Pater could claim told us more about the Greeks than direct study of them does. This claim shows again how totally Pater subjugated questions of historicity to those of mood; consistently, it must be admitted, with his belief that "in what is connected with a great name, much that is not real is often very stimulating."[3]

> In pictures like this of Botticelli's you have a record of the first impression made by it [the Hellenic spirit] on minds turned back towards it, in almost painful aspiration, from a world in

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[1] Ibid, 57-8

[2] Ibid, 58

[3] Ibid, 147

which it had been ignored so long....[1]

Pater said more in this essay on Botticelli about matters of artistic technique than was usually the case when he wrote about an artist, and in his discussion of Botticelli's use of line and colour he stresses its suitability to the subjective feeling which is always the real subject. Perhaps deliberately, to foster his melancholy interpretation of Botticelli, or perhaps because he really did not feel it, he ignores what Kenneth Clark calls

> the spring and flow of line which makes Botticelli one of the greatest draughtsmen in European art....[2]

It is nonetheless interesting to find him relating the mood he perceived in Botticelli's work to technical short-comings:

> Botticelli meant all that imagery to be altogether pleasurable; and it was partly an incompleteness of resources, inseparable from the art of that time, that subdued and chilled it; but his predilection for minor tones counts also....[3]

Technical limitations notwithstanding, Pater obviously believed that Botticelli's art presented not only a fascinating personality, but the spirit of an age which had absorbed without favouritism the heritage of both the pagan and Christian cultures. Strange as it was to assert that the mother of Christ took no side in the battle of good and evil, and that Venus looked forward with sorrow to "the whole long day of love yet to come"4, Botticelli did

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[1] Ibid, 59

[2] Clark, Op cit, 17

[3] Renaissance, 59

[4] Ibid, 59

so in Pater's presentation of him, thus allowing neither to be unaffected by her former rival. Pater made Botticelli's alleged moral neutrality, or morality of total sympathy, the ultimate enactment of quattrocento intellectual generosity.

Whereas Pater made much of Pico's appearance and personal life, he avoids considering Botticelli's. Certainly Fillipino Lippi's portrait of him, in the Brancacci Chapel, does not seem to fit the man who produced works of ineffable melancholy, showing as it does a sullen, sensual man with deep-set eyes and a heavy jaw. Pater refers to Botticelli's interest in Boccaccio on the one hand, and his discipleship of Savonarola on the other, suggesting that he "may well have let...theories come and go across him."[1] And although he happily used Vasari's story of the relationship with Palmieri, he stated that "his life is almost colourless."[2] In many other essays, such as that on da Vinci, Pater used discredited or suspect anecdotes, but he ignored most of what Vasari reported of Botticelli; and quite untruthfully said that in his case "there is no legend to dissipate"[3], and that "only two things happened to him."[4] Similarly, although it was true of other painters in whose case Pater made no mention of the fact, he stressed that Botticelli "did not even go by his true name."[5] He

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[1] Ibid, 55

[2] Ibid, 51

[3] Ibid, 51

[4] Ibid, 51

[5] Ibid, 51

made no use of Vasari's allegation that when Botticelli was paid well by the Pope, he squandered the money "during his residence in Rome, where he lived immoderately, as was his habit."[1]

There seems to be a simple explanation for this. Pater wanted to use Botticelli's art to put forward his idea of quattrocento culture. He did this by interpreting it in the manner discussed in these last few pages. But the real man behind the art suited neither Pater's presentation of that art, nor of the age it was being used to typify. He wanted Botticelli to be as melancholy and morally sexless as his Madonnas and goddesses, and as he was not he simply ignored him, making him "a disembodied voice, and yet the voice of a human soul."[2] Just as Pater had stressed Abelard's love affair at the expense of his philosophy, building for him the image of a rebel, he ignored Botticelli's life while building for him a false but convenient character out of his art. In the enchanted region of the quattrocento, there was no room for an overweight, sensual painter.

Tuscan Sculptors

Pater's treatment of quattrocento sculpture compares interestingly with what he wrote about the painting of the time. As has been seen, he had a clearer idea of which painters were conservative, and why, than he had about the mainstream of progressive art. The painter he chose as most exemplary of the whole intellectual ethos

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[1] Vasari, Op Cit, 147

[2] Arthur Symons quoted in H. Jackson, The Eighteen-Nineties, (Harmondsworth, Pelican, 1939), 51

of the time, Botticelli, was in his view stylistically ahead of many of his contemporaries--He "lived in a generation of naturalists, and he might have been a mere naturalist among them"[1], but he was a visionary--and Pater carefully censored the image of his personality. Just as Pater overlooked some of the most advanced painters of the quattrocento to concentrate on Botticelli, so he paid little heed to such sculptors as Donatello and Ghiberti, who incorporated the new knowledge of perspective into their reliefs. Instead of them, he devoted an essay, similar in length to that on Botticelli, to Luca della Robbia and his school. Luca's place in quattrocento sculpture is similar in at least one respect to Botticelli's in painting, although he is of course less distinguished: he stood midway between the most progressive and the most conservative of his contemporaries.

Kenneth Clark has suggested that the comparison between Michelangelo's style and that of the Greek sculptors, which occupies several pages of the essay "Luca della Robbia" (1872) "seems to be its only justification."[2] This theory is not supported by an examination of the essay and other relevant passages in Pater's writings. The comparison occurs because Pater believed that there were three distinct "great styles in sculpture"[3]--the Greek, the Michelangelesque and

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[1] Renaissance, 53

[2] Clark, Op Cit, 18

[3] Renaissance, 66

> the system of Luca della Robbia and the other Tuscan sculptors of the fifteenth century, partaking both of the Allgemeinheit of the Greeks, their way of extracting certain select elements only of pure form and sacrificing all the rest, and the studied incompleteness of Michelangelo, relieving that expression of intensity, passion, energy, which might otherwise have hardened into caricature.[1]

It seems an over-estimation of the significance of these Tuscan sculptors, to rank their style as one of the three great styles alongside those of the Greeks and Michelangelo, but Pater quite clearly does this. The opening sentence of this essay has the same defensive tone as much of the essay on Botticelli, showing that he was aware, when he wrote it, that many readers would think him to be making excessive claims for minor artists:

> The Italian sculptors of the earlier half of the fifteenth century are more than mere forerunners of the great masters of its close, and often reach perfection, within the narrow limits which they chose to impose on their work. Their sculpture shares with the paintings of Botticelli and the churches of Brunelleschi that profound expressiveness, that intimate impress of an indwelling soul, which is the peculiar fascination of the art of Italy in that century.[2]

Admittedly, for Pater much of the interest of these sculptors did derive from the way in which they were the fore-runners of Michelangelo, and represented a style midway between his and that of the Greeks, despite his perception of much that made them interesting for their own sake. Pater's comments on the sculpture of Verrocchio have been considered along with the discussion of his painting above, and it was clear that Pater had an appropriately high estimate of his

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[1] Ibid, 69

[2] Ibid, 63

achievements. It seems surprising, then, to discover that it was the work of the school of Luca rather than the monumental creations of Verrocchio and others which Pater regarded as most distinctly typical of their age; but the fact that he gave the most honoured place to the Tuscans, as the representatives of the stream which led to Michelangelo, is witnessed in many places.

The essay on Michelangelo was written a year before that on the Tuscans, and in it appears Pater's first reference to the role of these artists, in a comment on Michelangelo's sojourn in the city of Bologna:

> But about the portals of its vast unfinished churches and its dark shrines, half hidden by votive flowers and candles, lie some of the sweetest works of the early Tuscan sculptors, Giovanni da Pisa and Jacopodella Quercia, things as winsome as flowers; and the year Michelangelo spent in copying these works was not a lost year.[1]

Later in the same essay, Pater asserted that

> If one is to distinguish the peculiar savour of his [Michelangelo's] work, he must be approached, not through his followers, but through his predecessors; not through the marbles of Saint Peter's, but through the work of the sculptors of the fifteenth century over the tombs and altars of Tuscany. He is the last of the Florentines, of those on whom the peculiar sentiment of the Florence of Dante and Giotto descended: He is the consummate representative of the form that sentiment took in the fifteenth century with men like Signorelli and Mino da Fiesole.[2]

With some historical truth, but nonetheless, one feels, a personal preoccupation showing, Pater uses the Tuscan tomb sculptures to illustrate the obsessive interest in death of the men of the

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[1] Ibid, 79

[2] Ibid, 90

quattrocento.

> It was to this inherited sentiment, this practical decision that to be pre-occupied with the thought of death was in itself dignifying, and a note of high quality, that the seriousness of the great Florentines of the fifteenth century was partly due; and it was reinforced in them by the actual sorrows of their times. How often, and in what various ways, had they seen life stricken down, in their streets and houses! La bella Simonetta dies in early youth, and is borne to the grave with uncovered face. The young Cardinal Jacopo di Portogallo dies on a visit to Florence .... Antonio Rossellino carves his tomb in the church of San Miniato, with care for the shapely hands and feet, and sacred attire; Luca della Robbia puts his skyeyest works there; and the tomb of the youthful and princely prelate became the strangest and most beautiful thing in that strange and beautiful place.[1]

The importance of understanding the Tuscan sculptors and the mood their works embody, in order to understand Michelangelo as the last and greatest of the Florentines was stressed again in "The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture" (1880). Pater described the attempts of certain critics to appreciate the work of Pheidias, without a knowledge of earlier Greek monuments, as as fruitless as the efforts of

> people criticising Michelangelo, without knowledge of the earlier Tuscan school....[2]

Further to the credit of the Tuscans, Pater implied that they had a greater degree of technical control of their medium than Botticelli had of his. Whereas he admitted that certain aspects of that painter's work owed their essence to "an incompleteness of resources inseparable from the art of that time"[3], he stated that these sculptors

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[1] Ibid, 92-3

[2] Greek Studies, 214

[3] Renaissance, 59

"chose"[1] to impose narrow limits on their style. Clearly their role as the forerunners of Michelangelo was only one factor which contributed to Pater's generous estimate of their importance.

It appears that there were reasons of other than an aesthetic kind which made the Tuscan sculptors attractive to Pater. In addition to their concern with death, which clearly fascinated him, he was able to create for them an austere and serious image; without ignoring or denying evidence to the contrary, as he had had to do in the case of Botticelli.

> One longs to penetrate into the lives of the men who have given expression to so much power and sweetness; but it is part of the reserve, the austere dignity and simplicity of their existence, that their histories are for the most part lost, or told but briefly. Mino, the Raffaelle of sculpture[2], Maso del Rodario, whose works add a new grace to the church of Como, Donatello even--one asks in vain for more than a shadowy outline of their actual days.[3]

Another attractive aspect of the Tuscan sculptors was that, like Botticelli, they were little known in Pater's day; and consequently the familiarity with their work, which was enjoyed by the lucky few, was a pleasing mark of taste and knowledge beyond that of the ordinary art-lover or common tourist. This feeling, latent in the reference to their works at Bologna[4], is clear in "Luca della Robbia" and even clearer in "Art Notes in North Italy". In "Luca della

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[1] Ibid, 59

[2] The study of Pater's view of Raphael, in the next chapter, will show that this epithet credits Mino with grace and scholarship.

[3] Renaissance, 63-4

[4] Ibid, 79

Robbia" Pater observed:

> Their works have been much neglected, and often almost hidden away amid the frippery of modern decoration, and we come with some surprise on the places where their fire still smoulders.[1]

And twenty years later:

> The experienced visitor knows what to expect in the sacristies of the great Italian churches; the smaller, choicer works of Luini, say, of Della Robbia or Mino of Fiesole, the superb ambries and drawers and presses of old oak or cedar, the still untouched morsel of fresco--like sacred priestly thoughts visibly lingering there in the half-light.[2]

By the date of this second passage, Pater had come to see a deeper significance in Tuscan quattrocento sculpture than had at first struck him, but when he wrote "Luca" he was captivated as much by its associations as its aesthetic charm:

> I suppose nothing brings the real air of a Tuscan town so vividly to mind as those pieces of pale blue and white earthenware, by which he[Luca]is best known, like fragments of the milky sky itself, fallen into the cool streets, and breaking into the darkened churches.[3]

The aesthetic charm of Tuscan sculpture lay in its suitability to Pater's concept of the quattrocento, its subtlety and power of expression, derived respectively, from classicism, and medieval art. Pater said little about the sources of these qualities, either expecting his reader to be able to identify them from what had been said in the earlier chapters of The Renaissance, or simply allowing them to settle into the reader's mind to be evoked in the essay on

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[1] Ibid, 63

[2] Miscellaneous Studies, 97

[3] Renaissance, 64

Michelangelo which followed next in the book. Having said enough of their passionate seriousness to disallow objections to his estimate of them on the grounds of excessive sweetness and sentimentality, he sums up his view of their essential qualities in this inclusive paragraph:

> These Tuscan sculptors of the fifteenth century worked for the most part in low relief, giving even to their monumental effigies something of its depression of surface, getting into them by this means a pathetic suggestion of the wasting and etherealisation of death. They are haters of all heaviness and emphasis, of strongly-opposed light and shade, and seek their means of expression among those last refinements of shadow, which are almost invisible except in a strong light, and which the finest pencil can hardly follow. The whole essence of their work is expression, the passing of a smile over the face of a child, the ripple of the air on a still day over the curtain of a window ajar.[1]

Pater never again devoted a passage to an analysis of the stylistic aspects of Tuscan quattrocento sculpture, but the 1886 essay "Sir Thomas Browne" reveals an interesting, subtle but significant change in his attitude towards their treatment of death. Whereas in "Luca" he had emphasised the romantic aura of early death, in the later essay he perceives a more profound theme. Describing the Treatise of Urn-Burial as "the best justification of Browne's literary reputation"[2], he observed;

> Nowhere, perhaps, is the attitude of questioning awe on the threshold of another life displayed with the expressiveness of this unique morsel of literature, although there is something of the same kind in other than the literary medium, in the delicate monumental sculpture of the early Tuscan School, as also in

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[1] Ibid, 64-5

[2] Appreciations, 152

> many of the designs of William Blake, often, though unconsciously, much in sympathy with those unsophisticated Italian workmen. With him, as with them,...the visible function of death is but to refine, to detach from aught that is vulgar.[1]

In this passage Pater seems to be ascribing to the Tuscan sculptors a quite specific intellectual position with respect to death, and an aesthetic intention in making it their favourite subject. It has been observed that Pater has romanticised these sculptors, in the essay "Luca della Robbia": making something emotive out of their tomb sculpture, and presenting their lives as idyllic in their peacefullness. In that essay he emphasized their debt to the middle ages, and said nothing of their use of classical motifs. In effect, the essay on Browne extends and complements this image of the Tuscans. There the mood of Browne's work, which Pater claimed was also that of theirs, is defined as classical, because it so precisely fixed a feeling of basically romantic nature.[2]

It seems that Pater wished to present the Tuscans as producing an almost classical art as a result of a development of feeling for sweetness and subtlety, rather than as a result of a classical stylistic revival then taking place. In contrast to Botticelli, they are presented without any interest in classical or modern literature being attributed to them, and their art is seen solely as the expression of their temperaments, in tune with the Florentine tradition going back several centuries. Pater makes the Tuscan sculptors exem-

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[1] Ibid, 153

[2] Ibid, 156

plars of his belief that the Renaissance did indeed, to paraphrase Mrs Pattison, develop as "a sentimental revolution."[1]

Summary

Although he modified the somewhat idyllic picture of the quattrocento he had given in the "Preface" to The Renaissance, Pater held permanently to certain of the ideas he had put forward in that essay. His discussion of life and art in the quattrocento contrasts with his view of the Medieval Renaissance, in which rebellion, often in matters of sexual behaviour, had characterised the Renaissance spirit. Pater actually avoids mentioning or discussing at any length, the sexual and personal lives of Botticelli and the Tuscan sculptors, to whom he devoted essays, although a latently homosexual flavour is detectable in "Pico della Mirandola". In Pater's quattrocento, intellectual generosity, tolerance, even amorality were distinctive characteristics. Although in the essay on Botticelli he himself adopts an anti-religious tone, he does not suggest that Christianity was excluded from the quattrocento, although it was often obliged to fill a less honoured role than that occupied by classicism. The major effort of the century was, in Pater's opinion, the attempt to reconcile the two traditions, and avoid moral and theological confrontations. Excesses of any sort were abhorred.

Pico, who unsuccessfully attempted to reconcile the philosophies and mythologies of the two traditions, is made the typical

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[1] Pattison, Op Cit, 104

figure of the age. He is portrayed as beautiful and serene, reflecting in his person as well as his work, the best qualities of his century. Botticelli, by adopting a morality of sympathy rather than of judgment and exclusion, is credited by Pater with effecting the reconciliation in his works. He painted his sacred and profane persons in much the same way, Pater stresses, and expresses his own moods through Christian and classical subjects alike. The sculptors of the school of Luca della Robbia sought after ways to express sentiments which had been part of the Florentine tradition for centuries, and in doing so they used a style midway between that of the Greeks and Michelangelo, thus achieving classicism by a romantic, or medieval, route.

Although Christianity was not excluded from this "enchanted region", there was no place in it for the specifically medieval, anti-physical, strain of Christianity which had once been the enemy of those who sought to free the human mind. Artists like Perugino and Fra Angelico were described by Pater as "medieval", because they seemed to him to have their spiritual and intellectual roots in the age before the Renaissance. They were no more to be included in the quattrocento, than Giotto in the Medieval Renaissance.

Pater was similarly influenced by mood more than style in his consideration of the artists who represented the more progressive aspect of the art of the day. He ignored the most original painters of the time; and seemed to rank Verrocchio highly, and to be unimpressed by Ghirlandajo. He came in later years to respect the achievement

of Andrea Mantegna, but Botticelli remained, for him, the most interesting quattrocento painter.

The image of the quattrocento projected by Pater's writings is far from bland, however, despite its lack of the rebellious quality in personal life which he had stressed in the Medieval Renaissance. Apart from questions of homosexuality and necrophilia, tendencies which he seems to suggest distinctly though covertly, he attributed to the men of the quattrocento a freedom and daring in thought if not in everyday life. His typical man of the age seems to have lived an austere life by choice, while allowing no power or institution to direct his thoughts. The "strange rival religion"[1] had been securely installed in human culture, had lost its strangeness, and had no longer to struggle for survival and acceptance.

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[1] Renaissance, 24

CHAPTER IV

FORCES IN GENERAL CULTURE : THE HIGH RENAISSANCE.

Leonardo da Vinci

Pater's first discussion of Leonardo da Vinci was in the essay of 1869 devoted to him. It is the most famous of Pater's essays, often anthologised and analysed as if it is typical of Pater's criticism, or shows him at his best. The passage in it describing the Mona Lisa is one of the best-known fragments of English prose, and the frequent quoting of it, out of context, has formed (or deformed) many people's idea of Pater's style and approach to art. It is the classic specimen of a Victorian "purple passage", and has been used on many occasions as evidence for the generalisation that Pater was really a spinner of decadent fantasies, a creative writer who used a work of art rather than an original idea as his starting-point; and who posed as a critic, although lacking the ability to discuss art in other than rhapsodic tones. It was this passage which Wilde imagined being recited in the presence of the Mona Lisa like a prayer before an altar, and which Yeats chopped into lines and used as the first poem in his Oxford Book of Modern Verse.[1] In view of this tradition it is necessary to be very cautious in approaching the

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[1] W. B. Yeats, ed., The Oxford Book of Modern Verse, (Oxford, O.U.P., 1937)

essay on Leonardo, avoiding both an uncritical acceptance of the conventional view, and a pedantic over-reaction. A careful examination of the essay should make the role of the Gioconda passage, in its context, clearly apparent.

The essay on Leonardo begins with a reference to Vasari's Vitae, and to the monograph by Carlo Amoretti, published in 1804, which showed that most of Vasari's stories about Leonardo do not stand up to examination. Pater's attitude is apparent in his reference to "mere"[1] antiquarianism, and his observation that Leonardo's

> legend, as the French say, with the anecdotes which everyone knows, is one of the most brilliant in Vasari.[2]

The reader is warned that in his discussion of Leonardo, Pater can be expected to make more use of attractive legend than of less fascinating truth. In his essay on Botticelli, Pater ignored Vasari's legend to create his own, based on a free interpretation of certain of his paintings; in the essay on Leonardo he accepts and embroiders Vasari's legend, despite an awareness that it was lacking in veracity. The introductory paragraphs make it clear that for Pater the interpretation of Leonardo's art with the aid of the discredited legend was a more attractive project than undertaking research to increase definite knowledge about him:

> For others remain the editing of the thirteen books of his manuscript, and the separation by technical criticism of what in his reputed works is really his, from what is only half his, or the work of his pupils. But a lover of strange souls may still analyse for himself the impression made on him by those works, and

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[1] Renaissance, 99

[2] Ibid, 99

try to reach through it a definition of the chief elements of Leonardo's genius.[1]

The admission in this paragraph that Pater was fully aware that many of Leonardo's reputed works were of doubtful authenticity is also significant. If he was to use discredited anecdotes in his portrait of the man and his work, then it was consistent to refer to pictures of questionable originality. Modern writers, like Kenneth Clark,[2] who have been embarassed by Pater's acceptance of doubtful work and taken this as evidence of Pater's inability to distinguish the work of the master from that of his followers, could have been spared their embarassment had they considered these opening paragraphs, in which Pater admitted that he was quite conscious that what he was doing was unscholarly. Pater, at least at the time of writing "Leonardo da Vinci" and "Botticelli", clearly preferred the fascinating semi-mythical Renaissance of the legends to the often prosaic historical circumstances which he suspected underlay much of it. Pater clearly disclaimed any pretensions of being a technical critic like Crowe and Cavalcasselle and Berenson, and concentrated instead on writing a book which aimed to interest a wider public in the Renaissance. In view of his lack of self-deception in this matter, Pater's more hostile critics achieve little by complaining about his excessively "impressionistic" critical approach as though it was something of which he was unaware, or worse still, something which he sought

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[1] Ibid, 100

[2] Clark, Op Cit, 16

unsuccessfully to avoid. Certainly the notorious Gioconda passage seems less bizarre and striking when it is realised that its context was an essay directed not to the technical critic but to the "lover of strange souls".[1]

The first paragraph of the essay presents the best example, in its discussion of Vasari's comments on Leonardo's religious views, of Pater's conscious use of suspect evidence. In the first edition of Vasari's life of Leonardo, Pater wrote, there are a number of statements and suggestions omitted from the subsequent editions:

> There, the painter who has fixed the outward type of Christ for succeeding centuries was a bold speculator, holding lightly by other men's beliefs, setting philosophy above Christianity.[2]

Pater acknowledges that this image of Leonardo is suspect not only because Vasari himself saw fit to modify it, but because

> words of his, [Leonardo's] trenchant enough to justify this impression, are not recorded, and would have been out of keeping with a genius of which one characteristic is the tendency to lose itself in a refined and graceful mystery. The suspicion was but the time-honoured mode in which the world stamps its appreciation of one who has thoughts for himself alone, his high indifference, his intolerance of the common forms of things; and in the second edition the image was changed into something fainter and more conventional.[3]

But there is perceptible, in this very paragraph which allows the unreliability of the suggestion that Leonardo was unsure of his faith, the beginnings of Pater's process of deliberate distortion. There is

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[1] Renaissance, 100

[2] Ibid, 98

[3] Ibid, 98

a clear sense of disappointment and regret in the observation that "in the second edition the image was changed into something fainter and more conventional"[1], and that change seems to have been, in Pater's mind, almost an insult to Leonardo's memory. The words "fainter" and "more conventional" suggest that the clearing up of the doubt about Leonardo's religious orthodoxy, rather than being an exoneration, was a condemnation; and the reader is reminded of the standpoint of "Two Early French Stories" and "Botticelli".[2] Regretting that he cannot be confident in the thought of Leonardo the defiant free-thinker, Pater nonetheless insists that it is the unconventional and bizarre element in his art which accounts for its interest:

> But it is still by a certain mystery in his work, and something enigmatical beyond the usual measure of great men, that he fascinates, or perhaps half repels.... His type of beauty is so exotic that it fascinates a larger number than it delights, and seems more than that of any other artist to reflect ideas and views and some scheme of the world within; so that he seemed to his contemporaries to be the possessor of some unsanctified wisdom; as to Michelet to have anticipated modern ideas.[3]

Pater seems to have wished to communicate to, almost to impose upon, his readers, a view of Leonardo which he could not justify by rational argument. To this end he hasemphasised theories which he could not prove, and stories which he admitted could not be believed,

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[1] Ibid, 98

[2] Of course the essay on Leonardo was the first of these to be written, but is the last to be read by one who reads The Renaissance from "Preface" to "Conclusion".

[3] Renaissance, 99

thus implanting his view in his readers' minds nonetheless firmly for his admissions that the evidence was unreliable. One is reminded of those criminal lawyers who, in court, ask questions they know will be successfully objected to, in order to plant certain ideas in the minds of the jurors--ideas for which they have no admissible evidence.

It is interesting to observe that in addition to evoking the image of Leonardo the free-thinker, Pater, as a pretended alternative, suggests that he, like any other who has "thoughts for himself alone," was misunderstood and misrepresented by the "time-honoured mode" of the insensitive world. It is tempting to see in this a reference to the mistrust and open criticism which Pater himself suffered in these years, as a result of his apparent contempt for many aspects of Christianity. Certainly he is casting Leonardo in the mould of the romantic artist alienated from a philistine society which disapproves of anything unconventional enough to be beyond immediate understanding. This idea of Leonardo as one cut off from everyday society and mundane affairs is strengthened by the assertion that he

> is so possessed by his genius that he passes unmoved through the most tragic events, overwhelming his country and friends, like one who comes across them by chance on some secret errand.[1]

It has been observed that Pater was aware that the authenticity of much that he took to be Leonardo's work, for the purposes of this essay, was very doubtful. Nonetheless it is surprising to find that he accepted what seems to the twentieth century to be an obviously baroque Medusa as genuinely Leonardesque; clearly it fitted so

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[1] Ibid, 99

perfectly his conception of the bizarre in Leonardo's style that he could not resist making reference to it. Pater is fascinated to a very great degree by this work, and the tone of his description is more obsessive than critical:

> What may be called the fascination of corruption penetrates in every touch of its exquisitely finished beauty. About the dainty lines of the cheek the bat flits unheeded. The delicate snakes seem literally strangling one another in terrified struggle to escape from the Medusa brain. The hue which violent death always brings with it is in the features: features singularly massive and grand....[1]

Similarly he is at pains to associate Leonardo with violence and evil when he refers to his time in the employment of Ludovico Sforza, to whom he offered "strange secrets in the art of war."[2] Pater tells with relish that Sforza

> murdered his young nephew by slow poison, yet was so susceptible of religious impressions that he blended mere earthly passions with a sort of religious sentimentalism....[3]

He then asserts that in Sforza's Milan, a city of "brilliant sins and exquisite amusements...."[4], da Vinci adjusted himself easily and became

> a celebrated designer of pageants: and it suited the quality of his genius, composed in almost equal parts of curiosity and the desire of beauty, to take things as they came.[5]

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[1] Ibid, 106

[2] Ibid, 108

[3] Ibid, 108

[4] Ibid, 109

[5] Ibid, 109

> To Leonardo least of all men could there be anything poisonous in the exotic flowers of sentiment which grew there.[1]

Pater seems to have been trying to convict Leonardo of guilt-by-association; or at least using him as a Renaissance forerunner of a favourite decadent theme: sin as an art form. The poetry of Swinburne and Wilde's "Pen, Pencil and Poison" are two of many examples of nineteenth century interest in the aesthetic possibilities of evil; and Pater's essay on Leonardo perhaps deserves to be considered another work on this theme, portraying as it does the great genius as one in whose work the forbidden was a major element. In Pater's exposition of the distinctive formula of the Leonardesque, "curious" seems to mean bizarre, and "curiosity" seems to imply a questioning beyond the limits that either medieval or Victorian society set.

> Curiosity and the desire of beauty--these are the two elementary forces in Leonardo's genius; curiosity often in conflict with the desire of beauty, but generating, in union with it, a type of subtle and curious grace.[2]

Throughout the essay it is the element of curiosity rather than the desire of beauty which Pater stresses. In the next paragraph Pater describes Leonardo as the exemplar of the return to nature which was one aspect of the Renaissance, and immediately makes this interest in nature appear perverse:

> In this return to nature, he was seeking to satisfy a boundless curiosity by her perpetual surprises,...

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[1] Ibid, 109

[2] Renaissance, 109

> He who thus penetrated into the most secret parts of nature preferred always the more to the less remote, what, seeming exceptional, was an instance of law more refined, the construction about things of a peculiar atmosphere and mixed lights.... In him first appears the taste for what is bizarre or recherché in landscape.... It is the landscape, not of dreams or of fancy, but of places far withdrawn, and hours selected from a thousand with a miracle of finesse. Through Leonardo's strange veil of sight things reach him so; in no ordinary night or day, but as in faint light of eclipse, or in some brief interval of falling rain at daybreak, or through deep water.[1]

Similarly in dealing with da Vinci's handling of human faces and personalities, Pater emphasises the bizarre and morbid. Having already observed that, counter to the belief of many moralists, illegitimate children like Leonardo himself often have a "keen, puissant nature"[2], Pater continues to scorn propriety by using the portraits of Ludovico's mistresses to exemplify Leonardo's desire for beauty. An odour of necrophilia creeps in when he credits Leonardo with having, in the case of one of them, forseen her early death:

> Opposite is the portrait of Beatrice d'Este, in whom Leonardo seems to have caught some presentiment of early death, painting her precise and grave, full of the refinement of the dead, in sad earth-coloured raiment, set with pale stones.[3]

When he considers Leonardo's drawings, Pater passes quickly over those depicting mother and child, and discusses those of another character at length:

> It is a face of doubtful sex, set in the shadow of its own hair, ...with something voluptuous and full in the eyelids and the lips, ... We might take the thread of suggestion which these two drawings offer,...and, following it...construct a sort of series,

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[1] Ibid, 109-111

[2] Ibid, 100

[3] Ibid, 112

> illustrating better than anything else Leonardo's type of womanly beauty. Daughters of Herodias,...they are not of the Christian family, or of Raffaelle's.[1]

With no more justification than his own whim, Pater characterises Leonardo's women as not merely non-Christian, but anti-Christian. Herodias was the mother of Salome, who asked for the decapitation of John the Baptist, and who symbolised many of the vices and sins most abhorred by the Church, including of course, incest. Salome was to become the subject of a play by Wilde[2] and a series of drawings by Aubrey Beardsley, who implied in them that she achieved an orgasm by dancing with the severed head of John, indicative of necrophilia. That Pater should have associated Salome with Leonardo's faces of women, suggests that he was pre-occupied to some degree with these themes, and projected this obsession onto Leonardo.

A similar conclusion seems to be justified in connection with homosexuality, although in this matter there is ample evidence that Leonardo was emotionally involved in fact as well as in Pater's mind. Pater describes the St. John Baptist of the Louvre as one

> whose delicate brown flesh and woman's hair no one would go out into the wilderness to seek, and whose treacherous smile would have us understand something far beyond the outward gesture or circumstance.[3]

The same androgynous quality was found in many of the sketches as

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[1] Ibid, 115-6

[2] Oscar Wilde, "Salome", Works ed Maine, (London, Collins, 1954).

[3] Renaissance, 118

well:

> But among the more youthful heads there is one at Florence which love chooses for its own--the head of a young man, which may well be the likeness of Andrea Salaino, beloved of Leonardo for his curled and waving hair...and afterwards his favourite pupil and servant. Of all the interests in living men and women which may have filled his life at Milan, this attachment alone is recorded.... It illustrates Leonardo's usual choice of pupils, men of some natural charm of person or intercourse like Salaino, or men of birth and princely habits of life like Francesco Melzi--men with just enough genius to be capable of initiation into his secret....[1]

It is interesting to contrast with this passage an extract from the chapter "The Chinks in the Renaissance" from Raymond de Becker's study of homosexuality, The Other Face of Love.[2] In an age when more explicit expression was possible, de Becker wrote:

> Painters of this period [were allowed] to welcome young pupils of their choice into their own homes. Leonardo selected them more for their beauty than for their talent. As a result hardly any of their names are known in the history of art, not even those of...Andrea Salaino or Francesco Melzi.... As for Andrea Salaino, the account book has transmitted to us,...the details of the expenses into which this boy led da Vinci. Thus, on 4 April 1497 he noted, eight yards of cloth of silver, green velvet for the trimming, ribbons, fastenings, and all for a cloak he was giving to the scamp. "This is really the last time, dear Salai, that I am giving you more money", which in spite of this formal statement did not prevent him from living with him for eighteen years longer. Salaino seems moreover to have been merely a nickname meaning Saladino, or little devil, for this young good-for-nothing never stopped robbing Leonardo and Leonardo never stopped forgiving him.[3]

De Becker believed that Leonardo's homosexual tendencies revealed

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[1] Ibid, 116-7

[2] R de Becker, The Other Face of Love, (London, Neville Spearman, 1967)

[3] de Becker, Op Cit, 114

themselves in the "hidden and obstinate quest for hermaphroditism"[1] of his art, and in this too Pater seems to have anticipated the Freudian critics, for as a seemingly kindred spirit he recognised the symptoms of Leonardo's penchant.

Freud's study of Leonardo[2] has been largely discredited, for it has been shown to depend on a number of historically false assumptions. However, the essay is still valuable for several insights which are generally accepted.

Freud, who acknowledged that Pater "leads us to another clue..."[3] when he emphasizes Mona Lisa's smile, claimed that his interpretation of the painting as "expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire"[4] had validity and was true in as much as Leonardo's handling of this magnum opus was rooted in his homosexuality. Furthermore Freud wrote

> Pater's confident assertion that we can see, from childhood, a face like Mona Lisa's defining itself on the fabric of his dreams, seems convincing and deserves to be taken literally.[5]

Pater comments in several places on Leonardo's well-known

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[1] Ibid, 115

[2] Sigmund Freud Leonardo da Vinci. Penguin, 1966.

[3] Freud, Op Cit, 153

[4] Renaissance, 118

[5] Freud, Op Cit, 154

inability to bring to fruition all that he undertook, or even much of it. "He wasted many days in curious tricks of design"[1], he observes in one place, and later comments on "the hesitation which had haunted him all through life...."[2]

It is therefore interesting to see Freud interpreting this problem as a manifestation of Leonardo's sexual situation[3], and also finding a sexual neurosis behind Leonardo's scientific curiosity.[4]

It can be hypothesised that in dwelling on the bizarre homosexual and perhaps anti-Christian aspects of Leonardo's art, Pater was not only delighting in finding in a genius certain attitudes which he shared, but groping towards a fuller account of his difficulties along with his triumphs. If this is accepted, many passages often considered to be only creative prose poetry must be recognised as daring, if half-suppressed, criticism.

The notorious Gioconda passage is truly the climax of the essay, in that it identifies in this one famous work all of the perverse themes which have been introduced one by one, as well as some others which have not been previously mentioned.

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1 Renaissance, 104

2 Ibid, 127

3 Freud, Op Cit, 181

4 Ibid, 181

This anthology of the perverse and bizarre serves two obvious functions. The themes introduced in Pater's discussion of Leonardo's life and art are brought together in a single image, and an image is found for the "modern idea".[1] The painting itself is almost buried by the weight of symbolism it is made to carry.

Certainly it must be admitted that Pater's essay on Leonardo is not exclusively concerned with his real and imagined perversities and perversions. Pater defined Leonardo's genius as consisting of the desire for beauty as well as curiosity, and there are many references to Leonardo's involvment in unexceptionable activities. His childhood is presented as entirely idyllic, his chief pleasure having been in freeing caged birds.

Pater tells the story of Leonardo painting the angel into Verrocchio's Baptism, and sees no evil in the "bright" and "animated" figure which he calls "a space of sunlight in the cold, laboured old picture."[2] In many instances, however, Leonardo's successes are presented as the seeds of future discontents. He surpassed Verrocchio and achieved perfection in the old Florentine manner:

> And because it was the perfection of that style it awoke in Leonardo some seed of discontent which lay in the secret places of his nature. For the way to perfection is through a

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[1] Renaissance, 126

[2] Ibid, 102

> series of disgusts; and this picture...was after all in the old slight manner.... So he plunged into the study of nature. And in doing this he followed the manner of the older students; he brooded over the hidden virtues of plants and crystals,...and for years he seemed to those about him as one listening to a voice, silent for other men.[1]

It has been seen that Pater made this study of nature appear somewhat bizarre in his discussion of it; and he dealt similarly with da Vinci's work in the field of mechanics. In Pater's account, Leonardo's plan to jack up the church of San Giovanni, and his schemes to divert watercourses, become feats of magic, rather than merely ambitious engineering operations. Anticipating Freud, Pater specifically contradicts the apparently reasonable view of those who sought to see these schemes as they were, without mystique.

> He was smitten with a love of the impossible--the perforation of mountains, changing the course of rivers, raising great buildings,...in the air; all these feats for the performance of which natural magic professed to have the key. Later writers, indeed, see in these efforts an anticipation of modern mechanics; in him they were rather dreams, thrown off by the overwrought and labouring brain.[2]

Pater's practice here is analogous with his treatment of the Florentine historians and philosophers in "Pica della Mirandola". In that essay he claimed that the men of the fifteenth century lacked even the rudiments of the historical sense; an

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[1] Ibid, 103

[2] Ibid, 104

opinion he reversed a few years later. In the essay on Leonardo he comparably denies the rudiments of the true scientific spirit to the researchers of the Renaissance, presenting them as medieval alchemists because it suits the overall mood of the essay. Although he admits that "those who can judge describe him as anticipating... the later ideas of science"[1], Pater refuses, in another place, to accept this opinion:

> The science of that age was all divination, clairvoyance, unsubjected to our exact modern formulas,... Later writers, ...have imagined a rigid order in his inquiries. But this rigid order was little in accordance with the restlessness of his character; and if we think of him as the mere reasoner... we shall hardly have of him that impression which those about him received from him. Poring over his crucibles, making experiments with colour, trying, by a strange variation of the alchemists dream, to discover the secret, not of an elixir to make man's natural life immortal, but rather of giving immortality to the subtlest and most delicate effects of painting, he seemed to them rather the sorcerer of the magician, possessed of curious secrets and hidden knowledge, living in a world of which he alone possessed the key.[2]

The work in which Leonardo applied the results of some of these researches was The Last Supper, and Pater mentions, in his discussion of it, Leonardo's delays and irregular methods. Most interesting, though, is Pater's effort to make even this work a symbol of the declining power of the Church. He does not actually state that in painting it Leonardo had any but sincere motives,

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[1] Ibid, 110

[2] Ibid, 106-7

but he states that in its decay

> it is the image of what the history it symbolises has more and more become for the world, paler and paler as it recedes into the distance.[1]

Two pages earlier he had written:

> No one ever ruled over his subject more entirely than Leonardo[2], or bent it more dexterously to purely artistic ends. And so it comes to pass that although he handles sacred subjects continuously, he is the most profane of painters; the given person or subject, Saint John in the Desert, or the Virgin on the knees of Saint Anne, is often merely the pretext for a kind of work which carries one quite out of the range of its conventional association.[3]

In the final paragraph, Pater admits that the question of the nature of Leonardo's religious views is still undefined, and again shows his own bias by describing the provision for masses and candles in the painter's will as "hurried offices"[4] of no consequence. The theme of unorthodoxy is sustained from the beginning of the essay to the end, and shapes Pater's view of every aspect of da Vinci's life and art.

It is interesting to see the change in the tone of Pater's comments on Leonardo over the following twentyfive years. The essay on Leonardo was followed two years later, in 1871, by that on

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[1] Ibid, 121

[2] The reader is put in mind of Botticelli.

[3] Renaissance, 119

[4] Ibid, 128

Michelangelo. In this essay, Leonardo's interest in Nature is mentioned, and is quite lacking in sinister or bizarre overtones. Instead, it is described as having beautified his works:

> He [Michelangelo] has traced no flowers, like those with which Leonardo stars over his gloomiest rocks,...[1]

And again, "He gives us indeed no lovely natural objects like Leonardo...."[2] In the 1869 essay, Pater had noticed Leonardo's interest in nature with the words:

> For has not nature too her grotesques--the rent rock, the distorting light of evening on lonely roads, the unveiled structure of man in the embryo, or the skeleton?[3]

In 1871 he spoke of Leonardo's "lovely natural objects"; the change of emphasis could not be greater in so short a time.

"Two Early French Stories" was written in 1872, and in that essay Leonardo is cited as one who lived free from controversy, and is identified in that context by the polite alias "the painter of the Last Supper".[4] In this passage that ill-fated work carries none of the gloomy overtones with which it was laden in the essay of 1869.

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[1] Ibid, 75

[2] Ibid, 77

[3] Ibid, 105

[4] Ibid, 27

Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of Pater's abandonment of the idea that the bizarre and perverse is an essential ingredient in da Vinci's work, is the contrasting interpretations of the picture The Virgin of the Balances which he gave in 1869 and 1875. In "Leonardo da Vinci", Pater wrote that this work showed the Christ child weighing "the pebbles of the brook against the sins of men...."[1], and the reference to sin suited the context. In "Demeter and Persephone" he described this picture as having

> been thought to represent, under a veil, the blessing of universal nature....[2]

This quite opposite interpretation is all the more striking because it occurs in a passage which shows that, although he no longer sought to attribute all manner of perversions and unorthodoxies to da Vinci, Pater still felt the details in the pictures which he had formerly seen as indicative of them. In 1869 he had made the weary look of some of da Vinci's painted figures indicative of an exhaustion after excesses of sensuality, or of infinite worldly wisdom. In 1875 he referred to the way the

> sleepy-looking heads, with peculiar grace and refinement of somewhat advanced life in them, have just this half-weary posture[3]

quite without any suggestion that this was indicative of anything

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[1] Ibid, 117

[2] Greek Studies, 147

[3] Ibid, 147

in the least degree bizarre.

In "The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture" (1880) Pater refers briefly to the grotesque aspect of Leonardo's art, in a discussion of painted shields, but there is no hint of perversion. In "Art Notes in North Italy" (1890) he discusses the techniques of sfumato and chiaroscuro, mentioning Leonardo amongst the masters who employed them, but he seeks to attribute no supernatural significance to shaded and indistinct faces. Pater's final mention of da Vinci occurs in "Raphael" (1892), where he is cited as a master "of what we call 'the ideal' in art".[1] There follows a description of Leonardo's practice which is entirely consistent with the essay of 1869, while lacking its overtones of evil.

> He [Raphael] will realise the function of style as exemplified in the practice of da Vinci, face to face with the world of nature and man as they are; selecting from, asserting one's self in a transcript of its veritable data; like drawing to like there, in obedience to the master's preference for the embodiment of the creative form within him.[2]

It can be said in conclusion that the essay on Leonardo is really concerned primarily with asserting that art can be not merely amoral but immoral and remain great. Pater stresses every departure from conventional morality that he could justify and many that he could not, and created a myth of Leonardo living and working in total disregard of social mores. He portrays him as one who, like Botticelli, asserted himself and his ideas in his art, regard-

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[1] Miscellaneous Studies, 49

[2] Ibid, 50

less of its ostensible subject, thus claiming for himself a romantic freedom in his creativity as much as in his relationships with others. None of Pater's references to Leonardo after the essay of 1869 have the same anti-Church tone, nor do they reveal the same fascination with the painter's real and imagined sexual fantasies and irregularities. Instead they concentrate on his freedom in his role as artist, asserting his own ideas in his work, without specifying what those ideas were. In the 1869 essay Pater is seen distorting facts and spinning fantasies, disregarding scholarship, but verging on an extraordinary critical insight. The essay is in fact little short of an Imaginary Portrait. Pater's use of Leonardo here is precisely what he asserts was Leonardo's use of the world around him: a source of suggestions to be played with freely by the imagination.

Michelangelo

In the essay on Leonardo, Michelangelo is mentioned in connection with the rivalry between the two artists in painting a subject each from the Florentine wars of the quattrocento. Leonardo, then aged over fifty, chose as his subject the fighting between two groups of soldiers for possession of a standard, at the battle of Anghiari. The young Michelangelo

> chose for his cartoon an incident of the war with Pisa, in which the Florentine soldiers, bathing in the Arno, are surprised by the sound of trumpets, and run to arms.[1]

[1] Renaissance, 126

Both cartoons were lost, and have been reconstructed in general outline from related fragments. This lack of any precise evidence allowed Pater to imaginatively conjure up the works; and his comments on Michelangelo's cartoon, coming as they do in this essay which is more a piece of mythologising than criticism, are especially interesting:

> His design has reached us only in an old engraving, which perhaps helps us less than what we remember of the background of his Holy Family in the Uffizii to imagine in what superhuman form, such as might have beguiled the heart of an earlier world, those figures may have risen from the water.[1]

The language of this passage, with its references to superhuman forms, the earlier world, and rising (god-like) from the water, seems to be consistent with aspects of the body of the Leonardo essay. Michelangelo's art is here seen in terms of divine and antique grandeur; and it is interesting to see that while the image of Leonardo changes between the essays "Leonardo da Vinci" and "The Poetry of Michelangelo", that of Michelangelo does not. The themes introduced in the passage quoted from the essay of 1869 are those which dominate "The Poetry of Michelangelo" in 1871.

A reference to Michelangelo in "Pico della Mirandola", which was published only one month before the major essay, in October 1871 in the Fortnightly Review, is also indicative of Pater's understanding of the role Michelangelo played in the Renaissance. It will be remembered that although Pater was delighted by Pico's personality and fascinated by his researches, which he

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[1] Ibid, 126-7

saw as epitomising the intellectual generosity of the age, he had to admit that Pico's efforts to effect a reconciliation of the pagan and Christian traditions had not been successful. Pater believed that the work of Pico was brought to fruition by the men of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century:

> It remained for a later age to conceive the true method of effecting a scientific reconciliation of Christian sentiment with the imagery, the legends, the theories about the world, of pagan poetry and philosophy. For that age [the quattrocento] the only possible reconciliation was an imaginative one, and resulted from the efforts of artists, trained in Christian schools, to handle pagan subjects; and of this artistic reconciliation work like Pico's was but the feebler counterpart.[1]

As his example of this reconciliation in a work of art, Pater cites Michelangelo's Doni Madonna:

> In the Doni Madonna in the Tribune of the Uffizii, Michelangelo actually brings the pagan religion, and with it the unveiled human form, the sleepy-looking fauns of a Dionysiac revel, into the presence of the Madonna, as simpler painters had introduced there other products of the earth, birds or flowers; and he has given to that Madonna herself much of the uncouth energy of the older and more primitive "Mighty Mother."[2]

It seems that Michelangelo's art was for Pater the culmination of the movements of the quattrocento. Although he was fascinated to the point of obsession by certain of da Vinci's works, he never appears to have doubted that Michelangelo's were of even greater significance. When, in "Hippolytus Veiled" (1889), he needed a single work to typify Renaissance culture as the Parthenon typified that of ancient Greece, he chose the Sistine Chapel, and one cannot

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[1] Ibid, 47

[2] Ibid, 48

imagine that the Mona Lisa would have served as aptly.[1]

The opening paragraph of "The Poetry of Michelangelo" seems to have been written with the essay on Leonardo in mind, and it is fair to assume that Pater was aware that the two would be compared, and would together dominate The Renaissance, which volume he must have planned in his mind at least as early as 1871.

> Critics of Michelangelo have sometimes spoken as if the only characteristic of his genius were a wonderful strength, verging, as in the things of the imagination great strength always does, on what is singular or strange. A certain strangeness, something of the blossoming of the aloe, is indeed an element in all true works of art; that they shall excite or surprise us is indispensable.[2]

Here the element of strangeness in being defined in less bizarre terms than in the essay of two years before; and having said this much, so that a direct contradiction between the aesthetic position of the two essays would not be apparent, Pater begins to carefully modify the insistence on strangeness yet further:

> But that they shall give pleasure and exert a charm over us is indispensable too; and this strangeness must be sweet also--a lovely strangeness.[3]

Having modulated strangeness to loveliness, via excitement and surprise, Pater then abandons it, and declares with unusual dogmatism that the formula of the Michelangelesque is "sweetness from strength": an interesting contrast with Leonardo's formula of

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[1] Greek Studies, 157

[2] Renaissance, 73

[3] Ibid, 73

"curiosity with beauty".

> And to the true admirers of Michelangelo this is the true type of the Michelangelesque--sweetness and strength, pleasure with surprise, an energy of conception which seems at every moment about to break through all the conditions of comely form, recovering, touch by touch, a loveliness found usually only in the simplest natural things--ex forti dulcedo.[1]

The essay on Leonardo had made little of the medieval element in Renaissance culture, although there was an attempt to present certain of Leonardo's really quite forward-looking researches as essentially medieval in nature. It was Michelangelo, however, who most clearly symbolised the Renaissance for Pater, and so it is not surprising to find that in the analysis of his style the element of medievalism--which with classicism was one of the two main forces in the culture of the High Renaissance--is strongly emphasised. Speaking of the "true admirers" of the Michelangelesque, Pater went on:

> In this way he sums up for them the whole character of medieval art itself in that which distinguishes it most clearly from classical work, the presence of a convulsive energy in it, becoming in lower hands merely monstrous or forbidding, but felt, even in its most graceful products, as a subdued quaintness or grotesque. Yet those who feel this grace or sweetness in Michelangelo might at the first moment be puzzled if they were asked wherein precisely the quality resided.... In Michelangelo, people have for the most part been attracted or repelled by the strength, while few have understood his sweetness....[2]

Before engaging on a more detailed study of Pater's comments on the medieval and the classical elements in the

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[1] This formula is recalled in the essay on Raphael, in 1892.

[2] Ibid, 73-4

Michelangelesque, an examination of his understanding of his techniques is appropriate. There is as much on this matter in "Luca della Robbia" as in the essay devoted to Michelangelo, for as has been seen, Pater believed that an understanding of Michelangelo's sculpture could not be reached without a familiarity with the work of Luca's school. Pater regarded these quattrocento Tuscan sculptors as the creators of a style midway between that of the Greeks and that of Michelangelo, with more humanity in their works than their ancient predecessors, but less power than their great successor. Furthermore, it was noted that in his discussion of the School of Luca, Pater emphasised their place in the old Florentine tradition, and made little reference to their debt to classical modes. He seemed to be suggesting that such classicism as they did achieve, they achieved by the more medieval, or romantic, means of their committment to their subjects and themes, amongst which death was perhaps supreme.

In the essay on Luca, Pater referred to the well-known incompleteness of many of Michelangelo's works. He claimed that what age had done for the surviving statues of antiquity, Michelangelo's works gained from "a puzzling sort of incompleteness, which suggests rather than realises actual form."[1]

> Many have wondered at that incompleteness, suspecting, however, that Michelangelo himself loved and was loath to change it, and feeling at the same time that they too would lose something if the half-realised form ever quite emerged from the stone,...and

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[1] Ibid, 68

> they have wished to fathom the charm of this incompleteness. Well: that incompleteness is Michelangelo's equivalent for colour in sculpture; it is his way of etherealising pure form, of relieving its hard realism, and communicating to it breath, pulsation, the effect of life....In this way he combines the utmost amount of passion and intensity with the sense of a yielding and flexible life: he gets not vitality merely, but a wonderful force of expression.[1]

Leonardo's inability to complete much that he undertook has been related to his neo-platonism and his homosexual tendencies; and Pater seems to be venturing a similar thought as part explanation for the incompleteness of certain of Michelangelo's works, although he had also an explanation in technical terms. He states that

> it was a characteristic too which fell in with his peculiar temper and mode of life, his disappointments and hesitations.[2]

Whereas he had discussed the androgynous and otherwise suggestive nature of many of Leonardo's figures at length, hinting at his recognition of his orientation, Pater said little about the personal sexual implications of Michelangelo's figures. This may be because Michelangelo's homosexual tendencies have always been more widely recognised than Leonardo's, and were thus less in need of emphasising. It may also have been because Pater did not feel that the element of perverse sexuality was as significant in Michelangelo's art as in da Vinci's, which depended for so much of its impact upon its perverse strangeness.

Pater contrasts the Platonic relationship between

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[1] Ibid, 68-9

[2] Ibid, 68

Michelangelo and the aging widow Vittoria Colonna with the far more physical feeling of Dante for his Beatrice; but he says nothing about Michelangelo's relationships with men which is as direct as his comments on the association of Leonardo and Salaino.

It is sometimes claimed that Michelangelo's close relationship with Vittoria Colonna had the effect of terminating, or at least temporarily sublimating, his homosexual leanings. It is interesting to note that Pater went to some pains to stress that the relationship was almost certainly not overtly sexual:

> People have often spoken of these poems as if they were a mere cry of distress, a lover's complaint over the obduracy of Vittoria Colonna. But those who speak thus forget that though it is quite possible that Michelangelo had seen Vittoria, that somewhat shadowy figure, as early as 1537, yet their closer intimacy did not begin till about the year 1542, when Michelangelo was nearly seventy years old. Vittoria herself, an ardent neo-catholic, vowed to perpetual widowhood since the news had reached her,...that her husband,...lay dead...was then no longer an object of great passion.... It was just because Vittoria raised no great passion that the space in his life where she reigns has such peculiar suavity.[1]

The implications of this passage are that not every period of Michelangelo's life was lacking in passion, and that this intimacy with a woman was not typical of his emotional involvements. Pater's most open acknowledgement of the nature of Michelangelo's sexual orientation comes in a passage which begins with the assertion that

> In the story of Michelangelo's life the strength, often turning to bitterness, is not far to seek; a discordant note sounds throughout it which almost spoils the music.... Even his tenderness and pity are embittered by their strength.... What a sense of wrong in those two captive youths, who feel the

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[1] Ibid, 83-5

> chains like scalding water on their proud and delicate flesh!... We know little of his youth, but all tends to make one believe in the vehemence of its passions. Beneath the Platonic calm of the sonnets there is latent a deep delight in carnal form and colour. There, and still more in the madrigals, he often falls into the language of less tranquil affections; while some of them have the colour of penitence, as from a wanderer returning home.[1] He who spoke so decisively of the supremacy in the imaginative world of the unveiled human form had not been always, we may think, a mere Platonic lover. Vague and wayward his loves may have been; but they partook of the strength of his nature, and sometimes, it may be, would by no means become music, so that the comely order of his days was quite put out: par che amaro ogni mio dolce io senta.[2]

The element of strength in Michelangelo's life and art was seen by Pater as his inheritance from the medieval world, the Christian schools of art, and the Florentine tradition of interest in death. So strong was this element in Michelangelo, that Pater did not have to resort to a variety of dubious devices, as he had in the essay on Leonardo, to portray him as a romantic. He stresses his aggressive independence and scorn for conventional niceties:

> He "treats the Pope as the King of France himself would not dare to treat him"; he goes along the streets of Rome "like an executioner," Raffaelle says of him. Once he seems to have shut himself up with the intention of starving himself to death.[3]

Pater cannot, however, resist entirely the temptation to introduce a hint of the supernatural, and reports solemnly that Michelangelo

> was born in an interval of a rapid night journey in March, at a place in the neighbourhood of Arezzo, the thin, clear air of which, as was then thought, being favourable to the birth of

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[1] The reader is reminded of Tannhäuser; (see chapter II).

[2] Renaissance, 80-1

[3] Ibid, 80

children of great parts.[1]

It has been seen that Pater believed that one cause of the classical revival of the quattrocento was the need for men to satisfy the taste for sweetness they had acquired in their moments of rebellious self-assertion in the late middle ages. It is interesting to compare with this, his assertion that it was Michelangelo's strong grounding in the medieval traditions which made him in turn seek to surpass the Greeks. There would have been no true Renaissance, according to strict application of Pater's theories, if the medievally-engendered taste for sweetness had led to a classical revival which was no more than an attempt to resuscitate old forms. The greatness of the Renaissance was due to its combination of elements from the medieval tradition with the revived classical motifs and themes. Pater's discussion of the forces which drove Michelangelo to broaden the limits of sculpture makes it clear that he believed that the medieval element within the Renaissance was crucial and vital:

> A system of abstraction which aimed always at the broad and general type,...imposed upon the Greek sculptor limits somewhat narrowly defined; and when Michelangelo came, with a genius spiritualised by the reverie of the middle age, penetrated by its spirit of inwardness and introspection, living not a mere outward life like the Greek, but a life full of inward experiences, sorrows, consolations, a system which sacrificed so much of what was inward and unseen could not satisfy him. To him, lover and student of Greek sculpture as he was, work which did not bring what was inward to the surface, which was not concerned with individual expression, with individual character and feeling, the special history of the special soul, was not

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[1] Ibid, 77-8

worth doing at all.[1]

The proof that Michelangelo could have worked in the ancient manner, had not his personality and purpose demanded a more expansive style, is provided by the story of his fake-antique Bacchus. In "A Study of Dionysus", written five years after "The Poetry of Michelangelo", Pater points out the full significance of the success of this forgery in deceiving all who studied it, until Michelangelo himself confessed:

> The artists of the Renaissance occupied themselves much with the person and the story of Dionysus; and Michelangelo, in a work still remaining in Florence, in which he essayed with success to produce a thing which should pass with the critics for a piece of ancient sculpture, has represented him in the fulness, as it seems, of this enthusiasm, an image of delighted, entire surrender to transporting dreams. And this is no subtle after-thought of a later age, but true to certain finer movements of old Greek sentiment, though it may seem to have waited for the hand of Michelangelo before it attained complete realisation.[2]

Michelangelo's art, representing the Renaissance at its highest level of achievement, is the most successful example of the fusion of the classical and medieval traditions. His significance, in Pater's scheme of things, is even greater than this, because he also symbolises the fusion of classic and romantic tendencies, both in his life and his art. The essay "Romanticism", which became "Postscript" to Appreciations, ends with the statement that the

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[1] Ibid, 66-7

[2] Greek Studies, 18-9. Pater's claims for this work are reminiscent of his assertion that Botticelli's Birth of Venus is "a more direct inlet into the Greek temper than the works of the Greeks themselves". Renaissance, 58

supposed rivalry between classicism and romanticism is meaningless because

> in truth, the legitimate contention is, not of one age or school...against another, but of all successive schools alike, against the stupidity which is dead to the substance, and the vulgarity which is dead to form.[1]

It becomes clear that Michelangelo was, in Pater's estimation, the greatest artistic personality of all, the one who compassed in his life and work the greatest extremes and varieties of feeling. Certainly Pater seemed to identify with certain aspects of his personality, such as his homosexuality, but he did not seek to make of him a mythical figure of the sort he made of da Vinci. There was no need for that kind of sensationalism in the essay on Michelangelo, simply because his actual history provided Pater with all that he could desire and needed no embellishment. The two essays, written so close together, and seeming in many ways to form a pair, are very different. That devoted to Leonardo shows Pater putting criticism second, using his ostensible subject to create what almost amounts to a symbolic imaginary portrait; that on Michelangelo is as faithful and balanced a criticism as any he ever wrote. Thus they really are a complementary pair; in that they represent two quite different aspects of Pater as critic.

Raphael

Whereas the essay on da Vinci contained Pater's first

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[1] Appreciations, 261

published thoughts on that artist, the essay on Raphael came late in Pater's working life, and was preceded by a considerable number of brief comments about him. It was delivered as a lecture in August 1892, and appeared as an article in the Fortnightly Review two months later. This was some twenty-eight years after Pater's first recorded comment on Raphael, in the paper "Diaphaneitè", delivered in 1864, but not printed until it was included in the posthumous volume Miscellaneous Studies (1895).

The absence of an essay on Raphael in The Renaissance is interesting. Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael are considered the giants of the High Renaissance, and Pater seems to have done strangely in devoting lengthy essays to two of them, and quite overlooking the third. It is noticeable that he added an essay on Giorgione when preparing the third edition (1888), but failed to take the opportunity of including "Raphael" in the fourth edition, of 1893. Not only did he allow twenty years to elapse between the essays on Leonardo and Michelangelo, and that on Raphael, but he never included the latter in his most famous and popular volume.

Those who feel that "Raphael" is considerably inferior to the essays on the two other High Renaissance giants, might imagine that Pater must have agreed with them and felt it unworthy of a place. Certainly it has been overlooked at times, and referred to scathingly at others. In her generally very sympathetic book on Pater, Ruth Child describes the essay on Raphael as "so inadequate

as to be almost humorous"[1]. On the other hand, Kenneth Clark included it in his 1961 edition of The Renaissance, stating:

> Although it contains less critical thought than the best essays in the earlier volume and is not as well written, for by this time Pater's style had become almost unbearably mannered, I have thought it permissible to print it in this edition, as Pater's outline of Raphael is remarkably just, and describes the realisation of antique ideals in the Renaissance more fully than any of the other essays.[2]

A study of Pater's comments on Raphael over the years, as well as of the essay of 1892, could be hoped to explain Pater's treatment of that essay, as well as elucidating his view of Raphael's life and art.

The reference to Raphael in "Diaphaneitè" embodies several ideas about him which were developed in later writings. Pater admits that the diaphanous character is not the instrument of progress or reform in the world:

> It is not the guise of Luther or Spinoza; rather it is that of Raphael, who in the midst of the Reformation and the Renaissance, himself lighted up by them, yielded himself to neither, but stood still to live upon himself....[3]

Raphael's personal independence and integrity, and his lack of any ambitions to make innovations, are themes of the essay of 1892. What is especially interesting here is the description which follows: the diaphanous character, of which Raphael had just been

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[1] R. Child , The Aesthetic of Walter Pater, (New York, McMillan, 1940) p.114

[2] Clark, Op Cit, 20

[3] Miscellaneous Studies, 253

given as an example, is evoked in terms of serenity and sexlessness.

> The beauty of the Greek statues was a sexless beauty; the statues of the gods had the least traces of sex. Here there is a moral sexlessness, a kind of impotence, an ineffectual wholeness of nature, yet with a divine beauty and significance of its own.[1]

Not even early in his life, when he was in apparent revolt against Victorian moral standards, could Pater connect Raphael with any move to rebellion, nor find in his life and art the strong sexuality which so concerned him in the cases of Leonardo and Michelangelo. Despite Vasari's assertion that

> Raphael was much disposed to the gentler affections and delighted in the society of woman. He permitted himself to indulge too freely in the pleasures of life.[2]

Pater was persuaded by the feeling of the paintings, or at least engravings after them, and saw Raphael as sexless and conventionally moral.

Pater's next mentions of Raphael occur in "Winckelmann" (1867), where he describes several of his frescoes in Rome, which he had probably seen on his first trip to Italy in 1865, including that now known as Parnassus:

> In this fresco it is the classical tradition, the orthodoxy of taste, that Raffaelle commemorates.[3]

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[1] Ibid, 253

[2] Vasari, Op Cit, 229

[3] Renaissance, 198

When he refers to a work in which Raphael has used classical motifs, Pater does not associate classicism with paganism and freedom, as he does often in other contexts, but with austerity and dignity. In "Winckelmann" Pater agrees with Goethe that Raphael fused a "blithe" classicism "perfectly" with Christian themes.[1] In the essay on Leonardo, Pater characterises Leonardo's women as "daughters of Herodias", who "are not of the Christian family, or of Raffaelle's."[2] This is especially remarkable in as essay in which Raphael had been identified with the return to antiquity in the Renaissance, and that return to antiquity had generally been seen as opposed to the Christian tradition. In "Luca della Robbia", Pater called Mino da Fiesole "the Raffaelle of sculpture",[3] in a context which stressed the quiet and unsensational lives of the Tuscan sculptors. It is clear that the pious and subdued tone of the essay which finally came in 1892 was consistent with Pater's understanding of Raphael from the first.

Not only was the tone of "Raphael" in keeping with all that Pater had written about him in the previous three decades, the limited scope of the essay was intentional. When these facts are kept in mind, many of the harshest criticisms of it seem pointless. In

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[1] Ibid, 225

[2] Ibid, 116

[3] Ibid, 63

concluding, Pater stated:

> I have abstained from anything like description of Raphael's pictures in speaking of him and his work, have aimed rather at preparing you to look at his work for yourselves, by a sketch of his life, and therein especially, as most appropriate to this place [Oxford] of Raphael as a scholar.[1]

It can be speculated that the limited scope of the lecture-essay was the result of Pater's prolificity in 1892; for in that year he published three of the chapters of Plato and Platonism and "Emerald Uthwart" as well as "Raphael".

Certainly the almost bland tone of the essay is set from the start. Whereas in other contexts Pater had defined the spirit of the Renaissance as rebellious, or intellectually generous beyond the limits of medieval Christianity, here he defines it as basically scholarly:

> The Renaissance--an age of which we may say, summarily, that it enjoyed itself, and found perhaps its chief enjoyment in the attitude of the scholar, in the enthusiastic acquisition of knowledge for its own sake....[2]

The "wayward loves" and "brilliant sins" are almost entirely absent from Pater's account of Raphael, although they had been prominent in other essays dealing with the High Renaissance. Evil makes its only appearance in the persons of the Baglioni, a family of perverted criminals who lived in Perugia. Apart from the reference to

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[1] Miscellaneous Studies, 59

[2] Ibid, 38

the Baglioni, the reader gets the impression that Raphael's world was different in almost all respects from that inhabited by da Vinci and Michelangelo. Similarly the formula of his genius, given with mock reluctance, is different from theirs, with their prominent elements of curiosity and strength.

> Facile master as he may seem, as indeed he is, he is also one of the world's typical scholars, with Plato, and Cicero, and Virgil, and Milton. The formula of his genius, if we must have one, is this: genius by accumulation; the transformation of meek scholarship into genius--triumphant power of genius.[1]

Raphael's birth was similarly less dramatic, if not less auspicious, than that of da Vinci and Michelangelo. He was not illegitimate, nor born in an area where the air had magical properties, but "amid the art he was, not to transform, but to perfect, by a thousand reverential retouchings."[2] His father was Giovanni Santi, and as has been seen, Pater was deeply moved by some of Santi's work, in particular a Mater Dolorosa which had for him a personal significance.

> That may have been the first picture the eyes of the world's great painter of Madonnas rested on; and if he stood diligently before it to copy, and so copying, quite unconsciously, and with no disloyalty to his original, refined, improved, substituted,--substituted himself, in fact, his finer self--he had already struck the persistent note of his career. As with his age, it is his vocation, ardent worker as he is, to enjoy himself--to enjoy himself amiably, and to find his chief enjoyment

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[1] Ibid, 38-9

[2] Ibid, 39

in the attitude of a scholar.[1]

Pater constantly emphasised the meek and unrebellious nature of Raphael, often seeming to denigrate him and then half withdraw the denigration. Describing him from a reputed portrait, he wrote:

> A strenous lad! capable of plodding, if you dare apply that word to labour so impassioned as his--to any labour whatever done at Perugia, centre of the dreamiest Appenine scenery.[2]

What Pater was in fact doing was attempting to transfer some of the glory of Raphael's name to a style of life and work often thought dull and uninspired. The essay is a paean to the scholar-artist, a claim that scholarship can be creative and admirable, not the mere antiquarianism of which Pater had written scornfully in his youth. David Cecil, in Walter Pater: the Scholar-Artist[3] shows that in later life Pater saw himself much as he portrays Raphael in this essay; and thus the essay can be seen as a defence, even a glorification, of Pater's own life and style of work: austere, dedicated, under-rated by those who valued only show or worldly success. To this end he toys with the weaknesses he knows are apparent in Raphael's work, secure that he can fall back on the universal

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[1] Ibid, 40-1

[2] Ibid, 41

[3] David Cecil, Walter Pater: the Scholar-Artist, (Cambridge, 1955).

acceptance of his genius. He thus establishes an analogy with his own life-style which has the authority and security he needs to re-assure himself that what he is doing is worth-while, although it may seem to many to be dull and unoriginal. Whether this process is conscious or not, aimed at the reader, or merely a complex defence mechanism, can only be guessed at. The essay on Raphael embodies the self-image of Pater the mature scholar-artist, as clearly as that on Leonardo embodied the image of the enfant terrible of Oxford "setting philosophy above Christianity".

Pater discusses Raphael not only as the creative scholar-artist, but also as the pupil who is ever the teacher of his masters. He wrote relatively little about Michelangelo's debt to Ghirlandajo, and rather more about the relationship between Leonardo and Verrocchio. Raphael's first debt was of course to his father; after him he learnt from many others, and, Pater says, they learnt from him:

> And one by one, one after another, his masters, the very greatest of them, go to school to him.
>
> It was so especially with the artist of whom Raphael first became certainly a learner--Perugino.[1]

After the passage in which he expounds the distinctly medieval nature of Perugino's art, Pater discusses Raphael's debt to Perugino and Pinturicchio. He considered the early work of Raphael, done

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[1] Miscellaneous Studies, 41

under the influence of Perugino, "in fact 'conservative,' and at various points slightly behind its day, though not unpleasantly."[1] It is to the oft-maligned Pinturicchio, rather than Perugino, though, that Pater ascribes the major influence in the formation of Raphael's mature style. While Perugino had never broken through "the meditative circle of the Middle Age"[2]:

> Raphael, on the other hand, in his final period at Rome, exhibits a wonderful narrative power in painting; and the secret of that power--the power of developing a story in pictures--may be traced back from him to Pinturicchio, as that painter worked on those vast, well-lighted walls of the cathedral library of Siena....[3]

Raphael's "brilliant personal history,"[4] as much as his art, was in contrast to

> the Peruginesque conception of life in its almost perverse other-worldliness, which Raphael now leaves behind him, but, like a true scholar, will not forget.[5]

The next major influence which Pater saw as formative of Raphael's manner was that of the Florentines, masters of the ideal in art, and yet capable of handling the real world:

> For Raphael to come from Siena, Perugia, Urbino, to sharpwitted,

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[1] Ibid, 44

[2] Ibid, 45

[3] Ibid, 45

[4] Ibid, 45

[5] Ibid, 45

> practical, masterful Florence was in immediate effect a transition from reverie to realities--to a world of facts. Those masters of the ideal were for him, in the first instance, masters also of realism, as we say. Henceforth, to the end, he will be the analyst, the faithful reporter, in his work, of what he sees.... And here a faithful analyst of what he sees, yet lifting it withal, unconsciously, inevitably, recomposing, glorifying, Raphael too becomes, of course, a painter of portraits.[1]

Pater did not ascribe all of Raphael's art to the motivation of scholarship, although it is that impulse which he most consistently emphasises. In the passage in which he contrasts Raphael with Michelangelo, he introduces the more romantic concept of rivalry between artists, and many of his remarks make clear reference to the essay on Michelangelo.

> It was in his twenty-fifth year that Raphael came to the city of the popes, Michelangelo being already in high favour there. For the remaining years of his life he paces the same streets with that grim artist, who was so great a contrast with himself, and for the first time his attitude towards a gift different from his own is not that of a scholar, but that of a rival. If he did not become the scholar of Michelangelo, it would be difficult, on the other hand, to trace anywhere in Michelangelo's work the counter influence usual with those who had influenced him. It was as if he desired to add to the strength of Michelangelo that sweetness which at first sight seems to be wanting there. Ex forti dulcedo: and in the study of Michelangelo certainly it is enjoyable to detect, if we may, sweet savours amid the wonderful strength, the strangeness and potency of what he pours forth to us: with Raphael, conversely, something of a relief to find in the suavity of that so softly moving, tuneful existence, an assertion of strength.[2]

This comparison of Raphael and Michelangelo saves Pater's

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[1] Ibid, 50

[2] Ibid, 52

picture of Raphael from being altogether insipid. Certainly the description of the Madonna del Gran Duca which occurs just before the passage quoted above, stresses the solidity and strength of Raphael's style more than the essay as a whole seems to.

> Let is stand as representative of as many as fifty or sixty types of that subject, onwards to the Sixtine (sic) Madonna, ... Observe the veritable atmosphere about it, the grand composition of the drapery, the magic relief, the sweetness and dignity of the human hands and faces, the noble tenderness of Mary's gesture, the unity of the thing with itself, the faultless exclusion of all that does not belong to its main purpose; it is like a single, simple axiomatic thought. Note withal the novelty of its effect on the mind, and you will see that this master of style (that's a consummate example of what is meant by style) has been still a willing scholar in the hands of da Vinci.[1]

Although Pater mentions Leonardo's influence in this passage, it serves, with its references to art by means of exclusion, to put the reader in mind of Michelangelo. The reference to style, with the word italicised, reminds the reader also of the essay of that title, in which Michelangelo's idea of his work as freeing a figure from a block of stone was used to illustrate Schiller's concept of creative art as the removal of all surplusage. Near the end of "Raphael", Pater uses Raphel's style as he had used Michelangelo's in "Style" to illustrate this same concept. Echoing the earlier passage, Pater wrote:

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[1] Ibid, 51

> Note, therefore, how much mere exclusion counts for in the positive effect of his work. There is a saying that the true artist is known best by what he omits. Yes, because the whole question of good taste is involved precisely in such jealous omission.[1]

Pater saw a number of parallels between Raphael and Michelangelo, more at least than between either of them and Leonardo. Both blended the classical with the Christian, whereas Leonardo's prime source of inspiration had been in the natural world. While Michelangelo achieved a certain sweetness through strength, Raphael achieved strength through docility and scholarship. The nature of Raphael's borrowing from the middle ages was different from Michelangelo's. Michelangelo, Pater claimed, drew an emotional power from that receding period, while Raphael's borrowing was spiritual in a more conventionally religious way. This is of course consistent with the difference between their personalities--the one dramatic and powerful, the other scholarly and meek.

In the discussion of Giotto in chapter two above, two passages were cited from Marius in which Giotto was identified as the originator of an artistic tradition which culminated in the work of Raphael. Marius saw in the early Christians

> that regenerate type of humanity, which, centuries later,

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[1] Ibid, 60

> Giotto and his successors, down to the best and purest days of the young Raphael, working under conditions very friendly to the imagination, were to conceive as an artistic ideal.[1]

Michelangelo's figures were troubled by thoughts unknown to this regenerate type of humanity which Raphael's art epitomised. They were Christians rather than neo-Platonists.

It is significant that while Pater failed to realise the ideological significance of Giotto's style-- that by portraying Biblical personages as ordinary people he was humanising religion in line with the anti-establishment ideals of Saint Francis--he understood that in a sense, in a later age, Raphael's art paralleled that other religious movement to human liberation, the Reformation. In "Diaphaneitè" he had contrasted Raphael with Luther, the ineffectual diaphanous character with the man of action. Nearly thirty years later, with a view of art which related it more closely with society, he saw Raphael as doing in religious art much the same thing as Luther did in church politics.

> This graceful Roman Catholic rivals also what is perhaps best in the work of the rude German reformer--of Luther, who came to Rome about this very time, to find nothing admirable there. Place along with them the Cartoons, and observe that in this phase of his artistic labour, as Luther printed his vernacular German version of the Scriptures, so Raphael is popularising them for an even larger world; he brings the simple, to their great delight, face to face with the Bible as it is, in all its variety of incident, after they had so long had to content themselves with but fragments of it....[2]

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[1] Marius II, 110

[2] Miscellaneous Studies, 55-6

The contrast between this passage and the implications of "Diaphaneitè" exemplifies strikingly just how far Pater shifted his ground during his short working life. Although the essay on Raphael may be irritating in its proximity to triteness, in some respects it represents a more balanced understanding of art in society. Pater's exegesis of the significance of Raphael's work is more than just a self-congratulatory assertion of the power of the scholar-artist.

We surmise that at the time he wrote the essay on Raphael, whose inoffensiveness was alleged to be his greatest virtue, Pater would have looked back on the essay on Leonardo with mixed feelings of nostalgia and amusement. The essay on Raphael contrasted with that on Leonardo, and Pater's mature self contrasted with his youthful self, are evoked by his description of the changes in the image of Leonardo in Vasari's Vitae:

> In the second edition the image was changed into something fainter and more conventional.[1]

In his later years Pater seemed to see some value in appearing "fainter and more conventional", and so the character of Raphael, as he had always understood it, came to appeal more strongly to him.

The essay on Raphael, because its scope was so limited, is less impressive than those on the two other giants of the High Renaissance. It does, however, complement them interestingly, showing Pater able to find stimulus and gratification in a different

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[1] Renaissance, 98

aspect of the diverse culture of the Renaissance. Pater recognised, in time if not from the start, that orthodoxy and scholarship were just as much a part of the High Renaissance as romantic, dramatic inspiration and the love of perverse beauty.

CHAPTER V

REFINED AND COMELY DECADENCE

France in the Sixteenth Century, and Mannerism

The aspect of the Renaissance about which modern scholars are least able to agree is the movement towards emotionalism, anti-rationality, exaggeration, and self-consciousness which began during the lifetime of Michelangelo and continued through most of the sixteenth century. The art which reflects this movement is usually dubbed "mannerist", and is variously seen as selfconsciously stylish and decadent. Some scholars believe that the Renaissance so successfully completed its course, from Giotto to Michelangelo, that later artists had to fabricate a new direction. Others claim that the art of the period reflects social malaise, others that it is the product of a new infusion of medieval styles into neoclassical forms, others that it aimed merely at stylishness, glamour and bizarre elegance.[1] In this chapter an examination will be made of Pater's references to art and culture in both France and Italy in this period, and some conclusions drawn as to the apparent nature

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[1] These views are rarely explicitly stated or defended, but underlie the different approaches of such scholars as Arnold Hauser, J. Thuillier and J. Shearman.

of his understanding of the period, and of the phenomenon known as "mannerism".

His first reference to the later years of the Renaissance appears in the essay "Poems by William Morris" (1868) from which the "Conclusion" of The Renaissance and the essay "Aesthetic Poetry" were later extracted. After commenting, in what appears retrospectively to have been a hint of his own intentions that "No writer on the Renaissance has hitherto cared much for... [the] exquisite early light of it,"[1] he contrasts the later phase of the movement unfavourably: "Afterwards the Renaissance...becomes exaggerated and facile."[2] Many times before and since the words "exaggerated" and "facile" have been applied to mannerist painting, but here Pater seems to be thinking not exclusively, or even not at all, of the visual arts, but of the whole culture.

In the section of the "Preface" to The Renaissance which refers to the essay "Joachim du Bellay", Pater makes a similar contrast between the first and last phases of the Renaissance, but here the tone of condemnation is barely distinct. In fact, it is possible to feel that Pater, in accordance with his own proclaimed principles, is seeing the first and last phases of the Renaissance not as better and worse, exquisite and exaggerated, but as possessing distinctive

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[1] "Poems of William Morris" Westminster Review, October 1st 1868, N.S. XXXIV, 307

[2] Ibid, 307

but equally admirable qualities:

> The Renaissance thus putting forth in France an aftermath, a wonderful later growth, the products of which have to the full that subtle and delicate sweetness which belongs to a refined and comely decadence; just as its earliest phases have the freshness which belongs to all periods of growth in art, the charm of ascesis, of the austere and serious girding of the loins in youth.[1]

In "Leonardo da Vinci" (1869), Leonardo's selfimposed exile in France becomes something of a symbol of the transfer of the focus of the Renaissance from Italy to France. Speaking of the first years of the sixteenth century, Pater claimed

> France was about to become an Italy more Italian than Italy itself. Francis the First...was attracted by the finesse of Leonardo's work; La Gioconda was already on his cabinet, and he offered Leonardo the little Chateau de Clour, with its vineyards and meadows, in the pleasant valley of the Masse, just outside the walls of the town of Amboise, where, especially in the hunting season, the court then frequently resided. A Monsieur Lyonard, peinteur du Roy pour Amboyse--so the letter of Francis the First is headed. It opens a prospect, one of the most interesting in the history of art, where, under a strange mixture of lights, Italian art dies away as a French exotic.[2]

There is symbolic significance in Francis' ownership of La Gioconda, in which Pater saw the culmination of the culture of the centuries before the Renaissance, and in the close connection made between Leonardo and the French landscape, which figures so prominently in Gaston de Latour. This passage anticipates much that was to be more fully treated quite soon in "Joachim du Bellay" as well as later in Gaston.

The next section of this chapter will deal with the obser-

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[1] Renaissance, xiii

[2] Renaissance, 128

vations on the poetry of the Pléiade which appear in "Joachim du Bellay". Here we are concerned with the way that general remarks about the social climate in which these poets flourished add to our understanding of Pater's conception of the Renaissance of the sixteenth century.

The first few pages of "Joachim du Bellay" (1872) are devoted to an exposition of the intellectual situation in the middle of the sixteenth century. Pater immediately makes it clear that he sees the zeitgeist as resulting from a new infusion of medievalism into the Renaissance spirit:

> The spirit of the Renaissance was everywhere, and people had begun to look back with distaste on the works of the middle age, [but] the old Gothic manner still had one chance more, in borrowing something from the rival which was about to supplant it. In this way there was produced, chiefly in France, a new and peculiar phase of taste with qualities and a charm of its own,....[1]

Notwithstanding that here, as often he did, Pater speaks of art as if it were a living conscious organism, this analysis would be acceptable to many modern scholars.

> What is called the Renaissance in France is thus not so much the introduction of a whole new taste ready-made from Italy, but rather the finest and subtlest phase of the middle age itself, its last fleeting splendour and temperate Saint Martin's summer.[2]

This is the most remarkable example of Pater's realisation, outstandingly perceptive for his day, of the persistence of medieval traditions and styles despite the classical revival. It is a theme

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[1] Renaissance, 155

[2] Ibid, 156

to which he returns again and again in Gaston. For those readers who may have been confused by this, or imagine it to contradict other statements about the Renaissance, or even to place the sixteenth century outside the pale of that movement, there follows this reminder a few pages later:

> We are accustomed to speak of the varied critical and creative movements of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as the Renaissance, and because we have a single name for it we may sometimes fancy that there was more unity in the thing itself than there really was.[1]

Expressed simplistically, in terms of Pater's own concept of formulae for intellectual movements or creative talents, while the Italian fifteenth-century Renaissance was composed of one part classicism and one part medievalism, the Renaissance of sixteenth century France was a one-to-two blend. Its ingredients remained the same, the formula altered.

Most of the remainder of "Joachim du Bellay" is devoted to the lives and writings of the Pléiade, but there are one or two passages which contain descriptions of the age, usually where Pater is asserting that the poetry under examination is typical and expressive of the period. Our interest in the Pléiade is attributed to our acceptance of the humanist idea that nothing which ever moved living people can lose all its impact.[2] Thus:

> Its interest depends...on the circumstance that it was once poetry à la mode, that it is part of the manner, and carried it

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[1] Ibid, 160

[2] Here Pater flatly contradicts Mrs. Pattison.

> to a high degree of perfection. It is one of the decorations of an age which threw much of its energy into the work of decoration.[1]

In the last paragraph of the essay, Pater again generalises from the work of these poets to the zeitgeist. After quoting Du Bellay's famous poem "A Winnower of Wheat to the Winds" he goes on:

> That has...the qualities, the value,...of the whole phase of taste from which that school derives--a certain silvery grace of fancy at the happy and dexterous way in which a thing slight in itself is handled.[2]

Pater seems here to be approaching the concept of mannerism as a style in which subject, mere subject, is of value mainly as a pretext to show off some stylish style--manièra in the sense in which the term was used in the sixteenth century.

Pater's only mention between "Joachim du Bellay" (1872) and Gaston (1889) of the period of the Renaissance in France occurs in "Sir Thomas Browne", written in 1886. Here the emphasis is on the extremist nature of the period, with its religious wars and violent disputes, and thus the essayist Montaigne, a controversialist although a recluse, is cited as its typical man. Pater equates the age of Browne in England with that of Montaigne in France, as "An age stirred by great causes...."[3]

The central controversy of the age of the French Renaissance was that between the Catholics and the Huguenots, and this forms the background to the story of Gaston. The chapters in Gaston devoted

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[1] Renaissance, 166

[2] Ibid, 176

[3] Appreciations, 128

to the Pléiade, Bruno, and Montaigne will be considered later in this chapter. Here the book will be examined, as the essay on Joachim du Bellay has been above, as a source of generalisations about the period and its artistic styles.

The opening pages refer to the old buildings of the Latour family, and throughout the book there are references to mannerist architecture. The sixteenth century is called "An age indulgent of architectural caprices."[1] Elsewhere are other references which recall statements in "Joachim du Bellay". Pater claimed that in Gaston's century--he died in 1594, exactly three hundred years before his creator:"The apparatus of daily life became so eloquent of the moods of those to whom it ministered."[2] The same idea is conveyed by the characterization of Gaston's contemporaries as "A generation which, as by some aesthetic sense in the air, made the most of the pleasant outsides of life."[3] Obviously Pater was favourably impressed by the aspect of the age, here described, which provided a precedent for his own careful aestheticism with respect to his surroundings and personal belongings. The greatest fascination for him appears, however, to have been in the way in which the period combined opposite, or supposedly opposite, tendencies; such as cruelty and the love of beauty. Many passages in Gaston evoke the essay on Leonardo, and though they are more subdued in tone, suggest that he

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[1] Gaston, 2

[2] Gaston, 20

[3] Ibid, 33

had not quite, in 1889, reached the much milder, safer, posture exemplified by Raphael (1892). On the other hand, the delight in Leonardo's indifference to the evil around him, a kind of amorality, has been replaced by the feeling that there are problems for civilised, good men in a corrupt age. This feeling is most clearly expressed in this exclamation: "A difficult age, certainly, for scrupulous spirits to move in!"[1] A passage two pages later is of interestingly optimistic tone:

> The deeds of violence which occupy the foreground...might indeed lead one to fancy that little human kindness could have remained in France,...that no place at all could have been left for the quiet building of character.
>
> But the more permanent forces, alike of human nature and the natural world, are on the whole in the interests of tranquility and sanity, and of the sentiments proper to man.[2]

The younger Pater who wrote the essays of The Renaissance twenty years before would probably have taken issue with the way this passage implies a good spirit ruling over all, and some absolute standard dictating "the sentiments proper to man." The tone of the earlier essays is more akin to the passage in which Gaston and his friends are presented as enjoying the stimulus of "Their own violent though refined and cunning time...."[3]

For Pater, the terrible slaughter of St. Bartholemew's Day, 1572, was the central symbolic event of the age. In the essay "Prosper Mérimée" this is made clear, although Pater still refers

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[1] Ibid, 16

[2] Ibid, 18

[3] Ibid, 37

to it as "That favourite century of the French Renaissance...."[1] a few sentences after characterizing it as "That puzzling age which centres in the "Eve of Saint Bartholemew"..."[2]

In one of the later chapters of Gaston this apparent dilemma is clarified, and Pater explains the relationship he sees between the dainty culture and murderous behaviour of the time:

> A religious pretext had brought into sudden evidence all the latent ferocities of a corrupt though dainty civilisation.[3]

The implication is that even here art does reflect society, and the emphasis on the decorative nature of the arts at this time has been symbolic of shallowness, of an attempt to mask evil with prettiness, and thus deceive those too easily impressed by show and style without substance. No similar reconciliation of evil with artistic excellence coexisting in the same historical period was attempted in The Renaissance, as has been observed in chapter three above.

It is interesting to observe, in accordance with this analysis of St. Bartholemew's Day, that when, earlier in Gaston, the idea of a religion of beauty had first been introduced, a distinctly, and not pleasantly, sinister note had been apparent. Gaston, who had grown up a devout Christian and been ordained a clerk in holy orders in his early teens, was introduced by the Pléiade to a love for the classics which threatened to overwhelm him in a desire for beauty.

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[1] Miscellaneous Studies, 21

[2] Ibid, 20

[3] Gaston, 127. This is reminiscent of the tone of a passage on p.16, where the sixteenth century France is called "an artificial aesthetic culture".

We have here, in the mind of Gaston, an allegory of what happened to European culture with the early Renaissance:

> Here, truly, was a doctrine to propagate, a secret open to everyone who would learn, towards a new management of life,--say: a new religion, or at least a new worship, maintaining and visibly setting forth a single overpowering apprehension.
>
> The worship of physical beauty a religion, the proper faculty of which would be the bodily eye! Looked at in this way, some of the well marked characteristics of the Pléiad[1] assumed a hieratic, almost an ecclesiastical air.[2]

After a few sentences expanding this observation a new thought comes into Gaston's mind:

> The consciousness, no longer of mere bad-neighbourship between what was old and new in his life, but of incompatibility between two rival claimants upon him, of two ideals. Might that new religion be a religion not altogether of goodness, a profane religion, in spite of its poetic fervours? There were "flowers of evil", among the rest. It came in part, avowedly, as a kind of consecration of evil, and seemed to give it the beauty of holiness. Rather, good and evil were distinctions inapplicable in proportion as these new interests made themselves felt.[3]

This passage expresses the feelings of many people towards the Renaissance, both contemporaries and later generations. No doubt Savonarola and his reactionary followers saw much of the Renaissance as a consecration of immorality, and so did many Victorians. As Kenneth Clark wrote: "The Renaissance had been associated with every conceivable vice. And the aesthetic justification of vice."[4] For those Victorians who were ever wary of evil masquerading as art, the use of the phrase

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[1] Pater was inconsistent in his spelling of Pléiade.

[2] Gaston, 71

[3] Ibid, 71

[4] Clark, Op Cit, 24

"flowers of evil", with its inevitable evocation of Baudelaire, would have been a clear reminder that the dilemma of Gaston was still a real one in their own decadent age. Certainly the problem always concerned Pater, although his attitudes towards it modified over the years. Not surprisingly, he sent Gaston into the company of one of his own favourite essayists--the original sense of "essay" as a weighing of alternatives is significant here--Michel de Montaigne. Montaigne was clearly meant to come to the minds of his readers when he posed the rhetorical question:

> Was there perhaps somewhere, in some penetrative mind in this age of novelties, some scheme of truth, some science about men and things, which might harmonise for him his earlier and later preference, "the sacred and the profane loves," or failing that, establish, to his pacification, the exclusive supremacy of the latter?[1]

While he devoted whole chapters or essays to certain poets and philosophers of the sixteenth century, Pater made no extended study of its architecture. But, in Gaston, as has been noted above, and in other places, he often referred to it in passages which were intended to evoke the environment in which some of these poets and philosophers lived and worked. He did this sufficiently often to make it clear that he saw mannerist architecture as expressive of its age. Similarly his references to French artists of the sixteenth century are scattered but significant, although they are usually quite brief.

In "Joachim du Bellay" Pater discussed mannerist art and

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[1] Gaston, 72

architecture as the correlatives of Ronsard's poems. He began by giving a summary description of mannerist style which is as good as any of its length could be: "Blending the somewhat attenuated grace of Italian ornament with the general outlines of Northern design."[1] This process, he went on

> Produced the Chateau de Gaillon, as you may still see it in the delicate engravings of Israel Silvestre--a Gothic donjon veiled faintly by a surface of dainty Italian traceries--Chenonceaux, Blais, Chambord, and the church of Brou. In painting, there came from Italy workmen like Maitre Roux and the masters of the school of Fontainebleau, to have their later Italian voluptuousness attempered by the naive and silvery qualities of the native style; and it was characteristic of these painters that they were most successful in painting on glass, an art so essentially medieval.
>
> They got quite a new order of effects from it, and felt their way to refinements on colour, never dreamed of by those older workmen....[2]

In another passage in which architecture is taken as paralleling the literary style of some ages, from the 1877 essay on Giorgione, Pater speaks with fascination of

> Those strangely twisted staircases of the Chateaux of the country on the Loire, as if it were intended that among their odd turnings the actors in a[3] wild life might pass each other unseen;...[4]

The passage quoted above from "Joachim du Bellay" described the Italian style as "voluptuous", the French as "naive"; and a similar judgement is apparent in "Modernity" from Gaston, nearly twenty years later, where Pater wrote of the Italian style as "exotic"

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[1] Renaissance, 155

[2] Ibid, 156

[3] In some editions "a theatrical mode of life".

[4] Ibid, 134

and the French as "homely":

> Frequently...contemporary genius was visible...in a novel and seductive architecture, which, by its engrafting of exotic grace on homely native forms, spoke of a certain restless aspiration to be what one was not but might become--the old Gaulish desire to be refined, to be mentally enfranchised by the sprightlier genius of Italy.[1]

In this same paragraph, with the massacre of St. Bartholemew's Day apparently forgotten, Pater goes on to transfer virtues from the architecture to the people of the age. It seems as though, even against his will or his better judgement, he could not help invoking the converse of the "art reflects society" concept to assert, against the evidence, that society was justified by its art. Fewer passages evidence more clearly Pater's adherence to this doctrine, despite his protests against "acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy...of our own."[2] Here he overlooks all the horrors and cruelty of the age to assume that the people were "flawless bodies, duly appointed to typically developed souls"...[3] living in "dreamy apartments...."[4] Here we see further evidence for that limitation of Pater's which was apparent in his study of early Italian Renaissance society.

Pater's references to French sixteenth century painters were fewer but more specific than his references to the architecture of the period. In "Two Early French Stories" (1872) he cites Jean

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[1] Gaston, 78

[2] Renaissance, 237

[3] Gaston, 78

[4] Ibid, 78

Cousin and Germain Pilon as exemplars of the French Renaissance, that aspect of the movement which most clearly shows its debt to the Middle Ages. The medieval aspect of the work of Cousin was foremost in his mind when he observed in "Denys L'Auxerrois" (1886) that the "chastened temper...."[1] of his art was reminiscent of English Gothic. On the other hand, reminding us of the Renaissance neo-classical aspect of the French sixteenth century, he refers to the insignificant Janet, in a passage from Gaston mainly interesting because of its use of the term "mannered":

> The mannered Italian, or Italianised, artists, including the native Janet,..had given to all alike the same brown eyes and tender eyelids and golden hair and somewhat ambered paleness, varying only the curious artifices of the dress....Dangerous guests in that simple, cloistral place, Sybils of the Renaissance on a mission from Italy to France....[2]

In the introductory paragraphs of "Joachim du Bellay" Pater had explained the compatibility of French and Italian styles in a way that makes the sinister note constantly audible in later writings both unnecessary and surprising. There he had written of the qualities that the different national traditions had in common, and thus explained the easy grafting of the one onto the other:

> There was indeed something in the native French taste naturally akin to that Italian finesse. The characteristic of French work had always been a certain nicety, a remarkable daintiness of hand, une nettaté remarquable d'exécution.[3]

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[1] Imaginary Portraits, 50

[2] Gaston, 65

[3] Renaissance, 156

The use of the word "finesse", here italicized, reminds the reader of the passage in Leonardo da Vinci, in which that term was used to explain Francis the First's attraction to Leonardo's art, and thus to introduce the conquest of France by Italian taste. In the essay on Du Bellay, Pater went into this by means of a discussion of the art of the Clouets, painters of no more note than Janet, but useful for his purpose:

> In the paintings of Francois Clouet, for example, or rather of the Clouets--for there was a whole family of them--painters remarkable for their resistance to Italian influences, there is a silveriness of colour and clearness of expression which distinguishes them very definitely from their Flemish neighbours....[1]

Pater clearly saw French sixteenth century culture as rooted in the French tradition, as well as owing much to the Italian Renaissance. The next part of this chapter will go on to examine the poetry of the Pléiade, which Pater saw as the epitome of the age.[2] Pater's concept of the continuity of the development of European culture is the central theme here, as elsewhere. Just as Italian Renaissance culture was the product of grafting classical ideas onto medieval roots, so French sixteenth century culture was the product of a graft of Italian Renaissance culture onto the receptive old French stem. Pater's occasionally unconvincing belief in the organic nature of culture was at least useful in this context.

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[1] Ibid, 156

[2] Ibid, 166

The Pléiade

The Pléiade was the name adopted by a group of seven sixteenth century French poets, whose leading members were Pierre de Ronsard and Joachim du Bellay. They set out to elevate the dignity of the French language, in which they wrote; but did not reject the classics, in fact they borrowed many devices from them. They were very highly regarded in their own lifetimes, but fell into disfavour with changes in literary and critical fashions, and reached their lowest point of esteem in the eighteenth century. The early romantics immediately began to restore them to favour, delighting in the strongly medieval flavour of much of their verse. Pater clearly understood the fluctuation in their reputations, and writes in "Joachim du Bellay":

> The Romanticists, who in their eagerness for excitement, for strange music and imagery, went back to the works of the middle age, accepted the Pléiad too with the rest: and in that new middle age which their genius has evoked, the poetry of the Pléiad has found its place.[1]

Pater himself was in the tradition of those first "Romanticists", eager for excitement, and his two discussions of the Pléiade, in "Joachim du Bellay" (1872) and "Modernity" in Gaston (1889), helped to popularize them. That their restoration to favour was neither rapid nor total is witnessed by George Wyndham's Ronsard and La Pléiade (1906), the tone of which is quite aggressively defensive, indicating that they still had their detractors in the early twentieth century. We shall return to Wyndham's book later, and

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[1] Renaissance, 167

consider his comments on Pater's view of the Pléiade.

Early in "Joachim du Bellay" Pater discussed the mannerist style in French sixteenth century painting and architecture--his understanding of which has been considered above--and went on to state that it was closely paralleled by the literature of the period:

> In poetry, the Gothic spirit in France had produced a thousand songs; and in the Renaissance, French poetry too did but borrow something to blend with a native growth, and the poems of Ronsard, with their ingenuity, their delicately figured surfaces, their slightness, their fanciful combinations of rhyme, are but the correlative of the traceries of the house of Jacques Coeur at Bourges, or the Maison de Justice at Rouen.[1]

Pater presents Ronsard as the conscious artist who set himself a goal in general terms, and then proceeded to invent or borrow whatever techniques were necessary to the fulfillment of his purpose. In this his approach to art was the opposite of that of say, Michelangelo as Pater understood him, or the concept of the early Romantic artist drawing on "inspiration", and not quite knowing what he was doing, or why, except that he felt he had to. One is in fact reminded of Edgar Allan Poe writing "The Raven", an exercise in applied aestheticism.

> Casting about for the means of thus refining upon and saving the character of French literature, he accepted that influx of Renaissance taste,...He reinforces, he doubles the French daintiness by Italian finesse. Thereupon, nearly all the force and all the seriousness of French work disappear; only the elegance, the aerial touch, the perfect manner remain. But this elegance, this manner, this daintiness of execution are consummate, and have an unmistakable aesthetic value.[2]

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[1] Ibid, 156

[2] Ibid, 158

The classical aspect of the style of the Pléiade was more briefly dealt with, as a matter of technical rather than aesthetic interest, although of course contributing to the totally integrated whole:

> So the old French chanson, which...was often...rude and formless, became in the hands of Ronsard a Pindaric ode. He gave it structure, a sustained system, strophe and anti-strophe, and variety of metre which keep the curiosity always excited....[1]

Although Ronsard was the leader of the Pléiade, Pater entitled his 1872 essay "Joachim du Bellay". He did this not only because he considered Du Bellay's poem "A Winnower of Wheat to the Winds" the best example of the Pléiade's style, but because he saw his treatise, La Deffense et Illustration de la langue Francoyse, as a signal work of the period. He saw it as being fully as important as Pico's Heptaplus; a key document produced at a significant moment of the great and diversified intellectual awakening which was the Renaissance:

> But if anywhere the Renaissance became conscious, as a German philosopher might say, if ever it was understood as a systematic movement by those who took part in it, it is in this little book of Joachim du Bellay's, which it is impossible to read without feeling the excitement, the animation, of change, of discovery.[2]

Although Pater's claims for Du Bellay's treatise may seem somewhat excessive, it is easy to see that they are based on a solid foundation. In rediscovering the beauties and potentialities of his native tongue, Du Bellay was making a rediscovery comparable to the

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[1] Ibid, 158

[2] Ibid, 160

rediscovery of the classics made by the Italians two centuries before. The recognition of the virtues of the vernacular was a part of the process of liberating thought and art from narrow restraints, a process evident in Pico's

> Endeavours to reconcile the accounts which pagan philosophy had given of the origin of the world with the account given in the books of Moses....[1]

His description of Du Bellay's purpose makes the similarity quite clear. Both were attempts to decompartmentalise aspects of art and tradition which had been kept in sterile isolation:

> Du Bellay's object is to adjust the existing French culture to the rediscovered classical culture;...[2]

Pater quotes Du Bellay's protests against the narrow and stultifying pedantry which the purists purveyed:

> That is what these people do with all branches of culture, which they keep shut up in Greek and Latin books, not permitting one to see them otherwise, or transport them out of dead words into those which are alive, and wing their way daily through the mouths of men.[3]

Pater, quite rightly, sees this as more than an academic matter; and argues that it is a step in the direction of liberating and beautifying life:

> He recognised of what force the music and dignity of languages are, how they enter into the inmost part of things; and in pleading for the cultivation of the French language, he is pleading for no merely scholastic interest, but for freedom, impulse, reality, not in literature merely, but in daily

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[1] Renaissance, 45

[2] Ibid, 161

[3] Ibid, 161

communion of speech.[1]

This is no more than a logical application of Pater's premise that art and life are inextricable, and the quality and freedom of the one affects the quality and freedom of the other. Thus his insistence on the importance of Du Bellay's treatise is understandable.

It is interesting to note that Pater makes it quite clear a few pages later that although the Pléiade believed in the liberalization of art, they remained élitists. As with so many artistic movements, it was of no interest or value, at least at first, for the common people. Furthermore, despite Du Bellay's protests, it occasionally smacked of pedantry, but this pedantry, like Raphael's, could be excused as scholarship. On many occasions Pater had referred to the joy of scholarship as a typically Renaissance pleasure, and in this the Pléiade were like their Italian predecessors:

> It is poetry not for the people, but for a confined circle, for courtiers, great lords and erudite persons, people who desire to be humoured, to gratify a certain refined voluptuousness they have in them.. Ronsard loves, or dreams that he loves, a rare and peculiar type of beauty,..with golden hair and dark eyes. But he has the ambition not only of being a courtier and a lover, but a great scholar also;...He is just a little pedantic....[2]

Slowly and cautiously, Pater introduces the theme of necrophilia here also, in keeping perhaps with his view that the Leonardesque was the agent by which Italian Renaissance culture was transmitted to France. After observing that the poetry of the Pléiade was less serious than the art of Italy, he qualifies this

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[1] Ibid, 163

[2] Ibid, 168

with implications of a preoccupation with death:

> This eagerness for music is almost the only serious thing in the poetry of the Pléiad;...But except in this matter these poets seem never quite in earnest. The old Greek and Roman mythology, which for the great Italians had been a motive so weighty and severe, becomes with them a mere toy.[1]
>
> But they amuse themselves with wonderful elegance;..as they play, real passions insinuate themselves, and at least the reality of death;..is expressed by them with almost wearisome reiteration.[2]

In this particular instance Pater sees the lack of seriousness which the poets attempt as a reaction against their own century of violence and slaughter. He implies that although they are preoccupied with the anticipation of death, they are unable to cope with it at a serious and significant level:

> The imagery of death serves for delicate ornament, and they weave into the airy nothingness of their verses their trite reflections on the vanity of life; just as the grotesques of the charnel-house nest themselves, together with birds and flowers and the fancies of the pagan mythology, in the traceries of the architecture of that time, which wantons in its delicate arabesques with the images of old age and death.[3]

After this passage the theme of death is dropped, and Pater goes on to discuss Ronsard's deafness and its effect on his career. Significantly, however, the necrophiliac strain has not been destroyed but has been submerged only, and it is clearly present behind the continuing references to old age which follow.

Ronsard's deafness is said to have made him seem prematurely aged, and his poetry is alleged to possess the merits of the old--

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[1] Ibid, 169

[2] Ibid, 169

[3] Ibid, 170

"Grace and finish",...[1] This theme asserts itself again later, after a passage devoted to the French landscape:

> They have the love of the aged for warmth, and understand the poetry of winter;...So the fireside often appears,...and with a bonhomie as of little children, or old people.[2]

In summary, then, it can be said that in "Joachim du Bellay" Pater presents the Pléiade as selfconsciously blending French and Italian, medieval and Renaissance styles, in the manner of the artists and architects of the period. He claims that they contributed in their way to the liberalization which was one major aspect of the Renaissance, and delights in their frequent triviality because it is stylish. Finally, he perceives in their lives and writings a strong concern with death.

In the next part of this section, Pater's concept of the Pléiade as revealed by Gaston, written seventeen years later, will be examined and contrasted with that apparent in "Joachim du Bellay".

The discussion of the Pléiade in Gaston differs in scope and purpose from that in "Joachim du Bellay". Whereas that essay was written for The Renaissance with the specific purpose of illustrating the last phase of that movement; the chapter "Modernity" in Gaston attempts to present Ronsard and his poetry as they appeared to a young man of the sixteenth century. Consequently it is more obviously "appreciative" than concerned with matters of technical and historical significance. It is nonetheless valuable,

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[1] Ibid, 170

[2] Ibid, 171

though, as it goes far to explaining Ronsard's exceptional appeal for his own time. This affords Pater an opportunity to discuss "modernity": the special appeal to each generation of the art which is of its own day. Interesting as this is, it is not relevant to this thesis, which must concern itself with Pater's comprehension of the work of Ronsard, as part of the Renaissance.

The first mention of Ronsard's work in Gaston comes as a description of the book Odes, and a distinctly uneasy feeling is insinuated: "Sweet, but with something of...sickliness...."[1] The passage which follows repeats Du Bellay's objections to the conventional and stultifying nature of purist classicism, and his statement of the value of having great literature available in a living language. Read with a knowledge of the development of art since Pater's time, his evocation of the style of the Pléiade brings surrealisme to mind. For Pater's contemporaries it may have been evocative of the PreRaphaelite manner.

> It took possession of the lily in one's hand, and projecting it into a visionary distance, shed upon the beauty of the flower the soul of its beauty. Things were become at once more deeply ideal. At the touch of a wizard, something more came into the rose than its own natural blush. Occupied so closely with the visible, this new poetry had so profound an intuition of what can only be felt....[2]

But later in the same paragraph the bizarre, or unnatural tone, greatly subdued, is still evident: "The juice in the flowers, when

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[1] Gaston, 51

[2] Ibid, 54

Ronsard named them, was like wine or blood."[1]

In a passage which traces the decline of Ronsard in Gaston's estimation, in future years, Pater discusses the weaknesses of his poetry as he had not done in "Joachim du Bellay". Here he counts as faults certain distinct characteristics of the style which he had found charming seventeen years earlier. He lists the faults as

> The lapse of grace into affectation, of learning into pedantry, of exotic fineness into a trick....[2]

There is a tone of amused irony as Pater states that for the young devotee, acceptance of these faults as virtues was the sign of the initiate; and he goes on in the same vein to present the deceptive aspect of Ronsard's verse--the way in which it ignored the evil of the age to make much of its pleasures--as a service to the reader:

> It had been a lesson, a doctrine, the communication of an art,--the art of placing the pleasantly aesthetic, the welcome elements of life at an advantage, in one's view of it, till they seemed to occupy the entire surface; and he was sincerely grateful for an undeniable good service.[3]

Critics have often noted Pater's change of position from the amoral tone of the "Preface" and "Conclusion" to The Renaissance, to the stance adopted in the coda to "Style", where "good" and "great" art are distinguished. In this essay Pater asserts that to be "great", art must have significance and honesty and insight into the human condition.[4] In "Modernity" in Gaston, written one year after the essay

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[1] Ibid, 54

[2] Ibid, 55

[3] Ibid, 55

[4] Appreciations, 37-38

on "Style", he seems to be implying, indirectly, that Ronsard's poetry failed to be great, partly because it was dishonest and misleading. Perhaps even he was thinking that art which encouraged the evasion of truth could be in part responsible for the tragedies which untruth and misunderstanding give rise to. The perverse aspect of mannerism is sometimes thought to reflect social malaise: in a theory which makes art an integral part of society there is room for the idea that a blatantly superficial art, however appealing, can contribute to that malaise.

In "Modernity", as in "Joachim du Bellay", Pater mentions how the poetry of the Pléiade went through a period of neglect after the period of its greatest popularity, but he does not go on to discuss its revived popularity in the nineteenth century. In "Joachim du Bellay" Pater had referred to Ronsard's deafness, and the way in which he and his colleagues seemed to look forward regretfully to their own deaths. When he goes on, in the next section of "Modernity", to discuss the personality of Ronsard he seems to contradict some of his earlier statements and insinuations. Ronsard's pre-occupation with death is mentioned, but not his deafness--in fact he is portrayed engaging in conversations and otherwise acting as though he had all his faculties intact. It is never actually stated that he has his hearing, but no reader would gather from "Modernity" that he had lost it. (He is portrayed responding to a question asked behind his back[1]--a situation in which lip-reading would have

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[1] "At work...too busily to turn and look." Gaston, 61

been impossible!) This scene detracts somewhat from the image of Pater as the scholar-artist; one whose creative exercises were rooted in the facts of history. Only one word in this scene goes to re-affirm Pater's previous insistence on Ronsard's early aging and expectation of death: he is referred to as "prematurely aged...."[1]

In the scene of the interview between the four youths and the poet, there are numerous indirect reminders of aspects of his personality and work which had been mentioned in "Joachim du Bellay". First of all his pedantry, already mentioned in this chapter as a fault:

> Upon the cabinets,..around, were ranged the souvenirs...and... books....There was the Minerva, decreed him at a conference of the elegant, pedantic, "Jeux Floraux"....
>
> There it stood, doing duty for Our Lady, with gothic crown and a fresh sprig of consecrated box, bringing the odd, enigmatic physiognomy, preferred by the art of that day, within the sphere of religious devotion.[2]

The implied interchangeability, for Ronsard, of Our Lady and the pagan Minerva, puts him clearly in the tradition of Pico and Michelangelo, who each, in their magnum opus, sought to reconcile, if not quite equate, the pagan and Christian systems.

Pater then goes on to repeat what he had said in the 1872 essay about Ronsard's favourite female type, and brings in the reference to Janet that has been discussed above. Here he attributes to Ronsard a taste for things Italianate, quite out of keeping with Du Bellay's dislike of Rome and its associations.[3] Ronsard's love

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[1] Ibid, 61

[2] Ibid, 64

[3] Renaissance, 165

of Roman tradition is implied by the discussion of a symbolic portrait of him

> depicted appropriately, in veritable armour, with antique Roman cuirass...and flowered mantle; the crisp, ceremonial laurel-wreath of the Roman conqueror lying on the audacious, over-developed brows, above the great hooked nose of practical enterprise.[1]

Gaston was completely and willingly overwhelmed by this, but remained nonetheless sceptical:

> To Gaston, yielding himself to its influence, for a moment the scene around seemed unreal: an exotic, embalming air, escaped from some old Greek or Roman pleasure-palace,...[2]

The first point to be noticed here is that Pater, who must himself have been very conscious of the difference between the two, uses "Greek" and "Roman" in such a way as to imply that for Gaston they were interchangeable, identical. This is surely a discreet reminder of the actually very poor scholarship of the classical culture in the period of the Renaissance--a poverty which persisted into the time of Winckelmann. More significant, though, is the way in which this leads to another reminder of the morbid aspect of the Pléiade, forshadowed, perhaps, by the word "embalming" in the passage quoted above.

> In spite of his pretension to...kingly indifference of mind, the portrait of twenty years ago betrayed...the haggard soul of a haggard generation, whose eagerly-sought refinements had been after all little more than a theatrical make-believe--an age of wild people, of insane impulse, of homicidal mania.[3]

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[1] Gaston, 67

[2] Ibid, 67

[3] Ibid, 67

This sentence too can be interpreted on two levels. Not only does it stress the role of art in providing an escape amounting to self-deception for that generation; but the reference to the portrait of twenty years before giving unintended clues of depravity and dangerousness can be read as a comment on Pater's own portrait of Ronsard some seventeen years earlier. Whichever interpretation is adopted--or even if both are--Ronsard is nevertheless vindicated as far as his own purpose reached:

> Triumphant, nevertheless, in his battle for Greek beauty--for the naturalization of Greek beauty in the brown cloud-lands of the North--....[1]

The last paragraphs of "Modernity" are designed to act as an introduction to the next chapters, in which Montaigne is the central figure. The last specific mention of Ronsard is a reminder of the persistence of the Medieval influence, stressed far more in "Joachim du Bellay" than here. The guests are signalled to leave Ronsard's priory by "The striking of a rickety great bell of the Middle Age,..."[2] Just before hand the theme of death has been reintroduced, quite effectively related to just such another unfinished work as Gaston was to become:

> On his fortysixth year the unaffected melancholy of his later life was at ready gathering. The dead:--he was coming to be on their side. The fact came home to Gaston that this evocator of "the eternally youthful" was visibly old before his time; his work being done, or centered now for the most part on amendments, not invariably happy, of his earlier verse. The little panelled drawers were full of them. The poet pulled out one, and as it

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[1] Ibid, 67

[2] Ibid, 69

> stood open for a moment there lay the first book of the Franciade, in silken cover, white and gold, ready for the king's hands, but never finished.[1]

The comments on Ronsard and the Pléiade in Gaston take up all of the themes in "Joachim du Bellay", but the emphasis is different. In "Modernity" Pater stresses with a new seriousness the triviality of much of their verse, and its dangers, and continues the theme of death. Despite the vigour with which these comments are introduced--derived from the joy with which the young Gaston and his friends discovered the poetry of the Pléiade--the morbid note eventually triumphs. One cannot avoid concluding that in 1889 Pater took a more serious and concerned view of their poetry, and the age of which it was the cultural epitome, than in 1872. As he remarked, almost cynically, the sixteenth century was an age of youth in one sense only.[2]

As George Wyndham was mentioned earlier in this section, it may be appropriate to close with a consideration of his not unsympathetically approached estimate of Pater's view of the Pléiade. Although himself something of an aesthete[3], he differed from Pater in his judgement on the relative importance of the diverse influences which the poetry of the Pléiade evidences. In Ronsard and

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[1] Ibid, 69

[2] "The philosophic need to try all things had given reasonable justification to the stirring desire for travel common to youth, in which, if nothing else, that whole age of the later Renaissance was invincibly young" Gaston, 154

[3] see K. Rose, Superior Person (Weidenfeld & Nicolson London, 1969.)

La Pléiade (1906) he wrote:

> The opposite view, [to that of those who claimed that the Pléiade were basically classicists] urged tentatively by Sainte Beuve in 1828 was emphasized by Pater in his famous essay on Joachim du Bellay,...Their work, he writes, shows 'a blending of Italian ornament with the general outline of Northern design,' and exhibits 'the finest and subtlest phase of the Middle Age itself.'[1]

Wyndham goes on to describe this view as:

> Too French and complacently mediaeval, with but a top-dressing of Italian ornament. In truth their sources were manifold; to a degree in excess of both theories, taken together.[2]

He concludes this part of his essay with the statement that:

> Whilst the Pléiade did not discard the dower of mediaeval song, or condemn all their immediate predecessors, it cannot be said that they present in the main the last phase of the Middle Age, decorated with Italian ornament.[3]

Here we see Wyndham trapped, as so many of his contemporaries were, in a false position with regard to Pater's critical judgements. Because The Renaissance was Pater's most famous and controversial work they took it as a final, rather than an initial, statement. In his later references to the Pléiade in Gaston, Pater shifted his ground on the very matter which Wyndham sees as the flaw in his appreciation of their poetry. He distinctly emphasizes the classical aspects of their work, rather than those derived from medieval sources.

Many harsh judgements of Pater as a critic would be softened considerably if his later books were more widely read. In dealing

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[1] Wyndham, Op Cit, 23

[2] Ibid, 23

[3] Ibid, 26

with the Pléiade, as well as many other artists, he modified his initial statements after longer consideration. The reader who looks at Gaston as carefully as at The Renaissance will see that he reached a fair and balanced estimate of the achievement and significance of the Pléiade, which is substantially in accordance with that of the best informed modern critics. Classical and medieval, perverse and joyful, they expressed for posterity the fascinating strengths and tragic flaws of the French sixteenth century Renaissance.

Montaigne, and Bruno

Michel de Montaigne (1533-92), the inventor of the personal essay as a literary genre, is a personality who makes a brief appearance in many of Pater's books, and is discussed at length in Gaston de Latour. His first appearance in Pater's writings is in "Joachim du Bellay", (1872) where he is cited as an exemplar of that intimacy which Pater saw as characteristic of sixteenth century France.

Writing of the interest of Du Bellay's poetry, Pater asserted that it came not merely from the insight it provided into the period, but also from:

> Something individual, inventive, unique, the impress there of the writer's own temper and personality.[1] That age had other instances of this intimacy of sentiment: Montaigne's Essays are full of it....[2]

In his first reference to Montaigne, Pater thus referred to the

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[1] Renaissance, 173

[2] Ibid, 173

characteristic which has maintained the popularity of his work over the centuries. Whatever the ostensible subject, Montaigne wrote of his own feelings, and gave the world one of the most honest, uncensored and engaging personal testaments of all time. His essays are of interest primarily because they reveal to the reader a fascinating personality.

Montaigne was not mentioned again in The Renaissance, and there was no cause for him to appear in Marius the Epicurean, but he appears in Appreciations in the essay "Sir Thomas Browne", where he is in the company of another whose memory has survived, not so much because of his opinions, but because of the personality they reveal. What Pater says here of Browne clearly applies also to Montaigne:

> Hardly aware of the habit, he likes talking to himself; and when he writes (still in undress) he does but take the "friendly reader" into his confidence. The type of this literature, obviously, is not Locke or Gibbon, but, above all others, Sir Thomas Browne; as Jean Paul is always a good instance of it in French literature...is Montaigne, from whom indeed, in a great measure, all those tentative writers, or essayists, derive.[1]

This passage describes well the personal effect of the style pioneered by Montaigne, and acknowledges his place as the founder of the essay. We are reminded that the verb essayer had not been applied to literature before the writings of Montaigne. The use of the alias "tentative writers" is strongly evocative of Pater's own practice in attempting to resolve apparent dilemmas, and the following passage also makes us think of Pater, whose own personality is

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[1] Appreciations, 125

so clearly behind his essays:

> It was a result, perhaps, of the individualism and liberty of personal development, which, even for a Roman Catholic, were effects of the Reformation, that there was so much in Montaigne of the "subjective", as people say, of the singularities of personal character. Browne, too, bookish as he really is claims to give his readers a matter, "not picked from the leaves of any author, but bred among the weeds and tares" of his own brain.[1]

What follows can almost be read as an apology or justification by Pater for his own style. Even if it was not intended as such, it is a reply to many of his harshest and least sympathetic critics:

> The faults of such literature are what we all recognise in it: unevenness, alike in thought and style; lack of design; and caprice--the lack of authority; after the full play of which, there is much to refresh one in the reasonable transparency of...a classical clearness....But then, in recompense for that looseness and whim,..we have in those "quaint" writers, as they themselves understood the term (coint, adorned, but adorned with all the curious ornaments of their own predilection, provincial or archaic, certainly unfamiliar, and selected without reference to the taste and usages of other people)[2] the charm of an absolute sincerity, with all the ingenuous and racy effect of what is circumstantial and peculiar in their growth.[3]

This reference to Montaigne is preceeded in Appreciations by another which was in fact written two years later. It occurs in the essay "Style", (1888) and is perhaps an oblique comment on the obscurity of Montaigne's argument in some passages of some editions of his Essays:

A scholar writing for the scholarly, he will of course leave

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[1] Ibid, 125

[2] This description is reminiscent of mannerist architecture.

[3] Appreciations, 126

> something to the willing intelligence of his reader. "To go preach to the first passer-by," says Montaigne, "to become tutor to the ignorance of the first I meet, is a thing I abhor;" a thing, in fact, naturally distressing to the scholar, who will therefore ever be shy of offering uncomplimentary assistance to the reader's wit.[1]

Modern textual scholars have traced many of Montaigne's obscurities to alterations and interpolations he made in the essays years after they were first written, and it seems that they were the result of a desire to incorporate somewhere or other every passage, however short or isolated, that he composed; rather than a desire to flatter or extend the reader by not making his path too easy. Pater's assumption was not, however, an unreasonable one, although it is a less significant critical comment than those in "Sir Thomas Browne".

Throughout this thesis it has been shown that many of Pater's comments on Renaissance figures have been almost hidden by their context, or underemphasized by their phrasing; and have had to be extracted and examined carefully before their full importance has been apparent. This aspect of Pater's style has been widely recognised, and usually attributed to his shyness. Kenneth Clark wrote: "Pater's natural timidity did not equip him for the role of initiator."[2] Pater's comments in "Style" provide another explanation--perhaps he felt that to be too obvious in one's meaning was to insult and underestimate the perceptiveness of the reader. Certainly his

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[1] Ibid, 17

[2] K.Clark, Op Cit, 17

comments on Montaigne apply to himself, for he, like Montaigne, wrote of himself and his own responses whatever the ostensible subject. On the other hand, we can accept the idea that his timidity explains the reticent expression of many of his most original ideas, and interpret the passage from "Style" as a rationalization evolved when he became aware that his readers noticed his reticence.[1]

It was in Gaston (1889) that Pater dealt most fully with Montaigne, who is first mentioned in that book by Ronsard, with whom he had shared the friendship of Etienne de la Boétie. The chapters "Peach-Blossom and Wine" and "Suspended Judgment" are devoted almost wholly to Montaigne, who thus comes to dominate the book in its unfinished form.

Montaigne is presented first as one whose work, although by no means old-fashioned, served retrospectively to explain and justify a major aspect of the Renaissance--the liberation of the human spirit from the restraints of Church-dominated medieval morality. Pater's explanation of this role of Montaigne reminds the reader less of the immediately past High Renaissance, than of the earliest phase of the movement, the twelfth century proto-Renaissance. This is of course in keeping with his dictum that the Renaissance both began and concluded in France:

> In those earlier days of the Renaissance, a whole generation had been exactly in the position in which Gaston now found himself. An older ideal moral and religious, certain theories of man and

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[1] In "Symonds" he refers to "The quality of reserve,..so indispensable to the full effect of all artistic means,.." Uncollected Essays, 11

> nature actually in possession, still haunted humanity, at the very moment when it was called, through a full knowledge of the past, to enjoy the present with an unrestricted expansion of its own capacities.--Might one enjoy? Might one eat of all the trees? --Some had already eaten, and needed, retrospectively, a theoretic justification, a sanction of their actual liberties, in some new reading of human nature itself and in relation to the world around it.[1]

Having given this account of the niche in the Renaissance into which Montaigne's work fits, Pater spends the rest of the chapter portraying Montaigne the man as he appeared to Gaston. In the next chapter he sets forth and discusses the basis of his thought and writings. This imaginative recreation of Montaigne, and the exposition of his intellectual framework, is one of the best studies Pater made of any writer or artist. With the intimate Essays as his guide he was able to produce a living portrait which testifies to the strong sympathy he felt with Montaigne. Like Pico della Mirandola and Raphael, Montaigne appeared to Pater as a type of the "scholar-artist", but he was even more attractive than they because his basic subject was always himself. It is becoming clear that in many contexts, Pater was really writing about himself and his feelings. He did not do this as frankly as Montaigne, and perhaps this led him to admire Montaigne for his greater daring.

> But beyond and above all the various interests upon which the philosopher's mind was for ever afloat, there was one subject always in prominence--himself. His minute peculiarities, mental and physical, what was constitutional with him as well as his transient humours, how things affected him, what they really were to him.[2]

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[1] Gaston, 83

[2] Ibid, 105

Expanding on this, Pater echoes both the "Preface" and the "Conclusion" of The Renaissance, in which he insisted upon each individual's apprehension of what he experienced as the only sure knowledge. Overlooking, to some extent, Montaigne's dependence upon classical authors, he makes him a precedent for his own aesthetic theory. The flux of Heraclitus is referred to, but not specifically identified, or acknowledged as a common source.

> And what was the purport, what the justification, of this undissembled egotism? It was the recognition, over against, or in continuation of, that world of floating doubt, of the individual mind, as for each one severally, at once the unique organ, and the only matter, of knowledge,--the wonderful energy, the reality and authority of that, in its absolute loneliness, conforming all things to its law, without witnesses as without judge, without appeal, save to itself.[1]

Pater goes on to claim that this basic standpoint, common to Montaigne and himself, is in fact the only true or honest point of view:

> Whatever truth there might be, must come for each one from within, not from without.
> His own egotism was but the pattern of the true intellectual life of every one.[2]

Pater's especial interest in Montaigne can thus be related basically to his pleasure in finding a famous author whose standpoint was close to his own in many respects. That, in Gaston, he examined first of all Montaigne's personality, and later his works, is in keeping with Montaigne's projection of himself; as well as with Pater's own dominant interest in the personality behind the works in

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[1] Ibid, 105

[2] Ibid, 106

the case of most artists.

Pater writes with admiration of Montaigne's strict neutrality during the religious wars, evidenced by the fact that although he was a Catholic "His house had lain open to all comers...."[1] In the essay on Leonardo, Pater seems to have admired Leonardo's indifference to political matters, even where they involved moral issues, as he no doubt saw this posture as an aspect of the fidelity to one's own personal interests, which he was celebrating in that essay. Of Leonardo, Pater wrote:

> No one had ever carried political indifferentism farther; it had always been his philosophy to "fly before the storm", he is for the Sforzas, or against them, as the tide of their fortune turns.[2]

Montaigne's solution to the problem of how a man, whose world is that of the intellect, is to survive in a violent and barbarous era is far more positive and honest than Leonardo's. Instead of drifting with the tide, and pretending to condone the position and actions of the currently successful party, Montaigne made something positive of his neutrality and took his stand on his own known independence and integrity. It seems as though, in Montaigne, the mature Pater found a more pleasing hero than Leonardo, whose attitudes he had characterized with more concern for effect than accuracy, twenty years before. Whereas Leonardo had been upset in his plans and his work by the insecurity caused by his changeful loyalties, Montaigne found "That his frankness had been rewarded by immunity from all outrages of war, of the

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[1] Ibid, 84

[2] Renaissance, 127

crime war shelters...."[1]

The attitudes of Leonardo and Montaigne, as Pater presents them, compare interestingly on the subject of religion, as well as on survival in wartime. It has been seen that Pater began the essay on da Vinci with an attempt to imply that he was irreligious. He ended the essay with an almost scathing comment on the bequests he made for church candles and masses for the repose of his soul, saying dismissively: "On no theory of religion could these hurried offices be of much consequence."[2] Montaigne's often apparently ambivalent attitude towards religion was given much more serious consideration in Gaston than Leonardo's had been in The Renaissance. He describes Montaigne's death with the words "seemingly pious"[3], which could have been applied to Leonardo's will; but, through Gaston, applies a more pragmatic and more charitable interpretation:

> Yet when Gaston, twenty years afterwards, heard of the seemingly pious end of Monsieur de Montaigne, he recalled a hundred, always quiet but not always insignificant, acts of devotion, noticeable in those old days, on passing a village church, or at home, in the little chapel--superstitions, concessions to other, strictly appropriate recognitions rather, as it might seem, of a certain great possibility, which might lie among the conditions of so complex a world.[4]

This description of Montaigne's attitude towards churches and religious ritual tallies with those we have of Pater's attitude in his later years. It is interesting to notice that it took Gaston

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[1] Gaston, 84

[2] Renaissance, 128

[3] Gaston, 112

[4] Ibid, 113

twenty years to realize the significance of religious attitudes in a man unsure of the absolute truth of religion--exactly the time between "Leonardo da Vinci" and Gaston . In the twenty years between 1869 and 1889 Pater's attitude towards religion changed from the cynical to the apparently pious; from the attitude he gleefully tried to attribute to Leonardo, to that which he perceived in Montaigne. It does seem that part of his interest in Montaigne in later years may have derived from the example set by Montaigne of sober piety while retaining an open mind.

Many other aspects of Montaigne's personality mentioned by Pater are qualities which they shared, or perhaps in some cases which Pater would like them to have shared. Like Pico, Montaigne was a personality who embodied many of Pater's wishes and fantasies as well as many of his actual characteristics. For Pater, ever an admirer of youth, conscious of his own aging, the continually youthful figure of Montaigne was most attractive:

> Sociable, of sociable intellect, and still inclining instinctively, as became his fresh and agreeable person, from the midway of life, towards its youthful side, he was ever on the alert....[1]

Montaigne's method of evolving his essays is also similar to Pater's. We are told, Pater collected phrases and ideas which appealed to him on scraps of paper, and later fused them together with a deliberate "style". Similarly Montaigne worked up his essays:

> Notes of expressive facts, of words also worth of note (for he was a lover of style), collected in the first instance for the help of an irregular memory, were becoming...the primary, rude

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[1] Ibid, 85

stuff, or "protoplasm", of his intended work,...[1]

Not only in the way he produced his own work, but in the way he appreciated the literature of the past, Montaigne is made, in Pater's picture of him, like Pater himself. He clearly saw Montaigne in the humanist tradition of Pico, of which he felt himself to be part also. Montaigne is presented as approaching the literature of the past not as a fixed order but a source of quite mixed experiences. In his attitude to life, similarly, Pater saw Montaigne as providing a precedent for his own position. In the last analysis, the experience of life itself, unfolding as a continuing spectacle, was superior to art. There is, however, a modification in Gaston of the position of the notorious "Conclusion", which had urged that life be approached in the spirit of art. Pater had come to feel that there was something not quite satisfactory in the posture of the observer looking for aesthetic and other gratification in the events of the world. He claimed to detect this feeling in Montaigne's later writings, works he produced in the years around his fiftieth birthday, when he was the same age as Pater at the time Gaston was written. It seems that perhaps at the period of his own maturity, Pater sought an historical figure of comparable age with whom he could identify, as much as a youthful personality of mature mind like Raphael.

> Towards the end of life some conscientious pangs seem to have touched Montaigne's singularly humane and sensitive spirit, when he looked back on the long intellectual entertainment he

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[1] Ibid, 86

> had had, in following, as an inactive spectator, "the ruin of his country", through a series of chapters,...With its old and new battlefields, its business, its fierce changes, and the old perennial sameness of men's ways beneath them all, it had been certainly matter of more assiduous reading than even those choice, incommensurable, books, of ancient Greek and Roman experience. The variableness, the complexity, the miraculous surprises of man, concurrent with the variety, the complexity, the surprises of nature, making all true knowledge of either wholly relative and provisional; a like insecurity in one's self, if one turned thither for some ray of clear and certain evidence; this, with an equally strong sense all the time of the interest, the power and charm, alike of man and nature and the individual mind;--such was the sense of this open book, of all books and things.[1]

The slightly uneasy note is again apparent in the closing sentence of this passage; and it is again tempting to see Gaston as a persona of Pater:

> That was what this quietly enthusiastic reader was ready to assert as the sum of his studies; disturbingly, as Gaston found, reflecting on his long unsuspicious sojourn there, and detaching from the habits, the random traits of character, his concessions and hints and sudden emphatic statements, the soul and potency of the man.[2]

The chapter "Suspended Judgment", as its title implies, is concerned mainly with the basis and consequences of Montaigne's view of life; which, as has been seen, is presented quite accurately by Pater, in such a way that its compatability with his own mature view is emphasized. The passages quoted above suggest that Pater was using the youthful Gaston, the mature Gaston, and Montaigne to explain and illuminate some of the changes in his own thinking which had occurred between the writing of his first essays and Gaston.

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[1] Gaston, 89

[2] Ibid, 89

Although "Suspended Judgment" provides fewer clues to the reason for Pater's exceptional interest in Montaigne than "Peach-Blossom and Wine", it deals at some length, if obscurely, with one thing which may have been the major factor--Montaigne's latent homosexuality. By the time he wrote Gaston, Pater had abandoned, almost totally, the habit of openly sniping at conventional morality and expressing delight in the thought of sexual irregularities, which had lost him friends and caused him trouble in the years around 1873. Montaigne was almost certainly not a practising homosexual, and was a married man with children who enjoyed the respect of his community. Nonetheless there are hints of purely latent and doubtless unrecognised homosexual--or bisexual--leanings in his writing. He was, therefore, an excellent subject for allowing Pater to express his similar leanings while remaining beyond reproach, if not above suspicion.

Gaston had been introduced to Montaigne by Ronsard, who had spoken of a mutual friend: "Linked they were, in the common friendship of the late Etienne de la Boétie yonder!"[1] In "Suspended Judgment" this intense friendship is discussed at length, and Pater quotes from Montaigne's references to Etienne. In comparison with this passage, Pater's references to Montaigne's wife appear perfunctory and almost slighting. "The amiable, unpedantic, lady...."[2] clearly could not compete, at least in Pater's mind, with the

Incomparable Etienne de la Boétie, so perfect, inviolate and

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[1] Ibid, 69

[2] Ibid, 90

entire, that the like is hardly to be found in story,...[1]

Pater, quite accurately, presents Montaigne's friendship with Etienne as the greatest passion of his life, the only attachment which caused him to stray from his relativistic point of view:

> For once, his sleepless habit of analysis had been checked by the inexplicable, the absolute; amid his jealously guarded indifference of soul he had been summoned to yield, and had yielded, to the magnetic power of another.
> It had been better than love,--that friendship!...[2]

Quoting phrases from Montaigne's Essays, Pater went on:

> The "sweet society" of those four years, in comparison with which the rest of his so pleasant life "was but smoke", had touched Montaigne's nature with refinements it might otherwise have lacked. He would have wished "to speak concerning it, to those who have had experience" of what he said, could such have been found. In despair of that, he loved to discourse of it to all comers,--how it had come about, the circumstances of its sudden and wonderful growth. Yet after all were he pressed to say why he had so loved Etienne de la Boétie, he could but answer, "Because it was He! Because it was I!"[3]

Whereas Pater, anxious to avoid censure, left it to the reader to recognise the nature of this "special friendship", more recent writers have been able to state the matter more directly. In The Other Face of Love de Becker wrote:

> It would certainly be going too far to attribute to Montaigne any conscious homosexual leanings, or even more so, any homosexual practices. But it would be naive nonetheless to overlook in his conception of friendship...the expression, controlled or sublimated, if not repressed, of a personality structure of which homosexuality is the evident expression. Although Montaigne's friendship for La Boétie was virtuous...there was nonetheless a passionate character about this friendship which places it in the

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[1] Ibid, 98

[2] Ibid, 99

[3] Gaston, 100

> same line as the dubious friendships of Antiquity,..and no psychologists can be deceived by it.[1]

As has been observed, there are several occasions in Gaston where Pater expresses a muted uneasiness; sometimes voicing it in the retrospective thoughts of the mature Gaston. This slight hint that all may not be quite as healthy as could be desired in the life and writings of Montaigne does not, however, appear to be linked with Montaigne's latent homosexual tendencies, but rather with other traps which may ensnare one who takes too detached a view of the world. At one point, Montaigne's disinterested interest in the ruin of his country becomes reminiscent of Aurelius' attitude towards the slaughter of the Roman Circus, for which Pater censured him in Marius.[2]

In the 1894 essay on Pascal, in which Pater compares Pascal and Montaigne at some length, there occurs his strongest expression of discomfort with some of Montaigne's views. In words similar to those often used by harsh critics of the "Conclusion" to The Renaissance, Pater says of Pascal:

> You may even credit him, like Montaigne, with a somewhat Satanic intimacy with the ways, the cruel ways, the weakness, lâcheté of the human heart, so that, as he says of Montaigne, himself too might be a pernicious study for those who have a native tendency to corruption.[3]

The exact nature of the weaknesses, cruelties, and corruption in question is not specified, and this is probably not so much the result of

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[1] de Becker, Op Cit, 117

[2] Marius I., 241

[3] Miscellaneous Studies, 85

prudish caution, as the wish that the general nature of the statement should render it all-inclusive.

Most of the comments in "Pascal" echo Gaston, and this is true also of most of the references to Montaigne in Plato and Platonism (1893). Two comments from that book are especially worthy of quotation, as they show that Pater's characterisation of Montaigne's role in the Renaissance remained constant in different contexts.

> Strictly appropriate form of our modern philosophic literature, the essay came into use at what was really the invention of the relative, or "modern" spirit, in the Renaissance of the sixteenth century.
>
> The form of the essay...is indicative of Montaigne's peculiar function in regard to his age, as in truth the commencement of our own. It provided him with precisely the literary form necessary to a mind for which truth itself is but a possibility....[1]

Earlier in the book Pater had referred to Montaigne as "the great humanist..."[2] and cited his role as one who produced for men "an à posteriori justification of their instinctive prepossessions"[3] For Pater, Montaigne's main role was as the one who most significantly and deliberately explained and justified the new freedom of the Renaissance.

In summary, it can be said that there were many reasons why Pater found the figure of Montaigne so attractive. Not only did he satisfy Pater's desire for historical and artistic precedents

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[1] Plato and Platonism, 175

[2] Ibid, 81

[3] Ibid, 81

for his own views, but he did so while fulfilling one of Pater's most constant needs--the need for a personality with whom he could proudly identify himself. The fact that he revealed certain tendencies which Pater also felt in himself, made him all the more attractive and sympathetic a figure.

It has been shown that the basis of Montaigne's view of life seemed to Pater entirely compatible with his own. Both were based on a recognition that the experience of the individual is all that he really knows, that that experience is not finally verifiable by any outside test, and that therefore personality is the basis of all art and other human activity. Pater saw in Montaigne that same almost narcissistic self-interest, the consequence of the belief in the primacy of one's own experience, that was part of his own make-up.

Most significant of all, though, was the fact that Montaigne, with his profound good sense and honesty, stated these views with the integrity and maturity which Pater desired now that he had matured beyond the self-consciously "daring" and "shocking" young man that he was when he wrote such essays as "Leonardo da Vinci". As a younger man, Pater's views and temperament had led him into positions, both intellectual and social, which were unworthy and embarassing. By the time he was writing Gaston, at the age of fifty, he was seeking more subdued and mature expressions of these same views, and Montaigne satisfied this need. Unlike the younger Pater, but like the author of Gaston, Montaigne, while holding unconventional and sceptical views, was able to present them in a

manner which commanded respect and attention, rather than provoking a shocked response.

Just as Marius had been written to explain, clarify, and defuse some of the issues raised by The Renaissance, so, to some extent, was Gaston. It was, like all Pater's later works, written in the knowledge that The Renaissance was the basis of Pater's reputation. In an effort to justify some of his earlier excesses, Pater uses the young impressionable Gaston as a foil to the mature Montaigne, and also refers to afterthoughts and reconsiderations made by Gaston in later years. Thus a complex arrangement is evolved in which the impressions of the young Gaston, and the thoughts of Montaigne and the mature Gaston, symbolize and comment upon the thoughts of the young Pater and the mature Pater, respectively. It is to Pater's credit that this section of Gaston manages to be an excellent study of Montaigne while fulfilling its role as a piece of self-analysis and self-justification. Few writers have successfully handled so complex a piece of criticism-cum-autobiography.

Because of the similarity of their ideas in a number of significant areas, it is appropriate to consider Giordano Bruno and Montaigne in close proximity. Bruno, despite the invigorating role his ideas played in the sixteenth century, tends to be remembered as a dull, pedantic and humourless figure. His reputation, unlike Montaigne's, has survived despite, not because of, his personality. Their contemporaries regarded Montaigne and Bruno much as modern scholars do : Bruno the more profound thinker, Montaigne the better

writer--the two men so close in their ideas about perception and knowledge but so dissimilar in character. Bruno was as unpopular as Montaigne was respected.

Certainly Pater found Bruno a less interesting figure than Montaigne, and devoted far less of his writings to him. The 1866 essay "Coleridge's Writings", in its original form mentions Bruno once. In referring to the old charge that Schelling had been guilty of unacknowledged borrowing from Bruno, and thus that certain elements of Coleridge's theories derived from Bruno, Pater observed:

> Certainly that which is common to Coleridge and Schelling is of far earlier origin than the Renaissance.[1]

When he revised the essay in 1880, Pater made a number of alterations, which softened the original anti-Christian tone. He also made a slight alteration to the clause quoted above:

> Certainly that which is common to Coleridge and Schelling and Bruno alike is of far earlier origin than any of them.[2]

There is a small change of meaning here. In the revised version the fact that all three writers were dependent upon ancient philosophy is emphasized; whereas in the original version, where Bruno is not mentioned, there is consequently no explicit statement about his reliance on older ideas. Furthermore, the grouping of the three names provides a reminder that, for Pater, the sixteenth century

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[1] "Coleridge's Writings", Nineteenth Century English Critical Essays, ed Jones, Oxford, 1963, 437

[2] Appreciations, 75

began the modern age; for then such men as Bruno preached the concept of "the relative spirit".

In the revised version of "Coleridge" Bruno is mentioned again a few pages later. This passage further stresses the continuity of the influence of ancient philosophy:

> Still, wherever the speculative interest has been united with a certain poetic inwardness of temperament, as in Bruno, in Schelling, there that old Greek conception, like some seed floating in the air, has taken root and sprung up anew.[1]

Pater made no further references to Bruno until he produced, in 1889, the essay "Giordano Bruno", which was recast as "The Lower Pantheism", chapter seven of Gaston. It is interesting to see Pater dealing at length with a subject who had made so few appearances in his earlier writings. Perhaps his interest in Bruno, obviously slight until that time, had been roused by the considerable publicity given to the erection of a statue on the site of his martyrdom, in 1889.

The presentation of Bruno's ideas--understandably little is said about his personality,--in Gaston resounds with echoes of Montaigne. Not being interested in Bruno's cosmology as much as in his attitudes to perception and the senses, and his stand for philosophical freedom, Pater inevitably concentrates on just those aspects of his thought which most clearly evoke Montaigne. The consequence of this is that the reader may be led to underestimate Bruno's importance in the scientific world of his day, and thus

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[1] Ibid, 77

envisage him as an intellectual figure of the second or third rather than the first rank.

The chapter "The Lower Pantheism" begins with a rather morbid series of references to murder, fanaticism, insanity, disease and blood. King Charles' death leads to anecdotes being told of his life, and the uneasy note is sustained by a mention of his interest in

> The cities of Venice and Lombardy, seductive schools of the art of life as conceived by Italian epicures, of which he became only too ready a student.[1]

The late King's interest in Italian pleasures leads on to a mention of the Italian Bishop of Paris, and then to the Italian philosopher Bruno. The reader expects the worse, for here, in contrast to those passages where Pater had spoken of Italian delicacy being a gift to France, the Italian influence seems far from happy:

> It was the reign of the Italians just then, a doubly refined, somewhat morbid, somewhat ash-coloured, Italy in France, more Italian still.[2]

Further contradicting what he had written in other essays about the aesthetically-pleasing crimes and sins of the Renaissance, Pater went on:

> What our Elisabethan poets imagined about Italian culture--forcing all they knew of Italy to an ideal of dainty sin such as had never actually existed there,--that the court of Henry, so far as in it lay, realised in fact.[3]

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[1] Gaston, 136

[2] Ibid, 138

[3] Ibid, 138

Against this background, the chaste life of Bruno becomes representative of austerity, and he a type of the scholar-artist whose love is all for his work. He, although unattractive, is cast in the tradition of Pico in this respect; and historians of philosophy would not dispute this placing.[1] Pater mentions that Bruno found that "The monastic life promotes the freedom of the intellect by its silence and selfconcentration."[2] He supports this with other examples:

> What liberty of mind may really come to, in such places, what daring new departures it may suggest even to the strictly monastic temper, is exemplified by the dubious and dangerous mysticism of men like John of Parma and Joachim of Flora,.. strange dreamers, in a world of sanctified rhetoric, of that later dispensation of the Spirit, in which all law will have passed away;...[3]

Whereas Pico had attempted the reconciliation of Christianity with the pagan religion, and Montaigne, a seemingly devout Catholic, had claimed to make allowance for all possibilities, Bruno tried to create a system in which pagan freedom was permissible even to Christians. Unlike his predecessors, he was unable to do this without arousing hostility:

> He would soon pass beyond the utmost possible limits of his brethren's sympathy, beyond the largest and freest interpretation such words would bear, to words and thoughts on an altogether different plane, of which the full scope was only to be felt in certain old pagan writers,--pagan, though approached, perhaps, at first, as having a kind of natural, preparatory, kinship with Scripture itself.[4]

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[1] see W. Windelband, History of Philosophy II, Harper, New York, 1958, 354

[2] Gaston, 139

[3] Ibid, 140

[4] Ibid, 140

Bruno's Pantheism, asserting that as God is in, and in fact is, all things, therefore nothing can be utterly evil if seen in the context of the whole universe, comes in Pater's description to resemble the creed of Montaigne, based on the less expansive principle that tolerance is always desirable, as we can never judge absolutely. As if the similarities of the thoughts of the two men would not be obvious without comment, Pater goes on, it seems deliberately, to discuss Bruno in phrases which recall his discussion of Montaigne. The most blatant instance of this technique in application is the following, which echoes the passage from "Peach Blossom and Wine" quoted above:

> Even under the shadow of monastic walls, that [the non-existance of evil] had sometimes been the precept, which larger theories of "inspiration" had bequeathed to practice. "Of all the trees of the garden thou mayest freely eat!--If ye take up any deadly thing, it shall not hurt you!..."[1]

Pater saw Montaigne as providing the <u>à posteriori</u> justification for the expansion of the human spirit and the increased liberty of human behaviour which had begun with the rebellion of Abelard in the late medieval period. Bruno, for Pater's purposes, was little more than one who provided the same justification from different grounds, but it is interesting to see that in writing about Bruno he stressed the dangers of this justification very heavily. From the point of view of "Two Early French Stories" in 1872, his mind full of the stultifying and repressive effect of the tyranny of religion in the middle ages, he welcomed this increase in

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[1] Ibid, 160

human liberty, and clearly delighted that Abelard had practised a new freedom. In the discussion of Montaigne, he had expressed a small measure of uneasiness; but when he wrote of Bruno his uneasiness was loudly voiced. It seems hypocrisy to welcome a justification of greater human freedom, but to balk at its application to life, but Pater clearly does this in "The Lower Pantheism". Absurdity is added to hypocrisy when it is recognised that the justification comes four centuries after the practice, and is thus of academic interest only, a reminder that events often move ahead of ideas. Nevertheless, the concluding passage of "The Lower Pantheism" is clear in expressing this hypocritical and absurd concern; and can be seen as indicative of the lengths to which Pater was prepared to go, in 1889, to keep himself clear of the kind of accusations he had suffered in 1873:[1]

> Bruno, a citizen of the world,..was careful to warn off the vulgar from applying the decisions of philosophy beyond its proper speculative limits. But a kind of secrecy, an ambiguous atmosphere, encompassed, from the first, alike the speaker and the doctrine; and in that world of fluctuating and ambiguous characters, the alerter mind certainly, pondering on this,..would hardly fail to find in Bruno's doctrines a method of turning poison into food, to live and thrive thereon; an art, in Paris, in the intellectual and moral condition of that day, hardly less opportune than had it related to physical poisons.[2]

At this point Pater begins to differentiate, not only between philosophy and life, but between art and life. The aesthetic implications of this passage are most interesting. As we have seen,

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[1] In the same cautious mood, in 1890, he reviewed Wilde's Picture of Dorian Gray.

[2] Gaston, 160

Pater has simultaneously admitted that the justifications furnished by Montaigne and Bruno were a posteriori, and expressed concern at their being applied. In the last part of this passage, he seems to be stating that although there are separate sets of moral laws for art (including philosophy) and life, and that what is permissible in the one sphere may not be in the other, the two inevitably do and will merge for most people, even most intelligent and sensitive people. The implication seems to be that art and life cannot be kept apart and independent, even though it would be convenient if they could be. Ostensibly disturbed, although perhaps secretly stimulated, by the interchange of permissiveness between art and life; Pater is effectively accusing those who maintain the extreme position of the total separability of art and life of naiveté. This is in keeping with the aesthetic of the essay on Style, in which good art and great art are distinguished by their significance for humanity, and is a repudiation of the view, which many thought they discerned in The Renaissance, that morality and art were immiscible. In fact, it is in keeping with Pater's belief that art always related to society and general culture, which we have seen evidenced many times. The ending of "The Lower Pantheism" is a warning to those who carelessly and too glibly equate art and life; as much as a dissention from the view that they never meet:

> If Bruno himself was cautious not to suggest the ethic or practical equivalent to his theoretic positions, there was that in his very manner of speech, in that rank, unweeded eloquence of his, which seemed naturally to discourage any effort at selection, any sense of fine difference, of nuances or proportion, in things. The loose sympathies of his genius were allied

> to nature, nursing, with equable maternity of soul, good, bad, and indifferent alike, rather than to art, distinguishing, rejecting, refining. Commission and omission': sins of the former surely had the natural preference. And how would Paolo and Francesca have read this lesson? How would Henry, and Margaret of the "Memoirs", and other susceptible persons then present, read it, especially if the opposition between practical good and evil traversed diametrically another distinction, the "opposed point" of which, to Gaston for instance, could never by any possibility become "indifferent,"--the distinction, namely, between the precious and the base, aesthetically; between what was right and wrong in the matter of art?[1]

Like Montaigne, Bruno was used by Pater as a vehicle for self-justification, if not quite for autobiography. In Pater's hands he fared less well than Montaigne, and his ideas, although in fact more original and rigorous than Montaigne's, seem to be swallowed up in his. This is simply a result of Pater's determination to use him as an anvil on which his own ideas were to be hammered out, not the sign of ignorance or deliberate distortion on Pater's part. Bruno got less thorough treatment, finally, because he did not appeal to Pater as strongly as Montaigne. Because of the similarities he either perceived or liked to imagine between himself and Montaigne, Pater made him a hero; but Bruno, with whom Pater could not identify so deeply, failed to be granted that status. Perhaps, also, Pater preferred to identify himself with one who held the respect of others, despite his individual views, rather than with one who was martyred for his heresy. Pater could never have faced up to such a sacrifice for his opinions; he sought respect and acceptance, despite the danger of equivocation and blandness.

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[1] Ibid, 161

Italian Art of the Sixteenth Century

Pater's treatment of Italian sixteenth century painting is superficially reminiscent of his treatment of the art of the quattrocento. Large numbers of painters, both of considerable importance and of no significance, are mentioned but once or twice in passing. Pater made no attempt to provide a comprehensive coverage of sixteenth century art; and although several major figures are discussed at some length, none is treated with the thoroughness and interest that distinguish the essays on the three High Renaissance giants. Apart from all the scattered comments in various contexts, two essays contain most of the criticism Pater devoted to the period of Italian mannerism: "The School of Giorgione" (1877), and "Art Notes in North Italy" (1890). Until the essay on Giorgione was included in the third (1888) edition of The Renaissance, the book contained one reference to Titian[1] as its total acknowledgement of mannerism in Italy. The fact that Pater allowed it to be published with so large a gap indicates that he, especially when younger, tended to underestimate the significance of post-High Renaissance art. His practice in this respect is in keeping with his theory--he several times proclaimed that the last phase of the Renaissance took place in France, and that its focus shifted there with da Vinci. Over the years, Pater's realization of the importance of what had been done in sixteenth century Italy increased, and this late recognition was acknowledged by the appearance of "Art Notes in North

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[1] Renaissance, 75-77

Italy" in 1890; but it seems clear that he never ceased to prefer French mannerism to its Italian counterpart.

Sixteenth century France was not productive of painting of great importance, but expressed itself in poetry, architecture, and prose. In Italy painting held first place among the arts as it had done for the past two centuries, and architecture also was exalted. Apart from Bruno, there were few writers and thinkers of great note; and in concluding these introductory remarks it can be observed that it seems strange indeed that Pater ignored one of that few--Baldassare Castiglione, the educator who sought to teach well-born young men to make an art of their way of life. Castiglione, who in chronological terms, could have equally well been considered in essays on the High Renaissance, even though his influence was most strongly felt later in the century, seems to be a figure who would have appealed to Pater, and with whom he would have identified. An essay on Castiglione by Pater would almost certainly have been a success, and we can only regret that none was ever written.

Among the less significant Italian sixteenth century artists mentioned by Pater are Borgognone, Domenico de Lucca, Fra Damiano of Bergamo, Pellegrino da San Daniele, and the Piazza family; and it must be admitted that he seems to make few extravagant claims for them. Here, at least, he is being more careful, or, in retrospect, has been luckier, than in his handling of early Renaissance artists; for, as was shown in chapter three above, he seriously overestimated several nonentities from that period. On the other hand, it could be argued that Pater's failure to be overenthused by any minor figures

of the sixteenth century Italian art world is merely a fortunate side-effect, or by-product, of his general under-estimation of the period.

"Art Notes in North Italy", by its very nature as a collection of observations and appreciations rather than a structured evaluative essay, could well be expected to contain an especially large number of the over-estimations of minor figures which was always a danger in the application of Pater's appreciative criticism, seeking as it did to find the virtues in all works, rather than present a balanced and directed analysis of styles and movements in art. In this essay, which includes mentions of most of the small fry named above, there are references to a number of other artists who, although not of great stature, made some significant contribution to painting.

The essay on Giorgione, on the other hand, begins with a discussion of certain aesthetic concepts related to the maxim: "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music."[1] The major purpose of this lengthy introductory passage is to refute a common tendency in Victorian criticism to regard work in the various art forms

> As but translations into different languages of one and the same fixed quantity of imaginative thought,...[2]

and thus overlook the distinctive qualities of each medium. The

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[1] Renaissance, 135

[2] Ibid, 130

criticism of the Giorgionesque style which follows is presented as an illustration of an artistic genre which is undeniably dependent on a particular medium for its distinctive characteristics.

The title of the essay is "The School of Giorgione", and Pater does not become involved in the disputes, heated then as now, over which works actually were completed exclusively by the hand of that painter. He is concerned with a school, a style, and for his purpose the authorship of individual works is a matter of no importance. Giorgione himself is of interest as the type of his school; one whose legend, whether it be true or not, expresses something common to all who worked in the mode called Giorgionesque.

> By no school of painters have the necessary limitations of the art of painting been so unerringly though instinctively apprehended...as by the school of Venice; and the train of thought suggested in what has been now said is, perhaps, a not unfitting introduction to a few pages about Giorgione, who, though much has been taken by recent criticism from what was reputed to be his work, yet, more entirely than any other painter, sums up, in what we know of himself and his art, the spirit of the Venetian school.[1]

Pater refers to a number of works, formerly assumed to be by Giorgione, which Crowe and Cavalcaselle attributed to other artists. Since that time, most of these attributions have been changed several times, and many still remain uncertain. Before considering Pater's attitude to these attributions, it is appropriate to examine his understanding of the Giorgionesque style, and the Venetian tradition which he felt it epitomised.

His only reference to Giorgione before the 1877 essay was

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[1] Ibid, 140

in "A Study of Dionysus", written the year before. The subtitle of this study is "The Spiritual Form of Fire and Dew", and in discussing the dew as the solace for heat and fire, Pater refers to the physical sensations evoked by the passage in the "Conclusion", where "delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat."[1] is used as an example of one of life's "more exquisite intervals,..."[2] In this instance, however, it is drinking rather than bathing which is the source of the sensation, and by its evocation Giorgione's picture is made to seem even more sensuous and voluptuous, and with it the whole of Venetian life:

> And who that has ever felt the heat of a southern country does not know this poetry, the motive of the loveliest of all the works attributed to Giorgione, the Fête Champêtre in the Louvre; the intense sensations, the subtle and far-reaching symbolisms, which, in these places, cling about the touch and sound and sight of it?

The caution evident in Pater's description of the Fête Champêtre as "attributed to" Giorgione, shows that before he wrote the 1877 essay he was aware of the problems of attribution which handicap the student of Venetian art. It is, however, the sensations of "touch and sound and sight" which dominate this passage, not the problems of mere antiquarianism, as Pater goes on to capture the flavour of North-Eastern Italy:

> Think of the darkness of the well in the breathless court, with the delicate ring of ferns kept alive just within the opening; of the sound of the fresh water flowing through the wooden pipes

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[1] Renaissance, 233

[2] Ibid, 233 Although the passage in Renaissance refers to bathing and that in "Dionyous" to drinking, the experience is essentially the same.

> into the houses of Venice, on summer mornings; of the cry Acqua Frésca! at Padua or Verona, when the people run to buy what they prize, in its rare purity, more than wine, bringing pleasures so full of exquisite appeal to the imagination, that, in these streets, the very beggars, one thinks, might exhaust all the philosophy of the epicurean.[1]

The essay "The School of Giorgione" blends a feeling for this sensuousness in Venetian art with some technical criticism, and an attempt to place the Giorgionesque within the development of Italian painting. Pater notes that Venice was not the scene of great intellectual and spiritual ferment, and also that early Venetian painting had traditionally been subservient to architecture. He suggests that these two facts may explain the distinctively decorative, rather than expressive or intellectual nature of later Venetian art, opposing it to Florentine art:

> At last, with final mastery of all the technical secrets of his art, and with somewhat more than "a spark of the divine fire" to his share, comes Giorgione. He is the inventor of genre, of those easily movable pictures which serve neither for uses of devotion, nor of allegorical or historical teaching--little groups of real men and women, amid congruous furniture or landscape--morsels of actual life, conversation or music or play, but refined upon or idealised, till they come to seem like glimpses of life from afar.[2]

Admirable as is Pater's description of the character of the Giorgionesque, his assertions about the origins of the style are open to question. Many scholars, including Prof. André Chastel of the Sorbonne, see Giorgione as owing more to central Italian styles than

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[1] Greek Studies, 28

[2] Renaissance, 141

to the Venetian tradition[1]; and Pater does seem to underemphasize the religious content of many of his pictures. Because he intended his essay to be a corrective to the shortcomings of much Victorian criticism, Pater makes much of the exclusively visual aspects of the Giorgionesque. While not claiming for Giorgione a place in the history of art equal to that of the High Renaissance giants, he does seek to present him as a force in general culture, and thus of considerable significance. Pater claimed that Giorgione virtually invented the portable painting, a highly contentious claim, and thus opened up a new role and a greater significance for art:

> Those spaces of more cunningly blant colour, obediently filling their places, hitherto, in a mere architectural scheme, Giorgione detaches from the wall. He frames them...so that people may move them readily and take them where they go, as one might a poem in a manuscript, or a musical instrument, to be used, at will, as a means of self-education, stimulus or solace, coming like an animated presence, into one's cabinet, to enrich the air as with some choice aroma, and like persons, live with us, for a day or a lifetime. Of all art such as this, art which has played so large a part in men's culture since that time, Giorgione is the initiator.[2]

This passage, with its comparison of a painting to a musical instrument, is of course in keeping with the dictum that all art aspires towards the condition of music; but in addition the influence of a work of art upon a room is likened to that of a choice aroma, and thus the sensuous aspect of the Giorgionesque is kept in the reader's mind. Pater goes on to discuss The Concert, now believed to be by

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[1] "Giorgione", A Dictionary of Italian Painting, (Methuen, London, 1964), 126

[2] Renaissance, 141

Titian, as an example of the style of Giorgione, and in his description of it he emphasizes its effect of frozen motion, of a moment captured, thus making Giorgione the painter of magical fleeting moments such as those which were for him the greatest joys of life.

> The Concert in the Pitti palace, in which a monk...touches the keys of a harpsichord, while a clerk...grasps the handle of the viol, and a third...seems to wait upon the true interval for beginning to sing....[1]

captures a picturesque group in such a moment; "In the moment before they are lost altogether in that calm unearthly glow...."[2] A few pages later another passage, seeking to define the essence of the Giorgionesque, is reminiscent of the "Conclusion" (which reappeared in the third edition of The Renaissance) where the reader was urged to develop the love of art, because it gave

> The highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.[3]

Pater wrote:

> The master is pre-eminent for the resolution, the ease and quickness, with which he reproduces instantaneous motion--...the embrace, rapid as the kiss, caught with death itself from dying lips--some momentary conjunction of mirrors and polished armour and still water....The sudden act, the rapid transition of thought, the passing expression--this he arrests with that vivacity which Vasari has attributed to him....Now it is part of the ideality of the highest sort of dramatic poetry, that it presents us with a kind of profoundly significant and animated instants, a mere gesture, a look, a smile, perhaps--some brief and wholly concrete moment--...which seems to absorb past and future in an

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[1] Ibid, 144

[2] Ibid, 144

[3] Ibid, 239

> intense consciousness of the present. Such ideal instants the school of Giorgione selects,..from that feverish, tumultuously coloured world of the old citizens of Venice--exquisite pauses in time, in which, arrested thus, we seem to be spectators of all the fullness of existence, and which are like some consummate extract or quintessence of life.[1]

Thus Pater found in the style of Giorgione, as in the work of other artists, precedent and illustration of an aspect of his own view of life. The personality of Giorgione appealed to him also, and even the lack of reliable information about him added to his fascination. As André Chastel wrote:

> Eminent art lovers, like Walter Pater...have felt this ambiguity, or, perhaps, this mystery to be appropriate to Giorgione's singular art.[2]

Like Leonardo, Giorgione was illegitimate, a genius who by the laws of Victorian morality ought to have been ashamed of his birth. Little is known about his life and movements, and even the cause of his death at the age of thirty-three is disputed; although it was connected with a woman, who thus becomes a femme fatale and injects a flavour of necrophilia, evident in the phrase quoted above: "Rapid as the kiss, caught with death itself from dying lips,...[3] Giorgione is variously alleged to have died of a broken heart when his mistress eloped with one of his pupils, and to have died of a plague caught from her infected lips. In either case the connection of death with passion remains, and Pater's interpretation of the Mona Lisa comes to mind.

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[1] Ibid, 150

[2] Chastel, Op Cit, 125. Chastel wrongly refers to Pater's essay as written in 1873.

[3] Renaissance, 150

Like the Pléiade in Pater's presentation of them, Giorgione is all the more tragic for dying young when he so loved the beautiful sensations of this world.

In writing "The School of Giorgione", Pater accepted the attributions of Crowe and Cavalcaselle, whose excellent book is at its worst in the chapter on Giorgione. He seems to have accepted their attributions not so much because he was convinced of their accuracy, as because he was not in possession of any evidence to disprove them. Throughout the essay he seems uneasy, and even cynical, never stating with any firmness that Crowe and Cavalcaselle are to be believed:

> The accomplished science of the subject has come at last, and, as in other instances, has not made the past more real for us, but assured us only that we possess less of it than we seemed to possess.[1]

The uselessness of what Pater sometimes called "mere antiquarianism" is further emphasised in a later passage:

> Nor has the criticism, which thus so freely diminishes the number of his authentic works, added anything important to the well-known outline of the life and personality of the man....[2]

For Pater, the paintings themselves were what really mattered, and they told him more of their creators and their social background than any amount of antiquarianism:

> But although the number of Giorgione's extant works has been thus limited by recent criticism, all is not done when the real and the traditional elements in what concerned with a great

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[1] Renaissance, 143

[2] Ibid, 146

name, much that is not real is often very stimulating.[1]

This justification can be applied to Pater's use of material that he knew to be false or suspect in "Leonardo", but it especially concerns Giorgione:

> For the aesthetic philosopher, therefore, over and above the real Giorgione, and his authentic extant works, there remains the Giorgionesque also--an influence, a spirit or type in art, active in men so different as those to whom many of his supposed works are really assignable.[2]

The best indication of Pater's attitude to the work of Crowe and Cavalcaselle is perhaps his passing characterisation of their book as "the "new Vasari"...."[3] Although he knew that many of Vasari's stories had not stood up to examination, he, and other writers on art, made constant use of the Vitae. He seems to have been implying that Crowe and Cavalcaselle, like Vasari, are of use to writers on art, but not the final authority; always open to challenge, and not to be taken too seriously.

Giorgio Vasari was one of the sixteenth century Italian artists to whom Pater devoted a number of references, although not a full essay, and thus a survey of these remarks is appropriate here. Vasari was of course an undistinguished painter, not to be compared to Veronese or Titian or the Bellini, but the liveliness of his anecdotes has ensured his popularity as a biographer of his contempo-

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[1] Ibid, 147

[2] Ibid, 148

[3] Ibid, 145

raries.

"Leonardo da Vinci" is the essay in which Pater refers most often to Vasari--a total of six times. He opens by referring to a story about Leonardo in the first edition of the Vitae which was omitted from later editions; and goes on to describe Vasari's outline of Leonardo's life as "brilliant...."[1] although he knows from Amoretti's researches that it is full of errors. In discussing Vasari's story of a Medusa painted by Leonardo, Pater seems to prefer his own feeling and judgement to historical research, refusing to dismiss an attractive and stimulating story because it appears, from the results of antiquarianism, to be unfounded:

> Vasari's story of an earlier Medusa, painted on a wooden shield, is perhaps an invention; and yet, properly told, has more of the air of truth about it than anything else in the whole legend.[2]

In contrast to this passage, in which Pater seems to trust Vasari more than the modern researchers, he comes close to accusing him of deliberate deception when discussing a work then thought to be by Raphael, which is mentioned in this essay as being derivative from the Last Supper : "Vasari pretends that the central head was never finished."[3] Vasari makes his final appearance in "Leonardo" in the role of collector, being mentioned as having owned an "Inestimable folio of drawings...."[4] which included designs by Verrocchio.

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[1] Renaissance, 99

[2] Ibid, 105

[3] Ibid, 120

[4] Ibid, 123

In the essay on Botticelli, written one year later, in 1870, Vasari's anecdotes about Botticelli's immoderate spending and wild living in his early years are ignored, presumably because they are not compatible with the image Pater wanted to create for the then almost unknown painter. In fact, after denigrating Vasari as a gossip, Pater virtually denies the existence of any stories about Botticelli.

> Criticism indeed has cleared away much of the gossip which Vasari accumulated, has touched the legend of Lippo and Lucrezia, and rehabilitated the character of Andrea del Castagno. But in Botticelli's case there is no legend to dissipate.[1]

This is not only misleading but ironic, for as the essay on Leonardo reveals, no-one read and used Vasari's gossip more avidly than Pater himself, when it suited him. In his use of Vasari's anecdotes, Pater was guided not by their apparent truth or falsity, but by their suitability as illustrations for his creation.

Despite his dependence on Vasari when writing about Michelangelo and Giorgione, and his frequent use of his anecdotes, Pater mentions him by name once only in each of these essays.[2] In "Michelangelo" he is mentioned as the correspondent of the sculptor, in "Giorgione" as the source of one of the accounts of the painter's death.

In "Hippolytus Veiled" (1889), Vasari is twice mentioned as the chronicler of the early Renaissance, a period which he knew only

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[1] Ibid, 51

[2] Excluding the description of Crowe and Cavalcaselle as "the new Vasari".

from a distance, not intimately as he knew its last phase. Pater expresses regret that so little is known of

> The early Altic deme-life--its picturesque, intensely localised variety...and with it many a relic of primitive religion, many an early growth of art parallel to what Vasari records of artistic beginnings in the smaller cities of Italy.[1]

The second reference to Vasari, a few pages later, contrasts him favourably with Overbeck and seems to be entirely laudatory:

> Overbeck's careful gleanings of its history form indeed a sorry relic as contrasted with Vasari's intimations of the beginnings of the Renaissance.[2]

The reader is left with the impression that in the case of Vasari, as of Giorgione, Pater preferred to make up his own mind about the value of the man's work, regardless of what faults, inconsistencies, and untruths pedants and antiquarians might claim to detect.

Whereas he devoted an essay, or part of one, to Giorgione, while only once mentioning him in another context, Pater dealt with that other great Venetian master, Titian, in a number of scattered references over a period of twenty years.

In "The Poetry of Michelangelo" the patriarch of Venice is contrasted twice with the patriarch of Florence, as quite opposed in their use of landscape elements. For Michelangelo, the human figure was all, but in Titian's work nature plays so large a part that Pater bracketed him on one occasion with da Vinci. In the second paragraph of the essay on Michelangelo, in giving an introducto-

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[1] Greek Studies, 153

[2] Ibid, 158

ry summary of his particular genius, Pater observes: "No forest-scenery like Titian's fills his backgrounds...."[1] A few pages later, the same observation recurs: "He gives us indeed no lovely natural objects like Leonardo or Titian,..."[2] Pater was, however, fully aware that landscape in Titian's art is expressive, and not merely decorative; as is revealed by an observation in "Demeter and Persephone II" (1875), where Demeter is characterised as the mater dolorosa of the classical world:

> Her robe of dark blue is the raiment of her mourning, but also the blue robe of the earth in shadow, as we see it in Titian's landscapes; her great age is the age of the immemorial earth;...[3]

Titian's handling of figures in the landscape setting evoked Pater's praise in the essay "A study of Dionysus", written in the following year; and here he is contrasted with Tintoretto, another great Venetian master, who also painted a Bacchus and Ariadne:

> And as a story of romantic love, fullest perhaps of all the motives of classical legend of the pride of life, it survived with undiminished interest to a later world, two of the greatest masters of Italian painting having poured their whole power into it; Titian with greater space of ingathered shore and mountain, and solemn foliage, and fiery animal life;...[4]

Thus before he came to deal with Titian in the essay on Giorgione, with whom he was so closely connected, Pater had shown an awareness of several aspects of Titian's work; specifically, his

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[1] Renaissance, 75

[2] Ibid, 77

[3] Greek Studies, 114

[4] Ibid, 23

powerful use of landscape motifs, and his passionate interest in the sentiments of classical mythology. Titian's ability to bring a certain untranslatable pictorial quality to these scenes of classical mythology and also everyday life is mentioned early in the essay on Giorgione:

> To suppose that all is mere technical acquirement in delineation or touch,..this is the way of most spectators, and many critics, who have never caught sight all the time of that true pictorial quality which lies between,..that inventive or creative handling of pure line and colour, which, as...in the works of Titian or Veronese, is quite independent of anything definitely poetical in the subject it accompanies.[1]

Pater suggests that some element, difficult of definition, in drawing and colouring provides this true pictorial quality, citing amongst other examples two from Titian:

> It is the colouring--that weaving of light, as of just perceptible gold threads, through the dress, the flesh, the atmosphere, in Titian's Lace-girl, that staining of the whole fabric of the thing with a new, delightful physical quality. This drawing, then--the arabesque traced in the air by Tintoret's flying figures, by Titian's forest branches;...[2]

In addition to the qualities referred to in the earlier essays, this passage shows that Pater was fully aware of Titian's genius as one of the great colourists of art. In this paragraph Pater goes on to claim that Titian's work represents the final and highest state of poetry in painting, once the mastery of the basic devices of the artist is established:

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[1] Renaissance, 132

[2] Ibid, 132

> In its primary aspect, a great picture has no more definite message for us than an accidental play of sunlight...is itself, in truth, a space of such fallen light, caught as the colours are in an Eastern carpet,...And this primary and essential condition fulfilled, we may trace the coming of poetry into painting, by fine gradations upwards;..until in Titian we have, as his poetry in the Ariadne, so actually a touch of true childlike humour in the distinctive, quaint figure with its silk gown, which ascends the temple stairs, in his picture of the Presentation of the Virgin, at Venice.[1]

Among the many disputes which have arisen over the authorship of the poetic paintings of the school of Giorgione, most have concerned whether certain works are by Titian or Giorgione. At certain times in their lives their styles were quite identical, but the rarity, and thus greater cost, of the works of the short-lived Giorgione has always tempted owners of disputed paintings to attribute them to him. This in turn has led many to underestimate the quality of Titian's more easily available paintings. Pater rightly refused to denigrate Titian in comparison to Giorgione, and aptly summed up the situation:

> Born so near to Titian, though a little before him, that these two...may almost be called contemporaries, Giorgione stands to Titian in something like the relationship of Sordello to Dante, in Browning's poem. Titian, when he leaves Bellini, becomes in turn the pupil of Giorgione. He lives in constant labour more than sixty years after Giorgione is in his grave; and with such fruit, that hardly one of the greater towns of Europe is without some fragment of his work. But the slightly older man, with his so limited actual product..,yet expresses, in elementary motive and principle, that spirit--itself the final acquisition of all the long endeavours of Venetian art--which Titian spreads over his whole life's activity.[2]

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[1] Ibid, 133

[2] Ibid, 142

It is ironic that this question of the attribution of works which could have been by either of the artists, and which mattered so little to Pater--his belief that Titian's Concert was by Giorgione does not mar his characterization of the Giorgionesque--should have been the greatest difficulty of all to his admirer Bernard Berenson, as consultant to the dealer Lord Duveen.

Brief though most of his observations were, Pater mentioned Titian more consistently than any other painter. After a brief appearance in "Charles Lamb" (1878), in which Pater praises Lamb's criticism of his art, Titian and his distinctive handling of the human form in a natural setting are cited in the first paragraph of "The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture II. The Age of Graven Images." (1880). Not only Titian's handling of landscape, but his colour and his passionate classicism are evoked in this passage on Greek sculpture:

> Its real background,..was a world of exquisite craftsmanship, touching the minutest details of daily life with splendour and skill, in close correspondence with a peculiarly animated development of human existence--the energetic movement and stir of typically noble human forms, quite worthily clothed--amid scenery as poetic as Titian's. If shapes of colourless stone did come into that background, it was as the undraped human form comes into some of Titian's pictures, only to cool and solemnize its splendour; the work of the Greek sculptor being seldom in quite colourless stone,..but often in richly toned metal..,and in its consummate products chryselephantine,--work in gold and ivory, on a core of cedar.[1]

Whereas Pater's earliest mentions of Titian stress his handling of landscape elements, the later references seem to stress his

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[1] Greek Studies, 224

magnificent colours. In the passage above, his nudes in their settings were compared to Greek sculptures which juxtaposed marble with gold and cedar. In a passing reference in the 1887 Imaginary Portrait "Duke Carl of Rosenmold", Pater speaks of "The glowing gold of Titian's Italian sun,..."[1] Pater's references to Titian from 1871 to 1887 have been, without exception, flattering. Pater has shown himself moved by Titian's handling of figure and landscape, impressed by his daring and magnificent colouring, and delighted by his treatment of Christian and especially classical subjects. In the 1890 essay "Art Notes in North Italy" however, the older and more cautious Pater seems less happy with his work. Instead of delighting in his colourful and exciting rendition of classical myths, he seems distressed by hints of paganism; and comes close to accusing him of insincerity in his painting of Christian subjects, and even ventures a tentative censure on aesthetic grounds.

First of all, Pater acknowledges that some of Titian's religious art was successful, and declares him to have brought the religious dreams of Mantegna and the Bellini to their ultimate conclusion:

> Titian, as we see him in what some have thought his noblest work, the large altarpiece...of S.S. Nazaro e Celso, at Brescia, is certainly a religious--a great religious painter. The famous Gabriel of the Annunciation...adapted, it was said, from an ancient statue, yet as novel in design as if Titian had been the first to handle that so familiar figure in old religious art.., affording sufficient proof how sacred themes could rouse his imagination, and all his manual skill, to heroic efforts.[2]

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[1] Imaginary Portraits, 127

[2] Miscellaneous Studies, 90

Then, instead of using Titian's equal interest in pagan and Christian subjects as evidence of the bringing together of the two traditions in the Renaissance, Pater goes on instead to suggest that the different traditions occupied distinct and unmerged places in Titian's mind. The use of the word "attitudes", with its overtones of "attitudinizing", and Pater's failure to place Titian in the mainstream with Pico, Michelangelo, and Montaigne, as a unifier of the separate streams, is quite out of keeping with his practice in other contexts:

> But he is also the painter of the Venus of the Tribune and the Triumph of Bacchus; and such frank acceptance of the voluptuous paganism of the Renaissance, the motive of a large proportion of his work, might make us think that religion, grandly dramatic as was his conception of it, can have been for him only one of many pictorial attitudes.[1]

This expression of mistrust of Titian's religious devotion, and the uncharacteristic assertion that his interest in pagan culture makes his Christian convictions dubious, is followed a few pages later by the only passage in which Pater speaks less than enthusiastically about him:

> It must be admitted, however, that...Titian sometimes lost a little of himself in the greatness of his designs, or committed their execution, in part, to others,...[2]

The implication of this sentence is that Titian over-reached himself, that he was not always able to give full expression to his designs and intentions. This seems to contradict the many assertions

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[1] Ibid, 90

[2] Ibid, 102

in the earlier essays that he was a great master of all the techniques of painting, capable of giving form to any conception. The most reasonable explanation of this is that Titian was less pleasing to the pious conforming Pater of 1890 than he had been to the Oxford enfant terrible of two decades earlier; because the frank paganism that had once seemed delightful and liberating now seemed somehow threatening. This being so, Pater sought to find fault with Titian and thus rationalize and express his waned enthusiasm. Certainly we need not think Pater incapable of such a cloaking of moral uneasiness as aesthetic displeasure, for it is the logical converse of the process by which he formerly gave undue emphasis to the bizarre and sexually questionable aspects of what he took to be Leonardo's work. An examination of "Art Notes in North Italy" does seem to support the hypothesis. As stated in the introductory comments at the beginning of this section, Pater made no extravagant claims for the minor artists he discussed in this essay. It does seem, though, that their religious subject-matter is the only justification for his having written about them at all.

The essay begins with the assertion, discussed above, that although Titian was on occasion a great religious painter, his paganism makes one doubt the depth of his religious conviction. From there, Pater goes on to state that there were other artists of that day whose religious convictions could not be doubted, and by mentioning Giotto and Fra Angelico, seems to imply that these contemporaries of Titian's are in the mainstream of art by virtue of their faith:

> There are however, painters of that date who, while their work is great enough to be connected (perhaps groundlessly) with Titian's personal influence, or directly attributed to his hand, possess at least this psychological interest, that about their religiousness there can be no question. Their work is to be looked for mainly in and about the two sub-alpine towns of Brescia and Bergamo; in the former of which it becomes definable as a school--the school of Moretto, in whom the perfected art of the later Renaissance is to be seen in union with a catholicism as convinced, towards the middle of the sixteenth century, as that of Giotto or Angelico.[1]

In discussing Moretto, Pater describes a painting of his of The Conversion of St. Paul, asserting that:

> Moretto...is one of the few painters who have fully understood the artistic opportunities of the subject of Saint Paul,...[2]

Moretto is commended for having broken away from the stereotyped images of St. Paul as either a conventional Roman soldier or a dull old man; presenting him, it seems for a moment, as one of the beautiful youths so overtly admired by Pater in his franker moments:

> Moretto also makes him a nobly accoutred soldier...but a soldier still in possession of all those resources of unspoiled youth....[3] The pure, pale, beardless face, in noble profile, might have had for its immediate model some military monk of a later age,...[4]

The attractiveness of the image of the saint, reminiscent of Marius, is not all that Pater admires in this painting. The drama of the event impressed him:

> The terrified horse, very grandly designed, leaps high against

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[1] Ibid, 91

[2] Ibid, 91

[3] Ibid, 91

[4] Ibid, 92

> the suddenly darkened sky above the distant horizon of Damascus, with all Moretto's peculiar understanding of the power of black and white.[1]

In the last sentences, though, it becomes clear that neither the beauty of the saint nor the drama of the conversion is the basic cause of Pater's admiration of the picture. Most of all, he was moved by its religious sentiment, which he characterizes with the standard clichés and predictable peroration of a Victorian sermon:

> It breathes all the joy and confidence of the Apostle who knows in a single flash of time that he has found the veritable captain of his soul. It is indeed the Paul whose genius of conviction has so greatly moved the minds of men--the soldier who, bringing his prisoners "bound to Damascus", is become the soldier of Jesus Christ.[2]

The internal evidence of this passage, which suggests that Moretto's religious sentiment was for Pater not merely a factor, but the greatest factor, which made his art of interest, is confirmed by another reference to him later in the essay. After the observation that "Titian sometimes lost a little of himself in the greatness of his designs,...."[3], Pater went on:

> Moretto, in his work, is always all there--thorough, steady, even, in his workmanship. That, again, was a result of his late-surviving religious conscience.[4]

In tones more reminiscent of Marius than of The Renaissance Pater extolled the joys of Christianity he felt in Moretto's work:

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[1] Ibid, 92

[2] Ibid, 92

[3] Ibid, 102

[4] Ibid, 102

> An intimately religious artist, full of cheerfulness, of joy. Upon the airy galleries of his great altar-piece, the angels dance against the sky above the Mother and the Child;...[1]

For a few sentences Pater permits himself some technical observations which reveal an understanding of the place of mannerism in the development of artistic style, only to quickly lapse back into virtuous reverie:

> The spectator may note yet another artistic alliance, something of the pale effulgence of Correggio--an approach, at least, to that peculiar treatment of light and shade, and a preoccupation with certain tricks therein of nature itself, by which Correggio touches Rembrandt on the one hand, Da Vinci on the other. Here, in Moretto's work, you may think that manner more delightful, perhaps because more refined, than in Correggio himself.[2]

Pater does not pursue this very interesting line for long, because it leads him in a direction opposed to that which suits his purpose in this essay. He turns back the moment he reaches this inconvenient but inevitable conclusion:

> It is, in truth, the first step in the decomposition of light, a touch of decadence, of sunset, along the whole horizon of North-Italian art. It is, however, as the painter of the white-stoled Ursula and her companions that the great master of Brescia is most likely to remain in the memory of the visitor;...In the clearness, the cleanliness, the hieratic distinction, of this earnest and deeply-felt composition, there is something "pre-Raphaelite"; as also in a certain liturgical formality in the grouping of the virgins....They bring us, appropriately, close to the grave of this manly yet so virginal painter,...[3]

A reader who based his idea of Moretto's art solely on Pater's

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[1] Ibid, 102

[2] Ibid, 103

[3] Ibid, 104

comments would have a distorted view of his merits. In closing his section on Moretto, Pater refers once in passing to "His rare poetic portraits;..."[1] while discussing his altar-pieces in the National Gallery. Moretto's reputation is based almost entirely on his portraits, which Pater mentions so briefly. His large religious works are notoriously contrived and dull, and enthusiasm for them is a sure sign of religious emotion clouding aesthetic judgement. In 1877 Pater had been able to pronounce with sense and taste on the question of the relative status of Giorgione and Titian; but in 1890 he reached this strange and distorted conclusion about the relative merits of Titian and Moretto, having approached them so full of piety as to have excluded the possibility of a purely aesthetic judgement. When he came upon a genuinely significant line of enquiry, he cut his thoughts on it short, and lapsed back into trite phrases about joy and virginity.

In the comments that follow the discussion of Moretto, Pater concerns himself more with style and less with sentiment, as he seeks to characterize the work of Luini, Borgognone, and Ferrari. He seems to be tending towards the theory that mannerism had its origins in the convergence of High Renaissance and archaic northern European styles, in the sixteenth century:

> Both alike, Ferrari and Borgognone (sic), may seem to have introduced into fiery Italian latitudes a certain northern temperature, and somewhat twilight, French, or Flemish, or German,

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[1] Ibid, 104

thoughts.[1]

The use of the metaphor of temperature in this context recalls the reference to sunset in the passage on Moretto, which has already been quoted.[2] As in the essay on Winckelmann, Pater saw the warmer temperature of the mediterranean countries as appropriate to their more passionate art; and in view of his constant use of organic metaphors for art, it is indeed consistent that this region saw the germination of European culture. It is a fair generalisation that Italian Renaissance painting used warmer, earthier colours than northern European painting; and the often strident clashing colours of much mannerist art may be seen as, in part, the result of the adoption of an inclusive palette. When Pater's concern with sensations of heat and cold in art, as seen in the essays on Luca and Giorgione particularly, is remembered, it does not seem at all impossible that he was aware, consciously or otherwise, of some of these ramifications, or bases, of his metaphors. This thesis is not the place for an investigation of this matter, but it does assume some interest when the frequent use of the terms "warm" and "cool" in the jargon of twentieth century art is considered.

Pater seems to have recognised that Ferrari had more than one style, and that his works seem to differ from one another according to their location, or at least the place of their creation. Ever

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[1] Ibid, 93

[2] Ibid, 103

willing to see a link between art and the social and geographical circumstances which saw its birth, he finds a primitivism in certain of Ferrari's works which he relates to their unsophisticated social context, so much simpler than the more urban settings which seemed to provoke him to a more strained mannerism:

> Ferrari, coming from the neighbourhood of Varallo, after work at Vercelli and Novara, returns thither to labour, as both sculptor and painter, in the "stations" of the Sacro Monte, at a form of religious art which would seem to have some natural kinship with the temper of a mountain people....It is as if this serious soul, going back to his mountain home, had lapsed again into mountain "grotesque", with touches also, in truth, of a particularly northern poetry--a mystic poetry,...[1]

In contrast to this is Ferrari's work at Vercelli and Novara, where in works of "remarkable proportions..."[2] he is "not less graciously Italian than Luini himself."[3]

As he concludes "Art Notes in North Italy", Pater returns to the theme with which he began: the existence in the work of many of Titian's contemporaries of a spirit of devotion not always present in the greater master's art. The work of minor artists moves him to observe that

> It is here, in fact, at Bergamo and Brescia, that the late survival of a really convinced religious spirit becomes a striking fact in the history of Italian art.[4]

He totally overlooks the eroticism and sensuality of so much of the

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[1] Ibid, 94

[2] Ibid, 95

[3] Ibid, 96

[4] Ibid, 99

work of Romanino of Brescia, observing:

> He is distinguished also for a remarkable clearness of design, which has something to do, is certainly congruous with, a markedly religious sentiment, like that of Angelico or Perugino, lingering still in the soul of this Brescian painter towards the middle of the sixteenth century.
>
> Romanino and Moretto, the two great masters of Brescia in successive generations, both alike inspired above all else by the majesty, the majestic beauty, of religion--its persons, its events, every circumstance that belongs to it....[1]

The concluding paragraph of the essay contains an amazing and total contradiction of the basic idea of the Renaissance conveyed by the earlier essays--that it was a movement which unified the pagan and Christian traditions, broadening men's culture. Here, instead, he wrote of the spirits of beauty and holiness:

> At the Renaissance the world might seem to have parted them....But here certainly, once more, Catholicism and the Renaissance, religion and culture, holiness and beauty, might seem reconciled, by one [Romanino] who had conceived neither after any feeble way,...[2]

Even the change in Pater's attitude towards Christianity, which we have seen was cynical in 1869 and pious in 1890, does not prepare us for this reversal of his view of the generous, unifying function of the earlier Renaissance. The distortion is as great as that suffered by individual artists in Pater's description of them in "Art Notes in North Italy", where Moretto is acclaimed for his altarpieces, and Romanino for his piety, and Titian all but called a hypocrite. The extent of Pater's distortion of this phase of art is

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[1] Ibid, 101

[2] Ibid, 107

further illuminated by the realization that he devoted more words each to Moretto and Romanino, than to Veronese and Tintoretto together; having mentioned those great artists only in the most insignificant asides. Admirable as was "The School of Giorgione", "Art Notes in North Italy" shows Pater sacrificing a balanced view to his desire to find precedents and evidence for his own subjective views at the time of writing. In "Leonardo da Vinci" he had over-emphasized the dubious and the bizarre; here he has ignored it while making much of the religious element. Although many of his early beliefs, such as his faith in the inextricability of art and general culture, still underlie the later essay, there is an evident reversal of his attitude to morality in art. This provides final proof, if any is needed, that Pater as much as any of his contemporaries allowed the spheres of aesthetics and morality to overlap.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This thesis represents an attempt to build up, from hundreds of specific judgements, a complete picture of Pater's understanding of the Renaissance; in order that the development of his views could be followed, and a conclusion reached on the question of just how reliable a guide to that period, or movement, he was.

Pater wrote more about the Renaissance than any other aspect of human culture. Undeniably his writings contain a body of information and criticism which was a remarkable achievement in view of the difficulties scholars of his era faced. The shifts in his views on specific artists and personalities are very marked, and with few exceptions conformed to a general pattern. Despite these changes in judgement, Pater's overall view of what the Renaissance was, and what it meant in European culture, was maintained with remarkable consistency.

He never wavered from the opinion that the Renaissance was, in Mrs. Pattisons's phrase, a "sentimental revolution"[1], rather than a period in political history or the development of artistic

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[1] Pattison, review of Renaissance, 104

styles. He saw the Renaissance as a movement in human consciousness which was reflected in changes in art and social mores, and he always was at least as interested in personalities as in their work. He never expressly contradicted the definition of "Renaissance" which he gave in "Two Early French Stories" (1872), but he certainly changed his emphases in his later writings. In 1872 he wrote:

> For us, the Renaissance is the name of a manysided but yet united movement, in which the love of the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, the desire for a more liberal and comely way of conceiving life, make themselves felt, urging those who experience this desire to search out first one and then another means of intellectual or imaginative enjoyment, and directing them not merely to the discovery of old and forgotten sources of this enjoyment, but to the divination of fresh sources thereof--new experiences, new subjects of poetry, new forms of art.[1]

In his earlier writings Pater seemed constantly to see this spirit in terms of open and active revolt against the moral limitations of Christianity. It is apparent that rebelliousness more than any other characteristic was essential in the nature of anyone who aspired to a place in his medieval proto-Renaissance. Regardless of the significance of his work in stylistic and humanitarian terms, Giotto was excluded from the proto-Renaissance because of his obvious piety. Similarly Dante was not allowed beyond the bounds of the legitimate middle age, while Abelard, seemingly because of his love for Héloise, was hailed by Pater as the precurser of the new freedom.

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[1] Renaissance, 2

In his essays on Botticelli and Pico, Pater emphasized the breadth of their sympathies and their paganism. He seemed almost to deplore Botticelli's later religious art, and delighted in the earlier Venus-like Madonnas, and their possible irreligious significance.

The earliest of the essays on the High Renaissance giants, "Leonardo da Vinci", shows Pater straying as far as he ever did from real criticism into the realm of prose poetry. He presents Leonardo as decadent and anti-Christian, defying morality and reticence in his quest for the novel and fascinating. The essay on Michelangelo, written only two years later, is much milder, but the fierce individualism of the man and his love of the pagan tradition are emphasized. His fauns and classically conceived nude youths are discussed, but not his Moses or Pietà. Raphael is mentioned but once in The Renaissance.

Similarly, Pater was selective in choosing the aspects of the last phase of the Renaissance to be mentioned in his early writings. He spoke approvingly of the Pléiade, and the "refined and comely" nature of sixteenth century decadence.

In his later writings, almost everything is different. In Marius Giotto was rehabilitated, and later Dante too was given fairer treatment. In the later writings on the Gothic style, political repression rather than the limitations of Christian morality

was proposed as the rationale of revolt. Abelard comes to be considered as a philosopher rather than a lover, and Christianity is mentioned with reverence rather than cynicism.

The 1892 essay "Raphael" finally granted to the scholarly painter the place which he had earlier been denied, as the equal of Leonardo and Michelangelo. Pater cites as his virtues the very opposite qualities to those which he had admired in Leonardo. Later references to Leonardo entirely lack the selfconscious decadence of the 1869 essay.

The most remarkable evidence of the totality of the change in Pater's point of view is provided by his later discussion of the artists and writers of the sixteenth century. He expresses severe doubts about many aspects of the philosophies of Bruno and Montaigne, and effectively states that human liberation can be taken too far for the good of those concerned. Whereas he had chosen the School of Giorgione as the subject of his first essay on the sixteenth century, he chose in 1890 to single out the School of Moretto, and specifically their religious works, for his fullest praise. Reverence and restraint had entirely displaced rebelliousness as the most admirable qualities in thought and art. The chapter on Bruno in Gaston, with its claim that liberation was attractive and wonderful in theory but dangerous in practice, is the central expression of the late point of view; just as the essay on Leonardo was

of his early position.

There are unfortunately no adequate or even very helpful biographies of Pater, but it is clear that there was in his outward demeanour a change which paralleled that apparent in his criticisms of Renaissance art and literature. As a young man he is said to have enjoyed shocking others with irreverent remarks, but to have become apparently quite pious in his later years. It is doubtful whether he ever became a believer, at least in any readily intelligible sense, but he appears, especially if Marius is taken as evidence, to have decided that Christianity represented at least a possibility to be taken seriously. On the basis of his critical comments, though, there seems reason to believe that his early interests in homosexuality and necrophilia never faded right away.

It seems logical to conclude that in looking at any specific critical judgement of Pater's, the most important fact to be borne in mind is its date. There is no doubt that the change in his attitude towards religion was the biggest single variation in his critical standpoint, and so the major factor to be allowed for in his criticisms of art and thought in the periods in which religion was the greatest source of subject matter and stimulus.

That Pater changed from an amoral to a moral critic, is the usual conclusion of writers who seek to define his standpoints from an examination of the "Conclusion" and "Style". The analysis of

his changing estimates of Renaissance cultural achievements suggests that he never espoused an amoral or disinterested point of view--an "art for art's sake" position. Instead he moved from an aggressively anti-Christian position to one of reverence and active conventionalism. He was always, it would seem, morally involved in areas of aesthetic judgement. Formal and stylistic matters never concerned him as much as the question of where an artist or personality stood on the issues of liberty, individualism, restraint, and conformity.

This concern, coupled with his unscholarly method of using only the material which suited the image of an artist or personality which he chose to develop, regardless of its veracity, makes Pater a dangerous guide to isolated aspects of Renaissance culture. One who read only the essay on Leonardo, or the chapter on Bruno, would get a narrow and often misleading view of the subject. But if one reads all that Pater wrote about the Renaissance, one gets a broad and balanced overall view, although incomplete and flawed in obvious ways. It is hard to agree with Kenneth Clark that The Renaissance is "the best short introduction to the period"[1]; but it can be allowed that given the information available to him, and his deep-seated and continuous need to find great figures with whom he could

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[1] This opinion is quoted on the back cover of the 1961 Collins Fontana edition of The Renaissance.

identify, Pater achieved a remarkable understanding of the art of the Renaissance and the place of the movement in the history of Western culture. Precisely because of his inconsistencies and changes of viewpoint, Pater presents, in a thousand scattered comments, an admirable account of this "many-sided but yet united movement...."[1]

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[1] Renaissance, xii

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