

# Aestheticism: Sensations and Ideas

## Book of Abstracts

### ***The Renaissance* and the Harlem Renaissance: Walter Pater and Alain Locke**

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Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* strongly influenced the writings and ideas of Harlem Renaissance philosopher and critic Alain Locke. Locke's emphasis on aesthetic impressions has its origins in Pater's Preface to *The Renaissance*, and his conception of a self that is existentially and ethically cultivated by responses to art and beauty is significantly indebted to *The Renaissance's* Conclusion.

This paper takes as its topic Pater's presence in Locke's important 1925 anthology of Harlem Renaissance literature and art, *The New Negro*, and more specifically Locke's controversial conception of African-American literature and art in the aestheticist terms of an art for art's sake. I will be juxtaposing passages from *The Renaissance* with passages from *The New Negro* as well as from related essays by Locke from the 1920s.

My argument focuses on the "art or propaganda" debate between Locke and W.E.B. Du Bois occasioned by the publication of *The New Negro*. While Du Bois dismisses Locke's aestheticist ideas as decadent, Locke for his part insists on a correlation of ethics with aesthetics and aestheticism, following *The Renaissance*. Du Bois's critique of Locke, I argue, in essence repeats the familiar mischaracterization of Pater and aestheticism as amoral or immoral. Locke's defense of art for art's sake, by contrast, reveals the fundamental ethical and political stakes not only of his *New Negro* curatorial project, but also of a similarly misunderstood project to which he frequently alludes: Pater's aestheticism in *The Renaissance*.

### **Paterian Buds, Proustian Bloom: Pater's Floral Imagery**

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As is perfectly exemplified by the notorious 'strange flowers' evoked in the 'Conclusion' to his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, flowers furnish Pater with the most suitable linguistic (and conceptual) tools to flesh out his ideals of sensual plenitude, formalistic refinement, and Heraclitean mutability. By the same token, the idiosyncratic, artistically driven protagonists of his narratives are linked to flowers, with which they often establish a symbolic relationship from their early childhood (or the beginning of the story). Moreover, Pater's essays on ancient Greek culture indicate how he often invested flowers with strong mythical undertones. While this centrality of flowers in Pater's oeuvre has been pointed out by several critics, his floral imagery has not yet been examined systematically. In my paper I will seek to fill this gap by concentrating on a few aspects of Pater's flora that have received comparatively less critical

attention. After introducing how Pater's treatment of flowers epitomises the representation of blossoms in Postromantic literary culture in general, I will explore his atmospheric use of flora in the late narrative 'Apollo in Picardy' and discuss the ambivalent meaning of his artificial flowers. Finally, I will tackle the pervasive floral imagery of 'The Child in the House', trying to gauge the aesthetic and historical momentousness of Pater's flora by comparing it with similar representations of blossoms in Proust's flower-filled *À la recherche du temps perdu*. In this respect, I will provide a more detailed comparison between the imagery of the hawthorn in Pater and Proust, thus shedding new light on one of the most often cited examples of their connection.

## Undisciplining Aestheticism: Giordano Bruno and Decadence

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1888-9: the context of 'Giordano Bruno' in the *Fortnightly Review* in August 1889, and the severance in 1888 from *Macmillan's Magazine* of Pater's incomplete serialized novel *Gaston de Latour*, of which the Bruno text was part. A longstanding mystery in Pater studies, explanations for the withdrawal of *Gaston* from *Macmillan's* remain precarious. Due to blind spots of contents-led, bibliographic, and fiction-oriented critical approaches to *Gaston*, crucial critical texts on the conflation of aestheticism with decadence in *Macmillan's* (by the editor) and the *Fortnightly* remain uninvestigated.

The *destination* of Bruno, the *Fortnightly*, March 89: 'The Decadence of Thought in France' is a coruscating indictment of decadence and aestheticism and their history, in a trail that includes Pater's beacons—Hugo, the Goncourts, Zola, 'useless filth'. Its plangent theme is the collocation of Ideas and Sensation in these texts, the absence of 'beauty', and the reign of the ugly and 'weak'. It culminates in an extended discourse on salacious news of 1888, a murder by an Algerian journalist and his subsequent serial memoir, framed here as a real-life Act of an Idea, and its remediation into a print memoir of cheap and audacious sensation, typical of 'decadence.' Atypical in the *Fortnightly*, the exegesis of this position by a contributor exemplifies the *sensation* that its libertine editor Frank Harris will publish, and a liberal media policy that welcomes these controversial pieces—it, and a few months later Pater's Bruno.

In contrast, *Macmillan's Magazine* 1889: *Causeries* by Mowbray Morris, Pater's *editor*, are similarly critically intolerant of aestheticism and decadence, which he will not publish.

Together these periodical pieces highlight the aestheticism and decadence of Pater's historical pen portrait of Bruno, the rift between *Macmillan's* and *Gaston*, and the migration of Bruno to the *Fortnightly*.

## Edmund Trelawny Backhouse's Imaginary Pater

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In July 1943, one year before he died, Sir Edmund Backhouse (1873-1944), a queer minor aristocrat and Sinologist who had lived in Beijing since the late 1890s, prepared two sets of his substantial memoirs in typescript—the one titled "Décadence Mandchoue," which recalls his intimacy with the Empress Dowager before the collapse the Qing Dynasty in 1912, the

other named “The Dead Past,” which reflects on his schooldays, his boyhood flirtation with Paul Verlaine, his friendship with Stéphane Mallarmé, and his intermittent time as a student at Merton College from 1892 to 1895, when he mingled with Max Beerbohm, Alfred Douglas, and Oscar Wilde as well as Robert Ross and Aubrey Beardsley. Backhouse asserts that these recollections are unequivocally based in fact. In “The Dead Past,” one of Backhouse’s chapters focuses on his encounters with Walter Pater, whom he claims sent him a letter of invitation to luncheon at B.N.C. in late October 1892. No sooner had Backhouse entered Pater’s rooms than the “Master” treated the young man to some open-minded comments protesting English culture’s condemnation of the “grossness of masculine inter-copulation.” “Yet,” Pater asked Backhouse, “where is the grossness? I suppose that these helots of art and sense [i.e., moralists such as Matthew Arnold] mean the organ of generation, the phallus, and the anal cavity; the former is lovely and exquisite, especially the fore-skin fair as a new bud in spring; the latter with seemly and sweet environment.” On discovering Backhouse’s typescripts in 1973, Hugh Trevor-Roper, Regius Professor of History at Oxford, deemed that “these obscene memoirs,” which concentrate attention on male homoeroticism, were so startlingly implausible that it remained hard to resist conducting in-depth research on an otherwise obscure figure who had seldom caught much scholarly attention. In his resulting 1976 book, Trevor-Roper explores Backhouse as an arch-forger and fraudster whose fantasy life links him firmly with “another deviant character,” Frederick Rolfe (a.k.a. Baron Corvo) (1860-1913), whose boy-loving *Venice Letters* had recently been published in 1974. By comparison, in his 2011 edition of “*Décadence Mandchoue*” Derek Sandhaus concludes that Trevor-Roper is often “mean-spirited and narrow-minded” in his dismissal of Backhouse’s claims to veracity. Here, I want to suggest that the spurious conversation that Backhouse ascribes to Pater belongs in part to the genre of the imaginary memoir, which owes something to Pater’s own fictionalizing of historical figures in *Imaginary Portraits*. The impulse behind Backhouse’s creation of an imaginary Pater—one who speaks graphically about the male homoerotic body—forms part of the memoirist’s broader project to construct an affirmative and outspoken queer aestheticism that should have but never could have existed at the time.

## **An Idea of the Artist: Walter Pater’s *imaginary portraits* and Henry James’s *nouvelles***

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My paper aims at constructing a dialogue between Walter Pater and Henry James on the grounds of their contribution to late 19th-century short fiction. Although a significant number of studies have retraced James’s indebtedness to Pater’s aesthetical universe (Tinter 1982, Frank 1983, Boren 1987, Salmon 1999, Mendelssohn 2016), the domain of these two authors’ contribution to shorter fiction has seldom been taken as the prime centre of interest while comparing them. I propose to read James’s shorter fiction (or as he labelled it, of his *nouvelles*) revolving around the figure of the artist (and specifically of the writer) on the backdrop of the model of the imaginary portrait. Pater’s and James’s fictional renderings of the creative agent can be interpreted as inspired by a similar interest in the aesthetic import of the artist, a feature that collocates both of them – together, as I hope to argue – in the long history of the fictionalization of the author. More specifically, I aim at highlighting how Pater’s Aestheticism should be interpreted not only as a feature of James’s intellectual *Weltanschauung* at large,

but as a source of inspiration for the narrative architecture of his short fiction, via the model of the *imaginary portrait*.

## The Newman in *Marius*: Development, *Economia*, and Idealism

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In order to represent the development of Marius's religious conscience, Walter Pater resorted to motives and themes quite commonly deployed in a very popular genre in mid-Victorian England: conversion novel. Many eminent personalities sought to illustrate through novel writing their theological stances, and the peculiar religio-cultural controversy ravaging the public debate at the time. Among them, Cardinal Wiseman's *Fabiola* (1854), and John Henry Newman's *Loss and Gain* (1848) and *Callista* (1855) are some of the most known. Interestingly, Pater's narrative is built on a motive employed by both Wiseman and Newman in *Fabiola* and *Callista* respectively: that of allegorizing a critical discourse on religion in a historical tale set in Imperial Rome, recounting the conversion of a pagan to Christianity. This framework has its conceptual foundation in Newman's Tractarian years, when he sought to establish an analogy between the English Church and the Church of the Fathers, as in *Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833), and in *Lectures on the Prophetic Office of the Church* (1830-1841). Given Pater's widely acknowledged admiration for Newman's work, it may be reasonable to suppose that *Marius* engages in a dense dialogue with the Oxford Anglo-Catholic tradition in philosophical, theological, and historical-cultural terms, in fact narrativizing many a concept elaborated by Newman. To assess the validity of this supposition, this paper explores the Newman subtexts in *Marius* through a close reading of Pater's recurrence to key-notions in Newman's thought such as development, *Economia Sacramentalis*, and idealism.

## From Sensations and Ideas to the House Beautiful

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Focusing on homes as spaces of interiority on the one hand and aesthetic arrangement on the other hand, is a good way to explore how sensations and ideas are associated in Pater's works. Homes spatially illustrate different types of « brain building » along horizontal lines, when perceptions of the outside world feed sentiments and ideals within, as well as vertical lines when ascent to upper storeys symbolises spiritual detachment and contemplation. Incorporating past styles, objects have the power to trap time, sometimes hindering evolution with an opacity which is both physical and spiritual. This vindicates the importance of interior design, often described by Pater as the art of rearranging old objects and furniture according to a new style.

Pater's reflection on interior design is in line with his contemporaries in the aesthetic and arts and crafts movements. For Pater decoration contributes to build a House Beautiful which both reflects and influences its occupants. Similarly to William Morris, the house should be in harmony with nature as decorative patterns suggest the enjoyment of being outside. Windows also provide views of nature framed like paintings so that they become part of an aesthetic arrangement, blurring the distinction between art and reality. At the same time

decorative patterns may inspire the ascent from sensations to ideals and create musical harmonies, which for Pater vindicates the power of the lesser arts to free people's minds, similarly to Morris. Interior design is also for Pater a way to revive the past through an art of faded colours and *patina* which makes the passing of time visible and enjoyable for the senses.

## Walter Pater, Sandro Botticelli, and the Queer Psychoanalytic Scene

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After completing his essay on Leonardo in 1869, Pater next wrote a relatively short essay on Botticelli, first published as "A Fragment on Sandro Botticelli" in 1870 and later reprinted in *The Renaissance* in 1873. As part of his ongoing project to conceptualize a queer theory, Pater had in the Leonardo essay thought through the notion of the queer artist and queer artistic production, famously seizing on two of Leonardo's paintings, the *Medusa's Head* and the *Mona Lisa*, through which to reflect on queer experience, in both a proto-psychoanalytic and a cultural-historical registers, reflecting simultaneously on queer subjectivity and queer history. Pater continues this work in the essay on Botticelli. Although Pater had scarce evidence of Botticelli's sexuality, he conducts nonetheless a queer reading of Botticelli's artistic practice and artistic production, including a brilliant reading of *The Birth of Venus*, that like the readings of Leonardo's paintings is both psychoanalytic and cultural-historical. Psychoanalytically, in settling on this painting and pointing to the Greek myth that inspired it, Pater pinpoints =the queer psychoanalytic scene or the primal scene of queer subjectivity. In that myth, Venus is born from the castrated genitalia of the father and represents the female reincarnation and embodiment of the castrated phallus. This is an idea that 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century artists have themselves subsequently drawn out in their engagements with Botticelli. Cultural-historically, Pater is also pointing to a psychosexual *mythos* that underwrote "Greek" "culture," fundamentally opposed to the Christian *mythos* and culture of desire.

## Fowl Thoughts and Sensations in Aesthetic Paintings by Marie Spartali Stillman and Evelyn de Morgan

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There are many references to birds in Walter Pater's writings. In *The Renaissance* the joyful sensuousness and creative exuberance of young Leonardo is expressed through his 'buying the caged birds and setting them free, as he walked the streets of Florence, fond of odd bright dresses and spirited horses'. By contrast, in *Imaginary Portraits*, human existence is compared to 'a bird taken captive by the ill-luck of a moment, retracing its issueless circle till it expires within the close vaulting of [a] great stone church'. If the flying seabirds delight Sebastian van Storck, it is because he associates the free 'creatures of the air' with his own passion for distance, wide-open space and purely abstract thinking. In his case flying birds are associated not with the life of the senses, as in the essay on Leonardo, but with 'only thought'. Pater's later references to birds sometimes serve as analogies for the precariousness of the soul—as

when Marius is instructed by his mother to stop trapping wild birds and start viewing his own soul as a 'white bird'—while in *Plato and Platonism* the mind is likened to an aviary full of fluttering birds which become symbols for the elusiveness of knowledge.

Bird cages and caged birds feature prominently in British Pre-Raphaelite paintings, as Elaine Shefer has demonstrated. But in late Pre-Raphaelite paintings as in Aesthetic writings, the bird takes on more complex meanings which combine abstract ideas of freedom, creativity, knowledge and spirituality with vivid sensations of sound, colour, touch and movement. In D.G. Rossetti's *Veronica Veronese* (1872), for example, the uncaged bird serves as a metaphor for artistic inspiration, its song conveying the 'marriage of the voices of nature and the soul' and 'the dawn of a mystic creation', the verse on the picture frame informs us. Recent exhibitions have revealed that among Aesthetic women painters too the use of the caged/uncaged bird motif was prevalent. This paper will examine paintings by Maria Spartali Stillman and Evelyn de Morgan which feature bird-women, wild birds, and pet birds kept in cages, aviaries or enclosed parks. The objective will be to trace the deployment and paradoxes of these painters' distinctive 'fowl' thoughts and sensations in relation to the culture of Aestheticism.

## Translating Pater like Pater? Considerations on the first French translations of Walter Pater's works by Georges Khnopff

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*Imaginary Portraits* was the first of Walter Pater's volumes to be translated in French. In 1899, the publishing house of the *Mercure de France* published it under the title of *Portraits imaginaires* with the name of an obscure poet, Georges Khnopff, as translator. The latter was not however so unknown. After he was charged of plagiarising Paul Verlaine's work, the brother of the painter Fernand Khnopff decided to keep his poems unpublished and converted himself as a translator dedicated mostly to the work of many English aesthetic authors (Pater, Wilde, Schreiner, Housmann...) but not only as he translated many other Netherlandish, German and Scandinavian authors.

Khnopff paid an early attention to Walter Pater's work at a time when the name of the Oxford scholar was still barely known in France. The quality of his work as a translator was however dismissed many times by his followers. The value of his translation was often diminished, and its impact therefore remains underestimated today.

In his review of the translation in the *Mercure de France*, the critic Robert de Souza raised a paradox. If, according to Arthur Symons, Walter Pater's style had brought 'a savour of French soil' into English, Khnopff's translation certainly erased it, rendering Pater's text in a French that appeared 'molded' on English linguistic norms. De Souza exemplifies this idea through the too frequent anteposition of the adjective used in the translation. Unlike many later critics, De Souza does not however assume that Khnopff had a poor command of English to explain the appearing infelicities of the text. He rather perceives through them a possible willing of the translator to give 'more colour' to the French version.

This paper aims to study with a close attention Khnopff's translation for the first time and think how this 'colour' of a translation could be defined concretely. Khnopff was certainly aware of Walter Pater's considerations on style and translation. By enacting these in his way of translating, I will argue that the poet-translator intersected various aesthetic and

linguistic objectives, which converged in a new and specific aesthetics of translation inspired by Pater himself.

## **Pater's Marius and the Concept of Fate**

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In Chapter XIX of *Marius the Epicurean*, Marius famously experiences a moment of clarity in which he has a vision of his self as 'determined by a far-reaching system of material forces external to it, a thousand combining currents from earth and sky'. This Pater himself saw as a correlative to the well-known passage in *The Renaissance*: the external forces which move without and within us. Morgan (2010) and Hext (2013) have explored this aspect of Pater's thought in relation to autonomy and debates about determinism, whether idealist or materialist. There is, however, another angle from which we may approach this. I explore Marius's vision in relation to a different, though related, idea: fate. If we read this passage in the context of the whole novel, Marius responds to the notions of *Logos* and providence which he encounters in the stoic thought of the Roman court. These are pillars of stoic *fatum*. Fate differs from determinism in two ways: first, it allows for fundamental ambiguity regarding human agency; second, fate as concept is particularly conducive to an aestheticist view of the universe. We might conceive of fate as literary structure writ large. I will begin by offering an aesthetic definition of fate before demonstrating the usefulness of the concept as a framework for reading Pater. My argument is not that Pater, via Marius, takes fate or providence seriously as a metaphysical concept but rather that he does so as an aesthetic framework for understanding the individual's relation to situations.

## **Michael Field and the Dream of Historical Experience**

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This paper would look at the role of dreams in recording sensations and ideas in the journal of Michael Field. After visiting the tomb of Charlemagne in Aachen, Michael Field described a dream about the chair of Charlemagne, where it appeared 'not in memory – but in actualizing imagination'. This paper would look further at the function of 'actualizing imagination' in imagining historical experience, exploring how the ambiguous boundaries between memory, dreams and hallucinations described by Victorian psychologists were negotiated by the Fields in their journal. From Pater's claim of Winckelmann's 'whole nights of fever' studying the works of classical antiquity, the fever or dream held a privileged position in aestheticism as a way of encountering and accessing the past through objects. Moving through three dreams documented in the journal, the paper would look at the sensations and ideas elicited by the uncanny feeling of historical experience, situating the Fields' exploration of memory and hallucination against late Victorian interest in the ghost story of the past.

## On Sidney Colvin and Walter Pater

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Sidney Colvin and Walter Pater were engaged in a dialogue about the theorization of “Aestheticism” and they shared a similar imagery. Both defend Aesthetic artists and poets by resorting to a similarly complex dialectics of ideas and sensations. In his “English Painters and Painting in 1867” (*Fortnightly Review*), Colvin uses Auguste Comte’s tripartite process of imitation, idealisation, and expression in art to emphasize the role of sensations and of the perception of form, line and colour – mostly to valorise Aesthetic painting. But although Burne-Jones paints a “quintessence of nature” and “ideal figures in ideal landscapes” (“Edward Burne-Jones”, *Portfolio*, 1870), Colvin also stresses that the artist’s figures express affects and are to be apprehended through the senses. In “Poems by William Morris” (1868), Pater for his part affirms that Morris’s “aesthetic” poetry “projects above the realities of its time a world in which the forms of things are transfigured” – a world which the “new poetry sublimates” and which “is a finer ideal, extracted from what in relation to any actual world is already an ideal”. Still, Pater characterizes Morris’s aesthetics as a Baudelairean cult of sensations. Pater’s reflections on the issue of the “personifications of abstract ideas” (“Demeter and Persephone”) in the human form may in fact enrich our understanding of Aesthetic and Symbolist painting: the sensible and sensuous reality of the body makes it difficult to impose a purely discursive process on the human form, such as allegorization or metaphorization. For the body primarily ripples with affects and symptoms instead of just evoking ideas and discourses.

## Escape Rooms: Queer Interior Decoration and Community in the Aesthetic Movement

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In 1876, Pater imagined ‘that *House Beautiful*, that the creative minds of all generations—the artists, and those who have treated life in the spirit of art—are always building together, for the refreshment of the human spirit’. Despite its subsequent ubiquity in the Aesthetic Movement, the evolution of the ‘House Beautiful’, from its seventeenth-century origin in Bunyan’s allegory for the Christian congregation, through to Wilde’s lecture on architecture and décor, has been overlooked. So has its importance in the lives and literature of the queer aesthetes who followed Pater.

Firstly, I suggest that Pater’s *House Beautiful* is a vision of the ‘earthly paradise’ he describes elsewhere as the product of ‘Aesthetic Poetry’, representing the ideal of escape through and into art by anyone who has ‘treated life in the spirit of art’—implying transgressive lifestyles outside the bounds of oppressive Victorian morality. Pater thus transforms the home, then synonymous with heteronormative family, into a queer escapist space for a transhistorical community of aesthetes. Secondly, I build upon the literary critical work of Dustin Friedman (2019) and the art-historical perspective of Michael Hatt (2007) to show how later queer aesthetes, chiefly poets ‘Michael Field’ and collector-artists Ricketts and Shannon, concretised Pater’s concept in the material world of interior decoration. Through wallpaper, furniture, books, and so forth, they created spaces—material, imaginary, and both—for

inspiration, intimacy, and queer, transhistorical community. In other words, queer aesthetes embraced the *sensations* implied by Pater's *House Beautiful*, without losing sight of the *ideas*.

## The 'Sensuous Element' of Prose

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Edward Everett Hale's *Constructive Rhetoric* (1896) described Walter Pater as 'the contemporary writer of English who has thought most about the power of words'. Pater's essay on 'Style' (1888) and the chapters of *Marius the Epicurean* (1885) that deal with 'Euphuism' are overwhelmingly concerned with diction. However, modern scholarship's attempts to situate Pater as a prose stylist have taken a deeper interest in Pater's syntax, ascribing certain literary effects to the unusual extent and intricacy of his typical sentence. This paper examines, from a quantitative perspective, the lengths and structures of Pater's sentences relative to those of his contemporaries. I will consider the responses of Victorian readers to Pater's syntax, as well as the responses of more recent readers of Pater, such as Denis Donoghue, Linda Dowling, William Shuter and Carolyn Williams. A quantitative appraisal of Pater's sentences suggests some qualifications that might be added to the ways in which literary scholars and historians have interpreted Pater's style. I will conclude by asking how syntax can be interpreted in the spirit of the 'aesthetic criticism' that Pater advocates in the opening of his 'School of Giorgione' (1877) – as prose's 'sensuous' and 'truly artistic' element.

## 'Decadence' or 'Sweetness'? Rereading Pater and His Context

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This paper proposes that alignments of Walter Pater with decadence are exaggerated and imprecise. To support this contention, I pursue a two-fold approach. First, a close reading of Pater's 1873 volume, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, reveals the extent of his fascination with artistic qualities antithetical to decadence. Repeatedly, Pater uses nouns such as sweetness, charm, daintiness, delicacy, and elegance, and adjectives like graceful, refined, softening, and amusing.

These terms buttress phrases which are similarly incompatible with decline, degeneracy, or downfall: 'a tranquil, temperate sweetness'; 'a more liberal and comely way of conceiving life'; 'modes of ideal living'; 'the free play of human intelligence'; 'a certain nicety, a remarkable daintiness of hand'; 'these happier ends'; 'the fairer forms of nature'; 'this engaging personality'. Pater's repeated evocation of sweetness as a positive virtue—and, presumably, one that nineteenth-century Britain was in need of—comes to the fore in two chapters on French topics: 'Two Early French Stories' and 'Joachim du Bellay'. In the first, Pater stated the theme of his volume: For us the Renaissance is the name of a many-sided but yet united movement, in which the love of the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, the desire for a more liberal and comely way of conceiving life, make themselves felt, urging those who experience this desire to search out first one and then another means of intellectual or imaginative enjoyment, and directing them not only 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 Following Pater's suggestion to divine fresh sources, in the second part of my essay I look at the work of architect Basil Champneys (1842-1935). Champneys was selected because he was acquainted with Pater. Assuming therefore that his work bears affinities with Pater's writings, I discuss several of Champneys most prominent buildings such as Newnham College in Cambridge. Terms such as charm, sweetness, or refinement are apposite, as Mark Girouard pointed out in his 1984 book on the 'Queen Anne' Movement. In tandem with Pater's writings, such buildings will be seen as part of a liberal, optimistic project that marked the most progressive currents in Britain's artistic culture of the 1870s and 1880s.

## Pater's Abelard

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Pater's decision to remove the Conclusion from the second edition of *The Renaissance* has provided evidence for what Laurel Brake has termed "the retrospective retrenchment theory of Pater's oeuvre" that imagines a Pater covered by the scandalous reception of the first edition. However, over the last two decades, Brake and other scholars such as Richard Dellamora and Stefano Evangelista offer a counter-narrative to the retrenchment theory that showcases Pater's defiance in the face of scandal and "[persistence] in exploring the possibilities of what may be called 'gay' discourse" under the rubric of classical subjects. Dellamora, for instance, considers the removal of the Conclusion a cautious safeguard as Pater found himself competing for professional advancement at Oxford but shows how other revisions to the remaining text balance this perceived loss and even increase the volume's homoerotic content. While Dellamora's work focuses principally on the addition of *The Friendship of Amis and Amile* to Pater's first chapter, he overlooks the expansion of Pater's attention to Peter Abelard in the chapter as it more than doubles from two paragraphs in the first edition to five in the second. While navigating the threat of scandal in his own life at Oxford, Pater noncompliantly expanded his readers' attention to the most famous sexual scandal in European pedagogical history. This paper offers a survey of Abelard and Heloise in the Victorian imagination, from their appearances in Carlyle, Arnold, Buchanan, and even on the London stage, to provide a relief against which we can adjudicate how Pater positions the medieval lovers as a sexual and intellectual iconoclast in the second edition of *The Renaissance*.

## Feeling the Past: The Temporality of Walter Pater's Embodied Aesthetics

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Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* establishes an aesthetics that has the potential to change our understanding of history—the past—but also the futures that can grow from it. Influenced by Victorian biology and Darwin's theory of sexual selection, Pater understands the aesthetic to be manifested through embodied physiological processes that one has when viewing a historic object. In focusing on the embodied aesthetics of the past, I

argue that treats the past much differently than it is within historicism's progressive temporality. By emphasizing how history can be experienced aesthetically, through an observer's physiology, Pater shows how the past can be revived and comes to exist in the present moment rather than relegated to history. Drawing from John Morley's review of the text, I argue that Pater's aesthetic temporality clarifies the moral call-to-action that undergirds *Renaissance*. "To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame" is not meant to inspire decadent hedonism but, instead, to inspire a careful attention to the affective and material needs that individual and communal bodies generate in moments of experience. Pater's work demonstrates that, while other Victorians popularized of the idea of progress as well as the linear and unidirectional temporality that this idea implies, other authors broke with this orthodoxy and experimented with different temporalities in various literary forms.

## Old Modernity: The Place of Novelty in Pater's Cosmopolitan Aestheticism

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R.V. Johnson once wrote in his *Aestheticism* (1969): 'The nineties [1890s] hankered after novelty – these were the years of "the New Woman", "the New Hedonism", "the New" generally – and aesthetic ideas were no longer novel' (p. 85). The aesthetic penchant for novelty that haunted *fin-de-siècle* (and then modernist) Britain owed much to the earlier decades that informed and were informed by Pater's cosmopolitan aestheticism. Anticipating the modernist motto, 'Make It New', Pater's passion for novelty was equally an ambivalent one, depending on the pan-European, transcultural intellectual tradition, as can be illustrated by his epigrammatic Greek quotation from Pindar in the 'Postscript' ['Romanticism'] to his *Appreciations*, which reads: 'Praise the wine that is old; but of song, praise the newer flowers' (*Selected Essays*, ed. by Alex Wong, p. 413). Building on recent studies including Michael North's *Novelty: A History of the New* (2013), which briefly refers to Pater's possible place in this 'new' field, my paper will further explore the complex intertextual/historical dialogue between the new and the old that contributed to Pater's aesthetic renderings of sensations and ideas from *The Renaissance* onwards. As a classicist and modern essayist-critic, Pater pursued, through building his 'literary architecture' ('style'), a deeply synchronic aesthetic space for, say, 'new experiences, new subjects of poetry, new forms of art' ('Aucassin and Nicolette'), 'this new Italy in France' ('Joachim du Bellay') and, above all, 'the novelty, both of form and of motive', 'in pleading the cause of romanticism', perhaps also 'to keep us from yawning' ('Postscript').

## Gold and Grey: Pater on Venetian Painting

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This paper considers the role of Venetian painting in Walter Pater's thought, looking at how he handles its traditional association with superb colour. "The School of Giorgione" defines the "colouring" of a Titian painting as a "weaving of light." The explanation of a "great picture" also joins colour and light, and Pater later describes a Venetian painting as "a space of colour

on the wall, only more dexterously blent than the markings of its precious stone or the chance interchange of sun and shade upon it.” Pater credits Giorgione with detaching paintings from the architectural schemes on which they previously depended for their full effect. Thus, in his account, the *Gesamtkunstwerk* breaks apart in the Renaissance. Pater’s own textual blending of color, light, and stone extends through *The Renaissance* and his other writings, where colour is associated with gold, spring, paganism, and pastoral. Monochrome is aligned with Christianity, idealism, austerity, and stone. In *Marius the Epicurean*, Pater’s blending suggests that modern England had better not aim to resurrect a golden age, as its taste for austerity demands a place in its aesthetics.

In *Greek Studies*, Pater looks at the modern art museum and finds “work in colourless stone, against an almost colourless background,” then asks the reader to envision classical sculpture surrounded with colour, like the pale nudes in Titian’s vivid landscapes. It is Venetian painting that brings colour into modern England. “Giorgione” leaves the reader with the question of how that painter “really makes himself felt in our culture.” I propose that for Pater, Giorgione’s invention of the detached painting requires re-conception of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

In cuing us to trace the interplay between coloured light and stone forms in his oeuvre, Pater in a sense restores the cathedrals of stone and coloured glass that he admires.

## More on Clara Pater

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While recently researching an article on Walter Pater, I followed up a lead in Michael Levey’s 1978 biography of Pater, which took me to some sources in the Somerville College archive. These give important new information about Clara Pater (1841-1910), Walter Pater’s younger sister, who had been affiliated with Somerville since 1879 and became Resident Tutor in 1885, serving until her retirement in 1894 shortly before her brother’s death.

The principal source is a short draft MS paper on Clara Pater by the historian Lady Anne de Villiers (dated December 1976), originally intended to feature in a history of Somerville that never came to fruition. This paper in turn mentioned two earlier sources, both of which I examined in due course. These are an obituary by Clara’s close friend, May Ottley, published in 1910, and a note by the former Somerville Principal, Dame Emily Penrose, who had been an undergraduate when Clara was still teaching at Somerville and had known her personally.

These sources help fill out the rather scanty information already available on Clara Pater by providing valuable details of her temperament, aesthetic sensibility, tastes, religious views, and social circle. Intriguingly a number of eminent men are listed and described as her ‘intimate friends’. De Villiers also casts some interesting sidelights on Walter Pater, whom we are told, ‘visited the College, entertained the Principal to tea in Brasenose and gave some of his own works to the Library’, details that counter a received view that Pater was indifferent to or even sceptical of women’s higher education. The Somerville Library Gift Book apparently lists a copy of *Marius the Epicurean* (now lost) presented by Pater in 1886.

The information given in these sources does not seem widely known and, to my knowledge, the sources themselves have not yet been published. In his biography of Pater, Michael Levey refers to de Villiers’s paper and cites some information from it. However, I suspect he did not look at the other two original sources in their own right. I would like to use

the opportunity of a conference presentation to introduce this material to the larger Pater community, with the aim of subsequently publishing an article containing transcripts in *SWPA* or another suitable journal.

## At the Edges of Thought and Feeling: Pater's Outlines

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Lene Østermark-Johansen has drawn attention to Pater's fascination with blurred outlines and frayed surfaces. This paper will show how Pater's interest in the tension between definition and indistinctness extends beyond (or rather through) the aesthetic into wider domains of thought and feeling. The idea of 'outline' acquires overlapping layers of moral, intellectual, and historical significance in Pater's work, continually negotiating between sensations and ideas. It may be aligned with reductive or illusory abstraction, as in the essay on Coleridge, which contrasts modern thought – a thing of imperceptible gradations – with that of the ancients, which 'arrests every object in eternal outline'. But if Pater is often suspicious of definite conceptions and definite messages, he is also wary of an excessive 'want of definition' such as he perceives in Eastern thought, against which 'the forms of sense struggle vainly'.

Dante treads this fine line, his 'delight in concrete definition' risking the 'insanity' that comes of a too vivid materialising of vague abstractions. Sir Thomas Browne's parallel project is to match 'a very vague range of feelings' to 'very definite objects'. In the sphere of morals, Merimée's 'absolute clarity of outline' contrasts with Montaigne's more subtle and sympathetic (but also more dangerous) moral imagination, in which 'all fixed outlines seemed to vanish away'. Such distinctions testify to the productive but ambiguous position which outlines occupy in Pater's thinking: now to be deprecated, now to be desired; here the sign of plenitude, there of absence; sometimes a portent, sometimes a remnant.

## The 'Survival of Beauty': Michael Field Reading Walter Pater

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Michael Field (Katharine Bradley and Edith Cooper) was unquestionably influenced by Walter Pater's writing. However, the precise ways in which that influence manifested itself, and, more importantly, how it shifted as their aesthetic philosophy developed, have not been fully understood by scholars. In this paper I will chart the ways in which Bradley and Cooper evaluated and emulated Pater's work from 1889 to 1895. The first section examines the esoteric critique of Pater in their three remarkable prose works published in the *Contemporary Review* in 1889 and 1890 ('An Old Couple'; 'Mid-Age'; 'A Lumber Room'). As I argue, these hybrid allegory-essays are complex interrogations of the ethical and spiritual limits of Pater's philosophy of aesthetic experience, in particular the problems of ageing and faith (examined through their allusions to Pater's 1868 review of William Morris's poetry and 'A Child in the House'). The second section demonstrates how, from 1892-4, they embraced Paterian impressionism in their unpublished cycle of prose poems, or *croquis* as Cooper preferred to call them, *For That Moment Only*. These works, which I have recently finished editing for the MHRA, offer one of the most profound attempts to develop Pater's aesthetic philosophy of

experience into the most modern of prose forms. Around the time of Pater's death in 1894 their relationship with his thought changed again. Drawing on Edith Cooper's philosophical notebooks, I demonstrate that she considered the failure of Pater's works to be the inability to 'reissue emotion into the world', which had become for Michael Field the essence of art. In early 1895 they began reading Nietzsche and concluded that, for all his similarities to Pater, the German philosopher was more able to articulate a vital and intersubjective philosophy of life. Their turn away from Pater also coincided with their decision to recommit their energies to verse drama (a form Pater could not abide) which they felt was best able to fulfil their Nietzschean view of the role of art.

## Walter Pater and picturesque landscape: the appreciation of parasitical sublimity

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My proposal investigates the picturesque, as a strategy of perception and representation of landscape first described by Reverend William Gilpin; from the art of sketching, picturesque beauty and its "little rules" would affect landscape gardening ("gardenesque"), art criticism ("Turneresque"), architecture ("Tudoresque"), as well as poetical sketches and generally fiction, insofar as the perspective grid of foreground /middleground/background applied to representation would also symbolically affect verbal composition. Its symbolic structure would determine the moral colouring of Victorian writings inasmuch as authorial perspective modelled representation.

In Pater's time the picturesque had affected and invaded tourist guides, magic lantern slides, photography; thus, earning the definition given by John Ruskin, of "parasitical sublimity"; yet in *The Elements of Drawing* (1857) the "little rules" of Reverend Gilpin became, almost verbatim, Ruskin's "laws" of composition. When Walter Pater composes his *Appreciations. With an Essay on Style* (1889) the parasitical sublimity intrinsic to the uses of landscape, and the language of pictorialism in art criticism, are subjected to a fine examination that paves the way to the dismissal of the parasitical yet pervasive, almost invisible structure. Pater's disgust with the lakes of Switzerland – "horrid pots of blue paint" – is just the visible tip of the iceberg, the indication of his profound analysis of language and its hidden structures, that contemporary critics such as George Saintsbury ("Pater as a Prose Architect") would consider a kind of "heretical deviation".

English, for a quarter of a century past, has been assimilating the phraseology of pictorial art; for half a century, the phraseology of the great German metaphysical movement [...]; in part also the language of mystical theology [...]. For many years to come its enterprise may well lie in the naturalisation of the language of science. (A, 12)

By unmasking the stereotypes of pictorial realisations, Pater moved towards the intricacy of "the latent figurative texture in speech" (A, 17), detecting the "intricacy and subtlety of the moral world" in Shakespeare (A, 188-189), Coleridge's "imaginative treatment of landscape" (A, 92), Wordsworth's choice of materials that were "conventional, derivative, inexpressive" (A, 40-42). Indeed, after reading *Appreciations*, one may share Tomasi di Lampedusa's comment on Walter Pater: "condusse la vita studiosa, ritirata e modesta dei più pericolosi fabbricatori di esplosivi."

## Connecting the liberty of the heart with the free play of human intelligence: Abelard and Héloïse and the spirit of the Renaissance

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In the opening essay on Aucassin and Nicolette of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) Pater asserted that the Renaissance spirit began and ended in France. The text which in its expanded form would develop into 'Two Early French Stories' in subsequent editions of *The Renaissance* was, in effect, three early French stories, as the twelfth-century love story between Abelard and Héloïse appeared as a precursor first of the love story between Aucassin and Nicolette (1873), subsequently of the romantic comradeship of Amis and Amile (from 1877 onwards). Following Jules Michelet, Pater depicted Abelard, 'the great clerk, the great lover', as a revolutionary force, eventually leading to the French Revolution, who in his 'sinister claim for liberty of heart and thought' instigated a passionate cult of the body together with a medieval form of freedom of thought. Having in 'The Poems of William Morris' (1868) referred to 'the great romantic loves of rebellious flesh, of Lancelot and Abelard', Pater expanded his field of interest to the close interrelationship between Love and Wisdom in the romance between teacher and pupil. Repeatedly likening Abelard to Tannhäuser, Pater made his Héloïse—sorceress, Druidess—into the counterpart of Venus, a young woman who, thanks to her expertise in the ancient languages, was brought into close contact with Antiquity and ancient passions. My paper discusses Pater's intertwining of early humanism with erotic sensuousness in a provocative tracing of the Renaissance spirit back to twelfth-century Paris, questioning the kinds of emotions represented in the essay.

## 'I am the Dog': Aestheticism and the Book

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The aesthetic and intellectual life of Michael Field, joint pseudonym of poets Katharine Bradley (1846-1914) and her niece Edith Cooper (1862-1913), was inextricably linked to their beloved dogs. Bradley, for example, was expelled from the Guild of St George in 1877 after confessing to John Ruskin that she had 'ceased to believe in God' because she had found 'comfort' in her dog, a Skye Terrier. An incensed Ruskin wrote back: 'Send me word clearly what has happened to you – then perhaps I'll let you talk of your dogs and books.'

This paper discusses the partnering of books and dogs in Michael Field's aestheticism. I will be focusing on their last book of poems, *Whym Chow: Flame of Love* (1914), written mostly by Cooper in celebration of their dog Whym Chow, whose death in 1906 brought about a conversion of both poets to Roman Catholicism. This book has some sort of cult following, with animal studies and Michael Field scholars often discussing its poems in four distinct but interlocked directions: empathy with the animal world, campness, queer domesticity and religious conversion. Here, I would like to look at the ideas and sensations evoked by the book, in particular the poets' memorialisation of the Dionysian world of aestheticism. The paper will address the emotional background of the book and its tactile quality. Central to my argument is the idea of the aesthetic book as a form of taxidermy.

## The Sense of Generosity: Pater's Teaching at the Limit

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He had but divined, by a kind of generosity of spirit, the void place, which another experience than his must fill.

Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*

Is Walter Pater a generous teacher? What might a reading of generosity in Pater contribute to a reconsideration of his pedagogical ethics?

Reflecting on these questions, this paper traces modes of generosity in Pater's *Bildungsroman*, *Marius the Epicurean*, focusing on the Flavian episode and Marius's later essayistic responses to the philosophic teachings of Marcus Aurelius. I argue that the gift of patronage induces Flavian, the elder, poetically "gifted" son of a "freedman" (63, 64) who tutors Marius at the Platonist academy in Pisa, to assume a deadly task: by reclaiming an original authority over his verse, Flavian will be able to *give* the Latin language back to itself. In this way, Flavian's ambition to revive the Latin language by purifying poetic usage of Greek and Egyptian inflection doubles as an attempt to overcome the immense obligation imposed upon him by the patronage of his father's former master.

But Flavian's purification of the language, like his overcoming of the generosity of patronage, is destined to fail, and I argue that the ethical lesson of the episode—figured in the ironic reversals of Venus and Isis and the framing of an ambivalently "original" Latin text, *The Golden Ass*—involves a recognition of the generous plurality of origins revealed at the limit of human finitude. Such a plurality, Pater suggests, cannot be possessed, properly received, or situated in a stable mythology.

Rather, this generous plurality might be *touched*. Drawing on the work of Jean-Luc Nancy, I argue that Marius's essayistic reflections upon life in Aurelius' Rome *give* readers the sense of contact, "touch[ing]" (270) up against a limit constitutive of readerly and ethical experience. I close by gesturing towards how this reading of generosity troubles traditional accounts of Pater's ethics.

## "O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts!" The Importance of Sensations and the Re-Fashioning of Keatsian Receptivity in Pater's Diaphanous Artists

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This paper aims to explore the significance of the notion of 'sensation' in Pater's writings by focusing on Pater's interest in the Romantic poet John Keats. Taking its cue from recent scholarly work on the importance of 19<sup>th</sup>-century theories of embodied subjectivity for Keats and for Pater, this paper intends to argue that Keats's (medically informed) ideas about heightened sensibility and poetic receptivity affect in significant ways Pater's conceptualization of the artist's body as 'diaphanous'.

After considering the centrality of heightened sensations for Keats's theory of receptivity, this paper will show that the expansion of physiological sympathy which lies at the core of the Keatsian aspiration to the dissolution of self (a preliminary operation for the attainment of negative capability) finds rich outlets in Pater's writings about the artist's body.

By focusing on “Diaphaneità”, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* and *Imaginary Portraits*, this paper will argue that Pater re-fashions Keatsian receptivity by subtly exploring the trope of the vanishing self, whose extreme state of consciousness, suspended between refinement and pathology, allows for a fuller encounter with the work of art. Moreover, Pater actively takes part in Keats’s complex Victorian afterlife: if Keats’s death by consumption becomes symptomatic of the (emasculating) sacrifice required from the artist’s body, Pater is fascinated by the transformation of the vanishing body into an instrument for the enhancement of other persons’ sensations. While critics exploring the Keats-Pater connection have traditionally focused on transgressive forms of erotic desire, this paper would like to argue that heightened sensations and expanded sympathy provide a further instance of Keat’s relevance for Pater’s writings.

## Conjunction and Suggestion: The Styles of Transition in *The Renaissance*

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The presence that rose thus so strangely beside the waters, is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all "the ends of the world are come," and the eyelids are a little weary.

Walter Pater, “Leonardo da Vinci”

It is perhaps because there is so much to say about it that Pater’s prose style does not get discussed at the level of detail that it deserves. The pleasures of this famous passage from the essay on Leonardo reside in its destabilizing incongruity as the millennial desire of so many men and the prophetic ends of the world come down to a little bit of fatigue around the eyes. But I will admit that my reading of this passage has always hesitated over the way the final conjunction (the “ , and” structure), suggests but does not directly declare the presence of causality.

This talk will use use Walter Pater’s play with conjunction (mainly the place of “ , and” but also touching on his use of “; but”) in order to address the power of gaps in his arguments. I am interested in identifying ways in which Pater’s style makes claims on his readers that go beyond what the ostensible words on the page indicate. Engaging closely with some characteristic moments in which appositions are created but left unelaborated, whether between paragraphs or within sentences, this talk will propose some of the ways in which Pater’s suggestive style does some of its most suggestive work through what it leaves out.

## Translating Impressibility: Walter Pater’s Octave Feuillet

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Critics have long been aware of Walter Pater’s cosmopolitanism, namely how transnational sources and networks informed his “sensations and ideas.” Increasingly, Pater’s own theories and praxes of translation are seen as key features of that cosmopolitanism. In a recent VLC essay, Stefano Evangelista argues that Pater’s articulation of literary style as “inspired translation” “radically repositioned translation as a source of individuality in writing, within a

broader theory of literary style that rejected the logic of cultural nationalism.” When it comes to Pater’s own translations, however, focus has largely fallen on his Greek and Latin source texts. This paper turns instead to Pater’s French translations, probing his decades-long engagement with the novelist and playwright Octave Feuillet.

Beginning with Pater’s 1886 essay “Feuillet’s *La Morte*,” I delve into the piece’s abundance of translated passages. I read these citations alongside an American translation of the *La Morte* published that same year; as well as an unpublished manuscript of Pater’s translation from Feuillet’s 1884 novel *La Veuve*. Doing so not only confirms the foreignizing effects of Pater’s translations but also suggests the influence of Feuillet’s work on Pater’s own fictions, especially his unfinished *Gaston de Latour*. That influence, I argue, concerns less Feuillet’s style than the structures of feeling Pater detects in his plotting and protagonist portraits. Indeed, by linking the Frenchman’s characters’ “impressibility to great things” to their “capacity for pity,” Pater signals a noteworthy affordance of the novel genre: to explore how affects mediate the ethical dimensions of *The Renaissance*’s impressionistic method.

## A Case-Study of Art Crossing its Borders: Charles Demuth and Walter Pater’s *Anders-streben*

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Walter Pater’s famous words, “all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music” (Pater, 1873), are repeated time and again and do not cease to inspire authors and academics. The sentence alludes to his concept of *Anders-streben*, which refers to the possibility of arts transgressing the boundaries of their own medium into another art form. Pater’s concept, however, still lacks a profound conceptual understanding. In particular, the practice of *Anders-streben* within the arts remains vague, and Pater’s writings insinuate more than they concretise. Nevertheless, the idea of *Anders-streben*, where poetry, painting, sculpture, etc. aim to achieve the status of music, is a recurring thought in artistic practice.

I aim to make the interpretation of *Anders-streben* more concrete by way of analysing the work of Charles Demuth (1883-1935), an American painter and one of the pioneers in modernism and precisionism. Demuth admired Pater’s work and even intended to illustrate Pater’s *Imaginary Portraits* (1887). As an artist, he was inspired by Pater’s idea that art can transcend its limits and pass into the realm of other arts (Haskell, 1987). By exploring this case-study of Demuth’s paintings (*A Prince of Court Painters* (1918), *Aucassin and Nicolette* (1921) and *O’Keefe (Georgia O’Keeffe)* (1924) in relation to *Anders-streben*, I aim to (1) provide a framework with which *Anders-streben* can be put to practice in painting, and (2) demonstrate Pater’s significance within the modernist and precisionist movements. This way, *Anders-streben* can be perceived as an “idea”; as a cultural legacy that spread to the 1910-1920s of American painting.

## Walter Pater's Philosophical Moment

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Though widely recognized as the central philosophical exponent of British aestheticism, Walter Pater's position in the broader currents of intellectual history remains disputed today. A critical consensus has tended to see Pater's thought as either ambivalent or ultimately incoherent, embracing impressionism or refined hedonism in an (ultimately) unsuccessful attempt to resist the tides of positivism and scientific materialism sweeping his era. In this talk, I argue that Pater's "aesthetic criticism" can be understood in a new and more revealing light by situating his core concepts alongside his generation's broader inquiry into the intersubjective ground of experience. I examine three theoretical terms by which Pater conceptualizes the work of art and our access to it across historical time: "touch," "impress," and "the scene of experience." Each involves, I argue, a *scene of contact* between unlike elements, and this contact reveals the artwork's participation in broader relationships that cannot be explained in existing philosophical terms. Close reading reveals that, even as he adopts the vocabulary of Hume, Kant, or Hegel, his own inquiry into these problems produces a rupture in the British empiricist and transcendental idealist terms that initially seemed to frame it. This Paterian arc is not unique, however, but follows the general philosophical pattern of his time, as I show. Situating his thought alongside the contemporaneous theories of lived experience (*Erlebnis*), expression, and understanding in the works of Wilhelm Dilthey, I show how Pater participates in a broader hermeneutic and phenomenological turn appearing at the same time in continental thought.

## Marius as Palimpsest: Further Reflections on Pater's Classicism

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In a review of *Pater the Classicist*, Richard Jenkyns reiterated his attack on Pater's classicism, opining that the aesthete was 'right not to stick to the day job'. But recent scholarship, including Matt Potolsky's edition of Pater's *Classical Studies* alongside a number of other significant publications, has gone a long way to dispelling the idea that Pater was a 'bad' classicist. The question, however, is what kind of classicist Pater was, and what kind of classicism he thought he was practicing. This paper considers this question by focusing on the ways in which Pater approaches some of his sources in the early chapters of *Marius*, treating three interrelated issues. First, it will highlight the role played by Pater's reading of the work of contemporary classicists, including Wilhelm Adolph Becker (1796–1846) and Gaston Boissier (1823–1908), whose supposed influence on *Marius* has been minimized by Billie Andrew Inman. But these were crucial sources in the composition of the early chapters of the novel, to the extent to which it becomes difficult to identify where Pater's original source ends and his reading of these sources through Becker and Boissier begins. Secondly, noting Pater's use of contemporary classicism also reveals the significance of classical authors who go unnamed in the text of *Marius*, but with whom Pater was silently engaging, most notably Varro. Such authors are, as it were, effaced from the text, their presence in the final novel palimpsestic. Thirdly, considering the state of the classical field in the late nineteenth century can help us better understand how Pater creatively reworks extant classical sources, most notably in the

conflation of the festival of the ambarvalia with the rituals of the Fratres Arvales. Situating Pater's use of classical sources in relation to his reading of contemporary classicists reveals *Marius* to be a kind of palimpsest, like one of those 'fair inscriptions' at Cecilia's curious house, in which the new is being 'woven into the faded letters' of the old. And such a model of classicism is particularly apposite for *Marius*, in which older Roman religious and cultural practices were being reworked in the context of new 'modern' forces, including Christianity.