

WALTER PATER

AND THE

FUNCTION OF CRITICISM

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... the first time ... Walter Pater ...

... of his ...

... together ...

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ABSTRACT

This study starts from the belief that the significance of Pater for criticism has been obscured and distorted by the "Pater legend", and that there has been a danger of isolating him, and of exaggerating his isolation. Pater's views and practice of criticism rested upon a concern with "culture" as deep as that of Arnold.

It has therefore been necessary to compare Arnold and Pater as exponents of culture. It has been possible to show that :

- a) Arnold started from suppositions which Pater does not take for granted.
- b) Arnold's broad, publicist, treatment was undoubtedly of great service to his generation, but left much unexplained. Pater fills the gaps.
- c) Arnold's approach was "external", Pater's was "internal", and showed awareness of the individual's needs, and of the problem of communication.
- d) As regards the theory of criticism, Pater's statement of it is more permanently helpful than Arnold's.

It is in this context that the true significance of Marius the Epicurean for Pater's theory of criticism is revealed.

Pater's formal statements of his principles in the Preface to The Renaissance have been reviewed, together with the application in his principal critical essays. The place of Pater's criticism between "pure"

criticism and the biographical/historical has been assessed.

In the belief that the publicity attaching to "Art for Art's Sake" in art-criticism is partly responsible for some distortion or blurring of Pater's purely literary position, an attempt has been made to distinguish the parallel but not identical poetic line from Blake to Rossetti and to collect French literary statements so far as they are significant for Pater, particularly the opinions of Gautier, Baudelaire, and, especially, Flaubert.

The Essay ~~on~~ Style has been analysed in considerable detail as embodying Pater's mature judgments on creative writing and the principles and function of criticism.

Finally, though this is not a study of influences, an endeavour has been made to demonstrate the significance of Pater's work for the function of criticism by relating him

- a) to representative critics of the ^{preceding and} immediately succeeding generations
- b) to some modern critics who, while not "disciples", illustrate the persistence of central ideas for which Pater contended and to which he habituated critical minds.

INTRODUCTION

The approach to Pater's criticism is complicated by the existing idea of the man himself. He became a legend in his own lifetime, and the legend has survived him. The few memoirs of him, written shortly after his death, encouraged rather than dissipated the Pater myth, less by what was said than the tone of eulogy which was used to say it. The myth was enhanced by the very attacks made upon Pater, notably by W.H. Mallock's The New Republic, in which Pater appears as "Mr. Rose", an "aesthete" in the disparaging sense of the word, whose languid conversation shocks the ladies of the houseparty, and who displays an inordinate interest in certain books of doubtful morality. Actually Pater is not the only one to be satirised in The New Republic, Matthew Arnold also suffers, but "Mr. Rose" is the cleverest of the caricatures, and probably the most damaging.

The Pater legend shows us a sort of serious Bunthorne; a man reserved, melancholy, living life for the sake of art, valuing sensuous experience as the only kind of success worth having; a man so veiled in incense-smoke that we cannot see his face. A convincing case can be made out for this Pater, supported by references to the notorious Conclusion to "Studies in the History of the Renaissance", and to that "Imaginary Portrait", The Child in the House; and this is the Pater that some critics have tended to study; notably, of recent years, Lucien Caftan. It is a pretty picture, but it is not the true one, or at any rate it is not the only one; it is simply an exaggeration, a distortion of, certain facts of Pater's life.

The events of his life are very simple.¹ Born in 1839, he was sent

1. A full account of Pater's life may be found in the works of T. Wright and A.C. Benson (see Bibliography)

to King's School, Canterbury, in 1853, where he gave small indication of genius. In 1858 he entered Queen's College, Oxford, and disappointed his friends by taking only a second-class degree in Classics in 1862. For two years he took private pupils; in 1864 he was elected to a Fellowship at Brasenose. In the early years of his intellectual life he appears to have been interested **mainly in philosophy and metaphysics** but, as his work **shows abundantly**, there was at some time a veering of interest and presently Pater found his vocation as a critic of art ~~and art~~ and literature. A visit to Italy in 1869 seems to have fixed his new interest permanently. From this period to his death, he produced at irregular intervals papers on diverse subjects, connected with what had come to be his main preoccupation. The most important ones for this study of Pater are: ~~the~~ the volume which came to be known as The Renaissance (1873) Marius the Epicurean (1885) and Appreciations (1889). He died suddenly on July 30th 1894, leaving some unfinished work, and some papers which were collected by his friend, Charles Shadwell, and published in the posthumous volume of Miscellaneous Studies.

An assessment of Pater which tries to make him an apostle of the Aesthetic Movement and nothing else tends to forget one very important fact. Pater was a critic; his most important studies are critical essays: "Marius the Epicurean", "Gaston de Latour", and even the Imaginary Portraits, some of the most attractive pieces Pater ever wrote, are critical assessments of a period or phase of thought, summed up in a personality. And it is as a critic that he is to be considered in the present study. Far too much emphasis has been laid on what was at most a transitory connection with the Aesthetic Movement, and there has been a tendency to lose sight of,

or distort, Pater's very real contribution to literature, especially to criticism. For Pater in his criticism was a creative artist: by the nature of his occupation he was a careful reader; and, as I hope to show, this essential dichotomy gives much of the peculiar effect to his work

In discussing an artist as reserved as Pater, it is all too easy to go to the other extreme, in contrast to the "legend", and see him as a solitary writing in a literary vacuum. This is just as erroneous as the "legend". The present study has tried to steer clear of both extremes, and therefore begins by considering Pater's work in relation to the problem of Culture, which he treated on a deeper level than Arnold. Having thus orientated his work as far as possible, the study proper of his criticism begins. It does not pretend to be exhaustive - which would demand a thesis of far greater scope - but merely to suggest some main points of Pater's critical theory, and by a certain amount of textual examination to see them in practice. The third chapter confronts the vexed question of Aestheticism, not in the Bunthorne meaning of the word, but as regards Pater and the function of the artist. This completes what the writer hopes will prove a more closely analytic study of Pater in relation to the function of criticism. Finally, the Conclusion endeavours to place Pater's achievement in its setting of critical doctrine and practice and to illustrate briefly the persistence of its solid and durable elements.

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CHAPTER 1.CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION.

Pater was at once one of the simplest and most complex of critics, yet it is not difficult to discover his critical principles: they are set out in the preface to his most famous book The Renaissance which appeared at an early stage in his career. They suffer no material change in after years, although they may be amplified or restricted as need arises. Nothing, it seems, could be simpler than to conduct a straightforward examination of these principles, and draw from them Pater's idea of the critical function.

I submit that to do this would be to place obstacles in the way of a real frontal attack on Pater's idea of the critic. For his criticism can be seen clearly and in proportion only within the wider scheme of his thinking over the problems of his day. This study is concerned mainly with Pater and criticism; and I have chosen to approach this aspect of his work by way of his thoughts on culture. It was within this larger framework that his criticism came into being. As I hope to show, a main function of the critic is, for Pater, to foster culture in contemporary life. Before examining his conception of the problem of culture, we may briefly consider ^{the opinion of} another, more famous, person.

I. Arnold and Culture.

To modern readers, "culture" in any later-nineteenth century context is inevitably linked with Matthew Arnold. We think of culture in terms of the words and phrases he adopted or coined - sweetness and light,

Philistines, Barbarians, Populace and other expressions. It may be forgotten that Arnold is not the only writer who took into consideration the problem of culture. Pater's contribution, for instance, has been overshadowed by Arnold's efficient publicism. Moreover Arnold is really expressing, if not a general feeling, a growing sense of malaise in the intellectual world. Arnold, as Carlyle before him, had for some time been keenly conscious that all was not well. As early as 1848 we find him writing to his mother (March 7th)

I see a wave of more than American vulgarity, moral, intellectual, and social, preparing to break over us. 1.

Presumably it broke, for in May 1855 he confided to the same sympathetic auditor, that

the want of independence of mind, the shutting their eyes and professing to believe what they do not, the running blindly together in herds, for fear of some obscure danger and horror if they go alone is so eminently a vice of the English ... the last hundred years - has led them, and is leading them into ... scrapes and bewilderment. 2.

published in the collected essays of

In his essay on Heine (1865) Arnold deplored the English middle-class "want of ideas", adopting, then and afterwards, Heine's expression "Philistines".

He wrote of the "Philistines":

They have..become, in a certain sense, of all people the most inaccessible to ideas...because of their want of familiarity with them; and impatient of them because they have got on so well without them, that they despise those who, not having got on as well as themselves, still make a fuss for what they themselves have done so well without... there has certainly followed from hence, in this country, somewhat of a general depression of pure intelligence ... the born lover of ideas.. must feel in this country, that the sky over his head is of brass and iron. 3.

1. Letters of Matthew Arnold Vol.1. (Macmillan, 1895) p.4 Arnold's italics.
2. ibid p.44
3. Heinrich Heine Essays in Criticism, 1865 p.159

Arnold was at most times in a position to judge competently the middle class of which he acknowledged himself a member. As Professor of Poetry he came into contact with young Barbarians (the sons of the British aristocracy) and as Inspector of Schools he met and observed the Philistines and Populace. Probably, therefore, his testimony is trustworthy: there seems no reason to reject it.

Obviously something was very wrong. As a first step towards righting it, Arnold tried to trace the trouble back to its source. The new "modern" spirit, which was "awake almost everywhere", recognised the "want of correspondence between the forms of modern Europe and its spirit, between the new wine of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the old bottles of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, or even of the sixteenth and seventeenth To remove this want of correspondence, he concluded, "is beginning to be the settled endeavour of most persons of good sense."¹ It was certainly the settled endeavour of Arnold.

Culture and Anarchy, which appeared in^{book form in} 1869, examined the whole question of what was wrong in (the atmosphere of) contemporary cultural life. To analyse this remarkable book would be irrelevant; Arnold points out the merits of each group of people (Barbarians, Philistines and Populace), and tries to suggest a remedy for any defects. He sees no prospect of improvement unless some radical change in education, in the widest sense of the word, takes place. "Culture" is the solution he proposes. But what is culture? Arnold abhors theories, and it is consistent with the opinions he expresses in the book that he should think them unnecessary. Culture seems a vague and formless ideal.

¹ ibid p.154-5.

We are given, it is true, some near-definitions of the functions of culture. It "seeks to do away with classes" - not by the hustling and shouting method, which Arnold urbanely disposed of in an early chapter, but by "making the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere, and by making "all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely-nourished, and not bound by them."¹ Culture is "above all, an inward operation";² and in this conception of culture Arnold and Pater are one, although they deduce different effects from it. Culture is a liberating influence, giving free play of thought; it does not support some new notion at the expense of an accepted idea. "It is not culture's aim", says Arnold, "to give the victory to some rival fetish, but simply to turn a free and fresh stream of thought upon the whole matter in question."³ Arnold perhaps comes nearest to a definition of culture in the Preface, where he proclaims it as "a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world ..."⁴ Even this is vague. What does emerge clearly is that what we are seeking is total perfection, which cannot be sought without the co-operation of our fellows, nor can it be attained without affecting everyone. As we approach more nearly to culture, this should become increasingly clear to us. "Culture.. leads us .. to conceive of true perfection as a harmonious perfection, developing all sides of our humanity, and as a general perfection, developing all parts of our society."⁵

¹ Culture and Anarchy, Smith, Elder, 1897.
1869 p.31.

² Ibid. p.viii (Introduction)

³ Ibid p.x

⁴ ibid p.viii

⁵ ibid p.x
Arnold's italics.

Culture, which is inward; beginning within the personality, moves through individual perfection to the perfection of society and thence to the perfection of mankind. In the force which creates culture, Arnold recognises two distinct impulses: the "scientific passion for pure knowledge," and the "moral and social passion for doing good."¹ These two passions he characterises broadly as "Hellenism" and "Hebraism". England seemed to be suffering from an overdose of the latter; the antidote was a good injection of the former. Neither element is sufficient in itself. Hebraism - "the moral and social passion for doing good" - is zealous in activity, without always apprehending clearly the end to which its energy should be directed; and Hellenism - "the scientific passion for pure knowledge" - is sterile, unless informed by the Hebraic desire to do good. True culture, striking a balance between these two elements, so that they may work together, is in the broadest sense disinterested. The importance of disinterestedness - which is not merely the "critical" expression of Arnold's natural urbanity, but a deep and valuable principle, is stressed throughout the discussions on culture. The emphasis was very much needed in 1869.

Throughout Arnold's writings on culture, we are conscious of the tone of instruction, the missionary zeal. And there is little doubt that this, too, was badly needed when Culture and Anarchy was published. Like Pater, Arnold sees culture as a conscious process; but unlike Pater, he works on the whole with generalisations. He speaks of culture as an "inward operation", but we do not hear much about the actual working of this process. His approach is exterior; the ground he covers is so enormous

¹ ibid p.6.

that he cannot but leave us to fill in the details for ourselves. The generation for which Arnold wrote certainly needed the wide rather than the particular vision, and there is no doubt that his writings produced an effect. He wrote as one possessing culture, as the prophet of culture and as one expecting to be believed. The modern reader, however, is left feeling sure that Arnold is right, but wishing for some more definite help towards personal culture. He will find his mentor in Pater.

II. Pater and Culture.

i. The Problem of Communication

There is almost no evidence of actual contact between Arnold and Pater, apart from the re-interpretation of one of the former's most famous dicta in the Preface to The Renaissance. Pater makes only passing references to Arnold; he was an undergraduate at Oxford during Arnold's time as Professor of Poetry, and we might reasonably look for some evidence of "influence" on the younger man, especially on this question of culture. Pater, however, had an independent mind, and the process of his thinking towards an idea of culture followed ~~in the main an independent~~ route. "Culture", after all, was a word in common use; anyone was free to interpret it as he would.

The grand difference between the two writers lies in their mode of approach. Arnold, as we have seen, called culture "an inward operation", but nevertheless approached the question from outside, leaving a blank between the bald statement and the prospect of the now-cultured one advising others on the acquisition of culture. It is precisely this gap that Pater fills.

Arnold, in his study of culture, took certain premises for granted. It did not occur to him, for instance, that the problem of culture involved the problem of communication, except in so far as it implied persuading the British Philistine that he might become cultured. For Arnold, the problem of communication is the problem of persuasion. Pater's primary assumptions are humbler; his sense of the imperative need for culture springs partly from his sense of almost insuperable difficulties besetting the communication of minds.

Pater had the advantage of two viewpoints. As critic and literary artist, he had become aware of the gulf between artist and public and the critic's responsibilities in the matter. As a student of philosophies he was conscious of the deeper implications. Curiously enough, the essay which gained the doubtful advantage of notoriety was precisely the one in which this problem is first discussed.

The much-publicised "Conclusion" to The Renaissance, written the year before the publication of Culture and Anarchy, ^{in book form} reveals a Pater fascinated and appalled by the apparent impossibility of any kind of real communication between man and man. His thought is much affected by the Heraclitean theory of perpetual flux, utter instability - the destructive aspect of Heraclitean philosophy. Moreover, by this date (1868) his vocation as critic had declared itself and he had begun to weigh the exact value of "impressions". For him, experience was nothing but a series of impressions. There is a sense of desolation in the following:

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

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This dejected view is not startlingly fresh, except in the unexpected twist of the "impression". In conjunction with Heraclitean theory, it produces a sense of almost cosmic disintegration. Experience, according to Pater,

seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality. But when reflexion begins to play upon these objects, they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like some trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions, - colour, odour, texture - in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, fluctuating, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further: the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind. 1

Communication, even in its most elementary form would seem well-nigh impossible, and culture, of course, which can only proceed if we have communication, is out of the question. Only one solution offers itself. The possession of five senses is common to most men, and although this is so wide a measure of uniformity as to admit plenty of variety in perception, it does imply a certain similarity in the way in which objects are presented to the mind.

Pater seized on this as the sole clue to a possible way out of the maze. In "Marius the Epicurean", composed between 1880 and 1885, he returned to the discussion. Here the problem is presented as it seems to the maturer intelligence. Pater speaks of "the opposition between things as they are and our impressions and thoughts concerning them.. Our knowledge is limited by what we feel, But can we be sure of our own feelings?" ²

¹ There is no satisfactory answer to that question, and ibid pp 234-5

² Marius the Epicurean Vol. 1. p.149

Pater, remarking that no philosophy has provided the perfect solution, wisely shelves it and accepts a compromise. "How reassuring ... to fall back upon the direct sensation, to limit one's aspirations after knowledge to that!" Previously he had described how his hero, Marius, acutely conscious of the disparity between reality and our apprehension of it, had become ready "to concede ... that the individual is to himself the measure of all things, and to rely on the exclusive certainty to himself of his own impressions."¹

"To himself", we notice: the impression is a certainty only to one man; he can never be sure that it is exactly the same as anyone else's. From the isolation of the personality, and the sense of perpetual change; from Pater's preoccupation with art, and the fact that the senses are our chief mode of perception: the "impression" is the logical development. The importance of the "impressions" in Pater's criticism will be discussed in the next Chapter. Meanwhile, it is likely that the "impression" will have its part to play in the scheme of culture.

ii. Marius the Epicurean

It has been said that Pater was as fully aware of the need for culture as Arnold. He very seldom permitted himself a direct criticism of modern life. But in Marius the Epicurean he had a golden opportunity for analysing the varieties of thought and belief in a period in so many ways analogous to his own. The hero is a young patrician, seeking, amid the conflicting demands of contemporary life, the answer to his problems of belief and conduct. Again, like so many of Pater's fellows, like some of Browning's heroes too, Marius is never able to accept whole-heartedly any

¹ ibid p. 144.

solution: he dies within sight of acquiescence in one which, Pater hints, may well be the most satisfactory of all - the Christian faith. Possibly this situation, beside reflecting in some measure Pater's own spiritual state, is a result of the continued obsession with "perpetual flux" - man changing, not necessarily in rhythm with the ideas of his age, for these change too. Marius the Epicurean gains much of its peculiar force and effect by working simultaneously on two levels: as simple historical re-creation, and as subtle and penetrating analysis of nineteenth-century questions. The theme has great possibilities, and Pater exploits them so that, while we remain aware of the deliberate duality of treatment, it is not obtrusive, and the book stands as a work of art in its own right.

Marius, a young patrician, passes a tranquil childhood in the calm and pious atmosphere of an old-fashioned country home. He is thus especially conscious of the anarchy of contemporary thought when he comes to participate more fully in the life of his period. As he experiments with this or that theory, he becomes aware that he can retain his intellectual freedom only by a vigorous self-discipline, an education of himself.

"The precept of culture... or of a complete education - might at least save him from the vulgarity and heaviness of a generation, certainly of no general fineness of temper, though with a material well-being abundant enough."¹

In 1867, Pater had written of another ancient culture, "Breadth, centrality, with blitheness and repose, are the marks of Hellenic culture,"

and had asked

"Can we bring down the ideal into the gaudy, perplexed light of modern

¹ ibid p.158

life?"¹

For Pater, no less than Arnold, was conscious of the new "modern" spirit but in a broader sense: the "zeit-geist", that nimbly-shifting Time-Spirit.. which is always modifying men's taste,² so that culture will never become static or sterile. The new "relative" spirit, which had replaced the old system of "absolute" judgments, is a child of the "Time-Spirit", of the nineteenth century spirit too. "To the modern spirit nothing is, or can be, rightly known except relatively and under conditions ... The faculty for truth is recognised as a power of distinguishing and fixing delicate and fugitive detail."³

Pater has arrived at conclusion similar to Arnolds, but by his own route. Arnold sees the situation from outside, Pater has reached his point of vantage from within. Reinforced by the idea of "perpetual flux" which continued to obsess him, Pater's conclusion is immensely strengthened by having a theoretical basis. It is on this solid foundation that he builds his theory of culture.

Practical experience confirmed his idea of the "impression" on which his theory of culture rests. The impression which comes to us through the senses, is our only certainty. Greater receptivity, therefore, should be our aim, for only thus can we lay hold on reality, or on what must stand as reality for us. Increase in receptivity implies a careful education of the whole personality, and especially of the senses: and this means the very opposite of self-indulgence. Pater writes of Marius that .."he would demand culture...a wide, a complete, education - an education partly negative, as ascertaining the true limits of man's capacities, but for the

1 "Winckelmann"
Renaissance p.227

2 Appreciations p.256
Postscript

3 Appreciations p.66
"Coleridge"

most part positive, and directed especially to the expansion and refinement of the power of reception: of those powers, above all, which are immediately relative to fleeting phenomena, the powers of emotion and sense."¹

The striking feature here is, first, the consistency of development, so that the basic idea of culture as "education" is better justified than with Arnold who takes it for granted; the particular kind of education Pater has in mind follows logically on the rest of the theory. Another noticeable characteristic is the realism. Pater makes no attempt to transcend "the true limits of man's capacities." Declaring for "life as the end of life" - bravely, in view of the perpetual flux of things - he deduces

the desirableness of refining all the instruments of inward and outward intuition, of developing all their capacities of testing and exercising ones self in them, till one's whole nature became one complex medium of reception towards the vision ... of an actual experience in the world."²

The practical nature of this discussion on culture is particularly noticeable. Pater, defining culture as "an aesthetic education,"³ proceeds to suggest the actual means by which we can attain this education. Nor does he minimise the effort required. The effort will be strenuous and the way far from easy, but the reward - a true, sane view of life, and a participation in it in the fullest sense - amply repays the labour. ✓

iii. Towards a Theory of Culture

For Pater, then, more really than for Arnold, culture is indeed an "~~universal~~^{inward} operation". For Arnold, it was "a study of our total perfection" : in Pater, this becomes "Be ye perfect in regard to what is

¹ Marius Vol. 1 p. 159

² ibid pp.154-5

³ ibid p.159

here and now" - a positive and encouraging ideal: culture, begins not in the future, but now.

It was towards this that Pater had been moving since his earliest essay, the involved and far from lucid "Diaphaneité" in which he attempted to describe the perfect character. The ideal expressed here, and retained throughout his writings on culture, is taken from the Imitatio Christi - Sibi unitus et simplificatus esse.¹ "Such a simplicity," says Pater, "is characteristic of the repose of perfect intellectual culture." but the use of "repose" makes us suspect that at this time he had not begun to think consistently about culture, which for him involves strenuous effort, as we have seen. He is careful to distinguish between culture and taste, which is stigmatised as "a sterile kind of culture."² The germ of a theory of culture~~n~~ is there, but it has not yet developed.

We may pass over the essay on "Coleridge" (1865), where "culture" is used loosely in various contexts, without shewing any signs of progressing towards a theory. Here the man of "complete culture" appears to be the man of urbanity, or the epitome of indifference: he is a humanist who can survey the downfall of a theory with a smile. We feel the underlying preoccupation with "perpetual flux" and the relative spirit. "Culture" is taken for granted: Pater was thinking about it, but it was not engaging the whole of his attention.

Two years later appeared the remarkable essay on Winckelmann, and here we can observe the real beginnings of a theory of culture. Pater is writing here^{on Winckelmann} as "having made a step forward in culture", since he "multiplied his intellectual force by detaching from it all flaccid

¹ Miscellaneous Studies p.217

² ibid p.218

interests... nothing was to enter into his life unpenetrated by its central enthusiasm."¹ Later he adds "Doubtless Winckelmann's perfection is a narrow perfection", but asserts also that the beneficial effect which he had on Goethe was due to "the integrity, the truth to its type, of the given force."² Winckelmann's relation to Goethe is, in fact, an example of the transmission of culture, that is, of communication.

"The aim of our culture," Pater tells us, "should be to attain not only as intense but as complete, a life as possible." Completeness is often not possible, but culture in some one direction is accessible to all... "often the higher life is only possible .. on condition of the selection of that in which one's motive is native and strong: and this selection involves the renunciation of a crown reserved for others."³ This is sound advice for the vast number of people gifted in only one direction, counselling contentment, and effort in the one way open to them. It interprets, too, the remark on Botticelli as one who "accepts that middle world in which men take no side in great conflicts, and decide no great causes, and make great refusals."

As regards the artist, Pater distinguishes two kinds of culture, which the artist may gain first for his own sake and secondly to help in the work of forwarding the "aesthetic education". Pater asks

"Which is better - to lay open a new sense, to initiate a new organ for the human spirit, or to cultivate many types of perfection up to a point which leaves us still beyond the range of their transforming power?"

His answer is that

"criticism can reject neither, because each is true to itself."⁴

¹ Renaissance p.181 ² ibid p.185 ³ ibid p.188 ⁴ ibid p.188

✓ Integrity, then, will be an important feature in the pursuit of culture. And here Pater's theory touches his idea of the artist and his integrity, expressed most plainly in the "Essay on Style" (See Chapter III, below). Accepting Hegel's praise of Winckelmann as a critic, "He is to be regarded as one of those who, in the sphere of art have known how to initiate a new organ for the human spirit" - a phrase which, as we have seen, Pater adopted, he can not admit that there is much chance of initiating such an organ in art as distinct from criticism at the time of writing. And here Pater approaches Arnold's idea of the nineteenth century as primarily a critical, rather than a creative, period. (See Chapter II below)

It is in relation to Goethe and his development that Pater tries to see Winckelmann. The young Goethe appears as "possessing all modern interests, ready to be lost in the perplexed currents of modern thought" - a sort of Marius, in fact - when Winckelmann defines for him "the problem of culture - balance, unity with oneself, consummate Greek modelling,"¹ thus checking him in a fruitless expenditure of energy and genius. But how was Goethe to solve the problem? Not by "perfection in bodily form," nor by "the direct exercise of any single talent" - the world, according to Pater, is too old for that. Here, again, we are reminded of Arnold, with his consciousness of the new spirit requiring new modes of thought. Pater at this stage is looking back to Greece as Winckelmann did, with a sigh of regret. Goethe, whom he regards as a consummate type of culture, finds his solution in a "Hellenism.. of another order .. the completeness and serenity of a watchful, exigent intellectualism." - Sibi unitus et simplicatus esse again.

By 1874, the year in which he published his essay on

1. ibid p.228

Wordsworth, Pater's thoughts on the "inward" aspect of culture had reached their maturest form. Increasingly conscious of the absence of tranquillity in modern living, he had come to value more and more the healing power of certain writers. We hear of "the supreme importance of contemplation in the conduct of life ... We see", he adds, "the majority of mankind going most often to definite ends ... but the end may never be attained, and the means not be quite the right means."¹ The effect upon these "active" persons plainly distresses him, "it being possible for people, in the pursuit of even great ends, to become themselves thin and impoverished in spirit and temper"² - to become Philistines, as Arnold would call them - "thus diminishing the sum of perfection in the world, at its very sources ..." Pater has reached an ideal similar to Arnold's harmonious and general perfection:" Pater, however, carries it further, arriving at a sort of mystical view of culture, logically better founded than Arnold's, at least apparently so: for Arnold merely sketches in his arguments, leaving us to fill in the gaps.

Protesting against the mechanism of "means and ends" which govern the lives of most of us, he points out

"That the end of life is not action but contemplation - being as distinct from doing - .. is.. the principle of all the higher morality."³

There is possibly an added reason in the Heraclitean theory for Pater's acceptance of "contemplation" rather than "action". In a changing world, in which we ourselves are changing, the bustle and unrest connected with "action" as Pater envisaged it, is not only useless, but

1 Appreciations pp.59-60 2 ibid p.60 3 ibid p.62. See also Marius Vol.1 p.100

* "In this way, the true aesthetic culture would be realisable as a new form of the contemplative life, founding its claim on the "blessedness of 'vision' - the vision of perfect men and things."

damaging. Much better, much more consistent, to concentrate on "contemplation", to pursue our aesthetic education, and by increasing our receptivity, to increase our participation in life in the fullest sense.

How, then, can culture remedy the deficiencies of modern life? Pater has an impressive answer ready;

"To treat life in the spirit of art, is to make life a thing in which means and ends are identified: to encourage such treatment, the true moral significance or art and poetry".¹

This is a key-sentence in Pater's theory of culture. It sums up the aspects of the theory which we have already scrutinised: "life for life's sake", the urgent need for an aesthetic education, involving an intensive, ceaseless training in receptivity, and certainly entailing sacrifice and effort. The notorious phrase "to treat life in the spirit of art" is explained as something rather more than the obvious, impractical and foolish rallying-cry of Wilde and the "decadents": something serious, in which the deepest motives of man's nature are implicated. Culture is not a turning away from life to art, but a directing of the whole personality to life, through the help of art. The ideal of life as "a thing in which means and ends are identified" is that ideal of culture sibi unitus et simplicatus esse: "Be ye perfect in regard to what is here and now." Pater sees this as within the grasp of everyone, if only the necessary effort is made. The phrase from the Imitatio Christi sums up Pater's idea of culture - the integrity, the wholeness he admired in Winckelmann, the sacrifice, for integrity's sake, of "a crown reserved for others."²

The special place of integrity in art, and the identification of means and ends, including the identification of form

¹ ibid p.62

² v.sup. Renaissance p.188

and subject, will be discussed in Chapter III. In the pursuit of culture, artist and public are drawn together, united by a common aim. This is where the artist and the critic can find their place in the life of the century: they can help others towards culture just in proportion as they themselves approach the ideal. In the Winckelmann essay, Pater wrote, "What modern art has to do in the service of culture is so to rearrange the details of modern life, so to reflect it, that it may satisfy the spirit. And what does the spirit need in the face of modern life? The sense of freedom ... The chief factor in the thoughts of the modern mind concerning itself is the intricacy, the universality of natural law, even in the moral order .."¹

Here he approaches the philosophy of composition, the distinction between "fact" and "sense of fact", which he expounds in the "Essay on Style" (See Chapter III, below)

We have seen that Pater, having distinguished two forms of culture, relinquishes the first,

"to lay open a new sense, to initiate a new organ for the human spirit,"

as scarcely possible for the modern world. But the second,

"to cultivate many types of perfection up to a point which leaves us still beyond the range of their transforming power,"²

while perhaps less satisfying, is still within reach. Particularly it is within the province of criticism. The critic, as I hope to show in the following chapter, must cultivate his receptivity, then communicate his impressions, as clearly as possible, to others, thus encouraging their receptivity and helping forward the general culture. The seemingly

¹ Renaissance pp.230-231

² ibid p.188

impossible gulf has, therefore, been spanned by criticism.

And here we find that Pater has reached, by independent means, a conclusion similar to Arnold's. It is time to compare briefly the approach of the two critics to the problem of culture, to see where, if anywhere, Pater's theory makes an advance on Arnold's, and to prepare to see within the framework of the cultural theory, his idea of the function of criticism.

III. A comparison of Arnold and Pater.

We have seen how Pater, starting from a point different from Arnold's, arrives at an idea of culture in some ways analogous to the famous theory set out in Culture and Anarchy. In the year before this book appeared,¹ the "Conclusion" to The Renaissance came into being. The "Conclusion" sets down the problem of communication very convincingly, and suggests a solution, without fully expanding it: there is no further frontal attack on the question until Marius came to be written in the 1880's. The return to the problem is made along the lines suggested in the "Conclusion": it may be inferred, therefore, that Pater had never really set it aside. The sense of "perpetual change" underlies most of his work. It seems likely that the problems of communication and culture had been in his mind during the time (rather more than a decade) which elapsed between the "Conclusion" and "Marius". Probably some of Arnold's observations acted rather as pointers along the road he was already travelling, than signposts into new country.

Arnold, while disliking theories, did evolve an idea of literature in which his views on culture are implicated. As a critic, he is modestly aware of the limitations of his calling. "The critical faculty",

¹ It had been published in parts in 1867

he admits, "is lower than the inventive,"¹ agreeing, of course, with Wordsworth, and he emphasises the superiority of the creative power.

The grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery: [which belong to criticism]; its gift lies in the faculty of being inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas.. of dealing divinely with these ideas, presenting them in the most effective and attractive combinations - making beautiful works with them, in short. But it must have the atmosphere ... in order to work freely ...

2

Arnold's thesis is, briefly, this: there are periods favourable to creative work and periods favourable to criticism. Of his own time, he says

"Of the intellect of Europe in general the main effort for now many years, has been a critical effort: the endeavour in all branches of knowledge ... to see the object as in itself it really is."³

Leaving aside the sentence which Pater was to adopt as the springboard of his critical theory, we notice that Arnold's opinion of contemporary creative potentialities is low: the "atmosphere" is unfavourable to creation, and an "atmosphere" of ideas is what we must have. He explains this non-creative deadlock by assuming that the critical power

tends ... to make an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself. It tends to establish an order of ideas, if not absolutely true, yet true by comparison with that which it displaces: to make the best ideas prevail. Presently these new ideas reach society, the touch of truth is the touch of life, and there is a stir and growth everywhere; out of this stir and growth come the creative periods of literature.⁴

The critic has two tasks - he must prepare and he must interpret. Criticism prepares the way for a creative epoch in which work will be produced. Criticism, subjecting this work to scrutiny, will choose only "the best", thereby creating "a current of true and fresh ideas", and

¹ Essays in Criticism. 1st series Macmillan 1889
p.4

² ibid p.5

³ On translating Homer, 1861
(Smith Elder, 1895 Edn. p.65)

⁴ Essays in Criticism. 1st series
p.5

making ready for the next creative epoch. We may understand that creative periods will tend to become more frequent, as the intellectual climate is more consistently favourable to creation. This is the great opportunity for the nineteenth century, the era of the "practical man".

Without pausing to consider in detail Arnold's critical theory, we cannot but remark the limiting effect of this seemingly unbiassed alternation of critical and creative epochs. If the critic allows himself to accept this distinction too absolutely he will tend to look for creative work in "creative" epochs only and, for that matter, to think that criticism cannot be found in a creative period. Admittedly such blind acceptance is unlikely. Surely a remark such as

"Beauty exists in many forms ... all periods, types, schools of
¹
 taste are in themselves equal."

indicates a more liberal approach, or at least a less dangerous kind of preconception. For a definite idea of "alternation" may well preclude complete receptivity and the impression we shall obtain will be a partial one only, whereas a theory of "equality" will make us more open to impressions of the literature we study, whether it belongs to what Arnold would call a "creative" or a "critical" period. Perpetual flux rather benefits than does a disservice to literature, and indeed art in general: for it keeps alert both the artist and those who wish to understand his work, thus really creating "a current of true and fresh ideas."

Pater does admit, however, that certain periods are more
²
generally fruitful in culture than others; a case in point is The Renaissance.

"The various forms of intellectual activity which together make up

¹ Preface to Renaissance p.x

² my italics

the culture of an age, move for the most part from different starting-points, and by unconnected roads . . . There come, however, from time to time, eras of more favourable conditions; in which the thoughts of men draw nearer together than is their wont, and the many interests of the intellectual world combine in one complete type of general culture.¹"

This is a less hard and fast theory than Arnold's. Pater recognises that

the supreme artistic productions of each generation form a series of elevated points, taking each from each the reflexion of a strange light, the source of which is not in the atmosphere around and above them, but in a stage of society remote from ours.²

- the classical period, which is for him even more than Arnold, the measure of good art. The elevated points, since they chart a way of excellence, recall, to some degree, Arnold's "touchstones", but the idea is never pushed to become a ready-made substitute for critical mediation.

In 1871 Pater wrote in "The Poetry of Michelangelo"

The qualities of the great masters in art or literature, the combination of these qualities, the laws by which they moderate, support, relieve each other, are not peculiar to them, but most often typical standards, or revealing instances of the laws by which certain aesthetic effects are produced. The old masters.. are simpler, their characteristics are written larger [than those of modern artists.] But when once we have succeeded in defining for ourselves those characteristics and the law of their combination, we have acquired a standard or measure which helps us to put in its right place many a vagrant genius, many an unclassified talent, many precious though imperfect products of art.³

So that very criticism which springs out of the theory of perpetual flux will eventually modify and limit it. Here Pater approaches in a minor degree Arnold's desire to "place" writers - notably Wordsworth (see Chapter II, below). Pater, however, "places" qualitatively rather than quantitatively.

The advance Pater has made upon Arnold is considerable. A discussion of the famous system of "questions" on which Pater based his

¹ Renaissance p.xiii ² ibid "Winckelmann" p.199 ³ Renaissance pp 96-97

critical procedure is not relevant here, and will be considered in the next chapter. The "questions" are a logical development of the resolution (in so far as it can be resolved) of the problem of communication, and of the "impression" theory, and are intended to help the reader to increase his receptivity. Pater does not shew the hopeful Philistine a pile of prepared quotations as "touchstones", but indicates a working method by which he can cultivate his own taste. These "questions" are suggestive, calculated to start a train of thought: the Arnold "touchstones" are lines of poetry no doubt suggestive in themselves but not of much help to the would-be cultured man. We are told that they are good poetry, but never why they are good poetry and this is typical of Arnold's approach to the whole question of culture. He looks at it from the outside, a cultured man willing to help his less fortunate brethren to become cultured too. He takes a very broad view: that is the trouble. The view is so broad that no details are visible, and we follow Arnold with difficulty, feeling that he is undoubtedly right, but wishing for more clearly marked steps in his argument. Arnold loses something too for the modern reader because his examples are so often taken from contemporary persons and events, as Bishop Colenso and the case of poor Wragg. This undoubtedly reassured his contemporaries and does not detract very much from our appreciation now. There is no doubt that Arnold's work helped his own generation; details would hardly have added anything. But culture is an ever-present problem, and the modern reader would like some more practical advice.

This is where Pater can help. His approach is essentially "internal"; he attends to the culture of the individual, which Arnold glances at but does not really explain. Pater's arguments follow

logically from both his theory and his practice. In a word, he fills in the gaps in Arnold's idea of culture.

But this rather thankless operation is not his final one. Without Arnold, he would stand as an independent contributor to the discussion of culture.

We shall, therefore, approach Pater's criticism with the expectation of a logical, closely-knit theory arising out of the study of culture, and practices in the strict sense of aiding general, through particular, culture. With this in mind, we may turn to Pater's most important body of literary criticism: the essays grouped together under the title, Appreciations.

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CHAPTER II.THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM AND THE CRITICAL METHODI. Exposition of the Method.

✓ 1873 is a vintage year in Pater's critical writings. It marks the publication of the volume now known as The Renaissance and, most important, of the Preface to the book, which is the key to Appreciations.

x The significance of the Preface, which can hardly be exaggerated, becomes apparent if we approach Pater's theory of criticism by way of his concept of culture. For he did not see criticism in a void; the preceding chapter has given some indication of the part criticism was to play in the advancement of culture. The cultural theory will perhaps have helped to clear away certain misconceptions which seem to have clung round Pater's critical theory. For example, that suspect phrase, "aesthetic criticism" falls into place if we consider culture as an "aesthetic education", "directed especially to the expansion and refinement of the powers of reception". Criticism will plainly have much to do with this expansion and refinement: the Preface demonstrates the means it will employ.

✓ This is the fountainhead of Pater's criticism, and perhaps its most striking feature is the natural, almost inevitable, way in which it arises from the central theory of communication. Bearing in mind the now familiar ideas of "perpetual flux" and the "impression", we are not surprised to find Pater dismissing attempts "to define beauty in the abstract, to express it in the most general terms, to find some universal formula

for it."¹

Useless in themselves, these efforts may yet produce some valuable criticism by the way, for "beauty, like all other qualities presented to the human experience, is relative." Discussion of abstract definitions, we are told,

help us very little to enjoy what has been well done in art or poetry, to discriminate between what is more and what is less excellent in them, or to use words like beauty, excellence, art, poetry, with a more precise meaning than they would otherwise have.

Enjoyment, discrimination, precise definition of words are all tending towards the goal of a complete, aesthetic education. Pater is writing, of course, from the special standpoint of the critic, who is the half-way house between artist and public. As artist, he can see what artists are trying to do, where they are failing or succeeding; as "receiver", he understands the needs of the public if its members are to become cultured. It is as critic that he sets down the aim of the true student of aesthetics":

To define beauty, not in the most abstract but the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it.¹

Pater is quite conscious of the duality of his position: perhaps it is more present to him than to Arnold, and this may be why Pater's criticism seems more elastic, more helpful to the individual reader. The second paragraph finds Pater using one of Arnold's now celebrated phrases as the starting point for his attack on the question of criticism.

"To see the object as in itself it really is has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever."

¹ The Renaissance
p. vii

He confines Arnold's definition to the "aesthetic critic", but this is by no means to be understood as a handicap, for within his own prescribed limits he expands the phrase until it is something that both critic and reader can use.

"In aesthetic criticism, the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly."¹

The importance of the "impression" in Pater's central theory can scarcely be over-estimated. The impression is really our sole contact with anything external to ourselves; it is, therefore, a prime necessity to cultivate and improve our receptivity so that each impression shall be as vivid as possible. And of all men the critic must clarify his impressions before he can help others towards an aesthetic education.

The suggestions which Pater puts forward for crystallising the impression are intended primarily for the critic, but the careful reader is intended to profit by them too. The "questions" which follow are searching, and in the closest sense personal: for .. "one must realise primary data for oneself, or not at all." He supposes the critic - himself - faced with some object he wishes to understand and interpret. He is then to ask himself :

"What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to me? What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence and under its influence?"²

The answers are

"the original facts with which the aesthetic critic has to do:"

¹ ibid p.viii

² ibid p.viii

Pater emphasises the precision such a critic will require, by comparing aesthetic criticism to such scientific research as "the study of light, of morals, of number."

✓ Precision and clarity of impression will absolve the critic from his abstract studies: "he who experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the discrimination and analysis of them" - we notice the strenuous nature of the pursuit: aesthetic criticism will not be a holiday for the idle mind - "has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or what its exact relation to truth or experience." These enquiries Pater dismisses with some contempt as "metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere." The aesthetic critic "may pass them all by as being, answerable or not, of no interest to him."

Pater tells us :

The objects with which aesthetic criticism deals - music, poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life, are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces; they possess, like the products of nature, so many virtues and qualities."¹

Recalling the importance of "contemplation" and "treating life in the spirit of art", and remembering that the "impression" we receive is an impression not only of things but of persons, we shall not be misled by the phrase, "artistic and accomplished forms of human life." This passage shows a logical development of "perpetual flux" and the idea of the "impression". The aesthetic critic

.. regards all the objects with which he has to do,
 ... as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each
 of a more or less peculiar or unique kind."²

¹
ibid p.vii

²
ibid p.ix

The impression we receive from each of these objects is, as the Conclusion would suggest, a complex one, made up of several elements, but the effect is of one single impression. It is the complexity of its component parts that makes each impression unique.

— One of the critic's tasks is to make this impression distinct to himself.

"This influence" of the unique sensation "he feels, and wishes to explain by analysing and reducing it to its elements."

Analysis in this sense will not produce that sense of disintegration which makes the Conclusion so dizzying: it is essential if the critic is to know his impression as it really is. To the critic, the various objects presented to his consciousness,

"are valuable for their virtues, as we say, in speaking of a herb, a wine, a gem: for the property each has of affecting one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure."

Clearly connecting this with his idea of culture, Pater adds

"Our education becomes complete in proportion as our susceptibility to these impressions increases in depth and variety."

— The critic's part will be to encourage his own receptivity so as to "realise" his impressions as distinctly as possible, and then to report his findings to others.

— "The function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, to analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others.." ¹

Everything to do with the impression is brought under scrutiny, so that

¹ ibid pp. ix-x.

finally the critic will be able to isolate the "virtue" of the object he is considering and to convey his discovery to his readers. In this he will be better served by a sensitive mind than by an abstract intelligence:

"What is important is not that the critic should possess a correct abstract definition of beauty for the intellect, but a certain kind of temperament, the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects."

- Critics, in fact, are born, not made. Criticism is, in a sense, a dedicated service, a vocation: it is certainly not something that can be taken up half-heartedly. The entire personality of the critic is - ideally - too much involved.

- Pater now moves logically away from the sympathetic power of the critic, as opposed to the ~~application~~ of abstract definitions, back to the statement: "Beauty is relative". The aesthetic critic, bearing this always in mind, will be freed from preconceptions, and come to every object with a fresh mind. The objects in his case will mostly be artistic objects. In considering these, says Pater

"he will remember always that beauty exists in many forms. To him all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal." ¹

Whether an entire freedom from preconceptions is possible, or even desirable, in the critic, need not be discussed here; in any case, as the comparison between the respective approaches to culture of Arnold and Pater showed, "equality" is just as much a preconception as "alternation", even though the former may be a more liberal notion. What is really striking is the singularly broad, yet centralised, idea of criticism. Pater extends logically the idea of distinguishing a

¹ ibid p.X

special "virtue" in an object, to a wider function of criticism. Of the critic he says,

"The question he asks is always: in whom did the stir, the genius, the sentiment of the period find itself? Where was the receptacle of its refinement, its elevation, its taste?"

Even if the critic possesses the ideal critical temperament, together with a clear idea of his taste and how to set about it, he still has to take into account the vagaries of the artist. For he too has his "flux". Often, the critic is warned,

"it will require great nicety to disengage this virtue from the commoner elements with which it may be found in combination. Few artists ... work quite cleanly, casting off all débris, and leaving us only what the heat of their imagination has wholly fused and transformed."¹

As an example Wordsworth is chosen, foreshadowing the essay of the following year.

The rest of the Preface explains the choice of subject in the essays that follow. They illustrate different aspects of the Renaissance, in a wide sense "disengaging the 'virtue'" of each aspect, so as to sum up "that complex, many-sided movement", at least as Pater saw it. As so much of the Renaissance sprang from Italian sources, it is ~~fitting~~ fitting that the greater part of these studies should be devoted to Italian subjects. Pater does, however, return to France, where he had already detected an "early Renaissance" in the Middle Age; to consider the "Pléiade" - characteristically not through Ronsard, its chief glory, but through Du Bellay, by virtue of his treatise, Deffense et Illustration, and work for the French language. Some of the Renaissance studies were composed before the Preface, and many do not bear the stamp of the mature workman.

¹ Ibid pp. x-xi

But what gave the book its popularity apart from the "succès de scandale" of the Conclusion (which seems to have been enjoyed all the more because it was misinterpreted) was the freshness of approach to a well-known subject, the attempt to give a close personal interpretation (in the best sense) of works almost unknown or almost too familiar, all of which can be traced to the sense of dedication with which Pater confronted his task.

II. Application of the Method - Appreciations. Wordsworth.

Pater's critical theory must have been in process of formulation in his mind for some time before it achieved expression in the Preface to the Renaissance. It is the essay on Wordsworth that first demonstrates fully the method in practice. Written in 1874, the essay had already been anticipated by a hint in the Preface itself. To illustrate the difficulty of "disengaging the virtue" in an artist's work, Pater had written of Wordsworth,

The heat of his genius, entering into the substance of his work, had crystallised a part, but only a part, of it; and in that great mass of verse there is much that might well be forgotten. But scattered up and down it, sometimes fusing and transforming entire compositions ... sometimes as if at random, depositing a fine crystal here and there, in a matter it does not wholly search through and transform, we trace the action of his unique, incommunicable faculty ... Well! that is the virtue, the active principle in Wordsworth's poetry; and then the function of the critic of Wordsworth is to follow up that active principle, to disengage it, to mark the degree in which it penetrates his verse. ¹

The essay on Wordsworth shows Pater admirably fulfilling this function. The first sentences touch on the famous distinction between the Fancy and the Imagination, and move to what Pater considers "a deeper and more vital distinction" involved, with which criticism can be more profitable concerned, namely

"between higher and lower degrees of intensity in the poet's

¹ Renaissance p.xi

perception of his subject and in his concentration of himself upon his work."¹

Whether the distinction Pater makes is really deeper and more vital, is open to question. It certainly arises naturally out of Wordsworth's paragraph. There is a suggestion here of the distaste Pater had by this time come to feel for metaphysics. His use of "perception" recalls the problem of communication, which was never far from his mind.

Pointing out the inequalities of Wordsworth's work, and relating them in some measure to events in the poet's life, Pater tries to cut through them to arrive at the real subject for criticism.

By making the most of these blemishes it is possible to obscure the true aesthetic value of his work... And those who wish to understand his influence, and experience his peculiar savour, must bear with patience the presence of an alien element in Wordsworth's work which never coalesced with what is really delightful in it, nor underwent his special power.²

How like the Preface! Pater is "driving directly" at the discrimination and analysis "of his own impressions", for himself and others.

Throughout his essay, and in the best of the post-Preface studies, there is this sense of personal discovery which is the result of Pater's individual method. His receptivity gives him an insight into the workings of the poet's mind, so that he is able to link one of Wordsworth's fundamental ideas with his actual work: the poet himself seems unconscious of illustrating his own theory in this instance :

He who thought that in all creative work the larger part was given passively, to the recipient mind, who waited so dutifully upon the gift, to whom so large a ^{measure} part was sometimes given, had his times also of desertion and relapse; and he has permitted the impress of these two to remain in his work.³

Recalling the idea of poetry as a "possession" by a divine power,

¹ Appreciations p.39.

² ibid p.40

³ ibid p.41.

Pater turns this duality in Wordsworth to account on behalf of the modern reader :

"This constant suggestion of an absolute duality between higher and lower moods, and the work done in them, stimulating one always to look below the surface, makes the reading of Wordsworth an excellent sort of training towards the things of art and poetry." ¹

The underlying preoccupation with culture is still to be felt. Candidly admitting that Wordsworth attracts few, especially among young readers, Pater remarks that the reading of him nevertheless

"begets ... a habit of reading between the lines, a faith in the effect of concentratedness and collectedness of mind in the right appreciation of poetry, an expectation of things, in this order, coming to one by means of a right discipline of the temper as well as of the intellect." ²

And Pater, embarking upon a persuasive piece of special pleading, in an effort to convey his own enthusiasm, arrives at something not unlike Arnold's "touchstones", but with this striking improvement: he proposes to show us just how Wordsworth can help an critical faculty, not only as regards the criticism of art, but in "speech, feeling, manners", too: so that we shall distinguish

"that which is organic, animated, expressive"

from what is

"conventional, derivative, inexpressive." ³

Acknowledging the utility of selecting for oneself the best of Wordsworth Pater imagines the choice already made, and proceeds to ask questions reminiscent of the Preface:

"What are the peculiarities of this residue? What special sense does Wordsworth exercise, and what instinct does he satisfy? What are the subjects and the motives which in him excite the imaginative faculty? What are the qualities in things and persons which he values, the impression and

¹ ibid p.41

² ibid pp.41-2

³ ibid p.42

sense of which he can convey to others, in an extraordinary way?"¹

This brings us to the actual critical part of the essay, and Pater begins by tracing, in modern poetry, and as "a singular chapter in the history of the human mind,"

"an intimate consciousness of the expression of natural things which weighs, listens, penetrates, where the earlier sense passed roughly by."

'Of this new sense' says Pater, "the writings of Wordsworth are the central and elementary expression .." Touching lightly on the poet's temperament and circumstances, he relates Wordsworth's peculiar sensibility to the placidity of his life. Next he embarks on a closer scrutiny of his poetry:

To read one of his longer pastoral poems is like a day spent in a new country: the memory is crowded for a while with precise and vivid incidents.²

This is Pater's own impression³: everywhere there is the effort to "discriminate", to "realise distinctly", this impression. Obviously it is impossible to discuss adequately the whole achievement of Wordsworth within the compass of an essay: it is in such a case that Pater's principles of selection come into their own. / In his attempt to disengage the "virtue" of the poet, he suggests that Wordsworth has much to offer us in vivid description of sights and sounds, even of abstract impressions; or of "the whole complex sentiment of a particular place" or time. This leads to the "moral or spiritual life" which Wordsworth detected in natural objects; in one of those flashes of penetration which in themselves make his essays rewarding, Pater compares this sentiment to a "survival" of

1

ibid p.43

2

ibid p.45

3

my italics

"that mood in which the old Greek gods were first begotten."¹

The next paragraph reveals what it was that Pater valued particularly in Wordsworth:

an exceptional susceptibility to the impressions of eye and ear ... it is only in a temperament exceptionally susceptible on the sensuous side, that this sense of the expressiveness of outward things comes to be so large a part of life.

Receptivity, and a mind scrupulous in noting its own impressions, are plainly the main attraction for Pater; no wonder that he praised Wordsworth's power of healing for the diseased mind of the century. Moving from the poet's view of nature "ennobled by a semblance of passion and thought", he considers Wordsworth's approach to humanity under natural influences and intimately linked to nature: and thence moves to religion in Wordsworth, and the theory of the "real language of men". The next section touches on Wordsworth's philosophical thought and then goes on to discuss expression in his poetry.

The assessment of Wordsworth's value to the modern reader, with the plea for "contemplation", which has already been reviewed as part of Pater's scheme of culture, (see Ch.I, above) ends the essay. It is a complete vindication of the theory expounded in the Preface. Wordsworth is a particularly difficult subject to treat in the round; it is far easier to choose some single aspect of his work and concentrate on that. But Pater chose to discuss his own impression of "the whole Wordsworth", to "discriminate" it, to "realise" it, first for himself, then for others. The result is a brief but just summary of Wordsworth, perhaps the best introductory essay of all. It does not pretend to be exhaustive, and it succeeds on the level Pater chooses.

It is perhaps unfair to compare this essay with Arnold's on the

¹ ibid p.48

same subject. Arnold's was intended as an introduction to just such an anthology as Pater had envisaged: a selection of Wordsworth's best poetry, carefully separated from his less powerful work. Such a comparison does serve to show the difference in critical attitudes. Arnold, as usual, is preoccupied with the general advancement of culture: "making the best ideas prevail" by means of criticism. This makes him particularly anxious to rehabilitate Wordsworth, whose work was suffering, it seems, general neglect, whereas in the years 1830 - 1840 he had enjoyed great popularity. Arnold wants to "place" Wordsworth, to get him acknowledged as a classic, and his method certainly has the grandeur of simplicity: he merely makes a list of writers to whom Wordsworth is superior.

Arnold, like Pater, is conscious of the "mixed" nature of Wordsworth's poetry: he notes the peculiar "inspiration" in Wordsworth, which partly accounts for the duality in his work. So far he runs parallel to Pater, and his observations seem true and just. But when, distrusting the blind enthusiasm of the "devout" Wordsworthian for the poet's "scientific system of thought and formal philosophy", he is led to reject the "Prelude" and deny to the "Immortality Ode" anything more than the faint praise of possessing "undeniable beauty as a play of fancy", there is surely evidence that a less superficial study, even if it covered less ground, might have been more useful. There is no doubt, however, that Arnold's generation did find his criticism helpful, and his Wordsworth essay is no exception. The broad, general sketch was far more suggestive than close, practical analysis.

Nonetheless, even allowing for differences of intuition and circumstance of the respective essays of Arnold and Pater, we cannot but

feel that a reader who knew nothing of Wordsworth would be more helped towards a lively appreciation of his poetry by Pater's "personal" criticism than by Arnold's "public" approach. Pater's essay is the more encouraging for the modern reader who is perhaps better equipped to think for himself than were the contemporaries of the two critics. In this sense, at least, Pater is ahead of his time.

III. Application of the Method (i) Later Essays

So much for the first full demonstration of Pater's critical theory: a triumphant vindication. It is possible, of course, that the "Wordsworth" may be an isolated success: but an examination of some of the essays which follow it proves the contrary.

Of his studies of single writers, the "Charles Lamb" and "Sir Thomas Browne" are outstanding. The essay on Lamb (1878) is one of Pater's most attractive and penetrating pieces of criticism, revealing the affinities Pater recognised between himself and Lamb. Of Lamb's critical method he writes,

To feel strongly the charm of an old poet or moralist .. and then to interpret that charm, to convey it to others ... this is the way
1
of his criticism,

and it exactly describes Pater's way, too. This essay is very close in spirit to the Preface: even the idea of "virtue" is present when he speaks of

the very quintessence of criticism, the choicest savour and perfume of Elizabethan poetry being sorted, and stored ...
2
with a sort of delicate intellectual epicureanism ..

1
Appreciations p.112

2
ibid pp. 111-112

The language here is strongly suggestive of the Preface. There is an echo of the "Wordsworth" too in this comment on Lamb's contemporaries "Many were greatly occupied with ideas of practice"¹ - doing as distinct from being. Lamb does to some extent fulfil Pater's ideal of "contemplation" in his intensely personal writings. Beginning from the distinction between Wit and Humour, which came to England from Germany with the "Fancy-Imagination" distinction, Pater approaches Lamb as marking a transition from the eighteenth century convention to the "deeper subjectivity" of the nineteenth, and as embodying in his writing the critical distinction between Wit and Humour. The union of "grave, of terrible even with gay"² in the later Humour, Pater traces in Lamb's own life and circumstances and in his work. Lamb's attitude to his own writing as coming

to gild or sweeten a life of monotonous labour, and .. as far as regarded others, no very important thing,

in itself made his work enduring. For Lamb is not concerned with ideas of practice - religious, moral, political - which have since ... entered permanently into the general consciousness,

and which

have lost, with posterity, something of what they gained .. in immediate influence.³

Lamb, whose work is

still full of curious interest for the student of literature as a fine art⁴

(a phrase which will command our attention in the following chapter) is

¹ ibid p.109

² ibid p.106

³ ibid p.109

⁴ ibid p.106

untroubled by these ideas. Pater says

In the making of prose, he realises the principle of art for
its own sake,¹

and thereby contributes to that spirit of contemplation which was discussed
in the "Wordsworth". By this, and by his contemplative spirit, Lamb has
reached "an enduring moral effect .. in a sort of boundless sympathy."²

He works

ever close to the concrete, to the details .. of actual
things, books, persons, and with no part of them blurred to his
vision by the intervention of mere abstract theories.³

✓ There is thus a notable similarity in the critical aims of Pater and
Lamb. The excellence of Lamb's criticisms depends largely on its being
informed by his sympathy, which is so keen that his style finally "reaches
the length of a fine mimicry", as in his discussion of Sir Thomas Browne:
for Lamb is, of course, an excellent stylist. His qualities as a humourist
give him a peculiar view of his own period, almost as though it were already
past: he "anticipates the enchantment of distance" and his "subjectivity"
marks him as of the family of Montaigne, a writer for whom Pater had the
greatest admiration.⁴ The essay marks the attractive qualities of Lamb,
and while not attempting any detailed analysis, it does convey an
"impression" of Lamb - Pater's impression. And this is strictly in
accordance with the Preface.

It is fitting that in the arrangement of "Appreciations" the study
of Sir Thomas Browne (1886) should follow the "Charles Lamb" since Browne
is as individual and personal a writer as Lamb, and was indeed a great

¹ See Chapter III, below ² ibid pp.109-110 ³ ibid p.109

⁴ See, for instance,
the Chapter "Suspended
Judgment" in Gaston
de Latour

favourite of his. Browne, too, is a humourist "to whom all the world is but a spectacle in which nothing is really alien from himself;"¹ and his style is particularly suited to this quality in him.

Pater sees Browne as a perfect example of one type of pre-Dryden prose: eminently occasional, closely determined by the eager practical aims of contemporary politics and theology, or else due to a man's native instinct to speak because he cannot help speaking.²

He points out the inevitable faults of the "overheard" style - unevenness, lack of design and authority - but is willing to accept them for the sake of that "absolute sincerity" of Browne and his kind who "belong to, and reflect, the age they lived in."³ For Browne is not unique in his time. These writers have no sense of a "public" but "only a full confidence in the 'friendly reader'."⁴ It is characteristic of Pater's individual critical method, that he should choose as representative of the middle years of the seventeenth century in his writings, one who, while not indifferent to politics and public affairs, remained undisturbed by them - in a sense, another "contemplative". Pater shrewdly remarks of Browne,

His mind has much of the perplexity which was part of the atmosphere of the time,⁵

and observes that his great learning

completed his outfit as a poetic visionary stirring all the strange "conceit" of his nature to its depths.⁶

Part of Browne's detachment (in so far as he was detached) comes from his possession of "some inward Platonic reality of .. church or monarchy - to hold by in idea,"⁷ whether they were in actual fact disestablished or not.

¹ ibid p.128 ² ibid p.124 ³ ibid p.127 ⁴ ibid p.124 ⁵ ibid p.130 ⁶ ibid p.130
⁷ ibid p.132

Part of the essay is concerned with Browne's life, because it is inextricably mixed with his work. Browne's sense of poetry which overcame the true scientist in him, depends upon the vaguer possibilities of science, rather than on its real poetry - the revelation of truth by time.¹ Behind the essay lies a judicious estimate of the state of science in Browne's day. Once again, Pater does not attempt anything like a detailed study. What he gives us is an interesting sketch, or something more: an "impression" of the man and his work. As in the case of the "Charles Lamb", the impression is singularly clear and well defined. It is characteristic of the freedom and elasticity of his criticism that Pater does not discuss only the Religio Medici - admittedly the most important of Browne's works - but recommends also the attractive Urn Burial and Letter to a Friend as giving a true picture of the author's temperament and style. This is^a sympathetic study: the ~~quasi~~ scientific attitude towards criticism which Pater adopted in the Preface is inclined to cede before the apprehensions of his sympathetic temperament. This is consistent with what Pater has to say, two years after this, in the Essay on Style.² Pater's mental affinity to Browne is demonstrated in the following passage, which is really an offshoot of Heraclitean theory:

As is certainly the case with colour, music, number ... there may be whole regions of fact, the recognition of which belongs to one and not another, which people may possess in varying degrees; for the knowledge of which, therefore, one person is dependent upon another, and in relation to which the appropriate means of cognition must lie among the elements of what we call individual temperament.³

This, too, seems to reach forward to the particularised concept of "soul"

¹ This looks forward to the Essay on Style, two years later, with its distinction of "fact" and "sense of fact".

² See Chapter III, below
³ Appreciations
p.160

in style,¹ which will be discussed later.

The essay on Browne was written thirteen years after the Preface: the critical method outlined then is still in use, and still successful.

"Marius" is supposed to mark Pater's literary maturity; this essay is post-Marius and promises no falling off in the years to come.

Application of the Method (ii): Shakespeare studies.

But the volume of "Appreciations" is not concerned entirely with writers "in the round". There are three Shakespearian studies too, of which one, on Measure for Measure, was written in the same year as the "Wordsworth". Drama, especially Shakespearian drama, will be another kind of test for Pater's critical method. Adapted to dramatic criticism, it again proves its worth. By careful application of his "questions", by sensitive, painstaking study, above all by receptivity, Pater succeeds in realising and conveying with precision his "impression". He is not attempting to criticise the play as he has seen it acted, but solely as a work of literature.

One of the difficulties of Shakespeare criticism is, paradoxically, the existence of a large body of work on the subject. An unbiased view is almost impossible. Pater, as much as anyone, achieves this near-miracle. He is not unaware of existing criticism, as ironical references to German commentators in the essay on Love's Labours Lost would show. Starting from Shakespeare's handling of an old story, he postulates that in Measure for Measure, with all its irregularities and passages of unequal poetic or dramatic value, we have an example of "suggestive" writing, which

brings into distinct shape the reader's own half-developed imaginings.²

¹ See Ch. III

² Appreciations p. 173

"e recognise, in this description, the type of writing that Pater was best qualified to discuss, by reason of his essentially subjective approach. He hints, indeed, here and elsewhere, that a certain sympathetic temperament is desirable in the reader. (This, again, looks forward to the Essay on Style.) In Measure for Measure, the attention of the sympathetic or receptive reader will be directed "along certain channels of meditation beyond the immediate scope of Shakespeare's work,"¹ to discover, in fact, the "virtue" of the play.

The emphasis is on the personages of the play: their value, dramatic and symbolic, the use of contrast in characters or scenes, finally the language of the play. The piece itself, Pater reminds us, deals with "mere human nature", and conveys "a strong sense of the tyranny of nature and circumstance" pleading finally for a "finer justice ... based on a more delicate appreciation of the conditions of men and things" - in short, for sympathy in the pure, original sense of the word. In its ethics, Measure for Measure stands as "an epitome of Shakespeare's moral judgments." While pursuing this argument, Pater delivers some penetrating comments on the play itself, particularly on the affinities with Greek tragedy of the Isabella-Claudio theme, which he considers more psychologically interesting than the Isabella-Angelo episode. The whole is firmly anchored by the research which plainly accompanied the study of the play itself. This is never allowed to become the end in itself as can so easily happen in Shakespeare criticism. The essay is a sensitive and sensible piece of writing on a far from easy subject.

The short study of Love's Labours Lost (1878) shows Pater's talent for

¹

ibid p.173

interpreting little-known or misunderstood works. It proves again the success of his method, showing how Shakespeare "brings a serious effect out of the trifling of his characters",¹ though the play in itself is significant mainly for its wit and poetry. There are some interesting comments on Euphuism: the play exhibits, for Pater, "the manner in all its stages",² and Euphuism itself seems to him a reflection of the "real inward refinements" and "capacity for selection" of the Elizabethans.

Less successful is the later study, Shakespeare's English Kings(1889). The subject is too unwieldy for the minute, personal approach of a single Paterian essay: it lacks unity, and in his efforts to supply the want, Pater is guilty, unconsciously, of one of his few pieces of dishonest criticism. Had the essay been confined to "Richard II", which is admittedly the main interest, it would have succeeded brilliantly. The greater part of the essay is a sensitive appreciation of the character of Richard himself. But the theory of the chronicle plays as demonstrating the irony of kingship is hardly tenable. It is noticeable that Pater by-passes those plays which do not prove his theory: and to state that the keynote of Shakespeare's chronicles is expressed in Henry V's "I think the king is but a man, as I am," is to wrench a speech out of its context.

There is the feeling that Pater has not been able to give his critical faculty full play until he embarks on Richard II, and as he had already committed himself to studying "Shakespeare's English Kings", he could not devote himself entirely to Richard. Hence his essay misses by a hair's breadth the success of Measure for Measure.

Every critical method has its limitations, and the main stricture on Pater's so far seems to be that his method is successful until he tries to

¹ ibid pp.161-162

² ibid p.165

do too much with it. The method is adhered to with great fidelity and is an unequivocal success in the "Wordsworth", the "Charles Lamb" and the "Sir Thomas Browne" in one category, and in the "Measure for Measure" and "Love's Labours Lost", in another. But in Pater's application of the theory, there is a wider interpretation of the critical function, which will be discussed in the next section.

IV. For Pater, the terrain of criticism is the mind of the critic. The "primary data" which he has to "realise for himself or not at all", are answers to a set of questions the critic must put to his own mind. But is the average reader going to accept this? How far is any one person's impression valid for another? Has the reader no right to some facts that cannot be altered, however unconsciously, by the critic? Is the "impression" itself, as it stands, going to be adequate or will the critic need something more to complete it?

A reading of Pater's most successful essays shows that he was conscious of that need. The studies are all firmly anchored to reality by solid references to the life, times and circumstances of the person under discussion. This is particularly the case with the later essays, and indicates Pater's increasing respect and admiration for another eminent practising critic, some years his senior - Sainte-Beuve, who declared

"La littérature, le production littéraire, n'est point pour moi distincte ou de moins séparable du reste de l'homme: je puis goûter une œuvre, mais il m'est difficile de la juger indépendamment de la connaissance de l'homme même: et je dirais volontiers: tel arbre, tel fruit.¹

Sainte-Beuve, therefore, aimed at knowledge and interpretation of the man behind the work, taking a sane view which occasionally needs to be

¹ Sainte-Beuve. "Chateaubriand",
Nouveaux Mundis, t. 3 (Michel Levy, 1870 edn) p.15

be emphasised: namely, that the artist is a man like other men.

Entrer en son auteur, s'y installer, le produire sous ses aspects divers, le faire vivre, se mouvoir et parler comme il a dû faire: le suivre en son intérieur et dans ses moeurs domestiques aussi avant que l'on peut; le rattacher par tous les côtés à cette terre, à cette existence réelle, à ces habitudes de chaque jour, dont les grands hommes ne dépendent pas moins que nous autres, fond véritable sur lequel ils ont pied, d'où ils partent pour s'élever quelque temps, et où ils retombent sans cesse.¹

So wrote Sainte-Beuve in his study of Pierre Corneille (1829). All this elaborate enquiry is intended to distinguish and separate the influence which the artist's life and circumstances have had upon his work. By process of elimination, the critic will discover exactly how much is due to genius.

The obvious danger is that the enquiry may become an end in itself, and legitimate curiosity turn into impertinence. Sainte-Beuve's questions do in fact become personal to an unnecessary degree in the essay on Chateaubriand. But what is important is the ^{quasi-}scientific spirit in which he approaches literary criticism. This spirit, as I have indicated, is present to some degree in Pater, in the language and general attitude of the Preface, but it is rather ~~quasi-scientific~~ than scientific. Pater, partly because of his temperament, partly because of his method, which is in a sense due to his temperament, found it impossible to maintain a truly scientific detachment. He was conscious of the limitations of an approach like Sainte-Beuve's. Sainte-Beuve turned from the work to its creator, and looked forward to a time when

les grandes familles d'esprits et leurs principales divisions
seront déterminées et connues

¹ Oeuvres t.1 Gallimard, 1949
p.677

an idea which appears to go back to Goethe's "Conversations d'Eckermann".¹

Sainte-Beuve, however, realised that his critical method must fall to the ground if data about the author were insufficient. It could not be applied, for example, to the ancient writers: they must be judged on their work alone - a "pure" literary criticism akin to^{that of} the Pater of the Preface. He recognised the text as of great importance. "Une très-large part appartiendra toujours à la critique de première lecture et de première vue",² and, finally, concluded that no matter how precise a scientific criticism might become, only a critic qualified by experience and temperament - in other words, an artist - should practise it. His theory touches on Pater's: the emphasis on textual criticism and on the true critical temper recall the Preface: While Sainte-Beuve drives at knowledge of the author as an end in itself and of his work for that end, Pater aims at a purer criticism, helped out by such details of the author's life as may be relevant to that criticism. There is evidence in the Preface of a certain knowledge of Sainte-Beuve, and a certain affinity of mind: not only in the references to "a recent critic of Sainte-Beuve" (which might mean nothing, but might, on the other hand, imply that Sainte-Beuve was a classic to Pater, so that he read criticism written on him) but in the analytic language employed, and the essentially concrete nature of the discussion. The effort to distinguish "virtue" is analogous to Sainte-Beuve's search for what is due to "genius".

Pater's essays show an increasing awareness of possible links between an artist's life and his work, although unlike Taine (a confessed disciple of Sainte-Beuve) he does not carry the idea to a sort of logical mania in which race, environment and time become more important than the

¹ Nouveaux Lundis, t.3
éd. cit. p.16

² ibid p.24

work they are supposed to have produced. Pater wants to discover the ¹ essence of an artist: what he does, what means he employs, the ultimate achievement, and what he has to offer us: then he communicates his findings to others. Often his subjects, beside standing as artists in their own rights, illustrate some point in the development of the human mind. This is the key to the selection and arrangement of the Renaissance volume. In most of the studies in this book, the artist's background is sketched in where it is known. Pater, of course, draws largely on Vasari's Lives of the Painters. He differs from Sainte-Beuve in that he concerns himself only with such circumstances as are directly and obviously relevant. He recounts, for example, the bare facts of Michaelangelo's childhood and his first encounter with the arts, and then suggests the circumstances of life, travel and study which may have produced the peculiar blend of "strength and sweetness" in his work. The child's first experience of the art he is to prosecute seems to be of great importance to Pater, just as the significant point for Sainte-Beuve is the moment when the young artist produces his first masterpiece. Exterior events are brought in only in so far as they impinge upon the artist or his work: Botticelli is cited as one singularly free from the great conflicts of the world, and Leonardo as an example of "political indifferentism". /In the case of Winckelmann, Pater rightly treats the man and his work as inextricably mixed.

Appreciations works on the same principle. References to the life of the author are made only as his work is involved, or as the work reveals the life. Lamb's melancholy, his quiet humour, and intimate style, are related to his childhood, his poverty, and his tragic home

circumstances. In Browne's case the Civil War and Restoration are indicated *merely* because they had certain repercussions on his work. His character is discussed *simply* because it made his style what it is, his family because the letters of Browne are under scrutiny. The "Wordsworth" essay ignores the details of the poet's life, because they are not germane to Pater's study; the even tenor of his days, and the profound effect of his surroundings on his poetry are *mentioned*. The Political poetry is ignored because it belongs to another side of Wordsworth, with which Pater is not concerned.

It is noticeable that Pater's most successful essays have this basis, and are anchored, with however slight an anchor, to the life and circumstances of the subject. This explains why the studies of Feuillet and Rossetti are not among Pater's best work. The Feuillet essay is scarcely more than a book review, written during the author's lifetime, and consequently wants perspective. Lack of distance also mars the essay on Rossetti, although certain qualities of his poetry are indicated accurately enough: apart from this, the circumstances of Rossetti's death, and the fact that relatives of his were still living, must have precluded anything like a real connection of work and events in a study of his poetry. The essay, by the very conditions of its production, is no more than a sketch, but that an interesting one.

Of the later essays, the "Prosper Mérimée" (1890) is an example of an author's life studied so as to understand his work. The spirit of Sainte-Beuve is much felt in the essay, but there is a difference: Sainte-Beuve approached the works of an author chiefly to understand his life, while

Pater makes use of relevant facts in an artist's circumstances simply to clarify his work. The study begins with the mental and spiritual climate of France when Mérimée was growing to maturity, skilfully linked with Napoleon's triumph and fall. The disillusion, Pater tells us, produced a weariness, which demanded an artificial stimulus of the exceptional in art and science, a "fanaticism" of art for art's sake. Mérimée is the "central type" of this disillusion, founded in his case on an incident in early childhood, which produced in him an almost unconquerable reserve. The interest, for Pater, lies in the contrast between Mérimée's enthusiasm for the "rude, crude, naked force in men and women"¹ and his own mask of conventionality, dropped only in his Lettres à une Inconnue.

Pater's concern is with what Mérimée had to offer his own age, and the value of his actual contribution to literature; he divides Mérimée's work into letters, fiction and historical essays. Within these broad divisions Pater works with his usual patient care, "realising distinctly" his impression, and conveying it to his readers - the function of criticism being by no means submerged, but rather enriched by the added details which in Sainte-Beuve are an end in themselves.

The essay on Pascal, unfinished at Pater's death, again treats of Pascal's life - for example, the "gouffre" obsession - only in so far as it affects his work. The contemporary Jesuit-Jansenist opposition, which inspired the Lettres Provinciales, is dealt with in some detail. This study betrays no weakening in Pater's power, but rather a reinforcement of the method described in the Preface, and used with success until his death.

It might be contended that where Pater relates the data revealed by his criticism to strictly necessary facts about his subject, his essay

¹ Miscellaneous Studies p.4

succeeds: where he does not, it is less successful. In Gaston de Latour, the unfinished companion-piece to Marius the Epicurean, the Chapters on Ronsard and Montaigne just miss being successful either as Chapters in a romance or as essays in criticism: they are too closely attached to the facts of the subject's life to be good criticism, and too critical to be interesting portraits. The critic of Shakespeare must of necessity work in partial ignorance of his author and even of the date of some plays: the basis of fact is necessarily absent. Pater's "pure criticism" succeeds in "Measure for Measure" and "Love's Labours Lost", but fails in Shakespeare's "English Kings", because, knowing no more than another what Shakespeare really "intended" by his chronicles beyond the simple desire to write plays, he imparts a far fetched motive to him, and by trying to do too much, reveals the limitations of his method.

In spite of the essential purity of Pater's conception of the critical function, he seems to have felt the need to enlarge it: so that, as it now stands, the critic can legitimately employ facts about the artist, providing they are strictly relevant to a critical study of his work; providing, in short, that they help to crystallise an impression, and to convey it to the public. The "pure" method as formulated in the Preface is occasionally inadequate to control Pater's soaring fancy, and then we have such effusions as "Aesthetic Poetry" and parts of the Leonardo study. Pater himself seems to have felt the need of a check. He had the legitimate curiosity of a painstaking critic, and naturally liked to visualise the early life of the artist he was discussing. As late as 1892, in the study of Raphael, he wrote

For once, the actual conditions of early life had been suitable,

propitious, accordant to what one's imagination would have
 required for the childhood of the man.¹

"The Child in the House" is little more than a fantasy of what Pater thought his own Childhood should have been.

How much of Sainte-Beuve's influence is direct, how much came to Pater through Arnold, is not important. What matters is the elasticity with which Pater handled his research into the "background" of a work, selecting just such details as would serve the purpose of his criticism. Sainte-Beuve served his critical system. Pater made his method serve him. The function of criticism has been expanded, without being altered; it is essentially the same as when the Preface appeared in 1873.

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¹ with something
Miscellaneous Studies p.27

CHAPTER III

THE IDEA OF THE ARTIST AND THE ESSAY ON STYLE

To approach Pater's critical theory by way of his thoughts on culture is to place it in a perspective where distracting incidentals are reduced to a minimum. But for an all-round view of his criticism, we must see it in relation to his idea of the artist.

Pater's contemporaries were very conscious of what has come to be known as the Aesthetic Movement. Aestheticism was a heritage of French and English thought, starting from different points, but converging and reaching its climax when Pater was beginning to write. There is no doubt that it exerted a fascinating influence upon youth, particularly artists of all kinds, even when it fell into decadence; as Pater himself wrote in another context, "Forms of intellectual and spiritual culture sometimes exercise their subtlest and most artful charm when life is already passing from them."¹

There is perhaps no better exposition of the condition which produced the French theory of "l'art pour l'art" than the opening paragraphs of Pater's essay on Prosper Mérimée (1890). Napoleon's rise and fall, with all its consequences for the national life, the work of Kant and Heine in the intellectual sphere, contributed to the mal du siècle, that sense of disillusion from which sprang the demand for "artificial stimulus." "In such a period," says Pater, "the vocation of the artist will be realised with something ... of fanaticism, as an end in itself, unrelated, unassociated." This sentence, incidentally, is the perfect answer to those

¹"Coleridge". Appreciations, p.65

who wish to attach Pater permanently to the Aesthetic Movement.

The phrase "l'art pour l'art" appears to have been first used in France by Benjamin Constant in his diary; the ideals of the movement were partly formulated by Victor Cousin in a series of lectures in 1818. (These were not published until many years afterwards, and then incompletely.) In the movement itself there are only three French writers of significance whose work together adds up to a theory: (Gautier, Baudelaire, and Flaubert.) Of these, Gautier's contribution is in the form of a défi aux critiques and Flaubert's appears mostly in letters published after his death. Baudelaire was an ardent admirer of Poe, and had probably read his critical manifestos such as the "Letter to B ---", but it is unlikely that Poe's theory (if such it may be called) did more than help to crystallise Baudelaire's own ideas. The French theory is very much "occasional", but no less deeply thought out than the English.

The basis of aestheticism in England is more directly philosophical,¹ and can probably be traced back to Kant. For him, art which appeals directly to the senses, is a synthesis of reason and understanding, the realm in which opposites meet and are reconciled. Art is not to be judged by standards applicable to either of the single factors which it reconciles: there must be a separate code of judgment. We recognise in the direct appeal to the senses and the separation of art from normal judgment, the seeds of the aesthetic movement.

Pater's connection with the movement has been greatly exaggerated: nevertheless, certain points of Aesthetic theory are present in his work. He does, of course, use the phrase aesthetic criticism, but he understands

¹ See, on this point, A.J. Farmer, Louise Rosenblatt, works cited in Bibliography.

aesthetic in a more narrowly proscribed sense than most writers of the Aesthetic Movement. (On this point, see Chapter I, above). Perhaps it would be more correct to say that at certain points his theory touches Aestheticism, though it is by no means certain that he is indebted to the movement for his ideas. There is, for instance, the question of

i. Perception

The idea of direct sensuous apprehension appears in the work of most Aesthetic writers. Probably this is due to the influence of Kant, working mainly through intermediaries. Keats can hardly be considered as a member of the Aesthetic Movement, except in so far as he was taken as a fountain-head of the theory; he accepts the senses as the means of actual perception, but reserves judgment or discrimination of the impression received to the imagination; this is symptomatic of the shift in emphasis from the object to be "imitated", to the poet or artist himself, which is a feature of the Romantic Revolution. Later, with Flaubert, there is a reverse shift.

Baudelaire's conception is similar to Keats's, but more closely reasoned. He recognises a division of the mind into three parts: Pure Intellect, which aims at Truth, Taste, which shows us Beauty, and the Moral Sense, which defines Duty. Connections are admitted between the parts, but the separation is significant. "Taste", the result of an "aesthetic education" similar to Pater's ideal, implies receptivity and discrimination, with man himself as sole arbiter. Baudelaire distinguishes Beauty from Truth, whereas Keats identifies them (see below)

Gautier, in his Preface de Mademoiselle de Maupin, makes no statement

about modes of perception, but the forms of beauty he enjoys are those which appeal directly to the senses. It seems certain that the idea of perception, if reasoned out, would have been in line with aesthetic theory.

For Flaubert, the artist is above all an observer, and perception a combined effort of senses and imagination. "Pour qu'une chose soit intéressante" he wrote, "il suffit de la regarder longtemps."¹ Here he approaches Pater's idea of "receptivity" and painstaking examination of the "impression" thus received. For Pater, the question is bound up with the larger issues of the problem of communication. He, too, regards perception as a function of the senses, which are after all our only means of contact with what is exterior to ourselves, and considers as vital the education of the senses for the sake of increased receptivity. This stems directly from the Heraclitean doctrine of flux. In view of the perpetual flux of things, our only means of communication will be through an increased receptivity.²

ii. "Art for Art's sake": the Artist's Integrity.

The phrase, "Art for Art's sake", shouted like a battle cry by Gautier in 1837, is the central tenet of the movement. In Pater's view, it was Keats who embodied the principle of art for its own sake in verse.³

The famous

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' - that is all/ye know
on earth, and all ye need to know,

whether interpreted as a Keatsian axiom, or as a "dramatic" utterance by the Grecian Urn personified, can be held to suggest that the artist should have no aim beyond the creation of beauty, which will automatically be

¹Flaubert. Correspondence. Charpentier, Paris. 1920
Vol.I. p.105

²See Chapter I, above.

³In the Essay on Lamb.

truth because he is preserving his integrity; he is following the only path open to him as artist¹, and that is all he needs to know. This idea is present in Rossetti's Hand and Soul, a prose story of a young artist who has certain affinities with Rossetti himself. The artist, Chiaro dell'Erma, tries to produce pictures of moral value, and finds his painting becoming lifeless and cold because he has an aim beyond his art. He realises that his only hope of serving his fellow men lies in the preservation of his own integrity. This is stated categorically by Baudelaire:

"La poésie ... n'a pas d'autre but qu'elle-même, elle ne
peut pas en avoir d'autre"¹,

and he condemns the writing of poetry for a moral aim. Not that the moral effect will be wanting:

"Je ne veux pas dire que la poésie n'enoblisse pas les mœurs...
que son résultat final ne soit pas d'élever l'homme ...
Ce serait évidemment une absurdité."

All Baudelaire wishes to emphasise is that the poet should write simply for the sake of writing a poem:

"Je dis que, si la poésie a poursuivi un but moral, il y a diminué sa force poétique, et il n'est pas imprudent de parier que son œuvre sera mauvaise..."

Artistic force, then, depends upon artistic integrity; nothing is mentioned here about truth. There is nothing to be gained by choosing a moral subject: the poet should have only the poem in his mind.

Baudelaire tells us:

¹ Gautier "Souvenirs Romantiques" 1872
p.292

"La poésie ne peut pas, sans peine de mort ou de déchéance, s'assimiler à la science ou à la morale. Elle n'a pas la vérité pour but, elle n'a qu'elle-même." ¹

Flaubert's views are simple. Art is for him a

"principe complet de lui-même et qui n'a pas plus besoin d'appui qu'une étoile". ²

On the 15th September, 1846, Flaubert complained in a letter to his friend and pupil "Madame X",

"On reproche aux gens qui écrivent en bon style de négliger l'idée, le but moral ... comme si le but de l'art n'était pas le Beau avant tout." ³

It is for the interpretation of this beauty that the artist must work. Once again, it is the artist who perceives beauty, independent of outside judgments, and expresses it, for its own sake. This brings us to another facet of the artist as he appears in Aesthetic theory.

/ iii. The Artist as Prophet: Impersonality

"Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who present, past and future sees;
Whose ears have heard
The Holy Word
That walk'd among the ancient trees." ⁴

So wrote Blake in 1794: and this verse anticipates to some extent the artist's idea of the artistic function in the Aesthetic Movement's heyday. Blake himself stands outside the aesthetic movement proper, but the germs of it are in his work. For him, the poet is the prophet of an absolute truth ("Everything possible to be believed is an image of truth" ⁵) and the artist, ¹by his superior powers, is made exempt from ordinary judgments.

¹ ibid p.292 ² Flaubert Correspondence Vol. I. p.131.

³ Flaubert Correspondence ed. cit. Vol. I. p.131.

⁴ Blake Songs of Experience - Introduction O.U.P. 1949.

⁵ ibid Proverbs of Hell

"The tigers of wrath" said Blake, "are wiser than the horses of instruction"¹

Many years later the idea of the artist as prophet was taken up by Ruskin, who, like Blake, is outside the Aesthetic Movement, but affects it through his influence on the Pre-Raphaelite group. With Ruskin, too, appears the idea of impersonality in the artist: he writes

"The power of the masters is shown by their self-annihilation. It is commensurate with the degree in which they appear not in their work... Every great writer may be known by his guiding the mind far from himself, to the beauty which is not of his creation and the knowledge which is past his finding out."²

Ruskin was writing as a believing Christian, and the pursuit of his argument leads him eventually to conclude that good art can be produced only by an artist "good" in the moral sense. This, of course, leads him far away from the Aesthetic Movement." But the ideas of impersonality and prophecy are present in the work of Ruskin's most eminent admirer, Rossetti. The story Hand and Soul, which was mentioned in connection with "Art for Art's Sake", is confused, but interesting because it embodies some of Rossetti's convictions about art. There is a holy mistress who is, or who becomes, Art, and the young artist Chiaro imagines that she

"should pass ... into the shadow of the tree of life, and be seen by God, and found good: and then it had seemed to him that he, with many ... were permitted to gather round the blessed maiden, and to worship with her through all ages and ages of ages, saying Holy, Holy, Holy."³

Here again, Art requires divine sanction, but obviously the artist is soon to become the prophet of his art, not of God. When Chiaro, trying to paint pictures of moral greatness, discovers that his work is formal and

¹Blake Works ed. cit. Proverbs of Hell

²Ruskin "Modern Painters" London 1888

³Rossetti Collected Works. 1906.
p. 387.

Vol. I. pp. xxii - xxxiii

cold, he reflects,

"Am I not as a cloth drawn before the light, that the looker may not be blinded? but which sheweth thereby the grain of its coarseness, so that the light seems defiled, and men say, We will not walk by it?"¹

The "light" is not religion, but art: the artist is a prophet of the light, in the sense that it streams through his work, but if he fails to keep his personality under control, the light will be blurred and the world will refuse it through his fault. The difficulty is eventually solved by the artist's painting "his own soul." This is something analogous to the sense of fact" in Pater's essay Style (see section ii of this Chapter) Even in the quasi-religious atmosphere of Hand and Soul, the artist serves God and his fellows by serving his art.

Rossetti's rather muddled ideas bear a certain resemblance to Baudelaire's thought. For the French poet, the implications are deeper; the earth is a mirror, and man an immortal soul athirst for what it reflects of the mysteries "beyond the veil". The artist's work shows him a glimpse of these splendours:

"C'est à la fois par la poésie et à travers la poésie, par et à travers la musique, que l'âme entrevoit les splendeurs situés derrière le tombeau."²

This does not alter the principle of artistic integrity, and the creation of a work of art for its own sake: if the conditions have been fulfilled, if the work is good enough, it will give the glimpses of eternity. ~~The~~ The artist is anonymous, hidden in his work. This is not quite impersonality, for Baudelaire frankly proposes personal experience as a subject, but he does stipulate an objective treatment.

¹ Rossetti Collected works. 1906. p. 391

² Gautier, "Souvenirs Romantiques Paris, 1929 edn. p. 293.

The cult of impersonality was carried to its furthest limit by Flaubert, for whom the artist was the prophet of beauty. In 1853 he wrote to Madame X

"Il n'y a qu'un beau, c'est le même partout, mais il y a des aspects différents." ¹

Flaubert, in fact, looks back towards the eighteenth century in that he postulates "le Beau" as an absolute. His theory, as it emerges from his correspondence, is felt to be radically different from genuine Romantic theory. For him, the Universe exists, and he is the mirror of it; (this will be more fully developed later) he is thus really in line with the pre-Romantic doctrine of Imitation. Stendhal, too, had previously postulated the "mirror" ² theory, regarding the artist as "une glace fidèle", for exact reflection. Flaubert, as we shall see, modifies this. Stendhal, then, for all his Romanticism, belongs really in spirit to the Classical period.

Of impersonality, Flaubert wrote

"Je me suis toujours défendu de rien mettre de moi dans mes oeuvres", but he had found this an impossible ideal: he added,

"et pourtant j'en ai mis beaucoup" ³

For him, the artist is not invisible, but a mirror reflecting what he sees as faithfully as possible. "What he sees" is the key to Flaubert's theory, and here again we approach Pater's "sense of fact" (see Section II of this Chapter.) The "vrais maîtres", wrote Flaubert to Madame X in 1848, sum up humanity, and give an accurate reflection of the universe in their works. Of the "one beauty", he said

"Il est plus ou moins coloré par les reflets qui le dominent." ⁴

¹Flaubert Correspondence, ed. cit. vol.2 p.314 ²In his Racine et Shakespeare

³Flaubert Correspondence, ex. cit. vol.I p.128

⁴ibid Vol.II p.314

Flaubert's idea of impersonality is more realistic than that of Stendhal (see above.) The latter explored the "certain couleur" which Rousseau's personality gave to his work. Flaubert admitted that the "one beauty" would be "plus ou moins coloré": after all, the mirror must be fixed at an angle before it can reflect, and the angle must be carefully chosen. The artist must choose his "angle" before he begins to write. Flaubert's last word on the ideal of impersonality is summed up in

"L'artiste doit s'arranger de façon à faire croire à la postérité¹
qu'il n'a pas vécu"

Impersonality is more important in French than in English theory, possibly because ~~of the strength of the Classical~~ ^{tradition in France.} But the artist has yet another function: he is the giver of pleasure.

iv. The Pleasure Principle.

The theory of art as giving pleasure (usually combined with instruction) is far from new; but paradoxically it was during the earnest nineteenth century that the idea of pleasure from art without further corollary was emphasised. Coleridge had written

"A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having this object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part."²

A certain preoccupation with form can be felt. The poem as a whole, if it is to give pleasure, must be a harmony of pleasing parts. Balance and proportion are taken for granted, and though the form is the more significant there is no actual restriction on subject.

¹ ibid Vol. II p.77

² Coleridge. Biographia Literaria ed Shawveron. 1909 Vol. II p.8.

Hazlitt, in his introductory lecture in his series on the English Poets, states that

... "poetry is the language of the imagination and of the passions. It relates to whatever gives pleasure to the human mind..... This language is not less true to nature, because it is false in point of fact."¹

which Aristotle had virtually said before. This marks a cleavage between pleasure giving and fidelity to fact. Hazlitt is moving towards Art for Art's sake, and towards a distinction between "fact" and "sense of fact" which we shall rediscover in Pater's essay on Style.

It was in answer to charges of immorality levelled against his work on Villon that Gautier issued his preface to Mademoiselle de Maupin. He triumphantly confesses his faith in the Beautiful as the Essential, his principle of Life for Art's Sake. Most important, he obviously produces poems for his own pleasure.

Baudelaire states this as a principle:

"Aucun poème ne sera si grand, si noble, si véritablement digne du nom de poème, que celui qui aura été écrit uniquement pour le plaisir d'écrire un poème."²

The "pleasure" is now that of the poet himself; Gautier ignores the reader, and Baudelaire's fundamental idea of composition, upon which his theory of "poet as prophet" rests, is really that of Art for Art's Sake. The poem will succeed, and all the rest will follow, if the poet has written solely for the pleasure of creating a good poem.

Pater's own idea of the artist as pleasure-giver is most clearly seen in the essay on Wordsworth, where he wrote

"The first aim of Wordsworth's poetry is to give the reader a

¹ Hazlitt. Lectures on the English Poets. Collected works. 1902. pp.2-4

² Gautier. "Souvenirs Romantiques" ed. cit. p.292.

~~the reader~~ a peculiar kind of pleasure."¹

In his position as critic, he makes an advance on the theories of pleasure - giving, for having accepted the pleasure principle he makes it his business to analyse the pleasure he receives from different objects. He assumes pleasure to the artist in the essay on "Style".

Pater's own idea of the artist is part of his solution of the problem of communication. His is a far more responsible theory than general Aesthetic theory; as early as 1864 he is admitting that the artist, "out of the world's order" as he is, yet works "in and by means of the main current of the world's energy."² This side of the question has already been discussed in Chapter I. It remains to examine the conclusions Pater, as a practising critic and literary artist in his own right, drew about artistic composition in his essay of , on Style.

II. The Essay on Style

The essay on Style is considerably more than its name implies. It is the mature expression of Pater's thoughts on composition and criticism: his considered opinion of the artist-public relationship. A careful examination reveals that the full powers of a highly sensitive critical mind have been brought to bear on the problems of style and composition in regard to artist, reader, and critic. For Pater, as usual, is writing with a full appreciation of his position as critic, and he treats the question before him with the earnestness and painstaking with which we are now familiar.

1. Appreciations p.59

2 Miscellaneous Studies p.215

The opening paragraphs of the essay invite particular scrutiny: they show Pater at his critical best. His frontal attack on the problem of prose composition opens with a comment on the vexed question of prose and poetry. This distinction he modifies into a more liberal form, as "the laws and characteristic excellences of verse and prose composition". The opposition of prose and poetry can be too absolute, and then the function of prose may tend to be limited too narrowly. This Pater calls "false economy". The whole essay breathes a consciousness of the natural limitations of the media in which the artist has to work; but limitations can be overstressed. It is unwise for the critic to be too absolute about this kind of restriction, because the event is likely to contradict his prophecy. Citing the example of the great prose writers, Pater abolishes the narrow view of prose and its possibilities in a sweeping paragraph. After such varied examples of fine prose as the works of Cicero, Plato, Livy, Browne, Milton, Taylor, Michelet, Carlyle and Newman,

"it will be useless to protest that it can be nothing at all, except something very tamely and narrowly confined to ~~merely~~ practical ends"¹

Disposing thus of the lower estimate of prose, he comes to what is really important to the critic:

"In subordination^{to} one essential beauty in all good literary style, in all literature as a fine art, as there are many beauties of poetry so the beauties of prose are many, and it is the business of criticism to estimate them as such."²

1 Appreciations p.6

2 ibid p.6

"As such" - for themselves, not for some fancied ideal of what they ought to be, or for the sake of placing them in some external category. It is the one essential beauty that the critic must keep in mind. This "essential beauty" is defined later as "expression", with the peculiar force of meaning the word has for Pater. He continues:

"To find in the poem, amid the flowers, the allusions, the mixed perspectives ... the thought, the logical structure... *now delightful!* to identify in prose what we call the poetry, the imaginative power, not treating it as out of place, ... but by way of an estimate of its rights, that is, of its achieved powers, there."¹

The prosaic element in poetry, the poetic element in prose, must prove their worth, and once he is convinced that they have done so, the critic should be prepared to accept them. He must, in fact, approach his task with a mind freed as far as possible from preconceptions. This is in direct accord with the Preface to The Renaissance where the critic's most important possession is not a set of definitions, but a certain kind of temperament, a receptive mind.

The importance of the critical function is stressed everywhere in the essay; and Pater is not considering it only in itself, but in relation to culture and the progress of the human mind in general. The opening sentence is revealing:

..."All progress of the mind consists for the most part in differentiation, in the resolution of an obscure and complex object into its component aspects ..."²

What is this but criticism as described in the Preface to The Renaissance? The -scientific turns of phrase are reminiscent of the 1873 definition of the critical function. Progress is seen as depending upon the

¹ ibid p.6

² ibid p.5

critical powers, and there may well be a link here with Arnold, who recognised alternating periods dominated by artistic production and criticism respectively. Pater is certainly aware of the importance of criticism in his own time.

The analytic principle of "differentiation", which stems directly from the Preface to The Renaissance is here applied to the whole problem of style and all it entails. The essay, in fact, proceeds by a series of distinctions. The result of one of these may be termed

i. The Anatomy of Composition

The most important in the series of distinctions is one on which, in a sense, Pater's artistic creed depended. Here it follows from a discussion of Wordsworth's distinction between imaginative and unimaginative writing, analogous to De Quincey's "literature of power" and "literature of knowledge." In the "literature of power" or imagination, the "composer," Pater tells us,

"gives us not fact, but his peculiar sense of fact, whether
past or present."¹

This distinction between fact and the artist's sense of fact is not always easy to define. In the persuasive writers, argument may become pleading, "an appeal to the reader to catch the writer's spirit", something analogous to the later definition of "soul" as distinct from "mind" in style. The plea will present, not fact, but the artist's sense of it:

"his peculiar intuition of a world, prospective, or discerned below the faulty conditions of the present, in either case changed somewhat from the actual world."²

1

ibid pp. 7-8

2

Appreciations pp. 8-9

- in other words, the world of the artist's vision or insight.

[This seems to spring directly from Aesthetic theory: the artistic vision differs from the normal view of the world, but it is no less valid, for it remains in relation to a world.]

The "literature of fact" - science, and history in the scientific sense - is a domain in which the imagination has no place. Here "all the excellences of literary form ... are reducible to various kinds of painstaking." This is a good quality, but the critic has no scope, and in fact no task, here - at all events, the critic as Pater understands his function: for such a critic, with his finely educated sensibility is dependent upon "impressions" which will not always help him to judge bare truth to fact. The critic's task begins only when, as must inevitably happen, "the writer's sense of fact... will still take the place of fact, in various degrees."¹ In support of his theory, Pater cites the example of eminent historians, Livy and Tacitus among the ancients, Gibbon and Michelet among the moderns. The historian, as he modifies fact in accordance with his own sense of fact, ceases to be a recording machine and becomes an artist.

"For just in proportion as the writer's aim, consciously or unconsciously, comes to be the transcribing mot of the world, not of mere fact, but of his sense of it, he becomes an artist, his work fine art, and good art ..., in proportion to the truth of his presentment of that sense."²

Truth, indeed, is essential to all composition - truth either to fact, or to the artist's sense of fact, according to the category of the work he is trying to produce. "Truth! exclaims Pater. "there can be no merit, no craft at all, without that."

¹

Appreciations p.9

²

ibid pp. 9-10

And beauty is the direct reward for this truth.

"All beauty is in the long run only fineness of truth, or *what we call* expression, the finer accommodation of speech to that vision within."¹

Pater distinguishes between "fine" and "serviceable" art; it is the "fine" art which gives pleasure to both artist and reader or spectator. Pater elaborates :

"The transcript of his sense of fact rather than the fact, as being preferable, pleasanter, more beautiful to the writer himself. In literature, as in every other product of human skill ... wherever this sense asserts itself, wherever the producer so modifies his work, as, over and above its primary use or intention, to make it pleasing (to himself, of course, in the first instance) there, 'fine' as opposed to merely serviceable art, exists."²

A rather more pedestrian reader might remark that much of the world's finest art, including probably Pater's beloved "Gioconda", was commissioned and paid for. This does not invalidate his argument, but would suggest that occasionally artists do not paint solely to give themselves pleasure, or that they sometimes reconcile pleasure with interest. The passage just quoted appears to assume that there is no pleasure in the recording of bare fact, ignoring the intellectual satisfaction attending this type of work. All this, however, may be mere cavilling. What Pater gives is a statement of the pleasure-principle with a difference. The artist produces in the first instance for his own delight, and his pleasure in his work is proportionate to its correspondence to his sense of fact. And just so far as this correspondence is close and exact, his art will be "fine" art, and, as

¹ ibid p.10.

² ibid p.10

such, will give pleasure to others.

Pater is not discussing airy principles in some rarified atmosphere of his own. His approach is really very practical and he is as mindful of the particular wants of the age he writes in as Arnold. This is demonstrated by his approach to prose as

ii The Voice of the Age

Of prose in relation to his own time, Pater says

"That imaginative prose should be the special and opportune art of the modern world results from two important facts about the latter; first, the chaotic variety and complexity of its interests, making the intellectual issue, the really master currents of the present time incalculable - a condition of mind little susceptible of the restraint proper to verse form ... and secondly, an all-pervading naturalism, a curiosity about everything whatever as it really is, involving a certain humility of attitude, cognate to what must, after all, be the less ambitious form of literature."¹

The first condition recalls the background of Marius the Epicurean, the chaotic interests of the Roman world made analogous to those of the nineteenth century in England. It recalls, too, the sense of instability which made the Heraclitean theory so pervasive in Pater's work. The second condition, the "curiosity about everything whatever as it really is", suggests a general atmosphere in which the penetrating system of criticism advocated by Pater would seem inevitable. (The reality, of course, was sadly different.) That prose should be considered "the less ambitious form of literature" does not mean that there is to be any carelessness in composing or criticising it.

"And prose thus asserting itself as the special and privileged

¹

ibid pp. 11-12

artistic faculty of the present day, will be, however critics may try to narrow its scope, as varied in its excellence as humanity itself reflecting on the facts of its latest **experience** - an instrument of many stops, meditative, observant, descriptive, eloquent, analytic, plaintive, fervid... it will exert, in due measure, all the varied charms of poetry, down to the rhythm which ... gives its musical value to every syllable."¹

It follows that the maker of such a prose must possess, beside a sensitive ear and a sensitive taste, scholarly knowledge and ability of no mean order; for he writes, according to Pater, as prompted by the "scholarly" conscience", and will ever be aware of his responsibilities towards his material. The critic has already been advised not to jump to conclusions about the potentialities of a given artistic medium. Now the literary artist himself is asked to remember that he cannot create a new medium for himself; he is given language to use as it stands. "The material in which he works", says Pater, "is no more a creation of his own than the sculptor's marble."

The writer, anxious as he is to express with the maximum fidelity his "sense of fact", if he is a real artist, will find in the apparently arbitrary laws of structure and vocabulary, not a restriction, but an opportunity. The habit of rejection will lend distinction to his work, and beget a watchfulness, a sensitivity, not to the laws of his medium only, but to what is merely a matter of choice. In other words, it will breed good taste. Pater describes the situation thus:

"Braced only by these restraints, he is really vindicating his liberty in the making of a vocabulary, an entire system of composition, for himself, his own true manner, and when we speak of the manner of a true master we mean what is essential in his art."²

¹ ibid pp.11-12

² ibid p.14.

Pater returns to this point when he discusses the cliché "The style is the man" - a cliché which has for him peculiar and significant truth. Meanwhile, the scrupulous attention to language as an artistic medium is not advocated for the artist's sake only. It is at this point that Pater definitely splits off from the Aesthetic movement in so far as he is connected with it. For he was a critic as well as an artist, and therefore a reader, and thus particularly conscious of the artist's responsibilities towards

iii The Reader

Some proof has been given in an earlier chapter of Pater's concern for culture. It should therefore be unnecessary to comment in detail on the importance of the reader in his scheme of culture. Artist and reader, working together towards a culture in the benefits of which both shall share, have each something to give the other. This is the radical point of difference between Pater and the writers of the Aesthetic Movement proper. Gautier, for example, treated his public with a fine disregard, and most other writers, including Baudelaire, saw the question from only one angle - their own.

Pater, unlike Arnold, does not visualise a reader as a young cuckoo with his beak agape for the cultural grub. He expects some effort from his reader. The artist, he says, "will of course leave something to the willing intelligence of the reader"¹, and in criticising his own works as he produces them, "supposes always that sort of reader who will go ... warily, considerately through without consideration for him, over the ground."²

¹ ibid p.17

² ibid p.12

An intelligent, exigent reader, then: in short, a stimulating companion in the effort towards culture. But even a reader of this type can be led astray, and Pater, himself a lover of words, knew the effect they could have:

"The ornamental word, the figure, the accessory form or colour or reference, is rarely content to die to thought precisely at the right moment, but will inevitably linger awhile, stirring a long 'brain-wave' behind it of perhaps quite alien associations." ¹

This, beyond its immediate value as a piece of advice to the artist, is an oblique reference to those questions Pater would have the critic ask himself: "What is this ... to me? What effect does it really produce on me? How is my nature modified by its presence and under its influence?" Pater, then, is aware of the danger latent in "ornament" for the careful reader: "but, he says, "the true artist allows for it."

The scrupulous reader is, alas, only too rare; the general fault is in the opposite direction. The careless reader, too, is in danger of succumbing to distractions, and the artist knows it:

"Parallel, allusion, the allusive way generally, the flowers in the garden:- he knows the narcotic force of these upon the negligent intelligence to ^{which any diversion} welcome, any vagrant ^{intruder} within, because one can go wandering away with it from the immediate subject." ²

But the 'appreciative reader', when he is found, is the reward for all the artist's pains.

It is, then, for the reader, as much as for the sake of the work of art, fidelity to the inner sense of fact, or his ^{S/} own pleasure, that the artist will strip away every unnecessary particle. "For in truth", says

1 ibid p.18

2 ibid p.19

Pater, "all art does but consist in the removal of surplusage."¹ The artist's preoccupation with form will be something other than the selfish eclecticism it is so often thought to be, because it operates for the sake of the readers as much as for the artist. For how can they appreciate what he has produced, if he has not removed whatever tends to obscure it? And how can they advance towards culture if he has suffered a stumbling-block to remain in their way?

iv Mind and Soul

"The otiose, the facile, surplusage: why are these abhorrent to the literary artist, except because, in literary as in all other art, structure is all-important?"

With this question Pater opens the discussion of a further distinction this time between mind and soul in style. There is a significant description of structure in art as

"that architectural conception of work, which foresees the end in the beginning and never loses sight of it, and in every part is conscious of all the rest, till the last sentence does but, with undiminished vigour, unfold and justify the first - a condition of literary art which I shall call the necessity of mind in style ..." ²

This is but a logical development of the "sense of fact", the artist possesses the idea of his work as a whole before he attempts to realise it in his chosen medium. As he contemplates this inner conception, "the structure of it becomes apparent. Here Pater approaches Flaubert's cry: "L'unité, l'unité, tout est là".

The essay on Style devotes a good deal of space to expounding Flaubert's doctrine of form, which Pater has very largely adopted; this will come into question again later.

1

ibid p.9

2

ibid p.21

"Mind" in style is for Pater really the sense of structure, or the constructive intelligence, as he calls it.

"For the literary architecture ... involves not only foresight of the end in the beginning, but also development or growth of design, in the process of execution. .. the contingent as well as the necessary being subsumed under the unity of the whole." ¹

The constructive intelligence is, according to Pater "one of the forms of the imagination," and the critical tracing of this structure one of the greatest pleasures of reading good prose. The critic will, of course, have to concern himself with structure because, if he is dealing with a real work of art, structure and sense will be almost identified. To discuss the structure gives the critic a structure of his own on which to build his essay or study, more particularly since, according to Pater, his system of enquiry will bring him very close to the mind of the artist. But when he has thoroughly grasped the construction the critic has not yet done. He still has to consider the quality Pater calls soul.

The distinction between mind and soul, we are told, "is real enough practically, for they often interfere, are sometimes in conflict, with each other."

Pater defines mind and soul as, broadly, different ways of reaching the reader. By mind, the artist can reach anyone who cares to examine his work, because the painstaking, satisfying construction will be evident to all. Soul however, is something different:

"By soul (the artist) reaches us, somewhat capriciously

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ibid p.23

perhaps, one and not another, through vagrant sympathy and a kind of immediate contact."¹

"Mind", says Pater, "we cannot choose but approve when we recognise it; soul may repel us, not because we misunderstand it."

Soul in style is different to define: Pater chooses theological literature as the best example, where "an unconscious literary tact has, for the sensitive, laid open a privileged pathway from one to another." Sometimes, however, the same kind of sense "acts with similar power on certain writers of quite other ... literature, on behalf of some wholly personal and peculiar sense of theirs." This lends profane (as opposed to sacred) writers "a kind of religious influence". And here Pater employs the term prophet to describe a writer of this kind. He understands the word in a circumscribed sense with regard to the artist, so that not all artists - not those whose merit rests in mind alone, for instance - are prophets, but only those whose matter and form work together to produce "immediate sympathetic contact" with certain readers. In a first resort, soul is a matter of rejecting what is not directly relevant, with what Pater aptly calls "a drift towards unity" - unity of atmosphere for "soul", as unity of design for mind.

Criticism of "soul" in style will obviously present greater difficulties than appreciation of mind, and the direct appeal to the sympathetic reader would suggest that only such critics who find themselves immediately touched should attempt to discuss soul. Indeed, Pater has already said as much, in discussing the criticism of such painters as Botticelli. Mind, of course, can be discussed by every careful reader.

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ibid p.25

Possibly this distinction of mind and soul seems less central than the rest of the essay; but it is certainly germane to the rest of Pater's criticism, being the logical development or explanation of what might otherwise seem a personal caprice arising out of the Paterian system of criticism.

v. "The Style is the Man".

Pater's admiration for Flaubert is so well-known and so evident that it requires little comment here. "Flaubert" says Pater, "might perhaps rank as the martyr of literary style".¹ He seems to sum up all that Pater admired in a prose writer. The problem of style for Flaubert can be summed up as the quest for "the one word for ... the one thought",² the term that should express with absolute rightness the idea within the artist.

"The first condition for this must be, of course, to know yourself, to have ascertained your own sense exactly."³

This is the Pater of the Preface to The Renaissance, pursuing a persistent, unwearied enquiry by the method first formulated there. This working rule for the critic appears in Flaubert as the artist's one means of identifying form and matter. Like the critic's effort on behalf of the public is ^{summed up in} the sentence:

"If we suppose an artist, he says to the reader - I want you to see exactly what I see."⁴

Surely this is the end towards which the whole of Pater's critical theory

¹ ibid p.27

² ibid p.29

³ ibid p.31

⁴ ibid
p.31

is directed. The ideas of impression and receptivity, always with the underlying sense of "flux", are as present as ever, interpreted now from the standpoint of the artist. Pater writes:

"Into the mind sensitive to "form", a flood of random sounds, colours, incidents, is ever penetrating from the world without, to become, by sympathetic selection, a part of its very structure, and in turn, the visible vesture and expression of that other world it sees so steadily within".¹

"All language", says Pater, "involves translation from inward to outward".² In the course of his experience as literary artist, as well as critical reader, Pater has modified his idea of relativity. Possibly under the influence of Flaubert, as well as "relative", he now accepts the absolute in beauty.

"In literature, as in all forms of art, there are the absolute and the merely relative or accessory beauties, and precisely in that exact proportion of the term to its purpose is the absolute beauty of style."³

In September, 1846, Flaubert had written to "Madame X"

.. "L'idée n'existe qu'en vertu de sa forme. Supposer une idée qui n'ait pas de forme, c'est impossible, de même qu'une forme qui n'exprime pas une idée..."⁴

This identity of form and style, depending on the search for the exact expression, is an eclectic principle, "employing for its one sole purpose - the absolute accordance of expression to idea - all other literary beauties and excellences whatever."⁵ It would embrace such widely different types of literature as Stendhal's and Hugo's

¹ ibid p.31

² ibid p.34

³ ibid p.34

⁴ Flaubert, Correspondence ed, cit. Vol. I p.157

⁵ Appreciations p.34

work, Of this principle Flaubert is in a sense the embodiment.

"The style, the manner, would be the man not in his unreasoned and really uncharacteristic caprices... but in absolutely sincere apprehension of what is most real to him."¹

But, it may be objected, this will surely mean that style, language, which is to be used with circumspection, will be at the mercy of subjectivity, and become a mere matter of caprice. Pater anticipates this objection, and counterbalances it with the principles of selection, the welding of form and matter into the one inevitable phrase.

"If the style be the man, "he concludes,"in all the colour and intensity of a veritable apprehension it will be in a real sense "impersonal".²

This, then, is Pater's version of artistic integrity, and Pater quoted from this impersonality in art. If what he suggests is true, integrity is imperative for the artist, and the production of art no holiday, but every whit as much a dedicated life as Flaubert's history would suggest.

vi. Good art and Great art

There remains one distinction to consider: that of good as against great art.

"All art" Pater had said "continually aspires to the condition of music", because in music, form and matter are indistinguishable the one from the other. This identity is really what Flaubert strives for, as he understands it, and Pater follows him - the one expression for the idea within, absolutely true to the artist's "sense of fact".

¹ ibid p.36

² ibid p.37

Literature, by striving after the exact correspondence of form and matter, will fulfil the necessary conditions of good art.

Good, but not essentially great art, and here Pater diverges completely from the Aesthetic Movement. /The theorists of "Art for Art's Sake" had wanted to produce a perfect work of Art, regardless of the subject chosen. It was a test of their skill, a tribute to the absolute nature of their ideal. Their efforts proved they regarded art as a question of form. Pater is more realistic: both he and Flaubert (surely one of the great prose artists of the world) strive to identify matter and form, which are not distinct in the "whole" which pre-exists in the artist's mind. Pater states his case for subject less narrowly, but no less dogmatically than Ruskin:

"The distinction between good and great art rests not on its form, but on the matter ... It is the quality of the matter it informs or controls, its compass, its alliance to great ends, or the depth of the note of revolt, or largeness¹ of hope in it, that the greatest of literary art depends..."

and in a passage of impressive seriousness he enumerates some of the ends to which art must be devoted if it is to be great:

.."to the increase of men's happiness, to the redemption of the oppressed, or the enlargement of our sympathies with each other, or to such presentment of new or old truth about ourselves and our relation to the world as may ennoble and fortify us in our sojourn here, or immediately... to the

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ibid p.38

glory of God... if, over and above.. mind and soul.. it has something of the soul of humanity in it, and finds it logical, its architectural place, in the great structure¹ of human life."

There speaks no "aesthete" but an earnest Victorian. This is the final proof, if proof is needed, that Pater's theory of art and criticism, while owing something to the adherents of "Art for Art's Sake", really sprang from a different source, and tended towards another end. For Pater's aim is "Art for its own sake" only in so far as it will help the great mass of readers towards culture. And what is culture ultimately but a broad outlook of life, and a quality of living?

Here we may pause to consider the essay on Romanticism, which now stands as the Postscript to the volume of Appreciations. This has not been mentioned previously, as it really contributes nothing new, to the critical theory as it stands. Pater obviously considered it of importance, placing it as the last word in his volume of mature critical studies.

Good art, as we have seen, depends on the identity of form with matter, and on fidelity to the artist's "sense of fact". Primarily "good" art is a matter of structure and here it touches upon Classicism as defined by Pater. For classical art is characterised by the perfection of its form, and among writers "born classicists" are those

"who start with form, to whose minds the comeliness of the old, immemorial, well-recognised types in art and literature, have revealed themselves impressively; who will entertain no matter which will not go easily and flexibly into them." ²

¹ ibid 38

² ibid p.257

Pater is concerned, not with the hard-and-fast differentiation of "Classicism" and "Romanticism" as generally understood, but rather with the spirit of each kind of writing. And this is in accordance with the spirit that sought for the "deeper distinction" involved in the discussion of poetry and prose, and looked beyond the opposition of imaginative and factual literature as such to the distinction between "fact" and "sense of fact". In the final resort, Classicism corresponds to good art, in that it is preoccupied with form, while Romanticism, the unity of beauty with strangeness, in which the balance of interest is tipped in favour of subject, is nearer in this to the Paterian conception of great art. Pater obviously realises that the Romantic principle is the one which informs, and will continue to inform, modern art. He recognises the Classical and Romantic spirit respectively as abiding principles in the history of art, and is inclined to agree with Stendhal, who stated that all classical art had at one time been romantic. The Postscript to Appreciations, which is concerned mainly with the spirit of Romanticism, adds little to what we have already discussed.

Indeed, the essay ~~on~~ Style itself really inaugurates no new system of criticism; it does, however, elucidate and explain the existing principles which were first set down in the Preface to The Renaissance by approaching them from another direction. There is always the attempt to "realise distinctly" the "impression"; the effort at analysis and interpretation is as keen as ever. The principles themselves are not restated, but can be discerned by a careful reader. For instance, when

the pleasure derived by both artist and reader from a good work of art is mentioned, we recall the analysis of "what kind or degree of pleasure?" in the Preface to The Renaissance. The criticism which underlies this essay does in fact move from "pleasure" to the principles of "soul" and mind in composition: soul is grasped by a few, but mind is accessible to all, and the critic must analyse the structure of the work, regardless of the fact that the "atmosphere" of the thing does not make any direct appeal to his imagination. The analysis of structure will lead him, not only to the details of language and style, but back to the "sense of fact" in the artist - the idea, as it shapes itself, whole and perfect, within the creator, and for which he must seek the precise verbal correlative.

The function of the critic, then, is to trace the work back from its present perfection to the image of it which pre-existed in the artist's mind; to enter as far as possible into that mind, and thus attain a fuller understanding of the artist's purpose and his relative success. And thus, not to pry into the artist's personality, but to understand and appreciate what he has produced. Moreover, not only is criticism served by such a method, but the reader is helped towards a more perfect culture.

Pater's mature criticism leads us inevitably back to his ideal of culture, his essentially practical view of the whole scope of art. It is therefore singularly useless to fix upon isolated passages and try to prove from them that Pater was first of all an Aesthete, unconcerned with

realities. He was not a resident of the Ivory Tower, though he certainly helped to build the House Beautiful, and his intellectual heritage lies, not in decadent epigrams, but in serious criticism.

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direct line of descent from ...

CONCLUSION

Walter Pater occupies a specific place in the history of English criticism. That he does occupy a quite definite place is said advisedly, and perhaps needs to be emphasised: the individual quality of his work, and the false stress laid upon certain aspects of it have tended to give rise to a "Pater legend." As this study has attempted to show, the figure of the solitary aesthete glimpsed through clouds of the incense offered by his worshippers and implied by his detractors is, however intriguing, not the true Pater.

The Aesthetic Movement is dead; "Art for Art's Sake", which embodies a serious principle, survives, and will survive. Pater's critical writing does, in fact, accept this idea and support it, not by "aesthetic" posturing, but by a reasoned theory running through the best of his work, and firmly attached to reality. He realises "art for its own sake" in the realm of criticism, without for a moment forgetting that art subsists in and by means of, the world (see Chapter I, above.) He combines a delicate sense of the difficulties of communication with an understanding of the artist's responsibilities to his material: the whole is incorporated in a theory of criticism which is only part of an ideal of culture. This ideal, as we have seen, is behind the two volumes in which his best work is gathered: The Renaissance and Appreciations without ever marring the criticism or spoiling an appreciation of Pater's artistry.

Pater is, first of all, a critic, and as such he stands in the direct line of descent from earlier exponents of English and French

criticism. His theory of the function of art and criticism were anticipated in diverse ways by the critics of the Romantic period. It is possible to trace in their work a progressive idea of style and composition, and (either explicitly or implicitly) the function of criticism - an idea, or set of ideas, which Pater is to sum up and present in a perfected and reasoned form.

Wordsworth, in his Preface to the 1800 volume of "Lyrical Ballads", had denied

"any essential difference between the language of prose and
1
metrical composition"

thereby opening a controversy whose echoes reach as far as Pater. Beside this famous distinction, two important critical statements are to be noticed in this Preface: first, that poetry will succeed only if it has been composed expressly to produce pleasure - an idea with which students of the Aesthetic Movement cannot fail to be familiar. There is no need to analyse in detail Wordsworth's conception of the pleasure-principle, for that would entail a discussion of his entire theory of composition, which is irrelevant. The second statement is of particular importance to the critic:

"Among the qualities ... principally conducting to form a Poet,
is implied nothing differing in kind from other men, but only in
2
degree ..."

Wordsworth, in his commentaries and in the Prelude, and Coleridge, in Biographia Literaria, produced a vast amount of personal detail, which

no doubt led critics to believe that because the poet is a man, they
1 Wordsworth, Prose Works, edited William Knight, Macmillan, 1896 p.55

2
2 ibid p.63

should pay attention to the man rather than to his poetry. At no point, not even in the hey-day (for him) of aesthetic criticism, does Pater ever "disembody" his artists, though this idea¹ of "the man behind the work" which in Sainte-Beuve becomes the basis of a whole system of criticism, appears tacitly in Pater as "background" information, attaching the artist firmly to his period, and conferring just that stability of which Pater's critical system might otherwise seem to stand in need.

Wordsworth is remarkable, too, for his arbitrary association of sentiments or ideas with certain phrases, or single words. That Pater had grasped a similar principle of association is apparent when he warns the would-be prose stylist, that

"the ornamental word, the figure, the accessory form or colour or reference, is rarely content to die to thought precisely at the right moment, but will inevitably linger awhile, stirring a long 'brainwave' behind it of perhaps quite alien associates."¹

This argues a most scrupulous attention in the critic of "careful" prose, to catch those associations the writer intended to cling round the ornamental phrase.

Coleridge makes a progression in critical theory by carrying the "verse-prose" discussion one step further. For him, the elements of prose and verse are the same, the difference lies in the combination of them:

"in consequence of a different object being proposed."²

As we have seen, he considers a poem as

"that species of composition ... proposing for its

¹ Appreciations ed. cit. p

² Coleridge, "Biographia Literaria" ed. Shawcross, 1907. Vol II. p.8

immediate object pleasure, not truth."¹

The immediate object of prose, in its narrower range may be

"the communication of truths: either of truth absolute and demonstrable, as in works of science, or of facts experienced and recorded, as in history."²

Pleasure is not the immediate object, though it may well result from the attainment of the end proposed - i.e. the communication of truth. Truth, however, cannot be used as a measure for classifying works. Coleridge distinguishes two types of truth: moral and intellectual. The communication of one or other, he believes, should be the ultimate end of composition, even of that composition which proposes pleasure as its immediate aim: yet, he says,

"this will distinguish the author, not the class to which the work belongs."

Coleridge, by the very act of making these distinctions, is preparing for their reconciliation. Pleasure is opposed to truth, although these "opposites" can be co-existent in the same work, and in some cases the pleasure can result from the faithful transcription of truth. Arising from this, fact is divided from imagination. Pater, in his essay on Style, effects a reconciliation of these opposing principles (v. Ch. III above.) Coleridge's concept of the Imagination, undoubtedly valuable and interesting in itself, tends to become a little unwieldy. Pater's references to the imagination as such are few. In "Style", imagination

¹
v. sup.

²
"Biographia Literaria" Vol.II. p.9.

is subordinated to the artist's "sense of fact" which of necessity differs from plain fact: he preserves the distinction, but remarks how often the "sense of fact" replaces the fact itself. When this happens, he explains, the basic requirement of good art is fulfilled. In composing a work of art, which is distinct from a transmission of bare fact, "truth" becomes fidelity to the artist's sense of fact, and pleasure results first in proportion to this truth.

Coleridge's idea of prose might seem rather utilitarian: its merit rests in fidelity to truth, and "truth" for him is something entirely different from what it is for Pater. Nevertheless, he does emphasise the "composition" of prose - the artistic construction of a perfect expression for truth. In a note on "The Wonderfulness of Prose",¹ referring to the early productions of Greek prose, he says

".. Prose must have struck men with greater admiration than poetry ... To have an evolving roll, or a succession of leaves, talk continuously the language of deliberate reason in a form of a continued preconception of a Z already possessed when A is being uttered - this must have appeared god-like."

Coleridge's ideas of criticism are naturally linked to his theory of composition: and, while he sighs after "fixed canons of criticism", he declares :

"The ultimate end of criticism is much more to establish the principles of writing than to furnish rules how to pass

¹ Reprinted in Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism ed. T.M. Rayson, Constable, London, 1936. p.227. from a transcript of a notebook now lost.

Judgment on what has been written by others ..."¹

And this, surely, is what Pater fulfils.

Coleridge, writing during the last years of the eighteenth century and the first years of the nineteenth, is still under the discipline of the past. When he thinks of literature, the terms which rise naturally to his lips are the abstract personifications of Sentiment, Fancy, Imagination and the like. But his roots are by no means all in the past. He shows a tendency to appreciate literature for itself, and to demand co-operation on the part of the reader. (See, for instance, his remarks on George Herbert.) His criticism is directed towards writers of diverse periods and achievements, as though anticipating Pater's remark: that to the critic

"all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal."²

In a last analysis, it is the intrinsic interest of a work of art that Coleridge wishes to seize. He looks for the essential unity of the work, and its development from within. He writes

"nothing can permanently please, which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so and not otherwise".

A criticism partially disguised in older terminology, but containing the germ of a new principle, is that of Hazlitt. Nature, the imagination, the passions - terms redolent of the previous century - abound in his work (albeit without the personifying capitals): but he makes a step towards a conception of style which will override the artificial distinctions between prose and poetry: a conception which is

1

"Biographia Literaria", ed. cit. vol.1. p.44

2

"The Renaissance" p.X

perfected in Pater. Urging a wider choice of subject for poetry:

"there is no thought or feeling that can have entered into the mind of man, which he would be eager to communicate to others, or which they would listen to with delight, that is not a fit subject for poetry",¹

Hazlitt declares, in an almost Heraclitean sentence,

"It describes the flowing, not the fixed."

He arrives at an idea of poetic prose which anticipates Pater's.

Admittin_g that

"Common prose differs from poetry, as treating for the most part either of such trite, familiar and irksome matters of fact, as convey no extraordinary impulse to the imagination, or else of such difficult and laborious processes of the understanding, as do not admit of the wayward and violent movements of the imagination"²

he reaches forward to a different kind of prose:

"It has been well observed, that everyone who declaims warmly, or grows intent upon a subject, rises into a sort of blank verse and measured prose ... Every prose writer has more or less of rhythmical adaptation."³

If carried to its logical conclusion, this would produce something not unlike Pater's theory of prose in poetry (logical structure) and poetry in prose (imaginative power). Pater, it will be remembered, celebrates Wordsworth as the champion of poetry in prose.⁴ And Hazlitt arrives

¹ Hazlitt Collected Works ed. Waller & Glover, Dent 1902 Vol.V p.2. ² ibid p.3 ³ ibid p.13

⁴ See essay on "Style" and Chapter III, above.

at something in essence not unlike Pater's distinction of "fact" from "sense of fact", when he declares that poetry, "the language of the imagination,"

"is not the less true, because it is false in point of fact."¹

When we turn to De Quincey, we discover that he is chiefly important as regards Pater, in his remarks on composition. In his long essay entitled "Style", he complains of

"that general principle in England, which tends in all things to set the matter above the manner."

This, he confesses, is 'a principle noble in itself', but it is proved to be utterly impracticable. The fault lies not only with writers, but with the British public:

"In no country upon earth .. is it a more determined tendency of the national mind to value the matter of a book, not only as paramount to the manner, but even as distinct from it.... What first gave a shock to such a tendency, must have been the unwilling and mysterious sense that, in some cases, the matter and the manner were so inextricably interwoven, as not to admit of this coarse bisection ..."²

We may pass over De Quincey's structures upon authors as stylists; what is important is his urgent sense of the need for style, and of the impossible division which the separation of matter and manner is trying to effect in it. The century's most expert practitioner of style, Flaubert, bore out De Quincey's theory and emphasised the identity of form and matter (see Chapter III). Pater, following his example, is really continuing an English theory. In De Quincey, too, something of the relative spirit, so prevalent in much of Pater's work, is to be

¹ Hazlitt op. cit. p.4

² De Quincey, Works, ed Masson. Black 1897. Vol X. pp.137-8

See, on this point, Chapter III, above.

felt whenever he digresses to discuss some individual work or writer; as, for instance, in part of the Recollections of the Lake Poets. His sense of responsibility to his medium is no less acute than Pater's: as witness a footnote on the correct use of the word sympathy, as opposed to the current "unscholarlike" use, in the essay On the knocking at the Gate in Macbeth.¹ De Quincey too, is aware of the need for an intelligent reader: passing over his sarcasms, which anticipate Arnold, we may note in the Essay on Milton (1839) the significant :

"The reader ... is very often a more important person towards
the fortune of the essay than the writer."²

In spite of the vast difference in general approach, as in volume of work, De Quincey has something in common with Pater, and anticipates to a certain degree his criticism.

In view of Pater's explicit admiration for Lamb, we might expect some evidence of principles shared. Actually it is in spirit that Pater follows Lamb most faithfully. Professor E.M.W. Tillyard, in the Introduction to his volume of Lamb's Criticism, tells us that if a man

"goes to [criticism] for something that by some subtle means brings him closer to certain works of art than he has been able to get unaided, for something that creates in his mind the right receptive mood, then he will put Lamb among the very greatest of critics."³

This might have been written about Pater. Both critics show the same receptivity, the same capacity for entering into the spirit of their authors; each has a catholic taste, and can enjoy work of widely differing types and periods. Pater's appreciation of Du Bellay and Rossetti, Lamb's of Sydney and Cowper, could be cited as examples.

¹ De Quincey, Works, ed. cit. Vol.X.p.391 ² ibid p.395

³E.M.W. Tillyard, "Lamb's Criticism," Cambridge, 1923, p.viii

Both critics approach their work in an essentially humble spirit; both have sudden flashes of deeper insight, as when Pater, in the Wordsworth essay, links the idea of a "soul" in nature with the creation of the Greek gods, or when Lamb, touching on Marlowe's reputed atheism, remarks

"To such a genius the history of Faustus must have been delectable food: to wander in fields where curiosity is forbidden to go, to approach the dark gulf near enough to look in, to be busied in speculations which are the rottenest part of the core of the fruit which fell from the tree of knowledge. Barabas the Jew, and Faustus the conjurer, are offsprings of a mind which at least delighted to dally with interdicted subjects."¹

But the appreciation of Lamb can safely be left to Pater: his essay proves that he thoroughly understood his predecessor.

We may touch lightly on two critics who unconsciously illustrated the personal element in criticism, although they would have denied any such connection. The first of these, Carlyle, is as wedded to abstractions as the early romantic critics, with the sole difference that his are not the eighteenth-century abstractions. What he could not realise was that the standards by which he tried to judge were not external ones, but the arbitrary behests of his own nature. His criticism really reduces itself to the harmony or disharmony of his own temperament with that of a given order. Unconsciously he is ruled by his own personality which is something very different from Pater's reasoned approach:

"What is this ... to me?"

Macaulay, too, is really a subjective critic, although his distant,

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ibid p.17

aristocratic manner deceived his readers and himself with the illusion of impersonality. The standards he sets up are found to rest, not on absolute critical principles, but on his own taste. He too, then, although to all appearances so unlikely a subject, contributes to the sum of personal criticism.

Pater, as a previous chapter has attempted to show, arrives at his theory of culture, and of criticism in relation to culture, for the most part independently of Arnold; but he does in a sense complement and illustrate the elder critic.

For Arnold, as we have seen, the function of criticism is first "to see the object as in itself it really is", - to weigh its intrinsic merits, that is, undisturbed by extraneous considerations. But his own work does not always follow this rule. The essay entitled "Shelley" is nothing but a series of censures on the poet's private life - a criticism of a biography of Shelley, but no appreciation of his poetry. This essay might well have been called "Some thoughts on Dowden's Life of Shelley;" but the essay on Wordsworth is a real attempt to rehabilitate the poet, the study of Tolstoi an interesting appreciation of Anna Karenina, and the two essays on Eugénie and Maurice de Guérin are honest attempts to make two neglected talents better known. Arnold's "to see the object as in itself it really is", is not a guarantee of conformity; each sees with his own eyes, but it is possible to construct, as it were, a "working model" of the thing seen, which will answer well enough. Pater realised, as Arnold

apparently did not, that the problem of culture was not merely one of instruction and enlightenment, but basically one of communication. No two men see, or apprehend, exactly alike. Criticism becomes primarily a matter of a personal apprehension and appreciation. No culture is possible, of course, without some collective interaction. The essay is for Pater a means of mediation, and the reader is sometimes addressed.

In his idea of the critic, Arnold largely concurred with Sainte-Beuve. Discussing "poetic truth" in his Last Words on Translating Homer,¹ (1862) he writes,

"The critical perception of poetic truth - is of all things the most volatile, elusive and evanescent; by even pressing too impetuously after it, one runs the risk of losing it. The critic of poetry should have the finest tact, the nicest moderation, the most free, flexible, and elastic spirit imaginable."²

The critic should be a scholar, but not too learned:

"one often sees erudition out of all proportion to its owner's critical faculty."³

As regards prose style, Arnold would retain the distinction between Prose and verse, but prose would be extended to the domain of imaginative creation. In the same essay he writes of criticism in relation to poetry:

"To handle these matter properly there is needed poise so perfect that the least overweight in any direction tends to destroy the balance."⁴

The reader will be struck by the very Paterian tone of these quotations.

¹ Published in the volume "On Translating Homer" (1861) Smith, Elder 1896 Edn

² op.cit. p.116-117 ³ ibid p.117 ⁴ ibid p.116

Ideas are essential for creative literature but the expression of these ideas is not to be neglected. Arnold points to the French Academy as an arbiter of taste, and sighs after a similar establishment in England. His approach to the whole question of criticism is subjective, although his "touchstones" represent a doomed effort at objectivity (for touchstones have to be chosen.) Really, Arnold is following the line of development which began with Wordsworth and Coleridge: the growing demand for creative writing in prose, existing side by side with an increasingly personal idea of criticism. It is Pater who really sums up these movements.

And here it may be necessary to emphasise that any assessment of "influence" direct or indirect, of his predecessors upon Pater, or of Pater himself on his contemporaries and succeeding generations, is outside the scope of this study. The concern here is with Pater in relation to the function of criticism; in order to "place" him it has been necessary to consider a certain amount of literary history. It is Pater's spirit and attitude which will be sought in post-Paterian criticism, rather than evidence of "influence".

It is in this strictly limited sense, then, that Pater may be said to continue various tendencies in his predecessors: the catholicity of taste of Coleridge, Hazlitt's frank enjoyment of art and his search for what is pleasing in it: the humility of Lamb's approach, and his reserve of manner; De Quincey's preoccupation with form and ability to give an "impression" of a personality; and Arnold's conception of

criticism in relation to culture.

But Pater did more than sum up the past: and the most important thing he did was to think for himself. His approach to every work of art, to every artist, was as nearly as possible a fresh approach; he sought to rid himself of preconceived ideas, and to let nothing interpose between the object and the receptive critical mind. In order to focus the impression he often makes use of strictly relevant details of the artist's life. Saintsbury has described the process:

"Expose mind and sense ... like the plate of a camera; assist the reception of the impression by cunning lenses of comparison, and history, and hypothesis; shelter it with a cabinet of remembered reading and corroborative imagination; develop it by meditation, and print it off with the light of style..."¹

Whether we can fully enter into the details of this analogy, or not, the image of the camera is a good one, and describes aptly enough the process which Pater was always trying to perfect.

The process of thinking for himself entailed a severe and constant training of the mind; his is not the type of criticism which proceeds by measuring a given work against ready-made standards. For each object presented to him, the critic must begin the process anew; and this will minimise the risk of facile judgments.

Dryden had written

"They wholly mistake the nature of criticism who think its business is principally to find fault. Criticism was meant a standard of judging well: the chiefest part of which is, to observe those excellencies which should delight a reasonable reader."

And this is peculiarly true of Pater. For him, the function of

¹ Saintsbury "History of Criticism" Blackwood 1904
Vol.III. p.546.

criticism is appreciation: which entails close analysis, prepared for by conscientious training in receptivity. Like Sainte-Beuve, Pater supposes a certain type of temperament in the critic. Given a naturally receptive mind, there is no reason why he should not develop into a competent critic, always providing that he is willing to cultivate his receptivity unceasingly.

The function of criticism, then, is appreciative and interpretative, and the method Pater suggests can be applied successfully to works, or artists, of any period. Failure comes only when too large or too diffuse a subject is chosen. This may well be advanced as an objection to the method; but could any critic hope to discuss adequately a subject as large and decentralised as Shakespeare's, English Kings in the scope of a single essay?

One of the functions of appreciative criticism is to define the pleasure-giving powers of a work of art. Pater is quick to point out "those excellencies which should delight a reasonable reader". His great advance on his predecessors is that he attempts to analyse this pleasure, to see how it is produced and exactly what quality in the work excites it. The work is analysed, not only for itself or for the artist, but for the benefit of the reader.

Pater never saw criticism in a void: for him, it received its true dignity and importance in relation to the whole problem of culture. So criticism, and art, are not divorced from reality. Pater never forgets that the artist is a man; on the other hand, this is not

allowed to become obtrusive, as happens in the case of Sainte-Beuve. The great merit of Pater's criticism is its essentially sane approach. Criticism becomes fully significant in its relation to the advancement of culture: its function in this light is to be itself; the critic must follow conscientiously his critical principles.

It might be expected that so global a view should at once attract many. This is so but not perhaps in the way we should expect. Pater enunciated, or confirmed, certain principles of the utmost importance; but he did it unobtrusively. Possibly his greatest fault was the rare one of underestimating his own achievements. Moreover, his principles are not repeated, like Arnold's so insistently that they cannot fail to gain attention; the modern reader is tempted to add, "more's the pity". In his purely critical writings, as in more obviously creative works like the Imaginary Portraits, Pater embodies his ideas in a style as nearly approaching his own ideal as possible. This means a style not only as accurate to the "sense of fact" but as scholarly and pleasing as possible: so that the reader, unused to so careful a creation, may tend to cancel out Pater's efforts and forget the matter in the pleasure the form gives him.

It is still too early to make any kind of final estimate of Pater's importance; finality in any case is never possible, since literature is in continual growth and development. Without drawing any rash conclusions about "influence", then, we can afford to glance at a few examples of the continuation or development of Pater's principles. We may leave aside, as not relevant to this study, those writers through

whom the "Pater legend" has developed, pausing only to glance at one, whose imitation is an asset more often than a liability. This is Arthur Symons, whose Studies in Prose and Verse (1904) was preceded by a dedicatory letter in which he states that

"Criticism is not an examination with marks and prizes. It is a valuation of forces, and it is indifferent to their direction. It is concerned with them only as a force, and it is concerned with force only in its kind and degree... I have a few principles of criticism, and I apply these few¹ principles to every writer and on every occasion."

Symons's essay on Pater himself proves how thoroughly he had understood his master. Pater, we feel, would have been satisfied with this description of his own work.

"Here... we have criticism which, in its divination, its arrangement, its building up of many materials into a living organism, is itself creation, becomes imaginative work itself."²

Symons in a sense continues Pater's criticism: he fully agrees, for instance, with the principle of fidelity to fact, or rather to sense of fact, in creation:

"The first aim of art, no doubt, is the representation of things as they are. But then, things are as our eyes see them and as our minds make them, and it is thus of primary importance for the critic to distinguish the precise qualities of those eyes and minds³ which makes the world into imaginative literature."

Here Symons underlines the connection between the sense of fact in the artist, and the critic's power of distinguishing this sense. There is some relation here to Pater's theory of soul in style, as appealing arbitrarily to one and not another. In his essay on Meredith, Symons regards the "irrational pleasure" he gets from Meredith, who violates all his cherished principles, as "almost inexplicable", but

¹ Symons, Studies in Prose and Verse London 1904. p.V.

² ibid p.75

³ ibid p.97.

finally solves it as

"the unrecognised, incalculable attraction of those qualities which go to make up great poetry, coming to us in the disguise of prose ..." ¹

And here we may notice that Symons does not subscribe entirely to Pater's definition of the distinction between good and great art. Great art, here, would seem to be an intensification of the qualities which go to make up good art, and thereby Symons has certainly escaped what some have thought a retrogression in Pater: namely, his resort to subject as the final test for great art. (The present writer cannot subscribe to this stricture.) It will be seen, too, that Symons does not hold as clearly as Pater the distinction between prose and poetry, but seems to have adopted the broader view of style, which, in Pater's case, includes the lesser distinction.

Symons, then, holds Pater's views with only insignificant modifications, and exemplifies in his own work "creative criticism" as he understands it. When we turn to Saintsbury, the body of his criticism is too vast to be examined in relation to Pater's theory. Saintsbury, an avowed admirer of Pater, displays in his account of the older critic considerable understanding of his method, and it is possible to discover in his work some similarity of ideas. We are reminded of Pater's statement that to the critic all periods are of equal merit in that they have all produced good work and good artists, when we read that

"everything human exists essentially or potentially in the men of every time, ... you may not only find books in the running brooks but (what appears at first more

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. ibid p.150

contradictory) dry stones in them; while on the other hand, founts of water habitually gush from the midst of the driest rock." ¹

Elsewhere Saintsbury rejects explicitly, as Pater had rejected implicitly, Arnold's theory of alternating periods of criticism and creation; he thus helps to crystallise a Paterian principle. He rejoices to see, in "modern" criticism, a tendency to judge each work on its own merits, and this, of course, was one of Pater's central principles.

Saintsbury writes

"That a work of art is entitled to be judged on its own merits or demerits, and not according as its specification does or does not happen to be previously entered and approved in an official schedule - this surely cannot but seem a gain to every one not absolutely blinded by prejudice." ²

He accepts, too, the pleasure principle, much as Pater understands it, and admits the necessity of a careful training of the mind in the critic. For Saintsbury, too, criticism is a vocation. Reverting to the image of the camera, he writes of the critic :

"The plate to which he exposes the object cannot be too carefully prepared and sensitised, so that it may take the exactest possible reflection: but it cannot also be too carefully protected from even the minutest line, shadow, dot, that may affect or predetermine the impression in the very slightest degree." ³

It will be observed that he has adopted the term "impression", which he understands in Pater's sense.

Saintsbury was perhaps the most important figure in English criticism during the first years of the present century, and certainly his monumental History of Criticism has done much to establish the

¹ Saintsbury, op. cit. vol. III p.5

² ibid p.606

³ ibid p.609

principles which had guided Pater's work, and to make them more generally received. Symons and Saintsbury take us over the turn of the century. Since 1918 (taking a convenient date) new critics and new tendencies have arisen, too near as yet for a perspective to be attained. Most of the writers are still alive; some, like T.S. Eliot, from time to time unsay something said earlier. Pater's name may seem to recede, largely because his work was accomplished. It is not difficult to find examples, academic and non-academic, which prove the persistence of essential Paterian tenets: for instance, in the work of Mr. Bonamy Dobrée and Mr. Ezra Pound. Bonamy Dobrée maintains Pater's idea of "receptivity"; in 1929 he wrote

"It is only in certain states of receptivity that we are capable of an intuition, of grasping some fact or relation so that it has the peculiar force of a revelation. It is one of the functions of a work of art to produce that state." ¹

and made the connection with criticism thus:

"All intuitions are not equal. Part of the ultimate business of criticism is to discover, not only the intuition, but the worth of the intuition.... the other part is to discover how, and how well, the intuition has been conveyed." ²

There is no need to comment on the directly Paterian approach.

One of the most interesting groups in the history of the present century is the Imagist group; and some of the Imagist theories coincide to a striking degree with Pater's ideas. / In 1912, Ezra Pound, "H.D." and Richard Aldington (who, incidentally, has edited an anthology of Pater) decided on three principles of poetry, of which two are highly significant: the direct treatment of the thing whether subjective or

1

B. Dobrée. The Lamp and the Lute. Oxford 1929
p.xiii

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ibid p.xv

objective, and the use of no word that does not contribute to the presentation. In "Poetry" for 1913, Pound enlarged on this.

"Use no superfluous word, no adjective,
which does not reveal something."¹

"Go in fear of abstractions."²

We recognise at once two Paterian principles: the closeness of form and matter, and the desire for concrete presentation. Even more striking is the definition of good art, which first appeared in 1913:

"By good art I mean art that bears true witness, I mean the
art that is most precise."³

what is this but fidelity to the artist's "sense of fact"?

— Pound like, Pater, distinguishes between good and great art.

Good art has been defined above: great art is

"the result of some exceptional faculty, strength or
perception."⁴

and though the definition is different, the very fact that Pound has made such a distinction is interesting. Pound's comments in criticism are often Paterian in spirit: for instance

"Each age has its own abounding gifts,"

which recalls the catholicity of Pater's approach.

In the comment

"All that the critic can do for the reader or audience
or spectator is to focus his gaze or audition."⁵

the reader is reminded of Pater's description of the critic's efforts to make his audience see exactly what he sees. And there is no

¹ Literary Essays of Ezra Pound ex. T.S. Eliot. Faber, 1954.
p.4.

² ibid p.5.

³ ibid p.44

⁴ ibid p.56

⁵ ibid p.13

substitute for seeing and judging for oneself:

"The critic, the receiver, however stupid and ignorant,
must judge for himself."¹

For Pound, criticism is always personal, because ideas are changing all the time: the human mind is never static:

↓ "All criticism should be professedly personal criticism.
In the end the critic can only say 'I like it' or 'I am
moved', ... when he has shown us himself, we are able to
understand him."²

What are these but the principles Pater followed so closely in his own work, and advocated as a working system for others?

The history of twentieth century criticism is yet to be completed, and it is always a dangerous proceeding to try to estimate "influence". But it seems likely that the significance of Pater's work will not lessen, but rather increase, with the passage of time; that critics will come back to him for help, because the principles he upheld are of enduring value, and that the function of criticism, as he conceived it, is one of permanent use to artists, critics, and readers.

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¹ ibid p.56

² ibid p.56

APPENDIX

Pater and German Poetry and Philosophy

Pater's relation to the currents of ideas in his time, including those which have been assimilated from Germany, has been dealt with by Helen Hawthorne Young ¹ and I have not the equipment to explore further the background of German metaphysics and aesthetics with which Pater became acquainted as a young man. The critical sayings of the French creative writers considered in Chapter III are fully relevant but German metaphysics have no real bearing on Pater's mature conception and application of the function of criticism. The impress of this early reading is clear (naturally) in the Essay on Coleridge, particularly in the earlier-written portion. German culture and history remained a part of his European background and could contribute a topic to the creative writer ; there are a number of references, some appreciative, to the definitions and distinctions made by German philosophy and aesthetics ², but Pater rapidly won through to a pure or strict conception of literary (or art) criticism. It is not too much to say that he underwent a revulsion of feeling on this subject, and in the Preface

1) Pater and the Thought of his Time.

2) 'Coleridge' passim; beginning of 'Lamb', 'subtleties of thought transplanted hither not without advantage; 'Strife'; (p) 'the great German metaphysical movement of 80 years ago' (as contributing to vocabulary). Pater's general, non-specific, references to German Art are few and generally disparaging.

to The Renaissance (1873), he repudiated with unusual sharpness any attempt to yoke metaphysical speculation or abstract aesthetics with the critical activity.³⁾

In the following paragraphs are summarised Pater's most important references (outside the Coleridge essay) to German poets and philosophers.

Of the major German poets Heine is mentioned several times, in connection with Romanticism in Germany, and chiefly as the exponent of the "gods in exile" which Pater adopted in two of his Imaginary Portraits. For Goethe he expressed, particularly in his earlier career, an admiration equal to Arnold's. The "Winckelmann" was an attempt to place Winckelmann in relation to Goethe whose career was shaped by his example. Other references are:

Preface p.x. Goethe as an almost perfect artist:

"Few artists, not Goethe ... even, work quite cleanly.

Luca della Robbia p.66. Pater adopts the term Allgemeinheit (breadth and universality) as used by Goethe.

Leonardo da Vinci p.113. Goethe used to demonstrate the faults of excessive knowledge in the artist; his success in Elective Affinities and

3) 'Metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere.' pl

and Part I of Faust is contrasted with the comparative failure of the second part of Faust.

Plato and Platonism. is remarkable for a return to earlier interests. The use of Hegel here does not involve any inconsistency with the above statements since Pater's subject is philosophy. 'historic method' of criticism advocated by Hegel is emphasised. The other chief references are:

- p.9 "Dogmatic and eclectic criticism alike have in our own century, under the influence of Hegel and his predominant theory of the ever-changing time-spirit or Zeit-Geist, given way to a third method of criticism, the historic method, which bids us replace the doctrine, or the system, we are busy with... as far as possible in the group of conditions, intellectual, social, material, amid which 'it was actually produced.'
- p.192. A reference to Hegel's method as 'exact and formal.'
- p.193. A reference to Hegel as the upholder of the instructive and immediate character of the highest acts of knowledge.

In the Winckelmann essay (p.177) there is quoted Hegel's remark on Winckelmann:

"He is to be regarded as one of those who, in the sphere of art, have known how to initiate a new organ for the human spirit.

The Zeit Geist is mentioned as a controlling factor in art and literature, in the Postscript to Appreciations.

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