Pater as Psychagogue: Psychology, Aesthetics, Rhetoric
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I

Pater does not refer explicitly to 'psychology' in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), his most celebrated book, but it is something like a laboratory for thinking about consciousness, and for exploring its aesthetic implications:

> 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?[1]

These are the questions that, famously, Pater asks in the opening paragraphs of the book's Preface; and the answers to them, as he insists, are 'the original facts with which the aesthetic critic has to do' (*S* 3). The chapters of *Studies* might therefore be conceptualized as annotations of a series of psychological experiments, in which the subject's responses, his 'impressions', serve as his 'primary data' (*S* 3). Each representative of the Renaissance, as he idiosyncratically conceives the term, be it Botticelli or Luca della Robbia, is the occasion for a process of intense self-examination that tests the empiricist principle that, to put it in formulaic terms, objectivity is subjective; and at the same time probes the possibility of being 'objective about subjectivity'.[2]

'The function of the aesthetic critic,' Pater argues in *Studies*, is:

> to distinguish, analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. (*S* 4)

For Pater, then, it might be stated from the outset, psychology is aesthetics; aesthetics psychology. In his conception of aesthetics, psychological questions displace 'metaphysical questions', which are 'as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere', as he dismissively puts it (*S* 3). In Denis Donoghue's neat formulation, 'ontology is displaced by psychology.'[3] 'What is important,' Pater underlines, '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' (*S* 4).

Some time ago, Ian Small demonstrated that Pater's vocabulary, especially in the Preface and Conclusion to *Studies*, was shaped by debates about the physiology and psychology of aesthetics, conducted by Alexander Bain, Herbert Spencer, and James Sully in particular, which had been published in periodicals to which Pater too contributed, like the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Westminster Review*, in the 1860s and 1870s. Small called attention, for example, to the resonance for Pater both of Sully's article on 'The Aesthetics of Human Character', printed in the *Fortnightly* in 1871, and of his book *Sensation and Intuition* (1874), where he announced that 'in proportion as the mind is capable of finely distinguishing between different impressions and ideas, and of clearly noting their points of resemblance, its aesthetic enjoyments are multiplied'.[4] More recently, scholars such as Gowan Dawson and Maureen Moran have supplemented Small's compelling thesis, exploring Pater's use of scientific ideas in *Marius the Epicurean* (1885) and *Gaston de Latour* (1888) respectively.[5]

This is important scholarship, but my interests here are rather different. In this article, I propose to rethink the relationship between psychology and aesthetics for Pater in less obviously scientific terms. For it seems to me that, according to Pater, psychology is a matter of the spirit. It connotes a science of the soul (as in the pre-Enlightenment meaning of the term), in addition to a science of the mind (as in the Enlightenment or post-Enlightenment one). In Pater's discussions of aesthetics, psychology is a spiritual concept as well as a mental one, a temperamental issue as well as an intellectual one. It needs to be added, though, that it is also irreducibly bodily. The soul, in Pater's conception, is a physical phenomenon, as material as it is transcendental. 'Pater's career,' F. C. McGrath has pointed out, 'can be seen as a lifelong attempt to provide through an emphasis on the senses a corrective to the excessive rationalism that dominated Western culture from medieval Christianity through the eighteenth century.'[6] His understanding of psychology, shaped as it is by contemporary scientific studies of the mind, is at the same time resistant to excessive rationalism.

II

Pater does refer explicitly to psychology in his commentaries on Coleridge. In the first of these, 'Coleridge's Writings', which appeared anonymously in the *Westminster Review* in 1866, he praises Coleridge for possessing 'learning, inwardness, a subtle psychology, a dramatic power of sympathy with modes of thought other than his own'.[7] For Pater, it appears, psychology is associated with the quality that his disciple Vernon Lee came to call 'empathy'.[8] Subsequently, in the composite article on Coleridge that is printed in *Appreciations* (1889), he elaborates on this assessment, claiming that Coleridge's prose writings incarnate two distinct 'characters', or *personae*, that are of particular importance for understanding him. The first of these is the 'student of words', the Coleridge that 'notes the recondite associations of words, old and new' and explores the logic of 'their various uses'.[9] Here, Coleridge is cast as a philologist. But his interest in language is, according to Pater, 'allied to his undoubted gift of tracking down and analysing curious modes of thought' (*A* 82). He is to be seen 'as a psychologist, that is, as a more minute observer or student than other men of the phenomena of mind' (*A* 82). As Pater adds, this is the Coleridge praised by Shelley, in 'Peter Bell the Third', as a 'subtle-souled psychologist' (*A* 83).[10] Pater is interested in Coleridge's capacity for testing and tracing the involutions of his own consciousness. Indeed, Coleridge is implicitly the archetypal aesthetic critic, because he experiments on his own mind, distinguishing, tracking, analysing. Pater goes on to emphasize the poet's 'gift of handling the finer passages of human feeling, at once with power and delicacy, which was another result of his finer psychology, of his exquisitely refined habit of self-reflection' (*A* 100-1). As he had formulated it in the piece printed in the *Westminster Review*, 'a faculty for truth is a power of distinguishing and fixing delicate and fugitive details.'[11] Psychology, according to Pater, is a matter of self-reflection. 'What we have to do,' he states in the Conclusion to *Studies*, 'is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions' (*S* 120).

A couple of decades later, in *Plato and Platonism* (1893), the final book published in his lifetime, Pater both clarified and obfuscated this point. In the chapter on 'Plato and the Sophists', he argues that the truth on which the Platonic

Socrates insisted, 'in opposition to the Sophists' impudently avowed theory and practice of the *superficial*,' is that 'you yourself must have an inward, carefully ascertained, measured, instituted hold over anything you are to convey with any real power to others'.[12] This self-discipline is closely related to the psychological control he elsewhere elaborates as *ascesis*, which George Levine usefully describes as 'an austere, rigorous restraint of the self that, from the basis of an inevitable subjectivity, issued in an impersonality that opened both to art and to truth'.[13] But in the context of *Plato and Platonism* it appears to be indissociable from rhetoric, from communicating with 'real power to others'. In the concluding paragraphs of the chapter, he recapitulates the point, insisting that 'the essence of all artistic beauty is expression, which cannot be where there's really nothing to be expressed; the line, the colour, the word, following obediently, and with minute scruple, the conscious motions of a convinced intelligible soul' (*P* 120). Then, defending the Socratic method, Pater contends that its 'essential function' was 'to make men interested in themselves, as being the very ground of all reality for them, *la vrai verité*, as the French say' (*P* 120).

Pater had used the phrase *vrai verité* in the final paragraph of his essay on 'The School of Giorgione' (probably composed as early as 1872, though first published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1877, then added to the third edition of *The Renaissance* in 1888). There, he urges that Giorgione's most important achievement is the almost perfect equilibrium he achieves in his paintings between landscape and people, so that 'neither personage or scenery is ever a mere pretext for the other'. He concludes:

> Something like this seems to me to be the *vrai verité* about Giorgione, if I may adopt a serviceable expression, by which the French recognise those more liberal and durable impressions which, in respect of any really considerable person or subject, anything that has at all intricately occupied men's attention, lie beyond, and must supplement, the narrower range of the strictly ascertained facts about it. (*S* 135)

The essential truth, then, does not lie embedded in the ascertainable facts, but 'beyond' them, in those 'liberal and durable impressions' that are Pater's phenomenological equivalent of facts. The Paterian impression, as Wolfgang Iser has pointed out, is 'a mixture of subjective perception with objective perceptibility'.[14]

In the Conclusion to *Studies* – adapted from the final paragraphs of 'Poems of William Morris', an unsigned article that appeared in the *Westminster Review* of October 1868 – Pater effectively deconstructed, or dissolved, the distinction between facts and impressions.[15] The 'external objects' that appear to press in upon the individual consciousness as it processes experience are dissipated in the almost spontaneous, indeed coincident, act of reflection. These atomized objects, divested of even the fragile solidity 'with which language invests them', deliquesce in the form of 'impressions unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them' (*S* 119). Pater's use of the term 'impression', as Judith Ryan has emphasized, is irrefutable proof of his commitment to an empiricist conception of self.[16] In the first instance, Pater derives his empiricism from Hume, whose achievement he fleetingly alludes to in 'Sir Thomas Browne' (1886).[17] In the second instance, as Ryan has revealed, he derives it from H. L. Mansel, the author of the *Prolegomena Logica* (1851), an 'acute philosophical writer' whom Pater praises in the essay on 'Style' for demonstrating that 'all the technical laws of logic are but means of securing, in each and all of its apprehensions, the unity, the strict identity with itself, of the apprehending mind'.[18] Each impression, as he put it in the Conclusion, where he appears to be at his most solipsistic, 'is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world' (*S* 119). One of the difficulties in interpreting the Conclusion though is that, on the one hand, Pater seems to insist that this conception of the self is a characteristic of what he calls 'modern thought', something from which he manifestly distances himself; and, on the other, he seems to admit that he is deliciously caught up in the excitements of the tendency he describes.[19]

In *Plato and Platonism* the self is 'the very ground of reality'; but as such it consists no doubt of endlessly shifting sands. Meditating on the Socratic method in that book, Pater elaborates his point about making men interested in themselves. To make a man interested in himself is 'to flash light into the house within, its many chambers, its memories and associations, upon its inscribed and pictured walls' (*P* 120). This mesmerizing image, comparable to one of those expressions that, in *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard calls 'marvels of phenomenology', because they 'give

us a lesson in solitude', is at the same time extremely disconcerting.[20] It conjures up a man intruding on his own consciousness. He is a thief, whose flickering torch picks out glimpses of the home, or museum perhaps, into which he has stolen, as it strafes its frescoed surfaces. Or, as those enigmatic inscriptions seem to intimate, he is an archaeologist exploring a tomb, raiding his own past and that of an entire culture.[21] This richly mysterious metaphor also implicitly leads the reader back to the Conclusion of *Studies*; for it is there that Pater formulates an understanding of consciousness in terms of the chambers or walls that frame and encircle it; in terms of the architectonics of the house.

Famously, in the second paragraph of the Conclusion, Pater insists that, if we focus on the subject's impressions of the world, 'the whole scope of observation is dwarfed to the narrow chamber of the individual mind' (*S* 119). He continues:

> Experience, already reduced to a swarm of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. (*S* 119)

The subject seems to be hopelessly imprisoned in the chamber of the mind, perhaps its burial chamber. This description, another phenomenological marvel, is a persuasive metaphor for what Bachelard describes as the roundness of being. 'If we submit to the hypnotic power of such expressions,' Bachelard writes, 'suddenly we find ourselves entirely in the roundness of this being, we live in the roundness of life, like a walnut that becomes round in its shell.'[22] Pater's sentence, the complicated grammar of which entramels the reader, especially in its final clause, brilliantly mimes a sense of isolation. But if Bachelard celebrates 'the calm of all roundness', Pater's conception of personality as a thick, circular enclosure is in contrast notably turbulent.[23] It is closer to the mental space evoked by Hamlet, in Act II, Scene II, when he tells Rosencrantz, 'I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.'[24] For Pater, consciousness is so closely circumscribed as to be claustrophobic, as in a nightmare.

Pater's image of 'a swarm of impressions', to persist in examining this significant sentence, imparts an unsettling degree of energy to the phrase he had

used in the previous sentence but one: 'a group of impressions.' It can be constructively compared to Herman Melville's disturbing description of Babo's head, in 'Benito Cereno' (1855), as 'that hive of subtlety'.[25] But if a 'hive' indicates ordered, industrious activity, a 'swarm' implies tumultuous, half-spontaneous flight (its etymological meaning, derived from the Old Norse *svarmr*, 'may be that of agitated, confused, or deflected movement,' the *OED* notes). As Cristopher Hollingsworth has observed in his account of insect metaphors in literature from the *Iliad* on, the swarm 'is less civilized than the hive'.[26] The latter describes a centripetal movement; the former a centrifugal movement. Bees are, for example, said to swarm when they leave the hive in a compact but – from a human perspective – uncontainable cluster. Pater's impressions are thus implicitly inchoate, uncontrollable. They are in a permanent, teeming state of mutability. The Preface to *Studies* indicates that he aspires nonetheless to order them. The effective aesthetic critic, he asserts, is the one who 'experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the analysis and discrimination of them' (*S* 3). Where swarm was, as Freud might have formulated it, there hive shall be.[27]

There is, however, something almost unimaginably strange, alien even, about a swarm; and the scientific language of Pater's Preface, which characterizes impressions as 'data', cannot completely eliminate this essence (*S* 3). Unlike a hive, a swarm is obstinately, troublingly resistant to attempts to anthropomorphize it. It is presumably because of this inhuman quality that Milton, at the end of Book I of *Paradise Lost*, described the spacious council hall in Pandemonium as 'thick swarm'd' with Satan's regiments, 'both on the ground and in the air / Brush'd with the hiss of rustling wings'.[28] I think it is probable that, consciously or unconsciously, Pater had this passage from Milton's epic in mind when he wrote his review of Morris's poems:

> […] So thick the airy crowd
> Swarmed and were straitened; till, the signal given,
> Behold a wonder! They but now who seemed
> In bigness to surpass Earth's giant sons,
> Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room
> Throng numberless […][29]

The diction of this account of the sudden, shocking transformation of the Satanic forces is closely echoed in the language of Pater's Conclusion, the second paragraph of which uses no less than four of Milton's terms: 'thick', 'swarm', 'dwarfed', and 'narrow'. It makes sense, for Pater too describes a process of contraction: if we remain in the realm of impressions, he writes, 'the whole scope of observation is dwarfed to the narrow chamber of the individual mind', and 'experience, already reduced to a swarm of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us' (*S* 119). Pandemonium, in Pater's potent reinscription of the Miltonic precedent, is internalized. The sense of spiritual claustrophobia is individualized. But the intimations of an insurgent, centrifugal flight that vibrate in Milton's use of the abhuman metaphor of the swarm are also residually present in Pater's Conclusion. There is something potentially liberating about the rigid containment of consciousness Pater depicts, in which consciousness nonetheless pullulates with an insect life so intense that it threatens to irrupt. Imprisonment here, as in some psychogenic fugue, is a form of delirium.

III

In the passage from *Plato and Platonism* that I have quoted above, where Pater defines the Socratic method in terms of its insistence on making men interested in themselves, the image of the subject flashing a light on a darkened series of rooms has something uncanny about it. Neutralising this effect, though, Pater adds:

> Fully occupied there, as with his own essential business in his own home, the young man would become, of course, proportionately less interested, less meanly interested, in what was superficial, in the mere outsides, of other people and their occupations. (*P* 120)

In this disposition, the young man becomes less like the Sophists, with their 'impudently avowed theory and practice of the *superficial*', and more like the Platonic Socrates (*P* 117). Self-contained, contained in his self, he nonetheless avoids becoming solipsistic. There is, however, something *unheimlich* about this image of home. For this superficially mild-mannered sentence sits in an uneasy tension with the previous sentence, with its unnerving evocation of flashing light

'into the house within'. If the self is a house, it is half-haunted. Its architecture is, in China Miéville's characterization, 'unquiet.'[30] Pater's thought might thus be seen as an instance, in the late nineteenth century, of the 'spectralizing habit' that Terry Castle has identified as a consequence of 'the rise of modern skepticism', whereby 'the fact that we have come to speculate about the nature of reality with an urgency and insistence unknown to our forebears' is closely related to 'a subliminal faith in the reality of thoughts'.[31]

The next but one sentence of *Plato and Platonism* touches specifically on psychology, so I want to focus on it carefully:

> And as the special function of all speech as a fine art is the control of minds (*psychagogia*) it is in general with the soul of man – with a veritable psychology, with as much as possible as we can get of that – that the writer, the speaker, must be chiefly concerned, if he is to handle minds not by mere empiric routine […] but by the power of veritable fine art. (*P* 121)

The syntax here is complicated even by Pater's standards, and it is not easy to state with confidence what he means, but I am particularly interested in his reference to *psychagogia*, which he translates as 'the control of minds'. The term *psychagogia* is taken from Plato's *Phaedrus*, where Socrates argues for a definition of rhetoric that is significantly different from the one he had promulgated in the *Gorgias*. In the dialogue with Phaedrus, he defines rhetoric as 'a kind of skilful leading of the soul [*psychagogia*] by means of words, not only in public gatherings such as the lawcourts, but also in private meetings'.[32] Rhetoric is thus reinterpreted as an interpersonal matter. As Elizabeth Asmis has noted, 'in the *Gorgias*, rhetoric is the practice of public persuasion'; 'in the *Phaedrus*, by contrast, Socrates views rhetoric as a means of influencing individuals, in private or in public, on matters of individual concern.'[33] Unlike rhetoric that deliberately practises deception, *psychagogia* is the 'art of teaching individuals to discover the truth about themselves'.[34] It is a type of pedagogy that involves shaping language to the needs of the soul that it seeks to persuade, in order to guide them to self-knowledge.

Pater's contention in *Plato and Platonism* is that the writer or speaker who hopes to persuade minds 'by the power of veritable fine art' should chiefly be concerned with the control of minds, that 'knowledge of the soul of man' which was

once called *psychagogia*, but which he translates as 'a veritable psychology'. One can gain a clearer sense of this if one goes back to the essay on 'Style', and in particular Pater's incidental comments on Pascal, where he attempts to discriminate between 'fact and something quite different from external fact' (*A* 8). Pater points out that, in Pascal and 'the persuasive writers generally', as he calls them, there are moments when the argument, premised though it is on facts, 'becomes a pleading':

> a theorem no longer, but essentially an appeal to the reader to catch the writer's spirit, to think with him, if one will – an expression no longer of fact but of his 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. (*A* 8)

Pascal is a sort of psychagogue here, as Pater portrays him, because he uses his persuasive powers, his rhetorical skill, to assimilate the reader to his peculiar psychology, his conception or intuition of the world, his impressions.

If Pascal's rhetoric involves 'an appeal to the reader to catch the writer's spirit', then Pater's rhetoric involves this same appeal. But in so far as it engages with the painters and poets of the past, as in *Studies*, it is also an attempt to catch the spirit of these representatives of the Renaissance. Writing about Botticelli or Leonardo involves thinking with them, invoking them, conjuring up their psychology. In this respect, the etymology of psychagogy is important, because it originally signified necromancy, the invocation of the spirits of the dead. 'The term *psychagogia*,' writes Clive Chandler, 'conjures within us an image of the quasi-magical and mysterious power of manipulated discourse.'[35] This sense regained some currency in the nineteenth century, according to the *OED*, when it acquired both a spiritual meaning and a medical one. The word 'psychagogue' was on occasion used to refer to medicine that 'restores consciousness or revives the body', but it referred more commonly to 'a person who calls up the spirits of the dead; a necromancer'. The *OED* cites for instance an article from the *Daily News* in 1882, which drily states that 'our modern psychagogues, the members of the Psychical Society, have not been much more fortunate in calling up spirits than their ancient models'.

This term 'psychagogy', as used in *Plato and Platonism*, presents an opportunity retrospectively to rethink the relationship of psychology and aesthetics

in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. It is a term that mediates usefully between psychology and rhetoric, thought and language, the inner and the outer. Pater's prose, which mimics both scientific and spiritualistic discourses, which is that of both the chemist and the alchemist, is itself a species of psychagogy, I propose. The Paterian reader must 'catch the writer's spirit'. *Studies* and his other more or less 'imaginary portraits' are thus so many psychomantic attempts to call up the spirits of the dead. Psychagogy, for Pater, is a dialogue with the dead that enables, not only a deeper understanding of the consciousnesses that animated the past, but a deeper self-knowledge. It is an imaginary psychology. So here is an additional sense in which, as Jeffrey Wallen has claimed, *Studies* is an examination of 'the powers of influence, and the Renaissance is itself characterized as a series of instances of undergoing and transmitting influences that have survived the passing of their first appearance'.[36]

Pater's conception of psychology is a kind of late nineteenth-century pneumatology. It is an attempt to reinterpret the self in terms of soul rather than mind. Again, it is useful to refer to the essay on 'Style', for Pater there praises precisely those artists from the past who appeal to us not in terms of mind but of soul, which is, perhaps paradoxically, a far more bodily phenomenon. Blake, according to him, is 'an instance of preponderating soul, embarrassed, at a loss, in an era of preponderating mind' (*A* 25). He reaches out to us not through mind, that is, not 'through static and objective indications of design in his work, legible to all'; but through soul: 'By soul, he reaches us, somewhat capriciously perhaps, one and not another, through vagrant sympathy and a kind of immediate contact' (*A* 25). This soul is inseparable from the body – '"soul and body reunited," in Blake's rapturous design' (*A* 30). Pater seeks to identify and celebrate a 'religious influence' in a scientific age (*A* 26). The prophetic character of writers like Blake depends for him,

> on the effect not merely of their matter, but of their matter as allied to, in "electric affinity" with, peculiar form, and working in all cases by an immediate sympathetic contact, on which account it is that it may be called soul, as opposed to mind, in style. (*A* 26)

The phrase 'electric affinity', which echoes Goethe, Humphry Davy, and Coleridge, or channels them, occupies some indistinct space between the scene of scientific experiment and the séance. It fuses soul and body, in rapturous design.

Pater's emphasis on touch, a tactility that is charged both with the physical and the spiritual, is especially significant. It is equivalent to the touch envisioned by Tennyson in section 95 of *In Memoriam*:

> So word by word, and line by line,
>   The dead man touch'd me from the past,
>   And all at once it seem'd at last
> The living soul was flash'd on mine [37]

In *Studies*, shockingly, this emphasis on immediate contact, on sympathetic contact, on touch, is, as in Tennyson, erotic. The contact is immediate in one sense, in that it is instantaneous; but in another sense, it is not, because it is mediated by the artwork. The individual artworks that Pater analyses in *Studies* comprise the medium, in a double sense, through which a communion takes place between critic and artist. This communion is at once spiritual and physical, temperamental and tactile. Into painting, poetry, and music, he writes in the chapter on Winckelmann, 'may be translated every delicacy of thought and feeling incidental to a consciousness brooding with delight over itself' (*S* 105). Sculpture, he continues, 'deals more exclusively than any other art with the human form,' which is 'itself one entire medium of spiritual expression, trembling, blushing, melting into dew with inward excitement' (*S* 105). This 'spiritual expression', as contemporary conservative commentators were no doubt quick to intuit, is indisputably physical too; and in so far as it is physical, it is profoundly erotic. Pater's psychagogy is a pornography of the soul.

Studies in the History of the Renaissance is, then, a series of séances, in which Pater summons the spirit of a great artist and uses the almost physical encounter that he realizes – through sympathetic engagement with the artwork in all its materiality and immateriality – as the occasion for an exploration both of this artist's psychology and his own.[38] The conclusion to the chapter on Michelangelo, whom Pater directly compares to Blake, because of 'that strange interfusion of sweetness and strength' that characterizes both of them, is a fine example of this (*S*

55). In the final, rapturous sentences of the penultimate paragraph, Pater hymns him as:

> a poet still alive and in possession of our inmost thoughts – dumb inquiry, the relapse after death into the formlessness which preceded life, change, revolt from that change, then the correcting, hallowing, consoling rush of pity; at last, far off, thin and vague, yet not more vague than the most definite thoughts men have had through three centuries on a matter that has been so near their hearts – the new body; a passing light, a mere intangible, external effect over those too rigid or too formless faces; a dream that lingers a moment, retreating in the dawn, incomplete, aimless, helpless; a thing with faint hearing, faint memory, faint power of touch; a breath, a flame in the doorway, a feather in the wind. (*S* 54)

It is a remarkable rhetorical performance: line by line, the quietly ecstatic prose invokes the poet's spirit, which reaches from the past into the present and, in an elusive but overpowering instant of physical contact, touches Pater. The spiritual and the physical are indissoluble elements of an unmistakably erotic synthesis. Michelangelo becomes for Pater the medium through which, to use the terms of the Conclusion, he can momentarily affirm his indefinable self, a 'tremulous wisp', in the form of 'a single sharp impression' (*S* 119). It is a characteristic Paterian epiphany, in which the chaos of 'the inward world of thought and feeling' is suddenly redeemed by a moment of inspired self-discrimination. This is Pater as a subtle-souled psychologist, catching Michelangelo's spirit, capturing his 'strange, enigmatic, personal essence'.[39] It is Pater as psychagogue.

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[1] Thanks both to Carolyn Burdett and the anonymous referees for their comments on the draft of this article. Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 3. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text and are prefixed by *S*.

[2] 'Pater is arguing for a way to be objective about subjectivity, to find a position outside experience from which to experience it and possess it.' See George Levine, 'Two Ways Not to Be a Solipsist: Art and Science, Pater and Pearson', *Victorian Studies*, 43.1 (2000), 7-41 (p. 20).

[3] Denis Donoghue, *Walter Pater: Lover of Strange Souls* (New York: Knopf, 1995), pp. 139-40.

[4] James Sully, cited in I. C. Small, 'The Vocabulary of Pater's Criticism and the Psychology of Aesthetics', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 18.1 (1978), 81-87 (p. 84).

[5] Gowan Dawson, 'Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* and the Discourse of Science in *Macmillan's Magazine*: A Creature of the Nineteenth Century', *English Literature in Transition*, 48.1 (2005), 38-54; Maureen Moran, 'Walter Pater's House Beautiful and the Psychology of Self-Culture', *English Literature in Transition*, 50.3 (2007), 291-312.

[6] F. C. McGrath, *The Sensible Spirit: Walter Pater and the Modernist Paradigm* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1986), p. 55.

[7] [Walter Pater], 'Coleridge's Writings', *Westminster Review*, January 1866, pp. 106-32 (p. 129).

[8] See Carolyn Burdett, 'Is Empathy the End of Sentimentality?', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 16.2; and her contribution to this issue of *19*. On the relationship between Pater and Lee, see Laurel Brake, 'Vernon Lee and the Pater Circle', in *Vernon Lee: Decadence, Ethics, Aesthetics*, ed. by Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 40-57; and Stefano Evangelista, *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece: Hellenism, Reception, Gods in Exile* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 55-65.

[9] Walter Pater, 'Coleridge', in *Appreciations, with an Essay on Style*, Library Edition (London: Macmillan, 1910), p. 82. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text and prefixed by *A*.

[10] P. B. Shelley, 'Peter Bell the Third', in *Poetical Works*, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), l. 379.

[11] [Pater], 'Coleridge's Writings', p. 107.

[12] Walter Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, Library Edition (London: Macmillan, 1910), pp. 116-7. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text and prefixed by *P*.

[13] Levine, 'Two Ways Not to Be a Solipsist', p. 20.

[14] Wolfgang Iser, *Walter Pater: The Aesthetic Moment*, trans. by David Henry Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 36.

[15] Walter Pater, 'Poems of William Morris', in *William Morris: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Peter Faulkner (London: Routledge, 1973), pp. 79-92.

[16] 'Like Mansel, [Pater] knew that the unified subject was merely a logical construct, and he also knew that our perception of the object-world is similarly dependent on mental constructions.' See Judith Ryan, *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Literary Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 27.

[17] Pater, 'Sir Thomas Browne', in *Appreciations*, p. 159.

[18] Pater, 'Style', in *Appreciations,* pp. 21-2.

[19] I am less optimistic than Carolyn Williams, for instance, about his ability to resist the 'entangling force of [the] "modern" arguments' he represents in these paragraphs. See Carolyn Williams, *Transfigured World: Walter Pater's Aesthetic Historicism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 13.

[20] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 233.

[21] This is Caroline Arscott's characteristically suggestive interpretation of the image, for which I am most grateful. Note too that, in 'Coleridge's Writings', Pater had compared theology to 'a great house, scored all over with hieroglyphics by perished hands' (p. 129).

[22] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, pp. 233-4.

[23] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p. 239.

[24] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by T. J. B. Spencer (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), II. 2. 253.

[25] Herman Melville, 'Benito Cereno', in *Billy Budd, Sailor, and Selected Tales*, ed. by Robert Milder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 247.

[26] Cristopher Hollingsworth, *Poetics of the Hive: The Insect Metaphor in Literature* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001), p. 18. He notes, for instance, that Virgil 'domesticates the ancient energies of the swarm' as depicted by Homer (p. 55).

[27] In the present context, there is insufficient space to explore Pater's 'swarm of impressions' in relation to what the biosemiotician Jesper Hoffmeyer has recently called the 'swarm-semiotic model of the brain functioning involved in creating mental life'. It does seem to me, though, that the important presence of Heraclitus in the Conclusion to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, the epigraph to which cites his dictum that 'all things are in motion and nothing at rest', might be productively related to Hoffmeyer's insistence, in an echo of Karl Popper, that 'Heraclitus was right: We are not things, but flames'; and to his comment that, in *Signs of Meaning in the Universe* (1996), he had 'stated this in another way': 'We are "infinite swarms of swarming swarms".' See Jesper Hoffmeyer, *Biosemiotics: An Examination into the Signs of Life and the Life of Signs*, trans. by Jesper Hoffmeyer and Donald Favareau (Scranton: Scranton University Press, 2008), pp. 49, 258. See also Wendy Wheeler, *The Whole Creature: Complexity, Biosemiotics and the Evolution of Culture* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2006).

[28] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. by Alastair Fowler (London: Longman, 1971), I. 767.

[29] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I. 775.

[30] See China Miéville, 'The Conspiracy of Architecture: Notes on a Modern Anxiety', *Historical Materialism*, 2 (1998), 1-32.

[31] Terry Castle, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 137.

[32] Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 48.

[33] Elizabeth Asmis, '*Psychagogia* in Plato's *Phaedrus*', *Illinois Classical Studies*, 11.1-2 (1986), 153-72 (p. 154).

[34] Asmis, '*Psychagogia* in Plato's *Phaedrus*', p. 157.

[35] Clive Chandler, *Philodemus' On Rhetoric, Books 1 and 2: Translation and Exegetical Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 148.

[36] Jeffrey Wallen, 'Physiology, Mesmerism, and Walter Pater's "Susceptibilities to Influence"', in *Walter Pater: Transparencies of Desire*, ed. by Laurel Brake, Lesley Higgins, and Carolyn Williams (Greenboro, NC: ELT Press, 2002), pp. 73-89 (p. 74).

[37] Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, ed. by Robert H. Ross (New York: Norton, 1973), 95. 33.

[38] No doubt this claim applies to all of Pater's so-called 'imaginary portraits'. See especially, Walter Pater, *Imaginary Portraits* (London: Macmillan, 1887).

[39] This phrase is taken from Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, ed. by Michael Levey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 107.