

## Pater's Portraits: the Aesthetic Hero in 1890

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*Walter Pater's unfinished manuscript, "Gaudioso, the Second," is published here for the first time. Opening as it does with a reflection on a painting of Gaudioso, Pater's literary portrait parallels Oscar Wilde's use of a fictional painting within a literary portrait in The Picture of Dorian Gray and provides another piece of the apparent dialogue between Pater and Wilde. This essay positions "Gaudioso" as working in concert with the other works produced by Pater during his final years to create a Platonic vision of beauty. By insisting upon physical beauty as an external reflection of inner, spiritual beauty, Pater refutes the Victorian dichotomy of spirit and flesh that allows Wilde to dissociate the beauty of his characters from a "moral sense."*

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Walter Pater's various projects included both the writing of *Gaston de Latour* (1888, 1890–1893), a novel set in Renaissance France, and "Gaudioso, the Second," a story of Renaissance Italy—neither of which were ever brought to completion. As does Pater's *Gaston*, so this hitherto unpublished manuscript of "Gaudioso" highlights the ways in which Pater responded to Oscar Wilde by insisting upon a Platonic vision of beauty. In 1890 a new note of urgency clearly was injected into Walter Pater's literary schedule in response to the publication that year of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and "The Critic as Artist." Lord Henry Wotton in *Dorian Gray* incessantly misquoted both Pater's *Renaissance* (1873) and his *Marius the Epicurean* (1885) while in "The Critic as Artist" Gilbert praised Pater and declared that "Art is out of the reach of morals."<sup>1</sup> Reviewing *Dorian Gray*, a nettled Pater remarked that Wilde's novel "fails" to set forth a "true Epicureanism" (i.e., the Paterian theory of life defined six years before in *Marius the Epicurean*) because—if indeed life imitates art—art must be understood to contain the "moral sense,...

the sense of sin and righteousness,” something that Wilde’s heroes are bent on losing “as speedily, as completely as they can” (1891, 59–60). Wilde’s novel is essentially an embellished Platonic dialogue on beauty and love set in the luxuriant social milieu of the 1880s. In responding to this work, this dialogue of aesthetes, Pater picked up the thrown gauntlet. If Wilde’s novel had a moral, it was not thereby in Pater’s opinion a moral book, since its author clearly had an inclination for the atmosphere of exotic depravity in which his characters moved. Insisting that moral values must inform intellectual ideas, Pater sought in the ongoing composition of *Gaston* to correct what he saw as Wilde’s misinterpretation of his criticism and fiction. The fragmentary “Gaudioso” casts a further, interesting light on Pater’s reaction to Wilde’s portrayal of beauty; and it would have, if printed, publicly extended the “reciprocity,” or Socratic dialogue, between the two writers on art, love, and beauty.

Art, love, and beauty had been for Pater, during the first 1880s phase of writing *Gaston de Latour*, a particular preoccupation but one that had grown so much after the publication of *Dorian* that by his 1890 August–September long vacation period Pater felt compelled, after a two-year hiatus in the novel’s serialization, to resume composition with an intention to finish. The run-up to this 1890 contretemps is important, though less than spectacular reading. Not long after the publication of *Marius the Epicurean*, probably about January of 1886 when he borrowed several memoirs from the library for historical background, Pater began research on *Gaston*, the second of his proposed trilogy or triplet of novels on art and religion. His visit in August and September (during the so-called Oxford “long vacation”) to France in 1887 was undoubtedly a research trip for this new novel. From June to October of 1888, chapters one through five of that novel began appearing in *Macmillan’s Magazine*, while for his vacation that year he traveled to Switzerland.<sup>2</sup> Then, after five installments, the serialization was aborted before a sixth chapter, a non-fiction essay, could appear. This “Giordano Bruno” study, afterwards “fictionalized” and retitled as the seventh chapter of *Gaston*, had appeared originally in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1889. In August and September of 1889 Pater visited northern Italy—Milan, Bergamo, and Brescia. But sometime during August

of the following year, 1890, he abruptly canceled a second trip to Italy: “Pater is going to foreswear holiday and finish *Gaston de la Tour*” [sic] (quoted in Evans 1970, 113, n3). And in a letter of 18 October 1890 Pater tells Arthur Symons: “I never got to Italy after all, this summer; instead, finished a paper of Art-Notes in North Italy, by way of prologue to an Imaginary Portrait with Brescia for background” (quoted in Evans 1970, 114). Clearly Pater’s other project for 1890 was to wrap up his “Art Notes” essay and to begin “Gaudioso, the Second” to which his Brescian study was a “prologue.” Both Pater’s “Gaudioso,” a manuscript fragment which breaks off after only twenty-one MS pages, and his *Gaston de Latour*, just thirteen chapters long, remained incomplete at his death in 1894.

Although the connections of the 1890s “Gaudioso” to Wilde have not been at hand for analysis, the reciprocal influences of *Gaston* and *Dorian Gray* have been ascertainable. After Pater broke off serialization of *Gaston*, he still had some research material on Giordano Bruno for the novel that he published instead as an essay in the *Fortnightly* only a month before Wilde began writing *Dorian*. Wilde in chapter four echoes Pater’s Bruno essay. Then when Pater resumed writing *Gaston*, he indirectly commented on Lord Henry’s reflections in his novelized version of the Bruno essay, citing the too enticing dissociation of intellectual positions from moral values—doctrines unintentionally can produce treacherous advice and words may have indirectly fatal consequences. Even the exaggerated sexuality of Wilde’s *Salomé*, just then on the horizon, may have been foreshadowed in *Gaston* in Pater’s character of Queen Margot, the royal femme fatale of her day (Pater 1995, 81–82; 104–105).<sup>3</sup> This reciprocal connection becomes a Socratic dialogue of sorts. Socrates’ pedagogical method, as exemplified by Plato, attempted to sort out incomplete or incorrect ideas and beliefs, educating (from *ex duco*, “lead out”) by leading the learner through rigorously disciplined dialogue to a higher truth and accuracy. “Gaudioso, the Second” would have participated in that dialogue had Pater finished and published it. His portrait of Gaudioso, set only a few decades earlier in the same century as his portrait of Gaston, seems a parallel effort to reconcile fictionally the Victorian tendency to oppose spirit and flesh. Both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and “Gaudioso” turn around an



Figure 1 Panel of Girolamo Romanino's "The Nativity with Saints Alessandro of Brescia, Jerome, Gaudioso and Filippo Benizzi," in the collection of National Gallery, London. Oil and egg tempera on wood, 1524–1525. Illustration courtesy of the author.

aesthetic rendering of a fictionally-supposed living figure. Domenico Averoldi, the fanciful sitter for Romanino's portrait (about 1524), who represents his predecessor, Saint Gaudioso, is thus a counterpoint to the picture of Dorian Gray. And Romanino is a parallel to Basil Hallward since, for Pater as for Wilde, these portraits are the artists' master-

pieces. Pater's unsuccessful and rather nervously roving "Art Notes in North Italy," published in the *New Review* in November 1890, prefaces his appreciably more lucid "Gaudioso, the Second" with these words:

It is one of those old saints, Gaudioso (at home in every church in Brescia), who looks out with full face from the opposite corner of the altar-piece, from a background which, though it might be the new heaven over a new earth, is in truth only the proper, breathable air of Italy. As we see him here, Saint Gaudioso is one of the more exquisite treasures of our National Gallery. It was thus that at the magic touch of Romanino's art the dim, early, hunted-down Brescian church of the primitive centuries, crushed into the dust, it might seem, was "brought to her king," out of those old dark crypts, "in raiment of needle-work"—the delicate, richly folded, pontifical white vestments, the mitre and staff and gloves, and rich jewelled cope, blue or green. The face, of remarkable beauty after a type which all feel, though it is actually rare in art, is probably a portrait of some distinguished churchman of Romanino's own day; a second Gaudioso, perhaps, setting that later Brescian church to rights after the terrible French occupation in the painter's own time, as his saintly predecessor, the Gaudioso of the earlier century here commemorated, had done after the invasion of the Goths. The eloquent eyes are open upon some glorious vision. "He hath made us kings and priests!"<sup>4</sup> they seem to say for him, as the clean, sensitive lips might do so eloquently. Beauty and Holiness had "kissed each other," as in Borgognone's imperial deacons at the Certosa. At the Renaissance the world might seem to have parted them again. But here certainly, once more, Catholicism and the Renaissance, religion and culture, holiness and beauty, might seem reconciled, by one who had conceived neither after any feeble way, in a gifted person. Here at least, by the skill of Romanino's hand, the obscure martyr of the crypts shines as a saint of the later Renaissance, with a sanctity of which the elegant world itself would hardly escape the fascination, and which reminds one how the great Apostle Saint Paul has made courtesy part of the content of the Divine charity itself. (1895a, 102–104)

In Wilde's novel the sitter's beauty suggests a personality that has eluded moral constraints. Lord Henry's willingness to leave morality out of this equation is exactly what Pater cannot accept. In both Pater's novel, already begun, and in this developing imaginary portrait,

the Victorian dichotomy of spirit and flesh, soul and body, is shown as Platonically harmonized—they are intertwined rather than dichotomized.

Certainly the common renovation of churches in *Gaston* and “Gaudioso” is a clue to Pater’s understanding of the harmony of old Roman religious beauty, the beauty of those old gods, with the sanctifying of every kind of physical beauty by the Incarnation of Christ. In “Gaudioso,” the portrait breaks off with “the new cathedral, the new Brescia he designed, meant to build, was building already in earthly stones of price.” In *Gaston*:

Many years after, Gaston de Latour, an enemy of all Gothic darkness or heaviness, returning to his home full of a later taste, changed all that. A thicket of airy spires rose above the sanctuary; the blind triforium broke into one continuous window; the heavy masses of stone were pared down with wonderful dexterity, till not a handsbreadth remained uncovered by delicate traceries, as from the fair white roof touched sparingly with gold, down to the subterranean chapel of Saint Taurin, where the peasants of La Beauce came to pray for rain, not a space was left unsearched by cheerful daylight, refined, but hardly dimmed at all, by painted glass mimicking the clearness of the open sky. (1995, 3)

One suspects these architectural reconstructions, under the “true light” of Renaissance influences, prompts these two champions of physical beauty to end with this more-creative achievement than many others among Pater’s aesthetic heroes. *Gaston* and *Gaudioso*, both having taken holy orders, are a special religious category, perhaps. This is how his imaginary portrait of *Gaudioso* begins: <sup>5</sup>



### Gaudioso, the Second

“A happy soul, that all the way  
To heaven hath a summer day.”<sup>6</sup>

The good looks of Domenico Averoldi, under the title of *Gaudioso the Second*, Bishop of Brescia, who in Romanino’s picture represents, with so deep an impress of sanctity, *Gaudioso the First*, Bishop and Saint, were in truth hereditary in his family:—a gift of which, like shrewd

Italians, the Averoldi had ever been well aware,—of their masculine charm; duly estimating,—well! its pecuniary value: all it had helped them to in a world less exclusively practical in its application of the gift of sight than it is apt to suppose. Since the days of an earlier Domenico who three centuries before had brought an infatuated empress to her ruin, onwards, the family portrait gallery bore witness to the wonderful uniformity, from age to age, of that masculine charm, as the family records might have illustrated almost every variety of the use, and the misuse of it. Only, always, amid whatever moral obliquities, it had brought with it a certain æsthetic fineness of habit: was a thing to live up to,<sup>7</sup> and to make life a kind of chivalrous service, as to a trust.

Yet perhaps the masterful eyes of the Averoldi had never before looked out on the world quite like those of the Domenico in whom, towards the end of the sixteenth century, good looks and all, that family came to an end, whose youthful portrait as Gaudioso the Second remained not among the people at home, but in the sacristy of the cathedral, in its place among the bishops of Brescia. Eloquent eyes, of the poetic rather than the philosophic temper, they are not searching for anything:—have something to tell rather. And one could hardly conceive a frown between them. The expression of high birth and breeding is due chiefly to an air of harmonious composure in the lines. It is as if the facial apparatus for any painful or mean irritation were non-existent there. Ambitious relations, scrutinising his face seriously, and pushing him on, by help of it, to make good betimes his place in the world, the lad of eighteen, already, seemingly, in some respects, its creature, had felt something rise in his throat, as certain words, the like of which he had never taken heed of before, floated all at once into his memory: *Manus tuæ fecerunt me!*—“My Maker, Thy hands have made me and fashioned me”: and again, “’Tis Thou, hast fashioned me behind and before, Most excellent Artist! and laid Thine hand upon me!”<sup>8</sup>

A quaint story he never denied was sometimes told in his presence:—how, like Athanasius, as a child, with a naive delight in holiness, he had blessed his comrades *en pontife*.<sup>9</sup> But that was early in life; and a youth, apparently worldly enough, had intervened. His friends indeed had destined him not to the ecclesiastical, but to a diplomatic career. Had he made himself a diplomatist he might certainly have prospered well in a profession, which requires hardly less than the higher cleri-

cal profession, the appliance of fine manners such as those by which the youthful Domenico won a high reputation in the select society of Brescia, where, between the ending of his secular education and his entrance into Orders, he figured as a brilliant young man of the world, associated, by serious persons,—say! with tuberose and ballroom perfumes, appraising already, as an expert, not his good pictures only, but his good wines from the old country villa in the Val Camonica, with a sufficiently mundane taste, of which a traceable fulness of the mouth gave hint: not that voluptuousness which mars, sometimes, priestly lip (as another type of the priest has no lips at all) but a certain touch of the *bon viveur* such as makes one elegantly hospitable. Would the face lapse into obesity? interested observers asked themselves. It never did. When age came at last, it was like a return to the delicacy of childhood, over eighty years.<sup>10</sup>

Somewhere in that round of gaieties, of elegant comfort, he met a young lady of great fortune, then much admired among the youth of Brescia; and as he conversed with her almost daily, what lingering sense he may have had of native religious vocation forsook him and he became her openly affianced lover. Only, when certain difficulties about money settlements arose between his guardians and hers, the young lady herself being of no very ardent or tenacious temper, he made no effort to retain his advantage by holding her to her promise. The whole matter had occupied scarcely two months.<sup>11</sup> So far as bystanders could estimate it, the disappointment had hardly been sufficient to produce a distaste for the world, and determine a preference for one career in life over another. Yet summarily bidding adieu to his hopes in that direction, with a depth of serenity on his brow the significance of which was measured only by intimate friends, he turned once for all to the clerical profession. The white soul he would have given to his bride he brought now to the service of the altar with a facility, a decisive alacrity of heart, which presented itself to his new ecclesiastical superiors as a striking proof of the reality of his call.

Yet the austere old bishop who ordained him, at a somewhat earlier age than usual, seemed to reserve a doubt in the matter, and prescribed him, apparently for the mortification of surviving carnal or worldly tastes, an ecclesiastical function sufficiently opposed to his previous habits; adding to the intimation of the duties required (not unkindly)



“If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. It were better for thee to enter into life,—”: and the rest.<sup>12</sup> As if in irony, the high-bred young priest was appointed working local member of the *Venerable Congregation of Relics*.<sup>13</sup> Behold him, then, submissively at work, day by day, in mouldering ossuaries, charnel-houses, and such places, in those many dark crypts of the old Brescian churches, crypt below crypt, where the “Saints’ Tragedy”<sup>14</sup> of the first Christian centuries played out, and where, amid the buried or misused relics of voluptuous pagan Brixia (dear to Catullus),<sup>15</sup> the precious bodies of the Martyrs still lay, sleeping!—“sacramental dust”—he was ordered to think, “preserved to immortal life,” as being fed, at so great hazard in those cruel times, with the “bread of Angels.”<sup>16</sup>—Witness the [martyrs of the crypts] as commemorated by R[omanino]’s picture of [Saint Gaudioso] in the [National Gallery].<sup>17</sup> Did they think it was the resurrection morn,<sup>18</sup> come at last, after so long a night, thus exposed again to the old earthly daylight, by the hand of Domenico? The dainty fingers grew used to the touch of those rotting discoloured bones, the tardy process of corruption through prolonged centuries quickened now in the quicker air, and achieved in an hour. It was like a penance, thinly disguised,—his enforced sojourn in dark subterranean regions, so distastefully in contrast to the gaiety of the world above; its frescoed house-fronts; the flower-gardens amid the houses; the wholesome sweetness of his home from boyhood. In the grimy *purgatorio*, you might come, in truth, sometimes upon some polished temple-corner of the wicked buried city, lowest layer of all, which had once had, and misused, its daylight, yet perhaps not past praying for after all. Pledges they seemed, in any case,—those dainty fragments,—the promise, of a whole world of, at least visible, grace, which more laborious scholars than himself might recover. For himself, he must re-cover them in another sense, bury them once more: set the inscriptions only, according to a municipal regulation, a [precedent] of the [former] century, in the walls above-ground.

Could he but have stumbled on the buried Venus, now one of the central treasures of a place so rich in various art?—Aye! *Venus Victrix*,<sup>19</sup> though couched there, upside down in the dust, for fifteen centuries. He was spared such temptation to relieve the ashen tenour of the thoughts prescribed him: and set up, all about, another sort of inscriptions also: “My flesh shall rest in hope!”<sup>20</sup> [*In carne mea videbo Deum*

*quem visurus sum ego ipse et oculi mei conspecturi sunt.*”]<sup>21</sup> — “Oh! That these words were written,” Job had continued, “graven with an iron pen in the rock for ever.”<sup>22</sup> In letters, shapely as those of Pope Damasus in the old Roman Catacombs, Domenico so inscribed them on the dripping walls again and again. In fact, what had been meant to root out a suspected element of the old Adam in him had but re-instated it the more profoundly, and with the strength now of a religious sanction. The protest of inspired Job, thus repeated by him three hundred years since, suggested to him by the very ashes, these repulsive ashes of humanity, re-fortified, more stoutly than ever, his old just pride in the material world, that world in which he must perforce live, and, if he might, prosecute his salvation. In his secret heart he had required of his religion, and duly found there, the justification, it might be, also the correction of a manner of taking things instinctive with him, which was, and must remain, after all, a part of himself. A soul might find its way into the entire circle of religious belief through a single religious truth, and the very humblest Christian, surely, have his favourite doctrine. Well!—His should be a doctrine, certainly, quite orthodox, though pious people seemed almost to ignore its place in their creed perhaps because as it happens they had never quarreled about it—the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body of our carnal being taken *au pied de la lettre*. *Credo in [carnis resurrectionem]*: it became to Domenico the essence, the revealing doctrine of Revelation itself: the very soul of Inspiration. “Grant that all carnal [affections may die in them, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in them. Amen”]<sup>23</sup>—he had never been about to say a sincere Amen! to that austere beautiful prayer, hoped he might pray now instead [the words of Saint Athanasius, that at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ “all men with their bodies”] may “rise again” in Him.<sup>24</sup> A friend, not his confessor, asked only would he turn the doctrine into a heresy by wilful and one-sided preoccupation with it.

That stern person his confessor with a head like a well-preserved skull or a good carving thereof<sup>25</sup> became chaplain, when, in part through family interest, Domenico Averoldi still in early life himself became bishop of Brescia, Gaudioso the Second, taking that saintly name of Gaudioso “clerically” as his episcopal surname.—Devout people of that age would sometimes procure themselves a *memento mori* a death’s head of ivory or giallo antico<sup>26</sup> or of crystal—(as if you peeped into

heaven warily through the eyeless thing): you may still see such in this or that cabinet of the curious among the gentlemen's shoe-buckles and the fine ladies' fans. It was on a similar principle in great measure that Domenico had selected his chaplain to be still abundant in duteous rebukes, to be ever at hand as the one check through a long delightful course of years in which the world of art, the pictorial world especially by the mastery of Moretto, of Romanino, little by little approached, identified itself with, his gradually enlarging comprehension of the spiritual order. With that sweet thought of the carnal resurrection ever in his mind, he might frankly accept the world of sight; it would be almost a piety to "immerse" oneself in the matter [our Lord] himself had redeemed—this lovely realm of perfected colour and form. Aye! there was the point of union between catholicism and the Renaissance of which he became, so to speak, one of the saints. And in an age which so industriously refined the body and all that attaches itself thereto, this dogma of its resurrection was a principle not wholly cognisable by others, was the secret of a decided course of action. Yes! from the first, and as by anticipation long before, with those old Greek craftsmen, for instance, the fact of the Incarnation [*en sarki genomenos theos*]<sup>27</sup>—had involved implicitly the sanctifying of all visible beauty.<sup>28</sup> And now this delightful Italian art, whose ministry to errant eyes others had sometimes feared, for him was but one of the welcome after-fruits of the assumption of the flesh of our fine human clay by the Son of God. Surely the most heavenly-minded might wish to defer death, defer it for ever, that it might gaze thereon with the bodily eye. Domenico was become, might one say, a spiritual, a religious, materialist; and by consequence a warmer lover than ever, as wealthy also an effective patron, of the living art of his day. Feeling as always that for his part he could never be moved at all by a wholly unsensuous world, he was glad to assure himself now that he need never again endeavour to detach religious considerations from the things which are seen. To know and love the visible world one need not go out of His presence.

And then, how reassuring to remember that amid all His sufferings the Lord himself in his perfect flesh had apparently ever remained untouched by bodily sickness, sane as those old Greeks He had made so well, for his own pleasure surely, whose "delight" had been from the first "with the sons of men."<sup>29</sup> The thoughts of Domenico would still be persistently occupied with them. In truth, all the outward seemli-

ness of the manner of life circumstance had provided for him connected itself with his favourite doctrine. What the old Italian artists and others for the most part had conceived as a motive of physical horror, the [open grave],<sup>30</sup> was to him eminently gracious and pleasant, sanctifying every kind of physical beauty, putting to flight every kind of coarseness, a motive of fine discretion and dignity among the luxurious rich, of hope among the poor stricken here, sometimes stricken so hideously—Lazarus! the beggar! called forth like the butter-fly by the sun from its horny shard out of the dishonour of the grave. It was as if *Venus Victrix*, lying there so near his fresh morning walks to San Pietro in Oliveto, beset him, or in those forced subterranean researches had actually set a finger in contact with him, claimed that he should restore her, too, to the light of day. His predecessors doubtless had suspected, discredited, unhesitatingly excommunicated, the victorious beauty of those old gods and their worshippers. But were they perhaps not quite past praying for after all, after some form not prescribed, certainly, in Missal or Breviary? Buried along with those old Brescian martyrs, they might well arise together now in the new cathedral, the new Brescia he designed, meant to build, was building already in earthly stones of price, with the relics of [old saints/martyrs] enshrined in glory, of [Faustinus/Nazarus] and [Jovita/Celsus], while the hands of [Romanino] and [Moretti] recorded their heroic sanctity on the walls, the [sacred personages/bishops], the last [reminiscence] of [the old religion/worship of visible beauty], glorious in pontifical attire: so he chose to think of them and their doings.

It was about this time....



And here the portrait breaks off, with only the five words of the new paragraph on its twenty-first and last sheet.

It seems inescapable that “Gaudioso” and *Gaston de Latour* were caught up in a Platonic “dialectic process” with Wilde’s novel (Pater 1893a, 111). Whereas Wilde’s heroes yield to temptation and day-dreams, Pater’s aesthetic heroes seek and (perhaps) attain a beatific vision: “The eloquent eyes are open upon some glorious vision,” Pater had written of Gaudioso in “Art Notes” (1895a, 89). Marius likewise had

refined his intuition “till one’s whole nature should become a complex medium of reception, towards the vision—the beatific vision, if one really cared to make it such—of our actual experience in the world” (1885, 154). Plato’s theory is solidly paralleled to Pater’s. A passage of mythological fantasy in the *Phaedrus* (255c–e) develops this Platonic theory of vision, based on Plato’s prior allusion to beauty’s effluence. Here the “stream” of beauty “called ‘desire’” flows from its source in the beautiful one (Ganymede) toward the lover (Zeus), filling him, overflowing and rebounding back to the beloved. From the beautiful one, the lover’s soul catches and reflects back a glimpse of primordial beauty, to which the beloved conforms himself. Because the proper object of love is always the primordial beauty within and behind earthly beauty, the true lover becomes a mirror in which the merely physical is reflected as spiritual, inspiring the beautiful one’s idealizing counter-love (“love for love”).<sup>31</sup> Thus this Platonic theory of vision connects to Pater’s insistence on the harmony of the spiritual and physical worlds.

As early as *The Renaissance* Pater invoked Plato’s specular ideal: “Giorione ... becomes a sort of impersonation of Venice itself, its projected reflex or ideal, all that was intense or desirable in it crystallising about the memory of this wonderful young man” (1893, 155). This reflexivity between the real and the ideal also had been central to Pater’s most distinctly autobiographical work, “The Child in the House.” Through pictures in religious books, his alter ego Florian gains the vision of “sacred personalities, which are at once the reflex and the pattern of our nobler phases of life...—a mirror towards which men might turn away their eyes from vanity and dullness, and see themselves therein as angels” (1895b, 194). And thus also in the empty house of a friend, Gaston ponders his image:

Gaston became aware, surprised by a certain fineness new to himself in his own reflexion from a Venetian mirror, of lustrous depth and hardness, presumably faithful.... If according to the Platonic doctrine people become like what they see, surely the omnipresence of fine art around one must re-touch, at least in the case of the sensitive, what is still mobile in a human countenance.... Did portraiture not merely reflect life but in part also determine it? The image might react on the original, refining it one degree further. (1995, 90)

However, in *Marius the Epicurean* there are scenes that Marius must *not* gaze upon, as well as visions that he must pursue. Pater had described an oval chamber of “ancestral masks” in Marius’ villa which contained a bronze head of Medusa. Given that the Medusa head is in an oval *pinocateca*, the likelihood arises that the viewer and the gorgon stand at interchangeable foci. Is this vision such that it will petrify the viewer or can he resist? The key is that “those who have once begun the heavenward pilgrimage may not go down again to darkness and the journey beneath the earth” (1871, I: 590);<sup>32</sup> for such, Anteros is always, as Jowett wonderfully translated Plato’s phrase, “love returned.” But in the chapter of *Gaston* entitled “Anteros,” Pater refers to this child of Venus and Mars as profoundly ambiguous. Created to stimulate his brother Eros, Anteros may represent either love’s complementary fulfillment (love in return) or, as the beginning of Pater’s fourth paragraph remarks, an “unkindly or cruel love,” an anti-Eros. The philosophical lover of the *Phaedrus* is motivated by intellectual beauty, an enduring but half-forgotten vision of a preincarnate divine beauty; the non-lover is one whose sensual desires have nothing to do with intellectual beauty and instead create the “living death” of Dorian’s narcissistic soul. During the time that Pater labored to complete *Plato*, Wilde resolved to write *Salomé*. Within a few months of each other, Pater published *Plato and Platonism* (1893), and Wilde published his play.<sup>33</sup> Wilde’s characters in *Salomé* are “always looking” to their detriment. When the narcissist falls in love, as the young Syrian who “much loved to gaze at himself in the river,” he sees not an idealized reflection but an image of himself as merely mortal. This key trope of visual desire, turning morality into carnality and chastity into necrophilia, is not an *Eros* of love in return but the destructive *Eros* of self-worship.

One reason for Pater’s failure to finish either fictional work may be simply that he ran out of mortal time, dying of a heart attack following rheumatic fever and pleurisy. But why, then, did he choose to carry through the difficult project of writing *Plato and Platonism* rather than finishing his fiction? Although Pater had lectured frequently on Plato and Aristotle in earlier years, he seems to have returned to Plato at this time, not only as lecture material, but also as a timely subject for publication. What was it about his fictional compositions that proved

more difficult to write than the philosophical variety? Pater had moved into fiction belatedly in his career, in his thirty-eighth year, so perhaps scholarly explication, like art criticism, came more naturally, and *Plato* was another sort of necessary “prologue” to the eventual completion of his narratives. In 1891 when Pater identified the loss of “moral sense” in *Dorian Gray*, that ethical motive was precisely the element in beauty and love that he for many years had identified in Plato’s dialogues and expounded upon to the Oxford undergraduates. Moreover, since Wilde’s aesthetics found expression on the stage and in fiction, did Pater perhaps ultimately wish to side-step too direct a comparison, either in terms of popular attention or of a simplistic identification of his doctrine of love and beauty with that of Dorian—or, even, of Salomé? Plato, certainly no Victorian in temperament or practice, nevertheless would be a safer aesthetic hero to offer initially, given Benjamin Jowett’s successful translations of the *Dialogues*. And, indeed, Jowett and Pater (who in earlier years had studied Plato with the illustrious master of Balliol) made out of Plato a very different Greek hero of love and beauty than any of Wilde’s aesthetic characters in nymph-haunted meadows, in ateliers filled with the rich odor of roses, or on moon-lit palace terraces.

## Notes

1. The first version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* appeared in *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine* in July of 1890. “The Critic as Artist” was initially published in two installments as “The True Function and Value of Criticism” in the *Nineteenth Century* in July/September 1890.
2. With whimsical perversity Pater “used to pretend that he shut his eyes in crossing Switzerland, on his journeys to and from Italy, so as not to see the ‘horrid pots of blue paint,’ as he called the Swiss lakes” (Benson 1906, 191). Perhaps like Lionel Tollemache, who presented his wife a copy of *Marius* at Engelberg in June of 1885, he later enjoyed that high valley not far from Lucerne (afterwards to become a great ski venue).
3. Pater and Wilde were in touch during this period, Pater pointing out to Wilde before *Dorian* first appeared in *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine* (June 20, 1890) that a “certain passage” was liable to misconstruction and Wilde made “an addition” (Hyde 1956, 124).

4. Revelation 1.6, 5.10.
5. Permission to publish this material from among the papers of Walter Pater, so thematically imbricated in the circumstances of *Gaston de Latour*, comes from the residual legatees of his literary and scholarly estate, Ms. Catherine Jones and her sisters, whom I warmly thank. I use approximately the same editorial guidelines as described in the Introduction to my edition of *Gaston de Latour: the Revised Text*. Thus, bracketing in this fair copy or reading text indicates lacunae that Pater had not yet filled, but for which I have chosen approximate equivalents (in Pater's last paragraph, I include alternative possibilities).
6. The epigraph is from Richard Crashaw's "In Praise of Lessius" (1957, 157–158)
7. Pater saw an important distinction between Wilde's flippant aphorism to "Live up to your blue china" and his own theories of beauty and holiness. He selected Wilde's witticism as a chapter epigraph for "An Empty House" to inaugurate his 1890 continuation of *Gaston*—at least until he canceled it as a too direct attack upon his admirer (1895a, 232, fig. 5).
8. Psalm 119 (Vulgate 118) and Psalm 139, as found in the Book of Common Prayer, with an added echo of St. John Chrysostom's homilies on the Gospel of John. The Catholic poet G. M. Hopkins opens "The Wreck of the Deutschland" with just this poetically transformed image also.
9. "As a pontiff." Rufinus of Aquileia (c. 345–410) gives this account of Athanasius in the *Vite Patrum* or *Historia Eremitica* (i,14); see also *The Greek Fathers* by Adrian Fortescue (1908, 10).
10. Derisive *mots* from *Dorian* are echoed here by Pater. Wilde had Lord Henry exclaim: "But beauty, real beauty, ends where an intellectual expression begins. Intellect is in itself an exaggeration, and destroys the harmony of any face. The moment one sits down to think, one becomes all nose, or all forehead, or something horrid. Look at the successful men in any of the learned professions. How perfectly hideous they are! Except, of course, in the Church. But then in the Church they don't think. A bishop keeps on saying at the age of eighty what he was told to say when he was a boy of eighteen, and consequently he always looks absolutely delightful" (1890, 4).
11. A somewhat similar momentary liaison is noted in Gaston's history (1995, 65–66).
12. Matthew 18.9.
13. The Congregation identifies the bones of the ancient martyrs, separating them from pagans also buried anonymously in catacombs and other subterranean places, testifying to their validity as relics and distributing them to appointed resting places.



14. This is an allusion to Charles Kingsley's poetic drama, "The Saint's Tragedy" (1848), concerning St. Elizabeth of Hungary, a topic of Pater's poetic juvenalia also.
15. Brescia is the ancient Brixia; Catullus writes, "*Brixia Veronæ mater amata meæ*," "Brixia the well-loved mother city of my own Verona" or, with a conjectured emendation, "Brixia that mother-city which I love as I love Verona" (*Carmina*: Poem 67).
16. Psalm 78.23–25.
17. The reader may wonder why Pater's manuscript contained such crashingly unnecessary lacunae; perhaps because he intended an immediate revision and blanks required no ink or effort; or maybe he hoped some inspiration might occur a bit less barefaced than the obvious. Not only does the opening sentence of this manuscript contain the phrase "Romanino's picture," but the "Art Notes" essay provides all the other needed material—supported by such close parallel words in both essay and portrait as "dust" and "commemorated."
18. Compare *Gaston de Latour*: "As if mistaking the jubilant sunshine of this first summer day for the resurrection morning, the occupant of a nameless old stone coffin had tumbled forth" (1995, 129).
19. A bronze statue from the Roman imperial age known as the *Venus Victrix* of Brescia, in much the same pose as the marble Venus de Milo, was discovered during archeological excavations of the *Capitolium di Brescia* in 1826; she is called *Victrix*, having won the golden apple from Paris of Troy. The Louvre's statue from Milos is a canting pun on the island's name, which means "apple" in Greek.
20. Acts 2.26.
21. Job 26–27: "In my flesh I shall see my God, whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold." Pater's manuscript instruction here for his fragmentary English words and lacunae is "Lat. only."
22. Job 19.23–24. Is it perhaps too pedantic to point out that these verses *preface*, not continue, the previous Latin quotation?
23. Rendered here as Pater undoubtedly remembered the passage from the baptismal service in the *Book of Common Prayer*.
24. The *Quicumque Vult* or Athanasian Creed; Matthew 27.63.
25. Pater struck out the phrase "in ivory or yellow marble" here for the sake of euphony—a nice touch, but he wanted to use "ivory" again in the next sentence.
26. Marble, a warm yellow ("Numidian yellow") tinged or streaked with pink and brown.

27. "God existing in flesh." Pater here carets a dash above his primary line in such a way as to suggest a lacuna that needs to be filled. I've taken the phrase from St. Ignatius of Antioch's (A.D. ca. 35–107) "Letter to the Ephesians" (chapter seven).
28. In *Marius the Epicurean*, the young Marius is told by a priest at the Temple of Aesculapius that "he was of the number of those who, in the words of a poet who came long after, must be 'made perfect by the love of visible beauty.' It was a discourse conceived from the point of view of a theory which Marius afterwards found in Plato's *Phaedrus*, the theory of the ἀπορροή τοῦ καλλοῦς [effluence of beauty]" (1885, I:34).
29. Proverbs 8.31, spoken by the voice of "Wisdom." On the bottom of sheet eighteen, the four lines of this sentence were crossed out with dizzying pencil swirls; at the top of the next page, nineteen, this excised portion is rewritten.
30. Pater's lacuna is filled by the description in "The Child in the House" of an "open grave" associated there with the "physical horror of death" (1895b, 191).
31. "Then does fountain of that stream, which Zeus when he was in love with Ganymede called desire, overflow upon the lover; and some enters into his soul, and some when he is filled flows out again; and as a breeze or an echo leaps from the smooth rocks and rebounds to them again, so does the stream of beauty, passing the eyes which are the natural doors and windows of the soul, return again to the beautiful one ... and filling the soul of the beloved also with love.... The lover is his mirror in whom he is beholding himself, but he is not aware of this. When he is with the lover, both cease from their pain, but when he is away then he longs and he is longed for, and has love's [reflected] image, love for love (Anteros) [love returned], lodging in his breast" (Jowett 1871, I:589).
32. Compare to the *Symposium* (201 *et seq*).
33. Wilde composed most of it in Paris in 1891 and by January 1892 had finished it in England. In June 1892 rehearsals began in London with Sarah Bernhardt in the lead role; but the play was banned owing to an outdated ordinance prohibiting the portrayal of biblical characters on stage. It was published in February 1893 and its world premiere took place in Paris three years later. (Ellmann 1987, 341, 363, 371).

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