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Literature in Walter Pater's Architectural Analogy

Abstract
In his great essay "Style," Walter Pater proposes principles for writing good literature, to indicate, eventually, how "good" differs from "great." Interpreting "Style" in a broad context of Pater's other writings, this paper explores his imagery of the physicality of language, linguistic "archeology," writing as architecture and as music. It argues that, in his later years, Pater uses the architectural, rather than musical, analogy when speaking about the function of literature. By likening literature to architecture, Pater presents his ideals of frugality in rhetoric and usefulness of literature, the latter constituting a feature of "great" works. While examining the aesthetic and ethical implications of Pater's literature-architecture parallel, this paper seeks to demonstrate that Pater is pragmatic in his emphasis on the functionality of literature. It shows that Pater, though recognized as the mentor to decadent aesthetes, actually promotes art "for humanity" rather than only art "for art's sake."

Key words
Walter Pater; Aestheticism; language; style; architecture; music; functionality

1. Physicality

For Pater, language is not to be trifled with. It has the qualities of material reality and is governed by physical laws; it has to be carved, moulded, and examined for its tensile strength. In his essay "Style," Pater describes it as "obstinate durable metal" (32) and as a material "as hard as bronze" (35). His view of literary language bears no signs of the Romantic myth of the divine lightness or of freshness and directness of inspiration. The writer must be fully aware of the material which is already there, at his disposal, since the material with which "he works is

no […] creation of his own" (12); he "works as the sculptor with solid form" (5). In this labour there is little "tranquillity" which Wordsworth made the condition of poetry in his famous Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. Paterian process of composition is arduous. To Pater, literary creation is like skilled work. In his great essay on style, he extends his physical parallels to moulding, welding and stonemasonry: "the moulding of a bell or platter" (10), the work of a "gem engraver," the carving and chiselling away of "the rough-hewn block of stone" (19–20). Interestingly, Pater's image of a creative effort has the closest affinity with that which Eliot included in his *Four Quartets*. Uncannily echoing Pater's conviction that the poet's aim is to "possess a full, rich, complex matter to grapple with" (16), in the second section of "East Coker," Eliot described writing as "the intolerable wrestle/ With words and meanings" (1977: 197). Though Eliot never admitted the influence, similarities are, indeed, hard to miss.

Pater's tendency to equate writing with labour found its way into modernism. However, in the late Victorian era, Pater's insistence on the physicality of language and the strenuous character of the poet's work was not an isolated trend in art. In poetry, physical analogies for writing were deployed by Pater's contemporaries, Austin Dobson and, notably, Arthur O'Shaughnessy, who in his "A Song of a Fellow Worker" famously speaks of making poetry as of shaping a recalcitrant stone: "I carve the marble of pure thought, until the thought takes form,/ Until it gleams before my soul and makes the world grow warm" (1882: 404). The likening of language to marble imparts to the reader a sense of durability of the poet's material, but also of the timelessness of art and of the ensuing responsibility on the writer's part for the lasting result of his craft. It also bespeaks of O'Shaughnessy's philosophy of art: of the middle way he chooses between "art for art's sake" and "art for humanity." Jordan Kistler argues that O'Shaughnessy, dissatisfied with his position of a naturalist at the British Museum and unhappy in his day job, raised art from the level of a dreamily aesthetic preoccupation to the rank of work for the good of humanity (Kistler 2012: 75). In "Preface" to *Songs of a Worker*, O'Shaughnessy admits that

> a little "Art for Art" has already done a great deal of good in England, and that a little more is needed, and would be equally beneficial. But with Victor Hugo I do not say "Art for Art," but "Art for humanity," and my meaning is that art is good – is incalculable gain to man; but art in itself equally perfect, which grows with humanity and can assist humanity in growing – is still better. (qtd. in Kistler 2012: 74)

Kistler demonstrates that O'Shaughnessy works out a compromise between French radical aestheticist rejection of art's usefulness and Ruskin's ethos of art in the service of humanity. In fact, the reverberations of the Ruskinian ethos of the social usefulness of art and of the artist's social responsibility are noteworthy in the work of British writers of the later Victorian era. Social engagement shows itself in Swinburne's *Songs before Sunrise*, in Wilde's "Soul of Man un-

der Socialism," in George Gissing's novels, and in William Morris's essays and utopias. However, as noted by Kistler, while Morris invested labour with artistry, O'Shaughnessy, going the reverse way, viewed art as useful labour (2012: 84).

Such also was Pater's choice: literature had to be both beautiful and functional. This might be the reason why, in his "Style", Pater privileged the architectural among his metaphors for writing. For Pater writing was akin to sculpting and stonemasonry, art was the *House Beautiful*, and language was an autonomous reality, as durable and unyielding as a stone. Pater's insistence on language as an autonomous reality, governed by its own, strangely physical rules, should be viewed not only through the prism of literary comparisons but also considered, as Linda Dowling did it, in the wider context of nineteenth-century philology. Dowling explains that the view of language as physical is in accordance with the late-nineteenth-century idea of language divorced from the *logos* of idealistic philosophy and governed by phonetic laws. This shift from philosophical idealism to philological empiricism, together with the literary reverberations of this change, is outlined in Dowling's illuminating *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siècle*. Dowling places Pater in the circle of those authors who tried to salvage the written language, otherwise declared to be long dead. In particular, she shows Pater's work on literary style as a response to Max Müller's *Lectures on the Science of Language* (1986: 118). In his lectures, relying on the analogy between classical Latin and great contemporary languages, Müller famously asserted: "Literary dialects, or what are commonly called classical languages, pay for their temporary greatness by inevitable decay. They are like stagnant lakes by the side of great rivers […]" (qtd. in Dowling 1986: 66). And like the stagnant lakes they lose their freshness and degenerate.

While this assertion might render pointless the very idea of writing literature, Pater did not try to refute it. Having subscribed to Müller's doctrine of degeneration, he actually succeeded in turning the literature-degrading philology into his ally. As poignantly put by Dowling,

> Pater pursued the stylistic project of his later years, embracing the relentless persistence of the new philosophy that literary English is quite literally a dead or moribund language, and attempting to establish a new mode of writing on its very morbidity, dissolving the antagonistic opposition between philology and literature in a new vision of the writer as a sort of philologist or scholar of words […]. (1986: 111)

To be on a par with Müller and with later Neo-Grammarians – while trying to save the written from the charge of degeneration – Pater would cast himself in the role of a scholar, and don the cloak of academy rather than of bohemianism. With Müller's prophesising the decay of literary language on account of the inflexibility of its written form, he would see his own role as that of the restorer of its vitality. With Neo-grammarians discovering the rules of spoken dialects, he would see his task as parallel to theirs: as that of discovering the objective rules

of the written medium. For him, language was external to man. It was no longer a reflection of the divine logos or of human psychology; it was autonomous and recalcitrant.[1]

2. Archeology

In Pater's "Style," the objectivity of language and its autonomy are expressed through the metaphors of its physicality, with the very word "style" invoking a concrete image behind its worn metaphorical surface: that of a Latin *stilus*, a sharp shaft used for carving and incising a tablet made of wax or clay. The etymological pun comprised in the word "style" would be very much in the spirit of Pater's philosophy of rhetoric, which posits that a true stylist should be watchful of dead metaphors, or that a "lover of words […] will be on the alert not only for obviously mixed metaphors of course, but for the metaphor that is mixed in all our speech, though a rapid use may involve no cognition of it" (20). So, before rendering his literary thought in architectural terms, Pater uses images from archaeology. He recommends that words be treated as precious archaeological findings. Shapeless and roughened through the process of historical accretion, abstracted from their originally vivid significances, in the hands of a writer-scholar – as under the archaeologist's hammer and brush – they should reveal their shape, colour and intricate morphological structure. A member of the learned clerisy and "a scholar writing for the scholarly" (17), a prose writer cuts through the layers obscuring the meaning of words; he chips away the layers of wayward meanings, forgetfulness and misuse to "restore" precision in the use of vocabulary, or to reveal "the finer edge of words still in use" (16). The aim is exactitude and economy in the wielding of language.

Admittedly, Pater's metaphors for language reflect the nineteenth-century fascination with archaeology as mixed with the interest in geology and evolutionism. Also, in his apprehension of the physicality of language, as explained by Dowling, he shows himself to be the continuator of materialism. But he also belongs to the line of thought which Dowling presents as extending from John Locke to Richard Chevenix Trench, though not in the aspect of materiality, but in the aspect of historicity of words. Treating words as the embodiments of history and culture, he would not disagree with Trench, who states that words are "fossil ethics and fossil history," "the amber in which a thousand precious and subtle thoughts have been safely embedded and preserved" (Trench qtd. in Dowling 1986: 49). As amber reveals a glimmer of the past in the form of an insect sealed and preserved in resin, so will a single word reveal a meaning captured in its form, but obscured through the historical accretion.

The archaeological metaphor implies the necessity of historical awareness, but it also expresses Pater's disapproval of needless ornamentation. In his theory of style, though indeed not so much in his practice, Pater insists on frugality in the use of rhetoric: a writer's task consists in chiselling, cutting away, form-

ing, distilling, reducing to the absolutely necessary. His effort is muscular and his material physical; his aim, however, is meta-physical: to find the unadorned "truth," that is, the one and only true expression suitable for a thought. (This way, Pater-the-impressionist, or the radical epistemological relativist, turns out to be an essentialist in the matters of expression.) The ideals of austerity and precision – in visual arts, music and philosophy – are also supported by his other works. In *Plato and Platonism* (first published in 1893), Pater argues for the superiority of Dorian *askêsis* over Ionian exuberance. He shuns the "irresponsible, the Ionian or Asiatic tendency," believing that the meaning of the Ionic works is lost "in endless play of undirected imagination" and convinced that in the social aspect they produce anarchy and "separatism" (1909: 103). The Dorian, in contrast, is identified with the disciplined and the intellectual.[2] In hindsight, Pater's distrust of the Ionian – imaginative, fanciful, capricious, mannerist – informs also his essay on style, having transformed into the distrust of superfluous ornamentation. In "Style," Pater extols the virtue of "self-restraint," supported with Schiller's praise of the "tact of omission," and warns against "tarnished or vulgar decoration" unless it should be "structural" (17–18).

3. Architecture and the aesthetic requirement of *askesis*

With the mention of the "structural," Pater's references shift from archaeological to architectural. Whereas the metaphor of archaeology – for verbal exactitude – is only latent, that of architecture gradually asserts prominence. In the course of argumentation, the linguistic archaeologist proves to be an apt architect, and the archaeological metaphor of revelation gives place to that of architectural construction. It should, however, be noted that in Pater's *oeuvre* architecture not only provides a metaphorical illustration for the abstractions of literary style, rather it is a subject on its own. In his critical appreciations of architecture, Pater consistently returns to the same principle: the elimination of *surplusage*. He approves of ornamentation only if it consists in genuine and painstaking replication of natural forms. Such naturalism – and a keen interest in details – brings associations with the aesthetic theories of German Nazarenes and British Pre-Raphaelites. In those excerpts from *Miscellaneous Studies* and *Imaginary Portraits* which depict architectural ornaments, a reader will find praise of natural forms, apprehension of the grotesque, and parody of profuse embellishment. For instance, in his essay on the cathedral of Amiens, Pater admires the "tend[ency] towards naturalism" (1910: 119) and shows unease with the carved grotesque effects, the fruit of a brooding imagination. In the essay on the church of Vézelay, he expresses regret that, among its ornaments, it lacks depictions of local vegetation: "there are still however no true flowers of the field there" (1910: 135). In "Duke Carl of Rosenmold," he mocks a flowery quality – the mark of Carl's striving in music, drama and painting, "all alike florid in style, yes!, and perhaps third rate" – in the design of the castle topped with its "wonderful flowerage of architectural fancy" (1929: 148, 144).

Praising "naturalism" in architectural ornament, Pater subjects the opposite tendency – the mannerist flowerage – to parody. Likewise, in literature, "flowers" cannot be deployed according to the anarchic dictate of the mannerist imagination. As affirmed in his "Style," "figure or flower" (20) must be justified and functional. In this respect, the ur-modernist Pater clearly provides Eliot's criticism with a literary rendering of Hegel's *Objective Korrelat*. One of the most renowned neo-Hegelians in Oxford,[3] Pater suggests a source for his idea of verbal economy by admitting that it is possible "to detect the influence of a philosophic idea there, the idea of a natural economy, of some pre-existent adaptation, between a relative, somewhere in the world of thought, and its correlative, somewhere in the world of language […]" (30).[4] To Pater, literary idiom should consist of a chain of equivalencies, the abstract being matched by the sensuous (the *versinnlichen*), a thought being riveted in the physical form and expressed through an exact word.

In "Style" the qualities of verbal exactitude, directness, and freshness are stressed and contrasted with the degenerate, as Pater deems it, nature of the dead metaphor. Characteristically, to illustrate the effect of the dead metaphor, Pater uses an architectural element: the "coloured glass" (20). The tinting of glass – the *surplusage* – is deceptive; it is a result of a wayward desire for ornamentation, it adds colour but obstructs the flow of light. Interestingly, in a much later essay, from 1894, on the cathedral of Amiens, Pater expresses his admiration for the *grisaille* and his preference for plain glass over stained. A remaining *grisaille* window of Notre-Dame d'Amiens lets in almost as much light as pure glass. It is a test of the craftsman's excellence in execution, for its aesthetic effect resides entirely in the finesse of its largely monochromatic shapes and in the intricacy of its supporting structure – "the finely designed frames of iron" (1910: 116) – with no room for vibrant colour to compensate for imperfections of line or shape. Thus, with this shift of references to the architectural, the *grisaille* and the stained glass, Pater's linguistic archaeologist – the scholar discovering the etymological significance of a word – is supported by a literary architect interested in the unadorned structure. His business is with words restored to their earlier vividness, and used in relation to a physical action, rather than employed for their later-acquired abstract sense.

4. Architecture and the ethical requirement of usefulness

Pater's aesthetic rule of scarcity of ornamentation is supplemented with his ethical requirement that literature should satisfy needs other than solely aesthetic. In this respect, he would be in agreement with Arthur O'Shaughnessy. Pater's ethic of the usefulness of literature is also rendered in terms of an architectural metaphor: a literary work becomes a home and the reader, a dear guest.

Expounding his philosophy of style, Pater speaks of "the building of the sentence" (22), and of a writer working as a carpenter, "considerately, setting joint to joint" (24). Through these comparisons, he further asserts the physicality of

his medium. In composing from words, as in building with bricks, the same rule applies – the principle of a clear design, yet with some room allowed for contingency. Pater recommends "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 rest" (21). Such an ability of foresight is a measure of abstract intelligence, or of what Pater terms as the "*mind*" (21). The test for the soundness of structure is in unity, with "the phrase, the sentence, the structural member, the entire composition, song, or essay [showing] a similar unity with its subject and with itself" (22). This unity of the form and the subject – or of the design and the function (for Pater distinguishes the two, though he views them as mutually dependent) – would be stressed in Pater's essays on architecture, which he published in 1894. Pater would see the Gothic cathedral of Amiens, and its pointed arches, as expressing the spirit of individualism and freedom; the Romanesque structure of Vézelay, on the other hand, is described as embodying the spirit of monasticism.

Pater's belief that a particular style radiates a deeper – social and spiritual – meaning is located within the tradition of Thomist aesthetics where beauty is founded on "wholeness, harmony, and radiance," as in the wording James Joyce gave it in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1972: 211). However, Pater renders this rule through an architectural analogy and without reaching towards the Divine. His aesthetics stops with a "man." Typically for Pater, in the essays about the great French churches, the perspective is always presented as limited by human sight. Pater never organizes his description by relying on an abstract or encyclopaedic grid; rather, the reader is guided around like a visitor would be. So, directed by a chatty guide, on the way to Vézelay, one passes the abbey church of Pontigny, which, from a pedestrian traveller's perspective, rather looks like "a great farm building" (1910: 126). In the cathedral of Amiens, in turn, the tourist is located inside. The vistas open from beneath, from "the flagstone at one's foot." The building itself boldly defies the law of gravity, making a visitor apprehensive of the "oblique pressure on all sides, which is the essence of the hazardous gothic construction" (1910: 112–113).

Even if awe-inspiring, the design of Pater's ecclesiastical buildings takes account of human figures; and the churches, as he sees them, serve largely secular needs. Pater presents churches as the centres of communal life. In the story of "Denys'Auxerrois," in the church on Easter Day, the canons "played solemnly at ball" (1929: 65). In his studies on great French churches, the Gothic construction of Notre-Dame d'Amiens is presented as the fruit of the movement towards secularization. The cathedral belongs to a local community and – designed by an architect known by his name, "a layman, Robert de Luzarches" (1910: 111) – it expresses "civic pride" and the spirit of individualism. Its stylistic opposite, the Romanesque monastery of Vézelay symbolizes through its monumentality the despotic Roman rule, but at the same time, it provides – touchingly – shelter to those pilgrims who cannot find accommodation in the town. The tired travellers

may lay "on the pavement" and "in the high and dry chamber formed by the spacious triforium over the north aisle" (1910: 138). Typically, in Pater the vaults of the Gothic and Romanesque churches guard the hustle and bustle of human life, whilst the buildings of sheer utility display a beauty evocative of ancient architecture. Such is a barn from "Apollo in Picardy," depicted as harmonious, well-proportioned and bringing Greek associations with its gable, "almost a classic pediment" (1910: 152). The great barn, then, is outstanding for its classical beauty. In turn, the churches are expressive of the spirit of rebellion and freedom, which Pater historically locates in the thirteenth century. They impress, shelter and gather the local people.

Architecture, to Pater, is a largely practical art. This is the reason why Bernard Richards warns against "pursuing parallels between Pater's theory of prose style and his architectural tastes" (1991: 204). In his "Pater and Architecture," Richards indicates that – to Pater – architecture, being practical, is "not the most expressive of arts," and that it "is not figurative" in the sense of "not represent[ting] the human body" (1991: 190). However, Pater's "The Child in the House" and the essays on the church in Vézelay and the cathedral of Amiens, contrary to Richards' reservation, very strongly assert the expressive and aesthetic function of architecture beside its pragmatic role. This apparent contradiction perhaps can be solved if Pater's views on architecture are seen as evolving over time. Pater regards architecture as predominantly pragmatic, rather than expressive, in one of his first essays, the study of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, published in 1867 (the one from which the quotation undermining the parallel between architecture and literature comes). The literary-architectural analogy, in turn, is asserted in "Style," which was published some twenty years later. Also "Notre-Dame d'Amiens" and "Vézelay" are late works, actually, published in the year of Pater's death. So, it would seem that the works Pater published in the late 1880s and in the 1890s revoke the earlier, narrowly practical view of architecture and, in reality, attribute a pragmatic function to literature, the two coming together in an aesthetic-pragmatic parallel.

In fact, the Paterian point of the non-figurativeness of architecture seems problematized by Richards himself, when he admits that Pater exhibits a "tendency to keep introducing the human figure into architectural concerns" (1991: 190). Indeed, Pater preserves a careful balance between the metaphors derived from the animate and inanimate worlds, injecting human personality into the interior of a house and, conversely, presenting human body as a house for the soul. The first strategy is probably best exemplified by his 1878 essay, "The Child in the House," where Pater describes the growth of his aesthetic hero[5] in terms of various sensibilities – sensuality, religious feeling, empathy towards fellow humans, sympathy for animals – acquired by a child that absorbs the shapes and lights of the house, garden, nearby town, the church and the churchyard and that matures through the events of homely life. To the aesthetic hero, Pater attributes his own distrust of generalization, or of any abstract rules, describing how he learns the art of living by practically caring for his starling and looking after an angora

rabbit, his domestic pets. In the figurative language of the story, the matters of architecture and personality are entwined: the house is animated and, what is more, personified with the rooms "lying […] pale, with a look of meekness in their denudation" (1910: 196), whereas the brain shares in the qualities of the architectural, described as "the house of thought in which we live" (1910: 184).

A similar relation of metaphorical reciprocity is a typical feature of characterization in Pater, as in the examples from "Denys l'Auxerrois" and "Apollo in Picardy." The wild vine master is pictured as he climbs a scaffold and, enjoying the heavy rain, presses his body against the tower. Clutching at the "carved imageries of dark stone" (1929: 73), he effectively becomes integrated with the walls of the Gothic church. If watched by a distant observer, the body melts in with the carved relief and adds to the grotesque effect of architectural decoration. In this scene, cast in the form of an accessory, the body enlivens architecture. In turn, in "Apollo in Picardy," the human body is more than an addition – it is a structural principle, and also, the locus for a personality, or for what Pater would name "a soul." The body is presented as "a building with architectural laws, a structure […]." When referring to one of his characters, Prior Saint-Jean, Pater speaks of the body in ecclesiastical and architectural terms as of the "fleshly tabernacle [that] had housed him, had housed his cunning, overwrought and excitable soul […]" (1910: 155).

5. Architecture and the greatness of literature

The correlation of art, human figure and personality – which Pater describes in his excerpts related to architecture – also foregrounds his philosophy of literary language as expressed in his essay on style. Once the work is completed, "all becomes expressive. The house he [the artist] has built is rather a body he has informed" (24). In "Style," all four – architecture, literature, the "soul" and the "*mind*" – come together. With this synthesis, Pater works out his principles for "greatness" in literature. To Pater literature speaks. It is not simply a text to decipher, a puzzle with indeterminacies to fill in, nor is it a thing that enchants like a decadent *fatal book*, which, perhaps, is slightly ironic given Deconstructivist interest in Pater.[6] To be great, literature must be functional; it must be as useful as architecture – a meeting point and a dwelling.

Pater views a literary work in terms of an encounter, a meeting with "a person, in a book" (27); thus, he is impelled to set up a high ethical standard of truthfulness. Yet, Pater does not insist that literature should contain and communicate some unchangeable metaphysical truth. The truth of literature consists in the highest possible degree of compatibility between the thought and the word; it is the truth which Flaubert arduously seeks in trying to match perfectly his style and his personality. Genuineness, then, is Pater's ideal in place of Victorian earnestness. Upholding the virtue of sincerity, Pater says that the "style *is* the man" (35; italics mine). Yet, one should remember that "is" indicates only a proximity,

and that the ethical requirement of this relationship is in its closeness. The firmness of the fit between the style and the thought is conditioned on scrupulous and honest self-examination, which in Pater is the "first condition," an obligation "to know yourself." His ideal writers know themselves and their medium; they are scholarly and self-aware. The authors' self-knowledge, then, is essential, as is their care for the medium. Pater sets a high artistic and personal standard as he sees it embodied in the writings of Gustave Flaubert, "the martyr of literary style" (27), whose anguish in the searching for the right word is far-removed from Wordsworthian tranquillity. This high personal standard of honesty is fundamental since, in the metaphorical sense, in a house made of words, the author (even if not indicated by the authorial "I") is a host. This is how the ethical facet of Pater's aesthetics makes itself apparent: literature in Pater is a means of contact, a bridge leading us out of the trap of solitude.

The function of establishing intimacy amongst individuals overlaps with that of a sheltering home. Pater speaks of literature in terms of a "cloistral refuge, from a certain vulgarity in the actual world" and "a religious retreat" (18). But this retreat and "cloistral refuge" is not a hermitage. Literature is a home in which nobody is alone. It is always already inhabited by an authorial presence which, however, rarely is a genuine single self or a simple "I." The authorial presence, as Pater would understand it, corresponds to an *implied* author; it is a combination of various influences – social, religious, aesthetic and political – a node in a society of readers and writers.

The ethical function of a literary encounter is to alert us to infantile egotism and to amend adult solipsism. But the benefit is shared between the reader and the writer. To Pater, solipsism, as described in "Conclusion" from *The Renaissance*, was the greatest "nightmare of 'each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world'" (1998: 151). Pater's apprehension of the writer's seclusion from a shared world would be famously repeated by Eliot in his claustrophobic image from The Waste Land: of "each in his prison/ thinking of the key" (1977: 74). Although, in the "Notes," Eliot directs us to Dante and F. H. Bradley the reverberations of Pater's phrase are unmistakable. But Pater believed that psychological seclusion and literary mannerism could be prevented. As explained by Dowling, he thought that it could be achieved through writers' scholarly objectivity, acquired thanks to their knowledge of the language, the medium shared between them and their audience (1986: 138). By likening literature to architecture, Pater also gave a non-discursive expression to this belief. Through the poetics of comparison, both in the aesthetic and ethical sense, great literature exhibits the features of Pater's ideal Gothic church – Notre-Dame d'Amiens – and like this cathedral, it has the spirit of individualism and of the commune, not of solipsism. Notably, the role of literature as interpersonal encounter is stressed by the representatives of the contemporary ethical turn in literary theory. While creating a space for a meeting of minds, literature can effect a change. This is the function of all art as rendered, for instance, by Colin Lyas who, after Michael Tanner, reiterates that art is "not only illuminating but, in addition, deeply transforming"

(2003: 179). If people who impinge on us change us – though not necessarily through a shock of illumination, but gradually – so does art. Thus, Pater's architectural comparison makes possible to avoid the narrowness of both moralism and pure aestheticism, the two fallacies whose effects are jocularly described by Lyas when he says that pure aestheticism "often provided artists with a justification for being moral cretins" while the opposite extreme justifies artistic cretinism (2003: 278).

It is also interesting to see how, in the early 20th-century criticism redolent of phenomenological spirit, the Paterian sentence would be construed as his and his reader's abode. In a scholarly article from 1920, Richard R. Kirk, by exploring the effects of removing modifiers from a sentence randomly chosen from "The Child in the House," demonstrates how the Paterian sentence, in itself, creates a reality "unique," "concrete," and "individual" (371), dissociated from any class of ideas external to, or coming from without, the text. In Kirk's analysis, the Paterian sentence is self-enclosed, complete, with all its parts organically united. It does not refer to any object outside the text; it invokes a reality in which things "exist only by virtue of association one with another." In Pater, a sentence becomes an alternative reality. In his own words, the "term is right […] when it becomes, in a manner, what it signifies" (qtd. in Kirk 1920: 375). Interestingly, in the terms of contemporary theory, this position might be called radical textualism, and Pater's writing might be viewed as grounded on the assertion that there is no reality *hors de texte*. However, even if Pater does not concern himself with the late 19th-century tradition of realistic imitation, he does not shun sensuous reality. Perhaps, as Kirk postulates, he does not depict it, but he does imaginatively create it within the chamber of his *House Beautiful*,[7] structured and furnished with words.

6. The architectural and the musical

Even if in his essay on "Style" Pater consistently uses analogies from architecture, Pater scholarship tends to see his ideal in music.[8] This critical tradition, founded on the frequently quoted statement from "The School of Giorgione" (1877) – "*All art aspires towards the condition of music*" (1998: 86) – is certainly validated by Pater's frequent use of musical analogies to describe the formal aspect of fine arts and of literature. But this belief should perhaps be qualified by taking into account the ethical and pragmatic functions of art. The problematic status of the musical analogy is also apparent when two other factors of Pater's work are considered: the definitely non-musical quality of Pater's prose and Pater's insistence on the discursivity of literature.

Admittedly, Pater was not oblivious to the pleasant-sounding qualities of the spoken word and of rhythm which "gives […] musical value to every syllable" (11–12). But his own works were written in an "ocular style," to borrow an expression used elsewhere by Kenneth Burke (1973: 16-17). In her *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siècle*, Dowling places Pater within the

Coleridgean tradition of the learned *clerisy* guarding the standards of the written langue. In her words, Pater "composed […] not to the measure of the speaking voice, but specifically and literally for the printed page" (1986: 112). His elaborate sentences could be visually scanned by attentive readers, but their length would often defy the reader's auditory attention. Pater structured them by interposition and over-layering: by – as noted by A. C. Benson – inserting new phrases in the spaces between the lines, and then rewriting the text and repeating the process (qtd. in Dowling, 1986: 123). A Paterian sentence would then expand like a fan, even if the reader was presented with a grammatically convoluted line. But it certainly was not adapted to the sound, melody, and rhythm of speech patterns – that would be Wilde's speciality.

But even Wilde would be in the group of writers whose prose relied on the metaphors of painting rather than of musicality. Interestingly, while James Whistler used musical terms when giving his picture titles such as "harmonies," "nocturnes," and "symphonies," Pater and Wilde borrowed metaphors from pictorial arts, titling or subtitling their works as pictures, portraits and etchings, with Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* "com[ing] at high tide," as Kerry Powell claims, in the renaissance of the nineteenth-century "magic portrait" fiction (1983: 148). Finally, if the poets of the Rhymers' Club imported the sing-song villanelle and rondel and, by their frequent use of refrain, added a lilt to their verses, musical cadences entered English poetry for good only with Eliot's sonorities. Thus, in the late Victorian period, Pater's analogy between literature and music remained in the sphere of recommendations, rather than actualities.

In "Style" Pater gives a mature qualification to the musical ideal which he had set up in "The School of Giorgione": if he believes in the superiority of music over other arts, it is so because in music one can achieve a seamless fit between the "subject" and "expression." To him music is the highest art "because in music it is impossible to distinguish the form from the substance nor matter" (37). The greatness of music lies in the fact that the form and the technique in music are infinitely more important than any pictorial or narrative associations which music may stir. However, in "Style" Pater respects the discursive and pictorial specificity of literature; even more, he stresses that in literature discursive intelligence cannot be bypassed. The test for literary excellence is not in transcending the matter by form; it is in finding an equivalence between the two. Thus, if literature is like music, it is only through the *nearest* possible *proximity* between words and thoughts. It is definitely not like music in creating an impression of enchanting rhythm or of graceful melody.

In the essay on Wordsworth (from 1874, thus, written much earlier than "Style"), Pater anticipates the requirement of verbal precision by allowing that the auditory qualities of words might enhance the impact which words have on visual imagination. He permits the existence of "some subtle adjustment of the elementary sounds of words themselves to the image or feeling they convey," but literature is not made of "eloquent, or musical words merely" (58). Musical qualities of words are only an accessory to imaginative pleasure and to sense. The

condition of good literature, in yet another of Pater's anticipations of Eliot (specifically, the doctrine of unified sensibility from "The Metaphysical Poets"), does not lie in its melodious harmony, but in its power to convey the ideal through the tangible; this is the quality which Pater praises in Wordsworth, whose "words are themselves thought and feeling" (58). Thus, in literature, where absolute equivalence of the form and the matter is only an unattainable ideal, the seamless fit between the matter and expression, or the highest possible convergence of the "substance" and the form – and not the disappearance of the conceptual or mimetic "substance" – is the goal.

7. Conclusion

Significantly, Pater distinguishes between "good" art and "great" art. And in his definition of great literature, it is the architectural metaphor, not the musical one, that takes prominence. Like architecture, besides having an aesthetic value, great literature should be functional. In other words, great art is not pursued exclusively for its own sake, but for the sake of the fruit it bears. Pater states that, in the case of literature, the difference between the good and the great relies "not on its form, but on its matter," on "its alliance to great ends, or the depth of the note of revolt or the largeness of hope" (38). The function of literature is both ethical and cognitive. Ethical from "the increase of men's happiness, to the redemption of the oppressed, or the enlargement of our sympathies with each other"; cognitive by being "such presentment of old and new truth about ourselves and our relation to the world as may ennoble and fortify us in our sojourn here" (38). In fact, Pater's distinction between good and great art is echoed by Eliot who, in his "Religion and Literature," while recognizing the significance of "literary standards" in judging whether a text may be deemed literary at all, concedes that they are not sufficient for assessing its "greatness" (1976b: 388), and who, in his *Poetry and Drama*, requires of literary art that it should ultimately induce in the reader a state of mystical peacefulness: "bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness and reconciliation" (1950: 35). With these requirements for literature to be functional, their differences notwithstanding, Pater finds his place next to Eliot's in the tradition of British moral criticism, a fact which Eliot noted, too, but disparagingly.[9] The ethical weight of Pater's "Style" is also emphasised by Denis Donoghue, who explains Eliot's reservations in terms of Eliot's concern that Pater's amoral "Conclusion" would have much greater impact than his later essay or, as Donoghue puts it, that it would be "more insidiously remembered than the little essay on style" (1995: 291).

However, even the oft-quoted assertions from "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance* can be seen as anticipating the postmodernist view that ethics and aesthetics, although not identical, then still, as in Stephen L. Tanner's words, "are symbiotic" (2005: 123). Admittedly, Pater ends his *Renaissance* by stating that "art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to

your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake" (1998: 153), but his other claims, also from "Conclusion," deny the ephemeral nature of art. Pater persuades his reader that art is really an antidote for a sense of impermanence. It is life that is fleeting. And, though it cannot be halted, then, at least it can be filled with a sense that we are alive and not merely lasting. Thus, even Pater's notorious "Conclusion" can be construed as his statement, not about art for art's sake, but about art as both assuaging a fear of insignificant duration and enlarging this instant which is our life.

As its function is presented in "Style," to be "great," literature must shelter and enrich life; hence the metaphors of a house and a meeting place. Its greatness is captured in the image of a home where our receptivity will grow and our solipsism will wane. This home organises our sensibility by riveting thoughts and emotions to tangible objects and makes us a part of a community. However, through a literary encounter, we will not be offered any guidance for conduct save for the rule of ultimate sincerity in self-exploration, which Pater demands of the author. Such sincerity – the effect of the author's wrenching self-examination – and the linguistic economy with which he or she speaks constitute the Paterian truth. This is his ethical requirement. Then, in comparing literature to architecture, Pater is not a decadent aesthete, but an aesthetic and ethical pragmatist. He asserts that the greatness of a beautiful object is in its function, that functionality is always linked to structural precision and soundness, and that among the things we can find in literature are those which Pater's fictive Florian Deleal found down the memory path, in his imagined return to the house in which he had been born: comfort, consolation, and a deeper understanding of the self.

Notes

1 For a discussion of "Style" and *Marius the Epicurean* as including Pater's response to the contemporary philological theories, see Dowling (1986: 104–140).

2 See also Budziak (2008: 272–273).

3 For Pater's adaptation of Hegelian historicism, see McGrath (1986: 118–139).

4 See Conlon (1982: 170–172); Budziak (2008: 296n11).

5 The characters of Pater's prose are frequently referred to as "heroes" rather than protagonists. See Monsman (1971); Perlis (1980).

6 For deconstructivist readings of Pater, see Budziak (2008: 6n10).

7 Pater's metaphor for art as introduced in the "Postscript" to *Appreciations.* See Pater (1987: 241).

8 William F. Shuter also agrees that "in Pater's later work architecture sometimes seems to replace music as the type of art" (2005: 4).

9 See Eliot (1976a).

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