

curly-haired actor who starred in several of his films.

After Pasolini's death a veil of obscurity descended in Italy to cover the "embarrassment" of his sexual "deviation." Hence the effort some of his friends made to have his murder treated as a political rather than as a sexual crime; though the evidence was flimsy, this hypothesis was considered more respectable. Only recently, however, through the initiative of the Italian gay movement, has an analysis been undertaken of the enormous influence that Pasolini's homosexuality exercised on his achievements.

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Giovanni Dall'Orto

PASSIVE

See Active-Passive Contrast.

PATER, WALTER (1839–1894)

British writer and critic. Born the third child of a surgeon in the London slum of Stepney, Pater lost his father at an early age. He overworked himself to the point of illness to win a scholarship to Oxford. Pater early attempted writing in verse; yet lacking any poetic instinct or command of rhythm, he abandoned poetry to become a master of English prose style, a highly refined, allusive and personal style that gave him a potentially stirring instrument of self-expression. At Oxford he heard lectures by Matthew Arnold, appreciating their wide, topic range of literary references and the author's serious belief in the importance of culture. He learned French and German, studied the literature of both countries, and acquired a combination of French aestheticism and German learning, yet he never became a profound thinker or a conventional scholar.

In 1864 he won a classical fellowship at Brasenose College, Oxford—the

beginning of his career. A discrete essay on the homosexual archeologist J. J. Winckelmann (written for *Westminster Review* in 1867) betrayed to discerning readers a sympathy for Greek *paiderasteia*. Pater's marked preference for the company of young and good-looking men, joined with the intellectual currents in his work and the personality of several of his friends, was enough to win some admirers and make some enemies. Added to this heterodoxy was Pater's rejection of Christianity and affinity for paganism; and over him these aspects of his character cast a shadow that later efforts at hiding his private self never dispelled.

A friendship with Charles Lancelot Shadwell, a former pupil of his who became a fellow of Oriel College in 1864, inspired an essay entitled *Diaphanéité* (1864), and to him was dedicated the fruit of Pater's first visit to Italy, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873). This was not a true history, but a study of a set of chosen personalities whom he recognized as kindred spirits in subtlety, sophistication, and love of beauty. Collected and read together, the essays in the volume sounded a sensuous verbal music, adumbrating a novel view of life that made the tone of the work more fascinating than its contents. But even more provocative to Pater's contemporaries was the Conclusion, ending with the words "To burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life." Nothing could better have summed up the repugnance provoked by the volume than the pungent characterization of the author—attributed to Benjamin Jowett—as a "demoralizing moralizer."

In the second edition of *The Renaissance* (1877), he deleted the Conclusion, but revised the first chapter by adding passages on *The Friendship of Amis and Amile*, a thirteenth-century French romance centered on male friendship. As part of the plot Amis lays down his life for Amile by taking his place in single combat, while Amile in turn lays down his life

in proxy by slaying his children so that Amis may be healed. In the discussion of the tale Pater made both more explicit and more nuanced his appreciation of the libidinal aspects of human culture and specifically of the Christian culture of the Middle Ages.

Two others who appealed to Pater were Algernon Charles Swinburne, protodecadent poet, and Simeon Solomon, a Pre-Raphaelite painter, frankly homosexual, whose career was destroyed when a morals charge revealed his proclivities to Victorian society. From 1869 to his death, Pater lived in Oxford with his two spinster sisters in a curious sort of household that took the place of a conventional marriage.

In 1885 Pater published a novel entitled *Marius the Epicurean*. It was a sustained portrait of an invented, non-historical figure, a fictitious biography in two volumes set in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, when the alternatives of paganism and Christianity coexisted. In writing the book the author shifts from sensations to ideas, as the hero Marius replaces his love for the poetic and pagan Flavian with friendship for the Christian soldier Cornelius. Marius—with whom Pater strongly identifies—dies at the end of the novel, but since he intervenes to set Cornelius free when both are taken captive, the Christians with whom he has associated deem his death a sort of martyrdom.

Other works of his were in the field of literary criticism, such as *Appreciations: with an Essay on Style* (1889). Though containing nothing that could not have been read before, it elicited highly favorable reviews, with the recognition that the author was “beyond rivalry the subtlest artist in contemporary English prose.” Pater was famous at the end of his life, when he published *Plato and Platonism* (1893), in which, however, there are only a few neutral and scholarly references to homosexuality, while the book closes with an admonition to love the intellectual, disciplined, patiently achieved “dry beauty” which Plato recommends and is

shown to have achieved against his own instinctual urgings. In the spring of 1894 he became ill and died suddenly just before his fifty-fifth birthday.

Heterosexual love and marriage receive scant attention in his work, and the attitude toward Christianity in his early writings contained more animosity than wit. In a review of William Morris' poetry in 1868, he commented that medieval religion “was but a beautiful disease or disorder of the senses.” With intimates he could engage in a provocative mockery and sarcasm that he rigorously suppressed from his published writings and even more from his private letters, which reveal none of the arcana of his existence.

The refined and academic hedonism of Walter Pater mark him as a type of homosexual with profound aesthetic sensibilities who functions both as a critic of art and as a creator, in this instance, of a prose style whose formal perfection and musicality make it one of the highwater marks of nineteenth-century English literature. Only subtly does his fascination with male beauty betray the real focus of his interests, while he kept his private self deliberately elusive and hidden in his lifetime. His career as a lecturer at Oxford followed a path distant from the one trodden by “decadent” contemporaries such as Oscar Wilde whose unconventional sexuality he secretly shared.

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PATRISTIC WRITERS: THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

The Patristic writings are usually defined as the surviving texts of the Christian teachers from the end of the first century—when the New Testament was