Portraiture and the Early Portraits extends from mid-April to mid-May. The noun form of Florian’s surname is Delian, meaning one who comes from the island of Delos, birthplace of Apollo and sacred for its sanctuary and festival to him.20

The Latin base of Florian’s first name aligns him closely with that world of flowers which scatters such exquisite perfume through the whole of the portrait. We see him as a sort of male counterpart to Flora, goddess of spring, and similar in function to the vegetative god Dionysus. Florian is, then, intensely aware of the romantic as well as the classic quality of life: “he could trace two predominant processes of mental change in him—the growth of an almost diseased sensibility to the spectacle of suffering, and, parallel with this, the rapid growth of a certain capacity of fascination by bright colour and choice form” (MS, 181). So, as he says, “with this desire of physical beauty mingled itself early the fear of death—the fear of death intensified by the desire of beauty” (MS, 189–90). Florian is early aware of the cyclic pattern in the flux of phenomena, and “he yielded himself to these things, to be played upon by them like a musical instrument, and began to note with deepening watchfulness, but always with some puzzled, unutterable longing in his enjoyment, the phases of the seasons and of the growing or waning day, down even to the shadowy changes wrought on bare wall or ceiling” (MS, 188). This seems a verbal echo of the 1868 version of the Conclusion, in which Pater sees the winter Dionysus even in the bloom of the sensuous world—“the gradual darkening of the eye and fading of colour from the wall.”21

In a way, Pater here seems to be echoing Poe, Baudelaire, and Keats in the belief that death and physical beauty are reciprocally related, and we recall that line in Marius about “the fatality which seems to haunt any signal beauty” (ME, I, 93). Certainly

20 This explanation of Florian’s name has not been given before. Pater occasionally uses such characterization by names elsewhere, too. For example, Sebastian van Storck’s Christian name is an echo of St. Sebastian, who died a Dionysian death, transfixed by arrows and afterwards beaten. And just as the first Sebastian was a Roman officer, so the teacher of the Dutch Sebastian fancied “that his ultimate destination may be the military life” (IP, p. 83). Sebastian’s surname may reflect the traditional Dutch belief that it is the presence of the stork that brings children; the relevance of this to the portrait as Pater tells it is clear enough. Emerald Uthwart is another good example of such characterization; his name will be explained in Chapter VI. Pater also seems to borrow names from his favorite romantic writers. For example the name “Marius” may very well come from Victor Hugo’s Les Miserables (Pater mentions Hugo’s hero in Ap, p. 248) and Gretchen, the girl Duke Carl marries, may well come from Goethe’s Faust. (Goethe, of course, is a very important figure in the portrait.)

21 Westminster Review, XXXIV, 310.
this combination of opposites is the basis of all art and defines
the Apollonian temper for us. Speaking of the necessity under
which the romantic spirit feels itself for associating beauty and
strangeness, Pater writes in *Appreciations:* “Its desire is for a
beauty born of unlikely elements, by a profound alchemy, by a
difficult initiation, by the charm which wrings it even out of ter-
rible things; and a trace of distortion, of the grotesque, may perhaps
linger, as an additional element of expression, about its ultimate
grace” (*Ap*, 247–48). In the childhood vision of the boy Florian,
these two qualities of beauty and pain reach their fullest expres-
sion; it is a hearing of the musical harmony in the joy and sorrow
of the world. Life and death, beauty and pain—“In music some-
times the two sorts of impressions came together, and he would
weep, to the surprise of older people” (*MS*, 181).

This ideal harmony of beauty and strangeness finds its fullest
expression not in art but in the hope of Christianity:

To Florian such impressions, these misgivings as to the ultimate ten-
dency of the years, of the relationship between life and death, had
been suggested spontaneously in the natural course of his mental
growth by a strong innate sense for the soberer tones in things, further
strengthened by actual circumstances; and religious sentiment, that
system of biblical ideas in which he had been brought up, presented
itself to him as a thing that might soften and dignify, and light up
as with a “lively hope,” a melancholy already deeply settled in him.
(*MS*, 192–93)

For Florian, religion was “a constant substitution of the typical
for the actual,” a blending of two realms of experience, as in art,
so that inner and outer are one ideal world:

His way of conceiving religion came then to be in effect what it
ever afterwards remained—a sacred history indeed, but still more a
sacred ideal, a transcendent version or representation, under intenser
and more expressive light and shade, of human life and its familiar
or exceptional incidents, birth, death, marriage, youth, age, tears, joy,
rest, sleep, waking—a mirror, towards which men might turn away
their eyes from vanity and dullness, and see themselves therein as
angels, with their daily meat and drink, even, become a kind of sacred
transaction—a complementary strain or burden, applied to our every-
day existence, whereby the stray snatches of music in it re-set them-
selves, and fall into the scheme of some higher and more consistent
harmony. (*MS*, 193–94)

Three qualities “the child took away with him, when . . . he left
the old house”: a “sensibility” to the sorrow in the world, a “desire
of physical beauty,” and, transmuting both the pain and the
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beauty, “a strange biblical awe” (MS, 195). It is this ideal Apollonian world, neither merely soul nor merely sense, and expressed here (as later in Marius) in terms of religion rather than art, which Florian possessed as a child.

“The Child in the House” opens with a single vividly realized image of the aged man with the burden, and it closes with an equally vivid description of the empty house “like the face of one dead” (MS, 196). Each stage on the road of life is marked by a Dionysian dying—a dying to the old in order to be born into the new. This cycle of life and death appears often in Pater’s portraits, perhaps most clearly in Marius, where stages of Marius’ mental growth are marked by the death of those who had symbolized a particular way of looking at reality which Marius is about to transcend. Writing in Appreciations of Wordsworth’s “Intimations” ode, Pater finds in the poem the same sort of nostalgia for the “half-ideal” world of childhood that he himself expressed in “The Child in the House.” Wordsworth had pondered deeply, says Pater,

on those strange reminiscences and forebodings, which seem to make our lives stretch before and behind us, beyond where we can see or touch anything, or trace the lines of connexion. Following the soul, backwards and forwards, on these endless ways, his sense of man’s dim, potential powers became a pledge to him, indeed, of a future life, but carried him back also to that mysterious notion of an earlier state of existence—the fancy of the Platonists—the old heresy of Origen. It was in this mood that he conceived those oft-reiterated regrets for a half-ideal childhood, when the relics of Paradise still clung about the soul—a childhood, as it seemed, full of the fruits of old age, lost for all, in a degree, in the passing away of the youth of the world, lost for each one, over again, in the passing away of actual youth. (Ap, 54–55)

When writing “The Child in the House,” Pater must have thought of Vaughan’s poem as well as Wordsworth’s ode. Vaughan, like Wordsworth, wistfully admitted the impossibility of any “retreat” into the prelapsarian state:

O! how I long to travel back
And tread again that ancient track!
That I might once more reach that plain,
Where first I left my glorious train.—
But Ah! my soul with too much stay
Is drunk; and staggers in the way. (PP, 74)

The Dionysian “intoxication” with the things of this world demands a forward progress, the closing off of the past behind
As happened to the simple antique life of the Greeks, so with the childhood of Florian: the problem of unity could no longer be solved by "any joyful union with the external world: the shadows had grown too long, the light too solemn, for that" \( (R, 228) \).

In the last scene of "The Child in the House," as Florian salvages from a dead past a single spark of life, the truth of the impossibility of retreat dawns on him for the first time. The family has forgotten a pet bird, and Florian returns to save it from starvation:

As he passed in search of it from room to room, lying so pale, with a look of meekness in their denudation, and at last through that little, stripped white room, the aspect of the place touched him like the face of one dead; and a clinging back towards it came over him, so intense that he knew it would last long, and spoiling all his pleasure in the realisation of a thing so eagerly anticipated. And so, with the bird found, but himself in an agony of home-sickness, thus capriciously sprung up within him, he was driven quickly away, far into the rural distance, so fondly speculated on, of that favourite country-road. \( (MS, 196) \)

The expanding soul has grown beyond the bounds of the house, which suddenly has become a trap, and in its death-like atmosphere it becomes the first of the many images in Pater's fiction of that wintry Dionysian world of the Conclusion: "the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world" \( (R, 235) \). The old world of the summer Dionysus must be abandoned, for some new external order is needed to match the larger dreams of the soul. Never again can the Golden Age be found in merely the bloom of the red hawthorn; now it must be in the greater world of art, in the realm of Apollo himself, where Florian finds his ideal. Perhaps Florian's growing need to interpret life religiously was an indication that already he had outgrown the childish unconsciousness of the summer Dionysus.

Florian's act of pity is the perfect denouement, for the bird is a traditional image of the soul. Marius' mother had inscribed this same image deeply on her son's mind when he was a child at White-nights, the home so like Florian's own:

A white bird, she told him once, looking at him gravely, a bird which he must carry in his bosom across a crowded public place—his own soul was like that! Would it reach the hands of his good genius on the opposite side, unruffled and unsoiled? And as his mother became to him the very type of maternity in things, its unfailing pity and protectiveness, and maternity itself the central type of all love;—so, that beautiful dwelling-place lent the reality of concrete outline to
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a peculiar ideal of home, which throughout the rest of his life he seemed, amid many distractions of spirit, to be ever seeking to regain. (ME, I, 22)

Life and death successively replace each other as the pilgrim soul journeys out to some distant world of love, where once again the concrete ideal of home can be found. Pater has given us in “The Child in the House” a chronicle of “the first stage in that mental journey” (MS, 174) which he, like all men, had made.

Pater has drawn his inspiration for this portrait seemingly from Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, as he works into the actual facts of his own life the elements of the Everyman myth. The allegorical framework of the dream-vision universalizes the particular experiences, turning the simple images of the child, the house, the bird, and the road into symbols of the experiences of all mankind. Perhaps there is a certain quiet irony in Pater’s use of Bunyan’s Christian as Florian’s prototype. Christian stands always “with his face from his own house,” whereas Florian stands with his face toward his old home, an ideal, as it was with Marius, that he seemed “to be ever seeking to regain.” But perhaps there is no irony, for Christian, by going forward, and Florian, by going back, ultimately reach the same point. As Vaughan realized, God is without direction, both the Alpha and Omega of existence:

Some men a forward motion love,  
But I backward steps would move;  
And when this dust falls to the urn  
In that state I came return. (PP, 74)

“AN ENGLISH POET” (1878)

Pater had written to George Grove, as we have already noted, that “The Child in the House” was not intended to be part of some larger fictional work, but was meant to be the first of its kind in a series of such portraits. The second installment in the series, not generally realized as such, was “An English Poet,” the full heading of which resembled the preceding portrait, except that it was numbered as the second piece. We know that Pater devoted the autumn of 1878 to its composition, for he had written Grove in early September that he was working on the second installment, and Grove had replied by asking Pater to send it when finished.

22 In a section cut from the next to the last paragraph of Chapter XIX, “The Will as Vision,” in the later editions of Marius, Pater had described the golden moments of epiphany as “birds of passage . . . soon out of sight or with broken wing; yet not really lost, after all, on their way to the enduring light, in which the fair hours of life would present themselves as living creatures forever before the perpetual observer.”
to his assistant since he himself would be abroad. But by December
Grove had returned, and Pater wrote to say that the delay had
been caused by his having to take up again work of another sort
which he thought he had finished. Pater never did send Grove
his second installment, and the manuscript was not published until
1931, when Mrs. May Ottley, Hester Pater's legatee, discovered
it and published it in the *Fortnightly Review*.

Although Pater had abandoned the idea of a sequence in his
series sometime during the composition of the second portrait—
indeed, his failure to complete the portrait may have been owing
to his change in plans—Pater's letters cast light on his intentions
and encourage us to read "An English Poet" in relation to "The
Child in the House." If we suppose "The Child in the House"
to describe the initial awareness by the soul of itself and its identity
with the external world, then "An English Poet" deals with the
second major stage in the development of the creative personality,
namely, the awakening of the "imaginative reason," of artistic
vision, in the expanding soul. If the first portrait represents the
simple world of a Golden Age based on a harmony of soul and
nature, the world of the summer Dionysus, then the second defines
the more complex world of a Golden Age in which the dreams of
the soul are embodied in the objectivity of art, the world of Apollo.

In this second portrait the center of interest moves one step
farther down the autobiographical path in chronicling the stages
of Pater's mental growth. We can trace in this portrait, though
to a lesser extent than in the preceding one, the same incorporation
of autobiographical facts; and although Pater attempts to place
a certain distance between himself and his hero, the reader will
probably still feel that the autobiographical basis of the narrative
is betrayed by an almost too circumstantial account of the young
poet's literary apprenticeship. The objectives of the young poet

23 While both Pater's evident confusion following the death of his mother
and his youthful desire for a poetic vocation are undoubtedly reflected in
this work, a greater distance between author and hero is undeniably present.
In part, this distance is the result of a more fully differentiated narrative
personality. Pater appears in his authorial intrusions under the guise of a
traveller among "Swiss or English" (*IPB*, p. 36) mountains who is describing
in best essayistic fashion his reactions to his readers. While there is no real
necessity to deny a close link between subject and author, the fact that there
are now two distinct personalities takes us one step further from the retrospec-
tive essay. Pater further distances himself from his hero by providing a more
elaborate fictional setting—the Pays de Caux and the Cumberland Lake Coun-
try. This greater geographical coverage is matched by a considerably greater
temporal span, for we begin with the young poet's parents and continue follow-
ing his fortunes to his "earliest manhood" (*IPB*, p. 46), when he finally breaks
loose for his *Wanderjahre*. 

52
match almost exactly the goals laid down in Pater’s own criticism, as, for example, in the famous essay "Style." One has the inescapable feeling that in this second portrait, as in the first, Pater is curiously scrutinizing the "process of brain-building," which resulted in his being the man he was.

"An English Poet" opens, as do so many of Pater’s portraits, in the style of a travelogue, with a brief but very sensuous description of the Pays de Caux, which blends into the event of the young English girl’s finding "in the furrow one autumn morning a golden Roman coin with a clear high profile on it which looked to her as might an image of immortal youth" (IPB, 35). Afterwards, the Curé, to whom she showed the coin, "told her how in the old Pagan times the darkened minds of men had been wont to think much more of the perishable beauty of the body than Christians are allowed to do" (IPB, 35). Then, at about the same time, the coin came alive for her in the form of "a slim figure with delicate hands and golden hair growing crisply half down his forehead, and just such a profile as that on the golden medal. He has too, what the medal has not, colour—white and pale red, and just a touch of amber where the salt air of the channel has taken him" (IPB, 35).

The slim woman-like figure "of immortal youth" was the summer Dionysus returned to haunt her mind with the unsuspected possibilities of a new plenitude of life. The Dionysian influence built in her, as it did in Florian, a sensitivity to the beauty of growing things and a corresponding awareness of pain and death in the natural cycle: "She sheltered the budding rose bush in its pot near the chimney corner and began to fancy that such things as flowers really felt neglect even, and pined over their own short lives, and a little heart seemed breaking in each leaf that glided golden from the trees" (IPB, 36). Dionysian ecstasy invaded her heart as well, for with the renewal of the year, heralded in its pagan way by the blossoming of the rose bush in the red light of the hearth on Christmas Day, "the fire in her heart was burning strong and wild and the light fancies were no longer at her will" (IPB, 36). But the "bright figure" (IPB, 36) of the golden god did not return and the English girl died in childbirth, heartbroken, the following winter. As always, however, winter death gives birth to life, and the child is evidence of that renewal.

24 As Pater tells us in "The Bacchanals of Euripides," the involuntary fancies of the poet’s mother were the inspiration of Dionysus: "Himself a woman-like god,—it was on women and feminine souls that his power mainly fell" (GS, p. 57).
The boy was taken to be reared by relatives among “the stern Cumberland mountains,” which seemed like “some place of exile or punishment” (IPB, 36, 38). Certainly the Pays de Caux had its wintry side in the Curé, who distrusted “perishable beauty” and in “the plain young Frenchman” (IPB, 36) whom the poet’s mother married, just as the Cumberland mountains had a summer side, “its morsels of more delicate texture” (IPB, 40). But there is no real doubt as to the primary nature of either the Pays de Caux or the Cumberland mountains. The lad’s home takes the “stillness and isolation” of the world of the “day-dreams” of the poet’s mother (IPB, 35) and carries them to their extreme limit. His new home is “stern,” “chill,” “grotesque,” “graceless,” “northern,” “hard,” and “narrow” (IPB, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 47)—a perfect list of romantic, wintry qualities. When we recall the mention of the “adventure which ended in loss of life” (IPB, 36), we sense the lethal quality which haunts the boy’s home. For him, the “sacred fire” (IPB, 37), the warm and happy centripetal world, lay elsewhere—“the tide of real existence, great affairs and great creations,” flowed beyond “those impassable mountains reinforcing the barrier of his birth” (IPB, 40).

The sensitive lad suffered greatly in this wintry Dionysian prison. In the whole of his environment, there were only two things that had coaxed out his capacity for liking—a red honeysuckle over the gateway of the grange, the one more stately habitation in the place, in remarkably free flower this year, and a range of metal screen-work, twisted with fantastic grace into wreaths of flames or flowers, noticed now for the first time, making fine shadows in the pale sunlight on the mellow whitewashed wall of the old church as he sat there on Sundays, himself except that thing, the one touch of delicacy in its rudeness, and which seemed to him to hold somehow of that honeysuckle in flower and belong with it to a warmer heaven. (IPB, 39)

The red honeysuckle, like the red hawthorn in “The Child in the House,” seems to represent sensuous reality and the bloom of physical things, while the metal work is its artistic counterpart, so to speak, by which it has been elevated into an ideal Apollonian art world. The red vine and its artistic transfiguration are related to the southern world of the centripetal: “the honeysuckle was an exotic from France . . . and that ancient metal hand-work with its dainty traces of half-vanished gilding, an exotic that too from Augsburg where such metal flowers and flames are plenteous” (IPB, 39). The northern environment gave the lad vision, but it failed, except in the case of the excitingly strange red honeysuckle,
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to supply him the means of embodying it. What the boy needed was a “fitting stimulus for the senses, some concrete imagery which might fix the wandering vision, that visible garment of which he saw not so much as the hem, means of expression or translation through which that dim brooding infinite sense, imaginativeness, might take hold, and he be relieved of the stifling weight of it” (IPB, 40–41).

Through his reading in literature, he finds the sensuous world he so longed for: “out of the greyness and austerity of a school in which the senses pined while the fancy declined fondly towards a more exquisite mode of living, the boy required from words . . . all that was not actually there for ear and eye. . . . So written language came to be form and colour as well as sound to him, exotic perfume almost” (IPB, 44–45). Eagerly grasping at whatever has form or color, the lad embodied his inner vision in it:

For the strange boy himself there was a curious sense of relief in seeing thought or fancy, housed at last in the fragment of writing compressed, truly by many shapings, to some delightful inward pattern or ideal, which yet had weighed on him like a burden; for if your words regarding it are to be fragrant, he would say, you must have been for a time in slavish possession of the flower. (IPB, 46)

The lad escaped the oppressive weight of his wintry dream by embodying it objectively in the “hard, gemlike flame” of art. His poetry, we are told, had “a certain hardness like that of a gem . . . somehow not altogether unlike that of the metal honeysuckle” which wreathed itself in “metal flowers and flames” (IPB, 46, 39):

This, a peculiar character as of flowers in metal, was noticed by the curious as a distinction in his verse, such an elastic force in word and phrase, following a tender delicate thought or feeling as the metal followed the curvature of the flower, as seemed to indicate artistic triumph over a material partly resisting, which yet at last took outline from his thought with the firmness of antique forms of mastery. (IPB, 39)25

25 If there is any writer who is the stylistic model for Pater’s imaginary poet, it would probably be Wordsworth, whose art, like that of the young English poet, was a product of the Cumberland lake district. Pater’s imaginary portrait is a kind of prose counterpart to Wordsworth’s great poetic autobiography, The Prelude, in which the “Growth of a Poet’s Mind” (as the subtitle has it) is the subject. According to Pater, Wordsworth achieved as well as any man the ideal of poetry, for the word and the idea were united “in the imaginative flame, becoming inseparably one with the other, by that fusion of matter and form, which is the characteristic of the highest poetical expression” (Ap, p. 58). It is hardly surprising that, having written such an “appre-
Much of what Pater says about the art of poetry in this portrait later becomes expanded in Marius and in his essay “Style.” In the chapter on “Euphuism” in Marius, for example, Pater echoes the metaphor of the metal screen-work in his description of Flavian’s poem. The Pervigilium Veneris, he says, is “a composition shaping itself, little by little, out of a thousand dim perceptions, into singularly definite form (definite and firm as fine-art in metal, thought Marius), . . . a firmness like that of some master of noble metal-work, manipulating tenacious bronze or gold” (ME, I, 104, 115). And we are reminded again of the poet and his attempt to find an objective outlet for his inner states of awareness in “Style,” in which Pater writes, for example, that “into the mind sensitive to ‘form,’ a flood of random sounds, colours, incidents, is ever penetrating from the world without, to become, by sympathetic selection, a part of its very structure, and, in turn, the visible vesture and expression of that other world it sees so steadily within” (Ap, 31). But not only are such echoes of the stylistic principles of the “English Poet” found throughout Pater’s writings; even Pater’s own handling of syntax and diction follows those precepts defined in the portrait.

Since a great deal of the meaning in the portrait of the young poet lies in its poetic theory, a brief consideration of the physical structure and tone of Pater’s own style may shed considerable light on the subject of the original idea of inner vision expressed in visible form. There is a marked lack of significant stylistic evolution in the works of Pater, and from the very earliest essays to the very latest, the hesitating, precious rhythms of his prose are apparent everywhere. As a result, most commentators on Pater’s style seem entranced by its music. Percy Lubbock speaks of Pater’s “harmonious murmur,” and Graham Hough mentions “the languor of its rhythms.”26 It is as if Pater had very much the same sort of ear as had his hero Duke Carl, who liked in church music “those passages of a pleasantly monotonous and, as it might seem, unending melody—which certainly never came to what could rightly be called an ending here on earth” (IP, 132). This may also be

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a reasonably apt description of some of Pater’s longer and more trying sentences. I think, however, that it would be a mistake to draw any sort of extended comparison between Pater’s style and the quality of music. Music, for the most part, has a driving, linear movement. It goes places. But Pater’s style, with its interminable qualifications and afterthoughts, with its parallelisms and antitheses, with its connotative richness and frequent ambiguity, is certainly anything but fluid. It is static, pictorial. It resembles the highly inflected structure of the classical languages in that it permits a more arbitrary order of words so that the sentence seems to present to the reader all of its parts simultaneously. Describing this pictorial kind of style, Northrop Frye tells us that all the elements of the sentence “are fitted into a pattern, and as one point after another is made, there emerges not a linear process of thought but a simultaneous comprehension. What is explained is turned around and viewed from all aspects, but it is completely there, so to speak, from the beginning.”

Moreover, Pater’s is a style in which the sentence, not the paragraph, is the basic unit. Writing in paragraphs provides a sense of linear movement, but composition in sentences conveys a sense of stasis. Edmund Chandler, who made an extensive survey of the style of Pater’s *Marius*, writes:

The aspect of the revision that strikes [one] as most curious is that Pater felt he could dismantle *Marius* into its component sentences, and then revise each as an entity in itself—an undertaking rather like cleaning a watch. For though the essay on “Style” gives little support for such a view, it is clear from the revision that for Pater the art of writing was synonymous with the composition of sentences. . . . The reader of Pater’s prose soon becomes aware that a definite pause is essential after each sentence in order to adjust oneself to the rhythm of the next. Each sentence carries a complete impact and impression of its own, so that complementary sentences rarely occur. Such a manner is unusual, and we are so much more used to authors who think in terms of paragraphs and their total impression that Pater’s method comes as somewhat of a shock.  

Interestingly, Pater was in the habit of composing sentences on small squares of paper which he would then rearrange into paragraphs.

The structure of Pater’s style duplicates his *Weltanschauung*. It is a style which breaks up the flux of phenomena into isolated moments, for it is in these intervals only that reality is to be found,

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28 Edmund Chandler, *Pater on Style* (Copenhagen, 1958), p. 82.
Pater believed. It is a style which reflects those moments in which the stream has been arrested and the spirit incarnated in a form that lasts but briefly, but undeniably is achieved for an instant. Pater’s style obviously differs from that of the later stream-of-consciousness writers, who present thought as a process: their style reflects the stream itself, and its structure gives the reader, as Frye puts it, “the process or movement of thought instead of the logical word-order of achieved thought.”

This tendency to atomize both paragraph and sentence is also reflected in the over-all structure of Pater’s fiction. The portraits likewise are crystallizations of a precarious balance. On the one hand, there is the finite classic quality which provides the “general character” \( (R, 215) \) of the work, or what Pater in the essay “Style” calls “mind.” On the other hand, there is the infinite romantic quality which gives to the work its “special situation” \( (R, 215) \), or what in the same essay is called “soul.” The meaning of any portrait, however, lies not in its classic design or romantic atmosphere, but in a combination of the two. Just as the disparate elements of Pater’s sentences call for simultaneous comprehension, so the portrait demands a total view. We see in this demand a reflection of Pater’s contention that mind and soul, outer and inner, must be united in art: the theories expressed in the essay “Style” are no different from those basic to his concept of the Renaissance itself.

The tone of Pater’s style is a second method by which he conveys meaning. In his cadences there is a gentle sadness akin to the wistfulness in the faces of Botticelli’s exiles or to the longing in Florian’s enjoyment. It is the prose of quiet suffering, and its tones reach one as in a dream, as from across a distance. The nostalgia seems to testify to those shadowy memories of ideal patterns echoing in the soul here on earth and arises from the sense that the Golden Age which those patterns had inspired in youth, or in the youth of the human race, are now gone. Only by death will those pure forms again be seen. The poignancy and sentiment with which Pater invests the past come, however, not from the feeling that one’s own past or the historical past is outwardly more perfect than the present. Childhood may be a high point, as was the age of ancient Greece, but there is no literal Golden Age for Pater. In Marius Pater referred to belief in such an age as “the

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29 Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 266.
30 Pater’s influence on his most famous student, G. M. Hopkins, is evident here, for Hopkins, in his journals and other writings, also speaks of philosophical ideas which recur, of universal principles, and of an inner energy which gives pattern to all the diverse objects within the evanescent flux.
enchanted-distance fallacy” (ME, I, 101). For Pater there are moments, “golden” moments of ecstasy, periods of renaissance in nations and in individual lives, which shed light on that “whole long chaplet of sorrowful mysteries” (ME, II, 175) which constitutes the major part of existence for most men. Childhood or youth is, certainly, the most perfect of such periods, but it passes, as do all future moments. Pater’s deep awareness of this sorrow of the world, of the suffering of grown people and children and animals, and of the shortness of such “golden” moments, sets for each portrait its tone of nostalgia, its mist of sentiment. In Pater’s writings, as in the poetry of Tennyson, for example, the moment of ecstasy always lies in the past. It is ineffable when it is present, and it is gone when it is understood. There are left for the present only the suffering caused by its loss and the patient hope that soon again the self-divided world will be harmonized anew.

Undeniably, then, Pater’s own writing fulfills those principles of good style which he first set forth in “An English Poet,” and the structure and tone of his own works are in perfect accord with his critical theories. But the ultimate goal toward which Pater and his young English poet both strive is not merely that of a successful fusion of form and matter. Art should have a moral end as well. Pater was to write some years after his second portrait, in his essay “Style,” that, given a successful fusion of mind and soul in a work,

then, if it be devoted further to the increase of men’s happiness, to the redemption of the oppressed, or the enlargement of our sympathies with each other, or to such presentment of new or old truth about ourselves and our relation to the world as may ennoble and fortify us in our sojourn here, or immediately, as with Dante, to the glory of God, it will be also great art. (Ap, 38)

Pater was at pains in his portrait of the English poet to point to this quality of moral elevation in the boy’s art. There could be seen in the character of the young poet, says Pater, a certain mood “which with the desire of literary form, the ideal of literary life—became a motive high enough to purge out of an ambitious youth all that was common or unclean, and prompted an ideal so high that once to have conceived it, ‘il suffit que la pensée vous en soit venue pour que ma vie en demeure consolée et charmée’” (IPB, 43).31

31 This passage recalls what George Moore had to say about Pater: “He made me understand that the object of art is to aid us in forgetting all that is violent and cruel, and to orient us toward certain normal aspects of life.” Quoted in d’Hangest, Walter Pater, II, 35. See also Ap, pp. 62–63.
This is the true outcome of Pater's "aestheticism," and "An English Poet" could well serve as the imaginative embodiment of his own artistic creed which, at about this time, was being so grossly misinterpreted. Art, Pater here seems to say, purifies the soul. It was pointed out in the discussion of the idea of portraiture that the sublimity of Greek sculpture lay in its power to purge the mind of the melancholy, impure, and gloomy shadows of the winter Dionysus. The noble figure of Demeter, says Pater, was impressed "with all the purity and proportion, the purged and dainty intelligence of the human countenance" (GS, 138). Certainly Pater's conception of the ideality of art is hardly surprising when one considers that he shared with Hegel the belief that art is the expression of Truth, that it is the particular embodiment of the Absolute Idea. But Pater's emphasis differs from Hegel's. The moments of ultimate truth are moments of hard-core experience, true and valid in themselves, of which the woof is sense and the warp is reason. Indeed, just as Hegel stressed the universal as primary, so Pater stressed the particular; he exaggerated the importance of the subjective element in art to give this neglected side of the aesthetic object its proper due. Pater's enthusiastic disciples sadly forgot that their master's definition of true beauty included the classic as well as the romantic qualities. This unfortunate lapse in such followers as Wilde, Beardsley, Dowson, Johnson, and Moore produced a philosophy of art which displayed a narrow interest in artistic subjectivity. They slipped into a belief that the work of the artist, isolated from society, has no relation to morality, and they tended to rely upon personal emotion, demanding only novelty of sensation or a passion of the grossest kind of intensity as an artistic criterion. Pater naturally was horrified that such a construction should be put upon the philosophy of art advanced in The Renaissance. In opposition to the "decadents," he believed that Dionysian romanticism is only one ingredient in aesthetic beauty; he also insisted, as even George Moore tells us, that the function of art was to orient one toward the normal and natural rather than toward the artificial, rare, and abnormal. Certainly, when speaking of art for the sake of the full life, Pater did not mean art for the sake of sheer intensity.

The particular moment at which "The Child in the House" and "An English Poet" appeared in Pater's career is of crucial significance, for it seems that they were meant to be his apologia for the philosophy of art that he had expressed in the Conclusion to The Renaissance. The series of sequential portraits that Pater had originally planned may have been devised to serve the purpose
Portraiture and the Early Portraits

that *Marius* eventually fulfilled. In them Pater originally had hoped to answer those who misunderstood what he meant to say in *The Renaissance*, and it is interesting to note how closely at first even *Marius* approximated a sequence of portraits, for Pater had originally intended to publish it serially and had actually submitted his first two chapters before changing his mind.\(^32\)

Because of their unique position in the history of Pater's attempt to explain himself—why he was as he was and why he believed what he did—"The Child in the House" and "An English Poet" quite naturally differ from the portraits which follow in several very interesting ways. The most obvious difference between these and the later ones is their openly autobiographical, essay-like quality. One need not conclude, however, that the autobiographical quality of the portraits was unintentional, a mistake that embarrassed the author.\(^33\) The portraits depend for their unity on the reader's perceiving that each reflects a particular period in the life of a single contemporary artistic mind, and the reader would have to be very obtuse indeed not to realize that it is the artistic mind of Pater himself which they express.\(^34\) Secondly, the later portraits do not share the same contemporary setting, for it is no longer needed as a unifying device. Pater is free to choose whatever time setting he desires, from a century before his time in "Emerald" to the mythical past in "Hippolytus." Finally, in "The Child in the House," at least, a third differentiating quality is the absence of the physical death of the young hero. In all the other portraits there is one decisive moment of choice and action which leads the hero to an early, often violent, death. This lack of the Dionysian denouement is probably an indication, again, that the projected sequence of portraits was originally meant to trace successive stages of development and not whole lives, though there is a symbolic, if not a physical, death in "The Child in the House."

"An English Poet," on the other hand, ends in the middle of a sentence, and we can only guess about its probable conclusion. Pater does, however, supply us with a few clues. The young poet, steadily weakening from tuberculosis, returns in the end, as do so many of Pater's heroes, to the area of his birth: "the coming even so far southwards from the narrow Cumberland valley he felt like a removal in the abstract from North to South" (*IPB*, 47). It appears that he, like most of Pater's heroes, is destined for an


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early end. Like DuBellay, writing of his northern home while in the south at Rome, this young poet, too, lived long enough to mingle north in south:

And a time came when the sense of certain gracious things not exotic, neglected in that early mountain abode . . . came to him freshly as if then first seen, and with great reaching out of appetite towards them out of a feverish southern land, all the softer elements of that life at the lake side detached themselves from his memory and hung like a mirage over an imagined place he would fain have been in. (IPB, 40)

One might almost regard this death an anticipation of Flavian's death in Marius the Epicurean except that the delirious sensuousness of Flavian's poetry remains tortured to the end. Here the poet turns from the "exotic" aspects of the "feverish" land toward the simple, primary experiences of his childhood home itself, discovering the classic even in the very stronghold of the romantic. He is himself that summer Dionysus which his mother loved and for whom she gave her life; he is the life springing from death, and though he must himself die, his death will give birth to a new world. There is a curious resemblance between the young poet and Rousseau of the Conclusion. Like the English poet, "an undefinable taint of death had clung always about him," says Pater, "and now in early manhood he believed himself smitten by mortal disease." Rousseau's decision to dedicate himself to art was, according to Pater, "the awakening in him of the literary sense" (R, 238). So, too, with the young poet: the discovery of the centripetal world, his dedication to Apollo, and his creation of poetry represent an "awakening" not only in himself, but ultimately in the whole sphere of human affairs. Certainly the idea of a Dionysian death as the climax of the portrait must have been contemplated by Pater; but perhaps, as he told Sharp concerning "The Child in the House," it would have required too much reworking to fit it into the usual pattern of the imaginary portrait.35

In Marius, Pater returns to a more historical subject matter which resembles, in a sense, the material he had dealt with in The Renaissance. But between Pater's handling of Marius and, for example, his handling of Pico della Mirandola, there is a difference. The advance in understanding achieved in these two early imaginary portraits is carried over into the novel. The historical life of Pico had rough edges and did not fit easily into a precon-

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35 Evans, Letters of Pater, No. 72 (MS: Warden of All Souls College, Oxford), to John Sharp, May 23, 1887.
ceived fictional pattern of denouement. Few historical lives do. (It was only an accident, for example, that Winckelmann should have been so dramatically strangled.) Pater needed more freedom, both with respect to external events and also inner motives. In Marius, when speaking of the old masters of the Cyrenaic philosophy, Pater says that some among them realized "a vision, almost 'beatific,' of ideal personalities in life and art" (ME, II, 22). In the fiction which follows, Pater attempts to portray such "ideal personalities," who unite within themselves antithetical elements. And because he is free to create as he wills, he achieves a portrayal of this ideal state of synthesis more fully in his imaginary portraits than he does in his strictly critical or semi-autobiographical writings.
MARIUS THE EPICUREAN (1885)

It has been suggested that the need to excise the offending Conclusion from the second edition of *The Renaissance* (1877) may have prompted Pater to compose “A Child in the House” and “An English Poet.” Since *Marius the Epicurean* takes over from the early portraits their original function as a defense, we can date the inception of *Marius* at about the time when Pater abandoned work on “An English Poet”—in the fall of 1878—and we can assume that from this time on Pater devoted most of his energies to the creation of his novel.¹ Perhaps as he sat down to write his “apology,” Pater felt himself a little like Socrates of old, who was caught between the radical Sophists and “the good old men of Athens” (*PP*, 89), for Pater also was accused by the conservative forces of undermining with a new morality those old values which he in fact respected. His words in the footnote to the restored Conclusion, those about not wishing to “mislead” the young men, seem a conscious echo of the charge brought against Socrates. Perhaps this is why in *Plato* he was so drawn to Socrates’ attempt to steer a middle course between the pursuit of “experience” and the observance of traditional morality. At any rate, Pater structures his novel in terms of this dialectic and dramatizes it with archetypal myth.

Only among recent writers—Osborn, Hafley, Sudrann,

¹ For a résumé of possible sources for *Marius*, see Louise M. Rosenblatt’s “The Genesis of *Marius the Epicurean*,” *Comparative Literature*, XIV (Summer, 1962), 242–60. Rosenblatt should perhaps have also noted that *Marius* seems to belong to a sort of sub-genre of the nineteenth century not unrelated to the Oxford Movement and “tractarianism”: the novel of the primitive church written by an ecclesiastically minded author—among them, Kingsley’s *Hypatia* (1853), Wiseman’s *Fabiola* (1854), and Newman’s *Callista* (1856). Of course, *Marius* came some thirty years later, but there can be no doubt that, for example, Newman’s rather public religious struggle was an important intellectual stimulus for the novel. Verbal echoes from the writings of Newman are easily found; phrases such as “undeniable possibilities,” “sense of economy,” “gain and loss,” and many others create a Newmannesque atmosphere.
Inman—has *Marius* found critics willing to champion its structural coherence.\(^2\) Henry James, for example, grumbled to a friend that the novel fell apart in the middle—"that the first volume of *Marius* was given over to paganism, and a large part of the second to an equal admiration of Christianity, and that it was not possible to admire opposites equally."\(^3\) And, of course, T. S. Eliot’s famous critique is the most brutal of all. Having cast doubts on Pater’s mental ability, Eliot then proceeds to call *Marius* "incoherent; its method is a number of fresh starts; its contents is a hodge-podge of the learning of the classical don, the impressions of the sensitive holiday visitor to Italy, and a prolonged flirtation with the liturgy."\(^4\) Surely objections such as those of James and Eliot can be met simply by pointing to the autobiographical element in the novel; that is, its unity of mental development and its reflection of the nineteenth-century *Zeitgeist*. Yet the ultimate unity of the novel does not lie in any such ideological structure—in its religious autobiography (Osborn) or in the process of “learning to hope” (Hafley) or in the interaction of the metaphors of the rose, the heavenly city, and the face of death (Sudrann) or in “the consistency of Marius’s fundamental character” (Inman). All such unities tend more to reflect a static and theoretical structure than a dramatic one. The drama, the real action of the novel, is a duplication of the allegorical and mythical pattern of the quest of Psyche for Cupid, a pattern reflected in Marius’ quest for the God of Love. Just as Cupid and Psyche are ultimately united on Olympus, so the Christian community as a reflection of the Celestial City foreshadows the eventual unification of the soul with Christ. If Lubbock is right in saying that in *Marius* Pater dispensed with drama as thoroughly as it ever occurred to any novelist to dispense with it, we shall have to qualify his statement by noting that Marius’ quest for Love and his discovery of the Christian community carries with it all the drama of a mythic re-enactment.

**BOOK I**

The young Marius, like Pater’s English poet, is a dreamer. His mind nesting upon the still waters of the soul, creating a world


\(^4\) *Selected Essays,* p. 391.
in which everything is pervaded by a ubiquitous spirituality. "A dream in winter time, when the nights are longest"—this is the motto for Marius, taken from the seventeenth paragraph of Lucian’s Dream. The first book of the novel, then, begins with the dreams of the winter Dionysus at Marius’ childhood home of White-nights, a home which recalls in some of its aspects the world of the English poet who, like Marius, was burdened with a weary weight of visions. Marius’ removal from White-nights to the ancient city of Pisa at the death of his mother corresponds roughly to the English poet’s trip southward. Pisa is the world of the summer Dionysus, and this section of the first book stands in sharp contrast to the opening pages devoted to White-nights. In each of these two contrasting sections in Book I, Pater has carefully placed a vision of the ideal Apollonian world in the form of the Temple of Aesculapius and the story of Cupid and Psyche. However, this Apollonian ideal which harmonizes the winter and summer, the spiritual and the material, has as yet no actual embodiment, no tangible incarnation. The purpose of the succeeding books is to portray the progress of Marius’ search for the concrete representation of the Apollonian ideal. One may say that Book I provides Marius with the two basic alternatives of matter and spirit. These alternatives will be explored in the following books in terms of the philosophies of Epicureanism and Stoicism, neither of which Marius will find satisfactory because neither transcends the narrow confines of Dionysus’ solipsism.

Until the death of Marius’ close friend Flavian, an event which ends the first book and the period of Marius’ youth, the two worlds of White-nights and Pisa, of winter and summer, existed side by side in Marius’ life in a kind of uneasy Roman equivalent to Florian Deleal’s early environment. Certainly the heritage of White-nights remained a pervasive influence throughout Marius’ life, even when he most eagerly plunged himself into the material world. The name White-nights itself should mean, says Pater, "nights not of quite blank forgetfulness, but passed in continuous dreaming, only half veiled by sleep" (ME, I, 14). In Appreciations, Pater had written of Rossetti that the “dream-land . . . is to him, in no mere fancy or figure of speech, a real country, a veritable expansion of, or addition to, our waking life” (Ap, 214). Though actual enough, the world of reverie is a sort of unreal world as well, for dreams, so Pater says in Marius as he quotes “a quaint German mystic,” are like things which are white—“the doubles, or seconds, of real things, and themselves but half-real, half-material” (ME, I, 13). This unreality of sleep and dreams is, for
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Pater, a symbol for our veil of mortality. In this life we are asleep, and only when we awaken from sleep do we break through the immediate experience of the senses to God. Our dreams are, so to speak, those memories of that earlier state of existence celebrated by Wordsworth and Vaughan. This white unreality of our mortal dreams is a characteristic of Dionysus himself, whose "dazzling whiteness" (GS, 40) in winter contrasts with his summer tan. The white Dionysus, "son or brother" (GS, 45) of Persephone, has much in common with the goddess of death, whose domain is like that of the dreaming world of White-nights: she holds in her hand "the poppy, emblem of sleep and death by its narcotic juices, of life and resurrection by its innumerable seeds, of the dreams, therefore, that may intervene between falling asleep and waking" (GS, 148-49).

In this twilight world of mortality, Marius, the boy-priest, early endowed with "a spontaneous force of religious veneration" (ME, I, 5), acts out the rituals of the religion of his heritage, taking a leading role in the festival of the private Ambarvalia, with its processional of the images of Demeter, Dionysus, and the mysterious Dea Dia. But, of course, the gloomy shadows of the violent Dionysian death lie at the center of the festival. Marius had "a certain pity at the bottom of his heart, and almost on his lips, for the sacrificial victims and their looks of terror, rising almost to disgust at the central act of the sacrifice itself, a piece of everyday butcher's work" (ME, I, 9). The slaughter of the animals raises the specter of death generally. Is death in this supposedly religious context a breaking through the veil of mortality into the light of immortality? Will those dreams or half-recollections of the world beyond be proved real? The assurance of that reality is what Marius senses his religion lacks, and the real significance of his trip to the Aesculapian shrine lies in the fact that there he discovers that the visible counterpart, the proof, of the reality of his dreams can be found in this life.

The terror of the winter Dionysus is far removed from the shrine of Aesculapius, "that mild and philanthropic son of Apollo" (ME, I, 28). In the crystal sunlight and clarity of its air, a kind of immortal youthfulness seems to pervade everything, and the doctrine of the Apollonian mean, here taught, creates that pure and transparent nature of which Pater had written in his essay "Diaphaneitè"—the soul "'made perfect by the love of visible beauty'" (ME, I, 32). During a nighttime talk with one of the priests, Marius notes that the priest's expression of "perfect temperance had in it a fascinating power—the merely negative element
of purity, the mere freedom from taint or flaw, in exercise as a positive influence" (*ME*, I, 33–34). Here also at the Temple of Aesculapius Marius’ original “ideal of home” (*ME*, I, 22), of the close-knit religious community experienced in the family worship of Numa, becomes expanded to something very like the New Jerusalem revealed to John on Patmos. Marius is told by the young priest in the night talk that “a diligent promotion of the capacity of the eye” (*ME*, I, 32) may issue in “the possibility of some vision, as of a new city coming down ‘like a bride out of heaven,’ a vision still indeed, it might seem, a long way off, but to be granted perhaps one day to the eyes thus trained” (*ME*, I, 32). It is an ideal, typically centripetal, of the unity of all men in an eternal order which transcends the narrow world of the single soul. Already at the temple there is an attempt to anticipate that vision when, on his last morning there, Marius looks through a hidden opening:

What he saw was like the vision of a new world, by the opening of some unsuspected window in a familiar dwelling-place. . . . It might have seemed the very presentment of a land of hope, its hollows brimful of a shadow of blue flowers; and lo! on the one level space of the horizon, in a long dark line, were towers and a dome: and that was Pisa.—Or Rome, was it? (*ME*, I, 40)

Marius discovers that the dwelling place of this world, so familiar and seemingly unenchanted, may afford a vision to the questing soul, but its indeterminacy—Pisa or Rome?—is indicative of the distance he must still cover before that vision is clearly perceived. Marius goes to Pisa, but it is not the new city. Afterwards, he goes to Rome; that, too, is not it. As yet, the young lad does not suspect how far he must go, but the beginning of his journey is already at hand.

The death of Marius’ mother closes the first part of Book I and coincides with his removal as a “tall schoolboy” (*ME*, I, 44) to the old town of Pisa, where he seems to find “unlimited self-expansion in a world of various sunshine” (*ME*, I, 44), the sunshine of the summer Dionysus. Pater, in his Conclusion to *The Renaissance*, offers advice which can be considered applicable to young men in Pisa, and Marius, in effect, accepts this advice as he attempts to delve into the reality at the heart of the instant: “As in that gray monastic tranquility of the villa, inward voices from the reality of unseen things had come to him abundantly; so here . . . it was the reality, the tyrannous reality, of things visible that was borne in upon him” (*ME*, I, 47). Unlike his childhood world, this life was not oriented to the past, but to the present,
and its ideal of modernity perhaps clashed a little with the heritage of White-nights:

While the pursuit of an ideal like this demanded entire liberty of heart and brain, that old, staid, conservative religion of his childhood certainly had its being in a world of somewhat narrow restrictions. But then, the one was absolutely real, with nothing less than the reality of seeing and hearing—the other, how vague, shadowy, problematical! Could its so limited probabilities be worth taking into account in any practical question as to the rejecting or receiving of what was indeed so real, and, on the face of it, so desirable? (ME, I, 48–49)

Just as Pisa is the autobiographical equivalent of Canterbury, so young Pater’s goal in life resembled that of Marius, for “the fame he conceived for himself at this time was . . . that of a poet” (ME, I, 47).

As a schoolboy, Marius looked for the incarnation of his dreams in the form of his friend Flavian. To Marius, Flavian—older, wiser, handsomer—was a kind of Apollo. Almost literally, Flavian, whose name probably derives from flavus, “golden-yellow,” seems the golden god: “He was like a carved figure in motion, thought Marius, but with that indescribable gleam upon it which the words of Homer actually suggested, as perceptible on the visible forms of the gods” (ME, I, 50). But Flavian, for all his attractiveness, is not Apollo; he is only the summer Dionysus, who soon displays his sinister, wintry side. Marius’ hero, together with his magnum opus, the Pervigilium Veneris, are in some undefined and obscure way involved in an excess of love quite the opposite of the Apollonian mean:

How often, afterwards, did evil things present themselves in malign association with the memory of that beautiful head, and with a kind of borrowed sanction and charm in its natural grace! To Marius, at a later time, he counted for as it were an epitome of the whole pagan world, the depth of its corruption, and its perfection of form. (ME, I, 53)

Flavian seems almost a kind of precursor of the characters in Wilde’s Dorian Grey, and Pater seems to be implying that the moral problem at the heart of the aestheticism of the fin-de-siècle rebels was also to be found in the rather sinister Epicureanism of Flavian. One could say of Flavian, as Pater so characteristically remarked apropos of Lord Henry Wotton, that “he has too much of a not very really refined world in and about him” (UE, 128). Flavian, like Wilde’s characters, has a “doppelgänger” (UE, 131):
his two sides remain forever unreconciled, beautiful, yet sinister. Because of his experience at the Temple of Aesculapius, Marius' ideal of beauty, rooted in the golden mean, "made him revolt with unaltering instinct from the bare thought of an excess in sleep, or diet, or even in matters of taste, still more from any excess of a coarser kind" (ME, I, 34) and came to be an important factor in counteracting "the less desirable or hazardous tendencies of some phases of thought, through which he was to pass" (ME, I, 41).

Marius' discovery of the tale of Cupid and Psyche in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* strongly influenced his desire for an Apollonian beauty without taint or flaw. Pater makes it perfectly clear that this story from the Golden Book of Apuleius is closely interwoven with the history of Marius' mental development, and its appearance in the novel forms no mere digression, as Benson maintained. Undoubtedly, the translation has a certain amount of independent interest—to teachers of Latin, at any rate—but its real value lies in its relation to the main theme of the novel. Although two recent articles by Brzenk and Turner have discussed Pater's translation of this story, the most helpful consideration of the legend is that of James Hafley, who writes:

That awful moment at which Cupid awakes as the oil from Psyche's lamp falls upon his shoulder, at which her comforting sense of a shadowy ideal is transformed by her own curiosity to that of an invaluable but vanished reality, is in Marius's life the moment at which his apparently secure idealism becomes vanquished by experience and leaves him with only a longing for the "real ideal" he has glimpsed before its flight.

Hafley then states that Marius' eventual "discovery of Cornelius and his meaning is Cupid's triumphant return." This is perhaps too simple, as we shall see, but Hafley's realization that the plight of Psyche parallels Marius' quest to harmonize subject and object in the ideal world of the concrete universal is of considerable importance.

Perhaps the best clue to the correct interpretation of the story of Cupid and Psyche is furnished by Pater when he tells us that "you might take it, if you chose, for an allegory" (ME, I, 61). As an allegory, the tale of Cupid and Psyche supplies the key to the novel, for it pinpoints the quest of Marius for the God of

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5 Benson, *Pater*, p. 92.
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Love. Pater knew that the story was, like the legend of the Phoenix, one of the few myths accepted by the early Christians. During his trip to Rome in 1882, he could hardly escape noting the allegorical use to which the early Christians put this legend. But he probably was acquainted with the Christian allegorizing of Cupid and Psyche long before he saw it depicted on the sarcophagi and catacomb frescoes of Rome. From Martianus Capella in the fifth century to Boccaccio in the fifteenth, the allegorical interpretations grew increasingly more explicit, more familiar. The story of Cupid and Psyche is the allegory of the mortal soul freed from the grip of death through the power of its "love of Love" (ME, I, 75). Christ became Cupid, and the marriage of Psyche to Cupid brings to mind the well-known image of Christ as the bridegroom of "the living soul" (ME, I, 65) or of the community of Christian souls, the Church (ME, II, 97, 111). Pater is at pains to strengthen this allegorical quality of the old legend by the elimination of numerous extraneous personifications and the suppression of all the coarse and earthy humor of the original version. The focus is further sharpened by an elevation of the syntax and diction so that the language of the translation seems more appropriate to the King James Version of the Bible than to the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius.

Not only does the Cupid-Psyche legend describe allegorically Marius' movement toward Christianity, but also the legend has its mythical Dionysian overtones, which support and amplify its Christian meaning. In the *Greek Studies*, Pater writes:

Semele, an old Greek word, as it seems, for the surface of the earth, the daughter of Cadmus, beloved by Zeus, desires to see her lover

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8 Elizabeth Haight, in *Apuleius and his Influence* (New York, 1927), pp. 169-70, tells of the sarcophagi in Christian cemeteries and decorative paintings and mosaics in churches and catacombs in which the legend of Cupid and Psyche appears.

9 While Boccaccio's interpretation of the myth is its full-blown Renaissance form, it could, if simplified, have supplied Pater with something like the meaning which the legend must have had for the early Christians. The interested reader can find the Cupid-Psyche legend in the *Genealogia Deorum*, pp. 255-61 of Vol. CC of the *Scrittori D'Italia* series edited by V. Romano (Bari, 1951). A convenient English summary of the allegorical "kernal" can be found in D. C. Allen's *Image and Meaning* (Baltimore, 1960), pp. 28-29.

10 E. O. James in *The Cult of the Mother Goddess* (London, 1959), pp. 192ff and p. 281, nn. 6, 7, has collected a number of traditional references to Christ as the bridegroom of the Church Universal and of the individual soul within the church. One feels that perhaps the influence of the syncretic mythographers upon Pater can here be seen. "The gods of Greek mythology," he says—and he might also have added the figures of Christian religion to this—"overlap each other; they are confused or connected with each other, lightly or deeply, as the case may be, and sometimes have their doubles" (GS, p. 100).
in the glory with which he is seen by the immortal Hera. He appears to her in lightning. But the mortal may not behold him and live. Semele gives premature birth to the child Dionysus; whom to preserve it from the jealousy of Hera, Zeus hides in a part of his thigh, the child returning into the loins of its father, whence in due time it is born again. (GS, 24)

Semele’s story, then, is a kind of allegory, says Pater; it turns on the idea of

the love of the immortal for the mortal, the presumption of the daughter of man who desires to see the divine form as it is; on the fact that not without loss of sight, or life itself, can man look upon it. The travail of nature has been transformed into the pangs of the human mother; and the poet dwells much on the pathetic incident of death in childbirth, making Dionysus, as Callimachus calls him, a seven months’ child, cast out among its enemies, motherless. (GS, 24-25)

Semele incarnates “the mystical body of the earth” (GS, 25), and, united with Zeus, she represents Demeter as the goddess of fertility and life. But at the withdrawal of the immortal Zeus, part of her, like Persephone, dies; and part of her, in the form of her son Dionysus, remains alive and questing like the sterile and sorrowing Demeter, whose face is veiled, whose godhead is in eclipse, as she wanders over the earth in search of Persephone. The questing Demeter and the dead Persephone—these two aspects of Semele are the embodiment of her mortality; they constitute that state which is best described as life-in-death—the condition of the soul which has lost the light of the divine form, which is cast out into the world of sense, homeless and a wanderer in a cold and hostile environment.

Semele’s state of life-in-death corresponds precisely to that of Psyche and Marius, both of whom are searching for the fulfillment of those vague recollections of an immortal world beyond. The guarantee of the reality of that world is to be found in the sensuous realm, for the discovery of the visible counterpart of God is an anticipation of that final awakening. Often in Pater’s fiction the sensuous vestment of the Absolute is represented in art. Here in the novel it is that “city” beyond Pisa, beyond Rome, already anticipated by the vision in the Aesculapian shrine. The relationship between the individual and this visible expression of the Logos is a very close one, for the soul, in its discovery of the divine form, is the representative of the larger community, even as the community is visible proof to the souls outside of the victory which
the souls inside have won. Pater often presents the role of the soul as that of priest-attendant and masculine counterpart to this larger society. Because his novel is explicitly a Christian allegory, it is possible to see Marius’ name as the masculine form of Mary, the sorrowing and questing Demeter of the Middle Ages. Mary as the virgin Church, Marius as the virgin soul—both alike are searching for the supreme Lover.

For Marius, then, the legend of Cupid and Psyche becomes a parable of his own human situation, of his incarceration in the narrow prison of mortality, of his need to find some larger world which would answer to those dreams of a city of immortal Love. Psyche’s story, as it formed itself in his memory, “with an expression changed in some ways from the original,” served, says Pater, “to combine many lines of meditation, already familiar to Marius, into the ideal of a perfect imaginative love, centered upon a type of beauty entirely flawless and clean—an ideal which never wholly faded from his thoughts” (ME, I, 92). It is quite appropriate that Flavian should be Marius’ companion in the “truant reading” (ME, I, 54) of Apuleius, for Flavian served as the foil for the kind of love which Marius saw in the Cupid-Psyche legend. Because Flavian’s was a love not oriented toward the immortal world of Cupid or Zeus, but was a purely sensuous love turned wintry, he dies struck down by the plague, as Lucius Verus later will die, perhaps also as the penalty of some “amorous appointment” (ME, II, 31). The delirium of Flavian’s plague-fever is the perfect issue of his Dionysian love, for, having no external or spiritual order as his goal, he suffers the fate of a mind imprisoned in its own subjectivity (his egotism and self-sufficiency are significant), making the fatal descent from dream to illusion to delirium and death. Unlike the eventual death of Marius, which is the climax of a steady ascent toward light and life, Flavian’s life ends in the horror of the soul’s extinction—“A Pagan End” (Chap. VII), both physical and spiritual.

Flavian’s pagan end, however, is only symptomatic of the universal delirium sweeping through the ancient world of the second century. Pater turns the plague in Marius into an almost medieval personification of the subjective spirit: “It was by dishonour done to Apollo himself, said popular rumour—to Apollo, the old titular divinity of pestilence, that the poisonous thing had come abroad” (ME, I, 111). Indeed, “the unsuspected foe” (ME, I, 111), “the enemy” (ME, I, 116), “the destroyer” (ME, I, 116) seems very much like the well-known dragon or snake which has vexed so many allegorical kingdoms—a sort of Chthonian image of
human mortality, with its grotesque and macabre romanticism. This snake of evil quite predictably haunts even the paradisaical garden of Marius’ childhood. There was, says Pater, “a certain vague fear of evil, constitutional in him. . . . His religion, that old Italian religion, in contrast with the really light-hearted religion of Greece, had its deep undercurrent of gloom, its sad, haunting imageries, not exclusively confined to the walls of Etruscan tombs” (ME, I, 22–23). Indeed, the snake becomes even physically present as the image “of some unexplored evil, ever dogging his footsteps” when one day, as he walked along a “narrow road”—the narrowness suggesting the prison-like restriction of subjectivity—Marius had seen the snakes breeding, and ever afterwards avoided that place and its ugly associations, for there was something in the incident which made food distasteful and his sleep uneasy for many days afterwards. . . . There was humanity, dusty and sordid and as if far gone in corruption, in the sluggish coil, as it awoke suddenly into one metallic spring of pure enmity against him. (ME, I, 23–24)

After the death of Flavian, Marius begins his agonizing pilgrimage toward new light. He resembles the young Florian Deleal, whose soul finds itself caught like the bird, setting out on his journey in an agony of homesickness. The real seems on every hand tainted with corruption; the ideal seems unreal. With Flavian at Pisa, Marius has eaten of “The Tree of Knowledge,” as the chapter heading expresses it. His eyes have been opened, and he has been cast out into the storm and stress of a hostile world. He has become, seemingly, “a materialist” (ME, I, 125). Like Psyche of the allegorical tradition, he has been plunged into sensuous nature, a fallen creature in a fallen creation. The world is out of joint, sick unto death, its plague-wrecked frame evidence of its decay. And as Marius begins his quest and moves toward Rome, the heart of the empire, the evidences of the plague become increasingly prominent.

BOOK II

In the second book Marius explores the centrifugal world of Epicureanism and the centripetal world of its opposite, Stoicism. He also meets Cornelius, who heralds the higher Christian synthesis which Marius will eventually reach. Just as Flavian in the last book was the “spiritual form” of hedonism, so Cornelius in this book is the epitome of Christianity (ME, I, 233–34). The young Marius, setting out on the quest of life, has two paths open to him which correspond to these two figures: to awaken from sleep to
life or to slip back through sleep to death. Although the whole of the novel is about his choice of the former, in his rejection of Flavian, Marius refuses to abandon the material world. Somehow it must be reconciled with the spiritual. So here, at the beginning of Book II, Marius begins to build his philosophy by going back beyond Epicurus and Lucretius to the master of both, Heraclitus of Ionia, whose philosophy of the perpetual flux found its practical application in the precepts of Aristippus of Cyrene. In Pater's description of Marius' reaction to the thought of Heraclitus and Aristippus, we hear echoes of the Conclusion to The Renaissance:

Conceded that what is secure in our existence is but the sharp apex of the present moment between two hypothetical eternities, and all that is real in our experience but a series of fleeting impressions:—so Marius continued the sceptical argument he had condensed, as the matter to hold by, from his various philosophical reading:—given, that we are never to get beyond the walls of the closely shut cell of one's own personality; that the ideas we are somehow impelled to form of an outer world, and of other minds akin to our own, are, it may be, but a day-dream, and the thought of any world beyond, a day-dream perhaps idler still: then, he, at least, in whom those fleeting impressions—faces, voices, material sunshine—were very real and imperious, might well set himself to the consideration, how such actual moments as they passed might be made to yield their utmost, by the most dexterous training of capacity. (ME, I, 146)

This beginning of Marius' journey through the philosophies of the ancient world is paralleled by the beginning of his travels to Rome, and the reader cannot help feeling that the latter bears a certain metaphoric relation to the former: "The motion of the journey was bringing his thoughts to systematic form .... His philosophic scheme was but the reflection of the data of sense, and chiefly of sight, a reduction to the abstract, of the brilliant road he travelled on, through the sunshine" (ME, I, 164–65). In Plato, Pater had used the metaphor of the journey to describe

11 Elsewhere Pater calls the "sharp apex" the "little point of the present moment . . . between a past which has just ceased to be and future which may never come" (ME, I, 139). Pater is careful to show, however, that this intense consciousness of the present moment does not issue in hedonism: "Not pleasure, but fulness of life, and 'insight' as conducting to that fulness—energy, variety, and choice experience, including noble pain and sorrow even, loves such as those in the exquisite old story of Apuleius, sincere and strenuous forms of the moral life, such as Seneca and Epictetus—whatever form of human life, in short, might be heroic, impassioned, ideal: from these the 'new Cyrenaicism' of Marius took its criterion of values" (ME, I, 151–52).
the dialectic method of Socrates, so like this dialectic between the One and the Many in Marius’ thought:

It was like a journey . . . to a mountain’s top . . . From this or that point, some insignificant peak presented itself as the mountain’s veritable crest: inexperience would have sworn to the truth of a wholly illusive perspective, as the next turn in the journey assured one. It is only upon the final step, with free view at last on every side, uniting together and justifying all those various, successive, partial apprehensions of the difficult way—only on the summit, comes the intuitive comprehension of what the true form of the mountain really is. (PP, 180)

So Marius, on the seventh day of his journey to Rome, is climbing a winding mountain road. Just when his thoughts have reached their most refined stage, suddenly a heavy mass of falling rock plunges down the steep slope so close behind him that, like Achilles, “he felt the touch upon his heel” (ME, I, 166). This startling revelation of the proximity of death quite shakes Marius’ fragile little scheme of Epicureanism, which would scarcely have been able to explain the meaningfulness of being crushed to extinction under several tons of stone: “A sudden suspicion of hatred against him, of the nearness of ‘enemies,’ seemed all at once to alter the visible form of things. . . . His elaborate philosophy had not put beneath his feet the terror of mere bodily evil; much less of ‘inexorable fate, and the noise of greedy Acheron’” (ME, I, 166).

Precisely when Marius comes to realize that the Epicurean system cannot accommodate the fact of pain and death, he meets Cornelius of the Twelfth Legion. There at an inn at the top of the mountain—Marius goes “down the steep street” (ME, I, 167) the next day—his spirits are partially restored by the Spartan purity of the surroundings and the “reviving edge or freshness” (ME, I, 166) of the wine, so like the “unsweetened” (PP, 222) wine of the Lacedaemonians. “It was just then,” says Pater, “that he heard the voice of one, newly arrived at the inn, making his way to the upper floor—a youthful voice, with a reassuring clearness of note, which completed his cure” (ME, I, 167). Marius naturally does not understand at this time that it is Christianity which provides the answer to evil and death, but he nevertheless strikes up an acquaintance with Cornelius, puzzling over his irrepressible blitheness and noting that he seems to belong to a group even more exclusive than the imperial guard. The following day the two enter a goldsmith’s shop, and Marius marvels at the way in which pure matter has been given so clever a form. It is another detail which, like the asceticism of the inn and the military bearing
of Cornelius, attests to the Apollonian principle of order that informs all creation and is the goal toward which Marius’ quest is bent.

On the way toward Rome, the pair stops at the home of Cornelius’ friend, who is absent, and in a scene charged with symbolism, Cornelius’ Christian character is defined:

The great room of the villa, to which they were admitted, had lain long untouched; and the dust rose, as they entered, into the slanting bars of sunlight, that fell through the half-closed shutters. It was here, to while away the time, that Cornelius bethought himself of displaying to his new friend the various articles and ornaments of his knightly array—the breastplate, the sandals and cuirass, lacing them on, one by one, with the assistance of Marius, and finally the great golden bracelet on the right arm, conferred on him by his general for an act of valour. And as he gleamed there, amid that odd interchange of light and shade, with the staff of a silken standard firm in his hand, Marius felt as if he were face to face, for the first time, with some new knighthood or chivalry, just then coming into the world. (ME, I, 170)

Cornelius standing there is, says Edward Thomas, “a study from a picture, not from life,” and it reminds him of a passage in Pater’s “Giorgione” essay in The Renaissance, “of Giorgione’s ‘warrior saint, Liberale,’ and the study for it ‘with the delicately gleaming silver-grey armour’ in our National Gallery, which Pater admired.”12 We, however, are perhaps even more strongly reminded by the plague-emptied villa of Pater’s favorite metaphor of the world as a house. The world, like the house, has grown dusty and is emptied by plague. But at its center stands Cornelius. As Marius eventually comes to realize, “new hope had sprung up in the world of which he, Cornelius, was a depositary, which he was to bear onward in it” (ME, II, 209).

As Cornelius dons his armor piece by piece, he becomes the living incarnation of Paul’s warrior against “the wiles of the devil”:

Put on the whole armour of God . . . that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of

12 Walter Pater (New York, 1913), p. 15. The scene reminds me of Nicholas Wiseman’s portrayal of St. Sebastian, who was both soldier and Christian. Wiseman describes a room illuminated only “by an opening in the roof; and Sebastian, anxious to be seen by all, stood in the ray which now darted through it, strong and brilliant where it beat, but leaving the rest of the apartment almost dark. It broke against the gold and jewels of his rich tribune’s armour, and, as he moved, scattered itself in sparks of brilliant hues into the darkest recesses of that gloom; while it beamed with serene steadiness upon his uncovered head.” Fabiola (New York, n. d.), pp. 50–51.
righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Eph. 6:11-17)

“Every object of his knightly array,” Marius later reflected, “had seemed to be but sign or symbol of some other thing far beyond it” (ME, I, 233). Cornelius’ name, of course, derives from another early Christian warrior—the centurion Cornelius who, we are told in Acts 10, was baptized with all his house by Peter. Cornelius stands there, then, before Marius as a representative of a “new knighthood” that battles, in Paul’s words, “not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). Cornelius is the answer to Marius’ old, vague fear of some shadowy adversary in the dark. He will restore light to the darkened heart of the Roman Empire. Significantly, as Marius approached Rome, “the highest light upon the mausoleum of Hadrian was quite gone out, and it was dark, before they reached the Flaminian Gate” (ME, I, 170).

Marius arrives in Rome, “‘The Most Religious City in the World,’” only to find that its welter of competing religions is mere gross superstition and that Aurelius patronized them all like a shrewd politician. Aurelius, however, has his own “religion,” too, and it is to Stoicism that Marius is now exposed. Shortly after his arrival, Marius listens to a discourse by Aurelius, the ideas and images of which Pater derived directly from the Meditations themselves, but selected to drive home Aurelius’ awareness of the shortness of life, the closeness of death, and the vanity of existence. Despair and renunciation are, seemingly, more evident in Aurelius’ discourse as presented here than they actually are in the Meditations, for Pater has not included the more positive passages concerned with moral conduct. But Stoicism, despite all the extra awareness with which Pater endows it, fails as completely as did Epicureanism in finding significance in suffering and death. The Emperor’s lecture offers only the cold mortality of the winter god: “the discourse ended almost in darkness, the evening having set in somewhat suddenly, with a heavy fall of snow” (ME, I, 211). And later, after the events in the amphitheater, Marius concludes that the bare fact that the wise Emperor could complacently sit through the “Manly Amusement” of the public spectacle of suffering animals certainly seemed “to mark Aurelius as his inferior now and for ever on the question of righteousness. . . .

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