Transfigured World

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Many years later, in writing Marius the Epicurean, Pater attempted to explain more fully the thoughts suggested by his “Conclusion.” At that point he wrote into Marius’s character the “peculiar strength” of having “apprehended,” from the very beginning of his career, the possible consequences of “what is termed ‘the subjectivity of knowledge’”:

That is a consideration, indeed, which lies as an element of weakness, like some admitted fault or flaw, at the very foundation of every philosophical account of the universe; which confronts all philosophies at their starting, but with which none have really dealt conclusively, some perhaps not quite sincerely; which those who are not philosophers dissipate by “common,” but unphilosophical, sense, or by religious faith. The peculiar strength of Marius was, to have apprehended this weakness on the threshold of human knowledge, in the whole range of its consequences. (ME I, 137–38)

Certainly Pater understood Marius’s “peculiar strength” to be his own. In this section of my argument I want to ask how Pater’s aestheticism functions as an “apprehension”—both as grasp, or understanding, and as arrest or halting—of this “weakness” and how it responds to this “weakness” with its own “peculiar strength.” If the problem of “objective” knowledge and the problem of the “subjectivity” of knowledge are, for Pater, correlative problems, then they must be solved correlative. That is exactly what his theory of aestheticism attempts to do. And the solution depends upon reconstituting, upon new grounds, a provisional objectivity.

Aestheticism, as the suffix implies, proposes itself as a systematic attitude of self-consciousness, a coherent stance or perspective on things, a method of attention. Whether the word accurately refers to a coherent “movement” or not, a coherent account of the method.

1. He makes this clear in the famous footnote restoring the “Conclusion” to the third edition of The Renaissance, after its suppression in the second. For the wording of that footnote, see below, Part Three, sec. 2.

was propounded in English both by Pater and by Wilde. I want to describe here, as succinctly as possible, how I see the method working. I continue to focus on the “Conclusion,” but I shall also begin to range freely among the other essays in which Pater specifically addresses himself to articulating theoretically the function and operation of “aesthetic criticism.”

The “Conclusion” presents an extraordinary texture of metaphorical doubleness and transformation. All the dominant figures of paragraphs one and two are reworked and transvalued in paragraphs three through five. This is one way the discourse of aestheticism answers modern thought in its own terms—figuratively—and the instability of figures here is evidence both of the problem and, dialectically, of its solution. In the “Conclusion,” the systematic transvaluation of figures enacts on the level of form what has been clearly announced on the level of theme: Pater’s commitment to engage with and assimilate “modern thought” and then to turn it against itself under the auspices of aestheticism. In his original introduction to the paragraphs that eventually became the “Conclusion,” Pater made it quite clear that the essay would discuss the response provided by “the desire of beauty” to the destructive tendencies of modern philosophy. The “desire of beauty,” Pater wrote, in another of his graphic characterizations of modern thought, is “quickened by the sense of death.” That phrase resonates with his description at the end of the “Conclusion” of the goal and end of the aesthetic attitude: a “quickened, multiplied consciousness.” The essay was framed, then, by phrases describing the aesthetic attitude as “quickened,” which Pater uses to mean both

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3. This passage is rarely seen, having never been reprinted after its 1868 publication in the Westminster Review, n.s. 34 [October 1868], 300–312, until Hill’s 1980 edition of the 1893 Renaissance. Following these words, the first two paragraphs of the “Conclusion” appear quite clearly as an exercise in the ironic ventriloquism of “modern thought”: “One characteristic of the pagan spirit these new poems have which is on their surface—the continual suggestion, pensive or passionate, of the shortness of life; this is contrasted with the bloom of the world and gives new seduction to it; the sense of death and the desire of beauty; the desire of beauty quickened by the sense of death. ‘Arrière!’ you say, ‘here in a tangible form we have the defect of all poetry like this. The modern world is in possession of truths; what but a passing smile can it have for a kind of poetry which, assuming artistic beauty of form to be an end in itself, passes by those truths and the living interests which are connected with them, to spend a thousand cares in telling once more these pagan fables as if it had but to choose between a more and a less beautiful shadow?’ It is a strange transition from the earthly paradise to the sad-coloured world of abstract philosophy. But let us accept the challenge; let us see what modern philosophy, when it is sincere, really does say about human life and the truth we can attain in it, and the relation of this to the desire of beauty” [Hill’s notes, p. 272]. David DeLaura explained this setting of the “Conclusion” in Hebrew and Hellenic in Victorian England: Newman, Arnold, and Pater [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969], pp. 224–25.
“enlivened” and “accelerated.” And indeed, quickness (as mental mobility) is closely associated with the sense of “life” promised by aestheticism, just as the rapidity of dissolution was associated in the first two paragraphs with “the sense of death.” If we follow a few of these doubling, transformative turns for a moment, we will be able to find out what Pater imagines in a “quickened” and “multiplied” consciousness.

The “moment,” for example, which in paragraphs one and two signified only impermanence, temporal fragmentation, and the vertiginous speed of decay, is transformed in paragraph three into the culmination of a temporal sequence in which beauty and, above all, form is finally achieved:

Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us,—for that moment only. (R, 236)

Here form is taken at its face value, not dismissed as illusion; it may be accurately perceived, but it is alive and changing every moment, so it must be pursued actively. In the terms of modern thought, experience was portrayed as drastically ephemeral, “all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it”; but Pater’s aestheticism proposes that we may in fact “apprehend” that moment if we will only speed up and “fasten” our attention:

How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy? (R, 236)

Recommended here is a mental “quickening” that would enable us to keep up with moments in their passage by “passing” along with them, so that our attention could coincide with their brief points of focus. But in addition to the rush to “be present”—in spatial and in temporal terms, to be “there” and to be in the present moment—Pater’s aestheticism also promises an active, prehensile and formative capacity to grasp and focus those moments as they pass:

While all melts under our feet, we may well grasp at any exquisite passion or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment. (R, 237)
Pater's exhortation here means not only that "we may as well" grasp but also that we may do it well—that is, skillfully—though through the years most readers have heard Pater resignedly making the best of a bad situation and have missed the overture promising skill and strength. This active, prehensile attention, which "may well grasp" and "fix on" moments before they pass, is one answer to the "passage and dissolution" of modern thought.

This notion of mental attachment in the moment allows for tropes of reduction and contraction to be revalued as concentration and stillness—the answering opposite of the rapid mental dissolution of paragraph two. The famous injunction "to burn always with that hard, gemlike flame" may be seen, then, as the culminating moment in Pater's transvaluation of "modern thought." This figure portrays mental life as intense, concentrated, and pointedly organized, not as fragmentary, chaotic, and dissolute. Because the discourse of modern science in paragraph one had represented the passage of our physical life as "flamelike," and the discourse of modern philosophy in paragraph two had described impressions that "burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them," this well-known Paterian figure might literally be said to fight fire with fire. Gerald Monsman, wittily recognizing Pater's gesture of responsiveness here, has remarked that the "hard, gemlike flame" evokes "the spirit of the Bunsen burner" no less than "the spirit of the waxen candle in a holy place."4

On the other hand, the aesthetic stance promises not only concentration in the "moment" but also—paradoxically—expansion as well. As a response to the brevity of life, "our one chance lies in expanding that interval"; in that attempt "we may well grasp" at anything "that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment." In this apparent contradiction, we may once again recognize Pater's attempt to imagine a response to the seemingly opposite problems of modern thought: fragmentation and solipsism. Tropes of contraction and intensity respond to the speed of the "stream" in its "passage," while tropes of expansion "set the spirit free" from its figurative imprisonment. The paradoxical joining of contraction and expansion is resolvable only in temporal terms, not in spatial terms, as experience—or as literature—not as philosophical systematics. The key here is mobility or movement, shifts in attention that temporalize what was before, invidiously, conceivable only as the spatial figure of the prison. The mind in the act of passing "swiftly from point to point" constantly moves "outside" or "beyond" its former frame of awareness. There is

a sense of freedom in this constant activation of a self-consciousness that is now no longer fixated, immobilized, and spatially "contained," but is constantly moving outside itself, away from one point in time and toward another moment and another point of view.

Pater is proposing a dynamic of attention in which mobility or "quickening" plays off against fixation, "grasp," or "apprehension." What we find here, in the terms of our earlier discussion, amounts to a transvaluation of the "passage" as an activity of the shaping mind, interrupted by moments that have themselves been redefined as moments of active focus. As a description of an epistemological strategy, we can begin now to hear in the word "passage" both its musical and its textual senses, for this mental strategy involves a regulated articulation of time's passage in which extended phrases of play are punctuated by moments of "apprehension" or fixity. Responding to the mental chaos engendered by "modern thought," Pater has created an order by distinguishing the "moments" from their correlative, ongoing, overarching "passages." This model has the double advantage of marking out brief points of stillness and yet also liberating those moments of focus from any sense of permanent immobilization because they are constantly taken up in an overarching mobility. Both "moment" and "passage" are endowed, in this model, with the conscious shaping power of aesthetic formation. And this transvaluation of "moments" and their "passages" (each in itself and in relation to the other) has consequences also for the figure of the "prisoner," as we have just seen. For now the spatial metaphorics of solipsism can be transformed in successive moments of ecstasy, as consciousness evades entrapment by continually moving outside or beyond its former point of view.

"To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life." The aesthetic "ecstasy" recommended here—in its literal sense of "standing apart from (oneself)"—is as important to "maintain" as the intensity and concentration of the "hard, gemlike flame." We may note in passing that this figure of ecstasy also involves an important metaphorical transvaluation of...

5. The articulation of this systematic relation marks Pater's revision of the Wordsworthian "spots of time." As all revisions are, his revision was both an advance (toward Joyce's "epiphanies" and Woolf's "moments of being") and a return (for this systematic relation is embodied throughout The Prelude). For a short history of the epiphanic moment, which unaccountably slights Pater's pivotal role, see M. H. Abrams, "Varieties of the Modern Moment," in his Natural Supernaturalism (New York: Norton, 1971), pp. 418–27; and Bloom, introduction to Pater's Selected Writings, pp. x–xv. Bloom argues that Pater "de-idealizes" the epiphany by effecting a return to Wordsworth after Ruskin's critique of the pathetic fallacy.
"modern thought": the essential self as "prisoner" has been succeeded and joined by an overseeing self, standing outside itself. Thus this passage is important because it offers us a way to see what Pater imagined as the "multiplied" consciousness. In one sense I am simply pointing to Pater's embrace of the figure of self-division familiar from romantic epistemology and poetics, but Pater turns it into an active, operating principle with new consequences. Not only does it represent to him a stance that can be actively chosen, taken and retaken moment by moment, rather than suffered, however passionately, but it also creates a space of difference, a figurative gap within consciousness across which an object may be perceivable again. This attempt to recreate a sense of objectivity places Pater directly in the mainstream of Victorian poetics, but his temporalizing of the ecstatic stance represents one of his crucial shifts toward the "modern."

What is at stake here is recreation of the sense of distance—a figuraiive and internal distance, to be sure, but one that will serve to reconstitute the grounds of a provisional objectivity. In his description of the aesthetically mobile, experimental state of mind, Pater describes a rhythm of identification and detachment that is, in effect, the mobilization of this internal distance. He cautions, for example, against any "interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves." But he also warns against static fixation on any one object: "what we have to do is to be forever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions"; we must "gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded," and then we must pass on, detaching from one object in order to be receptive to another. At first the object, in its state of "identification" with the self, is practically invisible. But through a process of discrimination it can be distinguished from the perceiving consciousness, and it is through these oscillations in internal distance, these successive acts of identification and detachment, that the object is "objectively" perceivable again. Thus aesthetic experience permits a revised form of knowledge. 6

6. This internal distance is related to but different from what is commonly called "aesthetic distance," which is usually taken to mean the adoption of an "aesthetic attitude" toward an object or event that might under most circumstances seem to demand a more practical response. See Edward Bullough's 1912 essay, "'Psychical Distance' as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle," in Marvin Levich, ed., *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Criticism* [New York: Random House, 1963], pp. 233–54. Though Bullough mentions the dynamics of internal "distance" or self-division, the essay concentrates on the "outward" consequences of that assumed distance, in the turning away from utilitarian or practical considerations. The initial example given [which incidentally recalls the aesthetics of Ruskin, Turner, and Whistler] involves appreciating a fog at sea for its beauty rather than exerting oneself actively in the pursuit of safety.
We may see in this procedure the embrace of further self-consciousness as a dialectical "remedy" for the ills of self-consciousness itself, and in this sense it is a typically romantic gesture—here especially interesting in its historical sequence after one strain of romantic (Carlylean) and Victorian (Arnoldian) anti-self-consciousness. But a better way to specify the literary-historical moment of this strategy would be to take Pater's own cues from the "Conclusion," where aesthetic "ecstasy" appears as an internalization of "objective" distance. Aestheticism, then, appears as an ironic transvaluation of the stance of scientific objectivity. Not only does the distance established by self-division serve, epistemologically speaking, to reconstitute any object as an "aesthetic object," but also historically speaking, Pater has blatantly presented his solution after a summary representation of the specifically contemporary ills it was designed to cure. In other words, he marks this particular "solution" explicitly as a return to rethink romantic self-consciousness and the role of art "after"—meaning "later in time," as well as "in imitation of" and "against or in reaction to"—the specific developments of contemporary science and philosophy. We can see the sense in which his version of "aesthetic distance" is offered as a figurative simulacrum structured on the model of scientific or "objective" distance, and his aesthetic method of representing knowledge of an object is modeled as a cross between the methods offered by skeptical scientific empiricism and epistemological philosophy.

This provisionally objective stance enables an object to be perceived once more, but the object has now been relativized, reconstituted in relation to the subject. According to this model, the "aesthetic object" is "aesthetic" largely because it is admittedly recreated within the perceiving consciousness. This explains the curious circularity of one tenet of aestheticism: that any object can become an "aesthetic object" when regarded in the "aesthetic attitude." We can see all this


8. D'Hangest also argues that Pater's aestheticism was "based . . . directly on the contemporary disenchantment; he derived it from that very disenchantment and presented it as a remedy, the only one possible, for the confusion in which scientific progress had plunged Victorian spirits" (quoted in Hill's notes, p. 451).

clearly in the following passage from the "Preface," where Pater's revision of Arnold figures prominently:

"To see the object as in itself it really is," has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever, and in aesthetic criticism the first step toward seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly. The objects with which aesthetic criticism deals, music, poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life, are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces; they possess, like natural elements, so many virtues or qualities. What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to me? What effect does it really produce on me? ... How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence? The answers to these questions are the original facts with which the aesthetic critic has to do; and, as in the study of light, of morals, of number, one must realize such primary data for oneself, or not at all. ... The aesthetic critic, then, regards all the objects with which he has to do, all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar and unique kind. This influence he feels, and wishes to explain, analyzing it, and reducing it to its elements. [R, viii–ix]

The sly subversion of Arnold here has frequently, and "justly," been noted as the very linchpin of Pater's revisionary, aesthetic procedure. However, his introductory claim to be following Arnold's dictum is not a simple pretense but a complex and dialectical gesture. For one thing, it is in ways like this that Pater signals his awareness of his own particular historical moment, the proximate source or immediate precursor of his position, and his own critical difference from that precursor. In turning away from the "aim" of objectivity, he does not turn away entirely, and he puts in its place not the subjectivism with which he is continually—and wrongly—associated, but a regulated

10. On the complex relation of Pater to Arnold, see David DeLaura, Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England. On Pater in relation to Arnold's "object," see Richard Ellmann, The Critic as Artist: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde [New York: Vintage, 1968], pp. xi–xii. "There are not two but three critical phases in the late nineteenth century, with Pater transitional between Arnold and Wilde. ... In 1864 ... Arnold declared ... that the 'aim of criticism is to see the object as in itself it really is.' ... Nine years later Walter Pater [pretended] ... to agree with Arnold's definition. ... But Pater's corollary subtly altered the original proposition; it shifted the center of attention from the rock of the object to the winds of the perceiver's sensations. ... Eighteen years later ... Wilde rounded on Arnold by asserting that the aim of criticism is to see the object as it really is not." Bloom [introduction to Pater's Selected Writings, p. viii] repeats this formulation in 1974 and adds: "Between Arnold's self-deception and Wilde's wit comes Pater's hesitant and skeptical emphasis upon a peculiar kind of vision."
process, a method of recreating a provisional objectivity through a
dynamic of internalization and discrimination within.

To answer the famous question “What is this . . . to me?” is not
Pater’s final “aim,” after all, but only the “first step” in a dialectical
model of self-consciousness, whose aim is finally to discriminate the
object again by analyzing its “influence” within the aesthetic critic:

The function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, analyze, and separate
from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair
personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty
or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under
what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has disen­
gaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element.
[R, ix–x]

Those “adjuncts” are partly in the object and partly in its context,
which is, in this frame of reference, the mind of the observer. The
“disengagement” of the object’s “power” or “virtue” is a second­
order process: first the aesthetic object must be distinguished from its
context in the self—through its “impression” and the way that press­
ing force shifts the internal shape of things—and only then can one
quality of the object be distinguished from another. And if the experi­
ences of its effects on the subject are the “original facts” or “primary
data,” then the knowledge of the object would be a “secondary” result
of this analysis. This process of “disengagement” is modeled here on
the process of chemical analysis, and that explicit analogy tacitly
assigns to the aesthetic critic the function of answering the “analysis”
of one science with a scientific analysis of his own.

This line of thought suggests that Pater’s particular “impression­
ism” should be more rigorously identified as a late romantic model of
the correlation of poetic imagination, science, and philosophy. Above
all, his impressionism must be understood in the plastic sense of
“impression,” for it represents a mode of renewed belief in the possibil­
ity of internalizing the experience of real objects from a real outside.\[1\]

\[1\] The best discussion of critical impressionism in its Swinburnean sense may
be found in Jerome J. McGann, *Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism* (Chicago:
University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 14–23. Pater’s style is deeply influenced by
Swinburne throughout, and he does of course engage in famous passages of this sort of
impressionism—for example, in his reading of the Mona Lisa. But as Wellek pointed
out, these passages are rare in Pater and are not representative of his method [René
Century* [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1965], p. 382].
seen in a related shift in the notion of "content." Though objects are still called "receptacles," they contain not "content" but the "powers or forces" of "influence." Impressed with an object from the outside, the critical consciousness then scrutinizes itself for the "influence" of the object on its own "modified" configurations. Pater will use a wide range of figures for this relation, especially figures of backgrounding and foregrounding, in which the object is figuratively cast into "relief" against the background of an experiencing or observant subject.

Aesthetic "objectivity" remains provisional. It is always to be regarded as figurative, not "given" by the object as data but "made" from the object's effect on the subject, not absolute but relative, and continually in the process of being reconstituted through this dialectic of identification and detachment. By asking the crucial question—"what does it mean to me?"—an aesthetic, analytical, observant aspect of the subject differentiates itself from the receptive, vulnerable, "impressed" aspect of the subject laboring in the toils of experience. At any given moment, in other words, the aesthetic stance of self-division stops the uncontrolled "flux" with a sense of fixated attention. And, as we have seen, this very activity also seems to reduce the experience of time to fragments, isolated moments "with no before and after," as T. S. Eliot would later complain. However, when this same stance is mobilized in time, figured in temporal terms, it gains an operational value of another kind, for the aesthetic method is not only a method of positioning attention in such a way as to recreate the object. In Pater the romantic "ecstasy" of self-division also establishes an instrumental position from which an organized and totalized sense of the experiencing consciousness may be restored. The aesthetic, "critical" division within the subject is mobilized in time so that it may precipitate the sense of continuous identity, the sense of "self."

How does this work? With each self-conscious move "outside" or "beyond" itself, the subject establishes a still point, a present moment from which the "passage" of experience will then be regarded in the past. In other words, the gap constructed between one part of the self and another is refigured as the space of difference between present and past. By the time it is discriminated from the subject and perceivable as an object again, the object has already been reconceived, reconstituted, remembered. Analogously, that aspect of the subject which had been "impressed" has now been reformed; the "impression" records a for-

mer state of being, now remembered. Mobilized in time, as one moment of self-division succeeds another, the aesthetic position becomes the federating power of memory. In the mobility of these recreative self-divisions, both object and self are correlativeiy reconstituted as distinct and whole—but in the past and as the past.

The interrelated dynamics of attention I have been discussing as the method of Pater’s aestheticism—both the dynamic of mobility and fixation (figured as the passage punctuated by moments of focus) and the dynamic of romantic self-division (figured as “impression” followed by detachment or “ecstasy”)—reconstitute the self in relation to its objects as a function of retrospection. It should be possible now to see the conservative force of Pater’s aestheticism—and to begin an approach to his historicism. When cast in temporal terms, these dynamics of attention project the “passages” of experience into an ideal, overarching continuity of attention, a personal identity in time. Put another way, Pater uses the language of temporality to recontain the self as a whole. Perhaps it is clear that these operations yield not the “substratum” Pater wanted to intuit from Kant, but rather a decentered, “outer” layer of awareness always in the process of reforming. Describing Goethe as the type of his aesthetic attitude, Pater wrote that “such natures rejoice to be away from and past their former selves” (R, 229). That “former” self is also the “formed” self, from whom the reforming self, in its continually reconstructed present moment, continually flees away.

Nevertheless, though Pater theorizes this decentering flight into an absolute present, he does so from within the traditional commitment to a central self. In fact, he finally does so in order to conserve its centrality and wholeness in a sense of history or continuity. Surely this is one reason that Pater should be reexamined in our current critical moment. In an effort to preserve its wholeness, this aesthetically or critically divided self is continually in the process of projecting a transcendent identity to oversee its own passages of experience. That the metaphysical implications of this projection are undergoing a rigorous critique today should make Pater more, not less, interesting to us. Pater is explicitly aware of his aesthetic projection of identity—


14. The names Foucault and Derrida will suffice to indicate the broad outlines of that critique, but I mean specifically to call attention here to their stress on the correlative projections of the unitary subject and of an overarching history. Thus Foucault, in The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York:
as I shall show in discussing Marius the Epicurean—and aware also that the projection of an overarching history is its necessary corollary. Throughout his work, Pater employs a transformed, secularized version of Bunyan's "House Beautiful" as an image of the transcendent place where disparate moments of individual and cultural time are gathered together and restored. Of course, this end point, the result of Pater's aesthetic dialectic, is Hegelian and sublationary—as is so much of Pater, including all the formal techniques explored in this brief section: his dialectical transvaluation of metaphor, the subsumption of distinct moments in their "passage," the notion of memory as the overarching re-collection of successive moments of self-division.

Pater's attempt to reread the figurative "distance" of self-consciousness as a difference between present and past should remind us that in the nineteenth century the notion of scientific objectivity was often conceived as historical distance. It is within the historical realm that the already-made thing, the work of art, becomes the exemplary instance of Pater's aesthetic solution. As the quintessential relic from the past, the work of art is effective because it is definitively and already "different" from the self in the present. Before turning to the historical dimension of Pater's method, however, I want to conclude the discussion of his aestheticism by asking how these strategies of self-consciousness are registered on the level of his style.

4 · Answerable Style

How does Pater's aestheticism present itself as an ironic, synthetic, and revisionary discourse? If his aestheticism was meant as a response to modern thought, how might the "style" of the prose (that is, its

Pantheon, 1972), p. 12: "Continuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject: the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity; the promise that one day the subject—in the form of historical consciousness—will once again be able to appropriate, to bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference, and find in them what might be called his abode. Making historical analysis the discourse of the continuous and making human consciousness the original subject of all historical development and all action are the two sides of the same system of thought." Derrida makes a similar argument toward the end of his "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 291: "It could be shown that the concept of epistēmē has always called forth that of historia, if history is always the unity of a becoming, as the tradition of truth or the development of science or knowledge oriented toward the appropriation of truth in presence and self-presence, toward knowledge in consciousness-of-self."