in Michelangelo’s sculptures is “studied” seems naive or “natural” in these humble Tuscan objects that have hardly separated themselves from the contexts of domestic use or religious ritual to become purely beautiful, “aesthetic” objects. They are not self-conscious yet, but merely emergent in both the aesthetic and the historical senses. Pater’s figure of low relief represents a primitive, emergent form of the modern representation of emergence. In “Winckelmann,” Pater identified the complex figure composed both of background and of foreground as the quintessential figure of modern art, and here he makes the low reliefs of Luca Della Robbia historically prefigurative of these later, more highly evolved backgrounding and foregrounding strategies, fundamental both to realism and to modernism. His ekphrastic use of this historically concrete genre shows yet another sense in which art history itself can become a form of Pater’s aesthetic poetry.

7 · The Senses of Relief

If the early Renaissance low relief is used in “Luca Della Robbia” primarily as a figure for the historical emergence of a modern aesthetic, other versions of the figure proliferate throughout the volume as well. The Luca essay serves to concentrate several valences of the figure in one place and to alert us to its profound importance in the overall argument of Pater’s Renaissance. But in order to understand that importance, we must appreciate its wide range of uses in the volume. The figure works within both dimensions of his aesthetic historicism, for he uses it to imagine both the activity of consciousness in the present and the shape of past time. In fact, the extensive use of this figure is one powerful sign of the coherent relation between Pater’s aestheticism and his historicism.

When Pater writes of “throwing” something into “relief,” he alludes to the aesthetic construction of an image, a moment, or an object. The figure of relief depicts the result of that aesthetic construction: a “fixed” object displayed within and against its ground. As a figure for modern relativity, the relief portrays the conditional or contextual grounds of knowledge within which any “object” must be recon-

The modern "truth of relations" will always be construed as an "aesthetic" truth, constructed as a model or simulacrum of the relations between or within things, for it has been conceded that there is only representation, no direct access to "things in themselves." The "conditions" of representation, as we have seen, may be conditions of the subject or conditions of the object; in other words, the object is "thrown into relief" against the flux of consciousness in the present or against its own past historical context. And so, too, may the figure of relief refer either to the problem of the romantic subject or to the specifically historicist elaboration of the same problem: how to know a past object from the distant and different perspective of the present, and how to separate it from the complex network of contextual relations within which it is always entangled.

When the romantic subject forms the ground, the figure of relief expresses the relative repression of the subject while the object is highlighted within and against it. When the historical context is the ground, the object must be "raised" against past conditions simply in order to be visible. Pater characteristically indicates the aesthetic act involved in this selection by using the chosen object as the point from which to induce those general conditions. Thus his prose is characterized by movements of intense focus followed by broad generalization, an alternating rhythm of fixation and expansive dilation. The characteristics of ancient thought ("given" categories, stable, absolute standards) and the characteristics of ancient art (generality and repose) are both indicated in Pater's work by the image of sharp outline, but modern thought and modern art display the "subdued" or "repressed" outline of the low relief—not outline itself, but the "equivalent for" or the "sense of" outline. "Repressed" outlines, which suggest form without sharply defining it, indicate its partial submergence in the experiencing subject (the condition of all historical knowledge) or its partial emergence from an entangling context (the condition of all life in historical time). In both cases, the central object of representation is only provisionally separated from the background within which it must be seen and from which it can never entirely break free. Its independence as a figure is always understood to be relative and fictive; it is only a part of a more complex figure, composed both of figure and of ground.

A figure within its ground together form the complex, modern figure of relief. In this sense the figure of relief is quintessentially metafigural, expressing as a part of its complex figural structure the aesthetic activity of "raising" the foregrounded figures against the background. Using the example of Browning's poetry, in which a character is
thrown into relief against a “situation,” Pater calls attention to “relief” as a self-conscious procedure of modern representation (R, 214). But focusing on an overtly artistic imitation of the modern “truth of relations” only reinforces Pater’s fundamental understanding that knowledge is always aesthetically constructed in the modern world. The figure Pater uses for modern art is, in other words, the same figure he uses to portray modern consciousness.

Pater’s model of consciousness as relief, the fluid passage of time marked by moments of fixated, “high” intensity, may be seen as a later version of Wordsworth’s spots of time rising against the background of a general depression. But their fears are signally different: instead of stultifying depression, Pater fears the manic impulsion of mental process, time’s passage in its experienced form. He both recognizes and fears that the moments of relief are actually ungrounded; the aesthetic act of fixing such moments is then accompanied by an equally aesthetic activity of imagining a solid ground. In visualizing this mental dynamic as a plastic form, Pater marks the vast difference between his dialectic of consciousness and Wordsworth’s. What Wordsworth felt as an unconscious power “rising from the mind’s abyss” Pater has transformed into a model of consciousness in control of time’s passages. The spots of time lived on as renovating forces in Wordsworth’s memory, but in Pater retrospection is the aesthetic precondition of these moments, which are purchased at the price of their own disappearance into the past. The flux can be stilled only momentarily, and only by looking back upon it. In Pater’s aesthetic, the unconscious forces rising from the mind’s abyss are forces from the collective, not from the individual past; his personal consciousness is renovated by spots of time stored within the general cultural memory, which is the “spirit” of the ages.

With the figure of aesthetic relief, Pater finds another way of imagining relativity, different from the textual metaphor of the “network” or the “magic web”; thus he defends against the threat that the “clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, . . . a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it” by adjusting the figure. The experience of consciousness, like life in historical time, may only be truly described as the flux of forms continuously emerging, but by “throwing” a form into “relief,” the artist (or aesthetic critic) can imitate the modern truth of relative emergence and at the same time stabilize it as a static, spatial figure. Though the figure is spatially imagined, it has a temporal as well as spatial refer-

1. Discussed at greater length below, Part Three, sec. 1.
Figural Strategies in *The Renaissance*

ent—at least it refers not only to the activity of fixation and recontainment within the aesthetic consciousness, but also to the “music” or “play” of temporality against which that stabilization takes place. But the figure of relief imagines temporality from a position after the fact, the retrospective position from which the flux of consciousness or historical time has been reified as a shape, a figure, a plastic form.

As a means of articulating this relation between the individual memory and the cultural past, the figure of relief may be seen also as a visual image of Pater’s expressionist-impressionist theory of aesthetic creation and historical development. As we have seen, Pater envisions an individual dynamic of internalization and externalization, through which each artist is impressed by the spirit of his age before he expresses his own special vision, and as we shall see in Part Three, this dynamic holds true not only for artists and the “high” points of concentrated culture they represent, but also for every individual person, however invisible he may be to the eyes of the present. Moreover, the dynamic works on the general cultural level, too, in cycles of memory and repression, burial and renaissance. In other words, individual “impressionism” is echoed on the historical level when forms of cultural life are pressed deeply into (or even buried under) the ground, to be exhumed at a later time.

In other words, with the same figure he uses to describe modern art and modern consciousness, Pater also depicts the shape of historical time. As a synchronic figure, the Paterian type is formed by throwing a particular object or person into relief against a historically general background. When a concrete individual is invested with the aura of general historical value, it is figured in Pater as a fixed point within a surrounding field. The amorphous, indefinite background implies a vast number of similar forms, here grouped together under one “type” and represented by one “name.” The aura of generalization around the type signals its value as the bodily representative of a spiritual reality, but the unrealized, amorphous, implied background is important in another respect as well. A texture of substantiating detail has been lost to the present, and here again the difficulties of historical knowledge are implied in a figure. The type as high point in relief against its background expresses a sort of faith that the surviving physical evidence is indeed evidence of things not seen, representative of the lost texture of past historical reality, the flesh that once covered the bones of a deep structure.

Thus the figure of relief expresses the relation between what is remembered and what is forgotten in cultural life at large. But this figure also, and correlatively, theorizes the relation between historical
change and permanence. It works across the entire spectrum of histori­
cist thinking, from an absolute commitment to historical difference
and particularity all the way to the aesthetic construction of a mythi­
cally repetitive series of revivals of the “same” Greek standard:

Again, individual genius works ever under conditions of time and place:
its products are coloured by the varying aspects of nature, and type of
human form, and outward manners of life. There is thus an element of
change in art; criticism must never forget that “the artist is the child of
his time.” But besides these conditions of time and place, and indepen­
dent of them, there is also an element of permanence, a standard of
taste, which genius confesses. This standard is maintained in a purely
intellectual tradition. . . . The supreme artistic products of succeeding
generations thus form a series of elevated points, taking each from each
the reflexion of a strange light, the source of which is not in the atmos­
phere around and above them, but in a stage of society remote from
ours. The standard of taste, then, was fixed in Greece, at a definite
historical period. (R, 199)

Pater places the “ground” or “origin” of this tradition in Greece
during the Age of Pericles, and I have more to say about Pater’s funda­
mental devotion to things Greek in Part Four. Now, still concentrating
on the figure of relief, we may note that the permanence Pater envi­sions
beneath the surface of historical change is tacitly understood to
be an aesthetic construct, a “conscious tradition” formulated as an
image of plastic form. “Constructing a series,” as we have seen, is
Pater’s favorite way to indicate diachronic development, and this
“series of elevated points” represents the aesthetic creation of history
and the historical development of aesthetics with a familiar model.
High points emerge against a background, indicating the “periodic”
moments when a Greek standard was consciously revived. But of

2. These “high points” may be taken as a spatial representation of Arnoldian
“touchstones,” though Pater’s double use of the figure stresses more clearly than
Arnold’s that the “high points” are to be understood as chosen by the subject in the
present as well as “given” by past history as the best that has been thought and said.
It is possible also to see Pater’s figure as a transfiguration of Arnold’s scheme of
alternating “epochs of expansion” and “epochs of contraction.”
developmental view of history plus an aesthetic practice of “fixing” the high points against the continuous passage of time yields the model of the past as frieze in sculpted relief.

But if the frieze depicts past time literally frozen into tradition by the pressure of aesthetic retrospection, Pater also uses the figure of relief to indicate historical time in process. Leonardo’s moment of aesthetic “disgust,” for example, represents his detachment from the “former” (earlier and formative) type, which is thereby cast into the background and repressed while the new type rises against it. In this moment of antithetical rebellion, the “relief” expresses an escape from past entanglements, as if the spirit of the ages felt an emotional release at this moment when conventions are broken to make way for a new aesthetic distinction. For the individual spirit in the present, the “relief” is felt as freedom from temporality in moments of fixated stillness; but for the spirit of the ages “relief” is felt as freedom from the binding confinement of prior forms. Thus the figure enables Pater to turn both away from and back toward the flux of time. Here we can see how the recursive structure of the historical dialectic—dominant, foregrounded figure repressed as background, new figure rising against that constitutive ground yet never fully freeing itself and eventually becoming, in turn, the background against which yet another new type differentiates itself—provides a plot for Pater’s story of historical development. Because his dialectical categories are so deeply identified as concrete historical persons, the plot is enacted by real characters as well, not merely abstract categories.

These moments of dialectical reversal map the “progress of a great thing,” a general spirit such as “the art of Italy” or “the human mind itself.” In other words, the moments of reversal themselves imply further movement and a larger whole in the process of being formed, of which these recreative turning-points only mark the parts. Thus metafigurality always represents this pressure toward a “higher” and more “complex” unity; it signifies the conscious acts of sublation that characterize Pater’s historicism. Of course, it is only too obvious that Pater’s historical dialectic exerts a strong metafigural or sublatory pressure toward synthesis.3 In the historical plot a narrow and “one-sided” type like Winckelmann is always followed by a more “generous” type of “many-sided, complex unity” like Goethe. Or again, Pater sees antinomianism as a very component of the so-called

3. For previous discussion of Pater’s “synthetic views” in relation to contemporary currents of thought, see Helen Hawthorne Young, The Writings of Walter Pater: A Reflection of British Philosophical Opinion from 1860 to 1890 (Lancaster, Pa.: Lancaster Press, 1933), pp. 37–62.
"Age of Faith," which will be missed by historians who do not look for the differences covered within such a name. Yet division too, when it becomes "well-recognized," baffles the historian with "rigidly defined opposites" that limit the sympathies and prevent the finer perception of "that more sincere and generous play of the forces of human mind and character" (R, 25–26). Like the "acknowledged" types, these "well-recognized" controversies are too distinctly "classified," "but the painter of the Last Supper, with his kindred, lives in a land where controversy has no breathing place. They refuse to be classified" (R, 27).

The perfection of culture is not rebellion but peace; only when it has realised a deep moral stillness has it really reached its end. But often on the way to that end there is room for a noble antinomianism.

If the maxim from "Leonardo Da Vinci" ("For the way to perfection is through a series of disgusts") expresses the divisive pressure within Pater's dialectic, this maxim ("The perfection of culture is not rebellion but peace") expresses its other, synthetic side (R, 103). Both, however, implicitly promise an end of division as the "end," the goal as well as the conclusion, of the story. The service of antinomian "disgust" is simply to open the way, to enable movement to resume in the direction of an ever higher, more complex synthesis.

Pater's historical dialectic is as much a product of aesthetic retrospection as is his frieze of tradition. Like all historical dialectics, this one indicates change through the interaction of categories, imitating temporality through the recursive alternation of moments of innovating departure and synthetic return, which engage like gears and turn to thrust the plot forward. This dialectic operates in Pater to describe the development both of culture and of self-culture. Here again my larger point is the homologous relation between Pater's dialectic of historical development and his dialectic of self-consciousness, while my more limited focus is the figure of relief:

_Im Ganzen, Guten, Wahren, resolut zu leben_ is Goethe's description of his own higher life; and what is meant by life in the whole—_im Ganzen_? It means the life of one for whom, over and over again, what was once precious has become indifferent. Everyone who aims at the life of culture is met by many forms of it. . . . But the pure instinct of self-culture cares not so much to reap all that these forms of culture can give, as to find in

4. The latter maxim was deleted in the third edition. See Hill's notes, p. 213.
them its own strength. The demand of the intellect is to feel itself alive. It must see into the laws, the operation, the intellectual reward of every divided form of culture, but only that it may measure the relation between itself and them. It struggles with those forms till its secret is won from each, and then lets each fall back into its place, in the supreme, artistic view of life. With a kind of passionate coldness, such natures rejoice to be away from and past their former selves. [R, 228–29].

Pater reads Goethean "self-culture," then, as a technique or strategy of consciousness. His "passionate coldness" encapsulates in an oxymoronic formula the temporal dynamic of attachment and detachment. Here the mood is majestic "indifference," not "disgust," but the same process of internal impression and relieving self-division operates. The demand of the intellect "to feel itself alive" is fulfilled by these acts of internalization and discriminating measurement, and the process yields a calm wholeness or "indifference" that is produced synthetically, after many "differences." It also yields an understanding of the general "laws" of historical culture. This is the corollary of Pater's argument, at the end of the Michelangelo essay, that the qualities of the great masters reveal "the laws by which they . . . relieve each other" in historical time [R, 96]. As a historicist, Goethe measures the relation between himself and "every divided form of culture," and as an aesthete he accomplishes this differentiation as an internal function. Personal and historical development are mirror images of one another. In this passage, cultural development is experienced against the ground of the romantic self, and the self is formed through the dialectical internalization and discrimination of "external" culture.

Pater's interpretation of Goethean self-culture provides a model for the synthetic wholeness, the "many-sided, complex unity" that is possible from the romantic perspective at the end of the line. From that perspective all aesthetic history may be assimilated within an omnivorous and scrupulously organized consciousness. In this case, the consciousness is understood to be formed on the model of cultural development, but the opposite movement is also apparent in The Renaissance, in which cultural development seems to be modeled on the experience of "relief" in an individual consciousness. On this historicist side of the dialectic, Pater discovers a role for unconsciousness which he does not tolerate on the aesthetic side. And here again, the basic figure of aesthetic and historical revival is the relief.

When Pater uses the figure of relief to describe art-historical revival,

5. Pater's quote from Goethe here was actually misquoted from Carlyle (see ibid., pp. 439–40).
he literalizes the "ground" to stunning effect. The most common metaphor for historical emergence, "rising," depends of course on the sense of a ground from which that motion could be understood to originate. This metaphor is omnipresent in historical discourse of all persuasions: scientific, popular, philosophical, aesthetic. The metaphor is fundamentally organic, relying on the image of a plant breaking suddenly through the surface of the ground. When Pater argues that the "universal pagan sentiment" is the foundation of human nature and thus of all religions, he uses this organic sense explicitly. Pagan sentiment is

ineradicable, like some persistent vegetable growth, because its seed is an element of the very soil out of which it springs... modified indeed by changes of time and place, but indestructible, because its root is so deep in the earth of man's nature. (R, 201)

The wit of this formulation lies in Pater's use of an organic, horticultural metaphor for the unconscious, "natural" part of human nature. But this organic sense can also express the "human" part of human nature, the conscious "culture" or cultivation of the natural, as in the passage about the new flower, the anemone, which grew when the soil of Jerusalem was mixed with the common clay of Italy (R, 47). Pater is generally suspicious of the organic metaphor as a model for the artist, because it fails to do justice to "the most luminous and self-possessed phase of consciousness" (A, 80), but he does use the metaphor freely for historical "growth."

The archaeological sense of relief is even more forceful in The Renaissance, where it is used to portray a collective unconscious periodically disturbed into sudden revelation. Here the figure of relief is imagined from the impressed rather than the detached moment of the dialectic: rather than focusing on the "elevated" points expressed against a depressed background, in other words, the archaeological figure focuses on past forms that have been pressed into and even beneath the ground. Pater's own age was experiencing a second wave of the classical revival, more "scientific" than the Renaissance and provoked by archaeological findings that graphically demonstrated how much of the cultural past lay hidden beneath the surface of the earth. His modern sense of geographical strata hiding the impressions of the past (fossils of organic life pressed into rock, fragments of

ancient sculpture in repose underground] is evident throughout The Renaissance. The delight Pater feels in contemplating the Panathenaic frieze or the Venus of Melos was colored, after all, by the thrill of their recent recovery. The Elgin marbles are quite evidently a part of his aesthetics of relief, but so too is the Venus, which exists in a state of incompleteness both like and unlike Michelangelo's slaves. Her incompleteness bespeaks the aesthetic effects of time rather than the "studied" effects of an artist's intention. Aesthetic value thus appreciates in historical time (to recur to Pater's example of the Venus) and it is signified by the "frayings" of outline that take place after long burial underground (R, 67). When ancient art is "revived" against the context of the present, it comes to life as modern art at the same time that it becomes most truly a "classic."

Pater identifies the particular "ground" out of which antique art first "rose" with the ascetic, Christian "medieval mind." What is most interesting here is the way Pater mobilizes his familiar three-stage development—Greek body, Christian soul, synthetic figure of Renaissance "humanism" composed of a historical body that "contains" a spirit—as a theory of the generation of a collective unconscious. The medieval mind had unconsciously "an aspiration towards that lost antique art, some relics of which Christian art had buried in itself, ready to work wonders when their day came" (R, 225). When that day came, it seemed to the Christian ascetic as if "an ancient plague-pit had been opened." The structure of that figure accords exactly with Pater's view of the Renaissance as an exhumation, though he shifts the value from negative to positive in granting new life to buried forms.

Thus the service of the Middle or "Dark" ages, which Pater romanticizes (as he did in "Aesthetic Poetry") with the image of night, was to provide the time for necessary rest and the latency that enables recognition. Medieval Christianity had caused the "human mind to repose itself, that when day came it might awake, with eyes refreshed, to those ancient, ideal forms" (R, 226). The Christian discipline of introspection both "forgets" the body and provides the necessary precondition for remembering it consciously. Thus, from the point of view of the Renaissance, Greek sculpture has a "ground" from which to rise and against which to be seen as historically different. This is a figure for the development of the "historic sense" as well as for

7. The Elgin marbles were sold to the nation in 1816; the Venus was discovered in 1820.
8. This paradox is worked out with great subtlety and historical specificity in Kermode's The Classic.
the revival of classical antiquity, for the sense of history depends absolutely on this difference between parts of a recovered past, signified in the figure of relief.

In this figure the ground marks the difference between unconsciousness and consciousness in collective, historical terms. The surface of the earth serves a diacritical function within the figure, signifying the historical difference that generates aesthetic significance. The time during which antique art was lost and forgotten makes it possible for it to be suddenly recovered; asceticism is the necessary precondition of conscious sensual delight, as loss is the precondition of recovery. The submergence of antique art within “the medieval mind” represents its permanent accessibility as well as its temporary disappearance; its temporary occlusion permits the concept of sudden, though relative, innovation. The “medieval mind” is represented as if it were an individual mind, and change in time is depicted in spatial terms, as classical art rises up from under the ground. The Allgemeinheit and Heiterkeit of classical sculpture are thus reconstructed in figural form: submergence beneath the ground provides a modern form of relative repose in unconsciousness, as rising in relief against an aesthetically constituted ground provides a modern form of relative generality.

Pater generalizes this theory of the collective unconscious. The forces of the past have been impressed upon the spirit of each “succeeding age”; they live within the present, beneath the surface, underground:

The spiritual forces of the past, which have prompted and informed the culture of a succeeding age, live, indeed, within that culture, but with an absorbed, underground life. The Hellenic element alone has not been so absorbed, or content with this underground life; from time to time it has started to the surface; culture has drawn back to its sources to

9. The archaeological metaphor was prevalent in late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century discourse in several disciplines. Freud, for example, used archaeological excavation as a figure for probing and reconstructing the psychoanalytic Unconscious: “I had no choice but to follow the example of those discoverers whose good fortune it is to bring to the light of day after their long burial the priceless though mutilated relics of antiquity. I have restored what is missing... but like a conscientious archaeologist I have not omitted to mention in each case where the authentic parts end and my construction begins” (Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria [1905; reprint, New York: Macmillan, 1963], p. 27). Of course, my discussion of Pater’s concept of the collective unconscious alludes to Jung, and while I do not mean to equate Pater’s concept with Jung’s, this association will suggest the mythic or archetypal foundation of Pater’s model.
be clarified and corrected. Hellenism is not merely an element in our intellectual life; it is a conscious tradition in it. (R, 198–99)

Thus Pater's model of tradition as elevated points grounded in the permanence of the Hellenic spirit is itself based on this dialectic of unconsciousness and consciousness, "absorption" (or impression) and expression. Only from a "superficial view" do periods seem separate and definite, Pater argues; the "deeper view . . . preserves the identity of European culture" by relieving seemingly "definite" periods against an "uninterrupted," "continuous" ground (R, 225–26). Thus the "deeper," more internalized, amorphous, or even "forgotten" position below the surface can (as easily as the high points) be figured in the privileged, secondary, and aesthetic position; in fact, that repressed ground is itself turned inside out and "elevated" at those moments of dialectical reversal when impressed, culturally submerged material is suddenly expressed. This figure brilliantly mediates between permanence and change: the relative definition of the "elevated points" signifies historical concreteness, individuality, and difference, whereas the deep structure is mythic, repetitive, unified, and stable ground. But Pater's commitment to historical difference is not betrayed (or at least it is cleverly maintained) because the grounding "permanence" is repressed, hidden, implicit.

The ground allows for the sense of sudden discovery, even though what is "discovered" is also understood to have been there all along. This sense of sudden revelation is the very opposite of gradual, historical emergence, and in this sense the literalized "ground" serves to create the fiction of a sharp dividing line between absence and presence which Pater himself denies in his other uses of the figure to express gradually emergent historical reality. Pater allows for the sudden creation of form in the aesthetic sense which he denies in the evolutionary, historical sense, and he uses it as a metaphor for sudden recovery in historical time. He takes evident pleasure, for example, in imagining that Michelangelo's vision of the creation of man is decisively nondevelopmental:

For him it is not, as in the story itself, the last and crowning act of a series of developments, but the first and unique act, the creation of life itself in its supreme form, offhand and immediately, in the cold and lifeless stone. With him the beginning of life has all the characteristics of resurrection, it is like the recovery of suspended health or animation, with its gratitude, its effusion, and eloquence. (R, 75)
Here Pater reads the first chapter of Genesis ("the story itself") as if it were arguing for the theory of evolution, and he relishes Michelangelo's *Creation* in the Sistine Chapel because it seems to ignore this canonical story of a gradual "series of developments" and to offer instead a vision of sudden creation.

The aesthetic imitation of divine creation *ex nihilo* is a familiar trope, and here it provides Pater with momentary relief from, and for, his more characteristic evolutionary view. This uncharacteristic "disgust" at the very idea of development nevertheless reinforces Pater's characteristic late "humanist" focus on the human figure. These lifeless stones apparently can live. Renaissance humanism is metaphorically embodied in this passage as resurrection. Of course "humanism" would have to be the result of a rebirth; the "-ism" announces its distance from the unconscious self-sufficiency of the human form in Greek sculpture. Like aestheticism and historicism, it is a modern, systematic, and revisionary form of attention and measurement of effects, a "studied" return to reconsider the "sense of" human form, not a "natural" existence in the senses.

As usual, a profoundly antithetical wit is the effect of Pater's secularization here and of his ironic turn against Ruskin's own earlier secularization. The very historical moment that Ruskin regarded as the Fall, Pater here figures as the Resurrection. Both Ruskin and Pater use the sacred story to ground their interpretation of modern secular and aesthetic history, but Ruskin famously thought this turn into modern history brought error, decadence, and infelicity of form, whereas Pater's oddly transvaluing implication is that the Christian era "really" only begins just at the moment when "the modern mind" distinguishes itself against its Christian background. The dialectical doubleness and wit involve turning Christian doctrine against itself in a powerful way, making the resurrection of the body a figure for the rise of the "humanism" which in turn signifies the attenuation of Christian doctrine. Pater's figure testifies to the resurrection of the secular body, which nevertheless remains within the ground of the sacred story. After all, in Pater's scheme, we could never know what life "in the whole" might be without the punishing asceticism of the early Christian era, which "forgets" the body long enough to impress upon the spirit of the ages its inescapable, romantic interiority.

The figure of relief enables Pater to make a crucial compromise between sudden, "aesthetic" creation and gradual historical emergence. He finds the inspired plastic form of this vision in the sculpture of Michelangelo, which suggests the double sense of "life coming always as relief or recovery, and always in strong contrast with the
rough-hewn mass in which it is kindled, "new" life that nevertheless still bears the signs of an archaic, amorphous former life (R, 76). Pater's conception of the Renaissance, then, of which Michelangelo is the consummate type, represents another level of this figurative solution to the problems of historicism. As such it highlights an aesthetically forged compromise between Pater's intellectual commitment to evolutionary gradualism and his nostalgia for special creation, now transferred from the providential to the aesthetic register and transfigured as relief. This is especially evident in his theory of the historical development of the aesthetic, "studied" form of relief.

And on the other hand, the archaeological unconscious provides the historical version of the same compromise: ancient forms suddenly rise up from under the ground as if they were new, yet with their "frayed" outlines they display no longer the signs of sudden creation, but signs of gradual, historical emergence and contextuality. Furthermore, this figure works alike (and often simultaneously) on the level of individual consciousness and historical process. Like Pater's Mona Lisa, for example, Winckelmann seems to have a sort of clairvoyance or second sight, a natural or intuitive knowledge of true classical art; "he seems to realize that fancy of the reminiscence of a forgotten knowledge hidden for a time in the mind itself" (R, 194). And here we can see the extent of this figure's dependence on Pater's Hegelian scheme of linked levels in the mind or spirit of the world. Because "the composite experience of all the ages is part of each one of us," what has been hidden "within the mind itself" can be retrieved through Winckelmann's individual spirit.

With the structure of "relief," Pater mobilizes a brilliant complex of figures that operate dialectically or antithetically in order to express both gradual emergence and sudden recreation; contextual entanglement and freestanding form; modern Necessity and the momentary, fictive relief from that Necessity. And in each case, across the spectrum of each antithetical compromise, the figure can represent either individual consciousness or collective historical process, or both at once, for individual modern consciousness is grounded in Pater within a cultural unconscious that provides relief from the sense of time's passages and the devastating losses they entail.

While impressions race past in the present ("while all melts under our feet") Pater finds a sense of deep repose in the ground of the general

10. This passage reworks and recontextualizes a passage from Pater's earliest known essay, "Diaphaneité" (MS, 250). On the relation of this essay to "Winckelmann," see Hill's notes, pp. 424–25, and for my discussion of the earlier essay, see below, Part Three, sec. 1.
culture, a calming faith in resources impressed deep within. Pater's impressionism works in both these senses at once, first grasping the truly radical vision of an ungrounded temporality, and then carefully and painstakingly conserving and reforming that ground. The dynamic interplay of this radical impulse and the patient, conservative return from it has a special beauty of its own. Moments of relief and return succeed one another again and again, as Pater loses and recovers the sense of facility and direct access to the body of the past and its spirit. The ecstatic rhythm of these "subdued" measures is incomparably moving, for with each relief the spirit is freed again, momentarily mobilized, unfrozen, and committed again to the passage of time:

We can hardly imagine how deeply the human mind was moved, when, at the Renaissance, in the midst of a frozen world, the buried fire of ancient art rose up from under the soil. . . . On a sudden the imagination feels itself free. How facile and direct, it seems to say, is this life of the senses and the understanding, when once we have apprehended it! Here, surely, is that more liberal mode of life we have been seeking so long, so near to us all the while. [R, 184]

11. This "reaction" to the threat of ungrounded temporality might be called the nostalgic, "sad," regretful side of modernism, the opposite of the flight away from retrospection that Paul de Man describes in "Literary History and Literary Modernity," *Blindness and Insight*, pp. 142–65. De Man invokes Nietzsche's "ruthless forgetting" as the "authentic spirit of modernity" and goes on to propose and analyze the conflict and interdependence of the concepts "history" and "modernity" in Nietzsche's text. Pater has often been fruitfully compared to Nietzsche—especially because of their similar schemes of Apollonian and Dionysian forces archetypally at work in history—though Pater's version antedates Nietzsche's. (On this relation, see Monsman, *Pater's Portraits*, pp. 18–19; and Patrick Bridgewater, *Nietzsche in Anglosaxony* [Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1972], pp. 21–36.) Pater's ruthless remembering may indeed be seen as the nostalgic opposite of Nietzsche's "ruthless forgetting," and for that reason, among others, it is important to register the dialectical constitution of Pater's particular "modernity."