mates in the literary form of his own volume that synoptic view, providing at once a sense of lively exploration and a sense of providential teleology which is one effect of his formal stance of distant retrospection. In the final section of this study we shall see how this late volume appreciates life in time from the perspective of completed form.

It is a life, a systematised, but comprehensive and far-reaching, intellectual life, in which the reason, nay, the whole nature of man, realises all it was designed to be, by the beatific “vision of all time and all existence.”

[PP, 183]

7 · Paterian Recollection: The Anagogic Mind

The Paterian Plato is constructed as a mythic whole, a figure who synthesizes all philosophies before him and generates all that come afterward. His relation to Socrates serves to emphasize Plato’s emergence as a distinct figure against the background of orality or prehistory, and thus Plato/Socrates becomes one of Pater’s “two-sided” figures, representing both the mythic manifold and its break into literature and into history. Pater’s own relation to Plato, as it is constructed in this volume, is another such “two-sided” figure, a “twofold power, an embodied paradox” [PP, 87].

Like Plato’s literary re-creation of Socrates, we might think of Pater’s Plato as merely a “stage disguise,” were it not for independent evidence [PP, 75]. That Pater’s interpretation of Plato largely recapitulates contemporary sources only makes this point all the more interesting, for Pater has effectively shaped the perspective of his lectures to synthesize the “received” or “common” views of his contemporary historical moment. With the persona adopted in these lectures, therefore, Pater attunes the “Diaphaneitê” to the music of his own day. In so doing, Pater tacitly casts himself as a modern Ficino, “translating” Plato to his own later age, re-creating a Plato who would be recognized by his contemporaries in the late nineteenth century and who is recognizable now as a particularly late-nineteenth-century Plato. The Paterian Plato is a figure “fitted” to its intellectual environment.

Pater’s identification with Plato works both ways, as do all the

1. Esp. Grote and Müller [see above, Part Four, sec. 4, n.2].
modernizing tropes we have been examining. As a result of this "two-sided figure," a Platonic Pater comes into being as surely as the Paterian Plato. Pater attributes to Plato the synthesis that (as almost all critics have agreed) he himself worked out in many forms throughout the course of his career. He begins his dialectic with the atomism of the Heraclitean flux. Recognizing the problems with that doctrine, he imagines its opposite—an equally facile, undifferentiated unity—and uses that opposition dialectically to generate the "music" that to Pater represents not only the unity of matter and form but also, and perhaps even more important, change controlled by permanence, the process of consciousness stabilized in the end through historical retrospection. The question raised for Plato by the doctrine of Heraclitus is the question raised in the "Conclusion" to The Renaissance, and at the end of Pater's career we find him quoting from the same passage of the Cratylus that provided the epigraph to that incendiary early essay (PP, 14).

In Plato and Platonism, Pater considers this passage from the Cratylus at greater length. The challenge Socrates offers as a response to the Heraclitean doctrine, read in its Paterian context, is the question of historical change: "Now, how could that which is never in the same state be a thing at all?" (PP, 16). How can change be conceived so that its force toward dissipation and fragmentation is controlled at some point? How can change be conceived so that it does not obliterate identity? Pater answers this question on the level of historical as well as phenomenological discourse. The present study has been devoted to an examination of Pater's answering figures. His figures of "development" play one kind of "music" which harmonizes the colorful flux with its deep structure. Pater's "historic method" allows simultaneously for constant transformation on one level and profoundly stable identity on another. Thus Pater re-creates for the nineteenth century the synthetic manifold he has attributed to Plato. He synthesizes the representative thinkers of his time—the figures of Darwin and Hegel prominent among them—in the complex unity of his own "historic method." But he ends by portraying these forces of thought as "permanent tendencies" in the "human mind itself," and in this register he transcends historical change with his own myth and figures of permanence.

Pater describes a Plato who like himself lives at the end of a long tradition. Though Plato, when he is regarded retrospectively from the late nineteenth century, usually represents the beginnings of philosophy, Pater portrays him as already "late," "eclectic," "encyclopaedic," and "weary" of sectarian debate, not "fresh" in the "morning of the
mind's history" (PP, 6). Like Heraclitus, Plato "feels already old" (PP, 13). In this assimilation of Plato to his imaginative perspective at the end of the line, Pater achieves renewed energy for his own age: if Plato himself appears as a "late" product of culture, then there is hope that the late nineteenth century too may mark a beginning, when seen from a still later perspective. Pater strikingly associates Plato's dialogue form with the skeptical, dialectical essay, the "characteristic literary type of our own time," and he claims that the essay came into being along with the "relative spirit" in the Renaissance of the sixteenth century (PP, 174-75). Thus Pater characteristically extends "our own time" to include the modernism of the Renaissance and of Plato's age as well. In other words, on one level Pater realizes how forced this analogy might seem, and yet he argues that the Platonic Dialogue is "essentially" an essay, passing now and then back into the "poetry" of the former, primeval era (PP, 176). When in the service of this analogy he identifies Plato with Montaigne or, even more improbably, with Thackeray, all readers must be aware that Pater is assimilating his own modernism to Plato's (PP, 132, 175).  

To be "modern" in this sense is precisely to be "late," "eclectic," "encyclopaedic," and even "weary." Taking the long view, assuming the stance of vast retrospection, is one essential aesthetic gesture of this modernism; a pervasive strategy of cross-cultural analogy is the other. The creation of the Paterian Plato simultaneously modernizes Plato and transforms Pater into a very old thing indeed, as he identifies with the origins of his literary and philosophical culture. As usual, this figurative maneuver begins with the prospect of great difference, but in its most extreme form, as here, it ends by collapsing difference into similarity. As Pater demonstrated in "The Anecdote of the Shell," a long experience in time is necessary to develop the ability to read the world "by a kind of short-hand," to see things whole, "in a single moment of vision" (PP, 158). Pater certainly takes this long view in Plato and Platonism, and the effect of his gesture in its particular context is to collapse the differences of historical time in a moment of vision, which is represented by the lecturer's perspective in the present.

Pater's long view is an attempt to represent the perspective sub specie eternitatis like that of Parmenides, but with a difference (PP, 27). Even in this extreme statement of his historicism, Pater holds to the process of reaching back through difference to unity, rather than

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2. On the assimilation of Plato to Montaigne, see Turner, Greek Heritage, p. 407; on Pater's projective relation to Plato, see DeLaura, Hebrew and Hellene, p. 299.
reaching for a direct, unmediated vision of unity. His approach is more like Augustine's in the Confessions, with Books 10 through 13 approximating the perspective sub specie eternitatis only after Books 1 through 9 retrospectively proceed through the vicissitudes of earthly experience. But unlike the Confessions, where the totalizing perspective is relegated to the last few chapters, Plato and Platonism displays the effects of this perspective throughout. Thus the emphasis finally rests in the "synoptic view" from the mountaintop, rather than in the process of reaching that summit. Pater writes from the end of the line, after the climb.

Like Plato's, his is an "encyclopaedic view" (PP, 6). Using the analogy of the Platonic dialogue to describe dialectical thought, Pater writes that the "full light of indefectible certitude"

can only happen by a summary act of intuition upon the entire perspective, wherein all those partial apprehensions, which one by one may have seemed inconsistent with each other, find their due place. . . . The mind attains a hold, as if by a single imaginative act, through all the transitions of a long conversation, upon all the seemingly opposite contentions of all the various speakers at once. (PP, 181)

To Pater, historical life, like the dialogue, seems contradictory or fragmentary only if one looks at an isolated part of its development. But from the point of view of the end, all contradictions are at last resolved into perfect form. "Perfection . . . is attainable only through a certain combination of opposites" (PP, 24).

But dialectic is "co-extensive with life itself," as we have seen (PP, 185), and Pater has been at pains to portray the vivid, lifelike quality of "suspended judgment," the doubtful intellect aspiring in the midst of life, rather than resting in "the full light of indefectible certitude" at the end. Until life is over, the place where "all those partial apprehensions . . . find their due place" can only be in the mind of the Interpreter. The "synoptic view" from the mountaintop is an anagogic perspective, figuratively possible only when life itself has come to an


4. See "For the way to perfection is through a series of disgusts" (R, 103) and "But if he ['man'] was to be saved from the ennui which ever attaches itself to realisation, even the realisation of the perfect life, it was necessary that a conflict should come, that some sharper note should grieve the existing harmony, and the spirit chafed by it beat out at last only a larger and profounder music" (R, 222).
And this is the perspective Pater adopts in *Plato and Platonism*, where all the "permanent tendencies" of the "human mind itself" are gathered together in one place, each a part of the great "dialogue of the mind with itself" which now is quite literally all-inclusive. The diachronic dimension of the historic method gives way to the synchronic, and the volume is dominated by the anagogic mind that "comprehends" all the divided forms of life in time. In this volume, the end of time is figured by literary closure, specifically the end of a Platonic Dialogue. At the moment of its closure, dialectic—which is movement *toward* this complete perspective—is replaced by the "summary" or "synoptic view." From the point of view at its end, the unguided journey is felt to have been in the hands of "a kind of Providence" after all, and that particular "kind" of secularized Providence has been identified with the Interpreter himself.

This particularly Paterian anagogical perspective must also be seen as a modernization of Platonic recollection. Pater's aesthetic historicism has all along had this "aspect," but never before has it been so pervasively entertained as in this volume, where the point of view at the end of the line returns upon itself to examine the "ground" of its being. If "the composite experience of all the ages is part of each one of us," Pater can "remember" Plato as a part of his own historically spiritual preexistence (B, 196). This view solves the problems of historical skepticism with a certain secularized faith. Because the past in all its variety exists within, a differentiated company of voices engage there in "the dialogue of the mind with itself," and there they may be re-collected through a discipline of introspection that is indistinguishable from historical retrospection. Pater's great vision assumes the power of each individual to imitate "the secular process of the eternal mind," to take the perspective from which individual identity may be lost without regret, subsumed in the wholeness of a secularized eternal life.

It is humanity itself now—abstract humanity—that figures as the transmigrating soul, accumulating into its "colossal manhood" the experience of ages; making use of, and casting aside in its march, the souls of countless individuals, as Pythagoras supposed the individual soul to cast aside again and again its outworn body. (PP, 72–73).

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