

Sub Regno Cynarae



Sketch of Ernest Dowson by William Rothenstein in early 1890s

Ernest Dowson was born in 1867 into a prosperous family in London. His father owned a dock, but had more interest in literature than in business. Ernest spent two and a half years at Oxford, but he did not take a degree, leaving in 1888. The dock fell into debt, and the family became poor. His father took his own life in 1894, his mother following suit a few months later. Ernest Dowson became a homeless, alcoholic poet. He consorted with prostitutes. His most famous poem recalls the shadow of an earlier love:

Non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cynarae

Last night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her lips and mine
There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath was shed
Upon my soul between the kisses and the wine;
And I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

All night upon mine heart I felt her warm heart beat,
Night-long within mine arms in love and sleep she lay;
Surely the kisses of her bought red mouth were sweet;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
When I awoke and found the dawn was gray:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind,
Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng,
Dancing, to put thy pale lost lilies out of mind;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, all the time, because the dance was long:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I cried for madder music and for stronger wine,
But when the feast is finished and the lamps expire,
Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! the night is thine;
And I am desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

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The Latin quotation is from Horace's Ode IV:1: "I am not the same as when I was ruled by the good Cynara." Dowson was very familiar with the Roman poets. Although he did not finish his degree, he had distinguished himself in Latin in his years at Oxford.

The subject of Horace's ode is not the same as that of Dowson's poem. Horace is asking Venus to have mercy on him and not to tempt him with new passions, now that he is in his fifties and not the man he was. He tells Venus to attend to the prayers of younger and more able lovers. Yet he is unable to stop the tears and tongue-tied state brought on by thoughts of their present loves and remembrance of his past. His erotic stumbling has run alongside a creative slowing, ten years having passed since the Horace's last book of poems. The ode thus concerns his creative as well as his amorous activities – Cynara was his muse as well as lover (Putnam, 1986).

Furthermore, a sense of impending death edges his new poems. Horace was to die in the year 8 B.C. at the age of 57. Horace's most famous poem *Diffugere neves* is the seventh ode in this fourth book: "Who knows whether the high Gods will add more tomorrows to the sum of our todays?" (translation Shepherd). Nevertheless, different though they are, both Horace's ode IV:1 and Dowson's poem tell of the passage of youth and ability, and the shadow of the past that falls between the present moment and its enjoyment.

Cynara was a quondam mistress of Horace. She is referred to only occasionally in his poems and the letters. She is described as mischievous (*proterva*) and greedy (*rapax*). Horace remembers that in his youth he must have been both very handsome and very eloquent to have charmed Cynara "without a present" (Radice, in introduction to Horace, 1983, p.34). She died young. In Ode IV:13, Horace remarks cruelly on the aging of her successor Lyce: "To Cynara, the fates allowed few years, but Lyce shall be long preserved, an aged crow." It is not clear whether Cynara left Horace before she died. My intuition is that she did and that his "sad laments" at her leaving combined both real mourning and the bitterness of a rejected lover.

The actual situation in Dowson's poem shows more similarity to the relations between Propertius, another Augustan poet, and

his mistress Cynthia (Benediktson, 1989). As Plarr (1914, p.57) succinctly states in his reminiscences about Dowson's poem: "Horace suggested, but Propertius inspired." Cynthia and Propertius experienced both high passion and extreme jealousy, being most in love when they were unfaithful to each other. In Propertius' last book of odes, he describes how he retaliated after Cynthia had deceived him: with Phyllis and with Teia "we scattered simple roses for their scent ... they sang: I was deaf; showed their breasts: I was blind" (IV:8, translation Shepherd). Suddenly Cynthia returned, furiously putting Phyllis and Teia to flight, fumigating the bed, and making passionate love to Propertius.

In perhaps the most striking of his poems (IV:7), Propertius describes receiving a visit from Cynthia's ghost after he had witnessed her cremation. The ghost remembers their "secret promises", swears "I kept my faith to you" and prophecies that "though others may possess you, later I shall hold you alone and clutching closely, bone to bone." (translation Highet, 1965). Indeed, one wonders whether the jealous Cynthia described in Ode IV:8 returned in mortal or immortal form.

Dowson's Cynara poem conveys the same feelings as Propertius' Cynthia poems, though the details of the visits differ. In Propertius, Cynthia is specifically described as the shadow, whereas in Dowson Cynara casts a shadow; in the Latin, it is Cynthia and not the poet who keeps the faith, and keeps it even beyond her death.

Dowson's poem describes a terrifying nostalgia. His 1896 book of poems was dedicated to Adelaide Foltinowicz, the daughter of the owner of a small restaurant in London. Her youth and innocence had completely fascinated him. He called her "Missie," and asked for her hand in marriage. Yet Dowson's passion came to naught: "she listened to his verses, smiled charmingly, under her mother's eyes, on his two years' courtship, and at the end of two years married the waiter instead" (Symons in introduction to Dowson's poems, 1905, p

xiii).

In 1897, Adelaide married Auguste Noelte, a tailor who helped out in her father's restaurant. Dowson was devastated. He fell into a life of dissipation. His problems with alcohol had started before Adelaide's refusal, and may indeed have led to Adelaide's favoring some one less wild. Dowson was not without insight. He realized that his passion was irrational and that he and his beloved were not suited to each other. In a later poem *To a Lost Love* he says, "But at the best, my dear, I see we should not have been very near." However, this poem is not memorable: reason does not have the same rhythmic drive as passion, and often fails to persuade.

The poem to Cynara, however, is technically brilliant. The repetition gives a strong slow rhythm to the poem like the tolling of a bell. Since the two repeating lines of each verse are separated by a new line, this rhythm is gained without loss of interest. Even within the repetition, there is novelty: "and" varies to "but" and back, and the final verse uses the present tense – "I am desolate and sick." The images are balanced: "her warm heart" goes with "her bought red mouth" and "riotous roses" with "pale lost lilies." The sounds provide musical accompaniment to the images: the lilting l, m and n sounds of the line "Night-long within my arms in love and sleep she lay," and the softly dying s and f sounds of "But when the feast is finished and the lamps expire."

The Cynara poem is probably not directly related to Adelaide since it was written in 1891 when Dowson had only just met her (a girl of twelve) and long before she decided to marry another. The poem is perhaps more related to the inevitable loss of innocence and beauty voiced by Horace and Propertius. Given Dowson's life, it is also tempting to see in it the loss of his own art and potential.

In 1890, William Butler Yeats and Ernest Rhys had started The Rhymers' Club, a small group of poets that met irregularly in

a tavern just off Fleet Street called The Cheshire Cheese (Alford, 1994). The poets would have supper and then adjourn to the upper room of the pub to read and discuss their poetry. They published two volumes of the *Book of the Rhymers' Club* in 1892 and 1894. The Cynara poem, initially published in *The Hobby Horse* in April, 1891, was reprinted in the second book (p. 61).

Among the members of The Rhymers' Club were Lionel Johnson, Arthur Symons, Victor Plarr, Francis Thompson, Richard La Gallienne and Ernest Dowson. Oscar Wilde joined them occasionally. These were the English "decadents." They followed the precepts of Walter Pater and pushed the ideal of art for art's sake to its emotional limits. The poets played with dissipation, much like Baudelaire in France three decades before. "I cried for madder music and for stronger wine" is in the vein of Baudelaire's prose poem *Enivrez-Vous* (Be Drunken):

Be always drunken. Nothing else matters: that is the only question. If you would not feel the horrible burden of Time weighing on your shoulders and crushing you to the earth, be drunken continually.

Drunken with what? With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you will. But be drunken.

And if sometimes, on the stairs of a palace, or on the green side of a ditch, or in the drear solitude of your own room, you should awaken and the drunkenness be half or wholly slipped away from you, ask of the wind, or of the wave, or of the star, or of the bird, or of the clock, or whatever flies, or sighs, or rocks, or sings, or speaks, ask what hour it is ; and the wind, wave, star, bird, clock, will answer you: "It is the hour to be drunken ! Be drunken, if you would not be martyred slaves of Time; be drunken continually! With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you will." (Baudelaire 1869,

translated by Symons, 1905)

In his memoirs, Yeats (1972, p. 93) described Dowson as “burning to the socket, in exquisite songs celebrating in words full of subtle refinement all those he named with himself ‘us the bitter and gay’.” The quotation is from the *Villanelle of the Poet’s Road*

Wine and woman and song.
Three things garnish our way
Yet is day over long

Lest we do our youth wrong
Gather them while we may
Wine and woman and song.

Three things render us strong
Vine leaves, kisses and bay
Yet is day over long.

Unto us they belong
Us the bitter and gay
Wine and woman and song.

We, as we pass along
Are sad that they will not stay
Yet is day over long.

Fruits and flowers among
What is better than they:
Wine and woman and song?
Yet is day over long.

Dowson tried to live the life proposed by Walter Pater: “to burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life” (Pater, 189, p. 188). Yet for the cultivated hedonism of Pater, Dowson substituted wine and women. He was drunk more than sober, slept with prostitutes, and got himself into drunken brawls with laborers and cabmen.

He burned himself out.

Dowson's poem to Cynara has exerted an immense impact on the culture of the twentieth century. Quotations from the poem show up in the titles of books and movies, and in popular songs. T. S. Eliot's *The Hollow Men* (1925) echoes the anxiety of the shadow:

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom

Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow

Life is very long

Between the desire
And the spasm
Between the potency
And the existence
Between the essence
And the descent
Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom

Dowson used another quotation from Horace as the title of the first poem in his 1896 book. Horace was well loved of the English, particularly in the 19th century. His was a gentleman's poetry, full of wisdom and restraint, clear-headed and elegant. His sense of beauty was tempered with irony.

Horace lived when Roman Empire was at its zenith, much like the British Empire in the time of Queen Victoria. Just as the Romans looked back to Greece, so did the English look back to Rome to see how to live properly. *Dulce et decorum est pro patriae mori* (Ode III:2 – It is sweet and fitting to die for your country) and *Carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero* (Ode I:11 – Seize the day, and put little trust in the morrow) were Horace's gifts to England. In both England and Rome, the enduring nature of the empire brought thoughts of the ephemerality of the individual. Keats translated Horace's fourteenth epode to begin his own *Ode to a Nightingale*. Dowson's poem also deals with the brevity of our life:

Vita summa brevis spem nos vetat incohare longam

They are not long, the weeping and the laughter,
Love and desire and hate:
I think they have no portion in us after
We pass the gate.

They are not long, the days of wine and roses:
Out of a misty dream.
Our path emerges for a while, then closes
Within a dream.

<https://creatureandcreator.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/vitae9xn.mp3>

The quotation is from Horace's Ode I:4: "Life's short span forbids us to entertain long-term hopes." Dowson's poem is quoted by Edmund, the younger son, in *Long Day's Journey into Night* (O'Neill, 1955, p. 130). The stage directions state "sardonically." His father rails against such morbidity. Edmund goes on to bait his father further with Baudelaire's "Be always drunken" (p. 132). Eugene O'Neill was well aware how seductive these ideas were, how easy it was to fall into the life of intoxication and oblivion, where talent is wasted and hopes washed away in the beauty of what might have been.



Sketch of Dowson by Charles Condor, late 1890s

Dowson did indeed waste away. After being rejected by Adelaide, he moved to France, where he eked out a living writing translations. He suffered from severe poverty, alcoholism, and tuberculosis. He returned to London in late summer of 1899, and finally succumbed on February 22, 1900. Yeats wrote to Lady Gregory, "Poor Dowson is dead. Since that girl in the restaurant married the waiter he has drunk hard and so gradually sank into consumption. It is a most pitiful and strange story" (quoted by Adams, 2000). Adelaide's marriage was not happy. She had an affair with another man, and died after a botched abortion in 1903 (Adams, 2000).

Dowson had converted to Catholicism in 1891. His conversion may have resulted in part from his courtship of Adelaide, in part from his relations with Lionel Johnson, in part from the fact that it was the thing to do. Whatever the cause, he was formally admitted to the Roman Catholic Church (Adams, 2000, pp 58-59). Yeats doubted his conviction: "Dowson adopted a Catholic point of view without, I think, joining that church, an act requiring energy and decision" (1936, p. x). Yet Dowson was sincere in his beliefs, and he found some release of his guilt and despair in the rituals of the church:

Extreme Unction

Upon the eyes, the lips, the feet,
On all the passages of sense,
The atoning oil is spread with sweet
Renewal of lost innocence.

The feet, that lately ran so fast
To meet desire, are soothly sealed;
The eyes that were so often cast
On vanity, are touched and healed.

From troublous sights and sound set free;
In such a twilight hour of breath,
Shall one retrace his life, or see,
Through shadows the true face of death?

Vials of mercy! Sacring oils!
I know not where nor when I come,
Nor through what wanderings and toils.
To crave of you Viaticum.

Yet when the walls of flesh grow weak,
In such an hour, it well may be,
Through mist and darkness, light will break,
And each anointed sense will see.

Viaticum is the set of provisions for a journey. The word is used for the final Eucharist – the communion given to the dying – but it hearkens back to Roman customs. In *Marius the Epicurean*, Pater (1985) considers the voyage of the soul released from the body in the chapter on the poem *Animula vagula* (little wandering soul) of Marcus Aurelius. Dowson's poem also recalls the death of Marius "Gentle fingers had applied to hands and feet, to all those old passage-ways of the senses, through which the world had come and gone for him, now so dim and obstructed, a medicinable oil" (p. 296). Marius had drifted among the many philosophies of Rome, but ultimately died a Christian martyr even though he had not

formally converted to the new faith. Dowson had converted; yet yet no priest was present at his death to anoint his body.

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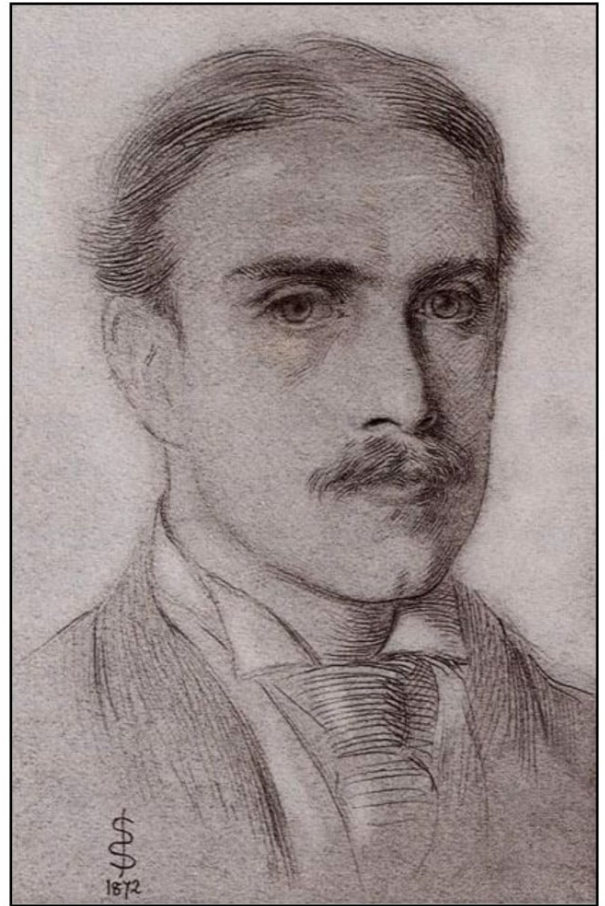
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Frost and Sun

In 1873, Walter Pater, a fellow at Brasenose College in Oxford, published *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. The book contained some previously published papers and several new essays on the poets, painters and philosophers of the Renaissance. The concluding chapter reworked some comments from an earlier paper on the poetry of William Morris to provide a summary of Pater's aesthetic philosophy. This combined a skepticism about anything beyond our immediate sensations, an agnosia about any higher power or any life beyond our present mortal span, and a delight in the pleasure that comes from experiencing beauty. The goal in life was to enjoy each moment as fully as possible:



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. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to seen in them by the finest senses? 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?

To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits: for, after all,

habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes two persons, things, situations, seem alike. 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, or any stirring of the sense, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening. (Pater, 1893, pp. 188-189)

The conclusion ends with the rallying cry of "art for art's sake" (Gautier's *l'art pour l'art*, Prettejohn, 2007), though in later editions Pater attenuated this to "art for its own sake:"

Well! we are all *condamnés*, as Victor Hugo says: we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve –*les hommes sont tous condamnés à mort avec des sursis indéfinis*: we have an interval, and then our place knows no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passion, the wisest, at least among "the children of the world", in art and song. For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us a quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which comes naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion –that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments'

sake. (Pater, 1893, p. 190)

Reviewers of the book complimented the author on his refined sensibility and elegant prose. The book contributed significantly to our understanding of the Renaissance. The chapter on Botticelli was the first consideration of this painter in the English language. Pater's sympathetic descriptions of the poems and the paintings were models of aesthetic interpretation.

However, the conclusion caused a scandal. To the Victorians life was serious. One was taught to think of the future and not the moment, to consider salvation before enjoyment, and to experience art for its meaning rather than its pleasure. John Wordsworth, grand-nephew of the poet and Pater's colleague at Brasenose, wrote to him that he considered the philosophy of the conclusion dangerous in that it might lead young minds to believe

that no fixed principles either of religion or morality can be regarded as certain, that the only thing worth living for is momentary enjoyment and that probably or certainly the soul dissolves at death into elements which are destined never to reunite (Heiler, 1988, p. 62).

Pater's former tutor W. W. Capes preached a sermon:

That is a poor philosophy of life which would concentrate all efforts upon self, and bid us console ourselves amid our short-lived pleasures, so they be only intense and multitudinous enough. (quoted in Donoghue, 1995, p. 58)

Soon after the publication of the book, Pater was involved in other scandals. In March, 1873, his friend Simeon Solomon, who had drawn the sketch used at the beginning of this post, was convicted in a London court of attempted sodomy. Pater was not involved in any way, but the event highlighted the fragility of his homosexual life. A year later, homoerotic letters from Pater to a young student at Balliol College were given to

Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol, who had tutored Pater and fostered his early academic career (Inman, 1991). The undergraduate, William Money Hardinge, was a talented poet and such an overt homosexual that he was known colloquially as the "Balliol Bugger." Hardinge was sent down, and Pater was reprimanded. The letters were never published, but Pater's progress at Oxford never went beyond his fellowship at Brasenose. Pater had been considered the next in line for the University Proctorship, but he was passed over and the appointment went to John Wordsworth.

Ethics and Aestheticism

Pater believed that his aesthetic philosophy had been misinterpreted. He removed the Conclusion from the 1877 edition of the book, though he replaced it in the later editions with a warning that its ideas should be treated with caution. Pater insisted that he did not condone the simple hedonism of Aristippus and the school of Cyrene (O'Keefe, 2002). In a chapter in his 1885 novel *Marius the Epicurean*, Pater considers the Cyreniacs and finds that the simple search for pleasure was insufficient.

Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die! – is a proposal, the real import of which differs immensely, according to the natural taste, and the acquired judgement of the guests who sit at the table ... the soul, which can make no sincere claim to have apprehended anything beyond the veil of immediate experience, yet never loses a sense of happiness in conforming to the highest moral ideal it can clearly define for itself. (Pater, 1885, p. 116)

Pater and Marius were more comfortable with Epicurus, who acknowledged that virtue can bring happiness, and who considered tranquility (*ataraxia*) more important than immediate satisfaction (O'Keefe, 2005). In his essay on

Winckelman in *The Renaissance*, Pater had advocated the serenity (*Heiterkeit*, p 176) that could come from the contemplation of Greek art. Both Pater and Epicurus were concerned with mortality and looked for some way to alleviate the fear of future death by living as intensely as possible in the present. Marius pointed out (p. 120) how these ideas resonate with Ecclesiastes 9:10:

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

Nevertheless, a theory of ethics is not easily derived from aesthetics (Hext, 2013; Tucker, 1991). The good and the beautiful are not necessarily related. Virtue is more associated with the ascetic than the indulgent. The appreciation of beauty can perhaps lead to morality by its cultivation of the self, educating the mind in sensitivity and empathy. Schiller (1794) and Arnold (1869) had both proposed that culture could replace religion in the education of the young and the promotion of the virtuous life.

Yet the aestheticism of Pater was far too individual to lead to social norms. He kept himself separate from society, in part because of his shyness, and in part because of his homosexuality. He was far more concerned with the refinement of his perceptions than with the progress of the world. His is an ethic more passive than active – a sympathetic attention to the human lot as portrayed in art rather than any compassionate action to alleviate that lot. Nevertheless, Pater's concentration on the individual remains a defense against any hijacking of art to support social norms. Who is to say that mainstream culture is correct?

Pater proposed that ethical sensibility derives from the sensual pleasure of contemplating the beautiful. For Pater morality was empirical rather than theoretical:

With this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch. What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy. (Pater, 1893, p. 189)

However, the relations between the good and the beautiful are tenuous at best. This is especially true if the beautiful is judged on the pleasure that it brings to the senses. The good may require sacrifice. What is the primary goal of action? Should we be good because the good is beautiful or only when the good is beautiful? (Hext, 2013, p. 177)

Pater's stress on the aesthetic moment – the intense experience of the here and now – attenuates any consideration of the consequences. This can be ethically problematic since the experience of beauty, especially in its Dionysian sense, can lead to evil. As Kate Hext (2013) points out

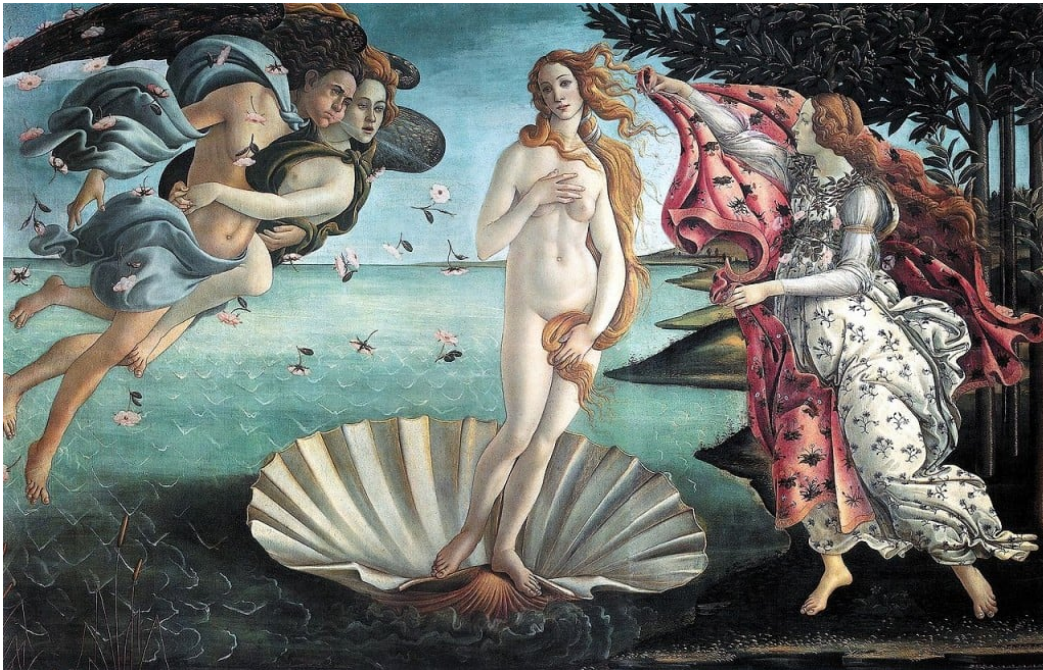
sensual 'ecstasy' may become uncontrollable, obscuring all distinctions between good and evil as the individual, intoxicated by his desire for greater and greater sensations, becomes aware only of his own pleasure (p. 178).

This may be too sharp a criticism. Pater was adamant that the proper appreciation of the beautiful leads to sympathy and compassion for our fellows. The experience of beauty is the way we can escape the fear of death, a fear we share with all others. In his description in *The Renaissance* of the paintings of Botticelli, he finds

a blending in him of a sympathy for humanity in its uncertain condition, its attractiveness, its investiture at rare moments in a character of loveliness and energy, with his consciousness of the shadow upon it of the great things from which it shrinks. (Pater, 1893, p. 47)

These ideas are particularly prominent in Pater's description of Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*:

The light is indeed cold—mere sunless dawn; but a later painter would have cloyed you with sunshine; and you can see the better for that quietness in the morning air each long promontory, as it slopes down to the water's edge. Men go forth to their labours until the evening; but she is awake before them, and you might think that the sorrow in her face was at the thought of the whole long day of love yet to come. An emblematical figure of the wind blows hard across the grey water, moving forward the dainty-lipped shell on which she sails, the sea "showing his teeth," as it moves, in thin lines of foam, and sucking in, one by one, the falling roses, each severe in outline, plucked off short at the stalk, but embrowned a little, as Botticelli's flowers always are. Botticelli meant all this imagery to be altogether pleasurable; and it was partly an incompleteness of resources, inseparable from the art of that time, that subdued and chilled it. But this predilection for minor tones counts also; and what is unmistakable is the sadness with which he has conceived the goddess of pleasure, as the depository of a great power over the lives of men. (Pater, 1893, pp. 46-47)



Modernism

Pater's contribution to our understanding of art was disparaged by T. S. Eliot in his 1930 essay on "Arnold and Pater" (Eliot, 1951):

His view of art, as expressed in *The Renaissance*, impressed itself upon a number of writers in the 'nineties, and propagated some confusion between life and art which is not wholly irresponsible for some untidy lives. The theory (if it can be called a theory) of 'art for art's sake' is still valid in so far as it can be taken as an exhortation to the artist to stick to his job; it never was and never can be valid for the spectator, reader or auditor.

The essay was written soon after Eliot's formal conversion to the Church of England. It reflected a view that religion is revealed rather than discerned, that ethics are given rather than proposed, and that art without religion is incomplete. Eliot wished for the days when religion played a more essential role in our society:

When religion is in a flourishing state, when the whole mind

of society is moderately healthy and in order, there is an easy and natural association between religion and art.

The reader of the essay might long for the earlier Eliot who found no such simple truths. Eliot was actually much influenced by Pater. The narrator of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (Eliot, 1917) is related in many ways to Walter Pater. He shares his aesthetic sensibility and his painful reticence. Indeed he may even share some of his words. Prufrock's "No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be" may derive from Pater's essay on Shakespeare's kings: "No! Shakespeare's kings are not, nor are meant to be, great men" (Fleissner, 1966)

Pace Eliot, Pater's ideas had far-reaching consequences. His immediate followers were the Decadents of the 1890s – Wilde, Johnson, Dowson, Symonds – who lived for the emotions of the moment without thought for the morrow. Yet Pater had more a deeper and more lasting influence on the Modernist movement in art, literature and philosophy (McGrath, 1986). His concentration on the individual experience – the here and now – led to the stream of consciousness of the novelists Joyce and Madox Ford. His idea of the intense emotional experience triggered by the beautiful became the idea of epiphany in poets such as Eliot and novelists such as Proust. Pater eschewed the absolute and found his home in the personal imagination: everything is relative to the perceiver. The Modernist version of the world is as much created in the mind as it is given in the world. McGrath (1986) quotes Nelson Goodman about the changes brought about by Modernism

The movement is from unique truth and a world fixed and found to a diversity of right and even conflicting versions or worlds in the making. (Goodman, 1978, p. x)

It is therefore fitting that W. B. Yeats chose as his first poem in the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936) a sentence from Pater's description of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*,

presented in the form of free verse (Rubin, 2011):

She is older than the rocks among which she sits;
Like the vampire,
She has been dead many times,
And learned the secrets of the grave;
And has been a diver in deep seas,
And keeps their fallen day about her;
And trafficked for strange webs with Eastern
merchants;
And, as Leda,
Was the mother of Helen of Troy,
And, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary;
And all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres
and flutes,
And lives only in the delicacy
With which it has moulded the changing lineaments,
And tinged the eyelids and the hands.



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