



DANTE AND US: THE RECEPTION OF DANTE IN MODERN ANGLOAMERICAN CULTURE

edited by *Dennis Looney,*
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Biancamaria Rizzardi

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c/o Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici,
Via S. Ottavio 20, 10124 - Torino
centroartidellamodernita.it

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GIOVANNI BASSI

A TURNING POINT

Walter Pater's Dante

ABSTRACT: This essay investigates Walter Pater's reception of Dante. From his juvenile production to his later writings, Pater's *oeuvre* is interspersed with references, quotations, and allusions to Dante, and often directly discusses important aspects of the poet and his works. Pater strongly sensualises Dante's idea of love, which he sees as functional to his own exploration of sensoriality. In this sense, his reading of Dante emphasises the features of Dante's realism (and symbolism) that are closer to his own poetics, interpreting them as emblematic of his artistic ideal of the fusion of matter and spirit. Moreover, Pater views Dante as instrumental in some of the cultural-historical phenomena – the Renaissance, Romanticism, modernity – which are pivotal for his aestheticist conception of history.

KEYWORDS: Dante, Pater, realism, modernity, senses, aesthetics.

Walter Pater's late narrative masterpiece, the proto-modernist "Emerald Uthwart" recounts the tragic coming-of-age story of a boy with a rare, enigmatic type of personality, from his birth in the scented gardens of Sussex to his premature death amid the soft flowers of his childhood.¹ The central section of the short story, which focuses on the protagonist's schoollyears at a prestigious college in Canterbury, contains one of the numerous allusions to Dante in Pater's works. By slightly altering Dante's apostrophising of Aristotle as "l maestro di color che sanno" ("the master of those who know," *Inferno* IV, l. 131), Pater likens the "sense of authority" imparted on children by the study of the classics to the "impenetrable glory round 'the masters of those who know'" (Pater 2014, 252).² Other than investing Pater's insight into the English educational system with the authority of Aristotle and the other Pagan sages included in Dante's Limbo, in this short story the quotation from Dante is not particularly meaningful per se and should rather be read as part of a constellation of references to classical literature which intersperse Pater's somewhat solemn representation of the protagonist's school. And yet, if this quotation does not add much to the interpretation of "Emerald Uthwart," it is certainly revealing of Pater's worship of Dante, whom in many respects he viewed—just as Dante himself viewed Aristotle—as "the master of those who know."

¹ This text was first published in periodical form in 1892 and then posthumously included in *Miscellaneous Studies* (1895).

² All references to the *Divina Commedia* are to Dante 2010, and are by *cantica*, and canto and line number in the body of the text.

The figure of Dante looms large in Pater's *oeuvre*. From his juvenile production to his later writings, Pater often mentioned, alluded to, or discussed, even at length, various aspects of Dante and his works. Quotations from Dante, albeit nearly always in English, are also rather frequent in Pater's writings. In addition to this pervasiveness, Pater's lifelong interest in Dante is also expressed by the centrality that he attributed to Dante in the history of literature and the arts, by his insistence, in other words, on Dante's fundamental place within Western cultural tradition. As a testimony to this, it suffices to mention that, in Pater's essay on "Style," published in 1888 and then collected in *Appreciations* (1889), Dante's *Divine Comedy* is numbered among the very few works, together with *Les Misérables*, *Paradise Lost*, and the King James Bible, which can be unquestionably regarded as "great art" (Pater 1974, 122). Indeed, Pater mentions Dante's concern with "the glory of God" (123) as a perfect example of the high moral purposes that should characterise great art.

Even though in his writings Pater discusses and uses exclusively the *Commedia* and the early prosimetrum *Vita Nova*, which were Dante's most popular books at the time, it appears that he had a certain degree of familiarity with, or at least, interest in, Dante's lesser-known works. In an 1879 letter to Alexander Macmillan Pater tries (unsuccessfully) to persuade the publisher to consider for publication a translation of Dante's *Convivio* that his young friend who would later become the linguist Edward Spencer Dodgson (1857-1922) was "anxious to make" (Evans 1970, 36). Presenting himself as *au courant* with the latest trends in Dante's reception, Pater remarks that the Dante-obsessed readership of the time would welcome a translation of the treatise: "there seems to be so large an interest felt just now on the subject of Dante that I should think a well-made translation of the 'Convito' might sell fairly" (37). In this regard, a translation would have seemed desirable for Pater, as he appears to have had a deep knowledge only of Dante's more famous (and much translated) works, a detail which may suggest that his contact with the Italian poet may have been mediated by translation. Pater had some knowledge of Italian, but it is possible that he first approached and then continued to read Dante with the assistance of the numerous and popular nineteenth-century English translation of his works. Among the more recent translations of Dante, he had some reservations towards both the translation of the *Commedia* (1867) by the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's (1807-1822) and that of 1851-1854 by the English linguist Charles Bagot Cayley (1823-1883), whereas he praised Dante Gabriel Rossetti's version of the *Vita Nova* included in *Early Italian Poets* (1861) and lamented that Rossetti had not applied his talent for translation also to the *Commedia*.³ While he quotes the *Vita Nova* from Rossetti's trail-blazing volume, he quotes the *Commedia* from the exceptionally popular 1814 translation published by the writer Henry Francis Cary (1772-1844), a fact which may indicate that he read Dante primarily from that version.⁴

³ See Shadwell 1892, xxiv.

⁴ For Cary and the other translators of the *Commedia* see Crisafulli 2000. For Cary see also Milbank 1998, 17-21.

Dante's considerable influence on Pater may have also had biographical reasons. Indeed, Pater's closest friend and literary executor Charles Lancelot Shadwell (1840-1919) was a scholar of Dante and one of the first members of the Oxford Dante Society, the second oldest Dante Society in the world.⁵ A fellow and later Provost of Oriel College, Shadwell joined the Society in 1877, nearly a year after its foundation, and it was probably through him that Pater gained admittance in 1890. Shadwell and his research into Dante are also behind Pater's only essay entirely devoted to the Italian poet, the Introduction that he wrote for Shadwell's Marvell-inflected translation of the cantos I-XXVII of Dante's *Purgatory*, which was published in 1892 (as he explains in the "Preface" to the volume, Shadwell [1892, xi] decided not to publish the entire *cantica* on the ground that "the concluding six cantos ... constitute, from several points of view, a distinct section of the poem"). It was probably around the time he was writing the Introduction to Shadwell's book that Pater started working on another essay on Dante, which was to be left unfinished.⁶ This essay survives as a manuscript fragment and is now held among the Walter Pater papers at Houghton Library, Harvard University. It has been recently digitised, which made it possible for me to make extensive use of it in this study.⁷

Given his reverence for Dante, Pater must have been antagonistic towards the negative criticism that the poet had attracted during the eighteenth century. On two different occasions, he openly contested Voltaire's caustic assertion in his *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764) that Dante's "reputation will ever be on the increase, because he is so little read" (Pater 1980, 65) ("sa reputation s'affirmira toujours [...] parce qu'on ne le lit guère" [Pater 2010, 46; Shadwell 1892, xiii]). Pater quoted Voltaire's comment first in the essay "The Poetry of Michelangelo"—published in 1871 and shortly after collected in the seminal *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873)—and then, twenty years later, in his Introduction to Shadwell's *Purgatory*.⁸ Strategically placed at the opening of the latter, Voltaire's passage furnishes Pater with the polemic target against which to formulate his own interpretation of Dante. As opposed to Dante's dramatic condition of neglect suggested by Voltaire, Pater's essay celebrates Dante as a universal poet, whose capacity to engage readers may vary, yet never falters throughout the centuries: "And withal Dante is a great poet, one of the greatest of poets, great like Sophocles and Shakespeare by a certain universality in his appeal to men's minds, and

⁵ For Shadwell see Evans 1970, xxxvii-xxxviii and Straub 2009, 116-118.

⁶ Both Evans 1970 and Straub (2008, par. 5; 2009, 112) date this fragment to 1892 on the grounds that it may be the mysterious "Dante article" which Pater makes reference to in a 1892 letter to Henry John Cockayne Cust (Evans 1970, 164).

⁷ The fragment is visible on (and downloadable from)

[https://iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:45474392\\$359i](https://iif.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:45474392$359i) [accessed 20 February 2022]. I have transcribed all the passages quoted in my essay from this digitised copy. I have normalized and added punctuation to Pater's text for the sake of clarity.

⁸ Pater inserted the quotation in French in the first two editions of *The Renaissance* (1873; 1877), but substituted it with an English translation starting with the third edition of the book (1888). He quoted again from the French original in the Introduction.

independent therefore of the special sensibilities of a particular age” (Shadwell 1892, xxiii).⁹

In light of Dante’s centrality in Pater’s thought, it is surprising how little critical material has been devoted to their relationship. Dante is generally only briefly mentioned in Pater scholarship, which often limits itself to gloss his references to the Italian poet that occur in his more dissected writings, and rarely focuses on less canonical Dante-related texts such as the Introduction and the Houghton Library fragment. By the same token, Pater has been rather neglected by specialists in the Anglophone reception of Dante. In Alison Milbank’s monograph on Dante and the Victorians (1998), the most recent book-length study devoted to the subject, Pater receives some attention, but Milbank’s account is far from comprehensive.¹⁰ The only exception to this paucity of secondary sources are an article (2008) and a book chapter (2009) by Julia Straub (the latter a reworking of the former). Straub’s discussion of Pater’s reception of Dante is convincing and well-informed. However, due to her primary focus on the figure of Beatrice, her exploration of the more general questions raised by Pater’s reading of Dante is at times somewhat economical. By elaborating on her study, I will seek to tackle these questions from a broader perspective and in greater detail.

A Great Poet, A Great Lover

Pater viewed the life and works of Dante as the emblem of physically felt and intense amorous feelings, the most representative expression of the overwhelming force and somatic dimension of the cultural and literary phenomenon known as courtly love. Indeed, when Pater discusses the sophisticated and passionate conception of erotic desire which informs much Medieval literature in Italy and France—a sentiment which he celebrates as an “ideal love” and invests with strong historical and aesthetic values (Pater 2010, 15)—Dante is often brought into play. In the essay *Aucassin and Nicolette*—which first appeared in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), and was then expanded and retitled *Two Early French Stories* in the later editions of the book—Pater remarks how the all-absorbing, sensual, and antinomian nature of courtly love is at the core of the more artistically significant passages of the titular tale, a mix of prose and verse in Old French which revolves around the vicissitudes of two young lovers from (seemingly) different backgrounds. Dante is evoked as the benchmark for the “ideal intensity of love” sung in the “profane poetry of the middle age” because he fully investigated (and experienced) the effects of love on his own vital faculties, recording how “the tyranny of that ‘Lord of terrible aspect’ became actually physical, blinding his senses and suspending his bodily forces” (Pater 2010, 10, 15). As in Dante, in the French story the tyrannical passion that consumes the young aristocrat Aucassin presents strong

⁹ See Straub 2009, 113.

¹⁰ See Milbank 1998, 1, 53-56.

bodily symptoms, to the point that, Pater observes, he “faints with love, as Dante fainted” (15).

Appropriately, Pater’s reference to the representation of love as an awful and destructive despot harks back to Dante’s *Vita Nova*, and in particular to the well-known episode from the initial paragraph in which the narrator recounts his dream of an especially gory personification of love. Both the colourfulness of the scene, where Love forces a half-naked and half-asleep Beatrice to feed on Dante’s heart, and Dante’s choice of words “Lord of terrible aspect,” which Pater quotes from Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s translation, must have struck Pater as particularly expressive of the physicality he sought to emphasise in his philosophy in that he alluded to the same episode and quoted again the same expression in his Roman novel *Marius the Epicurean* (1885). At the beginning of Chapter 6, a turning point in the novel, the phrase is used to connote Marius’s reaction to his reading of Apuleius’s *The Golden Ass*, and especially to the story of Cupid and Psyche. To Marius’s eyes “The petulant, boyish Cupid was become more like that ‘Lord of terrible aspect’, who stood at Dante’s bedside and wept, or had at least grown to the manly earnestness of the *Erôs* of Praxiteles” (Pater 1985, 87). As Marius’s imagination morphs the puerile god of Apuleius into a “graver” (87) and more virile deity, the myth of Cupid and Psyche helps to shape his developing worldview, stirring in him the cult of a “perfect imaginative love” (87). One of the key principles of Pater’s thought, this “perfect” passion is an aestheticized obsession with the beauty of the “human body,” a pure, almost religious adoration for bodily forms which is “centered upon a type of beauty entirely flawless and clean” (87). In its mingling of carnality and spirituality, this ideal is not remote from Pater’s somatic reading of courtly love which I have mentioned above, and the shared model of Dante seems to testify to this similarity.

Intriguingly, Pater’s sensualisation of Dante, his fixation with Dante’s “worship of the body” (Pater 2010, 11), seems to have had a certain degree of influence on the fin-de-siècle reception of the Italian poet himself. For instance, George Bornstein (1988) has hypothesised that Yeats’s re-appreciation of Dante in the 1890s was moulded on Pater’s discussion of the Italian poet, and especially on his Introduction to Shadwell’s *Purgatory*. By the same token, Pater may help to explain a somewhat mysterious allusion in Chapter 11 of Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890; 1891), where the narrator remarks how Dorian Gray’s dandyish, homoerotic charm was particularly bewitching for “very young men” because “to them he seemed to be of the company of those whom Dante describes as having sought to ‘make themselves perfect by the worship of beauty’” (Wilde 2006, 110). Wilde’s quotation is apparently not from Dante and critics have not yet been able to locate its exact source. However, whether or not there is a source, the tone of the quotation is certainly reminiscent of Pater’s idea of Dante, and this connection is fostered by the fact that Wilde’s words echo an almost identical (and equally sibylline) passage from *Marius the Epicurean*, where a young priest of Aesculapius exhorts Marius to be “of the number of those who, in the words of a poet who came long after, must be ‘made perfect by the love of visible beauty’” (Pater 1985, 53). In this sense, Wilde may have read Marius through the lenses of Pater’s Dante and thus identified “the poet who came long

after” with Dante. Moreover, the possibility that Wilde’s passage may owe something to Pater’s aestheticist conception of Dante is also corroborated by the fact that Wilde goes on to quote Théophile Gautier’s claim that “he was one for whom ‘the visible world existed’” (53), a revolutionary aesthetic declaration which Pater himself appropriated and quoted in *Plato and Platonism* (1893).¹¹

In “Aucassin and Nicolette” Pater’s reference to Dante’s fainting ‘with love’ may be reminiscent of two memorable passages of the *Commedia*, both of which are related to romantic passion, that is Dante’s ambiguous, much-debated reaction to hearing the tragic love story of Paolo and Francesca in *Inferno* V, as well as his emotional breakdown after seeing Beatrice again in the Earthly Paradise and hearing her words of reproach (*Purgatorio* XXXI, ll. 64-90). However, as indicated by the fact that he directly quotes from Dante’s prosimetrum, Pater here certainly hints also at the destabilizing effects of desire represented in the *Vita Nova*, in which Dante the character/narrator loses consciousness several times, or goes through comparable states of mental and physical derangement, due to the action of love.¹² Following an Aristotelian and Galenic-inflected commonplace that is typical of the Italian poetry of the Stilnovo, this violent form of lovesickness is often visualized as the disruption of the speaker’s vital spirits, fairy-like entities which regulate cognition and sense perception, and whose activity is strongly undermined by the sight or the memory of the beloved. In his emphasis on the effects of love on Dante’s “senses” and “bodily forces,” Pater seems to have been receptive to this markedly embodied type of psychology, and he might have also been thinking of it in his Introduction to Shadwell’s translation of *Purgatory*, when he opines that Dante’s psychological introspection in the *Commedia*, his attention to the movements of our inner world (“the mental or spiritual ways of others”), reminds the reader that “he is also the poet of the *Vita Nuova*” (Shadwell 1892, xix). Moreover, Pater’s appreciation and use of the *Vita Nova*, as well as his concern with Dante’s idea of love more in general, are also indicative of a larger tendency in the Victorian reception of the Italian poet. As noted by several scholars, the Victorians were particularly attracted to Dante the love poet and the unfortunate lover of the *Vita Nova*, whose poetry and biography they variously assimilated to, or at least put in creative dialogue with, bourgeois, middle-class values of family, femininity, and romantic relationships.¹³ This sentimental re-interpretation of Dante exploded after the alleged portrait of a young, seductive Dante by Giotto was discovered in Florence in 1840 as the result of a campaign partly financed by the Anglo-Florentine Seymour Kirkup (both the attribution of the painting to Giotto and the identification of the sitter with Dante have now been famously rejected). Pater seems to acknowledge both the momentousness of that portrait and the contemporary “Vita-

¹¹ See Pater 1974, 225. Gautier’s remark was reported by the brothers Edmond and Jules de Goncourt in their *Journal* (written from 1850 to 1896). One may find almost identical formulations in Gautier’s influential novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835).

¹² See *Vita Nova* 1. 5-18; 7. 1-8 (where Dante practically passes out after seeing Beatrice); 14.

¹³ For the Victorian reception of Dante see Milbank 1998, Ellis 1983, Cooksey 2003, Straub 2009. For the myth of Beatrice and the *Vita Nova* see Milbank 1998, especially 1-6, 102-161; Straub 2009; Straub 2012.

Nuov-ization” (Straub 2009, 206) of Dante when he speculates on the date of execution of “Giotto’s portrait of Dante the sweet singer of the *Vita Nova*” in his unfinished fragment on Dante (Houghton, f. 4). However, while Pater’s reading of Dante undoubtedly participated in the Victorian process of secularisation of the Italian poet, his association of Dante and his love poetry with fundamental questions related to sense perception, artistic form, and (cultural) history swerves away from contemporary moralising, ‘household’ appropriations of the Italian poet.

Between Body and Soul

In the essay on “The Poetry of Michelangelo” Pater’s discussion of Michelangelo is mostly carried out by comparing him with Dante. Intriguingly, especially in light of what I have pointed out above, one of the common points between Dante and Michelangelo lies in their poetic treatment of love. In Pater’s view, Michelangelo “learns from Dante rather than from Plato, that for lovers, the surfeiting of desire ... is a state less happy than misery full of hope” (Pater 2010, 50); on a more textual level, Michelangelo resembles Dante “in the repetition of the words *gentile* and *cortesia*, in the personification of *Amor*” and, most importantly here, “in the tendency to dwell minutely on the physical effects of the presence of a beloved object on the pulses and the heart” (50). And yet, although Michelangelo shares Dante’s bodily idea of love and carefully describes its effects on the senses, many aspects of his Platonizing poetics are antipodal to Dante, Pater argues. Albeit somewhat obliquely, Pater seems to contrast Michelangelo’s tension toward abstractness and “unseen beauty” (49), which results in metamorphic elemental imagery, with the low-relief stability and verbal richness of the poetic and narrative structure of Dante’s *Vita Nova*, which Pater defines as “a piece of figured work inlaid with incidents” (48-49). Whether or not one agrees with Pater’s rather opaque assessment, his use of terms related to art (“figured,” “inlaid with”) is particularly significant and offers clues about his overall interpretation of Dante.

Dante’s realism is a long-ingrained, much-vexed critical notion: throughout the centuries, the readers of Dante’s works, and especially of the *Commedia*, have reacted to and therefore tried to explain this quality of his verse in myriad ways.¹⁴ Irrespective of the comprehensive definition that one may want to give to this multi-layered concept, there is no doubt that one of its fundamental constituents is the unprecedented and unparalleled capacity of Dante’s language of reproducing, with extreme concision, the essential details of outer and inner reality in all their emotional and sensorial vividness. For its painterly energy, microscopic precision, and haptic concreteness, this unmistakable virtue of Dante’s verse—which almost amounts to an effect of reality—has been often explicated by drawing a parallel between Dante’s language and other, more material, forms of artistic representation. As is well known, Dante himself somewhat

¹⁴ For Dante’s realism see chiefly Barolini 1992; Barolini 2013.

encouraged this analogy when he expatiated, poetically, on the ‘visibile parlare’ and the cross-fertilization between the senses and different artistic media in *Purgatorio* X-XII (it should be noted, however, that the works of art depicted in those cantos are made by God and therefore attain a level of perfection unreachable by humankind).¹⁵

Twentieth century poets and scholars such as T. S. Eliot, Erich Auerbach, and Charles Singleton were very keen on attempting a systematic explanation of Dante’s realism, but this aspect of his poetry was much debated also by their Romantic and Victorian predecessors, who often saw it through the lenses of its sensorial and interartistic implications. For instance, the translator Henry Francis Cary remarked that Dante was the poet who “has afforded more lessons to the statuary and the painter, in the variety of objects they represent, and in the accuracy and spirit with which they are brought before the eye” (Milbank 1998, 20-21). Dante’s descriptive accuracy was also praised by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who, however, like Cary, had some reservations about Dante’s indulgence in grotesqueness and corporality (Milbank 1998, 21). The historian and politician Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859), who was well-versed in Italian literature, lauded in his important 1824 article on Dante the “consistency,” “minuteness,” and unmatched conciseness of Dante’s style as well as “the earnestness with which he labours to make the reader understand the exact shape and size of everything that he describes” (Macaulay 1860, 62, 71).¹⁶ In an equally influential essay on Milton published the year after, Macaulay juxtaposes Milton’s visionary sublimity to Dante and remarks how the latter “gives us the shape, the size, the colour, the sound, the smell, the taste” (Milbank 1998, 25). Closer to Pater’s time, John Ruskin revered Dante and wrote at length on him in many of his works, to the point that he even provided the reader with detailed descriptions of the landscape of Dante’s hereafter in *Modern Painters* III (1856). Owing to Dante’s graphic style and his combination of realism and transcendence, Ruskin considered him more a visual artist than a poet, and regarded the *Commedia* as a pictorial poem.¹⁷ In his *Introduction to the Study of Dante* (1872), Pater’s contemporary the poet and historian of the Renaissance John Addington Symonds (1840-1893) maintains that Dante’s “grotesqueness is the result of realism, rejecting nothing so long as it suited to express an idea” and that “Dante will be definite at any cost; he will be striking and pregnant” (Symonds 1893, 224).

As suggested by his use of artistic vocabulary to describe the *Vita Nova* in the essay on Michelangelo, Pater too was appreciative of the visual, ‘sensorial’ dimension of Dante’s verse. Indeed, it was almost inevitable that Dante’s perceptual intensity should be formative for a system of thought such as Pater’s, which delves deeply into questions such as intermediality, the sensual origin of artistic creativity and judgement, and the representational possibilities of language. In this sense, it is emblematic that Leigh Hunt’s assessment that Dante “writes things instead of words” (Milbank 1998, 22) is fascinatingly close (although not identical) to Pater’s manifesto claim in *Marius the*

¹⁵ See Barolini 1992, 122-142.

¹⁶ For Macaulay and Dante see Milbank 1998, 24-28.

¹⁷ See Milbank 1998, 29-44.

Epicurean that “words should be indeed things” (Pater 1985, 122). Tantalizing though they seem, similarities such as this are very general and in large part incidental. However, even though they cannot be taken as a testimony to direct intertextual influence, they indicate a certain degree of consonance between Pater’s aesthetics and some aspects of Dante’s poetics (and reception). Their significance is corroborated by the fact that several of Pater’s works directly tackle the question of Dante’s realism. In his essay on Dante Gabriel Rossetti, first published in 1883 and then collected in *Appreciations* (1889), Pater (1974, 200-201) likens the “definiteness of sensible imagery” of Rossetti’s poem “The Blessed Damozel” to Dante and “those early painters” of Dante’s time, and concludes that, besides their visionary subject-matter, the two poets share the same poetic principles of “particularisation” and “concrete definition.” In his Introduction to Shadwell’s *Purgatory* Pater points out that “Dante’s minuteness of touch” resembles “miniature painting,” and goes on to quote Dante’s memorable line about the art of miniature and its flourishing in Paris from *Purgatorio* XI (“*Ch’alluminare è chiamata in Parisi*” [Shadwell 1892, xviii; sic]), to which he alludes also at the beginning of “Aucassin and Nicolette” (Pater 2010, 9). When he discusses the difficulties in translating Dante’s vocabulary, he explicitly defines Dante as “so minute a ‘realist’” (Shadwell 1892, xxv). In his use of the adjective to indicate “close resemblance to what is real; fidelity of representation,” or the artistic rendering of “the precise details of the real thing or scene” Pater follows a tradition that, according to the *OED*, goes back to the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁸ In this respect, it is important to note that this sense of the word was certainly widespread, yet comparatively recent at Pater’s time, a detail which is particularly interesting because, as we shall see below, Pater’s notion of realism is profoundly connected with modernity.

Dante’s realism is also at the core of Pater’s fragment on the Italian poet, in which it is linked to what may be regarded as the main point of the text, that is Dante’s idea of art and his relationship with contemporary (Gothic) art and artists. Elaborating on a long-established critical terminology, Pater remarks that Dante’s poetry—especially in “the episode of the Earthly Paradise”—seems to be made of “coloured phrases” and “written pictures ... of life and nature,” linguistic elements that are so vivid as to appear “ready-made for the hand of the artist,” closer to images than to words (Houghton, f. 5). Pater’s interartistic approach to Dante is structural to the entire fragment. Pater illustrates Dante’s definition of human art (“*l’arte vostra*” meaning “crafts” in general and not merely “arts”) in *Inferno* XI, according to which, if nature is the product of the mind of God, and the works of men (including art) imitate nature, human art may therefore be viewed as “God’s grand-daughter” (f. 5). (Interestingly, in this point Pater is rather rigorous in that he inserts a superscript with the canto and line number and specifies that Dante refers chiefly to “practical” arts, even though he “might have admitted” that “creative arts” too are “derived immediately from nature” [f. 5].) The fragment mentions also the episode from the *Vita Nova* (23. 1-4) in which Dante is absorbed in drawing

¹⁸ *OED*, ‘realism’, item 4a.

angels and reads it as an example of how contemporary art influenced Dante, of how, in Pater's words, "Dante comes very close to the fine art of his time, rich and rigorous and innovating as it was," of how "the devotion to fine art which was so large an element in the mental atmosphere of his time was strong upon him too" (ff. 4-5). In exploring Dante's connection with visual art, Pater focuses especially on his reported friendship with Giotto. He recounts the popular anecdote about Dante and Giotto's children, which first appeared in Benvenuto da Imola's commentary to Dante's allusion to Giotto in *Purgatorio* XI.¹⁹ According to this story, Dante was surprised by the rustic, plain appearance of Giotto's children, which caused him to exclaim to his friend that it is was preposterous that such an accomplished creator of handsome figures like him should have begotten so unattractive children. To him Giotto wittily replied that he painted in daylight, whereas, to use Pater's words, the "faces" of his children were "begotten in the dark" (f. 2). Moreover, and most importantly here, Pater's fragment draws analogies between Dante's and Giotto's different means of artistic expression. Pater speculates on how Giotto's frescoes in Assisi might have been inspired by Dante's treatment of St. Francis' "mystical marriage to Poverty" (f. 3), and remarks that Giotto's works are "not less eloquent than Dante's poetry of beauty and holiness" (f. 2). The fragment points out how Giotto's paintings are, at least in some respects, not inferior to Dante's verse, but elsewhere Pater claims that the representational, aesthetic power of Dante's words overpasses contemporary visual art. In the essay on Botticelli, first published in 1870 and then collected in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, Giotto and the other artists of Dante's time are deemed inadequate to illustrate the *Divina Commedia* because they cannot emulate the special significance that Dante gives to sensible objects, thus failing to reproduce the complexity of his realism: "Giotto and the followers of Giotto, with their almost childish religious aim, had not learned to put that weight of meaning into outward things, light, colour, every-day gesture, which the poetry of the 'Divine Comedy' involves" (Pater 2010, 30).

Pater (2010, 31) opines that the first illustrator to pay justice to the *Commedia* was Botticelli because, like Dante, he was able to combine naturalism and "visionariness." Extremely sensitive to "outward things" (30), Botticelli bejewelled his works with detailed depictions of the natural world; yet, at the same time, he had a tendency to treat the "data" apprehended by sense perception as "the exponents of ideas, moods, visions" of his own interiority (31). If to Botticelli, "as to Dante, the scene, the colour, the outward image or gesture, comes with all its incisive and importunate reality," in Botticelli's and Dante's art sensorial profusion is not merely an end in itself, but functions also as the embodiment ("the double or repetition") of the feelings that it "awakes" in the artist's mind (31). In other words, in both Dante and Botticelli, Pater argues, sensible objects are always charged with subjective, if not symbolical, values. Botticelli's and Dante's similar mode of selecting and using sensations to represent outer and inner reality, their common type of realism, as it were, on the one hand fleshes out the invisible by moulding

¹⁹ For this anecdote see Pantone 2014.

the intellectual (and the sentimental) into sensual form, on the other hand etherealises physicality by infusing it with psycho-cognitive meaning. It is by virtue of this visionary realism that in Botticelli's and, most importantly, in Dante's works what is internal (or spiritual) and what is external (or material) practically merge.

As is well known, this fusion of sensuousness and spirituality, body and soul, is totemic for Pater's system of thought. It constitutes the basis of his definition of art—or, at least, of “good art,” as he specifies in the essay on “Style” (Pater 1974, 122)—and the rises and falls of this “artistic ideal” (Pater 2010, 127) over the course of time may be interpreted as one of the parameters that regulate his aestheticized narrative of (cultural) history. I shall return in due course to the historical implications of this principle, which Pater famously referred to as a “musical law” (127) because it is modelled on the perfect unity of form and content that is characteristic of music.²⁰ It suffices here to remark that Pater repeatedly points out Dante as one of the key examples of this ideal and therefore implicitly values the Italian poet as an antecedent of vital components of his own aesthetics. By the same token, Pater often mentions Dante as the touchstone for other artists who, either before or after him, sought to achieve a similar aesthetic condition. In the essay on Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a dyed-in-the-wool follower of Dante, Pater dwells on his theory of the intermingling between “matter” and “spirit” in order to better explain the physical aspects of Rossetti's conception of beauty and love. Dante has once again a prominent place in this discussion:

And yet, again as with Dante, to speak of his ideal type of beauty as material, is partly misleading. Spirit and matter, indeed, have been for the most part opposed, with a false contrast or antagonism, by schoolmen, whose artificial creation those abstractions really are. In our actual concrete experience, the two trains of phenomena which the words *matter* and *spirit* do but roughly distinguish, play inextricably into each other. Practically, the church of the Middle Age by its aesthetic worship, its sacramentalism, its real faith in the resurrection of the flesh, had set itself against that Manichean opposition of spirit and matter, and its results in men's way of taking life; and in this, Dante is the central representative of its spirit. To him, in the vehement and impassioned heat of his conceptions, the material and the spiritual are fused and blent: if the spiritual attains the definite visibility of a crystal, what is material loses its earthiness and impurity. (Pater 1974, 203)

The operation described above, which fixes spirituality into the tangible shape of a crystal while purifying corporality, enables the coalescence of opposites and is therefore propelled by some type of analogy, whether at a conceptual or linguistic level. In other words, Pater seems to say that Dante's verse—which he sees as an actualisation of his own artistic ideal—unifies “the material” and “the spiritual” thanks to the combined action of rich sensorial imagery (“particularisation”) and metaphorical structures (“visionariness”). Given the central role played by various forms of metaphor such as allegory, figurality, and/or typology in Dante's works, and especially in the *Commedia*, one could be tempted to liken the process of unification that is characteristic of Pater's

²⁰ I am quoting from Pater's frequently cited essay “The School of Giorgione,” first published in 1877 and then included, in a slightly edited form, in the third edition of *The Renaissance* (1888).

Dante to typological, allegorical or figural strategies, especially since they are, like Pater's process, ultimately based on analogy.²¹ Yet, it is important to remark that Pater's reading of Dante is decidedly not allegorical (or figural), at least not in the traditional sense. Indeed, although it connects two seemingly different planes of reality, Pater's very concept of the blending between matter and spirit is remote from typological systems. If in traditional allegory or typology earthly and transcendent beings are united via analogical devices, such as prefiguration and conventionality, which usually preserve the distinctness of the entities analogised, what Pater's process aims to achieve is precisely to blur this distinctness, and lead to unity and novelty. Admittedly, the notion of "type" is pivotal to Pater's thought, as persuasively explained by Carolyn Williams (1989, 123-142), but this centrality is here immaterial in that Pater deploys that notion mainly as a means of historical or aesthetic classification: his use of it pertains to the interpretation of recursive patterns in history, myth, or artistic configurations, and is therefore closer to "typification" (Williams 1989, 131) rather than typology proper. Moreover, even if one may go as far as to admit the presence of a strongly secularised form of typology in Pater, it would be misleading to read his idea of the fusion of matter and form typologically because this fusion represents not a consequence of, but one of the conditions for the existence of Paterian types.

While the unique realism of Pater's Dante cannot be explained in terms of allegory, it may be usefully defined as 'symbolical'. By using this adjective, I refer not merely to the notion of a thing representing or standing for something else—a general concept that can apply to all forms of analogy, allegory included—but to the specific late-eighteenth century and nineteenth century idea(s) of the symbol, a much-debated and tremendously complex set of theories which were paramount both for Pater and, most importantly here, for Pater's interpretation of Dante.²² This massive amount of theorization on the symbol was a transnational phenomenon which first originated in Immanuel Kant's philosophy, and was fully developed by Romantic or Romantic-related figures such as Goethe, Schiller, Schelling, as well as, in England, Coleridge and the diarist Henry Crabb Robinson (1775-1867), spreading through the artistic, philosophical, and literary discourse well into the second half of the nineteenth century, and preparing the ground for the emergence of innovative conceptions of literature, the arts, consciousness, and the body. Just as late-eighteenth century and early nineteenth century aesthetics are as numerous as they are various and, at times, conflicting, so "the post-Kantian symbol-concepts," which have frequently been analysed as the main issue of those aesthetics, "involve very different arguments and cannot be easily assimilated to one another" (Hühn and Vigus 2013, 6). For all their variety, however, all these theories of the symbol may be viewed as serving the same primary aesthetic and cognitive function. Indeed, all (post-)Kantian poetics and systems of thought were concerned with exploring the relationship between cognition, sensation, and creativity, and, as part of a general

²¹ For Dante and allegory see Freccero 2007; Martinez 2010; Kriesel 2019.

²² My discussion of post-Kantian symbolism is mainly based on the recent collection of essays Hühn and Vigus 2013, and Halmi 2007.

emphasis on imagination and intuition, they often developed the concept of the symbol as a modality of the imagination that is instrumental in connecting the mind and the senses, abstraction and concreteness. In this sense, post-Kantian symbols are generally understood as having at least one of these characteristics: they can be sensuous, embodied, non-discursive, rich in meaning (polysemous), self-referential, indirect, creative, intuitive, and, by virtue of these features, capable of *being* at the same time (and therefore of unifying) opposite things, the particular and the universal, the temporal and the eternal, subjectivity and objectivity. Interestingly, even though it is multifaceted and at times rather ambiguous, and presents much terminological and conceptual overlapping with previous analogical systems such as allegory itself, this new type of symbolism was often theorized in opposition to the notion of allegory, especially as exemplified by the highly codified allegories of eighteenth-century literature. In promoting the symbol as a synthesising, original, and sense-related mode of thought and creation, Coleridge and others disparaged allegory as artificial, standardized, and coldly intellectual. (I shall not here tackle the fiendishly difficult question of whether and to what extent symbol theory corresponded to a new poetic symbolism as it is not relevant to Pater's reception and discussion of Dante.)

All the pivotal phases of this redefinition of symbolism—late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century German philosophy and literary culture (from Winckelmann to Hegel), English and French Romanticism, as well as Anglophone and French post-Romanticism—had an enormous influence on Pater, and it is therefore no wonder that the (post-)Kantian theorization on the symbol contributed to moulding key elements of Pater's aesthetics, such as curiosity, strangeness, embodiment, and the fusion of the outer and inner (even the name of the psycho-cognitive faculty that Pater links to this ideal blending, the “imaginative reason,” harks back to Matthew Arnold's discussion of questions related to Romanticism and modernity, and may bear some trace of Kant's philosophy).²³ From this perspective, Pater's amalgamation of physicality and spirituality may be regarded as a materialistic, decidedly sensual reworking of the consubstantiality of opposites that is typical of post-Kantian (and especially Coleridge or Schelling-inflected) symbolism, and may therefore be treated as a symbolical operation. So, even though Pater learnt from his Romantic models also their terminological ambiguity and often used words such as ‘allegory’, ‘symbolism’, and related terms interchangeably, one could say that his idea of Dante's union of realism and subjectivity may be seen as a development of Romantic and post-Romantic symbol theories.²⁴ It is in this sense that,

²³ Pater 1980, 102, 385-386. Pater uses this expression both in the essay on Giorgione and in the first version of the essay on Wordsworth, published in *The Fortnightly Review* in 1874. For Pater and mid-eighteenth-century-to-early-nineteenth century German thought see Hext 2013, 44-63; Østermark-Johansen 2011, 71-111; McGrath 1986. For Pater and Romanticism see chiefly Daley 2001; Conlon 1982; Evangelista 2002; for Pater and post-Romanticism see Conlon 1982; McGrath 1986; Clements 1985, 77-139; and Østermark-Johansen 2011, 113-211.

²⁴ At the beginning of “The School of Giorgione” Pater uses the word “symbol” in a rather (post-)Kantian sense, when he defines the imaginative reason as the faculty which unifies every “thought or feeling” with its “sensible analogue or symbol” (Pater 1980, 109). Elsewhere Pater deploys this word and its derivatives more loosely to indicate the presence of a metaphorical or analogical process.

in my opinion, one could use terms such as ‘symbolic’ and ‘symbolism’ to refer both to Pater’s aesthetics and, what matters most here, to his reading of Dante.

At least on one notable occasion, Pater openly reveals his indebtedness to the Romantic discussion of the symbol and contrasts allegory with the Hellenising, sensuous, and sceptical type of symbolism (or rather realism?) that he posits at the core of artistic representation. (Given their simultaneous emphasis on haptic materiality and formalist polysemy, theories such as Pater’s seem almost to conflate the notions of realism and symbolism.) In the essay on Winckelmann, Pater’s second published essay (1867) later included in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, the Venus of Melos is preferred to both Beato Angelico’s figures and the Ephesian Diana because it better accomplishes the identification of matter and form. In this piece of sculpture, Pater argues, the spiritual “motive is not lightly or loosely attached to the sensuous form, as the meaning to the allegory, but saturates and is identical with it” (Pater 2010, 102). In light of such polarity between allegory and the symbol-like “sensuous form,” it is easy to understand that, when Pater remarks, in the essay on Michelangelo, that “For Dante, the amiable and devout materialism of the Middle Age sanctifies all that is presented by hand or eye” (Pater 2010, 49), he is not alluding to a figural, typological strategy, but referring to a consecration of sensorial stimulation on account of its epistemic (and therefore spiritual) significance, to a form of “aesthetic worship” even in divine matters. In this almost paradoxical view of medieval culture—where “devout” strangely collocates with “materialism”—sensuality can be elevated to godliness.

The divergence between Pater’s aestheticism and allegorical exegesis is particularly significant in relation to Dante, not only because much modern scholarship has unequivocally shown that in fact there *are* allegorical procedures operating in Dante’s works, but also because the allegorical or typological nature of Dante’s poetry, as well as the concept of typology in general, were much debated in the early-to-mid nineteenth century.²⁵ Although their rejection of allegory was often as strong as it was ambivalent, some Romantic writers such as the German August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845) and Coleridge applied their critique of allegorical modes to their interpretation of Dante’s works, whose allegorical features they frequently took pains to dismiss.²⁶ This tendency persisted in English literary culture well into the following decades, where, however, it was in some cases mitigated by the renewed interest in typology that emerged in the 1830s (an event which, if possible, caused even more confusion and superimposition between the uses of terms such as ‘allegory’ or ‘symbolism’). For instance, writers and poets such as Ruskin, and Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti—who were all conversant with scriptural typology—frequently re-appropriated Dante from the angle of their personal search for what may be seen as original forms of allegorical analogy.²⁷

²⁵ For Victorian typology see Landow 1980; Hönnighausen 1988, 1-82; and, with reference to Dante, Milbank 1998, 29-44, 102-149.

²⁶ See Milbank 1998, 121-122. For Coleridge see Halmi 2009.

²⁷ For Ruskin see Landow 1980 and Milbank 1998, 29-44. For the Rossettis see Tinkler-Villani 2004; Straub 2009, 37-73; Maxwell 1993; Hönnighausen 1972.

Other writers, like Pater or, according to Milbank (1998, 103), Matthew Arnold, seemed to adhere more fully to the Romantic dichotomy between symbol and allegory—at least as far as Dante was concerned—and had no qualms at playing down what today may be considered as the allegorical dimension of Dante’s *oeuvre*. An important example of this suspicion towards Dantesque allegory is that formulated by Tennyson’s much-mourned friend Arthur Henry Hallam (1811-1833), who, in commenting on the overly typological analysis of the *Commedia* carried out by the critic Gabriele Rossetti (1783-1854), concludes in a rather Paterian fashion that in Dante “form and spirit are one” (Milbank 1998, 121). In this sense, it comes as no surprise that Hallam, who promulgated an influential post-Romantic theory of poetry centred on the senses, predated a central point of Pater’s sensuous reading of Dante.

Pater explicitly links Dante to his ideal of the fusion of matter and spirit also in his later book *Plato and Platonism* (1893). Indeed, in Chapter 6 (“The Genius of Plato”), he explains the strong sensuousness (the “exquisite culture of the senses”) of Plato’s philosophy by recycling the same crystal-related turns of phrase and imagery which he had deployed in relation to Dante a decade before in his essay on Rossetti (Pater 1974, 230). Plato’s intimacy with “the sensible world” originates from an impassioned, almost physical, feeling of love (“he is a lover, a great lover, somewhat after the manner of Dante”): it is this amorous desire, this erotic appreciation of sensible things, that prompts both his and Dante’s cognitive and artistic merging of opposites (230). Dante’s unique focus on sense perception, whose nature and relationship with a specific idea of love I have discussed above, is called into play also in a previous chapter of Pater’s book, in which Plato’s sensorial rendering of the afterlife is analogised to Dante’s. An indication of how Plato’s “extremely visual fancy” could morph rather discarnate concepts such as the hereafter and the transmigration of souls into a “matter of very lively and presentable form and colour” (Pater 1893, 69), the Myth of Er recounted in the final part of Plato’s *Republic* resembles Dante’s visionary experience, Pater argues, especially in the depiction of the celestial world. Both Plato and Dante succeeded in injecting sensuality into spirituality, an artistic accomplishment which makes natural radiation and sacral radiance nearly indistinguishable. Plato’s Paradise is represented “with a quite Dantesque sensibility to coloured light—physical light or spiritual, you can hardly tell which, so perfectly is the inward sense blent with its visible counter-part, reminding one forcibly of the *Divine Comedy*, of which those closing pages of *The Republic* suggest an early outline” (69).

While the pervasiveness and importance of luminous images in Dante’s *Paradiso* have long been noted by both scholars and lay readers, the aspect of this heavenly light which Pater, in line with his aesthetics, mostly emphasises is its being at once physical and spiritual. More in general, as pointed out by Julia Straub (2008, par. 19; 2009, 119-127), Pater seems to have been drawn to Dante’s use of light imagery, which he alludes to in various texts. (This attraction is hardly surprising since Dante’s representation of luminosity was influential for many writers and poets who were formative for Pater, such

as Percy Bysshe Shelley.)²⁸ If *Plato and Platonism* refers to the brilliance of Paradise, a passage from “Winckelmann” discussed by Straub draws on the elegiac light of Purgatory to envisage the effect on Winckelmann of his “first years in Rome” (Pater 2010, 93).²⁹ Just as Dante creeps out of the darkness of Hell into the atmospheric purity of Purgatory and “is filled with a sharp and joyful sense of light” (93) that brings in ‘a moment of moral and metaphysical clarification and elevation’ (Straub 2008, par. 19), so Winckelmann—who came to Italy from the cultural obscurantism of Germany—experienced a similar intellectual and aesthetic illumination from his close contact with antiquity (“which is pre-eminently intellectual light”; Pater 2010, 93).

As remarked by Straub (2009, 118-129), Pater’s focus on Dante’s light imagery also characterizes his idiosyncratic use of the figure of Beatrice. In this respect, Pater’s connection between Beatrice and luminosity may seem hardly innovative. Like other female figures sung in Italian poetry of Dante’s time and thereafter, in the *Vita Nova* and, even more so, in the *Commedia* Beatrice is idealised as a luminous, sacral, apparition, with beaming eyes and a beatific aura (indeed, her memorable representation contributed to cementing the epiphany of radiant, sanctified women as a structural motif of European love poetry). Moreover, the coruscating sanctity of Beatrice, as well as several other social, political, and sentimental aspects of her persona, were right at the centre of Victorian cultural discourse during Pater’s time.³⁰ From Ruskin to William Gladstone, from George Eliot to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the Victorians were absolutely obsessed with Beatrice, to the point that her “function and status ... and the question of whether she was a real, historical figure or an allegory, became one of the most important aspects of the Victorian reception of Dante” (Straub 2008, par. 1). Despite (or perhaps owing to) such a complex reception, Pater managed to re-interpret Beatrice and her radiance from the perspective of his theoretical agenda. In his earliest surviving essay “Diaphaneité,” read as a paper at the Oxford University’s Old Mortality Society in 1864 and published posthumously by Shadwell, “the supreme moral charm in the Beatrice of the *Commedia*” is the first of several analogues that Pater (2014, 77) provides as a way of illustrating the singular “type of character” he advocates in the text.³¹ Because of her moral and ontological superiority, which gives her agency and intellectual authority in the poem, Beatrice is suited to symbolising the type of subjectivity described by Pater, which is innocent and submissive, and yet, precisely because of its ineffectual purity (or rather “transparency”), truly revolutionary. Just as Beatrice can come to Dante’s aid and alter his fate by virtue of her higher state, so the diaphanous personality can be the vehicle of historical and cultural change due to its “paradoxical union of sheer passivity with ‘unconscious activity’” (Williams 1989, 179). As hinted above, Pater’s analogy between Beatrice and his “transparent hero” (173) is also based on their common luminousness. Immediately after his reference to Beatrice, Pater (2014, 77) observes that the

²⁸ For Shelley and Pater see Maxwell 2012.

²⁹ This passage is analysed in Straub 2009, 119-120.

³⁰ See Milbank 1998, 102-116; Straub, 20120; Straub 2009, 1-37.

³¹ See Straub 2009, 118-121.

diaphanous individuality captivates the world with its “fine edge of light,” and, as if sprung from that passage, similar images of luminosity infuse the entire essay. Like Beatrice, diaphanous types are enveloped with supernatural light, as is suggested by the very term chosen to describe them (the titular “Diaphaneité”). In this sense, one may argue that the paradisiac glow of Beatrice may help to elucidate the enigmatic light-related title of the essay—a word which is probably Pater’s own coinage and has been interpreted in various ways.³² The significance of this Dantesque undertone is bolstered by the fact that Pater (81) calls his hero a “clear crystal nature,” thus deploying the metaphor of the crystal which he develops, in relation to Dante, in his later essays.

Across the Ages, Towards Modernity

In his fragment on Dante, Pater hints at the “remorseless law of changing taste” (Houghton, f. 2) that is expounded in *Purgatorio* XI in relation to Giotto’s fame. If Pater’s allusion is clear, his reading of Dante’s poem is here particularly idiosyncratic. Indeed, Dante’s much-dissected virtuoso passage (ll. 91-108) does not refer specifically to how fast artistic judgement mutates historically and socially, but, more broadly, denounces the ephemerality of one’s artistic supremacy in order to chastise human pride. In this sense, Pater is here once again secularizing Dante, reading his religiously-informed admonishment from a modern historical and aesthetic perspective. However, even though he shifts its focus away from the Christian idea of vanity towards a form of cultural relativism, the fact that Pater chooses to highlight this passage is symptomatic. In Pater’s view, Dante is not merely a pioneer of important aspects of his aesthetics but is also instrumental in triggering some of the cultural-historical revolutions, the moments of “changing taste,” as it were, which his system of thought sets out to describe.

For his innovative exaltation of sensuality, as well as his visionary realism that blends outer and inner reality, Dante played a key role in the epochal change that Pater identifies with the Renaissance.³³ As he explains at the beginning of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, Pater does not limit the notion of the Renaissance to the “revival of classical antiquity” (Pater 2010, 10) which flourished in Italy from the late fourteenth century, but analyses it as a much more complex phenomenon, that is the progressive emergence of a new, humanistic worldview. Of this new set of beliefs, which is animated by a sense of intellectual and imaginative freedom and dignity, by “the love of the things of the intellect and imagination for their own sake” (10), Pater retraces the origins to the end of the High Middle Age, more particularly to late-twelfth and early thirteenth century

³² A recent discussion of Pater’s text and its title is in Lene Østermark-Johansen’s Introduction to her edition of Pater’s *Imaginary Portraits* (Pater 2014, 13-17, especially 15). See also Varty 1991 and Williams 1989, 172-174.

³³ For Pater’s idea of the Renaissance see chiefly Østermark-Johansen 2011, 15-69; Bullen 1994, chap. 12; Barolsky 1987.

France. What he terms the “mediæval Renaissance” comes thus to designate “the assertion of the liberty of the heart in the middle age” and is characterised by hostility towards the oppressive religious and moral dogmas of the time, by the centrality of the “pleasures of the senses and the imagination,” and by the cultivation of physical and artistic beauty (16). Best exemplified by Provençal poetry and its “magnificent aftergrowth ... in Italy and France” (10), this medieval cultural rebirth, Pater argues, anticipates and lays the ground for the Hellenism of the following centuries. Dante, who fed on the French and Italian roots of the Renaissance, brought the characteristics of this phenomenon to the utmost and therefore became “the central expression and type” (15) of that cultural, historical, and artistic renovation. As a testimony to his momentousness, references or allusions to Dante are pervasive in *The Renaissance*. To give a measure of this omnipresence, it suffices to observe that Dante is either mentioned or discussed in six out of the nine essays included in the 1893 edition of the book (excluding the “Preface” and “Conclusion”).

Despite (or perhaps owing to) Dante’s contribution to the episteme of the Renaissance, Pater praises the *Divine Comedy* as the “peculiar and perfect flower of the Middle Age” in the Introduction to Shadwell’s *Purgatory* (Shadwell 1892, xxvi). A similar focus on the medieval dimension of Dante is also in his fragment on the Italian poet. The fragment opens with a quotation of the first line of Cary’s popular translation of the *Commedia* and uses this passage to articulate Pater’s reading of a key moment in the history of (medieval) art: “‘The midway of this our mortal life’, Dante’s thirtieth year, is the year 1300, a great year, a turning-point, in the history of the arts” (Houghton, f. 1). While he misreads Dante’s allusion to his age (since Dante was undisputedly thirty-five and not thirty in 1300, when he began his journey through the afterlife), Pater adroitly deploys the image of the “midway” as a means of introducing his account of how, at the turn of the century, phenomena such as the influence of Gothic art on Italian architecture and the rise of Giotto profoundly altered the artistic landscape of Italy (and Europe). Moreover, by presenting these pivotal events from the angle of Dante’s poetic narrative, Pater is inextricably knitting together Dante and contemporary visual art. In this regard, because of its link with medieval artistic culture, Pater’s celebration of Dante as the “central embodiment” of the “spirit”—a very Paterian term—of the Middle Age (Shadwell 1892, xiii) may be reminiscent of Ruskin’s discussion of Dante in *Modern Painters* II-V (1846-1860) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853). Intriguingly, as noticed by Straub (2009, 112, 150), a passage from the second volume of *The Stones of Venice* (1853) tackles many of the questions explored by Pater in his fragment, whose opening sentence it closely echoes:

I have above said, that all great European art is rooted in the thirteenth century; and it seems to me that there is a kind of central year about which we may consider the energy of the Middle Ages to be gathered; a kind of focus of time, which, by what is to my mind a most touching and impressive Divine appointment, has been marked for us by the greatest writer of the Middle Ages, in the first words he utters; namely, the year 1300, the “mezzo del cammin” of the life of Dante. Now, therefore, to Giotto,

the contemporary of Dante, and who drew Dante's still existing portrait in this very year, 1300, we may always look for the central mediæval idea in any subject. (Ruskin 1904, 400)

This passage almost undoubtedly testifies to Pater's familiarity with, if not direct use of, Ruskin's text.³⁴ And yet, although both Ruskin and Pater give Dante a central role in the development of medieval culture and Gothic art, their readings of the Italian poet diverge in many respects. While Pater views Dante as the apex of the medieval phase of the Renaissance, Ruskin (1904, 187) glorifies him as the emblem of an ideal, harmonious perfection of the human faculties ("the central man of all the world, as representing in perfect balance the imaginative, moral, and intellectual faculties, all at their highest"), a quintessentially medieval condition which Ruskin contrasts with the sociocultural decadence linked to the degeneration of Gothic art and the advent of the Renaissance. In this sense, it is indicative that, even though it suggests a connection between Pater and Ruskin, the passage from *The Stones of Venice* quoted above is nevertheless underpinned by a rather anti-Paterian opposition between the Middle Age and the Renaissance. Indeed, immediately after his canonisation of Dante and Giotto as the most representative medieval artists, in this section Ruskin goes on to unfavourably compare the typical Renaissance depiction of Cupid to that of Giotto. The divergence between the two iconographies is revealing: "there is not any minor circumstance more indicative of the *intense* difference between the mediæval and the Renaissance spirit, than the mode in which this god is represented" (Ruskin 1904, 400). If Pater's secularising interpretation of Dante points towards the Renaissance and modernity more in general—the year 1300 is a "turning-point," the beginning of a new era—Ruskin's reading is nostalgic, retrospective, and religiously-informed.

Further evidence that Pater associated Dante with the Renaissance is offered by his interest in Dante's special type of Hellenism. Perhaps elaborating on previous critical assertions such as Macaulay's claim that Dante was the only modern poet to successfully incorporate pagan mythology into Christian theology (Macaulay 1860, 69), Pater remarks that in the *Divine Comedy* there is a perfect coexistence of classical literary culture and Christian religion. Although he never regarded Hellenism as the only manifestation of the Renaissance, Pater considered it a structural element, as we have seen above, and this explains why he read Dante's eclectic classicism as proto-humanistic: "Dante's large-minded treatment of all forms of classic power and achievement marks a stage of progress, from the narrower sentiment of the Middle Age, towards 'humanism,' towards the mental attitude of the Renaissance and of the modern world" (Shadwell 1892, xxii-xxiii).

If Hellenism and the Renaissance are two of Pater's subjects of choice, Romanticism is undoubtedly another point of reference for his thought. As is well known, since his very first essays, Pater delved deeply into the phenomenon of Romantic literary culture, which he valued, like ancient Greece and its early modern revival, as a watershed event in

³⁴ For Ruskin and Pater see chiefly Daley 2001 and Brake 2001.

cultural history. (Incidentally, it is partly because of their similar degree of aesthetic-historical impact that Pater is often keen on emphasising the elements of continuity of these three moments of change: all of them, for instance, advocate the union of spirit and matter that I have discussed above.) Pater was practically the first, in England, to use terms such as ‘Romanticism’ and ‘romantic’ systematically (and positively) to classify British and European artists and works of art that nowadays may be unquestionably defined as ‘Romantic’. And yet, although at times he applies this category in a rather chronologically restricted, philological sense, he more often than not extends it so as to include other moments of European culture, from his own times back to antiquity.³⁵ In this respect, his memorable, compelling definition of Romanticism as the “addition of strangeness to beauty” and the “addition of curiosity” to the “desire of beauty” lends itself to describe an underlying tendency in literary and art history, “an ever-present, an enduring principle” (Pater 1974, 211).

Just as Pater’s aesthetics was profoundly indebted to Romanticism, so the Romantics were influenced by Dante, whom they often revered as the forefather of their poetic, social, and political ideas.³⁶ In this sense, given Dante’s much-studied influence on the Romantics, as well as Pater’s lifelong engagement with and inclusive conception of Romanticism, it comes as no surprise that Pater viewed Dante as a proto-Romantic poet. Indeed, in Pater’s essay on Romanticism, which was originally published in periodical form in 1876, and later slightly revised and appended as a “Postscript” to *Appreciations*, Dante is said to epitomise the medieval counterpart (or rather phase) of Romantic poetry. The essay’s approach to Romantic medievalism is twofold. From the point of view of the nineteenth-century reception of the Middle Age, Pater (1974, 213) observes that some features of medieval art particularly appealed to Romantic curiosity, providing a source for the “strange beauty” prized by Romantic artists. More interestingly, from the perspective of Medieval culture itself, he remarks that, although the action of (Romantic) curiosity as both a creative and interpretive principle is transhistorical, this tension towards stranger and therefore more exciting aesthetic pleasures is especially strong in those epochs such as the ‘later Middle Age’ (or, in other words, the Medieval Renaissance), where true interest in the aesthetic was finally awoken ‘after a long *ennui*’, that is after a period of artistic decline. (As is well known, and as Pater himself indicates in the essay, certain correlates of his idea of curiosity, such as the cultivation of the pleasures of art and the appreciation of art based on the type of pleasurable impressions it gives, are general tenets of his own aesthetics.)

The Romantic dimension of medieval culture is encapsulated by Dante’s verse, especially by its rather Wordsworthian focus on powerful, subjective feeling. This Romantic vein is evident, Pater (1974, 214) argues, in Dante’s reworking of Virgil’s episode of the “blood of Polydorus” spouting from the broken branches of a myrtle bush (*Aeneid*, 3, ll. 22-68): Dante amplifies and sensationalises Virgil’s passage into an entire

³⁵ For Pater and Romanticism see n. 23 above.

³⁶ For Dante and Romanticism see Audeh and Havelly 2012; Ellis 1983; Burwick and Douglass 2011; Havelly 1998.

canto of the *Commedia* (*Inferno* XIII), imbuing it with “a sentiment of profound pity,” that is with the “higher degree of passion” that, in Pater’s early essay “Aesthetic Poetry,” characterises the “romantic school” (190).³⁷ A similar attention towards Romantic-inflected individuality is also in Pater’s Introduction to Shadwell’s *Purgatory*. In the text, Pater remarks that the uniqueness of the *Commedia* derives, at least in key part, from Dante’s outpouring of his “personality” into the “grandest of subject,” from the way in which the millenarian tradition of Christian thought (“that immense intellectual deposit of thirteen believing centuries”) is tinged with his interiority (Shadwell 1892, xv). As seen above, such emphasis on sensation and subjectivity is also structural to both Pater’s reception of Dante and his idea of the Renaissance, and it therefore comes as no surprise that he himself makes this correlation explicit in the essay on Romanticism. Here Pater’s notions of the Renaissance and Romanticism almost coalesce; especially in light of his role in *The Renaissance*, Dante stands out as a consummate practitioner of both aesthetic poles as well as the first great author of European literature:

And it is especially in that period of intellectual disturbance, immediately preceding Dante, amid which the romance languages define themselves at last, that this temper is manifested. Here, in the literature of Provence, the very name of *romanticism* is stamped with its true signification: here we have indeed a romantic world, grotesque even, in the strength of its passions, almost insane in its curious expression of them, drawing all things into its sphere, making the birds, nay! lifeless things, its voices and messengers, yet so penetrated with the desire for beauty and sweetness, that it begets a wholly new species of poetry, in which the *Renaissance* may be said to begin. (214)

In the essay on Michelangelo, Pater opines that Dante’s main difference from Michelangelo lies in the fact that he is not as steeped in scepticism as his early modern successor. While Michelangelo’s modern state of doubtfulness is “ignorant” of the first principles of things (“of the spiritual world, of the new body and its laws”), Dante’s metaphysical framework is unshakeable: “Dante’s belief in immortality is formal, precise, and firm, as much so almost as that of a child who thinks the dead will hear if you cry loud enough” (Pater 2010, 54). In associating Dante with epistemic certainty and the immortality of the soul, Pater parallels a larger tendency of the Victorian period, where Dante’s worldview was valued as a source of existential stability and even used to shape the Victorians’ problematic idea of the afterlife.³⁸ And yet, although the essay on Michelangelo points out this anti-modern aspect of Dante, most of Pater’s assessment of the Italian poet insists on his sheer modernity.³⁹ As I have shown above, this connection with modernity is obviously at the core of Pater’s essays on the Renaissance, in which he significantly remarks that Dante and Boccaccio were regarded as “modern” by Botticelli

³⁷ “Aesthetic Poetry” was first published in periodical form in 1868 under the title “Poems by William Morris.” It was later revised and included in *Appreciations*.

³⁸ See Milbank 1998, 164-201. In his explanatory notes to *The Renaissance*, Donald Hill has persuasively shown how Pater’s phrase “the new body” echoes Statius’s discussion of the shape of the soul in the afterlife in *Purgatorio* XXV, ll. 79-108 (Pater 1980, 358-359).

³⁹ Another aspect of Dante’s anti-modernity is in Pater’s essay on Botticelli, where Pater (2010, 31) criticises Dante for his too rigidly hierarchical vision of the world.

(Pater 2010, 29), and also informs his reading of Romanticism. In this light, it is not difficult to understand why Pater went as far as to contend that Dante's modern condition directly resonated with his own, post-Romantic times.

More or less implied in all of Pater's references to Dante, the issue of Dante's modernity is fully developed in the Introduction to Shadwell's *Purgatory*. At the beginning of the text, Pater refutes Voltaire's slanderous comment about the neglect of Dante's writings by observing that, on the contrary, his own age was particularly infatuated with the Italian poet. The contemporary mania for Dante, his "popularity" both with lay readers and "admirable scholars," could not be simply reduced to an escapist form of Medievalism, Pater argues, but has more specific, and profound, reasons, which he saw as linked to the "genius of the nineteenth century itself" (Shadwell 1892, xiv). Rich in historical sensibility as it was, Pater felt that his own age had opportunely broken down past prejudices against Dante and could finally benefit from a more philological appreciation of the poet's works.⁴⁰ Yet, in his view, nineteenth-century historicism is, interestingly, just one of the aspects that motivates the aesthetic reevaluation of Dante: "in our own age, sympathetic, eclectic, cosmopolitan, full of curiosity and abounding in 'historic sense,' certain barriers to a right appreciation of him have been removed" (xv). Communality of feeling, eclecticism, cosmopolitanism, and Romantic-derived curiosity: these are all features that Pater frequently attributed to modern times, and may be subsumed under his notions of complexity and multifariousness.⁴¹ One may find, for instance, a slightly negative representation of such characteristics in "Winckelmann," where the self-reflexive "modern world" is described as full of "conflicted claims" and "entangled interests," "distracted by so many sorrows, so many preoccupations" (Pater 2010, 115). The idea of modernity is definitely implicated also by Pater's review of Arthur Symons's first collection *Days and Nights* (1889), in which "modern life" is optimistically characterised by its "variety and complexity" (Symons 2017, 181). Rather intriguingly, the aspects of modernity that are consonant with Dante's genius may be seen as fundamental ingredients of the age's protean complexity, and therefore the complex and various world which Pater associates with the undoubtedly modern, if not modernist, poems of Arthur Symons is also the same world that he finds particularly responsive to Dante's aesthetics, poetics, and language; as we shall see below, an allusion to Dante in Pater's review seems to corroborate this conjecture.

The all-encompassing, tumultuous richness of modernity is also central to Pater's essay on "Style." Indeed, in the essay the modern age's suitability for being represented through "imaginative prose, and its consequent resistance to being sung in poetry, are partly motivated by the "chaotic variety and complexity of its interests" (Pater 1974, 106). As is well known, in "Style" Pater is concerned with establishing a verbal equivalent of his ideal of the fusion of matter and spirit—something which he finds in the principle

⁴⁰ See Straub 2009, 113.

⁴¹ For Pater's observations on modernity see Bristow 2018.

of the “architectural” arrangement of the text, where every part should be structural to the whole, in the search for the perfect correspondence between words, thoughts, and feelings, and in the scrupulous, fastidious preoccupation with polysemy, with exacting the maximum amount of meaning from every expression (in his motto, the frugality “which makes the most of a word;” Pater 1974, 110).⁴² In this regard, it is therefore rather telling that style plays an important role in Pater’s modernising discussion of Dante, and that it does so in terms close to Pater’s own stylistic ideal. In the Introduction Pater lauds “the craftiest interweaving” of the components of the *Commedia*, its “deliberate evenness of execution,” its “sense of unity and proportion” in tandem with its handling “of every sort of minute literary beauty,” its “expressiveness” and rhythmic prowess (Shadwell 1892, xvi). In assessing Dante’s style through the lenses of his own poetics, Pater focuses also on Dante’s outstanding lexical range, inventiveness, and accuracy, noting rather acutely how Dante “is one of those artists whose general effect largely depends on vocabulary, on the minute particles of which his work is wrought, on the colour and outline of single words and phrases” (xxv).

The second aspect of modernity that, according to “Style,” lies behind the aesthetic supremacy of imaginative prose is “an all-pervading naturalism, a curiosity about everything whatever as it really is” (Pater 1974, 106). I have already emphasised the significance of a similarly naturalistic mode of representation, or realism, for Dante’s works and reception, and in particular its importance in Pater’s reading of the Italian poet. In light of this, it is no wonder that, in Pater’s account, one of the points of contact between the “genius” of Dante and late-nineteenth century culture is precisely their common realistic tendency. In the Introduction, Pater remarks that the “minuteness” of Dante’s “handiwork,” its meticulous rendering of details, fascinates his contemporaries because they are not less “realists” than Dante himself (Shadwell 1892, xvii). In Pater’s view, Dante’s verbal incisiveness satisfies the scientific disposition of the time, “connects itself with the empirical character of our science, our philosophic faith in the concrete, the particular” (xviii). In this sense, Dante’s realism is seen as consonant with positivism or, at least, with scientific empiricism, with the dominant late-nineteenth century belief that reality can, and therefore should, be analysed experimentally, objectively, and quantitatively. Moreover, just as this epistemic framework sought to examine external and internal phenomena as ultimately composed of the same, quantifiable matter, so Dante’s language is not merely adhesive to externality, Pater specifies, but could also capture the spectral, elusive world of our interiority. Dante’s realism is animated by “a minute sense of the external world and its beauty,” but also characterised by “a minute sense of the phenomena of the mind,” a fact which makes Dante as “skilful” a “psychologist” as his modern readers (xix).

Pater is very keen, in his discussion, on pointing out the intersections between realism as a contemporary set of beliefs and the realism of Dante’s verse. While he refers to his contemporaries as “realists” on account of their empiricist faith, later in the Introduction

⁴² For “Style” see Østermark-Johansen 2011, 277-331.

Pater, as noted above, clearly marks out Dante as a “realist” on account of his mimetic language. In this sense, Pater seems here to presuppose a connection between his aesthetic and philosophical-historical concepts of realism, and therefore to imply that Dante’s realism is not merely engaged in dialogue with a general realistic temper of Victorian society, but also with a specific late-nineteenth century form of artistic realism. Indeed, that his use of the word ‘realism’ and its derivatives may bear a faint trace of the more recent artistic trends of the period is indicated by Pater himself in the Introduction: just as Pater’s age is attracted to Dante’s “minuteness of touch,” so “The modern artist, the modern student of art”—who seeks to apply a similar type of realism in their representation of the world—will find in Dante a perfect handling of their artistic ideal (Shadwell 1892, xviii-xix). Determining whether Pater’s passage alludes to a particular artistic or literary current is something of a challenging task—it would be mainly a matter of speculation—and probably falls outside the remit of my study. It is sufficient here to note that Pater was probably referring, rather generically, to the propensity for realism of much coeval literature and art—something close to the “so called ‘realism’ in art” mentioned in the review of Wilde’s *Dorian Gray* (263) that he published the year before in *The Bookman* (Pater 1974, 263); most importantly, it is vital to remark that Pater believed that Dante could be inspirational for contemporary art.

Pater’s Introduction contends that Dante’s modernity and artistic excellence are especially evident in the *Purgatorio*. Neither infernal nor celestial, the second realm of the afterlife is in some ways similar to our everyday reality, and thus more expressive of the earthly, sensuous, and art-related dimension that Pater emphasises in Dante. Pater observes that Dante’s “fineness of touch ... is at its height in the placid and temperate regions of the *Purgatorio*,” where all the “delicacies”—a rather epicurean term—of inner and outer life are fully visible (Shadwell 1892, xx). Moreover, as pointed out by Straub (2008, par. 8-9; 2009, 113-114), Pater explains the modernity of the *Purgatorio* as an effect of the religious spirit of his epoch (“an age of hope”), in which the widespread “religious scepticism” provoked a compensating sense of “hope or hopefulness,” a social feeling that is close to the “sentiment” that imbues Dante’s second *cantica* (Shadwell 1892, xx-xxi). This primacy of the *Purgatorio* in the Introduction may be certainly motivated by the fact that Pater was introducing a translation of this specific *cantica*, but the association of the *Purgatorio* with worldliness and the “modern spirit” is also suggested by a much earlier essay. In “Sandro Botticelli” Pater (2010, 30) laments that the Italian painter had not illustrated Dante’s *Purgatorio* instead of the *Inferno* because the former’s “subdued imagery” would have been less tricky for him to represent than the grotesqueness of the first *cantica* (as noted by Hill, Pater had no knowledge of the set of Botticelli’s drawings of the *Commedia* which were first housed in the private collection of the Duke of Hamilton and then purchased in 1882 by the Berlin prints museum: this set contains illustrations of all the cantos of the *Purgatorio*).⁴³ Moreover, Pater’s essay seems to imply that the *Purgatorio*’s “subdued” reality was not merely less problematic to depict,

⁴³ See Pater 1980, 335.

but also especially congenial to Botticelli, who was interested in “that middle world in which men take no side in great conflicts, and decide no great causes, and make great refusals,” that is “what Dante scorns as unworthy alike of heaven and hell” (Pater 2010, 32). This “middle world” has been convincingly likened to both the Vestibule of Hell, as proposed by Hill (Pater 1980, 337-338), and the Antepurgatory, as suggested by Straub (2009, 114-115), but it may also be seen as including the entire Purgatory and even earthly life, especially since it is populated by rather mundane figures, “men and women, in their mixed and uncertain condition, always attractive ... but saddened perpetually” (Pater 2010, 32). Botticelli’s preference for the “middle world,” Pater argues, is representative of his aesthetic novelty, a detail which betokens Pater’s association of the *Purgatorio* with the modern world.

An underlying connection between modernity and the *Purgatorio* is also at the core of Pater’s review of Symons’s collection that I have mentioned above. From the very beginning of the review, which opens by calling into play concepts such as “modern literature” and “modern life” (Symons 2017, 181), Pater depicts Symons as a quintessentially modern poet. He remarks that Symons’s “themes” are “almost exclusively those of the present day” and that even the literary sources which he is overly eager to capitalise on are primarily concerned with actuality (“the actual life around us”) (181). In order to fully convey the typical feelings encapsulated by Symons’s verse, Pater inserts a rather unexpected allusion to Dante:

The reader of Dante will remember those words of La Pia in the *Purgatorio*, so dramatic in their brevity that they have seemed to interpret many a problematic scene of pictorial art. Shape their exacter meaning as we may, they record an instance of human passion, under the influence of some intellectual subtlety in the air, going to its end by paths round-about. Love casuistries, impassioned satiety, love’s inversion into cruelty, are experiences even more characteristic of our late day than of Dante’s somewhat sophisticated middle age; and it is just this complexion of sentiment—a grand passion, entangled in scruples, refinements, after-thoughts, reserved, repressed, but none the less masterful for that, conserving all its energies for expression in some unexpected way—that Mr Symons presents, with unmistakable insight. (181-182)

In Pater’s labyrinthine passage, Symons’s up-to-the-minute way of treating complex psychology—a technique which in his next two collections blossomed into an avant-garde form of impressionism—is compared to Dante’s minimalistic rendering of subtle, undefinable passions at the end of *Purgatorio* V. Pater is here evoking the much-discussed episode of “La Pia,” an enigmatic character whom the first commentators of the *Commedia* identified with an alleged noblewoman from Siena, Pia de’ Tolomei. Dante encounters the soul of this woman in the Antepurgatory, where she first asks him to remember her (in other words, to pray for her) and then succinctly “informs the wandering poet that her husband was somehow instrumental in her death in the malaria infested Maremma” (Saglia 2011, 118). Due to her tragic (and hazy) romantic story—it was generally believed that she had been murdered by her jealous or unfaithful husband—Pia de’ Tolomei became a much-celebrated figure in the nineteenth century,

both in Italy and in England, where she was sung by popular poets such as Felicia Hemans (1793-1835) and painted by artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti.⁴⁴ However, it was not the dark legend of her violent death, but the conciseness and suggestiveness of her words that resonated with Pater:

«Deh, quando tu sarai tornato al mondo
e riposato de la lunga via»,
seguitò 'l terzo spirito al secondo,
«Ricorditi di me, che son la Pia;
Siena mi fé, disfecemi Maremma:
salsi colui che 'n nanellata pria
disposando m'avea con la sua gemma». (*Purgatorio* V, ll. 130-136)

By recording “an instance of human passion” in all its complexity, the few, poignant lines uttered by “La Pia” prefigure, in Pater’s view, all the uncanny intricacies of modern love (and life). Once again, the greatness of Dante bridges the gap between his “somewhat sophisticated middle age” and Pater’s time. Dante was so “central” to Pater that it even came to his mind when he wanted to find an analogue of the turn-of-the-century poet Symonds. Dante’s pioneering handling of sensoriality, his realism infused with spirituality, and his revolutionary impact on cultural history left an indelible mark on Pater’s thought. “La Pia” begged Dante to remember her; we can be in no doubt that Pater remembered Dante.

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⁴⁴ See Saglia 2011. For Rossetti’s painting *La Pia de’ Tolomei* (1868-1880) see <<http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/s207.rap.html>> [accessed 20 February 2022].

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