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Diaphaneity, Divinity, Disguise:

The Vocation of the Scholar in Walter Pater

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Walter Pater's (1839-1894) earliest surviving essay, 'Diaphaneitè' (July 1864), has long aroused considerable critical attention—and autobiographical curiosity—among Pater scholars who have attempted to examine his first imaginary portrait of a diaphanous character (arguably of his friend Charles Lancelot Shadwell) in close relation to his later richly intertextual, and more stylistically elaborate writings, whether critical or fictional.¹ This little germ of the nineteenth-century British aesthetic revolution, triggered by the Oxford don who was 'supposed to have a new and daring philosophy of his own' and also already by 1864 to have 'introduced the aesthetic hero to literary history', was possibly, according to Gerald Monsman, the 'perfected form' of the other essay he had read before the Old Mortality Society on 20 February 1864.² Monsman also records that the original essay (on 'Subjective Immortality') 'anticipated the public reaction to his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) which has been regarded popularly as Oxford's first response to Aestheticism.'³ Although it is true that previous Pater scholarship has variously revealed much of the complex interaction between Pater's text and other literary or cultural contexts of his age, there remains a gap to be filled between the early and later Pater: a need to retrace a hitherto neglected thread of Pater's simultaneous, synthetic notion of diaphaneity and divinity; the notion often disguised with his deeply self-referential language or sense of facts, with his earlier vision of subjective immortality still

lingering.⁴

Soon after the publication of Pater's *Studies*, an unsigned review by Mrs Mark Pattison (Emilia Frances Pattison) appeared in the *Westminster Review*. By that time, the *Westminster* was more than familiar to Pater; for he had already anonymously contributed to the forum his crucial early writings such as 'Coleridge's Writings' (1866), 'Winckelmann' (1867) and also 'Poems by William Morris' (1868) which was later cut short and mutely reused for the immensely controversial 'Conclusion' to *Studies*, which the author as a result removed from his second edition (1877) and restored in the third edition (1888) with his sidestepping apology to the implied reader: '[the previous conclusion] might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall'.⁵

Not only was the fluid conclusion deliberately omitted, however, but Pater also effaced from his later editions a keyword of his original title 'history', the result, it can be assumed, of such critical responses as Mrs Pattison's. Herself a historian, who later published *The Renaissance of Art in France* (1879), and who also was described in 1907 as 'the one critic who ever stumbled upon the precise truth about Pater',⁶ she said:

The title [*Studies in the History of the Renaissance*] is misleading. The historical element is precisely that which is wanting, and its absence makes the weak place of the whole book. [. . .] Mr Pater writes of the Renaissance as if it were a kind of sentimental revolution having no relation to the conditions of the actual world.⁷

Although as a family friend of Pater she justly 'paid an ungrudging tribute to its unique and grateful bouquet' and 'the radiance of jewel' in his handling of words, it is obvious that his writing of the history of the Renaissance seemed to her to be sadly lacking, to use her words, 'the true scientific method, through

the life of the time of which [his subject] was an outcome'.⁸ Curiously enough, fifteen years after these severe criticisms Pater, in a slightly altered essay on 'Joachim du Bellay', sensitively acknowledged her book on the French Renaissance as 'a work of great taste and learning'.⁹ Still, Pater did not essentially surrender his historical, or subjective characters to the objections against him, in which criticism his Renaissance was simply considered 'not history', nor was it 'even to be relied on for accurate statement of simple matters of fact.'¹⁰ His essay on 'Style', which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* within a year of the publication of the third edition of *Studies [The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry]*, adroitly functions as another, yet far more progressive vindication of his own scholarly and literary career, where he states:

[I]n history so far as it conforms to scientific rule, we have a literary domain where the imagination may be thought to be always an intruder. And as, in all science, the functions of literature reduce themselves eventually to the transcribing of fact, so all the excellences of literary form in regard to science are reducible to various kinds of painstaking [. . . .] Yet here again, the writer's sense of fact, in history especially, and in all those complex subjects which do but lie on the borders of science, will still take the place of fact, in various degrees. Your historian, for instance, with absolutely truthful intention, amid the multitude of facts presented to him, must needs select, and in selecting assert something of his own humour, something that comes not of the world without but of a vision within.¹¹

Finding his historiographical exemplars in such ancients and moderns as Gibbon, Livy, Tacitus, and Michelet, Pater at this point reflectively transcribes each of their historic threads to promote his own literary, and even artistic visions: 'each, as he thus modifies, pass[es] into the domain of art proper. For just in

proportion as the writer's aim, consciously or unconsciously, comes to be the transcribing, not of the world, not of mere fact, but of his sense of it, he becomes an artist, his work *fine art*'.¹² In this context, it is also of some use to refer to one of Pater's early biographers who, almost in passing, seems to have so frankly touched the true nature of his subject: 'In those days there were probably a hundred scholars who knew considerably more about art than the author of *The Renaissance*, but there was only one Pater. But Pater was something far higher than a mere scholar. He was a creator'.¹³

In March 1886, between the publication of *Marius the Epicurean* and his restored conclusion to *The Renaissance*, Pater tacitly restated his persistent view on his own vocation by means of a quotation. In the unsigned review for the *Guardian* on Mrs Humphry Ward's English translation of Henri-Frédéric Amiel's *Journal Intime*, Pater maintains that he has randomly chosen from her translation some notable passages, so as to recommend them to the reader; and one of them strongly works to defend his former, rejected if only in appearance, view:

A book of 'thoughts' should be a book that may be fairly dipped into, and yield good quotable sayings. Here are some of its random offerings: [. . .] 'It is not history which teaches conscience to be honest; it is the conscience which educates history. Fact is corrupting,—it is we who correct it by the persistence of our ideal.'¹⁴

For Pater, who is essentially a moral educator of history rather than 'a mere scholar' or a hedonistic demagogue, writing the past does not so much mean to reflect objective fact in reality through 'the true scientific method' as to reform the corruptible facts according to his own, and more universally 'our' own, ideal which needs support particularly by the scholarly conscience.¹⁵

Remarkably, Pater's quotation above originally consisted of part of a

short paragraph in Amiel's diary entry written between 18 November 1851 and 1 February 1852.¹⁶ In Mrs Ward's text, the extract is followed by these two sentences: 'The soul moralises the past in order not to be demoralised by it. Like the alchemists of the middle age, she finds in the crucible of experience only the gold that she herself has poured into it.'¹⁷ Pater, obviously having read the passage in the English translation, also performs the role of the alchemist about whom he speaks, although it is only represented in a distorting mirror. By wearing two different masks in gender and nationality, namely mingling the thoughts of Amiel with the words of Mrs Ward, Pater corresponds his own 'soul' with theirs. Here he is acting as a stylistically synthetic, 'sexless' reviewer, a reminder of his enigmatic '*Ur-portrait*', '*Diaphaneité*'.¹⁸ Disguising himself with a random quotation in an unsigned review, Pater reveals his fundamentally subversive, ongoing ideal.

In his notes on 'Leonardo da Vinci' (1869), Pater represents the ingenious 'lover of strange souls' as an anomalistic variation of the alchemist of the Middle Ages.¹⁹ For him Leonardo is 'Poring over his crucibles, making experiments with colour, trying, by a strange variation of the alchemist's dream, to discover the secret, not of an elixir to make man's natural life immortal, but of giving immortality to the subtlest and most delicate effects of painting'. Although Leonardo's soul is described as 'clear glass', which thus could have been easily identified with that of the Paterian crystal character, Pater depicts how Leonardo later quitted being the 'cheerful, objective painter' for some reason. As his artistic life goes on, Leonardo appears to Pater to become more and more esoteric: now he was 'rather the sorcerer or the magician, possessed of curious secrets and a hidden knowledge, living in a world of which he alone possessed the key'. Pater portrays the painter's soul losing its transparency, because his 'clear purpose' is now overclouded, and also 'the fine chaser's hand' is mysteriously perplexed. For Pater, it is certain that Leonardo has 'almost ceased to be an artist' at one period of his life.²⁰ Thus, his strange soul finally fades away into

‘All the thoughts and experience of the world’, ‘The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences’, just like *La Gioconda* or Lady Lisa, whose curious, synthetic beauty he depicts, and who is thus nothing but ‘the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea’; therefore, as opposed to the ‘white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity’.²¹ Followed by W. B. Yeats who famously chose the euphuistic illustration of Mona Lisa as his poetical firebrand for *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* in 1936,²² Pater had perceived Leonardo as a characteristic representation of modernity in the nineteenth century.

By contrast, Pater does not properly focus on Raphael in his studies of the Renaissance, where he barely mentions the artist like the embodiment of an old dream yet in a quite different manner. Differentiating the two masters of art from each other, Pater clearly expresses his view on the historical, Janus-faced movement:

The movement of the fifteenth century was two-fold; partly the Renaissance, partly also the coming of what is called the ‘modern spirit’, with its realism, its appeal to experience. It comprehended a return to antiquity, and a return to nature. Raphael represents the return to antiquity, and Leonardo the return to nature. In this return to nature, he was seeking to satisfy a boundless curiosity by her perpetual surprises, a microscopic sense of finish by her *finesse*, or delicacy of operation, that *subtilitas naturae* which Bacon notices.²³

Modernity for Pater is a movement or spirit rather than the period, because only a movement or spirit can make it possible to repeat itself in every period of history, and thus can reproduce in his own century a certain condition of a certain period, whereas the period itself cannot recur. Since he distances himself from realism, experience and nature, Raphael goes back to antiquity at the expense of

the ‘modern spirit’, and still remains a representative of the Renaissance. However, Pater here seems to use the term ‘the Renaissance’ rather as a period than a movement, in a far narrower meaning than he does in ‘Aucassin and Nicolette’ [later retitled ‘Two Early French Stories’] (1872), where he states: ‘The word *Renaissance*, indeed, is now generally used to denote not merely the revival of classical antiquity which took place in the fifteenth century, [. . .] but a whole complex movement, of which that revival of classical antiquity was but one element or symptom’.²⁴ It is likely that in writing the history of the Renaissance, by this time Pater had come to feel somewhat deeper desire rather than sympathy, for Leonardesque modernity than for a mere Raphaelesque revival of antiquity or the Renaissance in its narrower sense.

What must immediately be added, however, is that Pater’s ideal human type is deeply connected to the nature of Raphael as he conceives it, and that such a nature dates back in its origin to Pater’s intimate association with an undergraduate essay community at Oxford, named the Old Mortality Society. Before entering into an analysis of Pater’s peculiar characterisation of Raphael, it is essential to consider Pater’s intellectual commitment to the Society. As some scholars have more or less pointed out, the Old Mortality actually marked an epoch in the Victorian and even later British intellectual context, whether political, religious, educational, or literary.²⁵ It was founded by John Nichol (1833-1894) in November of 1856 among his friends such as Albert Venn Dicey, George B. Hill, Algernon S. Grenfell, George Rankine Luke, and Algernon C. Swinburne; most of the founding members were the students of Balliol. Monsman also offers a correct list of the members and points out the historical significance of the Old Mortality in the century, which ‘numbered 35 members during the decade that it flourished (1856-66) and included in its ranks such brilliant minds as those of A. C. Swinburne, Walter Pater, J. A. Symonds, Thomas Hill Green, Edward Caird, and James Bryce, without whose contributions the Victorian era certainly would not have been what it was’.²⁶ Other members who joined in the 1860s include

important figures like Charles Lancelot Shadwell and Ingram Bywater, both of whom were Pater's lifelong friends at Oxford since their early years, and later colleagues.

The themes of the papers read to the Old Mortality, if confined to those of the early years, clearly reflect the broad interests of the members which can also suggest Pater's range of knowledge. For example, essays were read on 'Plato, Herodotus and Thucydides, Greek tragedy and modern drama, Cicero, Wiclif, Raleigh, Gibbon, Boswell, Junius, Hume, Fichte, Carlyle, Froude, Montalembert, and [. . .] English literature from Bede to Browning.'²⁷ Unmistakably, as Monsman maintains, the Old Mortality is 'a perfect microcosm of the intellectual ferment of the era, and it affords the student of Victorian thought a rare opportunity to examine the common intellectual background of these men during the formative years of their genius.'²⁸ Intellectually, however, the Old Mortality is of course not the only forum for Pater to have had a relation to 'the conditions of the actual world'—something which Mrs Pattison ironically denied in him—but it at least strongly operates as an essential, transitional stage, where each 'I' can incorporate the rather small audience at first and then be dissolved into the more universal condition of 'we', in order to achieve their mutual aim; that is, to teach history for its own sake.

It is thus worth noting that each member's national or local awareness also pervades the intellectual atmosphere of the Old Mortality. In this context, it may be of some use to remember the name of the Society, which was derived from Walter Scott's nationalistic novel based on the Covenanters in the seventeenth century. Epitomised in Nichol's academic career, who belatedly came to Oxford after matriculating at Glasgow, and later became Professor of English at Glasgow (1862-89), the Society's 'distinctive qualities owed much to the Scots influence, [. . .] most of whom were Balliol men supported by the Snell Exhibitions.' As the mature 'students of Carlyle and German idealism', their thoughts were also mixed with those of the members who, for instance,

after being greatly infected by Thomas Arnold's liberal education at Rugby, brought with them the 'ideals of social radicalism and a distrust of the mystical element in Tractarianism'.²⁹

Pater, though himself neither Scottish or Rugbeian, yet a voracious reader of Continental literature and philosophy among many other subjects, was also immersed in such an overtly progressive, intellectual context; for it was the Old Mortality for which he composed his two crucial papers. 'Diaphaneité' was actually one of two that was written for the Society. The manuscript of the other essay read on 20 February, 'Subjective Immortality', was unfortunately lost, and yet its content can be more or less reconstructed from some personal records related to the meeting. Samuel Roebuck Brooke, a conservative member in the ultra radical Society, was one of those who witnessed it.³⁰ It should be noted that on 28 February 1863 Brooke read his own paper on 'Liberal Education amongst the Lower Classes' which he was against. And after that he recorded the response from the audience of whom Pater was one: 'The conservative principles adopted in the Essay could scarcely suit "Ultra Liberals", and therefore the discussion was almost one-sided.' Brooke's antithetical words can be useful enough to throw into relief the Society's consensus—and also Pater's personal view—on the development of liberal education, which ought to ultimately aim at the cultivation of the Victorians in general. In this context, referring to Pater's lost essay read the following year, Brooke wrote in his diary entry for the very day of the meeting: 'Pater's Essay this evening was one of the most thoroughly infidel productions it has ever been our pain to listen to.'³¹ However, considering Brooke's conservative position in the Society and his former comment on its religious views that they are 'disagreeable in nature', it is still doubtful that his defensive use of 'our pain' can thoroughly be taken on trust.³²

Whether or not it was 'infidel', it is of great significance that Brooke also mentioned about the theme of the essay in which Pater 'advocated "self-culture"'.³³ Soon after that event, Brooke read his paper on 29 February, in

which he took objection to Pater's previously submitted idea that 'a future state is unpracticable', and called it 'the absurdity'.³⁴ About the controversy over the interpretation of the distinction between subjective immortality and annihilation, Monsman argues that the Rev. Henry Parry Liddon's references to Johan Gottlieb Fichte in his diary and letters, that Gerard Manley Hopkins told him about Pater's essay on 'Fichte's Ideal Student',³⁵ though 'not completely',³⁶ may serve to 'illuminate Pater's position on the relationship of self-culture to subjective immortality and allow us to correct Brooke's distortions and to surmise what Pater may have said.'³⁷

In her meticulous study on Pater's reading and library borrowings, Billie Andrew Inman has pointed out that Pater could have read Fichte's lecture-essays on the ideal scholar during his winter holidays, such as *The Vocation of the Scholar* (at Jena in 1794) and *The Nature of the Scholar* (at Erlangen in 1805); for he gave his address 'only a short walk from the British Museum' to renew his reader's ticket on 26 December 1863, two months before he read his paper on 'Subjective Immortality' at Oxford.³⁸ In his 1794 lecture, as Inman summarises, 'Fichte emphasizes that self-culture requires a harmonizing of the faculties of the mind'. Moreover, she briefly traces the afterlife of Fichte's idea of self-culture to its spiritual equivalents in Victorian England, including Matthew Arnold's notion of 'culture', and Pater's idea of diaphanous nature having the 'equipoise' of faculties, which leads to his later 'well balanced' characters.³⁹

Perhaps Pater's most elusive essay, 'Diaphaneité', slowly reveals the mystical nature of such a mind and character. The ideal human type, as he attests, 'does not take the eye by breadth of colour; rather it is that fine edge of light, where the elements of our moral nature refine themselves to the burning point. It crosses rather than follows the main current of the world's life.'⁴⁰ This nature, if somewhat sexually liberated, morally supports and anticipates both Pater's 'Preface' and 'Conclusion' to *The Renaissance*; for in the former he mentions 'that other life of refined pleasure and action',⁴¹ while in the latter, success in life

is 'To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy'.⁴² The nature Pater presupposes is therefore not only temporarily 'felt like a sweet aroma in early manhood', but also, as 'there are flushes of it in all of us', recurs 'in every period of life'.⁴³ Pater also regards it as 'a basement type': being a type of life 'People have often tried to find', and also which differs from that of the philosopher, the saint, or the artist. Rather, his ideal human type, which is far from being 'the pedant, or the conservative, or anything rash and irreverent', 'must be one discontented with society as it is'.⁴⁴ Until the very end of the essay, Pater in this way suspends and prolongs his ambitious statement, although even the conclusion itself still does not fully determine the nature he has been advocating. The speech ends with his dramatic prophecy that 'A majority of such [nature] would be the regeneration of the world.'⁴⁵

Before the radical undergraduates of the Old Mortality, however, Pater's conclusion distances itself from the extremes, of mere radicalism or aloofness. In his diaphanous character, he has actually hidden his sense of history: 'The nature before us is revolutionist [. . .] But in this nature revolutionism is softened, harmonised, subdued as by distance. It is the revolutionism of one who has slept a hundred years.' It is also 'like the reminiscence of a forgotten culture', as well as 'a relic from the classical age, laid open by accident to our alien modern atmosphere.'⁴⁶ Here a kind of indifference blended with revolutionism creates something new or modern, yet which is at the same time historically moderated, therefore naturally avoiding any kind of excess or rashness. In this context, Pater finds his synthetic ideal in both historical and imaginative characters, such as Dante's Beatrice, the spirit represented typically in Thomas à Kempis's *De Imitatione Christi* [*The Imitation of Christ*], and Charlotte Corday depicted by Carlyle in his history of the French Revolution, and with them, according to Pater, also comes Raphael who has a crystal, heroic nature beyond the centuries:

It is not the guise of Luther or Spinoza; rather it is that of Raphael, who

in the midst of the Reformation and the Renaissance, himself lightened up by them, yielded himself to neither, but stood still to live upon himself, even in outward form a youth, almost an infant, yet surprising all the world. [. . .] Over and over again the world has been surprised by the heroism, the insight, the passion, of this clear crystal nature.⁴⁷

For Pater, Raphael is able to surprise the world not merely because he is passionate and insightful, but also because he is at least spiritually isolated, ‘as by distance’, from anything dependent around him. What should not be forgotten, however, is that Pater himself, who perceives the crystal nature of Raphael in perspective, with the future regeneration in mind, cannot wholly be independent of outer turbulence or the circumstances that are far from the condition of music.

Outside of Oxford, such a crystal nature had literally met with a popularly modernised counterpart, which surprised the eyes and minds of the Victorian people. In 1851, the Great Exhibition was held in Hyde Park, London, where the Crystal Palace reflected a glorious light to the world.⁴⁸ At that moment, two years before going to the King’s School, Canterbury, Pater with his family lived in Enfield, ‘a peaceful village eleven miles north of London.’⁴⁹ In addition, as already noted, that was the period when Amiel in Geneva recorded his personal view that history be educated by conscience because ‘Fact is corrupting’. When his monologue was refreshed in the mid 1880s by way of Mrs Ward’s translation, it so much attracted Pater’s attention as to lead him to automatically select it as a ‘notable’ passage. Although these historical events were themselves not directly related to each other, such subconscious memories, national and personal, strengthened Pater’s ongoing educational programme in his later years to forge the nation into ‘the power of the sword’.⁵⁰ Rachel Teukolsky points out the strong alliance between the Victorian craze for Raphael and the rise of British nationalism:

The Victorian love affair with Raphael [. . .] had nationalist overtones because Britain acquired, in the seventeenth century, a series of Raphael's cartoons for the Sistine Chapel tapestries, and displayed them at Hampton Court Palace. This aesthetic possession signalled one of the ways that Britain was claiming the patrimony of Renaissance Italy. The earlier European culture combined an artistic and economic power that Britain wanted to inherit, if only symbolically.⁵¹

Such a symbolic and nationalistic ideal was finally achieved in the age of the Exhibition, and the Crystal Palace, which was nothing but 'the symbol of the modern idea'; that is, of technology.

Typical in Pater's *Mona Lisa*, however, modernity does not go without a sense of history or tradition within it, since it has to be 'the embodiment of the old fancy' as well. Augustus Welby Pugin's *Medieval Court* worked as such an example, for 'This medievalized space must have been an extraordinary spectacle when seen against the ultra-modern glass and the iron structure of the Crystal Palace.'⁵² There, numbers of subject matters were gathered to forcibly aspire to the condition of music, or rather of the museum, where the exhibits were juxtaposed to each other beyond any particular time and place. In this way their locality was ironically diminished in favour of their newly-gained loyalty, in order to create amongst the people who perceived them by distance (if only symbolically) as both personal and national experience, an ideal modern state. In fact, as in Pater's *Lacedaemon*, there is also heard an echo of the separation between town and gown, namely a social distance between the visitors and those who inspect them from both inside and outside. The reason being that 'The expert eye was didactic in spirit, instructing working-class Exhibition visitors to look but not to touch.'⁵³

In this context, Teukolsky's comment on the Crystal Palace appropriately applies to the afterlife of Pater's synthetic sense of Raphael: 'Modernity,

transparency, lucidity, order, and sense: the structure summed up everything in the name “Crystal”’.⁵⁴ Modernity and transparency are here mixed as one mutual condition within the crystal nature. In the year when Pater visited Italy for the first time together with Shadwell, Raphael was actually becoming drawn into Britain’s cultural and nationalistic policy, which linked his historical presence and prestige to the symbol of modernity and transparency:

In 1865 Queen Victoria decided that the Raphael cartoons should be loaned for display to the Victoria and Albert museum. [. . .] Her decision cements a link of the Raphael cartoons to the Great Exhibition, since the V & A was founded as the ‘South Kensington Museum’ in 1852 to permanently display some of the designed wares from the 1851 event.⁵⁵

Although it is certain that Pater in ‘Leonardo da Vinci’ has deprived Raphael of modernity in order to make him represent ‘the return to antiquity’, Pater’s lecture on the same artist, first delivered to the University Extension Students at Oxford in 1892, and later published in the *Fortnightly*,⁵⁶ indivisibly unites the two hitherto incompatible elements. In the essay, Raphael on the one hand still represents ‘the return to antiquity’; for example, on his first visit to Rome ‘A consequent close acquaintance with antiquity, with the very touch of it, blossomed literally in his brain’.⁵⁷ On the other hand, however, Raphael at the same time synthesises, rather than merely represents, ‘somewhat Teutonic’ touches of Pinturicchio, his elder by thirty years,⁵⁸ and even various philosophical ‘Modern efforts’ of Pater’s ‘own century’, all at once into his accumulative knowledge and ‘the intelligence of the eye’.⁵⁹

By uniting separated ideal twins, Pater in his later years silently draws his early diaphanous ideal to his own vocation as the scholar, which he has inherited from reading Fichte’s lectures in the 1860s, and also which, synchronising with Amiel’s thought, attempts to educate history according to his own conscience.

Refashioning Raphael as ‘one of the world’s typical scholars, with Plato, and Cicero, and Virgil, and Milton’, Pater sees the ‘*formula*’ of Raphael’s genius which is achieved ‘by accumulation’, and also by ‘the transformation of meek scholarship into genius’.⁶⁰ In the last chapter of *Plato and Platonism*, ‘Plato’s Aesthetics’, Pater also suggests that ‘Patience, “infinite patience”, may or may not be, as was said, of the very essence of genius.’⁶¹ He also said of this kind of genius in writing of Raphael as the ideal scholar. For such a scholar, Pater goes on, the Renaissance was the age that ‘enjoyed itself’ by enthusiastically seeking ‘knowledge for its own sake’.⁶² Raphael’s self-education starts early in the ducal palace that has been recently rebuilt, which provides this young student with ‘a museum of ancient and modern art’, and also with opportunities to get in touch with ‘the choicer flowers of living humanity’. Although Pater depicts the place as immensely artistic or aesthetic, it should not be forgotten that he also regards it as fundamentally political, for it has ‘become nothing less than a school of ambitious youth in all the accomplishments alike of war and peace’.⁶³

In the very end of his lecture, as a hopeful result of what he has done in the last sentence of ‘Diaphaneitè’, Pater symbolically hands over his own vocation as the scholar to his spiritual colleague at Oxford, Raphael, by reviving him as a diaphanous mediator of the Fichtean Divine Idea. In terms of his synthetic sense of Raphael, Pater’s ideal scholar can be better found in the seventh lecture of *The Nature of the Scholar*, ‘Of the Finished Scholar’, where the ‘Teutonic’ educator Fichte defines the nature of his ideal scholar, ‘whose life is itself the creative and formative life of the Divine Idea in the world.’⁶⁴ Moreover, Fichte classifies the life into two classes: the first class and the second class. The Pater and Raphael he depicts, though aspiring to the condition of the first, more resemble and represent the second class⁶⁵—the vocation of which, as Fichte explains, is ‘to maintain among men the knowledge of the Divine Idea, to elevate it unceasingly to greater clearness and precision, and thus transmit it from generation to generation, ever growing brighter in the freshness and glory of renewed

youth.⁶⁶ Fichte points out the distinction and necessary interaction between the two:

The first class act directly upon the world,—they are the immediate point of contact between God and reality;—the second are the mediators between the pure spirituality of thought in the God-head, and the material energy and influence which that thought acquires through the instrumentality of the first class; they are the trainers of the first class,—the enduring pledge to the human race that the first class shall never fail from among men.⁶⁷

In other words, the mission of the second class, which also accords well with the thought of Amiel quoted by Pater, is to educate reality ‘by persistence of our ideal’. Pater’s diaphanous nature, which he conveyed to the relatively small audience of the Old Mortality almost thirty years prior, allied with the second Fichtean ideal scholar as the mediator of the Divine Idea, from generation to generation, finally incarnates as Raphael’s ‘Ansidei, or Blenheim, Madonna’, a picture acquired by the National Gallery, London, in 1885, the very year Pater moved to 12 Earl’s Terrace, Kensington.⁶⁸ As the mediator of Raphael, St. John the Baptist and eventually ‘what is to come’, Pater speaks to the extended audience, to explain the picture:

Strange, Raphael has given [St. John the Baptist] a staff of transparent crystal. Keep then to that picture as the embodied formula of Raphael’s genius. Amid all he has here already achieved, full, we may think, of the quiet assurance of what is to come, his attitude is still that of the scholar [. . .]⁶⁹

‘The scrupulous scholar, aged twenty-three, is now indeed a master; but still goes

carefully’, says Pater of Raphael.⁷⁰ Here represented, however, is not so much Pater’s mere autobiographical identification with his own sentimental past, as the afterlife of his and also his age’s far more imaginative, communicative sense of the fact from the early 1860s to the early 1890s.

By thus disguising his early diaphanous character Raphael as a scholastic mediator of diaphaneity and the Divine Idea, Pater has not only restored his personal ‘relic from the classical age’, or once rejected ‘history’ to the Renaissance, but also, via Raphael, has passed on his own vocation as the ideal scholar to the following generations, eventually for ‘the regeneration of the world’. In *The Lives of the Artists*, Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) records, ‘In short, Raphael lived more like a prince than a painter.’⁷¹ Slightly different in Pater, who was familiar with Vasari’s imaginary portraits enough to own the eleven-volume edition published in 1791-94.⁷² He considers Raphael a ‘prince of the Renaissance’ as well as ‘one of the world’s typical scholars’.⁷³ Pater reverbalses his earlier vision of a latent renaissance (or an inviolate revolution), barely visible in ‘Diaphaneité’ and belatedly revealed through ‘Raphael’, in his careful and recurrent attempt at a secret marriage between prince and scholar—namely a unity between social realities and scholarly ideals, by means of his synthetic and figurative sense of the fact. Recalling such a somewhat ‘sudden’ conclusion of ‘Raphael’ above-quoted, A. C. Benson in memoriam of Pater seems to have quickly sensed the dead scholar’s ‘patient sympathy’ reawakening⁷⁴: ‘Here, then, at least, we see Pater in the light of the educator, the scribe, the expounder of mysteries, rather than as the hieratic presenter of the deeper symbol.’ Moreover Benson, with Alfred Tennyson in mind, called Pater’s Raphael ‘the Galahad of art’, and the divine-diaphanous painter’s ‘balance of temperament’ and ‘steady deliberate bias to perfect purity’ the note of his life.⁷⁵ Finally Tennyson himself was not the exception to have paraphrased and vocalised, a bit more gallantly in verse, a story of Pater’s visions and revisions of the diaphanous character: ‘Our voices took a higher range; / Once more we sang: “They do not die / Nor lose their mor-

tal sympathy, / Nor change to us, although they change; / Rapt from the fickle
and the frail / With gathered power, yet the same, / Pierces the keen seraphic
flame / From orb to orb, from veil to veil.””⁷⁶

Notes

- * This paper is based on part of my MA thesis submitted to Keio University in 2012; and also on the manuscript read before the 51st annual meeting of the Walter Pater Society of Japan, which was held at Jissen Women's Junior College on 20 October 2012. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Takami Matsuda, Associate Professor Isamu Takahashi of Keio University, and also Professor Noriyuki Harada of Tokyo Woman's Christian University, for their invaluable advice and support. I am grateful to Professor William Snell and Mr Theodore Smith for reading the manuscript; and also to Emeritus Professor Morito Uemura of the University of Shiga Prefecture for sending me his article on Pater's use of the term 'Diaphaneité' and its literary context.
- 1 See, for instance, Gerald C. Monsman, 'Old Mortality at Oxford', *Studies in Philology*, 67 (1970), 359-89; Harold Bloom, 'Introduction: The Crystal Man', in *Selected Writings of Walter Pater* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), pp. vii-xxxi (p. x); Carolyn Williams, *Transfigured World: Walter Pater's Aesthetic Historicism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 172-84; Anne Varty, 'The Crystal Man: A Study of "Diaphaneité"', in *Pater in the 1990s*, ed. by Laurel Brake and Ian Small (Greensboro, NC: ELT, 1991), pp. 205-15; Kit Andrews, 'Walter Pater and Walter Benjamin: The Diaphanous Collector and the Angel of History', in *Walter Pater: Transparencies of Desire*, ed. by Laurel Brake, Lesley Higgins, and Carolyn Williams (Greensboro, NC: ELT, 2002), pp. 250-60; Morito Uemura, "'Diaphaneité": Pater's Enigmatic Term', *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens*, 68 (2008), 123-34; Julia Straub, 'Construction of a New Ideal: Walter Pater's "Diaphaneité"', in *A Victorian Muse: The Afterlife of Dante's Beatrice in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (London: Continuum, 2009), pp. 107-29; and Kate Hext, 'The Limitations of Schilleresque Self-Culture in Pater's Individualist Aesthetics', in *Victorian Aesthetic Conditions: Pater across the Arts*, ed. by Elicia Clements and Lesley J. Higgins (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 205-19.

- 2 Monsman suggests: ‘Since the Old Mortality met only during the term time and since “Diaphaneitè” consequently could not have been read when dated, the inference is suggested that it is the substance of the 20 February essay, probably reworked to avoid direct reference to the sensitive subject of immortality.’ See Monsman, ‘Old Mortality at Oxford’, p. 372.
- 3 Monsman, *Oxford University’s Old Mortality Society: A Study in Victorian Romanticism* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1998), p. 99; A. C. Benson, *Walter Pater* (London: Macmillan, 1906), p. 22.
- 4 There has been so far no definite agreement about the origin of the term ‘Diaphaneitè’ except that it might be an ambiguously modified form of a Greek, Latin or French word. See, for example, John J. Conlon, ‘Walter Pater’s “Diaphaneitè”’, *English Language Notes*, 17 (1980), 195-97; Varty, p. 258; Monsman, *Oxford*, p. 101; and Uemura, p. 125. The English noun form ‘diaphaneity’ (or its adjective form ‘diaphanous’) used in this paper is to follow the definition in the *OED* generally, ‘the quality of being freely pervious to light; transparency’, but also including translucency (semi-transparency) or anything that can be seen through as a medium. Atsushi Okada’s genealogical, interdisciplinary study on such an elusive concept of diaphaneity (or what he calls *διαφανής*) in the Western intellectual tradition, although it never mentions Pater, is worth mentioning here briefly as a pre-history of Pater’s ‘Diaphaneitè’. In the second chapter of his book, Okada traces the origin(s) of such diaphanous images back to Aristotle’s *De anima* [*On the Soul*] and also *On Sense and Sensible Objects*, later the angelic or gem-like images in The Bible, such as in Genesis 28.12; Exodus 24.10; Ezekiel 1.4-28; Revelation 4.3-6, Averroës’s and Albertus Magnus’s commentaries on Aristotle, Roger Bacon’s philosophy of nature, Dante’s notion of language or the universe such as in *Convivio* [*The Banquet*] or *De vulgari eloquentia* [*On the Eloquence of Vernacular*], the sixteenth-century Venetian humanist Ludovico Dolce’s dialogue, and others. See Okada, *Hantoumei-no-Bigaku* [*Aesthetics of Diaphaneity*] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2010), pp. 31-77.
- 5 *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry: The 1893 Text*, ed. by Donald L. Hill (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), p. 186. About the nature of the *Westminster* in Pater’s own intellectual or periodical context: ‘It is possible some members of the [Old Mortality] Society put Pater in touch with the *Westminster Review*, the radical or liberal journal edited by Chapman, for behind the Positivist slant of Pater’s

- Westminster* essays lies the Victorian liberalism of the Old Mortality.’ See Monsman, *Oxford*, p. 84; see also, for example, Laurel Brake, *Walter Pater* (Basingstoke: Northcote, 1994), p. 16; also Brake, ‘The “wicked Westminster”, the *Fortnightly*, and Walter Pater’s *Renaissance*’, in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, ed. by John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 289-305.
- 6 Thomas Wright, *The Life of Walter Pater*, 2 vols (London: Everett, 1907), I, 253.
 - 7 R. M. Seiler, ed., *Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1980), pp. 71-72.
 - 8 Wright, I, 253-54; Seiler, *Critical*, p. 71. Of the contemporary use of the key phrase ‘scientific method’, the *OED* lists three nineteenth-century examples, including the earliest T. H. Huxley (1854), J. A. Froude (1871) and Lewis Carroll (1889), suggesting that it is ‘a method of procedure that has characterized natural science since the 17th century, consisting in systematic observation, measurement, and experiment, and the formulation, testing, and modification of hypotheses.’ Another entry there from J. S. Huxley (1927) seems to help to specify the context retrospectively: ‘There was a great outcry when scientific method was applied, in the form of the so-called “Higher Criticism”.’
 - 9 Seiler, *Critical*, p. 71; Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 125.
 - 10 Seiler, *Critical*, p. 72.
 - 11 *Appreciations: With an Essay on Style*, in *New Library Edition of the Works of Walter Pater*, 10vols (London: Macmillan, 1910; repr. New York: Johnson, 1967), V, 9.
 - 12 *Appreciations*, in *New Library*, V, 9-10. See also Lene Østermark-Johansen’s wonderful essay, ‘On the Motion of Great Waters: Walter Pater, Leonardo and Heraclitus’, in *Victorian and Edwardian Responses to the Italian Renaissance*, ed. by John E. Law and Lene Østermark-Johansen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 87-103 (p. 88). She there sharply points out: ‘Although not a historian, [Pater] was well aware of the collapse between subject and object in historiography [. . .] Stylistically, the blending of past and present is evident in Pater’s choice of verbal tense’.
 - 13 Wright, I, 254.
 - 14 *Essays from ‘The Guardian’*, in *New Library*, X, 36. See also Henri-Frédéric Amiel, *Amiel’s Journal: The Journal Intime of Henri-Frédéric*

- Amiel*, trans. by Mrs. Humphry Ward, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1885), I, 29.
- 15 A probable context of Pater's almost automatic choice of the term 'conscience', in its close association with his synthetic notion of the even sculpturally diaphanous scholar and also of his language, can be more explicitly found in 'Style': 'The literary artist is of necessity a scholar, and in what he proposes to do with have in mind, first of all, the scholar and the scholarly conscience—the male conscience in this matter, as we must think it, under a system of education which still to so large an extent limits real scholarship to men. In his self-criticism, he supposes always that sort of reader who will go (full of eyes) warily, considerably, though without consideration for him, over the ground which the female conscience traverses so lightly, so amiably. For the material in which he works is no more a creation of his own than the sculptor's marble. Product of a myriad various minds and contending tongues, compact of obscure and minute association, a language has its own abundant and often recondite laws, in the habitual and summary recognition of which scholarship consists.' See *Appreciations*, p. 12.
- 16 The dates are due to the first English two-volume edition of Mrs Ward's *Amiel*, which Pater utilised in writing the review. According to Billie Andrew Inman, he also beforehand had borrowed from the Taylor Institution (from 30 March to 9 April in 1885) the first volume of the French two-volume edition of Amiel's *Fragments d'un journal intime*, intro. by Edmond Scherer, 2nd edn (Paris: Sandoz and Thuellier, 1884). See Inman, *Walter Pater and his Reading, 1874-1877: With a Bibliography of his Library Borrowings, 1878-1894* (New York: Garland, 1990), p. 463. It is very likely that Pater must have used both editions.
- 17 *Amiel*, I, 29.
- 18 *Miscellaneous Studies: A Series of Essays*, in *New Library*, VIII, 253. See also Monsman, *Pater's Portraits: Mythic Pattern in the Fiction of Walter Pater* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins, 1967), p. 22.
- 19 *Renaissance*, p. 78.
- 20 *Renaissance*, p. 84.
- 21 *Renaissance*, pp. 98-99.
- 22 See W. B. Yeats, ed., *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1936; repr. 1947), p. 1. 1892 is the year when Pater's modernised 'Raphael' was published in the *Fortnightly*, a principal medium

to which Pater had almost exclusively contributed his essays from 1869 to 1880 and far less so after that. Kenneth Clark was right in incorporating ‘Raphael’ into the body of his 1961 edition of Pater’s *Renaissance*, as a substantial sequence to the volume; but even Clarke, probably having Ruskin’s noted criticism of Raphael in mind, and also attending to Pater’s relative lack of ‘critical thought’ or stylistic performance in the 1892 lecture-essay, seems to have minimised or missed a symbolic influence ‘Raphael’ must have retrospectively had on Pater’s whole career or history of writing. See ‘Introduction’ to *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry, To which is added the essay on Raphael from Miscellaneous Studies*, ed. by Kenneth Clark (London: Fontana, 1961), pp. 11-26 (pp. 19-20). Mentioning Pater’s—rare—reference to Raphael in *The Renaissance*, Kenneth Daley has commented: ‘The allusion to the [Raphael] frescoes serves to introduce Winckelmann’s conception of the Hellenic spirit, but, more conspicuously, it marks a contrast with Ruskin by defending Raphael and his elevation of the pagan tradition to the spiritual level of the Christian.’ See Daley, *The Rescue of Romanticism: Walter Pater and John Ruskin* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001), p. 66.

23 *Renaissance*, p. 86.

24 *Renaissance*, p. 1.

25 For details of the Old Mortality Society, see for example, Monsman, ‘Old Mortality at Oxford’; Monsman, *Oxford*; Monsman, *Walter Pater* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1977), pp. 26-35; Richard Dellamora, ‘Pater at Oxford in 1864: Old Mortality and “Diaphaneité”’, in *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 58-68; Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 81-85.

26 Monsman, ‘Old Mortality at Oxford’, pp. 359-60.

27 Monsman, ‘Old Mortality at Oxford’, p. 364

28 Monsman, ‘Old Mortality at Oxford’, p. 366.

29 Monsman, ‘Old Mortality at Oxford’, p. 366. About the intellectual context of Balliol College in the nineteenth century, see for example, Noel Annan, ‘Benjamin Jowett and the Balliol Tradition’, in *The Dons: Mentors, Eccentrics and Geniuses* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 61-78. In his *Memoirs*, which was edited by his widow and posthumously published in 1885, Mark Pattison (Rector at Lincoln

- College) shows his ambivalence about the Oxford Movement. See Mark Pattison, *Memoirs* (Fontwell: Centaur, 1969).
- 30 See Seiler, *Life*, pp. 11-13 (p. 12).
- 31 See Seiler, *Life*, p. 12.
- 32 In addition, Brooke ceased attending meetings of the 'disagreeable' Old Mortality early in 1864, and instead came closer to the newly founded and more explicitly religious (Catholic) Hexameron Society, of which Liddon and Hopkins were also members. See Seiler, *Life*, p. 11; Monsman, 'Old Mortality at Oxford', pp. 366-67.
- 33 See Seiler, *Life*, p. 12.
- 34 See Seiler, *Life*, p. 12.
- 35 See Monsman, *Oxford*, pp. 87-88. Liddon was Hopkins's first confessor.
- 36 See Monsman, *Oxford*, p. 94.
- 37 See Monsman, *Walter Pater*, p. 32.
- 38 See Inman, *Walter Pater's Reading: A Bibliography of his Library Borrowings and Literary References 1858-1873* (New York: Garland, 1981), p. 67.
- 39 See Inman, *Walter Pater's Reading*, p. 69.
- 40 *Miscellaneous Studies: A Series of Essays*, in *New Library*, VIII, 248.
- 41 *Renaissance*, p. xxiv.
- 42 *Renaissance*, p. 189.
- 43 *Miscellaneous*, pp. 253-54.
- 44 *Miscellaneous*, p. 254.
- 45 *Miscellaneous*, p. 254. This finale echoes Schiller's statement that 'Only the predominance of such a character among a people makes it safe to undertake the transformation of a State in accordance with moral principles.' It should not be forgotten, however, that here in the fourth letter what Schiller had in mind was Fichte's lecture-essay, and thus he acknowledged: 'I refer to a recent publication of my friend Fichte, *Lectures on the Vocation of a Scholar*, in which illuminating deductions are drawn from this proposition in a way not hitherto attempted.' See Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*, ed. and trans. by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), p. 17. According to Inman, 'Although there is no doubt of some indebtedness of Pater to Schiller, it is difficult to judge the degree of indebtedness: [. . .] because Schiller's ideas are inextricable from Hegel's, Kant's and Fichte's at some points and Pater was well versed

- in Hegel, Kant, and Fichte before he read Schiller [in 1865]’, while Hext later questions Inman’s dating, and suggests that Pater could have read or become familiar with Schiller much earlier, before the composition of ‘Diaphanaitè’. See Inman, *Walter Pater’s Reading*, pp. 100-01; Hext, pp. 205-06, 218.
- 46 *Miscellaneous*, pp. 251-52.
- 47 *Miscellaneous*, p. 253.
- 48 See for example, Rachel Teukolsky, ‘Sublime Museum: Scripting Fine Arts at the Great Exhibition’, in *The Literate Eye: Victorian Art Writing and Modernist Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 64-100. See also Richard D. Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas: A Companion for the Modern Reader of Victorian Literature* (New York: Norton, 1973), pp. 11-12.
- 49 See Seiler, *Life*, p. xii.
- 50 *Plato and Platonism*, p. 220.
- 51 Teukolsky, p. 265.
- 52 Teukolsky, p. 86.
- 53 Teukolsky, p. 73.
- 54 Teukolsky, p. 73.
- 55 Teukolsky, p. 265.
- 56 *Miscellaneous*, p. 38.
- 57 *Miscellaneous*, p. 54.
- 58 *Miscellaneous*, p. 46.
- 59 *Miscellaneous*, p. 57.
- 60 *Miscellaneous*, pp. 38-39.
- 61 *Plato and Platonism*, p. 283.
- 62 *Miscellaneous*, p. 38.
- 63 *Miscellaneous*, p. 39.
- 64 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Popular Works of Johann Gottlieb Fichte*, trans. by William Smith, 4th edn, 2 vols (London: Trübner, 1889), I, 281. Unmistakably, the translator dedicated these volumes ‘To the Memory of Thomas Carlyle’. Dellamora points out a possibility that in Pater ‘Fichte’s ideal was mediated through the persona and writing of Thomas Carlyle’. See Dellamora, p. 62.
- 65 In parenthesis, this Fichtean categorisation might remind Paterians, if not Pater himself, of a well-known episode in Pater’s early years: Despite the fact that ‘[Benjamin] Jowett indeed divined a peculiar quality in Pater’s

- mind', he 'failed to do himself justice, in his examinations, taking only a second-class in the Final Classical Schools in 1862.' See Benson, p. 9.
- 66 Fichte, p. 282.
- 67 Fichte, p. 282.
- 68 See Michael Levey, *The Case of Walter Pater* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 175. Levey also writes: 'Among the freedoms Pater enjoyed through living in London was that of being able to visit not only churches but art galleries.'
- 69 *Miscellaneous*, p. 61.
- 70 *Miscellaneous*, p. 60.
- 71 Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. by Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998; repr. 2008), p. 338.
- 72 See Inman, *Walter Pater's Reading*, p. 202.
- 73 *Miscellaneous*, pp. 38-39.
- 74 According to Inman, Pater's notion of human 'sympathy' in close relation to morality, as typically observed in his description of Sandro Botticelli, well harmonises with Shaftesbury's statement especially in 'Sensus Communis: An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour', collected in his *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 5th edn, 3 vols (London: J. Darby, 1732). Pater borrowed the first and the third volumes from Brasenose during the composition of his notes on Leonardo in 1869. See Inman, *Walter Pater's Reading*, p. 213.
- 75 See Benson, pp. 161-62. What Benson recalls here is Tennyson's 'Sir Galahad' published in 1842, where the knight in quest of the Holy Grail speaks, 'My strength is as the strength of ten, / Because my heart is pure.' See also, *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. by Christopher Ricks (London: Longmans, 1969), pp. 610-13 (p. 610).
- 76 See section XXX (ll. 21-28) of *In Memoriam A. H. H.*, in Tennyson, pp. 889-90 (p. 890).