



WALTER PATER AS CRITIC OF RENAISSANCE CULTURE

by

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SUMMARY

This thesis represents an effort to build up a complete picture of the development of Walter Pater's understanding of the Renaissance as a movement in European culture, by collecting together his scattered references to its leading figures, as well as considering his major essays. In doing this, such changes in taste and understanding as he underwent during the twenty-odd years of his literary life became apparent.

In his early writings on the emergence of the Renaissance from the middle ages, Pater stressed the importance of the rebellious spirit. He had at first a poor opinion of Giotto and certain other late medieval figures whom he saw as complacent and pious. In his later writings on this so called proto-Renaissance, however, Pater ceased to stress the aspect of rebelliousness, and came to think more highly of the religious artists of the time.

The treatment of the quattrocento in Pater's writings is comparable, but the change is less marked. At first Pater emphasized those figures whom he could present as amoral, anti-Christian, or at least in some matters pro-pagan. This emphasis is not found in the later references to quattrocento artists, although most of these references date from what is perhaps better considered as a

middle period in Pater's literary life. In his last years, Pater wrote relatively little about the quattrocento, apart from a few significant revisions of his estimates of certain major figures.

Most of Pater's thoughts on the High Renaissance are contained in the three major essays "Leonardo da Vinci", "The Poetry of Michelangelo", and "Raphael". In the first of these he allows imagination to overwhelm scholarship, and presents a vivid but somewhat bizarre image of Leonardo. The essay on Michelangelo is more subdued and scholarly, although designed to present Michelangelo as the type of the moody and emotional romantic artist. The essay on Raphael, written twenty years later, is very different, extolling the merits of scholarly, unsensational works.

It is in Pater's treatment of the last phase of the Renaissance, the sixteenth century, in which mannerism flourished, that the shifts in his ideals and tastes are most clearly seen. In later years he became increasingly uneasy about many aspects of this period, and he emphasized the dangers of its philosophy instead of the beauties of its poetry.

It is suggested, in conclusion, that the shifts in Pater's point of view over the years led to his works presenting, overall, a broad and relatively well balanced, if not consistent, account of many aspects of Renaissance culture.

This thesis contains no material which has been previously submitted for any other degree in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where acknowledgement is made.

Signed:

D.S. DOLAN

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The following system of reference to the work of Walter Pater is used throughout this thesis.

- Appreciations.....Appreciations. London, MacMillan, 1910.
- Essays from "The Guardian".....Essays from "The Guardian". London, MacMillan, 1910.
- Gaston.....Gaston de Latour. London, MacMillan, 1910.
- Greek Studies.....Greek Studies. London, MacMillan, 1910.
- Imaginary Portraits.....Imaginary Portraits. London, MacMillan, 1910.
- Marius I.....Marius the Epicurean (vol. 1) London, MacMillan, 1910.
- Marius II.....Marius the Epicurean (vol. 2) London, MacMillan, 1910.
- Miscellaneous Studies.....Miscellaneous Studies. London, MacMillan, 1910.
- Plato & Platonism.....Plato & Platonism. London, MacMillan, 1910.
- Renaissance.....The Renaissance. London, MacMillan, 1910.
- Uncollected Essays.....Uncollected Essays. Portland, U.S.A., 1903.