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PATER'S MOUTH

By Matthew Kaiser

AT NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD, LIONEL JOHNSON had a reputation for sleeping past noon. On Monday, April 15, 1889, the sun was high overhead when he boasted in a letter to his friend Campbell Dodgson of his intimacy with the elusive Walter Pater, at whose London house he had spent the weekend: "I lunched with Pater, dined with Pater, smoked with Pater, went to Mass with Pater and fell in love with Pater" (Roseliep 148). That all of these friendly activities – lunching, dining, smoking, taking Communion, and perhaps even falling in love – entail opening one's mouth, or at least loosening one's lips, suggests a connection, in Johnson's eyes, between Pater's well-documented powers to charm his audience and the oral susceptibility of that audience. Getting to know the *true* Pater, Johnson implies, is an oral affair. His conversations with Pater, their meals, his very sense of Pater, linger on his lips. Teachers open our eyes. But Pater opens Johnson's mouth. One is tempted to dismiss the letter to Dodgson, who, like Johnson, was same-sex oriented, as youthful homoerotic banter: a campy projection of Johnson's own ambivalent and mercurial appetites. A year later, after all, in a letter to his friend Arthur Galton, Johnson recounts a "mid-day" visit he received at Oxford – whilst "lying half asleep in bed" – from Oscar Wilde, who "laughed at Pater" and "consumed all my cigarettes" (Holland and Hart-Davis 423). "I am in love with him," Johnson declares.

We tend to approach Pater's writings with heightened visual and auditory awareness, with eyes and ears wide open. We anticipate jewel-like sentences about rich Renaissance oils, the intricate play of sparkle and shadow, gossamer images that sharpen our focus. Pater teaches us to see. We are prepared, too, for a certain musicality, an operatic intensity, to his prose, for all art, Pater famously insists, including his own, "aspires towards the condition of music" (*Ren* 86).[1] Pater teaches us to listen. There is even a tactile dimension to Pater's art criticism, his Greek "tact," as Thaïs E. Morgan describes it, whereby Winckelmann, and thus Pater himself, "fingers" "pagan marbles with unsinged hands" (*Ren* 143), simultaneously celebrating "male beauty" and downplaying any "latent" "perversity" in its celebration (Morgan 147). Perhaps it would be more diplomatic to argue that Pater heightens *all* our senses, and leave it at that. Mouths make some people cringe, especially the mouths of men. To focus on a writer's mouth is to degrade, some believe, the man attached to it. But what if Johnson is right? What if the material locus of Pater's genius, the bodily throne of his intellectual attractions, indeed, the privileged organ of perception in which all other organs are subsumed, is the mouth? Did Lionel Johnson inadvertently discover – with fork and

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cigarette at his lip, God trembling on his tongue – the gateway to Pater's art? Let us take the plunge. Let us give Johnson credit, too, for providing an invaluable account of the *oral* spell that Pater cast over likeminded thinkers. Eyes and ears shut, mouth agape: there is wisdom in sleeping late.

Pater's Tasteful Sense of History

FROM ANTIQUITY TO MODERNITY, aesthetic philosophy has tended to privilege the relatively disembodied senses of sight and hearing over their more corporeal and unruly counterparts: touch, taste, and smell. Philosophers rank the sense of taste, Carolyn Korsmeyer notes, "among the lowlier attributes of human beings" (11). Fixing one's gaze on another person's mouth reduces that person to a material body in a way that eye contact – even persistent eye contact – does not. No window onto the soul, the mouth is the "entrance," Freud reminds us, "to the digestive tract" (16). Historically, the mouth has been associated, Korsmeyer points out, with animals and with the female body, or with the feminized male body, "governed by the senses and by emotion" (30). It is curious, therefore, that in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the word "taste" becomes increasingly synonymous with aesthetic judgment itself, as Denise Gigante has documented, with epistemological subtlety and masculine self-control (1–21). Gigante credits this historic shift in taste's fortunes to the rise in the West of consumer culture, to an emergent consumption-based subjectivity with all of its unbridled, promiscuous appetites, which Timothy Morton and Colin Campbell, among others, have explored in depth.[2] Taste's ascendancy comes, however, at the expense of – and in anxious opposition to – the newly assertive middle-class mouth. Taste counters the sensory temptations unleashed by consumerism. Taste civilizes appetite, sublimates bodily pleasures. The eighteenth-century Man of Taste, the discriminating *Homo sapiens*, governs his rumbling stomach with his sensitive tongue, pitting his mouth against itself, just as an expert wine taster demonstrates her superior powers of appreciation by refusing to swallow the vintage she samples. A disembodied mouth, a spectral orality, haunts the concept of taste.

Pater returns aesthetic judgment to the mouth. He refuses to be haunted or made squeamish by mouths. He literalizes taste, confronts modern aesthetic philosophy with the orality it invokes only to repress. Tongue, teeth, lips, palate: not only does the mouth serve as the primary organ of aesthetic perception for Pater, the very seat of judgment, but the mouth situates us squarely within time, chronicling and monitoring the quotidian processes of mastication, the recurring feedings that propel our bodies into the future. Pater's mouth is historical. Through it the future passes. In it lingers an aftertaste of the past, an elegiac evanescence, as John Rosenberg might say (187–216). Pater seeks to do more than merely challenge his readers' preconceptions about Renaissance culture (or ancient Greek or Roman culture). He wants his readers to *taste* the Renaissance, to appreciate its distinct flavor, to hold history in their mouths. In *Appreciations* (1889), Pater claims that a scholar "is nothing without the historic sense" (12). In *Plato and Platonism* (1893), he repeats this idea, imploring young classicists "to cultivate" their "historic sense" (5). Pater uses "sense" here in the physical sense of the word. Praising Prosper Mérimée's abilities as a "historian," for instance, Pater detects in his writings an "instinct" "that carries physiognomy in it," an acute sensitivity "amid a hundred details" (*MS* 9). Historical consciousness, indeed, all consciousness, begins physiologically for Pater as sensation, as affect. One *feels* the past. For Pater, the somatic provenance of historical consciousness, the bodily source of historic

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sense, is his sense of taste. "[F]ar more than a mental attitude or manner," "taste" – which has a "magnificent intellectual force," Pater writes, "latent within it" – is "the reminiscence of a forgotten culture that once adorned the mind" (*MS* 218). An "imaginative act" that "throws" one "back into a world unlike one's own," taste is not personal memory or recollection (*Ren* 22). An enchanting sensation, it is the ability to feel the historical forces that shape one's feeling, to sense beneath the surface of perception subtle currents of time, just as one is able, some claim, to taste the summer in a piece of fruit, or fields of clover in fresh honey.

Like Marx, Nietzsche, and other nineteenth-century materialist thinkers, Pater understands that the bodily conditions of our existence – illness, vigor, hunger, satiety, destitution, ease – determine our consciousness, rather than the reverse.[3] In his exploration of the corporeal dimension to all thought, in his claim that "philosophy" is "merely an interpretation of the body" (*The Gay Science* 34–35), Nietzsche, like Pater, veers dangerously close, at times, to crude biologism or naturalism, to the type of "sensuous empiricism" or "mechanical materialism" that Terry Eagleton associates with the most literalist and dubious expressions of nineteenth-century physiology (197). In *Ecce Homo* (1888), Nietzsche insists that "distressed intestines" cause "prejudices," and that "genius *depends*" on the kind of "rapid metabolism" produced by "dry air" and "clear skies" (238–40). In "Why I Am So Clever," the ethereal Greek aphorism, "Know thyself," crashes inelegantly to earth, becoming, in Nietzsche's mischievous hands, "One has to know the size of one's stomach." The danger inherent in this kind of thinking, Eagleton points out, if taken to its extreme, is that the human body "become[s]" "another privileged anteriority," a "spuriously self-grounding" entity, like "the Fichtean ego," outside history. With its openness, however, with its eagerness to be filled by time, Pater's mouth becomes as much a product of history as history's sensuous register.[4]

For all Botticelli's colors and Leonardo's shadows, references to orality, to food, to mouths, to taste, make an appearance on average 1.3 times per page in *The Renaissance* (1873), an average of 2.4 times per page in certain essays.[5] In a text that purports to be a "study" of the visual and literary arts, this frequency is striking. In his preface, Pater compares the aesthetic object to "a herb, a wine" (xxx). He describes the "racy Teutonic flavour" of an "old French story" (10), the "peculiar savour" of Michelangelo's marble sculptures (58), the "Eastern deliciousness" of a particular piece of writing (13). Heightened aesthetic sensitivity is akin, he claims, to that moment of "delicious recoil" from a "flood of water in the summer heat" (150). He conjures up an image of Michelangelo sitting in an "empty church," "tasting the sunless pleasures of a weary people" (54). He recounts how the "Queen of Scots" read, "in her northern prison," Ronsard's poetry, which brought back to her "the true flavour of her early days in the court of Catherine at the Louvre" (106). Pater repeatedly refers to "morsels" of Provençal poetry (15, 18), to "a morsel" of "uncut stone" (49). The decline of Hellenism in Europe during late antiquity results in the flight north, he imagines, of refugee gods, "forced to drink beer instead of nectar," to "earn[] their bread" (21). A veritable orchard, a harvest of returning gods, *The Renaissance* bursts with actual and figurative fruit: with the "strange blossoms and fruits" of Leonardo's "unique temperament" (75); with the "fruit of [Leonardo's] wistful after-dreaming" (78); with the "various fruits" with which Luca della Robbia adorns his "marvelous frames and garlands" (46); with the "fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness" (153); and, of course, with the olive-skinned Johann Winckelmann, who "gather[s] the first-fruits" of Pompeii, and who is himself "the last fruit of the Renaissance" (125, xxxiii). A veritable feast, the Renaissance gives "humanity" a "culture" "for heart and imagination to feed upon" (20).

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The Renaissance also makes humanity a little tipsy. Della Robbia's works of "white earthenware" might seem "like fragments of the milky sky itself," but they also seem "like Tuscan wine," which "loses its savour when moved from its birthplace" (41). In the right "climate," "Hellenic culture," too, Pater writes, acts on one's constitution like a "clear and exhilarating" "wine" (131). In "A Study of Dionysus" (1876), Pater claims that the Renaissance constitutes a "return" not simply to classical Greece but more particularly to Dionysus, god of wine, an oral divinity, on whose red-stained "lips" "the secrets of life" are written (*GS* 41, 19). He defines Dionysian experience as a "loosening of lips and hearts" (19). Thus, in *Imaginary Portraits* (1887), he characterizes the enlightened Duke Carl of Rosenmold, who yearns to study Roman antiquities, as a "lad" with "full red lips . . . coming as with a great cup in his hands to life's feast" (159). In ancient Athens, in the "loosened utterance and finer speech" of "young men" "at the banquet," Pater sees Dionysus's handiwork (*GS* 39). Wine leads to cultural renewal. The Renaissance is intoxication, history in its cups.[6]

Pater's persistent – one might say obsessive – association of Renaissance art and culture with the mouth is not confined to the essays that comprise *The Renaissance*.[7] In "Art Notes in North Italy" (1890), for instance, Pater recalls his visit to Vercelli, with its "thick pressing crop of pumpkins and mulberry trees," a lush "[g]arden of cucumbers" "invad[ing] the quiet open spaces of the town" (*MS* 78). The traveler cannot depart Vercelli – home to Ferrari's "masterpiece," "Our Lady of the Fruit-garden" – without "the savour of this picture in his memory." Byron might have experienced Italy as a garden, but Pater experiences it as a chance to dine *alfresco*.[8] To the "youthful Raphael," "antiquity" had upon it "the dew of herbs" (34). Even when he moves to Rome and becomes "a courtier," a guest at so many dinner parties that one "might fancy" "he was 'serving tables,'" even then, Raphael retains the imprint of the "olive gardens" and the "romantic morsels" of "architecture" that first inspired him as a young man (39, 29). Pater has a fondness for the word "morsel," which succinctly conveys, like a "small bite" itself, savoriness and refinement: an *amuse bouche*. "In the sacristies of the great Italian churches," Pater stumbles upon a "still untouched morsel of fresco" (80). He admires the "refined" or "idealized" "morsels of actual life" in the paintings of Giorgione (*Ren* 90). Even the Romantics, who remind Pater at times of Renaissance artists or Provençal poets, are not without an infectious orality. He notes the "peculiar savour" of Wordsworth's poetry, "the necessity of selecting" from his lengthy works "precious morsels for oneself" (*App* 38–40).

Are Pater's oral references – and they are legion – merely figurative? How literally should we take them in this post-Derridean world of ours, where literary critics recoil from any attempt to establish literal meaning? We should take them quite literally. In his essay on Pico della Mirandola, Pater credits the mouth with being a more subtle organ of philosophical perception than the eye: "The word *mystic*," he writes, "has been usually derived from a Greek word which signified *to shut*, as if one *shut one's lips*, brooding on what cannot be uttered; but the Platonists themselves derive it rather from the act of *shutting the eyes*, that one may see the more, inwardly" (*Ren* 24). What is this mystical form of sight, experienced with open lips and shut eyes, this inward vision more visionary than sight itself?[9] For Pater, it is taste. Because we are encouraged by Pater to see inwardly with open mouths and closed eyes, rather than outwardly with open eyes and shut lips, because the act of looking is for Pater essentially lingual, reading his descriptions of actual mouths can feel at times like osculation. Take, for instance, his description in *Greek Studies* (1895) of Myron's *Discobolus*, or rather the Roman copy of the lost statue housed in the British Museum. In the middle of a sentence

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detailing the young man's "beautiful" face, in a parenthetical aside no less, Pater implores his reader, "(look into, look at the curves of, the blossomlike cavity of the opened mouth)" (288). The swell of Pater's parentheses echoes typographically the contours of the statue's mouth, in which our lingual eye is encouraged to enter. This is not the only instance in which Pater uses parentheses to communicate visually the erotic and epistemological power of an open mouth. In *Plato and Platonism*, he discusses Socrates's view that the Sophists "neither reach, nor put others in the way of reaching, that intellectual ground of things (of the consciousness of love for instance, when they are to open their lips, and presumably their souls, about that) in true contact with which alone can there be a real mastery in dealing with them" (104). True *eros*, Platonic love, necessitates a state of sensory and spiritual susceptibility: the openness of a mystical mouth, an aperture of appreciation. Where tedious words exit the mouth of a Sophist, love *enters* the mouth of the Socratic thinker.

I have explored elsewhere the ethically and sexually potent trope of touch in Pater's writings, specifically in the context of the Platonic friendship between Marius and the Christian soldier, Cornelius, in *Marius the Epicurean* (1885):

> Marius's conversion – if one can call it that – betrays no hint of coercion or indoctrination. Cornelius is no proselytizer. Rather, Marius is *touched* by Christianity, made sensitive, susceptible to it. The Christians inspire in him a willingness to risk his skin, to open himself to the sensations (as opposed to the tenets) of their faith. He engages in a sensory dialogue with Christianity, allows himself to be caressed. (197)

Other critics, too, including Morgan and Rosenberg, have mapped the complex structure of Pater's tactile logic. But because Pater places the mouth at the nexus of sense perception, because he treats it as the sleeping giant around which other senses play, *taste* invariably rears its head before long, recalls its wandering siblings. Marius, for instance, finds Christianity most touching on his deathbed, when an unseen hand slips the Eucharist "between his lips" (296). Pater does not demote the other senses; rather, he enlists them in the promotion of good taste. Pater subsumes touch, for example, in taste, finds taste touching, touch tasteful. Indeed, the very word "taste" in English contains the swallowed specter, a lexical aftertaste, of "touch." According to that most Victorian of institutions, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, prior to the mid fourteenth century, the word "taste" meant exclusively "[t]he sense of touch, feeling (with the hands, etc.); the act of touching, touch" (659).[10] As the word "feeling" became increasingly aligned with interiority, with an inward sensitivity, so did the word "taste." The mouth becomes gateway to the soul, a site of love, where subjectivity expands and unfurls, opens onto an interior vista. Mouths of course do more than taste. They bite, suck, inhale, exhale, and lick, among other things. Pater's etymologically informed invocation of the word "taste" incorporates a repertoire of intimate motions, little acts of discovery and discernment: hence, the importance to Pater of the kiss, the touching-mouth.

Pater intersperses his analyses of art and literature with kisses. Consider his analysis of Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*. He focuses his reader's eye not on the nude Venus at the center of the composition but on the "emblematical figure of the wind" in the upper left corner of the painting, a male figure with puffed cheeks, who "blows hard," Pater writes, "across the grey water, moving forward the dainty-lipped shell on which she sails, the sea 'showing his teeth,' as it moves, in thin lines of foam, and sucking in, one by one, the falling roses" (*Ren* 38–39). Pater transforms *Birth of Venus* into a same-sex kiss between anthropomorphic wind and

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sea. In *Marius the Epicurean*, Venus promises the first man to "deliver[] up" the "fugitive" Psyche "the inmost honey of her throat," "seven kisses" (82). Pater considers the act of kissing mystical, transformative. It is tinged with divinity. Hence, the "mysticism" of the "Greek religion" expresses itself most poignantly, Pater writes, in "statues worn with kissing" (*Ren* 131). Here spectators place their mouths directly on the art object in an act of spiritual communion and aesthetic devotion. It is a far cry from Rosenberg's characterization of a sad and "dotty" Pater "gaz[ing] longingly at the delicate muscularity" of a stone athlete from afar (190), or vicariously "finger[ing] those pagan marbles with" Winckelmann's "unsinged hands." Instead, Pater encourages us to imagine mineral and dust on our lips, the intoxicating taste of stone. Kisses shift paradigms, change lives. In *Appreciations*, Pater is moved by this detail from Thomas Browne's childhood: "His father used to open his breast when he was asleep, and kiss it in prayers over him, as 'tis said of Origen's father, that the Holy Ghost would take possession there" (132–33). Similarly, before Amis miraculously cures his friend Amile of leprosy by sacrificing his own children, he "fell upon him, and began weeping greatly, and kissed him" (*Ren* 7).[11]

The power of the Paterian mouth to inspire ("to breath into") is inextricably linked to what Linda Dowling has described as Pater's post-philological understanding of "literary English" as "quite literally a dead or moribund language," the "Victorian ideal" of literature "as an embodiment of cultural values" having been fatally undermined by "the new comparative philology imported from Germany," which privileged the spoken word over the written, viewed speech as the only living and authentic language (111, 104–05). Thus, we have Max Beerbohm's famous complaint that Pater self-consciously writes "English as a dead language," laying "out every sentence as in a shroud," a post-philological "widower" tending the body of his beloved (67).[12] Where Dowling and Beerbohm hear linguistic fatalism or necrophilia, a lugubrious "acquiescence" on Pater's part to the purported deadness of the written word, I hear something entirely different: a rallying cry to perform mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, to fill dead words with living mouths. Because language is dead, as Dowling contends, it is all the more important, for Pater, that it be resurrected like Lazarus. Pater's prose quivers with messianic self-consciousness, with the burden of rebirth, the promise of *renaissance*.

Thus, Pater refuses to let us forget that words emerge from mouths, that intrinsic to every word, even if unspoken, is an oral materiality, movements of tongue and lips. Hence, the "licentious Boccaccio gives a keener edge to his stories by putting them in the mouths of a party of people who had taken refuge in a country-house" (59). Pater is drawn to Browne's description of the creation of the universe: "At the blast of His mouth were the rest of the creatures made, and at His bare word they started out of nothing" (*App* 129). In *Gaston de Latour* (1888), young Gaston does not want merely to "sip" "poetry" that "pleas[es] the acquired taste" (62). No, he seeks "books" that "drink up and absorb him." Pater conceives of text and reader as intertwining mouths, drinking, reinvigorating each other. He often uses the word "tongue" as a synonym of "language," reminding us of the lingual nature of the linguistic. "[T]hough he composes songs in the vulgar tongue," Abelard "writes also in Latin" (*Ren* 5). And Mirandola, too, writes "love-songs in the vulgar tongue" (27). Poetry is the tongue in love, a living tongue. Joachim du Bellay is a "lover of his own homely native tongue," his poetry "leav[ing]" a delightful "relish behind it" (105). In "Style" (1888), Pater claims that a writer of "good taste" recognizes that language is a "[p]roduct" of "contending

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tongues" (*App* 11, 9). Pater goes so far as to suggest that language has an actual taste: hence, his enjoyment of those "[r]acy Saxon monosyllables" and "those long, savoursome, Latin words" (13). Though he admires Coleridge's ability to "loosen the tongue" (71) and his "taste for the supernatural" (97), Pater cannot help but find "the opium-eater" difficult to swallow: he recoils from his "white and delicate skin, the abundant black hair, the full, almost animal lips" "touched with narcotism" (70–71). It is like kissing a smoker. The act of quotation or literary citation becomes for Pater an opportunity to hold within one's mouth another person's mouth, the motions of another tongue.[13] Hence, Pater sees in Shakespeare's characters, and by extension in the actors who perform them, the Bard's tongue moving in their mouths.[14] Pater can taste Shakespeare when he reads him.

For all his invocation of flavor and food, Pater stubbornly resists appetite. Like the eighteenth-century Man of Taste, Pater prefers tasting to eating. Unlike the Man of Taste, however, Pater trusts the mouth, adores its architecture, its contours, texture, and untapped power. Paterian taste – by which I mean this repertoire of interrelated oral actions – does not come at the expense of the mouth. He refuses to sublimate the mouth's pleasures simply because of its regrettable connection to the stomach. The most exquisite bodily pleasure lies not in devouring the object in question but in holding it deliberately on the tongue, allowing it to unfurl across the palate. Unlike eighteenth-century aesthetic philosophers, who tame appetite by abstracting the mouth, Pater overthrows appetite *physically*, displacing it with the more pleasurable sensation of oral retention. He masculinizes the mouth, severs its historical connection to feminine digestion, to the disorderly lower body. Pater's goal is nothing less than the overthrow of Mind – that disembodied tyrant of philosophy – with a *thinking mouth*. The mouth enables Pater to explore an alternative masculinity.

Pater's artistic heroes taste, therefore, more than they eat. He describes Winckelmann at one point "hungrily feeding," it is true, but only on "books" (*Ren* 115). So "delicate" was his stomach, he could eat but "bread and wine" (121–22). Pater's Michelangelo, whom he praises for "chipping a tooth" from a statue of a faun in order to give it character, suffers bouts of anorexia, "shut[ting] himself up" one day "with the intention of starving himself to death," so that he might hold in his parched, empty mouth the "bitterness" of life (51). As we have seen, Marius, too, tastes God, *feels* Christian, but only when he finds life slipping from him. With his newfound "thirst" for God, he is "deprived" "of appetite," capable of stomaching only "bread and water" (*ME* 251, 292). A taste for greatness emerges from a tamed appetite. In *Plato and Platonism*, Pater suggests that the source of Greek civilization is the austerity of the Spartans, who drove the "lads of Lacedæmon" into the mountains, refused to feed them, "to brace youthful stomachs and develop resource" (185). A stomach braced, taste masters appetite. Or, rather, taste – as Pater describes it in "The Child in the House" (1878) – is "mystical appetite": a mouth that opens but stops short of swallowing (*MS* 165). On occasion, Pater will even link taste to the act of purging: "There is a saying that the true artist is known best by what he omits" (46).[15] "Yes," Pater concludes, "the whole question of good taste is involved precisely in such jealous omission." Though he credits Romanticism – the primary inheritor, in his eyes, of the Renaissance tradition – with having "purge[d] away" those elements of classicism that are "not organically appropriate" to poetry, Pater wishes that Wordsworth, in particular, had "purged away" more of "that alien element" (*App* 270, 41). Fortunately, in compiling his "thin" collection of Wordsworth's best poems, Matthew Arnold, who has "excellent taste," did the purging for him (41).

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Pater's Sweetness

WHAT DOES THE RENAISSANCE taste like? After all, if Pater considers taste the somatic seat of historical consciousness, then the historical period known as "the Renaissance" must have a specific gustatory register. Presumably, its taste is different than that of the Middle Ages. How does one determine whether one's *thinking mouth* has achieved true consciousness of the Renaissance? The word to which Pater returns obsessively, sometimes five or even six times on the same page, so many times in fact that its use might seem self-parodic, is "sweet." The Renaissance tastes sweet. Pater describes the "subtle and delicate sweetness" of sixteenth-century French works (xxxii), the "taste for sweetness" in Provence that marks France's departure from "the middle age" (2), the "languid sweetness" of late medieval French texts (3). He notes that Mirandola's life had a "touch of sweetness" in it (23). He recounts the "power and sweetness" of Della Robbia's career (41). He celebrates Raphael's "sweet and solemn" style (77), the "sweetness and dignity of the human hands and faces" in his paintings, the very "sweetness and charm of his genius" (*MS* 38–39). Describing a portrait by Leonardo da Vinci, Pater draws our attention to the "parched and feverish lips," to the "sweetness in the loose, short-waisted childish dress" (*Ren* 74). So shockingly sweet, in fact, is Leonardo's boyhood work, that his master Verrocchio "turn[s] away as one stunned, and as if his [own] sweet earlier work must thereafter be distasteful to him" (65). Though Michelangelo's life story was often "bitter," Pater concedes, "there are select pages shut in among the rest" "which yet sweeten the whole volume" (52). A fruit that takes its time to ripen, Michelangelo "lingered on to be of immense, patriarchal age," we are informed, "till the sweetness it had taken so long to secrete in him was found at last" (57).[16]

French poetry is not merely sweet but juicy, its syllables bursting in one's mouth: Villon, Du Bellay, Ronsard "drain out," Pater writes, "the last drops of sweetness which a certain note or accent contains" (108). Though Pater insists that Ronsard perfects a "tranquil, temperate sweetness" (108), he concedes in *Gaston de Latour* that this "sweet-souled songster" (77), this "mouthpiece" of a "sweet" school of poetry, exudes at times the sweet "sickliness" "of flowers" (59).[17] In "Apollo in Picardy" (1893), an allegorical account of the birth of the Renaissance in Europe, a medieval monk discovers the fugitive god Apollo asleep in a grange: "And yet what gentle sweetness also in the natural movement of the bosom, the throat, the lips, of the sleeper!" (*MS* 127). Yes, the Renaissance tastes sweet. Pater's frequent use of "sweetness," "sweet," "sweeten," and "sweetly" is no stylistic quirk. In all things sweet, in their perfumes and juices, he tastes the Renaissance. Honey, sweet herbs, wine, milk, and fruit: their essential sugars trigger in Pater's mouth historical consciousness, a *sense* of the Renaissance.

What is at the root of Pater's sweet tooth? He knows, after all, that "sweet" has a venerable history as literary trope and sometime cliché. He also knows that his repeated use of the word – some might say its abuse – has the potential to leave his reader not with a "sense" of history but with nothing at all. An empty calorie of a word, "sweet," at least in a non-culinary context, is as vague as it is pretty, the urbane cousin of "beautiful," "pleasant," and "nice." Some will detect in Pater's "sweet" an airy impressionism, the self-indulgent subjectivism to which he has been unfairly linked over the past 125 years. Pater's "sweet," however, has real substance. It has a job to do. First, it reunites aesthetic philosophy with its exiled senses; second, it resuscitates a literary language "demoralized by philology" (Dowling 176). In Pater's "sweet," Arnold's "sweetness and light" meets Swinburne's notoriously fetishistic orality. In "Anactoria," for

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instance, a dramatic monologue brimming with cannibalistic lust, with "broken kisses," "shuddering lips," "sweet mouth[s]," Swinburne strips "sweet" – more mercilessly than any other Victorian poet – of its fuzzy poetic garb, exposes its toothsome materiality, its repressed orality (48–49).[18] Informed by Swinburne's decidedly material invocation of sweetness, indeed, of all things oral, Pater's "sweet" puts real teeth in Arnold's exalted theory of a "new" and invigorating "culture," which "open[s] and widen[s]" "the intellectual horizon," while cultivating an "inward" sensitivity: "increased sweetness, increased light, increased life, increased sympathy" (60–61, 75). Arnold's concept of sweetened culture is implicitly mouth-like: culture opens outward only to incorporate, drawing us inward. Anarchy, by contrast, is sheer appetite, the gaping maw of class interest. Simultaneously intersubjective and personal, Arnoldian culture induces sensitization and renewal: good taste in a society reborn. The height of gustatory pleasure, the refinement of taste, sweetness triggers this cultural rebirth, this renaissance.

One of the implicit targets of Pater's materialist resuscitation of sweetness is Edmund Burke, who attempts in his aesthetic philosophy to sever sweetness conceptually from the mouth that perceives it. In the few instances in his *Philosophical Enquiry* (1757) in which he stoops to discussing actual taste buds, Burke half-heartedly aligns sweet foods and substances with the beautiful, and bitter ones with the sublime (85), suggesting, at one point, that the smallness, roundness and smoothness of the sugar granule – or "globe," as he terms it – makes it technically beautiful (152). Because the sugars that comprise sweet substances, Burke claims, are "smooth" in structure, and hence "smooth of taste," sweet foods like fruit and milk, the "first support of our childhood," are "generally relaxing" (154). In comparing sugar granules to "the marbles with which boys amuse themselves," and in linking the purportedly relaxing effect of sugar to breast milk, Burke infantilizes *and* feminizes the sense of taste, associates the pleasures of the mouth with unmanliness: with a childish attraction to the roundness of breasts, marbles, and other "globular bodies" (152–53). With this cursory nod to the mouth, Burke proceeds to abstract "bitterness" and "sweetness" altogether, subsuming them in his theory of the sublime and the beautiful, dismissing the mouth as a relatively crude and unreliable organ of aesthetic perception. Pater not only returns aesthetic perception to the abandoned mouth but he masculinizes that mouth, attributes to sweetness a virility traditionally associated, Elaine Scarry reminds us, with the sublime, with "mountains, Milton's Hell, and tall oaks in a sacred grove," but a virility devoid of Burkean bitterness (83). Pater transforms sweetness into a sensation both beautiful *and* sublime. History itself unfurls in Pater's mouth. In the delicacy of sugar, in a sip of wine, he senses the awesome sweep of time, the depth of centuries. In order to achieve historical consciousness, the sensitive historian must exude a sweet manliness.[19] Pater's painstaking recuperation of sweetness as a masculine ethic is yet another example of those "strategies of legitimation" that critic James Eli Adams detects in "mid-Victorian constructions of the gentleman" (152). Pater's masculinity, then, derives from his gentlemanly sweetness, his suasive efforts on behalf of taste, his artful tongue.

Pater's stubborn refusal to disassociate sweetness from the simple carbohydrates that produce it, however, renders his use of the word decidedly gastronomical. Pater can taste actual *sugar* in an artfully composed sentence. He quotes Flaubert's definition of the perfect sentence, which sounds a lot like Burke's description of a sugar granule: "entire, smooth, and round" (*App* 32). No wonder Flaubert is "ripe" (26). Pater's sense of history, indeed, his understanding of art, is intrinsically gastronomical. The dean of nineteenth-century

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gastronomical philosophy, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin credits our sense of taste with performing two interrelated biological functions: "the preservation of the individual and the continuation of the species" (32). A conservative impulse toward self-preservation, taste monitors and evaluates the various foreign substances that enter our bodies orally. A spur to growth and a joyful stimulation, taste perpetuates the species by rallying our bodies. Preservative *and* preparatory, consolidating *and* expansive, taste consists of a double motion: a deliberate turning back, self-protectively, and a moving forward, elatedly. A survival instinct, taste situates us in time, makes us aware of our trajectories as organisms. For Pater, literary "taste" also consists of a double motion: "[t]o turn always with that every-changing spirit, yet to retain the flavour of what was admirably done in past generations" (*App* 269).

In fact, Brillat-Savarin's twofold theory of taste mirrors, in many ways, Pater's theory of the Renaissance: a historical moment of rebirth and revitalization, in which European culture turns back pensively to Dionysus, the "loosener of lips," in order to move forward. That Brillat-Savarin considered sugar a particularly nourishing, even medicinal, substance, a "universal flavoring" that "ruins nothing," only reinforces the gastronomical nature of Pater's association of sweetness with cultural reparation (103). Thus, in "Apollo in Picardy," when the refugee god infiltrates an austere and somewhat geriatric monastic community, his very presence, his radiant, youthful physique, re-enchants that little world, reawakens the bodies of those around him, the monks feeling, as though for the first time, "the sweet novelties of the country," the "sweet low pastures" (*MS* 128). The old Prior is "surprised" "at the fresh springing of his brain, the spring of his footsteps over the close greensward, as if *smoothed* by the art of man" (emphasis mine). The Renaissance is a sugar high, an eruption of virile energy. It is a masculine birth, along the lines of Platonic spiritual procreation, the mouth serving as manly womb. If only Victorian artists would impart the "sweet" "savour" of "early manhood" – the essence, Pater insists in "Diaphaneitè," of Renaissance art – to the tasteless world of nineteenth-century Britain, "such would be," he prophecies, "the regeneration of the world" (*MS* 221–22).

As food historian and cultural anthropologist Sidney Mintz has documented, the most profound historical change that the human diet has ever undergone occurred in the nineteenth century, when sugar, considered in the eighteenth century a seasoning or garnish, became not just a full-fledged food but a caloric pillar of the modern diet, supplying by century's end one in five calories to the average Briton (6). In 1800 a typical Englishman consumed 18 lbs of sugar annually. By 1890, that number had risen to 90 lbs (143). A supplement in the eighteenth century to a diet based largely on complex carbohydrates, this simple carbohydrate partially supplanted that diet in the nineteenth century. While this dietary revolution was most pronounced in the lives of working-class people, even the protein-heavy diets of the Victorian middle and upper classes contained an unprecedented number of sucrose-infused foods. When the Victorians added cream and sugar to their tea or coffee, for instance, what many of them called "cream" is what we call today sweetened condensed milk (147). In the early 1870s, when Pater was writing the bulk of *The Renaissance*, mass-produced jams and jellies were being distributed commercially for the first time, becoming a staple of the English diet. In the late nineteenth century, dessert, too, was becoming enshrined as an official course. It is no exaggeration to say, therefore, that modernity – of which the Renaissance constitutes, for Pater, a nascent stirring, a prescient glimmer – is marked by an increasingly sweet, if not saccharine, taste.

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Pater's theory of the Renaissance is a corrective to John Ruskin's passionate denunciation of Renaissance art and architecture in *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53) as "vulgar, vain, and foul," as inorganic and morally suspect (50). *The Renaissance* is also an antidote, however, to the increasingly syrupy nature of Pater's own modern moment, to the unrefined and unwholesome state of Victorian consumer culture, symbolized for Pater by the sugary diets served daily by English wives and mothers. Pater hopes the subtle, nourishing sweetness of Renaissance art will heal his readers' enervated and domesticated taste buds, fill their mouths with a new taste for history, with the vital taste of history. The point, then, is not that the Renaissance is sweet. The point is that it is *perfectly* sweet, refined, gentlemanly. Sweetness must be tempered, its femininity modulated. Though Socrates "listen[s]," Pater writes, "sweetly, kindly, approvingly" to the "young men" with whom he dialogues, almost as a mother would, Plato's own touches of "irony" act as "salt" "to keep the exceeding richness and sweetness of his discourse from cloying the palate" (*PP* 83, 118). The Greeks teach Renaissance artists and thinkers how a pinch of salt or a trace of bitterness moderates and hence accentuates sweetness: how the certainty of death, its unshakable shadow, gives life its very impetus.

Pater's Theory of Metaphor

SOME READERS MAY WONDER whether I have taken Pater's gustatory metaphors too seriously, whether I have been too literal in my treatment of Paterian orality. While they will no doubt concede that oral imagery is ubiquitous in Pater's writings, and that Pater attributes a peculiar materiality to the concept of taste *rhetorically*, some will find the idea that Pater (or that anyone, for that matter) has the ability to taste the Renaissance difficult to swallow. The Renaissance has no ontological or material essence. It is a historical fiction. How can one hold the concept of the Renaissance – or any conceptual abstraction – in one's physical mouth? Set aside, for a moment, the conceptual dimension to the Renaissance. How can one taste a painting, statue, or poem? Take a bite out of the *Mona Lisa*. Nibble on a Botticelli. One will taste something, certainly, but that something won't be sweet: dust, rancid oil, disintegrating canvas. This is the taste of the so-called Renaissance, if it can be said to have a "taste" at all. So, yes, Pater's "sweet" is *merely* a metaphor.

But let us consider Pater's own theory of metaphor. In his lecture "The Myth of Demeter and Persephone" (1875), he refutes the notion that the Greeks exhibited naiveté or crude superstition in detecting a nymph or water spirit in every tree or brook. This will to anthropomorphize derives, he suggests, from a temperament more "poetical" than our own, from a talent for – and susceptibility to – metaphorical thinking (*GS* 100). The slithering of breeze between branches, the nodding of treetops, "suggested to them the presence of a soul or will," he writes, "with a living spirit, and senses, and hands, and feet." The oxymoronic phrase that Pater uses to describe the poetic enchantment, the sensory suggestibility, to which the Greeks "yield[ed]," is "real illusion." On the surface, it is an impossible idea. *Real illusion*: the act not of making metaphors but of *feeling* them, intuiting in tenor and vehicle a material reciprocity, the tingle of actual life. Real illusion: a hallucination actualized, like the "sacred blood of the Martyrs" seen "flowing out between" the "fingers" of Pope Gregory, when he squeezed a clot of "common" dirt with "his hand" (*App* 162). When Raphael, in defiance of modern fashion, "applies symbolical gilding for natural sunlight" in his paintings, it is because, on a sensory level, he is still "half-convinced" that he detects, like his artistic

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forebears, sunlight crystallized in gold, gold vaporized in sunlight (*MS* 35). To understand the true power of metaphor, Pater explains, to lay claim to a poetic temperament, necessitates cultivating a heroic willingness to be "half-convinced." One must join within oneself "a certain simplicity," a "taking" of "all things literally," with a highly refined aestheticism, a "vivid pre-occupation with . . . the *figured* side of figurative expression, the *form* of the metaphor" (*GS* 99). Real illusion: the tremulous sensation, the erotic shiver, produced in us by – and inseparable from – figurative language. With all the metaphors in the world from which to choose, Pater gives the following example from the Book of Revelation: "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword" (19.15).[20]

Pater traces the origins of the poetic temperament to a primordial animism or "primitive condition," to an ability – an exuberantly sensuous one – to mistake one's own metaphors for fact, to hear murmurs of consciousness, "animation," in inanimate and insentient "natural objects," so "full of souls" (*App* 45–46). About Wordsworth, Pater writes: "And so it came about that this sense of a life in natural objects, which in most poetry is but a rhetorical artifice, is with Wordsworth the assertion of what for him is almost literal fact." The key word here is "almost": that state of being "half-convinced." Poetry is religion for people embarrassed by certainty. The poetic mind inhabits the magnetically charged, uncanny space between tenor and vehicle. The poet senses "a certain weird fellowship" – the spark of an "emanation" – between "the moving leaves" and "the moods of men." It is "what Coleridge meant," Pater writes, "by Imagination": the "complete infusion . . . of the figure into the thought" (89). Like the flowery arbitration performed by the honeybee, poetry transports the residue of actual life, sensation, between tenor and vehicle, reawakening, through "sympathetic selection," the reader's enervated senses (28). The very metaphoricity of Pater's trope of sweetness is the source, then, of its mystical materiality. Rather than convince us that our mouths have the capacity to taste history, Pater seeks merely to half-convince us. In the end, it is a more profound endeavor.

To some, Pater's understanding of how metaphors work will seem like magical thinking. At times, Pater himself acknowledges that this aesthetic *ethos* of taking all things literally, of feeling one's impressions so intensely that they blossom into half-facts, or "soul-fact[s]," as he terms them, hovers on the cusp of insanity, a form of childish superstition (6). In "Pascal" (1894), Pater's last essay, written weeks before his death from rheumatic fever, he recounts the story of Pascal's mental and physical decline, the "nervous shock" that he purportedly suffered, "from which he never recovered," when his carriage turned a corner too abruptly near "the bridge at Neuilly" and tumbled "down the bank" into the Seine (*MS* 72). For the rest of his life, Pater writes, as "he walked or sat," "he was apt to perceive a yawning depth beside him" (72–73). So disturbingly real was this sensation, that he would "set a stick or chair there to reassure himself." Pascal's distrust of his peripheral vision, his sense of a looming abyss, manifests itself as "a physical malady," as "active collusion" between tenor and vehicle, between a visceral fear of falling and the unseen space that symbolizes that fear. Rather than an instance of happy cross-pollination, the metaphor, in this case, swirls like a whirlpool. Pascal experiences real illusion. To be half-convinced, however, is to be terrified. We might read "Pascal" as a deathbed confession, Pater's acknowledgement of the limitations of his style of metaphorical analysis, of thinking with one's senses, of putting "thought in sense" (*App* 47).[21] Pater's claim that the mouth tastes history, that the Renaissance tastes sweet, might be tinged, he knows, with madness, with the blush of delusion. Some readers might even conclude that historical consciousness constitutes schizophrenia: seeing what is not there, feeling the impossible.

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Pater's challenge, then, is to induce historical consciousness in his readers, to trigger a "real illusion" of sweetness, but in a way that cannot be dismissed as either nostalgia for pagan animism, or a professionally suicidal flirtation with insanity. In the nineteenth century, there still exists one cherished institution, an ancient one, really, in which "real illusion" is very much at work, an institution, not coincidentally, that privileges the mouth over other organs of perception. I am referring to the Eucharist. Paterian aestheticism is intrinsically Eucharistic. Over the course of his career, Pater, whose aesthetic and ethical fascination with Catholic ritual has been deftly explored by Ellis Hanson, turns increasingly to the Eucharist as a means of grounding conceptually and legitimizing politically his mystical-materialist theory of taste (Hanson 169–228). Only, instead of God, it is history that Pater holds on his exalted tongue. In his metaphor of sweetness, we experience history as transubstantiation. Pater envisions himself as history's priest, a literalizer of metaphor, its devotee: his words trigger in his mouth and in the mouths of his readers a fleeting sensation of the past. Historical consciousness becomes a kind of death-defying miracle: the past is Lazarus returned to life.

In "Dante Gabriel Rossetti" (1883), Pater denounces what he calls the "false contrast or antagonism" between "[s]pirit and matter," our inability to see how "inextricably" they "play" "into each other," how they are "fused and blent" (220–21). In place of Greek mythology, however, or Wordsworthian nature, Pater finds his example of fusion in the "sacramentalism" of the Church, in "the resurrection of the flesh." So oblivious is Michelangelo, for instance, to the opposition between a "spiritual world" and a physical one, Pater writes, that "he does not surely know whether the consecrated Host may not be the body of Christ" (*Ren* 61). To taste Christ's body in a Communion wafer, to feel a tremor of life, a literal fleshiness, between tenor and vehicle: this is what Pater means by "aesthetic worship" (*App* 221). Pater presents historical consciousness to his Victorian readers as a quintessentially modern expression of aesthetic worship, as modernity's answer to medieval ecstasy. Just as Renaissance artists cultivate a historic sense of antiquity, so Pater cultivates a historic sense of the Renaissance. He envisions historical consciousness as a powerful and compelling means of transcending the smallness and myopia of individual existence, of opening one's senses to the world beyond, of achieving consciousness of the ineffable. The ethical dimension to Pater's aesthetic historicism lies precisely in this expansive yet materialist sense of a "beyond." Tremendous ethical and spiritual potential lies dormant in taste. For Pater, the soul is a shadow cast by the tongue.

Eucharistic imagery abounds in Pater. The sweet juiciness, for instance, of Ronsard's poetic language – in which the "soul" "come[s]" to the material "surface" – brims with Eucharistic innuendo: "The juice in the flowers, when Ronsard named them, was like wine or blood" (*GL* 63). The blood-filled mouth, the taste of blood, functions for Pater not merely as symbol but source of heightened historical consciousness, of an uncanny awareness of the motion of time. One tastes heartbeats in blood, the rhythmic ebb and flow of life. With the taste of "wine" in their mouths, Gaston's three friends "stroll[] out" one summer night, only to return "disconcerted," having experienced a terrible premonition of death (85–86). Their sudden awareness of the fleetingness of time, however, of their own ephemerality, does not express itself phantasmagorically, as life passing before their eyes. Rather, it is a sensation of "blood," "fresh upon the bosom or in the mouth."

The trope of the bloody mouth, of Eucharistic contemplation, haunts Pater's most famous paragraph in *The Renaissance*, his homage to historical consciousness: his description of *La Gioconda*. Myriad tributaries of the past – "the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the middle age" – feed the Mona Lisa, a transhistorical channel for time

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itself (80). Carolyn Williams suggests that the Mona Lisa's famously "weary" eyelids "are expressive of a gaze turned inward, a mystic half-shutting of the eyes," a reference, of course, to Pater's etymological definition of "mysticism" as a closing of the eyes (116). As her eyelids droop, her lips and tongue awaken. The taste of blood fills her mouth, lurks behind her enigmatic smile. "[L]ike the vampire," Pater writes, "she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave" (80). The historical consciousness of which she is a visual expression tastes bloody. Like the enchanted wine of the Eucharist, the blood that the vampire drinks transports her, frees her consciousness from quotidian confines.

An account of a young man's conversion from paganism to Christianity in second-century Rome, *Marius the Epicurean* is Pater's most sustained and explicit celebration of Eucharistic orality, of the aesthetic worship it enables.[22] Persecuted by the Roman authorities, the early Christians must practice their "ancient eucharistic order" in secret, in catacombs, cellars, and remote country houses (247). Toward the end of the novel, a spiritually-adrift Marius enters one of these secret churches, located in a "villa" of "noble taste," and reminiscent anachronistically – with its "spiral columns" and "mosaics" – of "the old way of true *Renaissance*" (227–28). Enthralled by the rhythmic chanting and "benedictions," by the "grave sweetness" of the "rite," Marius watches the priest kiss the sepulchral altar, before "open[ing] his lips" in prayer, clasping in his "hands" with "an increasing mysticity" the sacred "bread and wine" (249–50). Suffering "a kind of thirst," Marius watches "the faithful approach to receive from the chief minister morsels of the great, white, wheaten cake," described by Pater with gastronomical specificity (251). Months later, on his deathbed, in "his extreme helplessness," surrounded by his new Christian friends, Marius tastes at last "their mystic bread," which "descend[s] like a snow-flake from the sky, between his lips," administered by unseen hands (296). Marius's open, receptive mouth and closed eyes trigger the taste of God, an aesthetic mysticism. His conversion allegorizes the rise of Christianity in Europe, its displacement of polytheism, the historical vicissitudes of Western consciousness. The deathbed scene pulsates with a prophetic historicity. Epicureanism and Christianity are traditionally opposed. Pater, however, reconciles them, "Hellenize[s] the Hebrew," to borrow Hanson's phrase (177). The Hellenistic and the Hebraic unite in the domed temple of Marius's mouth. Over the course of the novel, the Epicurean motto, "*Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!*," merges with and becomes indistinguishable from the "heavenly banquet" of the Eucharist (116, 276).

Though Pater deems *La Gioconda* Leonardo's "masterpiece," the *Last Supper* is Leonardo's most Paterian achievement (*Ren* 79). Despite its "decay," its slow death on a "damp wall" "oozing with mineral salts," it is Leonardo's sweetest work (76). Pater describes the fresco as an "effort to see the Eucharist, not as the pale Host of the altar," an ahistorical abstraction, "but as one taking leave of his friends," a sensuous man whose farewell kiss tastes of bread and wine (77). The disappearing image captures visually the sensation of imminent departure, the inexorable motion of time. But it is not with our eyes only that Pater encourages us to see Leonardo's fresco. Indeed, as the image fades from view, the power of the eye becomes less relevant. Leonardo's *Last Supper* teaches us the ethical and epistemological profundity of taste. Lingering on the wall of the refectory, where priests eat their silent meals, the *Last Supper* is a true aftertaste of the past, a mellowing memory, an object of relaxed contemplation. As Lionel Johnson discovered when he lunched, dined, smoked, and took Communion with Pater, when he fell in love with him, and when he thought fondly of him the next day, Pater teaches us, in the end, how to appreciate, how to unfurl a

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thought lovingly across our tongues, how to give ourselves the gift of time. He is like the angel from the Book of Revelation who places the Word in our mouths. Only, instead of an emissary from God, Pater is the angel of history:

> And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. (10.10)

Harvard University

NOTES

I would like to thank Charles Sligh for alerting me to the copious Eucharistic imagery in *Marius the Epicurean*.

1. In his 1888 essay "Style," Pater reiterates this idea, suggesting that music is "the ideal of all art whatever" (*App* 35).
2. See, for instance, Campbell's *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (1987). See, too, Morton's *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste: The Body and the Natural World* (1994) and *The Poetics of Spice: Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic* (2000).
3. We can consciously change the conditions of our existence, of course, but our "consciousness" is never anterior to the conditions we seek to change.
4. For an excellent analysis of how Pater's understanding of artistic "influence" is shaped by "the emerging discourse of physiology" (73), see Jeffrey Wallen 73–89.
5. The text's most "oral" essay, "The Poetry of Michelangelo," originally written in 1871, contains, by my count, at least thirty-nine references to oral phenomena. "The School of Giorgione," on the other hand, which Pater wrote in 1877, and which he included for the first time in the third edition of *The Renaissance* (1888), contains many fewer, only fifteen.
6. Indeed, the first essay in *The Renaissance* recounts the "passionate exaltation" characterizing the "comradeship" of Amis and Amile, a symbol, to Pater, of the Renaissance spirit (5). In Rome, the Pope presents them with identical cups "adorned with gold and precious stones": "beautiful" cups that "keep[] sensation well awake," solidifying their friendship, and out of which they drink "good wine" (6–7).
7. In *Appreciations*, Pater compliments Charles Lamb on his "delicate intellectual epicureanism," his ability to gather and sort the "choicest savour and perfume of Elizabethan poetry" (114). He approvingly quotes Thomas Browne's proclamation that "all existence" "had been but food for contemplation" (132).
8. I am referring to the following stanza in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812–18):
   The commonwealth of kings, the men of Rome!
   And even since, and now, fair Italy!
   Thou are the garden of the world, the home
   Of all Art yields, and Nature can decree;
   Even in thy desert, what is like to thee?
   Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste
   More rich than other climes' fertility;
   Thy wreck a glory, and thy ruin graced
   With an immaculate charm which cannot be defaced. (IV.26)
9. At the end of his career, a year before his death, Pater reversed himself on the question of the etymology of "mysticism." In *Plato and Platonism*, he writes: "*Mysticism* – the condition of the initiated which

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may perhaps mean to close the eye that one may better perceive the invisible, but more probably means to close the lips while the soul is brooding over what cannot be uttered" (50). Though he leaves open the possibility that his initial etymology from 1871 ("Pico Della Mirandola" was first published in October 1871 in *Fortnightly Review*) is correct, twenty-two years later Pater has his doubts. Why? Did a colleague challenge his theory? Did he discover textual or historical evidence that contradicts his earlier assertion? Or did he become disenchanted near the end of his life with the philosophical and aesthetic efficacy of the mouth? Though *Plato and Platonism*, Pater's last book-length work, contains occasional references to mouths, it is, thematically and stylistically, his least explicitly "oral" work. On a performative level, however, it is his *most* oral work: the only book he subtitles "lectures," rather than "essays" or "studies."

10. To the fellow Victorianist who pointed me in the direction of this etymology last year, I offer my heartfelt thanks. Unfortunately, I never caught your name.
11. Perhaps unsurprisingly, heterosexual kisses function differently in Pater, though they also mark the passage between life and death. Giorgione dies at the hands of the plague, contracted from the "kisses" of his dying mistress, "caught with death itself from dying lips" (*Ren* 94–95).
12. Even here Beerbohm cannot help but linger for a moment on Pater's mouth, on "[t]he serried bristles of his moustachio" (67).
13. I am indebted to Herbert Tucker for this observation.
14. Upon Hamlet's "lips," Pater muses, Shakespeare places "perhaps the most eloquent of all [his] words" (*App* 188). In *Measure For Measure*, too, Shakespeare, Pater writes, "kindl[es]" Isabella's "tongue to eloquence" (*App* 181).
15. In *Appreciations*, Pater credits this "saying" to Schiller: "'The artist', says Schiller, 'may be known rather by what he *omits*'" (15).
16. Michelangelo's "strangeness," "potency," and "strength" can overwhelm the uninitiated, Pater warns (*MS* 38–39). If one is sensitive and patient enough, however, one eventually discovers his "sweet savours."
17. This is not the case, apparently, with the English writer Thomas Browne. Pater detects both a "sweetness of cadence" in Browne's "sentences" and "a dreamy sweetness of character" in the man himself, an "inward Platonic" sensitivity that never cloys (*App* 162, 135). On the subject of Elizabethan drama, Pater lauds the "seductive sweetness" of Webster's characters (184). He marvels at the power of Shakespeare's Richard II: the "most sweet-tongued of" his "English kings" (201).
18. I would like to thank Stephen Arata for pointing me in the direction of Swinburne's mouth.
19. Pressed to provide an example of a sublime taste, Burke names "the bitter apples of 'Sodom,'" in other words, rape, death, and genocide. Pater's need to masculinize sweetness might be motivated by his desire to rescue masculinity from its canonical association with pain and violence, especially between men. It should not be seen simply as Paterian gynephobia.
20. "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."
21. The phrase "thought in sense" comes from Shelley's *Peter Bell the Third* (1819), which Pater quotes in "Wordsworth" (1874). Shelley writes:
    Thus – though unimaginative –
    An apprehension clear, intense,
    Of his mind's work, had made alive
    The things it wrought on; I believe
    Wakening a sort of thought in sense. (IV.10)
22. Again, we encounter the prophetic power of the bloody mouth in Pater's imaginary portrait "Denys L'Auxerrois" (1886), a fable about the rejection by medieval Europe of the Dionysian impulse. Beloved at first by his fellow townspeople, the charismatic Denys, a seller of fruit and wine, leads "swarming troops of disheveled women and youths with red-stained limbs and faces" in raucous celebration of "the Feast of Fools," playing the part of "the God of Wine" himself (*IP* 69–71). An aftertaste of

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Hellenism, Denys is an Orphean foretaste of the Renaissance. Eventually, his medieval community turns on him, on the free-spiritedness he unleashes. The sight of "a long trickling of blood upon [his] chin," from a scratch on "his lip[,] . . . transport[s]" the "spectators" "with a kind of mad rage" (87). They tear his body "limb from limb": "The men stuck little shreds of his flesh, or, failing that, of his torn raiment, into their caps; the women lending their long hairpins for the purpose" (87–88).

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