Postscript

Stephen Bann

Who was reading Pater's critical works over the century that followed his death? How did his readers place his ideas in the context of their other literary pursuits? And what might a study of Pater's readership tell us about the development of English studies over the period? These questions may appear to be impossibly ambitious. But there is one crucial element that could suggest that they are not entirely meaningless. The writings of Pater's great rival Ruskin were immured in the Library Edition of Cook and Wedderburn, which was completed in 1912, though individual pocket editions continued to circulate in the 'Popular Ruskin' series. By contrast, Pater's works were still being reedited and reprinted in much the same distinctive format as he had agreed with Macmillan in 1872. To choose one example, my personal copy of *Appreciations*, bought in the 1970s, derives from the fourth reprint of the Library Edition of 1910, which succeeded four preceding editions dating back to 1889 and their five intercalated reprints.

One may assume that these repeated publications testify to a continuing demand for Pater's work. The individual books must have circulated widely over the period, and subsequently many of them entered the second-hand market. Moreover, and in common with the other volumes of the period, they offer the bonus of not infrequently giving us the names and the written comments of their successive owners. This Postscript provides me with the opportunity to review a small selection of these inscribed copies. Though this will inevitably be a random selection, I suggest that it offers some glimpses into the reception of Pater over a period when he maintained his place in the canon, though his work was still far from gaining institutional assent in the universities. My review will end with a brief record of the early stages of this process.

The first copy to be considered here has to be the 1925 reprint of the First Pocket Edition of *The Renaissance*, inscribed by my father with his name and dated 'Christmas 1927'. In later life, Harry Bann (1902–98)

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wrote in a brief unpublished memoir about the readings in poetry and criticism which he cultivated while preparing to qualify as a solicitor in Stockport in the 1920s. During his schooldays, he readily admitted, poetry had been treated in a 'dull, unimaginative way . . . represented chiefly by pieces suitable or considered suitable for recitation'.[1] Yet he made up for this deficiency by becoming familiar nonetheless with the poetry of Keats, Shelley, and Wordsworth. In 1920 he was indebted to his friendship with an Anglo-Catholic schoolmaster for the gift of the *Poems of Christina Rossetti*, and he received from the same source the anthology of extracts from English and French literature, *The Spirit of Man*, compiled by the poet laureate, Robert Bridges. It is worth noting that Bridges took great care to underline the support that he had received in this undertaking from W.B. Yeats, who was a major contributor. But he did not select any work at all from Morris, Swinburne, or either of the Rossettis, let alone any passages from Ruskin or Pater.[2]

Over the 1920s, my father's reading became more wide-ranging, as indicated by the red leather-bound edition of the poems of Lamartine, which he purchased in Le Havre as a present for my mother, and the pocket edition of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, which he annotated with verses that cheekily parodied Byron's stanzas, the outcome of an overnight train journey to the North of Scotland in 1928. His interest in acquiring a copy of Pater's *Renaissance* around this period could well have been stimulated by another early present of Julia Cartwright's *Raphael* in Duckworth's 'Popular Library of Art'. But it was another volume from the same series, G.K. Chesterton's study of the painter G.F. Watts, that elicited many more marks of assent beside particular passages in the text. In marking his *Renaissance*, he confined himself to underlining two passages: Pater's intimation in 'Early French Stories' that this medieval account of a historic friendship appears 'to have been written by a monk' (*Ren.*, 21), and the mention of Pico della Mirandola as having anticipated 'a later age' which would find 'the true method of effecting a scientific reconciliation of Christian sentiment with the imagery, the legends, the theories about the world, of pagan poetry and philosophy' (36). In effect, it was undoubtedly Chesterton rather than Pater who became my father's literary mentor. As he later acknowledged: 'In so far as I imbibed a philosophy of life in my early days it was, I feel sure, inspired largely by Chesterton's ideas and writings.'[3]

Side by side with this peripheral instance, I can place a figure born in the previous decade whose interest in Pater undoubtedly began in early youth, and whose annotated copies of works by Pater turn out to be especially

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informative. Bonamy Dobrée (1891–1974) was a Channel-Islander whose Huguenot predecessors had acquired considerable wealth and status in the City of London. He was educated at the public school of Haileybury, which had merged with Kipling's alma mater, the 'Imperial Service College'. It was through his success in the school's 'Mason Prize' in the Summer of 1908 that he acquired his copy of the Second Edition (1907 reprint) of Pater's *Miscellaneous Studies*. As this information is provided together with his signature in a handwritten inscription on the fly leaf, it would appear that the choice of this particular book by Pater was probably a personal one.[4] Maybe it is not coincidental that this posthumously published collection of essays concludes with 'Emerald Uthwart', Pater's affecting account of the schooldays and early death of a young British officer.

Dobrée would move on from Haileybury to the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. After being commissioned in the Royal Field Artillery in 1910, he resigned as a subaltern in 1913, but rejoined the army in 1914 and emerged as a Major at the end of the First World War. He was later enabled by his private income to embark on a career as a man of letters. He would become a close friend of T.S. Eliot, who commissioned him to write an article on Kipling for the *Criterion*. Moreover the annotation 'T.S.E' that he pencils in the margin of Pater's essay on 'Style' (glossing the use of the term 'correlative') suggests that his intensive reading of *Appreciations* might date back to the 1920s. Among the many underlinings and comments with which he embellishes his copy of the Library Edition (1911 reprint), there is a brief note in the original French that identifies one of Pater's sources for the opening essay on 'Style'. Pater's comment, apropos of Flaubert, that 'the idea only exists by virtue of the form' (*App*., 30) is glossed with the quote: 'de la forme naît l'idée Gautier'. The essays on 'Coleridge' and 'Wordsworth' are also replete with Dobrée's perceptive annotations.

After beginning his career as an independent critic with a special interest in drama, Dobrée became a lecturer in English at Queen Mary College, London. From 1936 to 1955 he later served as the first Professor of English at the University of Leeds, where he set up a thriving department. It would be unnecessary in this context to summarise his highly productive career as a scholarly author, whose range of subjects ranged from Restoration dramatists to eighteenth-century figures as far apart as John Wesley and Horace Walpole, and extended to Rudyard Kipling. But Pater's abiding influence can be detected in a late essay on the art of prose. Dobrée comments: 'what you can do, what you must do, is to import your own

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"sense of fact", to use Pater's still seminal phrase, give something of the ethos that surrounds an idea'.[5] He disagrees with Pater's depreciation of the prose of Dryden (here mentioned in Chapters 1 and 6). But he elevates both into his chosen list of prose stylists: 'Very few writers cherish prose, really think about their instrument, as, say, Dryden, Berkeley, Landor, and Pater did.'[6]

After his death in 1974, Dobrée's working library, which included the copies of the works of Pater already discussed here, was donated to the newly founded University of Kent at Canterbury. Mention has been made in this volume of the movement towards the 'institutionalisation of English in British universities' that took place in Pater's own century. Yet the issue of how English studies continued to develop in the following century is equally significant. Marcus Waithe's chapter in this volume refers to the writer's first encounter with Pater as an undergraduate in the 1990s. But the curriculum development of the 'new universities' of the 1960s was surely a material factor in his reception. Dobrée's working library, with its much-thumbed Pater volumes, was a helpful resource for my own students when I introduced Pater's work in a graduate course at Kent in the early 1970s, a development that will be further discussed in this Postscript.

As a prelude, however, I offer two further examples of books by Pater bearing contemporary inscriptions that belong to the mid-twentieth century. It is worth mentioning that the only selection of extracts from Pater's writings that was readily available at this time was the collection by Richard Aldington, which had been compiled during the Second World War although it was only published in 1948. Accordingly, Aldington opens with an apology: 'for a war-weary generation, scrambling on somehow from day to day, Pater's work may seem as remote as Pater's epoch'. He concludes his introduction with a modest plea in favour of what he terms Pater's 'civilising influence, particularly over sensitive and studious youth'.[7]

Some incentive to read Pater was thus being communicated to the post-war generation. My own copy of the second reprint of the 'Caravan Library' edition of *Appreciations* bears the firm signature of 'Mary Wilkinson / Reigate August 1951' on the fly-leaf. Her pencilled annotation to the essay on 'Style' reads: 'With Pater, criticism is quickened meditation, worship of form.' But what is worth bringing out in this case is the commentary added by her fellow students (or maybe her teachers?) from the 'Sizewell Hall, Suffolk, Course for Continuing Students', who have scrawled their sentiments on the inside back cover: 'Best wishes for Oxford 1951'; 'Good Luck, Mary!'; 'Shall think of you in November. Bon chance.' Seemingly, this young woman was then preparing for an Oxford

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Entrance exam, and had forearmed herself with a Paterian precept that was probably not in tune with the English course to which she aspired.

Another gift originally proffered in the mid-century period is my edition of *Gaston de Latour* (1928 reprint of the Library Edition) which is dedicated in a graceful hand with the phrase 'Love from the Plowdens of Mayfield'. There is no problem in identifying this Anglo-Indian branch of an ancient Catholic family (one of them a patron of the young Kipling) who had returned to England before the outbreak of the Second World War. The subject matter of Pater's unfinished *Gaston*, and the sender's informal dedication, might suggest that this present was destined for a young family friend, perhaps indeed a 'sensitive and studious youth'.

My own personal interest in Pater's writings (other than his *Renaissance*) can be dated precisely to November 1970, when I returned from visiting the Scottish poet Ian Hamilton Finlay with a sheet of paper on which he had written a set of instructions, the first being: 'Read Pater's Imaginary Portraits.'[8] The injunction was fulfilled in July 1971, and Finlay congratulated me on reading the work which he ranked as his 'Favourite Book of All', adding the suggestion that I 'might well write a kind of contemporary sequel'.[9] When I subsequently wrote a catalogue essay for Finlay's first major exhibition outside Scotland in 1977, I took the advice of this embattled gardener and neoclassicist, and entitled it: 'Ian Hamilton Finlay: An Imaginary Portrait.' My epigraph derived from the essay on 'Duke Carl of Rosenmold': 'To Apollo, praying that he would come to us from Italy, bringing his lyre with him.'[10]

However it was the stimulus offered by the teaching programme of the new University of Kent at Canterbury that encouraged me to pursue my interest in Pater's work more broadly. Kent was established as a collegiate university, with a Faculty of Humanities that placed a high premium on interdisciplinary contact. Though I was appointed as an Assistant Lecturer in History, I was willingly recruited for a Master's degree by coursework set up by the English Board of Studies, and assisted in planning a seminar course devoted to 'The Modern Movement'. With my colleague Ian Gregor, I designed a course for the first of two terms which began with Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and continued with sessions involving the major English critics of the later nineteenth century. Pater's focus on Flaubert in the essay on 'Style' provided a running thread in a sequence that continued by way of Arnold, Ruskin, and Morris to Pater and Wilde. Over the following two decades, this pattern persisted, though Rossetti was added to Morris, and Wilde was ultimately replaced by Swinburne.

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There was initially some difficulty in advising the students on secondary reading. Of the available collections of extracts from Pater's critical writings, Aldington's summons to 'sensitive and studious youth' did not strike the right note, and Jenny Uglow's collection of 1973 hardly galvanised the class, while concluding that Pater 'does not provide us with authoritative judgements, but with suggestive, personal interpretations'.[11] Thus it was timely that Harold Bloom brought out his *Selected Writings of Walter Pater* in 1974. Bloom had been scrupulous in mentioning earlier work on Pater, commending the work of Ian Fletcher as 'a necessary starting point for all future study'.[12] He did not overvalue Pater's contribution, arguing that Coleridge and Ruskin were of greater eminence as critics, though Pater was 'superior to his older rival, Arnold, and to his disciple, Wilde'.[13] But his insistence on Pater's unique role as a harbinger of Modernism (and his relegation of Arnold) proved forceful enough to generate a vigorous altercation. When I met Bloom at New Haven in the spring of 1978, he was still smarting from an editorial in the *Times Literary Supplement* in which Christopher Ricks had professed himself to be 'someone who believes that Arnold's little finger is worth Pater's whole hand'. Arnold had never doubted, as Ricks argued, that 'the critical faculty is lower than the inventive . . .. But a recent critic of the school of Harold Bloom would accept no such thing'.[14]

The launch of this polemic against Bloom, and the 'Yale School', is a reminder that Pater's works had also circulated widely on the other side of the Atlantic. Many graduate students who took the Kent course on 'The Modern Movement' came from outside Britain, and were not deterred by the equivocal reputation that he still held within the local context of English studies. Although there is no room here to investigate his reputation in the United States over the foregoing period, my conclusion will rest with the curious history of the two volumes of *Marius the Epicurean* (Library Edition, 1921 reprint), which were recently presented to me. These were acquired in the 1970s by a Kent colleague who was studying Comparative Literature at the State University of New York at Buffalo. His elegant bookplate adorns the first volume, and the neat pencil marks indicate his attentive reading. But the second volume exhibits the personal book-plates of two remarkable women: Miss Frank E. Buttolph (1850–1924) and Gretta Brooker (1905–53). Miss Buttolph served as a volunteer at the Astor Library in New York, and her contribution to culinary history derives from the fact that she donated her unrivalled collection of over 25,000 menus to the New York Public Library. The handsome bookplate enshrines her surname between two heavily stacked rows of shelves.

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Gretta Brooker, born in St Louis, served as a War Correspondent in Indonesia after graduating from Vassar College in 1925. Her last years were taken up with a vigorous campaign against the persecution of the Christian church in Asia, and she was also well known as a committed feminist. Her bookplate once again shows a well-stocked bookcase, with a female figure absorbed in reading while perched on the topmost stand of a ladder. In my previous 'Afterword' to *Pater the Classicist*, I drew attention to the interest in *Marius the Epicurean* shown by the forgotten English nineteenth-century novelist Florence Montgomery, who covered the opening pages of my two volumes with her copious annotations. Pater's readers have often embellished the printed text with their adornments and their inscriptions. They will surely not cease to engage us as we navigate the perimeter of English Studies.

Notes

1 Harry Bann, 'Miscellany', unpublished memoir (typescript), 4.
2 Robert Bridges, *The Spirit of Man: An Anthology in English & French from the Philosophers & Poets made by the Poet Laureate in 1915* (1919).
3 Bann, 'Miscellany', 19.
4 My cousin's husband, Michael Higginbottom, who was at Haileybury in the 1950s, confirms that the choice of books for such prizes was left to the recipient.
5 Bonamy Dobrée, 'Some Remarks on Prose in England Today', *Sewanee Review* 63 (1955), 631–46 (634–5).
6 Dobrée, 'Some Remarks on Prose', 646.
7 See *Walter Pater: Selected Works*, ed. Richard Aldington (1948), 15.
8 See *Stonypath Days: Letters between Ian Hamilton Finlay and Stephen Bann 1970–72*, ed. Stephen Bann (2016), 99.
9 Bann, *Stonypath Days*, 142.
10 See *Ian Hamilton Finlay*, exh. cat., Serpentine Gallery, London (1977), 7–28.
11 *Walter Pater: Essays on Literature and Art*, ed. Jennifer Uglow (1973), xxii.
12 *Selected Writings of Walter Pater*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York 1974), bibliography, xxxvi.
13 Bloom, *Selected Writings*, xxiv.
14 Christopher Ricks, 'Pater, Arnold and Misquotation', *Times Literary Supplement* (25 November 1977), 1383. The further consequence of this disagreement between Ricks and Bloom was a symposium on Plagiarism published by the *Times Literary Supplement* on 9 April 1982, in which Bloom asserted: 'Great critics like Hazlitt and Pater tended to quote from memory in their essays, and their inevitable misquotations are considerably more enlightening than invariable accuracy could have been' (413).

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