Preface

In our earlier collection *Pater the Classicist: Classical Scholarship, Reception, and Aestheticism* (Oxford University Press 2017) we sought to direct detailed critical attention to Walter Pater's writings on classical antiquity, including his book on Plato and his essays on Greek sculpture, which have been largely neglected. We aimed to show that Pater made a significant contribution to classical studies and to combat the idea that he has little to teach us today about his objects of study. Although himself a classicist, Pater also wrote widely about English literature, and collected many of his principal essays on the subject in *Appreciations*, first published in 1889. These essays too have not in general been accorded detailed analysis; all our contributors, whatever their differences of view, agree that Pater has novel, interesting, and important things to say about English authors that merit our serious attention. There is currently no systematic treatment of Pater as a student of English literature, despite its importance to him and his enormous sophistication as a literary critic; this volume aims to fill that gap.

For its realisation *Pater the Classicist* required bringing together Paterians and Victorianists with classicists, including classical philosophers and students of ancient art and archaeology, since in general classicists do not read Pater and Paterians are seldom experts in matters classical. For our new project we adopted a similar research methodology, essential in our view in the case of writings which are so wide-ranging, cosmopolitan, and interdisciplinary. We assembled a group of Pater specialists, Victorianists, and broad-minded scholars who specialise in the authors Pater wrote about, and who are sympathetic to reception studies and the view that Pater has much that is significant to tell us about these writers. In July 2018 we held a two-day workshop in Oxford for contributors (generously supported by the University's English Faculty and by the Department of History of Art at York, and ably managed by Alexandra Gushurst-Moore) to establish a clear sense of the scope and aims of the project and habits of

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intellectual interchange. Three of the participants, Nicholas Halmi, Catherine Maxwell, and Daniel Tyler, have in the event been unable to contribute to the resulting publication, but assisted in its framing. Stefano Evangelista (one of the editors of *Pater the Classicist*) has not only contributed his own chapter, but has advised on the project throughout, in respect of design and scope. At the outset we received excellent and formative advice from James Williams and David Hopkins. We would also like to thank our anonymous readers for their suggestions and Bethany Thomas, our ever-helpful editor at Cambridge University Press.

The principal writings that deal with English literature treated in this volume are, in the order of their composition (with dates of subsequent publications in brackets), as follows:

1866 'Coleridge's Writings', rewritten as essentially a new essay 'Coleridge' for T. H. Ward's *The English Poets*, 1880, and the two combined for *Appreciations*, 1889 (hereafter *App*.)
1868 'Poems by William Morris', reworked as 'Aesthetic Poetry', *App*., 1889, deleted from the second edition of 1890, and never thereafter republished
1874 'A Fragment on *Measure for Measure*', revised as 'Measure for Measure', *App*.
'On Wordsworth', revised as 'Wordsworth', *App*.
1876 'Romanticism', revised as 'Postscript', *App*.
1878 'The Character of the Humourist: Charles Lamb', revised as 'Charles Lamb', *App*.
1883 'Dante Gabriel Rossetti', in Ward's *The English Poets* vol. 4 (second edition), revised in *App*.
1885 'On *Love's Labours Lost*', revised as 'Love's Labours Lost', *App*.
1886 'Sir Thomas Browne', revised in *App*.
1888 'Style', revised in *App*.
1889 'Shakespeare's English Kings', revised in *App*.

There are also some pieces collected in *Essays from 'The Guardian'* (1908; vol. 10 of the New Library Edition), including reviews of a study of Robert Browning; *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; *Robert Elsmere*; and 'Four Books for Students on English Literature', among them Saintsbury's *Specimens of English Prose Style*; together with some uncollected items.

It is worth stressing that the collection, in this too like *Pater the Classicist*, is not a series of essays on disparate subjects loosely attached to a principal theme, but a single, focused project: a re-examination of Pater as a critic of English literature in the light of the development of English

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studies and literary criticism during the period. In that sense it might be better regarded as a book with multiple authors than as an essay collection. Because no one scholar would have the necessary expertise or range required for the project, its successful achievement required such multiple authorship. (Of course one result of this is that there are differences of view and of emphasis in different chapters, but we regard this as an enrichment, not a defect.)

This is moreover an excellent moment for writing about Pater since Oxford University Press's fully annotated new Pater edition is bound to raise his profile and increase serious interest in his work; the first volumes have now appeared. Two of its team of editors are contributing to this volume: Kenneth Daley (*Appreciations*) and Lene Østermark-Johansen (*Imaginary Portraits*). There is evidence, from conferences and elsewhere, that younger scholars are increasingly attracted to Pater's writings. There is also a growing interest in the essay as a literary form and in style, including prose style.

The collection, while its primary focus is on Pater's essays on particular English authors, helps to situate those essays in various wider contexts, including developments in literary criticism and scholarship, and the gradual process that established English as a university subject. Pater, far from being a disengaged recluse, constantly engaged, if often in a characteristically covert way, with the views of his Victorian contemporaries, challenging (if only by implication) dominant views on critical and artistic practice, and on matters including religion and morality. The volume relates his work to other Victorian critics, including Arnold, Newman, and Saintsbury. And it offers material for the study of the development of English as a discipline as well as possible paths not taken (the relationship between English and Classics; the development of literary criticism and its styles; English and the literatures of continental Europe). The volume also contains some reflections on the reception of Pater: Pater as an imaginative writer (and thus himself the object of criticism); Pater and the leading anglophone modernists, including Woolf, Joyce, and T. S. Eliot (Pater is a presence in almost all of them, though often occluded); Pater and the deconstructionists (after the High Modernist period Pater falls to a significant extent into disfavour, but there is an extraordinary revival with the Yale critics, including J. Hillis Miller and Harold Bloom).

Quotations from the writings of Pater are cited within the text in abbreviated form (see xv–xvi for a list of abbreviations). Documentation for all references and citations is given in full in the notes to individual chapters. (For books, the place of publication is London unless otherwise

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specified.) Our volume also contains, at the end, a specially compiled general bibliography on the subject: this provides overall guidance on publications about Pater and English Literature.

Our group of scholar-critics includes established academics who are leading authorities in their field and those who are nearer the beginning of their career. Our volume is designed not only for enthusiasts for Pater but also for anyone interested in 'Eng. Lit.' and the way it is written about, the history of criticism, and the institutional history of English as a discipline and object of study. We hope that our inclusive, outward-facing, broad-minded approach would also have met with the approval of that most cosmopolitan of writers on English literature: Walter Horatio Pater.

Charles Martindale
Lene Østermark-Johansen
Elizabeth Prettejohn
York and Copenhagen, 2022

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