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**Paterian Cosmopolitanism:
Euphuism, Negativity, and Genre in
*Marius the Epicurean***

TO ANYONE LOOKING TO PLACE *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas* (1885) in the context of nineteenth-century intellectual history, the figure of Matthew Arnold looms large. Traces of Arnold's essays such as "Marcus Aurelius" (1863), "Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment" (1864), and *Culture and Anarchy* (1867-68) can be found throughout Pater's novel, which narrates the intellectual and spiritual development of an aesthetically inclined young man during the last days of the Roman Empire under the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180 CE). This is, perhaps, not especially remarkable. Along with John Ruskin, Arnold was one of the most influential and widely read aesthetic and social critics of the mid-Victorian era. In addition, he stood as the latest representative of a British critical tradition which, under the influence of German idealist thought, established the literary intellectual's preeminent role in English society – the critical tradition that Pater, well versed in the German philosophy then de rigeur in Benjamin Jowett's Oxford, consciously sought to enter.¹

Most descriptions of Arnold's influence on Pater emphasize the shift from an objective to a subjective or "impressionistic" form of criticism, encapsulated by Pater's transformation of Arnold's famous assertion in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864) that the aim of the critic was "[t]o see the object as in itself it really is" into the question asked in *The Renaissance* (1873), "[w]hat is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to me?" Recently, however, Amanda Anderson has revised this standard account by calling attention to the subjective elements already present within Arnold's writing. She

notes Arnold's statement in the 1864 essay that criticism can be understood as "the 'free play' of the mind upon convention or customary ideas," and characterizes this free play as a "constant movement and even a kind of restless negative energy" that Arnold celebrates "as 'a pleasure in itself,' a formulation that anticipates the tenets of the Aesthetic Movement."²

It is within this dialectical tension between the objective and the subjective that she finds Arnold's somewhat paradoxical understanding of "cosmopolitanism," which Anderson equates with Victorian society's general ambivalence regarding the creation and maintenance of a "distanced" perspective toward one's own culture. According to Anderson, Arnold attempted to imbue this distanced critical perspective with an ethical dimension advocating for "the subjective enactment or embodiment of forms of universality." This necessarily "value-laden value-neutrality" stands, for Anderson, as "one key instance of the nineteenth-century approach to detachment as an ongoing achievement: as something that cannot simply be presumed or asserted but rather must emerge out of concrete practices, guided by shaping aspirations, and intimately linked to the crafting of character and moral selfhood."³ This tension finds its most characteristic articulation in

the privileged place that race and cultural heritage play in Arnold's obsessions with the modern project of achieving psychological, moral, and cultural distance from the 'given.' Arnold is drawn to and wants to believe in the possibility of transformative and critical relations to what he construes as natural racial forces, but he is also haunted by the fact that such forces are starkly determining.⁴

Anderson's account of Arnold's contradictory cosmopolitanism is characteristic of a large body of critical work that has focused on the central importance of racial thinking in Arnold's *oeuvre*.⁵ For students of Pater, this is of great interest, because of the conspicuous absence of racial discourse in his writings. Although he does not hesitate to describe the characteristics of various nationalities, Pater avoids any discussion of the various racial typologies (Celtic and Germanic, Hebrew and Hellene) that structure Arnoldian cultural criticism.⁶ While Anderson views the relationship between Pater and Arnold to be one of revision rather than rejection, in which "Pater elevates stance itself as a value" while "Arnold promotes a particular kind of stance, one that can reconcile the objective

and the subjective, the universal and the particular,” she does not provide an explanation for the lack of racialist statements in Pater’s writings.⁷ Given the determinate role race plays within Arnold’s ambivalent cosmopolitanism, the relationship between Pater’s celebration of the subjective and the paucity of race thinking in his cultural criticism surely demands our attention.

Pater’s apparent lack of interest in racial categories is even more remarkable when one considers the immense influence of anthropologist E. B. Tylor on his work.⁸ Beginning with the essay on “Wordsworth” (1874) and continuing through *Plato and Platonism* (1893; the last volume he published during his lifetime), Pater was preoccupied with the notion of primitive “survivals,” which Tylor defined as “things that were originally rational in motive” that have become “meaningless or absurd as they persist [...] by the sheer force of conservatism into a new intellectual context.”⁹ This fundamental concept grounded Tylor’s explicitly hierarchical theory of race, which posited the existence of “primitive” races that persist in the forms of “savage” or “barbaric” culture that Western society had since evolved beyond.¹⁰

Within this intellectual context, it is reasonable to ask how it was possible for Pater to absorb the insights of Arnold and Tylor without becoming preoccupied with racialist accounts of culture. I believe that the answer lies in his development of a critical discourse that Rebecca Walkowitz has recently called “cosmopolitan style,” a form of writing that, in her view, calls into question “epistemological privilege” and the assumption that there exists “a consistent distinction between who is seeing and what is being seen.”¹¹ To readers of *Marius the Epicurean*, this style is known by the name of “Euphuism.”

Pater describes “Euphuism,” as “the always and increasingly artificial” literary style that is “manifested in every age in which the literary conscious has been awakened to forgotten duties towards language, towards the instruments of expression.”¹² Discussions of Paterian Euphuism have long been dominated by Linda Dowling’s influential analysis of his reaction to the “new philology” and its subversion of the notion that moral and social order bases itself upon a divinely ordained linguistic order. Yet while Dowling correctly calls attention to post-philological self-awareness of Pater’s writing, her claim that he rejected the Anglo-German idealist critical tradition exemplified by Coleridge’s importation of Kant into British cultural critique is unsupported by Pater’s own discussion of Euphuistic style in *Marius*.¹³

In this essay, I argue that Pater's Euphuism relies upon the insights of idealist philosophy in order to articulate a theory of "cosmopolitan style." Specifically, Pater draws upon a disparate number of cultural discourses in his articulation of Euphuism while simultaneously subjecting those discourses to an intensely self-reflexive process of questioning and scrutiny, performing what G. W. F. Hegel famously called "the labor of the negative" upon his own theory of literary style. By doing so, Paterian Euphuism fundamentally disrupts the logic that underlies any cultural category that threatens to become solidified or essentialized. In *Marius*, these categories not only include Arnold and Tylor's racial thinking, but also the literary form of the historical novel.

Walkowitz's concept of cosmopolitan style can help us to understand the relationship between Pater's investigation of literary form and his critique of the conceptual categories that underwrite racial, gender, and national political discourse. Specifically, she identifies cosmopolitan style as an aspect of literary modernism's "critical cosmopolitanism" – a theoretical project that (similar to Pater's writings) seeks to "supplement and in some ways contest" Kant's injunction to reflect upon and demystify the intellectual and social categories that organize human experience. Critical cosmopolitanism "implies a new reflection on reflection," seeking "to position knowledge in history, to investigate the social uses of knowledge, and to evaluate the political interests that knowledge has served," while also extending "the investigation of categories that seem to be neutral to the affective conditions [...] that have seemed to make argument or engagement possible."¹⁴ Cosmopolitan style, therefore, concerns itself "with the need both to transform and to disable social categories" by calling attention to the process of literary description, which includes in its purview "what ought to be described, on the one hand, and the social conditions and political consequences of description, on the other."¹⁵ This descriptive self-consciousness calls attention to "the conventions of writing, which determine how arguments are made, how words can be used, and even which comparisons are relevant and which irrelevant or impertinent," all of which shape how the national and international political order is understood both intellectually and affectively.¹⁶ Cosmopolitan style denaturalizes the process of literary description, thereby rendering the political investments of literary convention legible, and consequently, potentially malleable.

This specifically “modernist” form of cosmopolitanism, influenced by “changes in the study of culture in the late nineteenth century,” such as the advent of modern anthropology, “assumes more integration among cultures and less uniformity within them” than the Victorian cosmopolitanism of a figure such as Arnold, which Anderson characterizes as promoting detachment from a definitive nation or community.¹⁷ Yet while Anderson enfoldes the aesthetic writings of Pater and Wilde into her definition of Victorian cosmopolitanism, Walkowitz stresses the continuities between the “new analysis of perception and alternative tones of political consciousness among early modernist writers” and “the syncretic but less-than-national tradition of cosmopolitanism [...] which is often associated with aestheticism, dandyism, and *flânerie* at the fin de siècle.” She emphasizes this “association between cosmopolitanism and the late-Victorian tradition of aesthetic decadence, a repertoire of excessive and purposefully deviant cultural strategies whose values include pleasure, consumption, syncretism, and perversity,” because it “amplifies the place of transience and artificiality within models of national culture and transnational mobility.”¹⁸

Cosmopolitan, perverse, and artificial were precisely the qualities associated with Euphuism in the mid-nineteenth century. As Lene Østermark-Johansen has noted in her extensive research into Euphuism in late-Victorian England, “charges of foreignness, effeminacy, and of a false focus on manner rather than matter were frequently raised against such writers as Swinburne, Rossetti, and Pater, and the term ‘Euphuism’ was invoked to illustrate the ridiculous extremes to which such concern with verbal ornament could be taken.”¹⁹ The word “Euphuism” derives from two popular romances written by John Lyly in the early modern period, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1578) and *Euphues and His England* (1580). These tales, both of which made use of a highly ornate prose style that partook of literary devices commonly associated with poetry (such as alliteration, simile, and antithesis) became extremely popular during the Elizabethan era and into the early seventeenth century, before precipitously falling out of fashion for well over two hundred years. Østermark-Johansen traces the Victorian revival of interest in Euphuistic style to John Morley’s 1861 review of Fairhold’s new edition of Lyly’s dramatic works. She argues that “the hidden agenda of Morley’s review was to launch a debate about prose style in general and thus to give a far wider meaning to the term ‘Euphuism.’” Morley offered this as a conclusion: “By the fate, then, of the writers who have flattered fashion

and are read no more, let modern Euphuists be warned. Nothing is lasting that is feigned.”²⁰

“Euphuism” soon became associated with the ornate, complex, and self-consciously artificial style of writers associated with the aesthetic movement. For example, Østermark-Johansen cites John Addington Symonds’s declaration that Euphuism was “the English type of an all but universal disease. There would have been Euphuism, in some form or other, without Euphuies; just as the so-called aesthetic movement of to-day might have dispensed with its Bunthorne, and yet have flourished.”²¹ An association between elaborate literary style, failed masculinity, and the corrupting influences of foreign literature played a prominent role in the anonymous article “An Alexandrian Age,” which appeared in *Macmillan’s Magazine* in 1886. The author of this essay, who uses the terms “Alexandrian” and “Euphuist” interchangeably, equates the elaborate, self-consciously literary language of contemporary writing with the inadequacy of contemporary masculinity.²² He approvingly cites Thomas De Quincey’s assertion “that our native disregard for the graces of style had its origin in the native manliness of our character, ‘in the sincerity and directness of the British taste, in the principle of *esse quam videri*, which might be taken as the key to much in our manner, much in our philosophy of our lives.” He then goes on to explain that,

[i]t is certain that manliness is not just at this moment the capital distinction of our literature either in prose or verse. In the general bulk of our original work this quality of manliness is certainly not conspicuous; in our criticism it is, one might say, entirely wanting; and in our more serious work, historical, philosophical, and the like, the general tendency is to a minute, dissecting, curious mood, more given to pulling down than to building up. And this tendency is inevitably reflected in the style. The modern style is, indeed, the modern man.²³

“An Alexandrian Age” exemplifies what James Eli Adams has identified as the nineteenth century’s characteristic association between masculinity and style. By the time this essay was written in 1886, the words “manly” and “manliness” would have inevitably been connected with the “muscular Christianity” movement in the popular imagination. Muscular Christianity, as articulated in the writings of Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes, called for a program of Christian

activism combined with an ideal of disciplined, athletic, eminently *British* form of masculinity. According to Adams, Muscular Christianity introduced into British literary discourse a particular style of masculinity, embodied in the image of the healthy, ascetic, and virile male body as the epitome of the nation's moral virtue.²⁴ Thus, when the author of "An Alexandrian Age" contrasts the unmanliness of contemporary criticism's "minute, dissecting, curious mood, more given to pulling down than to building up," with the "pre-eminently robust, sincere, and direct – in a word, pre-eminently manly" English prose style that has gone out of fashion, he identifies Alexandrian/Euphuistic literary style not only as a signifier of modern masculinity's failure to live, but with the corruption of the English nation itself.²⁵

As we will see later, Pater ironically references this discourse of masculinity in *Marius*, in the chapter titled "Manly Amusements." For the moment, however, it is sufficient to note that when Pater gives the title "Euphuism" to *Marius*'s sixth chapter, he alludes to a cultural debate that not only focused on the nature of good literary style, but also associated the revival of Euphuistic style with the failure of British masculinity and the corresponding perversion of the English nation. Pater's goal in this chapter, though, is not simply to intervene in this debate, but to examine the conceptual, social, and affective categories embodied by literary conventions that made the discursive association between style, gender and national possible. By placing "Euphuism" in the middle of his historical *Bildungsroman*, rather than in a stand-alone essay (as he would do in the "Style" essay of 1888), Pater renders Euphuistic discourse itself into an object of critical scrutiny by embedding it within a specific social and historical context.²⁶

Specifically, Pater uses the form of the novel to exploit the distance between himself and the voice of the narrator. He does so in order to accomplish a singular rhetorical effect: the Euphuistic finesse of the narrator directs the reader's attention to the paradoxes, feints, and contradictions inherent within the Euphuistic literary project itself. The "Euphuism" chapter, therefore, is not just an intervention in the debate about literary style's relationship to gender and national politics, but an investigation into how literary language, even on the level of the sentence, functions to naturalize relations of power within society. These insights, I argue, were fundamentally inspired by Pater's idiosyncratic application of Hegel's notion of "the encounter with the negative" to his understanding of the act of literary creation. As we will see, Pater crucially makes use of these insights in

his representation of Marcus Aurelius in “Manly Amusements,” and does so in order to render legible the ideological work performed by the genre of the historical novel.

Initially, however, “Euphuism” is the term that the narrator uses to describe the literary style of Flavian: the aloof and immensely attractive Roman schoolboy with whom Marius, Pater’s hero, develops an erotically charged emotional and intellectual relationship. After Flavian and Marius discover the story of Cupid and Psyche in Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*, Flavian decides that his task in life is to revivify the literary language of a declining Roman empire. Pater even goes so far as to ascribe an actually existing anonymous Latin poem, the *Pervigilium Veneris*, to Flavian’s pen.

The novel’s discussion of Flavian’s Euphuism is obviously influenced by the writings of Tylor and Arnold. The narrator anachronistically displaces Euphuism from its Victorian and early modern contexts to the Rome of late antiquity, and defines Euphuistic style as that which “manifests in every age in which the literary conscience has been awakened to forgotten duties towards language” (*ME* 90). This definition strongly recalls Tylor’s definition of “survivals” as “processes, customs, and opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on [...] into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved.”²⁷ Euphuistic style, much like a Tylorian survival, is an aspect of culture that persists across time and is revived periodically to “awaken” literary language to its “forgotten duties,” i.e. to its vital relationship to “an older condition of culture.”

Most strikingly, however, the narrator’s use of Euphuistic style recalls Arnold’s discussion of the “free play of mind” in “The Function of Criticism” essay. This is apparent when the narrator compares Flavian’s rhetorical ability to a form of military prowess: “The secrets of utterance, of expression itself, of that through which alone any intellectual or spiritual power within one can actually take effect upon others, to over-awe or charm them to one’s side, presented themselves to this ambitious lad in immediate connexion with that desire for predominance, for the satisfaction of which another might have relied on the acquisition and display of brilliant military qualities” (*ME* 88). In the first half of this sentence, until the appearance of the main verb “presented,” the narrator uses a series of appositional clauses to realize a progressively more accurate definition of the “secrets” that

“presented themselves” to Flavian. A close examination of each apposition reveals a gradual redefinition of what these “secrets” regard: “utterance” refers specifically to vocalized speech, which the narrator then redefines a “expression itself,” referring to any method by which the individual makes his thoughts known by externalizing mental activity, a definition that includes but is not limited to spoken “utterance.” In other words, the rhetorical form of this sentence mimics the effort of mind needed to express the true “intellectual or spiritual power within one.”

This process of steady redefinition and expansion, which suggests a certain playful attitude towards language, meaning, and the mimetic capacity of language, seems the very embodiment of Arnold’s description of “the free play of mind upon all subjects.” He defines this free play as “a pleasure in itself, being an object of desire, being an essential provider of elements without which a nation’s spirit, whatever compensations it may have for them, must, in the long run, die of inanition,” a spirit which, Arnold claims, “hardly enters into an Englishman’s thoughts.”²⁸ Taken together, the narrator’s deployment of Tylorean and Arnoldian theories of culture appears to counter implicitly charges that Euphuism is symptomatic of the perverted and degraded modern English nation. On the contrary, Euphuism would seem to represent an effort made towards reviving the nation’s dignity, a revival of forgotten duties and food for the starved Roman (and, by extension, English) national spirit.

Upon closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that Euphuism, far from indicating either the decline or revival of the nation, actually exposes the process by which literary language conceals its political work by naturalizing ideological categories. Pater’s narrator, through his own spectacular Euphuistic performance, does this by implicitly contrasting the supposed description of the methods of Euphuistic composition with the *actual* rhetoric work accomplished by the Euphuistic language used to express those revelations. Put another way, by using Euphuistic style to articulate the theory of Euphuism, Pater transforms Euphuism into a cosmopolitan style.

Returning to the sentence quoted above, one notices that the narrator, after he redefines “utterance” as “expression,” defines expression as “that through which alone intellectual or spiritual power within one can actually take effect upon others,” thereby placing less emphasis on the purely communicative function of language and more on language’s capacity for rhetorical persuasiveness, defined as the transformation of one’s subjective desires into a means of affecting the

beliefs of others in order “to over-awe or charm them to one’s side.” Ultimately, the “secrets” the narrator describes sounds much more like the ability to exert control over others through rhetorical skill, and much less like the ability to express or verbalize clearly one’s thoughts and feelings. Thus, Flavian’s intuition of an immediate “connexion” between “utterance” and “the acquisition and display of brilliant military qualities” indicates the process by which the relationship between rhetorical facility and the capacity to dominate others becomes naturalized. The narrator performs this same process within in the sentence itself. Through the accretion of appositional phrases, the narrator rhetorically mimics the mental act of thinking through the implications of the concept “utterance.” This complex process stands in marked contrast to Flavian’s ostensible “immediate connexion” of rhetorical prowess “with the desire for predominance.” The narrator thereby demonstrates the power of rhetorical artifice both to create and undermine the illusion of a natural “connexion” between language and dominance by performing the very rhetorical operation that naturalizes the ideological assumption that the passage appears to represent as natural and intuitive.

A similar process is at work when the narrator relates that “the popular speech was gradually departing from the form and rule of literary language, a language always and increasingly artificial. While the learned dialect was yearly becoming more and more barbarously pedantic, the colloquial idiom, on the other hand, offered a thousand chance-tost gems of racy and picturesque expression [...]” (*ME* 88-89). This passage associates aesthetic power with a “colloquial idiom” whose “chance-tost gems” offer a spiritually edifying alternative to the pedantry of learned literary language, which leads the reader to expect that the artistic value of colloquial speech might provide leverage for a certain democratizing impulse. Especially given contemporary fears regarding literary English’s transformation into a self-referential “dead language” for scholarly elites, such an assertion would have suggested to a learned Victorian audience that Euphuism had the capacity revive literary language by opening itself to a broader and more diverse range of influences.

Thus, the narrator’s description of Flavian’s “literary programme,” as “a work, then, partly conservative or reactionary, in its dealing with the instrument of the literary art; partly popular and revolutionary, asserting, so to term them, the rights of the *proletariate* of speech,” would seem to refer to the political implications of Euphuism insofar as it vindicates “the rights of the *proletariate* of speech.”²⁹

Yet, upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that the use of “popular” speech cannot be “revolutionary” specifically *because* Flavian uses it as part of his “literary art,” thereby removing it from its dynamic existence as a spoken dialect. Flavian appropriates the language of the common people only so that his literary compositions may seem naturally “racy and picturesque,” when in reality those compositions merely appropriating popular speech in order to achieve the desired rhetorical effect. In this way, the narrator calls attention to the markedly undemocratic impulse underlying Flavian’s arrogation of popular speech by undermining the reader’s assumptions regarding the political resonance of terms such as “colloquial idiom,” “revolutionary,” and “*proletariate*” to describe Flavian’s ultimately selfish desire to use his rhetorical skills to dominate others.

While the influences of Arnold and Tylor are surely not hidden in the “Euphuism” chapter, they do not account for the method by which Pater undermines Euphuism from within Euphuistic discourse. He inaugurates a reflexive process that uses Euphuistic style against itself, rendering it the object of its own linguistic operations. In other words, Pater uses the resources of an “unnatural” literary style to expose the naturalizing function of literary language more generally. Although this renders Euphuism a “cosmopolitan style” *avant la lettre*, to understand the fundamental intellectual logic shaping Pater’s treatment of Euphuism, we must turn to the history of idealist thought. The overarching intellectual framework in which Pater’s cosmopolitanism operates owes much to G. W. F. Hegel’s concept of “the labor of the negative.”

Accounts of Pater’s philosophical and literary influences have long taken pains to emphasize the centrality of Hegel’s theories of aesthetics to Pater’s intellectual development, calling attention to Pater’s unusually early access to Hegel in Britain, his involvement in the “Old Mortality” group at Oxford (sometimes referred to as the “young Hegelians”), the importance of his knowledge of German Idealism in winning the Brasenose College fellowship, and the immense influence of Hegelian historicism on *The Renaissance* and in his writings on Greek mythology.³⁰ Less attention, however, has been devoted to the importance of Hegelian concept of negativity for Pater. Hegel defines “negation” as an obstacle that a society or an individual encounters and engages with on the path towards self-development and self-knowledge: “The road can therefore be regarded as the pathway of doubt, or more precisely as the way of despair. For what happens on it is not what is ordinarily understood when the word ‘doubt’ is used: shilly-shallying about this or

that presumed truth, followed by a return to that truth again, after the doubt has been appropriately dispelled – so that at the end of the process the matter is taken to be what it was in the first place.”³¹

Negation, therefore, is Hegel’s way of explaining how a system can “organically develop” without the necessity of introducing external influences into the system. As C. J. Arthur explains,

Hegel’s method depends [...] on the dialectical point that when a given claim to knowledge is to be rejected as untrue “the exposition of the untrue consciousness in its untruth is not merely a negative procedure,” because if the result of the argument is properly understood as a determinate negation of the original thesis, ‘a new form has thereby immediately arisen.’ That is to say, to refute is not simply to deny, but to find relevant grounds for such rejection. Every claim to knowledge has its specific refutation, and this involves consciousness in a new set of commitments. [...] Validity appears here not in relation to an external measure but in accordance with what consciousness provides ‘from within itself’ at each stage.³²

In Hegel’s account, development occurs when negation, by eliciting the disintegration of an intellectual concept, allows for the reformation of a concept through the reinterpretation of knowledge already immanent *within* that concept. In other words an encounter with the negative creates a radically different relationship to knowledge that is already present within a system without introducing new information into the system.

In the “Euphuism” chapter, Pater stages this encounter with the negative by using the narrator’s own Euphuistic prose to discuss Flavian’s Euphuistic “literary programme.” In the rest of this essay, I will demonstrate how Pater restages the Euphuistic encounter with the negative with a critically cosmopolitan purpose. While Hegelian thought is surely not typically associated with theories of cosmopolitanism, Pater’s idiosyncratic deployment of negativity occurs on the level of narrative form, where it functions to denaturalize the intellectual and affective logics inherent in the literary genre in which Pater’s novel participates, the nineteenth-century historical novel.

Pater renders the political investments of these genres most legible in the chapter pointedly titled “Manly Amusements.” This chapter narrates Marius’s encounter with the violent displays of ritualistic animal sacrifices presented in the Roman amphitheatre, the “manly amusements” referred to in the chapter title, which the narrator relates in grotesquely vivid detail (*ME* 168). In a specific reference to E. B. Tylor, the narrator identifies the spectacle as a “survival” of ancient rituals associated with the worship of Artemis and Diana. Turning away from this violence in disgust, Marius trains his eye on the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, who stares impassively at the spectacle. Marius then declares Aurelius to be his “inferior now and forever on the question of righteousness” because of his ability to view the spectacle with passive indifference (*ME* 170).

In many ways, the objects of Pater’s scorn in this chapter could hardly be more overt. As discussed above, Pater’s use of the word “manly” to describe the violence of the amphitheater registers his critique of the normative ideal of aggressive, athletic masculinity that Muscular Christianity introduced into Victorian culture. Richard Dellamora points out as much when he asserts that Pater uses the “scene of gladiatorial to attack ideas of masculine self-worth that depend on aggression and physical brutality.”³³ It is also readily apparent that Pater is critical of the ideal of Stoic masculinity embodied in the figure of Marcus Aurelius. Marius’s disgust at the emperor’s ability to endure the violence of the amphitheater passively – a spectacle that it is well within his power to stop – would have carried marked significance to a Victorian readership. Many critics have attested to Marcus Aurelius’s status as a towering figure in nineteenth-century intellectual discourse, serving as a touchstone figure for thinkers ranging from John Stuart Mill to Friedrich Nietzsche.³⁴

The emperor’s significance for Victorian literary culture is most characteristically, and perhaps most famously discussed in Matthew Arnold’s “Marcus Aurelius”. In this essay, Arnold asserts that Aurelius “lived and acted in a state of society modern by its essential characteristics, in an epoch akin to our own, in a brilliant centre of civilization.”³⁵ Thus, in addition, to his status as “perhaps the most beautiful figure in history,” Arnold asserts that Aurelius provides a model of behavior that can restore the English nation and English “race” to its former greatness, standing as “one of those consoling and hope-inspiring marks, which stand for ever to remind our weak and easily discouraged race how high human goodness and perseverance have once been carried, and may be carried

again.”³⁶ Going on to assert that Aurelius’s *Meditations* (170-180 AD) provided Roman antiquity with the spiritual philosophy most akin to Christianity, Arnold emphasizes the emperor’s importance as an exemplary figure from the historical past whose moral vision should be emulated by modern persons. By necessity, therefore, Arnold must tiptoe around the well-known historical fact that Christians were persecuted during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, most famously in the killing of forty-eight Christians in Gaul in 177 AD. Arnold attempts to extenuate the emperor’s actions by explaining that “Christianity appeared something anti-civil and anti-social, which the State had the faculty to judge and the duty to suppress,” thereby explicitly tying Aurelius’s permissive attitude towards violence with his national and imperial concerns.³⁷

Pater almost certainly has Arnold’s essay in mind when he has his narrator assert, in reference to the emperor’s indifference at the amphitheatre, that “Marius remembered well [Marcus Aurelius’s] very attitude and expression on this day, when, a few years later, certain things came to pass in Gaul, under his full authority; and that attitude and expression defined already, even thus early in this so friendly intercourse, and though he was still full of gratitude for his interest, a permanent point of difference between the emperor and himself [...]” (*ME* 169). It is apparent in this passage that Pater believes Aurelius’s Stoic philosophy to be morally inadequate, especially when faced with the world’s violence and injustice. Taken as a whole, “Manly Amusements” all but explicitly criticizes late-Victorian culture’s predominant understandings of normative masculinity and their relationship to ideals of the national character.

More than simply criticizing the canonization of Marcus Aurelius as a model of morality for the British nation, however, Pater uses the figure of the emperor to draw attention to the ways in which literary language can enable facile understandings of the historical past, i.e. the literary effects that provide the necessary precondition for the politically problematic identification of Marcus Aurelius as a model for British national identity. He does so by subjecting the literary genres of the historical novel to the labor of the negative, thereby calling attention to the way those genres enable certain forms of political discourse. In other words, in “Manly Amusements” Pater does for literary genre what he did for the literary sentence in “Euphuism.”

Pater inaugurates this labor of the negative by emphasizing the fundamentally aesthetic nature of Marius’s moral awakening. The narrator, after describing the

violent acts of the amphitheatre in lurid detail, informs us that a “weary and indignant” Marius “could not but observe that [...] Aurelius had sat impassibly through all the hours Marius himself had remained there” (*ME* 169). By gazing upon Marcus Aurelius, Marius realizes that Aurelius’s “indifferent attitude and expression” will serve as

a permanent point of difference between the emperor and himself [...] There was something in a tolerance such as this, in the bare fact that he could sit patiently through a scene like this, which seemed to Marius to mark Aurelius as his inferior now and for ever on the question of righteousness; to set them apart on opposite sides, in some great conflict, of which that difference was but a single presentment. (*ME* 169-170)

As Wolfgang Iser has noted, Marius’s action and his realization are both negative: he turns away from the spectacle so that he may define his ethics against those of Marcus Aurelius.³⁸ Yet rather than indicating Marius’s moral passivity, these negative actions register the ethical force that can inhere in the aesthetic representation of cruelty. After his observation of the events of the amphitheatre, Marius can assert that “[h]is chosen philosophy had said, – Trust the eye: Strive to be right always in regard to the concrete experience: Beware of falsifying your impressions. And its sanction had at least been effective here, in protesting – ‘This, and this, is what you may not look upon!’” (*ME* 170). The narrator, focalizing itself through Marius’s morally indignant conscience, articulates Marius’s realization that one need not have an ethical philosophy that can be articulated discursively. Instead, he realizes that a morality can be founded upon the immediacy of one’s aesthetic impressions.

The narrator attempts to inaugurate this same process for the reader by turning to address the reader. In an attempt to avoid becoming the sort of “novel” that merely provides help for “sluggish imaginations” by representing “grisly accidents, such as might happen to one’s self; but with every facility for comfortable contemplation” the narrator forces the reader to become self-aware of the position from which he or she casts ethical judgment upon the narrative. After presenting the awakening of Marius’s conscience while looking at Marcus Aurelius, the narrator asserts:

That long chapter of the cruelty of the Roman public shows may, perhaps, leave with the children of the modern world a feeling of self-complacency. Yet it might seem well to ask ourselves – it is always well to do so, when we read of the slave-trade, for instance, or of great religious persecutions on the side of this or that, or of anything else which raises in us the question, ‘Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?’ – not merely, what germs of feeling we may entertain which, under fitting circumstances, would induce us to the like; but, even more practically, what thoughts, what sort of considerations, may be actually present to our minds such as might have furnished us, living in another age, and in the midst of those legal crimes, with plausible excuses for them: each age in turn, perhaps, having its own peculiar point of blindness, with its consequent peculiar sin – the touch-stone of an unfailing conscience in the select few. (ME 170)

This paragraph, the penultimate one in the chapter, has a clear purpose: namely, to prevent the reader from falling into “self-complacency” by identifying uncomplicatedly with Marius’s ethical awakening. The narrator realizes that readers, by sharing Marius’s disgust at the useless slaughter of animals for the purposes of entertainment, may very well be tempted to gloss over the difficulty entailed by Marius’s realization. The narrator suggests that this too-easy identification with Marius leaves the reader in an attitude of Aurelian indifference towards the profound struggle that defines Marius’s encounter with the negative. In order to lift the reader out of this complacency, the narrator emphatically calls attention to the narrative’s illusion of historical verisimilitude. This is one of the defining generic features of the nineteenth-century historical novel. Beginning with the subtitle of Walter Scott’s *Waverley: Or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since* (1814), the Victorian historical novel continually takes pains to call self-conscious attention to the vital relationship between past and present. Pater, however, ingeniously turns this narrative convention on its head by accentuating the subterfuges and self-justifications that are naturalized by the conventions of the historical novel, thereby performing the “labor of the negative” upon the genre’s most prominent feature.

The purpose of narrator's turn to the reader is to make readers cognizant of the extent to which their affective responses to cruelty, such as "the slave-trade" and "religious persecution," are conditioned by their placement within a particular historical moment in their culture, rather than their own refined moral sensibility. The narrator suggests that understanding the supposed moral failings of the past does not require an imaginative act of historical sympathy, described as a consideration of the "germs of feeling we may entertain which, under fitting circumstances, would induce us to the like." Rather, it necessitates an intense self-examination that makes one aware of the extent to which personal "morality" is dependent upon historically contingent social norms. This act of self-reflection will lead us to realize, the narrator states, that thoughts and conditions "actually present to our minds [...] might have furnished us, living in another age, and in the midst of those legal crimes, with plausible excuses for them." In other words, our consciousness as it exists *right now* would gladly participate in the cruelty we abjure if it were transferred to a different time and place, "each age in turn, perhaps, having its own peculiar point of blindness, with its consequent peculiar sin." One can only become aware of this ethical blind spot and begin to construct a subjective moral philosophy, the narrator implies, through the aesthetic education of the bodily eye – the same dialectical process Marius has undergone within the chapter, and which the narrator subsequently attempts to inaugurate in the reader through this reflection upon the self-consciousness of the historical novel.

It is precisely this "reflection about reflection" that Walkowitz identifies as the preeminent feature of critical cosmopolitanism, the element that enables literary style to function as a critique of language's normalization and naturalization of ideological assumptions. I hope to have shown that Pater's cosmopolitanism goes beyond his desire to include perspectives from different national cultures within his critical purview. Instead, cosmopolitanism is fundamental aspect of his literary style, derived from the unlikely source of Hegelian idealism. It is my hope that we not only begin to think of Pater as a crucial link between Victorian and twentieth-century forms of literary cosmopolitanism, but furthermore, that we begin to understand Paterian aestheticism's continued relevance in helping us to comprehend the genuine political value of the always and increasingly artificial realm of the aesthetic.

NOTES

1 Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill and London: U of North Carolina P, 1990), 59-60.

2 Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2001), 92.

3 Anderson 97.

4 Anderson 101.

5 See, for example, Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), 55-89; Vincent Pecora, *Secularization and Cultural Criticism* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 2006), 131-56.

6 See, most notably, Arnold's assertion that "[m]odes of life, institutions, government, climate, and so forth, – let me say once and for all, – will further or hinder the development of an aptitude, but they will not by themselves create the aptitude or explain it. On the other hand, a people's habit and complexion of nature go for to determine its mode of life, institutions, and government, and even to prescribe the limits within which the influences of climate shall tell upon it." See Arnold, "On the Study of Celtic Literature," in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, Vol. 3, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor, MI: U of Michigan P, 1965), 353.

7 Anderson 116.

8 Billie Andrew Inman, *Walter Pater and His Reading 1874-1877* (New York: Garland, 1990), ix-x.

9 Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, Vol.1 (London: John Murray, 1871), 22-23.

10 For an account of Tylor's hierarchical theory of race, see Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira P, 2001), 140-41.

11 Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia UP, 2007), 2.

12 Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas*, ed. Michael Levey (London, Penguin, 1985), 88. Subsequent references will appear in parentheses in the main text, identified as ME.

13 See Linda Dowling, *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Princeton, IL: Princeton UP, 1986), 104-74.

14 Walkowitz 3.

15 Walkowitz 7.

16 Walkowitz 11.

17 Walkowitz 10.

18 Walkowitz 11-12.

19 Lene Østermark-Johansen, "The Death of Euphuus: Euphuism and Decadence in Late-Victorian Literature," *English Literature in Transition (1880-1920)* 45 (2002): 4. Most of the subsequent information regarding the history of Euphuism in English literature derives from this article.

20 Østermark-Johansen 4. She cites from Henry Morley, "Euphuism," *Quarterly Review* 109 (1861): 383.

21 John Addington Symonds, *Shakespeare's Predecessors in the English Drama* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1884), 71. Cited in Østermark-Johansen 8.

22 *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines Alexandrianism as a literary style, “derivative, imitative, artificial, [and] addicted to recondite learning,” associated with the literature produced in Alexandria under the Ptolemies.

23 Anon., “An Alexandrian Age,” *Macmillan's Magazine* 55 (1886), 31. See also Thomas De Quincey, “Style,” *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 47 (1840): 4.

24 James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1995), 149-82.

25 “An Alexandrian Age,” 31.

26 Jason Camlot argues that the “Style” essay represents Pater’s “cautious mode of cosmopolitanism” by “allow[ing] for the inclusion of foreign influence without being overly threatening or offensive to more insular, nationalistic positions.” See Camlot, *Style and the Nineteenth-Century British Critic: Sincere Mannerisms* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 121. See also Walter Pater, “Style,” in *Appreciations, with An Essay on Style* (New York: Macmillan, 1906), 1-36.

27 Tylor 16

28 Matthew Arnold, “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,” in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, vol. 3, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor, MI: U of Michigan P, 1965), 268.

29 According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, when the word “proletariat” entered the English language in 1847, it already carried its proto-Marxist meaning, referring to wage earners who have no capital and who depend for subsistence on their daily labor, i.e. the working classes.

30 See Patrick Bridgwater, *Anglo-German Interactions in the Literature of the 1890s* (New York: Legenda, 1999), 14-15; William F. Shuter, “History as Palingenesis in Pater and Hegel,” *PMLA* 86.3 (1971).

31 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1977), 49.

32 C. J. Arthur, *Dialectics of Labour: Marx and His Relation to Hegel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 75.

33 Richard Dellamora, “Critical Impressionism as Anti-Phallogocentric Strategy” in *Pater in the 1990s*, eds. Laurel Brake and Ian Small (Greensboro, NC: ELT Press, 1991), 133.

34 See Frank McLynn, *Marcus Aurelius: A Life* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo P, 2009), 511; Frank Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 319.

35 Matthew Arnold, “Marcus Aurelius,” in *Essays in Criticism* (London: Macmillan, 1865), 285.

36 Arnold, “Marcus Aurelius,” 279-80.

37 Arnold, “Marcus Aurelius,” 287.

38 Wolfgang Iser, *Walter Pater: The Aesthetic Moment* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), 142-43.