PATER, Walter (August 4, 1839, East London—July 30, 1894, St. Giles)

Walter Pater was a man of letters and art critic associated with the Art for Art’s Sake movement. Pater was a notably quiet Oxford don. However, in 1873 he published *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, the conclusion of which scandalized his peers at Oxford for its perceived hedonism. Pater dedicated a chapter of the book to the German art historian Johann Winckelmann, who identified the underlying paganism in all religions borne out in Renaissance art. Winckelmann’s appreciation of male beauty and his assembly of youthful followers served as a model for Pater’s own circle of acolytes at Brasenose College. Pater’s *Renaissance* influenced a generation of aesthetes, including Oscar Wilde, who were inspired by art and criticism free from moral constraint. Pater advises readers to cultivate their awareness of worldly phenomena because experience itself is a desirable human end in a world of constant flux.Pater emphasizes the importance of experience in *Miscellaneous Studies* where he depicts man as *tabula rasa*,molded individually by happenstance. *Marius the Epicurean* details Pater’s theory of aesthetic experience. Art, by means of its strangeness, allows the spectator to capture an impression (a mixture of subjective response and objective quality) of reality that transcends the ravages of time and finite existence.

Bibliography: Iser, Wolfgang. *Walter Pater: The aesthetic moment*, trans. by David Henry Wilson (New York, Cambridge UP, 1987).

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