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“Could that be diabolical, and really spotted with unseen evil,  
which was so spotless to the eye?”–Discipline and  
Homosexuality in Walter Pater’s “Emerald Uthwart” and  
“Apollo in Picardy”

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## Abstract

In Walter Pater's work there are often mentions of discipline and asceticism in an explicitly positive way. But, in some of his work, discipline, although not asceticism, seem to be taking on a more negative form. Critics have nonetheless seemed satisfied with Pater's explicit praise for discipline and the area is thus not very thoroughly researched. One area that is well researched is the homoerotic subtexts that are evident in a lot of Pater's work, which critics have examined in a variety of different ways. I suggest analysing the imaginary portraits "Emerald Uthwart" and "Apollo in Picardy," to argue that Pater contrasts the Ancient Greek notion of asceticism with the nineteenth century understanding of discipline in order to question the legal restrictions on homosexuality in late nineteenth century England. Due to the historical context of the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act, which criminalised homosexuality, and Pater's regular use of—as well as his admiration for—Ancient Greece, I have found that there is a connection between discipline, asceticism, and homosexuality. In the essay I make use of some of Foucault's theories, especially from *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2.*, to argue that the juxtaposition between homosexuality and discipline and asceticism in the two portraits provides new insights to the intricacies of Pater's work.

**Keywords:** Walter Pater; discipline; asceticism; homosexuality; "Apollo in Picardy"; "Emerald Uthwart"; Imaginary Portraits

In his writings, Walter Pater often expresses an admiration for discipline and self-discipline, or ascesis, the greek word that Pater often shows a preference for. But, even though discipline is obviously celebrated in his writing, in two of his imaginary portraits, “Emerald Uthwart” and “Apollo in Picardy,” the discussion of discipline is distinctly different from a lot of his other works. Critics of his work seem to have been content with the explicit praises for ascesis and discipline while ignoring the subtextual disapproval of especially discipline, without questioning what makes for this dissonance. There is therefore not a lot of research done on the topic. Extensive research has, however, been done on the homoerotic subtext in his works with a variety of different approaches. Pater often uses elements of Ancient Greece in his writings, which can clearly be seen as a homosexual code, as Linda Dowling argues in *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*, but in addition to that, it can also serve as a comparison between Ancient Greece and Victorian England. In this essay, I argue that in the imaginary portraits “Emerald Uthwart” and “Apollo in Picardy,” Pater contrasts the Ancient Greek notion of ascesis with the nineteenth century understanding of discipline in order to question the legal restrictions on homosexuality in late nineteenth century England.

The word “ascesis” (alt. “askesis”), that Pater seems so fond of, comes from Ancient Greek and has in modern days acquired connotations of self-denial and complete abstinence. This connotation was, however, not existent in Ancient Greece, where ascesis rather meant exercising moderation and self-discipline. This was not only used in relation to sexual desire but is highly applicable to it. Michel Foucault

gives detailed information about the sexual politics of Ancient Greece in *The History of Sexuality vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure*, where he describes how the Greeks were much more engaged in the discussion of the moderation of sexual pleasure than in which acts were acceptable in sexual behaviour, and between whom they ought to occur. How much or little sexual activity was classified as “moderate” is however not completely clear. Excessive sexual activity was deemed improper in much the same way as excessive eating or drinking, as it showed a lack of self-control and was thought to have negative effects on the body. The notion of homosexuality in Ancient Greece was also not the same as it is today, or rather, according to Foucault, homosexuality as a category and identity was not “invented” until the 19th century where it came to be through medical discourse. Desire in Ancient Greece was not categorised differently depending on which gender it was directed towards and thus the general “rules” of sexuality were in effect independent of whether the sexual acts were committed by two people of the same or of opposite sexes. Some extra guidelines existed, however, concerning male/male sexual relationships, as men had a much higher rank in society and it was, therefore, important that what happened in these relationships were respectful to both parties. Sexual desire, as well as sexual acts between people of the same sex, were accepted—and even exalted—in Ancient Greece and the law of the time was neither able to dictate nor punish sexual behaviour. The sexual politics of Ancient Greece, then, stands in stark contrast to the sexual politics of Victorian England, where homosexuality was illegal. Before 1885, the legislation only concerned the crime of ‘sodomy,’ as well as public displays of sexual behaviour between two members of the same sex. But, with the approval of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, all homosexual acts—or acts of “gross indecency,” as it was legally called—committed in public as well as in private, were deemed criminal and were punishable by up to two years of imprisonment with hard labour. The criminalisation in 1885 changed the law from deeming an act, sodomy, as criminal, to deeming the identity of homosexual to be criminal. During the trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895, for example, part of the evidence used to prove Wilde’s “indecency” were his literary works. This displays how a person’s thoughts and identity was deemed criminal and sufficient as part of the evidence for a crime. The

Victorian use of discipline was, then, extremely different from the Ancient Greek ascesis, and both Victorian discipline and Ancient Greek ascesis have a clear connection to sexuality, and specifically homosexuality.

The criminalisation of the homosexual, however, instead of enforcing silence on the matter, brought to the forefront the “issue” of homosexuality, which meant that there was an increase in discourse about the subject, as Foucault explains in *The History of Sexuality vol 1: The Will to Knowledge* in the section “The Repressive Hypothesis.” This discourse was perhaps often to condemn homosexuality, but knowledge about its existence, as well as terms to use in speaking about the matter, became available and created discursively the “issue” of the homosexual. With the terms to discuss homosexuality, it was also possible to attempt to reverse the discourse from condemning to praising. This kind of reverse discourse is most often associated with Wilde’s trials and subsequent imprisonment, and the discussions that flourished in relation to it, and the Wilde trials are perhaps the point where the homosexual discourse truly began to reverse, as the affair was so immensely public. However, attempts to reverse the discourse of the homosexual were made before the trials as well, although perhaps not as successful as after. The attempts at a reverse discourse were made not least by Wilde himself in his various work, but also, as I argue, by Pater<sup>1</sup>. This discourse is also relevant in relation to the criminalisation itself, as well as other homosexual scandals—as for example the Cleveland Street scandal<sup>2</sup> in 1889—, as they brought attention to the formation of this “new” identity, even though they were perhaps not as public, or at least not as successful in reversing the discourse, as the Wilde trials. Pater had also been the victim of a more personal and direct repression when Benjamin Jowett in 1874 came into possession of incriminating letters written by Pater to a student of Balliol by name of William Money Hardinge (Inman 2). Jowett threatened to make these letters public if Pater sought higher positions at the university of Oxford, where he worked. This personal repression may also result in a desire to critique the systems that allowed sexuality to be a hindrance for further success. Foucault’s theory, then, explains the rise of

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<sup>1</sup> And, of course, various other authors and artists of the period.

<sup>2</sup> Also sometimes referred to as the West End scandal.

discourse about homosexuality after 1885, and explains why Pater might perhaps have included covert criticism of the current state of the law.

Some critics, William Shuter in his article “The “Outing” of Walter Pater” most notably, might not agree with the heavy focus on the homosexual aspects of Pater’s work, meaning that this overlooks other aspects of his work; and it is true that queer readings of Pater’s various work are perhaps the most prevalent and it is also true that other aspects of his work—such as his focus on art and myth, and his peculiar blend of history and fiction—of course exist, and are deserving of critical attention. However, one approach does not have to exclude another, and it is also important to not underestimate the influence of sexual identity, and, as stated above, the repression of that identity, to influence and to—to some extent—shape that work. Stefano Evangelista suggests that Pater himself, in his essay on Winckelmann, first published in 1857, uses the secret homoerotic desires of Winckelmann as a “key to interpret[ing] his writings” (237), and in some of his other essays published in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, “The Poetry of Michelangelo” and “Leonardo da Vinci” for example, he also alludes to the homosexuality of the artists. This could suggest that the “key to interpret[ing]” some of Pater’s own texts could also be his homosexuality; and since both discipline and asceticism seem intrinsically connected to homosexuality, in Victorian England as well as in Ancient Greece, it is reasonable to assume that they might be in Pater’s writings as well. I will look at how discipline and asceticism are discussed and presented in these two pieces of short fiction, and examine how these representations could have connections to homosexuality and the sexual politics of Victorian England. I will begin with “Emerald Uthwart,” a largely direct discussion of discipline with strong homoerotic undertones, and continue with “Apollo in Picardy,” where the discussion of discipline is more allegorical, but which also possesses strong homoerotic subtext.

“Emerald Uthwart” is the story about a young man of the same name, and chronicles his life from childhood to his premature death. He grows up in a small English village but is soon sent to school, after which he has a brief stay at college and then joins the army. He is soon disgraced, however, and after some aimless

wandering, he at last returns to his birthplace, where he suffers an early death as the result of an old injury.

The discussion of discipline is apparent within the first couple of pages of the story, where it begins with the telling of Emerald Uthwart's childhood. The village where he grows up is described as little and uneventful, and he belongs to a family in a long line of gardeners. His early life is characterised by an almost excessive freedom where he is allowed to do essentially whatever he pleases; he gets out of bed whenever he likes, or occasionally not at all, he plays whenever he likes, and he is not at all confined to study, although he chooses to do so as he is fascinated by it. The home is depicted with a soft tone, describing the scent of flowers, the colours and the general softness of the place. There is, however, a small sense of confinement in the midst of all the liberty which relates to Emerald's feeling of inadequacy in doing something other than living out his quiet life at the place of his birth. Only one person of the family had ever made something else of his life which Emerald finds "wretched," "fine" and "inconceivably great and difficult" but concludes that it is "not for him" (241). Emerald seems fascinated with the idea of not merely living out his life "of birth, death, and the rest, as merely natural process" (243), but thinks that this is not his lot in life.

The first decision that is not taken by Emerald himself is that he is to be sent to school, and this "chiefly for the convenience of others" (242), creating a slight animosity to his home and family. The liberty of his home is strongly contrasted with the high discipline of the school. Arriving at the school, all the softness and delicacy of language is promptly exchanged to coldness, and hardness, and the home and the school are directly contrasted here:

Emerald's softly nurtured being, his careless wild-growth, must now adapt itself [to the school], though somewhat painfully recoiling from contact with what seems so hard also, and bright, and cold. From his native world of soft garden touches, carnation and rose [...] where everyone did just what he liked, he was passed now to this world of grey stone; and here it was always the decisive word of command (243)

This description makes it seem as if the home is obviously preferable to the school, with words such as "soft," and descriptions of flowers and freedom relating to the home, and words as "hard," "cold," and "painfully" coupled with the description of a

very limited freedom connected with the school. However, some words stick out as not conforming to this hierarchy; the word “careless” is not quite positive, connoting indifference and a lack of purpose, and the word “bright” is decidedly positive, indicating light and vividness. This is perhaps to say that neither the home nor the school has only good nor bad qualities, even though they are quite direct contrasts to each other.

The school is further described continuously in both positive and negative ways, often in direct sequence. It is said that a lot of attention is given to classical studies, which is connected to a lot of positivity, describing how it was “a lesson in attention and patience, at the least” (244). This sounds like quite a positive notion of school, but, the “at the least” added to the end of the sentence makes it sound as if this is the only use and that nothing other than attention and discipline is gained from the teaching, and that there possibly is more to it than what is learned or taught. This could allude to the changes in curriculum at Oxford, made by Benjamin Jowett in the late 1840s, where a higher focus was placed on Greek studies; but, Jowett, even though “circulating Plato among English readers” (Evangelista 234) constantly excluded or simply explained away the connections to homosexuality in Plato’s work to make the texts “conform to then-contemporary heterosexist tenets” (Higgins 44). This would mean, both in real-life Victorian Oxford as well as in the story of Emerald Uthwart, a very selective understanding of the Greek texts, which Pater most certainly must have been opposed to, considering that his own work on the Greeks, and especially on Plato, “negotiated new meanings for Plato’s texts within an emerging homoerotic sexual-aesthetic discourse” (Higgins 44). Patience is later once again said to be “decorous and mannerly” and it is described how the youth of the school sing of being silent and hard-working, but it is also added, once again at the end of the passage, “sung [...] to wonderfully cheerful and springily music, *as if* one liked the idea” (emphasis added, 246), immediately changing the tone, again, to a negative interpretation where it seems as though the school is trying to promote something that is in reality negative. Furthermore, the school is presented to be a “place where character is formed,” but, “the school is shown to play directly against this objective of forming and defining character, for its discipline effaces individual character under

the force of an overwhelming disciplinary regime and institutional culture” (O’Connell 977). The narrator of “Emerald Uthwart” states that the school claims to “mould all who enter it to a perfect, uninquiring, willing or unwilling, conformity to itself” (246), which sounds quite negative. We see here that what is negative is the overbearing discipline of the place, the enforced control over the students by authority. What is not displayed in a negative light is asceticism; although also described as perhaps difficult for Emerald, asceticism is stated to have been “visibly effective in him” (247).

At the school, Emerald forms a close friendship with James Stokes, his “immediate superior” (248) who is a prefect. This relationship can easily be interpreted as a homoerotic one from the very moment when it is introduced, when it is described how Emerald’s “Soldier-like, impassable self-command [...] awakes suddenly all the sentiment, the poetry, latent hitherto in [...] James Stokes” (248). This first description of the friendship between Emerald and James effectively places them in a sort of artist/muse relationship, where Emerald inspires James and has a positive effect on his scholarly career which is further solidified in additional descriptions: “The well-worn, perhaps conventional, beauties of their ‘dead’ Greek and Latin books, associated directly now with the living companion beside him, really [shone] for [James] at last with their pristine freshness” (249). This also brings to mind Plato’s *Symposium*, where he describes how the beauty and love of boys is a step towards recognising and appreciating all beauty and love that exists in the world (*The collected Dialogues*). This casts the relationship in the light of the Ancient Greek notion of pederasty, where Emerald, the younger of the two, is the *eromenos*, the beloved, and James, the older, is the *erastes*, the lover, who through the inspiration, love, and beauty provided by the *eromenos* is able to develop an appreciation for other types of beauty as well and in return teaches him about a variety of things. If the muse/artist relation firstly established is not clearly erotic<sup>3</sup>, the *eromenos/erastes* relation certainly is. Intellect and sexuality are not only linked in the case of James Stokes, but also in relation to Emerald. It is described how Emerald’s “intellectual

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<sup>3</sup> Though the *OED* defines a muse as “a person (often a female lover) or thing regarded as the source of an artist's inspiration; the presiding spirit or force behind any person or creative act,” so, even if not necessarily sexual, it very much allows for an interpretation of the kind

awakening” has “something of the stir and unction [...] of the coming of love. [...] He felt it, like the pressure outward of wings within him [...]; but again, as some do with everyday love, withheld, restrained himself (253). It seems likely that the “everyday love” spoken about here is homosexual, as intellect and homosexuality were so closely linked in the Ancient Greek tradition, and as this kind of love is one that had to be withheld in the contextual setting of “Emerald Uthwart.” It is shown, then, that the restraint on homosexuality also puts a restraint on intellectual progress, and that an intimate male/male friendship, in contrast, has the power to “awake something of genius in a seemingly plodding scholar” (248). Calling Emerald “soldier-like” might seem to counteract the homoerotic subtext somewhat, as the common way of establishing it is through effeminacy. However, it actually only serves to strengthen it, as the Ancient Greek tradition of “paiderastia was martial in origin” (Dowling 79), and it is this above all that Pater expresses an interest in.

The exploration of Emerald and James’ relationship goes on, and the allusions to Ancient Greek values continue:

[James Stokes] finds their antique friendship or tries to find it, in the books they read together. None fits exactly. It is of military glory they are really thinking, amid those ecclesiastical surroundings, where, however, surplices and uniforms are often mingled together; how they will lie, in costly glory, costly to them, side by side, (as they work and walk and play now, side by side,) in the cathedral aisle, with a tattered flag perhaps above them, and under a single epitaph (249)

We can here see that the lives of the two boys are significantly entwined. They read together, work, walk and play together, and they even want to be buried together. This shows an unusual closeness between two male friends. Being buried together, and especially “under the same epitaph,” also bears strong connotations to being a married couple, as people are rarely buried together otherwise. The reference to ‘lying together’ in the sentence “how they will lie, in costly glory, costly to them, side by side...” could also be read as an allusion to homosexuality, to them a glory, but a costly one given the societal views on homosexuality at the time, as well as the laws against it. That this is immediately followed by a description of how they do everything together only makes this impression stronger, especially as that description makes for a pause in the sentence and delays the explicit context where the reader realises that they are speaking of being buried together, not sharing a bed. This second

part of the sentence, as we have seen, has its own connotations, but it does clarify the intent of the passage. It does not, however, diminish the fact that the phrasing of the first part of the sentence is very vague, and therefore allows for multiple interpretations.

The two characters trying to find the Greek or Latin model of their antique friendship furthers the impression of a pederastic relationship and the reference to their friendship as “antique” strongly suggests that something about it is different from the norms of their current day. What they are trying to find—friendship based on military glory—could possibly be an indication to the traditions of ancient Sparta, where both military and intellectual discipline were highly valued and important for the culture. The Spartan/Dorian society was also a homosocial one, something Pater expresses clear interest in in his essay “Lacedæmon” (Østermark-Johanson, *Imaginary Portraits* 315-321) which was published the same year and month as “Emerald Uthwart.” The connection between the short story and the essay is something scholars and critics have been attuned to for a long time and they are often analysed side by side, as the works share obvious similarities (Shuter, “Arrested Narrative” 3). Concerning the notion of military friendship, the relationship shown between Uthwart and Stokes also bear a resemblance to the relationship of Achilles and Patroclus, both in the military aspect as well as in the closeness of their companionship. The passage is even vaguely reminiscent of a passage from *The Iliad* where the ghost of Patroclus begs Achilles that the two of them should be buried together: “Never bury my bones apart from yours, Achilles,/let them lie together.../just as we grew up together” (Homer, 23.100–103). Furthering the allusion to Achilles and Patroclus, in one passage, Stokes is discussing the Greek concept of the destinies and discussing how there is one “extraordinary destiny” which “had a scent for distant blood-shedding” (249). Lene Østermark-Johansen remarks that the term used by Stokes to describe this destiny—or spirit of death as it more accurately is described as —*Kêr*, is “primarily used by Homer” (*Imaginary Portraits* 249n31), and is used in relation to both Achilles and Patroclus, translated as simply “death” or “grim death.” The relationship between Achilles and Patroclus is one of the most highly debated ones throughout both ancient and modern time, with philosophers such as Plato

arguing for its romantic nature<sup>4</sup>. In having the relationship between Emerald and James somewhat mirror this famous, widely debated, relationship, Pater might be suggesting that Emerald and James should also be the subject of the same kind of debate.

The friendship between James Stokes and Emerald Uthwart seems to almost be on the verge of co-dependence, as when it is time for the two to leave school Uthwart plans to join the army, and it is said that “the first mention of Uthwart’s purpose defines also the vague outlooks of James Stokes, who will be a soldier too” (256). It is also later said that Emerald is often told “that he would ‘do for the army’; which he is now wholly glad to hear, for from first to last [...] the army had still been scholar Stokes’ choice, and he had no difficulty [...] in keeping Uthwart also faithful to first intentions” (260). Their combined life in the army does not last for very long, however, as they committed a “brave” but “undisciplined” act, which is “criminal [...] to the military conscience,” and punishable by death. The narrator states that the act is desertion but does not elaborate further than this on the criminal act and when Emerald and James later are said to be “*pessimi exempli*”<sup>5</sup> (267), Pater is “deliberately vague about [...] whether it is military, or whether it is an example of intimate male friendship” (Østermark-Johanson, *IP* 267n76). The vague nature of Pater’s descriptions is an important way in which he establishes the homoerotic subtext, both in this instance and previously in the story. The language used in relation to the undisciplined act is also suggestive of its nature. It is described how James “seduced” Emerald “from the clearer sense of duty and discipline” (262) and the act is described with exclamations of “[d]elightful heroism! Delightful self-indulgence” (263). ‘Seduced’ bares the most obvious erotic connotations, but ‘self-indulgence’ also has a connection to the erotic and especially in Greek thought, where “self-indulgence—*akolasia*—relates only to the pleasures of the body” (Foucault *Use of Pleasure* 40). Describing the act as ‘brave’ but ‘undisciplined’ is significant; as ‘brave’ is a word with highly positive connotations, it seems as if the act in the eyes of

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<sup>4</sup> Something Pater most certainly must have been aware of, considering his work on Plato in *Plato and Platonism* published in 1893, the year after the publication of “Emerald Uthwart”

<sup>5</sup> English: ‘the worst examples.’ Translation from the latin is provided by Østermark-Johanson *Imaginary Portraits* 267n76

the narrator is a good one, although the military, a highly disciplined institution, sees it as criminal. And even if the act was ‘self-indulgent’—perhaps not the best example of asceticism—the major wrongdoing is committed by the disciplinary institution which takes it upon itself to punish and control this, assumed to be sexual, behaviour. This makes it seem as if the highly disciplined institution is criticised and seen as committing a malpractice.

When the day of the execution arrives, Emerald’s life is spared as he was “the younger of the two offenders” and is instead dismissed “from the army with disgrace” (265). This only after he has witnessed the execution of his friend. It is later stated that Emerald felt “one half of himself had [...] descended” (266) into the grave. Once again this is a very ambiguous statement that can be read both as stating that half of Emerald himself died that day, some vital part of him perhaps, but it can also be read as James Stokes being that other half, which would clearly be a very romantic notion<sup>6</sup>. An unknown narrator states that “the state of the country being what it is, [Emerald] might join the enemy” (265), an interesting remark as the battles depicted in this story were acted out during the Hundred Days of Napoleon (Østermark-Johanson, *IP* 260n66), and fought, of course, against France. The French army had a much more relaxed stance on male intimate friendships, and in fact, saw it as an important part of the army life. The relationship between Napoleon and Lannes, for example, has been described as “[r]ecalling the classical model of *The Iliad*” (Martin 2), once again evoking the notion of Achilles and Patroclus, and the “antique model” of military friendship, as James and Emerald themselves spoke about.

The school which Emerald attended is portrayed as both positive and negative, but the majority could still be judged as positive, although at times difficult. The school, much more than the army, resembles Pater’s studies of Ancient Sparta, which, as stated above, are often read in parallel to “Emerald Uthwart,” where he discusses the importance of martial and intellectual discipline as well as the homosocial community. The school, as Ancient Sparta, places high value on intellectual discipline and is a homosocial community. What is not positive is that the

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<sup>6</sup> This is an antique idea and an Ancient Greek myth even tells the story of humans once being two people combined, but that they were separated by Zeus and therefore forced to wander around until they found their other half and became complete beings again (Plato 543).

authority is perhaps overbearingly controlling and, as there is so much discipline, does not allow enough room for the practice of ascesis, and it is in this process that the school renders character “formless” and “conforming” instead of building and developing individual character. Furthermore, even though the school is clearly a homosocial community, it does not seem to be close enough to a homosexual one to be considered well-balanced. The army, unlike the school, is put almost exclusively in a negative light, where the only acts we actually see them perform is a trial and an execution. The trial was rushed and presumably unfair; it is stated that “in an ordinary trial at law, the motives, every detail of so irregular an act might have been weighed, changing the colour of it. [...] Martial courts exist not for consideration, but for vivid exemplary effect and prompt punishment” (263). And the execution that follows can, after an unfair trial, be nothing but unfair itself. Here we see that the military discipline is extremely high—although unjust—, and although this, too, certainly is a homosocial environment, it may be assumed that it is also a highly homophobic one and that it is perhaps this that sends the two men, James Stokes directly and Emerald Uthwart indirectly, to their deaths. The trial is a clear example of Victorian disciplinary institutions, where—if the act committed is indeed interpreted, as is suggestive of the language used in relation to it, as a homosexual one, or at least pertaining to something of that nature—the disciplinary institution, in this case the military court, has the power to discipline, punish and control sexual behaviour.

The praise for discipline is—in this portrait—always partial, starting out as praise, but with only a few words ending up being a critique and pointing out how something is lacking. The relation between Emerald and James follows the same pattern, but, adds up not to a critique of the relationship itself, but to the disciplinary powers that govern over its outcome. The relationship has positive effects both on Emerald and on James, but as the intimacy is not accepted, it is bound to end negatively.

In his last imaginary portrait published before his death, “Apollo in Picardy,” the critique of discipline is less conflicting than in the previous portrait, but is also less direct. This story is a version of Heine’s idea of “The Gods in Exile” and centres around Prior Saint-Jean, who observes the doings of a malignant and positively

sadistic Apollo, now residing in the medieval French village of Picardy. The discussion of discipline is in this story more allegorical than the previous one and the criticism of discipline is not as unstable, but at the same time more subtle.

The Ancient Greek god Apollo is commonly associated with light, music, poetry, archery and healing, being the god of all these, but he is also associated with order, rationality and discipline. These are all traits that Pater has previously incorporated in his depictions of Apollo. In “Lacædamon” he writes that Apollo was the “sanest of the national gods” (*Imaginary Portraits* 319) and in one of his essays in *Greek Studies* he states that “[Apollo] represents all those specially European ideas, of a reasonable, personal freedom, as understood in Greece; of a reasonable polity; of the sanity of soul and body, through the cure of disease and of the sense of sin; of the perfecting of both by reasonable exercise or ascésis” (*Greek Studies* 254, qtd. in Keefe). Pater essentially claims Apollo to stand for all the things he himself seems to admire with Ancient Greece. This second quote is quite telling of what Pater admires, and what he perhaps covertly says he does not. He is praising the god for resembling—among other things—the polity, individual freedom and ascēsis of Ancient Greece, all things that we have seen are connected, in one way or another, to same-sex relationships during the time. This description may point to the idea that same-sex relationships were within the boundaries of the “reasonable” in Ancient times and that this was a positive thing. Pater praises these things but also makes it abundantly clear that they are to be understood in the context of how they were viewed in Ancient Greece, not as they are viewed in Pater’s contemporary setting.

The Apollo character in “Apollo in Picardy,” however, is distinctly different from both of these descriptions, as he is neither sane nor reasonable in any way. In this work, Apollo is depicted as sadistic and cruel, far from the god of light that we usually associate him with. This darker Apollo is not a modern invention of Pater but is rather a classical side of the god that is usually forgotten—or overlooked—by 19th-century writers. Even as he emphasised the more “idealised” version of Apollo, “Pater was never unaware of the god’s other side” (Shuter, “Grudge against Apollo” 183). This portrait could, then, be interpreted as Pater simply exploring this dark side of the god, and meaning nothing else by it. This being said, the fact remains that Pater’s

previous interpretations of Apollo has been of the brighter version, where he has expressed admiration for the god; and this makes “Apollo in Picardy” quite a jarring piece of Pater’s writing. For this reason, I believe that there is more to the sudden shift than simple curiosity on Pater’s part.

We are from the very beginning told in what way we are supposed to read this portrait, or at least how we are supposed to interpret the character of Apollo (Whiteley 128); before we even get into the major part of the story, we are told that Apollo “is, in fact, a devil” (272), which shapes our reading of the portrait. Apollo is also given a new name in this story, Apollyon, which is the greek name for Abaddon, a “devil-like figure,” in Christianity (Østermark-Johansen *Imaginary Portraits* 279n21). Combining the names of Apollo with an evil Christian figure might only be a way of once again asserting the likeness to a devil in this version of Apollo, but it also brings in Christianity very strongly<sup>7</sup>, which might be seen as clashing with the Greek. This combining of names, furthermore, suggests that the Apollo in this portrait is not entirely the same Apollo that Pater has shown admiration for in previous work. Apollo here, is rather a combination of the Greek and the Christian, the ancient and the modern, much like the disciplinary institutions—the polity and legal system especially—of Victorian England was a combination of the ideas of Ancient Greece but ruled by Christian—or modern—values. We are even told, also at the very beginning of the portrait, that this Apollo, “the northern or ultra-northern sun-god” is “almost like a mock sun amid the mists” (271), indicating that the Apollo that we are introduced to in the following story is but a faint impression of the god we perhaps are used to seeing. Apollo’s harp and bow, symbols of his power, are also said to have been “of silver-gilt once, but the gold had mostly passed from it” (276), insinuating that they are not as beautiful as they were in antiquity. In addition to the new name of Apollo, the portrait is also laden with other Christian imagery and allusions to the bible, in a way reinforcing that the Greek god Apollo is very much out of place in the setting where we now find him.

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Dellamora brings up a similar point about christianity in this portrait on p. 168 of *Masculine Desire*

Apollyon is described to commit a variety of sadistic acts, he “draw[s] the wild animals, [...] to share their sport, yet not altogether kindly. Tired, surfeited, he destroys them when his game with them is at an end; breaks the toy; deftly snaps asunder the fragile back. Though all alike would come at his call” (282), and on another occasion he kills all the birds in a birdhouse. In another passage, it is stated that “[Apollyon] has all his own way with beasts and man [...] much as all alike distrust him” (284)<sup>8</sup>. Apollyon is shown time and time again to be untrustworthy and unpredictable: when he tires of his games—which are presumably joyful—he kills his playmates on purpose, as far as the reader can see; so how is it that “all alike would come at his call”? Perhaps because Apollyon is so alluring and compelling, or perhaps—if going by the previously established likeness between Apollyon and disciplinary institutions—because they literally do not have a choice in the matter. No one would willingly subject oneself to the treatment that people in the story seem to expect, or at least suspect, from Apollyon; he is unfair, unreasonable and even the good deeds he does, for example curing people of their diseases, he does out of self-interest and “mainly for his own satisfaction” (281). He is thus shown to have neither compassion nor a sense of right and wrong.

This evil nature, however, is not completely constant, and that there, as Keefe states, would be “nothing, sane, nothing human about him except his appearance” (167) is not completely true. He commits brutal acts, which could easily be described as inhumane and clearly sadistic; however, he does at times seem to show a quite benign side as well. When he has “pierced the small furry thing” with his arrow, an act that is decidedly unkind, it “[flees] to him nevertheless caressingly, with broken limb, to die palpitating in his hand” (282) and Apollyon “presumably receives the dying creature not with a closed fist but with an open palm” (Shuter, “Grudge Against Apollo” 186); in the aftermath of him having killed the birds the narrator

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<sup>8</sup> An interesting contrast can be made to one of Pater’s earlier imaginary portraits, “Denys l’Axerrois” (1886), which is focused on the reincarnation of the Greek god Dionysus, commonly depicted as Apollo’s opposite, symbolising the emotional and chaotic. Dionysus is depicted as kind and helpful towards both animals and humans but is not trusted by the people in the village and ultimately has a tragic ending. Dionysus does not wrong anyone but himself in this portrait and yet he is the one punished, in contrast to “Apollo in Picardy,” where Apollo is the instigator of a lot of pain and suffering, but in the end gets away with his actions.

states that “Apollyon sobbed and wept audibly” (284) and appears to feel, if not remorse, then at least sorrow over their deaths. It is also stated that it seemed as if Apollyon is able to feel guilt, which is a distinctively human attribute. When Apollyon accidentally kills his companion Hyacinthus while immersed in a game of discus, he emits “an immense cry, as from the very heart of ancient tragedy” (290). The use of ‘ancient’ here implies that the grief felt by Apollyon in that moment was perhaps from the “ancient” part of himself, and not from the Christian, modern, part of him that commits the horrible acts. Although the grief “seems quite genuine” (Shuter, “Grudge Against Apollo” 186), it is not very long lasting and is given much more attention in the original myth of Apollo and Hyacinth (Østermark-Johansen *Imaginary Portraits* 290n48). It appears, then, that the benign and the sadistic nature of Apollyon is not completely stable, or that his once gentle side can be spotted but never truly reached. We see short glimpses of tenderness, remorse, guilt, glimpses that are ever so much closer to the classical, idealised, Apollo that Pater so often writes about and admires, but they are never visible for long before the next act of cruelty is committed.

The homoerotic subtext in the portrait is plentiful and at times quite thinly veiled. First of all, the most basic way in which Pater establishes homoeroticism in this portrait is the fact that it is a retelling of the myth of Apollo and Hyacinth, and the relationship between the two of them has been regarded as a romantic one since ancient times. There was even an annual festival celebrated by the Spartans called Hyacinthia, where the relationship between them was celebrated. This, of course, suggests that the relationship between Apollyon and Hyacinthus in this version of the myth is also of a sexual/romantic nature, and Richard Dellamora even remarks that the scene where Apollyon and Hyacinthus are playing discus could be read as “a euphemism for intercourse” (187). But the relationship between Apollyon and Hyacinthus is only the very surface and is not the truly interesting part, concerning this particular discussion at least. It is rather the desires of the Prior that is of true interest. In contrast to “Emerald Uthwart,” where Pater mostly deals with ambiguous language and allusions to antiquity to implement homoeroticism, in this portrait, he is more focused on the male body and, to some extent, desire, the object of which is at

all times Apollyon. When Prior Saint-Jean first sees Apollyon it is when he the god lays, asleep, in “a flood of moonlight” and the Prior “seemed to be looking for the first time on the human form, on the old Adam fresh from his Maker’s hand.” It is insinuated that Apollyon is naked, and the description of him continues: “how lordly, or godlike rather, in the posture! Could one fancy a single curve bettered in the rich, warm, white limbs; in the haughty features of the face, with the golden hair, tied in a mystic knot, fallen down across the inspired brow?” (276). The description invokes the statue Apollo Belvedere, once again putting the Christian together with the Hellenistic (Østermark-Johansen *IP* 276n17). Apollyon is also described to be a “seductive person” (283).

But even though the homoerotic subtexts are strong, they seem to be connected to the question of discipline and asceticism in a very different way than in the previous portrait. Prior Saint-Jean is repeatedly shown to be attracted to Apollyon, as are most people in the story, but he is also the one who expresses the most amount of distrust towards him. Reading Apollyon as a symbol for institutional discipline, and Prior Saint-Jean as a—very closeted—homosexual man with the weight of his Christian faith upon him, this would suggest that the attraction is perhaps towards the body of Apollyon, the part of him that looks the same as it did in Ancient Greece, but the actions that are a product of the Christian, modern values of his environment bring distrust. This contradictory nature is what, at the end of the story, drives the Prior insane; and at the moment of his death, he still wishes to return to the grove where he met Apollyon. As the Prior is also from a deeply Christian community homosexuality is probably very deeply ingrained in him as a sin, once again condemning Christianity and in doing so, modern values and systems.

From the reading of both of these short stories we can see that Pater shows clear admiration towards discipline and asceticism in the context of Ancient Greece—and towards modern institutions which operate in the fashion of Ancient Greece—but directs criticism towards them when adhering to modern values, especially concerning homosexuality and the restriction and punishment of it. With the recently changed laws against homosexuality, this contrast was perhaps made even more distinct than previously and might be a reason for the change in the tone of Pater’s work. In

“Emerald Uthwart” the praise for asceticism is stated explicitly, and the consequences of not practicing asceticism are shown to be death. But although this could be interpreted as a critique towards “self-indulgent” people, it is more so a critique against the institutions that enforce discipline, which regulate and punish acts which they should not be concerned with, as they were not in Ancient times. Many things in the story are reminiscent of antiquity, the homosocial environments and the military aspirations especially, but they are never quite as positive as Pater’s direct descriptions of Ancient Greece, as if there is a vital part of it missing, that part being the acceptance of homosexual relationships. In “Apollo in Picardy” the same critique is directed at the symbol for discipline, namely Apollo himself. He is sadistic and evil, but also shows that there is a foundation of something else underneath. He is different from the classical notion of Apollo, or at least the version Pater has previously written about and shown admiration for, for the specific reason that Apollo stands for the discipline and rationality of Ancient Greece. Making Apollo a sadistic and unreliable character and having the story set in a much more modern setting, might signify that the things that he represented in antiquity have in modern times come to be evil. Once again, this indication of disciplinary institutions being evil and untrustworthy—so soon after the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act was passed—indicates that it is perhaps the laws against homosexuality that are deemed especially destructive. The two portraits complement each other in their critique, “Apollo in Picardy” being an allegorical exploration of how modern—and especially Christian—values have affected the Ancient Greek ideal, and “Emerald Uthwart” exhibiting how these effects present themselves in a setting closer to Pater’s contemporary context.

There is a certain melancholy in the way the critique is presented, in the contrasts that are created between the ancient and the modern. The ancient ideal is at all times visible, but never truly reached. So many things are built upon the foundation laid out by the Greeks, but homosexuality—which was so vital and exalted in the Ancient Greek society—is completely left out of the modern Victorian one, and, furthermore, controlled and punished by the very powers that once honoured it. Removing this fundamental element of antiquity, the structure of the Greek ideal is still visible, but the effects are essentially different. After all, the question that Prior

Saint-Jean asks himself upon seeing Apollo—the god so often associated with discipline—is “Could that be diabolical, and really spotted with unseen evil, which was so spotless to the eye?” (276), and it can only be answered with a distinctive ‘yes.’

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