

SIGRID SCHOTTENIUS CULLHED  
MATS MALM  
(Eds.)

# Reading Late Antiquity



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*The Library of the Other Antiquity*  
MARCO FORMISANO (Ed.)



## *The Library of the Other Antiquity*

Over the past decades Late Antiquity has evolved into an independent and increasingly productive area of study. No longer seen merely as the continuation of “classical” antiquity, epigonal age or first phase of the medieval, late antiquity is understood as having its own characteristic traits, which have to be analyzed as such. Currently, a comprehensive re-engagement with Late Antiquity is taking place, promoting a shift in its evaluation as well as a variety of disciplinary approaches. The profile of Late Antiquity that is emerging is diverse, complex and problematic, as it combines cultural pluralism with a stubborn dedication to tradition.

It is at this moment in the history of late-antique studies that this series intervenes. Although for terminological reasons the term ‘Late Antiquity’ cannot currently be avoided, *The Other Antiquity* aims to contribute to a more independent conceptualization of the epoch. The series thus understands itself as provocation and stimulus for a discussion of Late Antiquity which will open up new approaches in the areas of Classical Philology and literary studies, and simultaneously put the fascination and charm of Late Antiquity on display for other disciplines as well. This series has three major focuses: (mainly Latin) late-antique textuality, its reception in later ages in Western culture (including visual and material aspects), and Late Antiquity as a paradigm for the construction of other Western “decadences”.

*The Other Antiquity* will open up the field to a broader cultural discussion, not least with a view to postmodern reassessments, and will offer a basis for the interpretation of texts of widely varying origin and genre. It will serve as a forum for discussing these texts in an interdisciplinary fashion, for pursuing alternative paths in research and for departing from the traditional approaches of Classical Philology.

*Marco Formisano, Ghent University*

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## Introduction

To their credit, a reader will only perceive  
That the language they loved was coming to grief,  
Expiring in preposterous mechanical tricks,  
Epanaleptics, rhopalics, anacyclic acrostics:

To their lasting honor the stuff they wrote  
Can safely be spanked in a scholar's foot-note,  
Called shallow by a mechanised generation to whom  
Haphazard oracular grunts are profound wisdom.

The sympathy expressed in “The Epigoni” for the belated verse makers of the fourth and fifth centuries C.E. was not unusual by the 1950s, when W.H. Auden wrote this poem.<sup>1</sup> From French Symbolism to Spanish American modernismo, Italian decadentism or Greek surrealism, poets had drawn on emblematic notions, texts, and artefacts of late Roman and Greek culture in a spirit of aestheticism. Auden gives “credit” to the late antique poets for having turned inwards; for maintaining their integrity by escaping to virtuoso manipulation of language rather than pouring out in a pathetic swan song to dramatize the catastrophe they experienced. Yet, their true and eternal “honor” never radiated as strongly as when their texts landed in the hands of modern scholars and had to endure constant thrashing. Dull scholarly footnotes attacked the Epigoni for dullness, and they were spurned as “mechanical” by a generation more mechanized than any other the world had ever seen. Editorial philologists and translators could spend years on poets like Decimus Ausonius Magnus, but in the end they felt a need to expiate themselves in the preface to the edition by emphatically announcing the marked inferiority of the same poet.<sup>2</sup> This view on late Latin and Greek texts among Classical scholars has been shaped by a series of events; Edward Gibbon’s pessimistic narrative about the political, institutional, economic and cultural decline of the Roman Empire was influential in articulating the general notion of this period as decadent, inferior by far to the classical era. Until the middle of the twentieth century, on the other hand, the idea of the preceding centuries as an epoch of cultural and political superiority impacted historical self-understanding among the educated elites in Europe, and

<sup>1</sup> W.H. Auden, *The Shield of Achilles* (London: Faber, 1955).

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Hugh Evelyn-White, *Ausonius* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1919), vii and passim: “the chief value of the works of Ausonius is historical.” See also Marie José Byrne, *Prolegomena to an Edition of the Works of Decimus Magnus Ausonius* (1916), 2; 44–45.



the ideals of classicism necessitated a sharp distinction between Classical Antiquity and the centuries that followed. Scholarly discourse eventually shifted during the 1970s, influenced by the development of Late Antiquity as a discrete historical period. A new paradigm, rooted in the works of the Viennese art historian Alois Riegl and culminating with the historian Peter Brown, emerged in ancient social, cultural, and religious history, but also touching on philological and archaeological practices. Some scholars felt that this development was unfolding too fast and that “hard facts” about the institutional development and crisis of the Roman Empire were being overlooked. At the end of the twentieth century, the historian Andrea Giardina questioned the consequences of Peter Brown’s influence in the seminal article “Esplosione di tardoantico.”<sup>3</sup> Giardina disagreed with what he regarded as more or less conscious attempts to make the socio-political decline of Rome seem less dramatic than it actually was. According to Giardina, this change of perspective had arisen from the shift of focus from legal, political, and economic issues to the religious and cultural prosperity of the period. Furthermore, this wealth had been augmented by followers of Brown, who had tended to project characteristics of the nineteenth century and experiences of Late Modernity onto this epoch. A little more than a decade after Giardina’s polemical article, Gibbon’s Roman Empire in decline was once again gaining ground among historians such as P. J. Heather and Bryan Ward-Perkins, and the question of how to interpret Late Antiquity is still under negotiation. While historians are once again stressing the socio-political decay of the period, Classical philologists have only just begun the reappraisal of its literature.

Charles Martindale once wrote that reception studies

helped to challenge the traditional idea of what “classics” is (something most classicists, including myself, simply took for granted 30, or even 20 years ago), [...] contesting the idea that classics is something fixed, whose boundaries can be shown, and whose essential nature we can understand on its own terms.<sup>4</sup>

What we today call Late Antiquity, on the other hand, has always been read as a period of movement and change with loose geographical and temporal boundaries. The scholarly movement of Late Antique Studies that emerged during the twentieth century involved self-reflexion and criticism from the start, but in recent years there have been signs of a desire to retrace our steps in a more systematic manner and to inquire into the millennial history of previous interpretations, historicization and uses of textual and material artefacts dating from the period.<sup>5</sup> Philip

<sup>3</sup> Andrea Giardina, “Esplosione di tardoantico,” *Studi Storici* 1 (1999), 157–180.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Martindale, “Introduction,” in *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, ed. C.A. Martindale and R.F. Thomas (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Stefan Rebenich, “Late Antiquity in Modern Eyes,” in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, ed. P. Rousseau and J. Raithel (Oxford, 2006), 77–91; Edward James, “The Rise and

Rousseau's *Blackwell Companion to Late Antiquity* (2007) opens with the section "The View from the Future," which adopts such a perspective. A more recent example is Clifford Ando's and Marco Formisano's multi-authored volume *The New Late Antiquity* (under publication), which approaches the topic by constructing a gallery of intellectual portraits of nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars. Moreover, Scott McGill and Edward Watts' forthcoming *Blackwell Companion to Late Antique Literature* will include a section on the later reception of late antique literature. This desire is part of the larger spread of reception theory and history as developed by Hans-Robert Jauss and integrated into Classical studies by Charles Martindale during the 1990s. Yet, while we have witnessed an explosion of Classical Reception Studies as well as reception of the Middle Ages ("medievalisms"), until very recently the field of Late Antiquity has remained a relatively unexplored area. It would seem that Reception Studies that focus almost exclusively on well-known writers from the classical period can lead to further perpetuation of the established canon and thereby prevent new knowledge about the *Nachleben* of ancient culture in its wider sense, and its fluid boundaries in respect to the Middle Ages and Byzantium.

This volume was envisioned as a contribution to the growing field of Late Antique Reception Studies. In the spring of 2015, we hosted the conference "Reading Late Antiquity" at the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in Stockholm. We invited participants to present papers on receptions of textual or material artefacts from roughly the late third to the eighth century. Several contributions showed that the construction of "Late Antiquity" has been more significant and diffuse than one might suppose. In and of itself, this is hardly surprising. As noted by Gabrielle Spiegel when reviewing claims about the pivotal role of "the medieval" in the construction of modern colonialism:

I suspect that one could find the same range of utilization and varying function in the making of modernism, colonialism and postcolonialism in material drawn from almost any field of history—the Roman Empire, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment would seem likely candidates for this.<sup>6</sup>

In a specialized volume like this it is important to remember that Late Antiquity is but one of many historical narratives and collections of artefacts influencing and being appropriated by modern cultural movements. But they all have their own properties and do not play by the same rules. In the case of Late Antiquity, there

Function of the Concept 'Late Antiquity'," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1 (2008), 20–30; Arnaldo Marcone, "A Long Late Antiquity? Considerations on a Controversial Periodization," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1 (2008), 4–19.

<sup>6</sup> Gabrielle Spiegel, Review of *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of 'the Middle Ages' outside Europe*, ed. Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul, in *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 15 (2011), 617–625; 619.

are clear effects of its marginalized status in relation to its counterpart, “Classical” Antiquity. Unfolding in the shadow of the hegemonic “Classical” tradition, the culture of the late Roman Empire has tended to slip in and out of western consciousness. When we come across moments in which modern minds have identified and felt a connection with this period, it is not uncommon that this feeling can be explained as forgetfulness of the influence that Late Antiquity has exerted on the debates we are participating in. In an article from 1990, Georgia Nugent discussed similarities between Postmodern literary theory and late antique aesthetics and artistic practices. From Giardina’s perspective, this kind of reading of Late Antiquity could be seen as a typical projection of the present, making Late Antiquity into a place for historiography to stage not only contemporary ideologies and sentiments about the present but also literary aesthetics. Yet, the similarities pointed out by Nugent also depend on the forgotten and occasionally suppressed influences that thinkers and artists of the late Roman era had on several precursors and exponents of modernism and postmodernism such as Paul Verlaine, Gabriele D’Annunzio, Jacques Derrida or Edward Said, to mention just a few persons that will return in this volume. The texts, images, and histories of Late Antiquity have gained attention, often in times of crisis and change, and exercised influence only to disappear again. When later readers have turned to the same period and identified with what they perceive, they have tended to ascribe the feeling of relatedness to similar values and circumstances rather than to the formation of an unbroken tradition of appropriation.

The book is divided into three sections. The first is entitled “Theoretical Outlooks” and deals with the theoretical and methodological implications of reinterpreting Late Antiquity. In his chapter “Untimely Antiquity: Walter Pater and the Vigil of Venus,” James Uden explores the theoretical potentials of the critical trope of ‘untimeliness’ based on a literary analysis of Walter Pater’s (1839–1894) novel *Marius the Epicurean* (1885) and the anonymous late antique poem *Pervigilium Veneris*. This ‘untimeliness’ not only characterizes the modern conception of Late Antiquity, Uden argues, but also anticipates the theoretical concept of anachronistic reception studies, described by Sebastian Matzner as a queer approach that resists the tendency of historicism to exaggerate “the self-identity of any given moment” and thus also “the differences between any two moments.”<sup>7</sup> Uden transcends the limits of late antique literature and challenges us to “embrace the idea of multiple temporalities in any literary work,” concluding that the literature of this epoch “has become a paradigm for the capacity of all literature to seem to exist outside of time, simultaneously recalling ideas from the past and the future.”

The concept of anachronistic reception studies is further developed in the next chapter. With inspiration from Walter Benjamin’s *Ursprung des deutschen*

<sup>7</sup> Sebastian Matzner, “Queer Unhistoricism: Scholars, Metalepsis, and Interventions of the Unruly Past,” in *Deep Classics: Rethinking Classical Reception*, edited by Shane Butler (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 181. Cf. Uden in this volume.

*Trauerspiels* (1925), Marco Formisano attempts a new definition of late antique textuality in “Fragments, Allegory, and Anachronicity: Walter Benjamin and Claudian.” Following the concept of the “anachronic” as theorized by the art historians Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood (*Anachronic Renaissance*, 2010), he explores the possibility of understanding late Latin texts as bearing a transhistorical meaning that cannot be reduced to the historical context within which they were conceived, nor to their attachment to previous literary tradition, which has often been their main scholarly attraction. Instead, Formisano highlights the presence of allegory, fragmentation and ruin in late Latin texts, viewing them as “an original moment, which disturbs and disrupts rather than re-affirms historical continuity.”

A similar perspective is also at work in “Late Antique Foundations of Postmodern Theory: A Critical Overview,” where Jesús Hernández Lobato explores the influence that a number of late antique intellectuals and religious thinkers have had on postmodern literary theory. Late Antiquity and postmodernism are read in the light of crises of “logocentrism”: in the first case a consequence of the insight that classical modes of communication did not suffice to fathom the truths of Christianity, in the other that of the linguistic turn. Hernández Lobato observes parallel exegetical interpretations of the non-literal taking place in the light of the experience of the impossibility of articulating one’s own self in words.

The second section of the book is entitled “Decadence and Decline” and treats scholarship, literary texts, and artworks that belong to the decadentist movement in France, Italy and Austria, and historiographical works from Switzerland and Germany that shaped and developed the general concept of the declining Late Roman Empire. Late Antiquity served as a mirror for modernity which scholars and intellectuals used either to lament or celebrate the state of things. In “Decline and Renaissance: Re-reading the Late Antiquity of Jacob Burckhardt,” Olof Heilo pinpoints such dynamics in Burckhardt’s (1818–1897) early work *Die Zeit Constantins des Großen* (1853). Late Antiquity had lost its “sense of beauty.” This is very much how Burckhardt perceives his own time, for which he airs his contempt in disguised analogies. Heilo observes that the cultural historian describes the Renaissance in *Die Renaissancekultur in Italien* (1860) in a similar way as the one in which he conceptualized Late Antiquity in his earlier work, yet paradoxically he arrives at entirely different conclusions: “Polemically put, what seemed like symptoms of stagnation and decline in Constantinople have become praiseworthy examples of rejuvenation in Italy.” Heilo argues that Burckhardt’s Protestant background offers important clues to his partly contradictory notions of historical change and agency.

The image of a decaying Empire flourished and was transformed into an aesthetic category in the decadentist movement, above all in Joris-Karl Huysmans’ (1848–1907) epoch-making oeuvre *Against the Grain* (1884). In “Reading Against the Grain: Late Latin Literature in Huysmans’ *À rebours*,” Scott McGill explores the library of its protagonist Des Esseintes, which includes poets of Late Antiquity such as Commodian, Ausonius, Claudian, Prudentius, and Sedulius. McGill analy-

ses the different traits of decadence ascribed to this poetry—moral, linguistic, and political—and how these are reflected in contemporary characteristics of French *fin-de-sièclisme*.

As World War I and the Russian October Revolution escalated and the atmosphere of desolation that had been spreading throughout Europe since the turn of the century intensified, Late Antiquity loomed even larger than before. Many believed that their own military conflicts and ideological disputes marked the end of the global hegemony of Europe, and they brought a cyclical interpretation of history to the fore, for which the rise and fall of Rome stood as a paradigm. In “Late Antiquity, a Gentleman Scholar and the Decline of Cultures: Oswald Spengler and *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*,” Stefan Rebenich discusses one of the most important and influential works of this sort, Oswald Spengler’s bestseller *The Decline of the West*, in which the author developed the notion of the first millenium and fitted Islam into it (1917/22; ET 1926/29). Rebenich examines Spengler’s innovative view on Late Antiquity and the Fall of the Empire in relation to crises in the light of World War I and of Otto Seeck’s notorious work *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt* (1897–1920) with its inverted Darwinism, which Spengler indirectly seems to renounce.

One of the writers that appear in Huysmans’ *Against the Grain* is the early fifth-century poet Rutilius Namatianus, who “filled the dying Empire” with his crying.<sup>8</sup> In “Rome Post Mortem: The Many Returns of Rutilius Namatianus,” Sigrid Schottenius Cullhed traces the steps of this Gallo-Roman poet; from the pen of Edward Gibbon—who saw in Rutilius an archetypal image of the crumbling Empire, to French postrevolutionary intellectuals who perceived him as a romantic hero. Rutilius’ experiences were acutely relevant in the disasters that followed after the Napoleonic Wars, but it was in the Italian nationalist and decadentist movements that his poem had its greatest political impact. Once integrated into the fascist movement, he became the voice of the Great Roman Empire that would now come alive again within this movement.

Another late antique text that greatly influenced the decadentist movement was Procopius’ *Secret History*, and its representation of Empress Theodora. Victorien Sardou’s interpretation is well known, but Alma Johanna Koenig’s in *Der Heilige Palast* (1922) is less read, even though it was a bestseller in its own time, as Henriette Harich-Schwarzbauer shows in “Alma Johanna Koenig’s *Der heilige Palast*: The Rise and Fall of Theodora in the Belletrist of the *Wiener Moderns*.” This almost forgotten author was well known in the Austrian *fin de siècle* movement, but was deported and killed in a concentration camp during the war, and her works

<sup>8</sup> Joris-Karl Huysmans, *À rebours* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1884): “Rutilius, avec ses hymnes à la gloire de Rome, ses anathèmes contre les juifs et contre les moines, son itinéraire d’Italie en Gaule, où il arrive à rendre certaines impressions de la vue, le vague des paysages reflétés dans l’eau, le mirage des vapeurs, l’envolée des brumes entourant les monts.”

were banned by the Nazis. Koenig's younger lover and publisher Oskar Alfred Tauschinski preserved them, but it would be many years before scholarly interest in her work increased. In her first book, *The Holy Palace* (1922), Koenig re-writes Procopius of Caesarea's portrayal of Empress Theodora in *Secret History*. In Koenig's work, Harich-Schwarzbauer argues, a modern Theodora—in many ways a projection of the author herself—strikes back against her cruel creator.

In the last essay of this section, we turn to opera and thematization of late antique religion battles in Chiara O. Tommasi's "A Byzantine Phaedra between Paganism, Heresy and Magic: The Tragic Fate of Silvana in *La Fiamma* by Ottorino Respighi and Claudio Guastalla (1934)." The composer Ottorino Respighi, Tommasi argues, chose a Byzantine Italian setting because of its "languid decadence and visual preciousness" and for its ability to project a complex interaction between Christianity, asceticism, and paganism onto the early twentieth century. As Tommasi demonstrates, the stylistic register of Late Antiquity is adapted and nuanced by the musical score which implements Late Antiquity as a historical frame and as a stylistic resource in this work.

Not all readings of Late Antiquity have followed the pattern of a Falling Empire and cultural decadence. In other times and in other contexts, it has been perceived as an innovative period, a beginning of a new era of literary expressions and practices worth emulating in their own right. Its particular genres—the Bible paraphrase, pilgrim narratives, and hagiographical accounts—and its literary practices—elaborate uses of typology, the copying and pasting of verses or entire passages from earlier literature, the systematic amalgamations of classical pagan and biblical literature—all are features that inspired medieval prose and poetry in both the East and West. In the concluding section of this book, "Continuities and Transformations," the chapters deal with literary texts and traditions in which late antique models are used as sources for imitation, appropriation, and rewriting.

In his chapter "Versifications of the Book of Jonah: Late Antique to Late Medieval," Ad Putter illustrates the extraordinary consistency from late classical to late medieval Biblical paraphrases of the narrative of Jonah and the whale, represented in the *Carmen de Jona* (once attributed to Tertullian), Prudentius' *Cathemerinon*, Marbod of Rennes, and the Middle English poem *Patience*. Putter illustrates their common set of conventions; the recurrence of the same extra-Biblical details, assimilation of the Bible to classical epic, and their similar expressions of pathos. He also discusses how these features are reconciled with the comic potentials of the story, a factor that also gives a sense of how light-heartedly medieval poets were inclined to inscribe themselves in the late antique tradition.

Turning East in the chapter "Literary *mimesis* and the Late Antique layer in John Doukas' (or Phokas') *Description of Palestine*," David Westberg guides us through late antique and Byzantine mimetic conventions, exploring the reception of the orations of the rhetorician Chorikios (sixth century) by the twelfth-century author John Phokas in his narrative of a pilgrimage. Westberg concludes that Phokas not only found his dominating model in Chorikios, but that he even took pains

to accentuate this in his text. Phokas' literary use of his predecessor provides the ground for Westberg's exploration into the techniques of visualizing discourse and further into a discussion on current notions of literary emulation, borrowing and theft.

The theme of literary thievery forms a central element in Helena Bodin's chapter "‘I Sank through the Centuries’: Late Antiquity Inscribed in Göran Tunström's Novel *The Thief*." This novel by the Swedish author Göran Tunström (1937–2000), written in 1986, is set in provincial Swedish Sunne (twentieth century) and in sixth-century Ravenna. The Gothic *Codex Argenteus*—and attempts to steal it—plays a central role in this novel, as does textual and medial materiality, foregrounded in digressions on parchment, ink, and letters. Tunström integrates late ancient writing practices into his plot, and frequently alludes to the literature of the period, not least by inserting and framing the narrative with long quotations from Procopius' *The Gothic War*.

In the last chapter of the section and of the book, "*Mundus totus exsilium est: On Being Out of Place*," we come one step closer to the twenty-first century in Catherine Conybeare's exploration of the relevance of Augustine's *Confessions* to Edward Said's autobiographical project *Out of Place: A Memoir* (1999). Many of the themes and the articulation of episodes concerning significant figures have parallels in the *Confessions*, yet explicit references to Augustine are almost completely absent from Said's work. Conybeare suggests reasons why Said might have preferred not to make the debt to Augustine explicit. The reasons are grounded in the complex intercultural histories and sophisticated theoretical positions of both authors, yet they share the feeling of displacement.

This volume and the preceding conference were made possible by generous grants from the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, and the Sven and Dagmar Salén Foundation. For many improvements we are grateful to the two anonymous reviewers.

I  
THEORETICAL OUTLOOKS





JAMES UDEN

## Untimely Antiquity: Walter Pater and the “Vigil of Venus”\*

When we read Late Antiquity, we wrestle with a problem of time. The period is defined by the chronological condition of coming after the classical. No matter the innovations of individual authors, our periodization still casts Greek and Latin authors from the third to sixth centuries as epigones, latecomers to ancient culture. Equally familiar, though, is a more paradoxical rhetoric of Late Antiquity as a period forever “in-between,” whose meaning is always deferred, never settled in its own chronological space, always recalling the classical or anticipating the medieval.<sup>1</sup> This is the “untimeliness” of the late antique—another critical trope, to be sure, but one with intriguing historical and theoretical implications of its own. Late antique literature might be said to be untimely in any number of ways: in a belated fidelity to classical models that elides the passage of intervening centuries; in the development of allegorical modes of reading that subvert chronology to find Christian ideas anticipated in earlier works; in philosophical elaborations of the capacity of God to exist beyond human temporality.<sup>2</sup> Here my focus is on the use of this notion of untimeliness by a nineteenth-century critic highly sensitive to how our perception of time shapes our impressions of a work of literature. The aesthetic model of reading late Latin and Greek texts demonstrated by the Oxford literary figure Walter Pater in his novel *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas* (1885) positively embraces the untimeliness of Late Antiquity as a way of combating its contemporary associations with decadence and decline. In his work, late Latin and Greek literary texts become paradigms for the capacity of all litera-

\* My warm thanks to Sigrid Schottenius Cullhed and Mats Malm for inviting me to speak at the Reading Late Antiquity conference in Stockholm, to Tobias Myers for discussing my ideas with me as I was writing, and to Daniel Libatique and Kevin Ohi for thoughtful comments on this chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Marco Formisano remarks that “Late antiquity is a period characterized by the very difficulty of finding a name for it...it exists somehow *in between*...”: “Reading Décadence—Reception and the Subaltern Late Antiquity,” in M. Formisano et al., *Décadence: “Decline and Fall” or “Other Antiquity”?* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2014), 8, italics original.

<sup>2</sup> “In the unspeakable beginning, the Word was timeless, unreachable,” begins Nonnus’ late antique paraphrase of the Gospel of John (ἄχρονος ἦν, ἀκλίητος, ἐν ἀρορήτω λόγος ἀρχῆ). On Augustine and time, see Andrea Nightingale, *Once Out of Nature: Augustine on Time and the Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2011).

ture to seem to exist outside of time, simultaneously recalling ideas from the past and the future. By examining Pater's vision of untimely antiquity, we recapture an important moment in the nineteenth-century reception of the late antique and explore the historical and theoretical implications of a critical trope that still shapes our analyses of late Latin and Greek literature.

*Marius the Epicurean* is Pater's only completed novel. It is set in the Roman Empire of the second century, and Marcus Aurelius, Apuleius, Lucian, Fronto, Aelius Aristides, and Galen all appear as characters. The liminal aspects of the age are projected by Pater as a spiritual condition. The young hero, Marius, vacillates between worlds: he is drawn first to Epicureanism (or Cyrenaicism) and invests his faith in experience, before being increasingly drawn to Christianity, which he understands as the dawn of a new, transcendent system of values. The second-century setting is deliberate and detailed, indebted to a nineteenth-century fascination with the Stoic emperor Marcus Aurelius and his milieu.<sup>3</sup> Yet one of the novel's most striking characteristics is the narrator's constant breaks with this temporal frame. A connoisseur not only of artworks but of eras, Pater is forever appraising his characters' philosophies and ideas by reference to subsequent writers and movements, likening Roman elegy to Wordsworth, Apuleius' style to sixteenth-century "Euphuism," Heraclitean philosophy to Goethe's *Faust*.<sup>4</sup> In James Porter's words, the world of *Marius the Epicurean* "knows no single temporality because it is made up of plural temporalities. It is not a simple past because it is composed of several pasts that are superimposed one upon the other..."<sup>5</sup> Sebastian Matzner has recently argued for the value of anachronism as a way of resisting the tendency of historicism to exaggerate "the self-identity of any given moment," and therefore "the differences between any two moments." In so far as anachronism disrupts the historical assumptions of "straight" Classics, Matzner argues that this could constitute a distinctively queer mode of studying classical

<sup>3</sup> On this fascination, see John Coates, "Renan and Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*," *Comparative Literature Studies* 37 (2000), 402–423; Daniel Orrells, "Roman Receptions/Receptions of Rome: Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*," in *Ancient Rome and the Construction of Modern Homosexual Identities*, edited by Jennifer Ingleheart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 136–137.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas* (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2008 [1885]), 8, 61–65, 87. On the importance of Romanticism for *Marius*, see especially Stefano Evangelista, "Rome and the Romantic Heritage in Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*," in *Romans and Romantics*, edited by Timothy Saunders et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 305–326.

<sup>5</sup> James Porter, "Learning from Pater," *Classical Receptions Journal* 5 (2013), 220. On Pater's "aesthetic" vision of history, see the influential work of Carolyn Williams, *Transfigured World: Walter Pater's Aesthetic Historicism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

reception.<sup>6</sup> The deliberate disruptions of chronology in *Marius the Epicurean* in many ways foreshadow this approach. Pater forges an idiosyncratic community of writers and periods otherwise stranded by separations of time.

In one important scene, Pater imagines the composition of the Latin poem, the *Pervigilium Veneris* (“Vigil of Venus”). Pater’s heterochronic vision finds a particularly apposite object of study in the *Pervigilium*, an anonymous text that had itself long been regarded as strangely out of time.<sup>7</sup> As the only extant example of an extended hymn in its meter (trochaic septenarii), the “Vigil” is notoriously difficult to place in any ancient context. Editors vary widely in their reconstruction of the text, particularly with regard to the frequency and placement of its memorable refrain (*cras amet qui numquam amavit, quique amavit cras amet!*, “tomorrow let him love who has never loved; he who has loved, tomorrow let him love!”). The echoes of earlier verse in the *Pervigilium Veneris*, particularly Lucretius, Catullus, and Ovid, look back to Classical Latin poetry. But critics typically claim that the poem also anticipates any number of future styles and periods: accentual verse, the Middle Ages, the troubadours. Ezra Pound likened its stylistic prescience to jazz.<sup>8</sup> The first 88 lines are a hymn to the power of Venus, the return of spring, and Venus’ role in Roman history. In the final section, the poet’s own voice abruptly emerges, lamenting his exclusion:

She sings; I am silent. When is *my* spring coming? | When will I become like the swallow, and cease my silence? | I have destroyed my Muse through silence, and Apollo pays me no heed. In this way silence destroyed Amyclae, since it did not speak.<sup>9</sup>

illa cantat: nos tacemus. quando ver venit meum?  
quando fiam uti chelidon, ut tacere desinam?

<sup>6</sup> Sebastian Matzner “Queer Unhistoricism: Scholars, Metalepsis, and Interventions of the Unruly Past,” in *Deep Classics: Rethinking Classical Reception*, edited by Shane Butler (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 181. Cf. Formisano in this volume.

<sup>7</sup> On the *Pervigilium* and Pater there is (to my knowledge) only a short and summary-heavy article by Domenico Romano, “La Genesi ed il significato del ‘Pervigilium Veneris’ nella interpretazione di Walter Pater,” *Ann. Lic. Garibaldi Palermo* 11–13 (1974–1976) 289–295.

<sup>8</sup> *The Spirit of Romance*, revised edition (New York: New Directions, 1952 [1929]), 18–19: “...the *metric* of the *Pervigilium* probably indicated as great a change in sensibility in its day as the change from Viennese waltzes to jazz may indicate in our own.”

<sup>9</sup> Text of G.P. Goold in F.W. Cornish et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987). Two ancient cities called Amyclae—one in the Peloponnese near Sparta, and the other near Caieta in Latium—had the same anecdote applied to them. Frustrated by repeated false reports of an approaching enemy, Amyclae passed a law that made it illegal to mention the subject, but when an enemy did approach, this self-imposed silence led to their destruction (Serv. ad *Aen.* 10.564).

perdidi Musam tacendo, nec me Phoebus respicit:  
sic Amyclas, cum tacerent, perdidit silentium. (Perv. Ven. 89–93).

The sudden emphasis on destruction rather than rebirth, and the urgency of the plangent personal voice, come as a surprise. It is as if the poet is interrupting himself, or even beginning to speak for the first time.<sup>10</sup> The joy of the rest of the poem seems suddenly like a dream, or a deceit, or even a “trap” into which unsuspecting readers can fall.<sup>11</sup> Only in the famous final stanza of Catullus 51, when the translation of Sappho is interrupted by the poet berating himself for his indulgent “leisure” (*otium*), is there a more startling emergence of the personal voice in Roman poetry; and indeed the abrupt allusion to the destruction of Amyclae at the end of the *Pervigilium Veneris* may well have been prompted by the melancholy last line of Catullus 51.<sup>12</sup> *Perdidit urbes*—leisure “destroyed cities,” Catullus wrote (51.16).

Our volume is called *Reading Late Antiquity*. Is this poem, by our standards, “late antique”? One solution to the dating controversy ascribes the *Pervigilium Veneris* to Tiberianus, the late third/early fourth-century Platonist and poet, who falls squarely within our chronological parameters for Late Antiquity.<sup>13</sup> In the nineteenth century, the case for Tiberianus’ authorship had already been made by the noted German philologist Emil Baehrens.<sup>14</sup> But readers of Pater’s day, if they dated the poem at all, were more likely to consider it a product of the second century, either as the work of the Hadrianic author Florus or some other anonymous poet of this period. The note attached to an anonymous translation of the poem in *All the Year Round* (December 5, 1868), a periodical edited by Charles Dickens, reads:

Certainly, whatever be the period which produced the *Pervigilium Veneris*, it would seem to have been the period of literary *decadence*, such as the age of Hadrian. That which has tempted [*sic*] to a paraphrase of this little poem is the essentially modern character of it.

The age of Hadrian is not now considered “late antique,” and yet the rhetoric used in the periodical to describe the *Pervigilium Veneris* will be instantly familiar to

<sup>10</sup> Laurence Catlow has argued for a female author, suggesting that the poem “betokens... the feelings and imaginative response” of a female poet: *Pervigilium Veneris* (Brussels: Latomus, 1980), 25. I leave the question open.

<sup>11</sup> Andrea Cucchiarelli, *La veglia di Venere* (Milan: BUR, 2003), 7.

<sup>12</sup> So Scevola Mariotti, “Catullo nella chiusa del *Pervigilium Veneris*,” in *Hommages à R. Schilling*, edited by Hubert Zehnacker et al. (Paris: Société d’édition Les Belles Lettres, 1983).

<sup>13</sup> Alan Cameron, “The *Pervigilium Veneris*,” *Atti del V Corso della Scuola Superiore di Archeologia e Civiltà Medievali* (Messina: Centro di Studi Umanistici, 1984), 224.

<sup>14</sup> *Unedirte lateinische Gedichte* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1877), 36–37.

scholars of late antique literature. The poem occupies a typically liminal space: both late and early, decadent and modern. Influenced specifically by Charles Thomas Cruttwell's popular *History of Roman Literature* (1877, six editions by 1898), Pater similarly imagined the poem as a product of the second century.<sup>15</sup> He casts the poem as late and artificial, oppressed by the "burden of precedent," but also prophetic in its style, offering a "foretaste" of romantic beauty in the medieval world and beyond. How might individual literary works—and, by extension, entire periods—embody within them different temporalities? If the second-century world depicted by *Marius the Epicurean* is not chronologically late antique as we would define it, Pater's reading of the *Pervigilium Veneris* nonetheless offers a powerful consideration of the aesthetic and philosophical implications of literary lateness, and a response to the nineteenth-century narrative of Roman decadence that played such a formative historical role in studies of Late Antiquity.

### The Shadowy *Pervigilium Veneris*

Pater makes the *Pervigilium Veneris* into the work of a dying man. Pater imagines its poet, Flavian, afflicted with the Antonine plague, although suggestions of spiritual corruption earlier in the novel carry the lingering implication of venereal disease. These associations of death and decay are juxtaposed surprisingly by Pater with the overt themes of the "Vigil of Venus," the main section of which celebrates the arrival of spring, the participation of all nature in cycles of rebirth, and the power of erotic love to create and regenerate life. But although the *Pervigilium* has tended to be rather blandly categorized as a celebratory paean to Venus, other themes—the silence of the poet, voices suppressed and struggling to be heard, the destructive capacities of erotic love—run as a sort of darker counterpoint to the central narrative. In a curious aside in *Marius*, Pater wonders if the Romans had a word for "unworldly," and decides that the closest approximation to it is the Latin word *umbratilis*: "secluded," but literally "shadowy."<sup>16</sup> Not just in the abrupt and surprising conclusion, there is a shadowiness to the "Vigil of Venus," a poem at once hymn and lament.

The *Pervigilium* as a whole is pervaded by a sense of the singer's exclusion from the exuberant world of Venus he is describing. The central problem is time: the first-person character of the silenced singer is consistently presented as both too early and too late to enjoy a full share of the joys being described. The surrounding world is repeatedly described in terms of human eroticism, in an al-

<sup>15</sup> Charles Thomas Cruttwell, *History of Roman Literature* (London: Charles Griffin, 1877), 469. Brasenose College Library records show that Pater borrowed the book in May 1881: Billie Andrew Inman, *Walter Pater and his Reading, 1874–1877* (Garland: New York, 1990), 445.

<sup>16</sup> Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 21.

most psychedelic vision of a personified world animated by eros. Birds “marry” (*nubunt*, 3). Each bull is “held by a conjugal bond” (*tenetur coniugali foedere*, 82), and sheep lie with their “husbands” (*maritis*, 83). “Marital rain showers” make the wood “loosen its hair” (*nemus comam resolvit de maritis imbribus*, 4). “Pleasure fertilizes the fields; the fields feel Venus” (*rura fecundat voluptas, rura Venerem sentiunt*, 76). Sexual deflowering awaits actual flowers: “purple blossoms have laid aside their modesty” ( *pudorem florulentae prodiderunt purpurae*, 19), and the wetness of dew loosens their “virgin rosebuds” (*virgineas papillas; papillae* also means “nipples,” 21). In the morning they too are ordered to marry (*ipsa iussit... virgines nubant rosae*, 22). The celebration of Venus makes explicit the sexual overtones already latent in the characteristic motifs of spring description: surging, swelling, opening.

Crucially, though, these actions are all described in the present or the perfect tense. They are actions ongoing or just completed. Latin spring poetry tends to manifest an excited insistence on the present: Catullus’ spring poem repeats the word “now” (*iam*) four times in eight lines, and the even more ecstatic description of spring in Columella’s poetic section of the *De Re Rustica* repeats the words *nunc* and *iam* eight times in ten lines.<sup>17</sup> Catullus’ wedding songs (poems 61 and 62), to which the *Pervigilium* is also indebted, also summon a sense of action in the present (“come forth, new bride, if you are ready now...now you may come, husband”).<sup>18</sup> The *Pervigilium Veneris*, however, contrasts the present romance of the natural world with the love between people, which is always referred to in the future. “Tomorrow (*cras*), let him love who has never loved,” says the repeated refrain; “he who has loved, tomorrow (*cras*) let him love.” Clearly there is a kind of universality in the line’s inclusion of those who have loved in the past and those who have not, but there is a powerful temporal disjunction in the poem between the ongoing, tumultuous eroticism of nature in the present, and the refrain’s promise of personal love in the future. The constant repetition of *cras* (“tomorrow”) brings an awareness of time to the surface of the text, suspending us in anticipation while we watch the erotic spectacle ongoing around us. This anticipation throughout the *Pervigilium* hints constantly at the alienation that will be expressed openly and powerfully at the poem’s end. The hope of love tomorrow is also an insistent, eternal, postponement of happiness.

A different kind of temporal problem is suggested by the poem’s relationship with the long tradition of Latin spring poetry. In *Marius the Epicurean*, Pater imagines Flavian, in the process of writing the poem, wrestling in “self-torment” with the “burden of precedent.” In the late Latin literary world, he fears that there can be “no place left for novelty or originality; place only for a patient, an infinite,

<sup>17</sup> Cat. 46.1–8; Colum. 10.196–206. For other examples, Cucchiarelli, *La veglia di Venere*, 89.

<sup>18</sup> Cat. 61.92–93 (*prodeas nova nupta sil iam videtur*); 184 (*iam licet venias, marite*).

faultlessness.”<sup>19</sup> Spring is a beginning of new life, and often of new poetry. It is not coincidental that Lucretius’ hymn to Venus and celebration of spring begins his work, given the association of spring and Venus with beginnings. The problem is that, although the subject matter is synonymous with newness, descriptions of spring and its effect on the natural world are among the most familiar of Latin poetic topoi. How is one sufficiently to represent newness on a theme so poetically old? The very opening line of the poem seeks to establish a place for the poet. He declares: *ver novum, ver iam canorum; vere natus orbis est* (“Spring is new, spring is now full of song; in spring the world was born”). The line places him immediately in a series of poems in which the incantatory repetition of the word *ver* (“spring”) is a binding motif. Virgil writes: *ver adeo frondi nemorum, ver utile silvis/ vere tument terrae et genitalia semina poscunt*, with the same pattern of cases (*ver...ver...vere*).<sup>20</sup> Ovid echoes, with minor variation: *nec Veneri tempus quam ver erat aptius ullum: vere nitent terrae, vere remissus ager*.<sup>21</sup> Even as they celebrate fresh beginnings, each is a reiteration—a version—of a shared technique. Varro, we might note, derives the word *ver* from *vertere*, “to turn”/ “to transform”/ “to translate.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, when the poet of the *Pervigilium Veneris* stresses that “spring is new” (*ver novum*), the poet simultaneously signals a repeating tradition and attempts to make a place for this work. Although the adjective *canorus* primarily refers to birdsong, it is tempting to hear in the phrase *ver iam canorum* a metapoetic reference to the intertextual saturation of the tradition; “spring is now,” or perhaps “already” (*iam*), “full of song.” Ezra Pound translates: “A new spring, already a spring of songsters/ Spring is born again to the world.”<sup>23</sup> *Quando ver venit meum?*, the singer will ask at the end of the poem—“when will my spring come?” When one rereads the *Pervigilium Veneris* after experiencing the final lament, the voice of the poet seems, in the give-and-take between allusion and innovation, to have been negotiating with tradition and struggling for audibility all along.

The personal voice must therefore contend with voices from the past, the poetic tradition of those whose spring has come and gone before him. His silence is also contrasted implicitly against the ongoing sound of nature itself. In the *Pervigilium Veneris*, the present buzz of natural processes in the spring is repeatedly imagined as the result of speech. Everything else in this world has a voice. The words of Venus have a generative force: Venus “will speak” (*dicet*, 50) the laws of nature. Birds are “full of song” (*canoras...alites*), and that is because of the

<sup>19</sup> Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 66.

<sup>20</sup> *Georg.* 2.323–324: “So useful is spring to the forest foliage; so useful is spring to the woods:/ in spring the ground swells and demands life-giving seed.”

<sup>21</sup> *Fast.* 4.125–126: “Nor is any season more suited for Venus than the spring:/ in spring the ground glistens, in spring the soil is made soft.”

<sup>22</sup> *De Ling. Lat.* 6.9.

<sup>23</sup> Pound, *The Spirit of Romance*, 19.



“order” of Venus (*iussit*, 84). The earth’s renewal in spring is presented in terms of artistic invention: Venus “paints” the year purple (*pingit*, 12); the father “creates” the whole world anew with spring rainclouds (*crearet*, 60). Most explicitly, at lines 45–47, the poet expresses the wish of Venus that “neither Ceres nor Bacchus nor the god of poets is absent. The entire night must be lengthened, must be spent in song.”<sup>24</sup> One naturally thinks of *this* song—and yet, before *nos tacemus* in line 89, there is only one first-person verb in the entire poem (*rogamus*, 38), which editors punctuate as Venus’ direct speech. The *Pervigilium Veneris* never foregrounds the poet’s own voice as many Latin hymns and prayers do (“we praise,” “we sing,” “we request”). While the voices of the natural world around him are present and ongoing, he is silent, out of time. The evocation of a natural world constantly engaged in song and speech and creation serves all throughout the *Pervigilium Veneris* to accentuate, by contrast, the silence of the personal voice of the singer himself.

In *Marius the Epicurean*, when Pater describes Marius reading the *Pervigilium Veneris* for the first time, he experiences an uncanny sense of time out of order:

The impression thus forced upon Marius connected itself with a feeling, the precise inverse of that, known to everyone which seems to say—*You have been just here, just thus, before!*—a feeling in his case not reminiscent but prescient, which passed over him many times afterwards, coming across certain people and places; as if he detected there the process of actual change to a wholly undreamed of and renewed condition of human body and soul.<sup>25</sup>

The vertigo of intertextuality, that dizzying sense of speeding back and forth through literary time, is projected on to the experience of Marius himself. On a first-time reading of the *Pervigilium Veneris*, he feels a paradoxical forward-looking sense of *déjà vu*, as he senses, impossibly, transformations that are yet to come in aesthetic and religious history. This untimeliness finds an especial resonance in the “Vigil” itself, which describes the tragic silence of the human singer and his exclusion from natural cycles of rebirth. If Pater imagines Marius briefly outside of human time in feeling the frisson of futurity, the “Vigil of Venus” depicts the alienating dislocation between human and natural time, the ruthless unidirectionality of an individual’s life amid a world that regularly starts itself all over again. When will *our* spring come? “Suffering is one very long moment,” wrote Oscar Wilde. “We cannot divide it by seasons.”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Perv. Ven.* 45–46: *nec Ceres nec Bacchus absunt, nec poetarum deus./ detinenda tota nox est, pervigilanda canticis.*

<sup>25</sup> Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 75.

<sup>26</sup> *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, vol. 2: *De Profundis; Epistola: In Carcere et Vinculis*, edited by Ian Small (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 [1905]), 159.

## Reading Lateness with Pater

In *Marius the Epicurean*, Pater gives Flavian a short life intensely lived. Flavian's imprint on the sensitive young Marius is described in terms of an incorporeal world that briefly feels a body temperature. A "shadow, handling all things as shadows," writes Pater, "had felt a sudden real and poignant heat in them."<sup>27</sup> Flavian is a passionate youth with a devotion to beauty and art very much like that of the students in *fin-de-siècle* Oxford whose commitment to aestheticism was stirred by Pater's own work.<sup>28</sup> Pater reconstructs the process of writing his final, great poem—the "Vigil of Venus"—in detail across two chapters of the novel, using fiction to fill in the gaps of conventional classical scholarship. Pater accounts for the popular associations of the meter by supposing the refrain "a snatch from a popular chorus, something he had heard sounding all over the town of Pisa one April night," and describes the boys' experience of a ritual to Isis, which, it is implied, Flavian transforms imaginatively into the poetic ritual to Venus.<sup>29</sup> The open eroticism of the ancient text, so foreign to Pater's sensibilities, is not ignored, but remains tantalizingly implicit in the bond between the poet and his friend. A certain horror of sexuality is part of Marius' personality: a lasting trauma of his youth was seeing snakes mating, which was "like a peep into the lower side of the real world" and robbed him for days of the pleasures of food and sleep.<sup>30</sup> Yet Flavian's poem makes sexuality pleasing and acceptable to him, even for a short time. He praises the *Pervigilium* as a mystic nuptial hymn that celebrates the "mating together" of "all fresh things, in the hot and genial spring time," and even cites some bawdy lines in the poem about Cupid's being "armed" when naked.<sup>31</sup> Irresistibly, the eroticism of the ancient text colors the description of the relationship between Marius and Flavian, a boy described from the first in terms of the natural world (he "carried on the expression of the austere light, and the clear song of the black-bird," and "changed much with the changes of the passing light and shade about him").<sup>32</sup> The intense experience of the poem's composition, with Marius acting as both amanuensis and nurse, is charged with erotic suggestions of the boys' own spiritual union. True to the *Pervigilium*'s own themes, though, potential human eroticism will be interrupted and forced into silence.

Flavian composes the "Vigil" on his deathbed. Pater imagines the poem's famous refrain being sung by "strong, young men" outside Flavian's window, and its irregular repetition in the poem as imagined as a periodic interruption of the po-

<sup>27</sup> Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 38.

<sup>28</sup> Flavian is "a brilliant youth who loved dress, and dainty foods, and flowers," who cultivated a "foppery of words": Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 36–37.

<sup>29</sup> Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 65.

<sup>30</sup> Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 19.

<sup>31</sup> *Perv. Ven.* 31–35 (= Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 74).

<sup>32</sup> Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 36.

et's feverish thoughts.<sup>33</sup> The vagaries of the poem's transmission are projected by Pater as the result of the poet himself fading in and out of consciousness. Flavian attempts to "fashion out, without formal dictation, still a few more broken verses of his unfinished work, in hard-set determination, defiant of pain, to arrest this or that little drop at least, from the river of sensuous imagery rushing so quickly past him."<sup>34</sup> As Marius assists with writing his ostensibly exuberant Latin hymn, he is haunted by a premonition of disaster, "some shadowy adversary in the dark."<sup>35</sup> The most striking omission in Pater's account is any explicit reference to the memorable final lines, in which the poet's voice emerges and laments the destruction of his Muse. In Pater's retelling, though, the account of Flavian's last hours assumes the structural place of this final passage. He literalizes the silence of the personal voice in a description of Flavian's death.

The narrative of the *Pervigilium Veneris* in *Marius the Epicurean* is, in Pater's quiet way, a provocation. First, the imaginative and openly fictionalizing description of the poem's composition is a subtle kind of rebellion against the premises of contemporary, conservative philology. The poem's many uncertainties had attracted particular scholarly attention in the nineteenth century. As well as Emil Baehrens, other leading figures of nineteenth-century German classical scholarship (Franz Buecheler, Otto Ribbeck, Alexander Riese) had edited and commented on the text.<sup>36</sup> The conjectures of the famous humanist Joseph Scaliger and his solution to the perennial dating question—"if I surmise correctly, after Constantine"—were discovered and published by the librarian of the Bibliothèque nationale de France in the same year as *Marius the Epicurean*.<sup>37</sup> Pater's approach, of course, is different. He puckishly solves the key scholarly problem, the date and origin of the *Pervigilium Veneris*, not through an application of "scientific" methods of philology but through an open exercise of authorial imagination. Moreover, if *Marius* is, as Stefano Evangelista writes, "not so much a historical novel as a novel about historiography," Pater's description of the poem implicitly highlights the degree to which *all* such judgments on literary history depend on a personal act of creative reconstruction, a conjuring of the tendencies and character of a particular author or period.<sup>38</sup> In an evocative recent treatment, Kevin Ohi

<sup>33</sup> Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 75.

<sup>34</sup> Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 77.

<sup>35</sup> Pater, *Marius the Epicurean*, 76.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Franz Buecheler, *Pervigilium Veneris* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1859), who tentatively decides upon a second- or third-century date (at page 51); Otto Ribbeck, "Zum *Pervigilium Veneris*," *Rheinisches Museum* 14 (1859), 324–325; Alexander Riese, *Anthologia Latina sive poesis Latinae supplementum*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1869), 144–148.

<sup>37</sup> H. Omont, "Sur le 'Pervigilium Veneris': Conjectures de Joseph Scaliger," *Revue de Philologie, de Littérature et d'Histoire Anciennes* 9 (1885), 126.

<sup>38</sup> Stefano Evangelista, "Rome and the Romantic Heritage in Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*," 314.