W.B. Yeats is acclaimed as a poet of great distinction, but the significance of his critical writings is perhaps not fully realised. There is little doubt that his critical writings throw a good deal of light on his poetry and help us understand it better. But considered purely as criticism too, they reveal an originality and talent very few critics possess.

In a sense Yeats is beyond the scope of this study, because unlike in the case of Oscar Wilde and Lionel Johnson, a very small part of his critical work belongs to the Nineties. He continued writing criticism throughout his life and lived up to almost the middle of the twentieth century. And yet, since he happens to be the greatest figure to come out of the Nineties, and since as a member of the Rhymers' Club was deeply influenced by Walter Pater, and also because the
theories and ideas of symbolism which he formulated
and pursued in his later years can be traced back to
his early thinking and associations, it is necessary
and instructive to study the exact nature of the
literary relationship between him and Pater and the
extent of influence wielded by the sage of Oxford on
the younger but no less gifted writer.

It is perhaps not possible, for lack of evidence,
to point out precisely when Yeats became acquainted
with Pater or his works. But he could not obviously
have remained unaware of the renowned literary figure
after his arrival in London in 1887 from Dublin and
particularly when he often met Oscar Wilde, who
expressed a sense of pride in giving himself out as a
disciple of Pater. He also developed friendship with
Lionel Johnson and Arthur Symons after his association
with the Rhymers' club in 1891, and the two were
devoted followers of Pater too. It is certain, however,
that his influence on Yeats came partly from Lionel
Johnson, Oscar Wilde and Arthur Symons and partly from
his own reading of Pater's works. The kind of
enthusiastic response to Rossetti, Morris and Swinburne
evident in Yeats's writings is perhaps not there so far
as Pater is concerned. But in the various references
to him in his writings, Yeats acknowledged the powerful
impact Pater's ideas had on the age in general and on
him and his friends in particular.
In the section the "Trembling of the Veil" of Yeats's *Autobiographies*, for instance, which contains some important references to Pater, we come across the lengthiest discussion about him. After referring to the pervasive and powerful influence of Rossetti on the Rhymers, Yeats says; "We looked consciously to Pater for our Philosophy. Three or four years ago I re-read *Marius the Epicurean*, expecting to find I cared for it no longer, but it still seemed to me, as I think it seemed to us all, the only great prose in modern English." A little further on he tells how Pater made them learned and ceremonious and polite... and relates that Johnson and Symons would visit "our sage at Oxford", and report what he had said: "Everything that has occupied man for any length of time is worthy of our study." Yeats continues to speak, in a vein slightly critical of their response to Pater, of Pater's influence thus: "Perhaps it was because of Pater's influence that we, with an affectation of learning claimed the whole past of literature for our authority... that we preferred what seemed still uncrumbled rock to the still unspotted foam; that we were traditional alike in our dress, in our manner, in

our opinions and in our style."

Some critics assert on the basis of the passages in the "Trembling of the Veil" that Yeats, after the turn of the century, turned away from Pater for good and regretted his influence on the writers of his generation. It is not difficult to refute this assertion. For a close look at what Yeats states on this subject leaves little doubt in the mind that such a claim is untenable and that there is hardly anything condemnatory of Pater in those comments. On the contrary, there is definite praise for Pater's prose and the doctrines he handed down to his followers.

Not only that, it is also important to note that Yeats, unlike Oscar Wilde and like Lionel Johnson, was impressed more by the mature, conservative aspect of Pater than the early, epicurean Pater. This belief is strengthened by Yeats's eulogy in the Introduction to the Oxford Book of Modern Verse, which is by far the handsomest tribute paid to Pater by Yeats. And this tribute comes very late in Yeats's life, in 1936. It is clear from it that he recognised the distinction between the Pater of the 'Conclusion' to The Renaissance

2. Ibid., p.303.
and the Pater of Marius and the latter essays. Of the critics who have considered Pater in relation to Yeats there are only a few who have seen Pater go beyond the merely aesthetic and believe that his influence on Yeats was little more than youthful enthusiasm which Yeats naturally outgrew. Evidently such false assumptions are unjust to Pater as well as to Yeats.

Yeats opens his selections from modern verse with an excerpt from Pater's evocative description of Mona Lisa in his essay on Leonardo da Vinci. He breaks up the passage in the form of verse and calls it the "first modern poem", for Pater, according to Yeats, had won "the entire uncritical admiration of his generation" and also "dominated a generation that accepted him master." He asks whether in the description of Mona Lisa Pater foreshadows "a poetry, a philosophy where the individual is nothing, the flux of The Cantos of Ezra Pound, objects without contour... for time cannot be divided?" This is not just high praise, but the acknowledgement of a deep debt that Yeats owed to Pater, in whom he recognized his own forerunner and also the acceptance of the importance of

4. See "On Style" in Appreciations.
Pater's influence not only in the Nineties but also in later times.

It has become a common practice among critics to find resemblances in passages from Yeats's prose and poetry and passages from Pater, suggesting thereby that Yeats owes a good deal to Pater in style, particularly in diction. Like most young writers of the day, Yeats too was fascinated by the elegance of Paterian prose and the abundance of examples of similarities of expression in his writings of that period shows that he learned a lot from Pater. But this is perhaps not so significant a part of Pater's influence on Yeats. For the sort of influence which was really significant and substantive, we have to look for those elements which are common in their aesthetics. For instance, it should be clear that when Yeats thought of style it was not merely a matter of phrasing, diction, or rhythms, but something more serious than that. In his first published reference to Pater in an essay "A Ballad Singer" (1891) Yeats says, "To talk of books at all on this green clover spotted grass seems sadly out of keeping unless, indeed, it be some dreamy romance like Marius the Epicurean whose golden sentences, laden as with sleepy sunlight, I have been
reading slowly and fitfully..."6 Now the allusion to Marius as some "dreamy romance" and the enthusiastic reference to Pater's "golden sentences" might indicate the superficially fashionable approach to Pater, more Wildean than Yeatsian. But a little further on in the essay we realise that he has not missed the substance of the book and that his eye is not on the manner only. Yeats says: "The doctrines I have just been studying and Pater's jewelled paragraphs - the Platonic theory of spiritual beings having their abode in all things without and within us, and thus uniting all things, as by a living ladder of souls, with God Himself..."7

A close study of "Art and Ideas" (1913) reveals Yeats's position as critic during the nineties. Although he was one of the Rhymers, he was not quite satisfied with their way of thinking, their greater stress on individuality and turning away from all ideas. Yeats happened to see some paintings by Pre-Raphaelite painters such as Millais, Rossetti and Potters, which startled him into a rediscovery of himself and made him realise what he seemed to have

7. Ibid., p.394.
overlooked for quite sometime: "I had learned to think in the midst of the last phase of Pre-Raphaelitism and now I had come to Pre-Raphaelitism again and rediscovered my earliest thought." He tells us that when he had begun to write, he had avowed the principles of Arthur Hallam in his essay on Tennyson, that is, the principles of the aesthetic school to which Keats and Shelley belonged, who, unlike Wordsworth, wrote out of the impressions made by the world upon their delicate senses and did not intermix in their poetry, elements of thought. He was however left discontented with those delighted senses, for the impressions needed an over-elaborateness while he desired simplicity of the "careless old writers." This difficulty was often in his mind but he put it aside, "for the new formula was a good switch ... it set us free from politics, theology, science, all that zeal and eloquence Swinburne and Tennyson found so intoxicating." Yeats tells us that he was the only one among the writers who met at the Cheshire Cheese, that loved criticism of Arthur Hallam's sort ..." criticism founded upon general ideas." He says that

9. Ibid., p.349.
10. Ibid., p.349.
even when he accepted it as a useful position from which to attack Swinburne and later Tennyson, he felt that the pure and unalloyed art of aestheticism lacked vitality and immediate force. He further says that he had turned away in private to fill his imagination with the popular beliefs of Ireland and "sought some symbolic language reaching far into the past and associated with familiar names and conspicuous hills that I might not be alone amid the obscure impressions of the senses." 11

The essay is important, in spite of a sort of vagueness about it, in helping us to a correction of perspective. Yeats apparently dissociates himself from the decadent kind of aestheticism followed by the Rhymers, which laid stress on formal perfection and pure art, and claims to follow a different order of aestheticism. He tells us that poetry in the nineties had to liberate itself "from a demagogic system of morals which destroyed the humility, the daily dying of the imagination in the presence of beauty." 12 It is clear to Yeats that art should express the personality of its creator at its fullest. He pleads for the recognition of the importance of

11. Ibid., p.349.
12. Ibid., p.351.
content as well as form in art. He believes that the pure art of aestheticism lacked the immediate force of the careless old writers and that it should be possible to appreciate both pattern and subject. The emphasis upon pure form which some of the writers of the Nineties thought they learnt from Pater, Yeats clearly realises was a misunderstanding of Pater. That he understands style in the true Paterian sense is evident from his Introduction to Essays and Introductions too. He writes: "At the end of his essay upon Style Pater says that a book written according to the principles he has laid down will be well written, but whether it is a great book or not depends upon subject matter."

Yeats did not adopt the doctrines of Art for Art's sake because excessive preoccupation with art resulted in artificiality and insincerity and isolation from life. His way of seeing things is akin to Pater's. Pater also set great store by sincerity in art, sincerity to the artist's personal vision. Yeats says: "We should write out our own thoughts as nearly as possible in the language we thought them in."  

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believed that he could be a great poet if "I can be sincere and make my language natural."¹⁵ Skill in craftsmanship, cadence, and beauty of phrase were fine ideals but not the only things poetry had to do with. It is bad morals not to obey to the utmost the law of one's art, for good writing is the way art has of being moral. Yeats's theory was that "Literature must be the expression of conviction and be the garment of noble emotion, and not an end in itself."¹⁶ Yeats in his essay on J.M. Synge again emphasizes sincerity in literature: "To speak of one's emotion without fear or moral ambition, to come out from under the shadow of other men's minds, to be utterly oneself, that is all the Muses care for."¹⁷

In his conception of beauty Yeats also reminds us of Pater. Beauty he saw as "the end and law of poetry" and the very existence of poetry was to "find beauty in all things and when it rejected beauty it destroyed its own right to exist."¹⁸ In this insistence upon beauty there is no suggestion of the

¹⁵. Ibid., p.103.
sensual beauty of the decadent aesthetes. To him, as to Yeats, beauty is a form of truth. The writer or the artist, Yeats says, "must make his work a part of his own journey towards beauty and truth." And his peculiar response to William Blake may partly be due to Yeats's passion for beauty which was something immortal for Blake and in the name of which he revolted against reason. "We write of great writers even of writers whose beauty would once have seemed an unholy beauty, with rapt sentences like those our fathers kept for the beatitudes and mysteries of the church, and no matter but we believe with our lips." We believe, says Yeats, "with our hearts that beautiful things as Browning said in his one prose essay that was not in verse, have lain burningly on the Divine hand." And elsewhere he expresses his faith that the new age will understand with Blake that "the Holy spirit is an intellectual fountain and that the kinds and the degrees of beauty are the images of its authority."  

Peter's aesthetic had always a close correspondence to his ethic, as we have seen, and Yeats.

19. Essays and Introductions, p.207.
20. Ibid., p.112.
21. Ibid., p.78.
particularly in his essays on the need of an Irish national theatre, desires that art should get close to life, its vitality, vigour and spontaneity, for he believed that it could, and should, educate the people and enlarge human sympathies. Yeats had no doubt in his mind about the relationship of literature and morals: "... has art nothing to do with moral judgements? Surely it, and its judgements are those from which there is no appeal." 22 It is not exactly the propagandist or didactic nature of art that he favours, although the essence of these essays was propaganda for a national drama. He says that literature "will influence the life of the country immeasurably more though seemingly less than our propagandist poems and stories. It will leave to others the defence of all that can be codified for ready understanding, of whatever is the especial business of sermons, and of leading articles; but it will bring all the ways of men before the ancient tribunal of our sympathies. It will measure all things by the measure not of things visible but of things invisible." 23 He values literature that helps people to become more charitable and understanding. In other words Yeats would like art to perform the sort


23. Ibid., p.147.
of function which Pater considered in his essays on Lamb, and on Style, for instance, as belonging to it. Yeats is hovering between a literature which is suggestive or evocative in the symbolist manner and a literature which aims at moulding people. However, in his essay "Certain Noble Plays of Japan" (1916) Yeats is full of enthusiasm for the Japanese Noh drama, with its ritual marks and stylization and its appeal to "a few cultivated people." This idea of the appeal to a selected group and, the dislike of vitality and realism which he preached earlier, and the calculated distance from life are surely born of his disillusionment with the Irish national theatre.

Yeats's literary friendship with Arthur Symons had evidently aroused his interest in symbolism and he often refers to the symbolist movement in the articles written during the Nineties. In his essay on "Blake's Illustration to the Divine Comedy" (1896), he speaks of Blake as "the first great symbolist" of modern times. Commenting on the new development in art he says: "The recoil from scientific naturalism has created in our day the movement the French call symboliste - which has brought into art a new subtle inspiration." 24

Yeats speaks of Blake as one who spoke confusedly and obscurely because "he spoke of things for whose speaking he could find no models in the world about him. He was a symbolist who had to invent his symbols." 25 Yeats also considers Blake a forerunner of aestheticism for "he announced the religion of art" 26 and worshipped beauty. What is of interest to note here is the development in Yeats's critical position. In what was earlier aestheticism or decadence he now sees elements of symbolism; the aesthete was in fact changing into a symbolist. The signs of this change can be seen in some earlier essays, all written in 1895.

In "The Autumn of The Body", for example, he tells us that when he first began to write he desired to describe outward things as vividly as possible, but then quite suddenly he lost that desire and found that he took little interest in a book unless it was spiritual. He did not then understand that the change was from beyond his own mind; writers were "struggling all over Europe, though not often with a philosophic understanding of their struggle, against the picturesque and declamatory way of writing, against the externality which a time of scientific and political

26. Ibid., p.111.
thought has brought into literature." 27 He tells us that in England too, a new poetry had grown up in the shadow of the old. It was, Yeats goes on, with Goethe and Wordsworth and Browning that poetry gave up the right to consider all things in the world as a dictionary of types and symbols and began to call itself a critic of life and interpreter of things as they are. He sees in arts of every country "those faint lights, and faint colours and faint outlines and faint energies which many call the decadence, and which I, because I believe that the arts lie dreaming of things to come, prefer to call the autumn of the body." 28 Yeats speaks of the interests in many things which positive science had always denied: "communion of mind with mind in thought and without words, foreknowledge in dreams and in visions..." 29 Yeats believes that the arts are about to take upon their shoulders, "the burdens that have fallen from the shoulders of the priests" and to lead us back upon our journey by "filling our thoughts with the essence of things, and not with things." 30

27. Ibid., p.189.
28. Ibid., p.191.
29. Ibid., p.192.
30. Ibid., p.193.
It is not just the verbal texture of this essay, the languorous tone, the occupation with "an elaboration which is almost ritualistic and incantatory", which remind us of Pater. The search of the artist for "the essence of things and not with things" echoes Pater's "not fact but the sense of fact." And "the evermore arduous search for an almost disembodied ecstasy"\(^{31}\) recalls Pater's quest for the ecstatic passion, and the multiplied consciousness, for the apprehension of the exquisite beauty.

In almost a similar vein of revolt against materialism or externality Yeats wrote in "Moods": "Literature differs from explanatory and scientific writing in being wrought about a mood, or a community of moods, as the body is wrought about an invisible soul."\(^{32}\) A little further on in the essay he claims for the artist a freedom from all materialism because he belongs to the invisible life: "the only restraint he can obey is the mysterious instinct that has made him an artist and that teaches him to discover immortal moods, immortal desires, and undecaying hope in our trivial ambitions a divine love in sexual passion."\(^{33}\) Pater had

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p.194.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., p.195.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., p.195.
also emphasised the importance of the moods, "the moods that are passionate or receptive." 34

The appeal of Pater's views that Yeats felt, as well as his shifting towards a symbolistic point of view, is also revealed in the essay on "The Body of The Father Christian Rosencruz", wherein Yeats tells us that imagination had been laid in a great tomb of criticism for the last two hundred years but now it is not the great persons or the great passions they imagine which absorbs them, for the persons and passions in their poems are mainly reflections their mirror has caught from older poems or from the life about them, but the "wise comments we make upon them, the criticism of life we wring from their fortunes." 35

He goes on to argue that "this age of criticism is about to pass and an age of imagination, of emotion, of moods, of revelation, about to come in its place ... for art is a revelation and not a criticism." 36

In "The Return of Ulysses" (1896), however, Yeats is more emphatic in his statement: "the more a poet rids his verses of heterogeneous knowledge and irrelevant analysis, and purifies his mind with elaborate art, the more does the little ritual of his verse resemble the

35. Essays and Introductions, p.196.
36. Ibid., p.197.
great ritual of Nature and become mysterious and inscrutable." 37

Yeats has treated the subject of symbolism at greater length in two other essays. They reveal that he was confirmed in his view that poetry is a spiritual activity and a means of obtaining a revelation of the hidden life of things. In "Symbolism of Painting" (1898) he seeks to clear away the confusion between symbolism and allegory. Yeats considered allegory inferior to symbolism, for it was "but a moment's amusement for our fancy" 38 whereas a person or landscape, liberated from the bonds of motives and their actions, causes and effects, from all bonds except the bonds of love, becomes "a symbol of an infinite emotion, a perfect emotion, a part of the Divine Essence." 39 He describes Keats as "a fragmentary symbolist", because, although he had evoked perfect emotions he had not "set his symbols in the great procession as Blake would have him, in a certain order suited to his imaginative energy." 40 At the end

37. Ibid., pp.201-2.
38. Ibid., p.148.
39. Ibid., p.149.
40. Ibid., p.150.
of the essay Yeats seems to be undecided whether symbols are "the eternal realities" of which we are the reflection or a momentary dream.

Perhaps the best account of what Yeats meant by symbolism is contained in "The Symbolism of Poetry" (1900). He says:

The scientific movement brought with it a literature which was always tending to lose itself in externalities of all kinds, in opinions, in declamation, in picturesque writing, in word painting, or in what my friend Symons called an attempt to build in bricks and mortar inside the covers of a book, and now writers have begun to dwell upon the element of evocation, of suggestion, upon what we call the symbolism in great writers.41

Yeats tries to explain the meaning of symbolism by giving a close textual criticism of a few lines from Burns. He also quotes from Blake, Nashe, and Shakespeare to show the symbolic quality in poetry. He suggests that all sounds and colours and forms because of preordained energies or long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions, or as he prefers to think, "call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions; and when sound, and colour, and form are in a musical relation, beautiful relation to one another, they become, as it were, one sound, one colour

41. Ibid., p.155.
one form, and evoke an emotion that is made out of their distinct evocations and yet is one emotion.\footnote{42}

The passage is obviously reminiscent, in tone and phrase, of Pater's essay on Giorgione wherein he tells us that form and matter in their union and identity present one single effect to the imaginative reason and every thought and feeling is born with its sensible analogue or symbol.

The acceptance of the theory that poetry moves us because of its symbolism, according to Yeats, would bring about a change in the manner of poetry: "A return to the ways of our fathers", in which "descriptions of nature for the sake of nature, of the moral law for the sake of the moral law, of all anecdotes and of the brooding over scientific opinion, that extinguished the central flame in Tennyson\footnote{43} would be cast out. He realised that this new manner could well result in obscurity, as Symons too had realised in the case of Mallarmé's poetry. Yeats defending the obscurity said:

The form of sincere poetry, unlike the form of the popular poetry may indeed be sometimes obscure ..., but it must have the perfections that escape analysis, the subtleties that have a new meaning every day, and it must have all this whether it be a little song made out of a moment of dreamy indolence, or some great epic made out of the dreams of one poet and a hundred generations whose hands were never weary of the sword.\footnote{44}

\footnote{42} Ibid., p.157.
\footnote{43} Ibid., p.163.
\footnote{44} Ibid., p.164.
Yeats believed, as is evident in "Magic", that the borders of our mind are for ever shifting, that many minds can flow into one another and create one single mind. He thought that our memories are part of the Great Memory, the memory of Nature herself and that this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols.

By the time Yeats wrote the Introduction to the Oxford Book of Modern Verse (1936) he had worked out his aesthetic in theory and practice. The comments he makes therein clearly indicate that he recognised some sort of similarity between his own theories of symbolism and Pater's rather incomplete but suggestive treatment of the symbolic method. We have only to read carefully what Pater says in his essay on Leonardo da Vinci to realize why Yeats considers it so significant. Commenting on the painting of St. John the Baptist Pater says, "We recognise one of those symbolical inventions in which the ostensible subject is used not as a matter for definite pictorial realization but as the starting point of a train of sentiment, subtle, and vague as a piece of music."45 A little later he starts discussion of the Mona Lisa by comparing it with Leonardo's religious subjects thus:

"As we have seen him using incidents of sacred story, not for their own sake, but as a cryptic language for fancies all his own, so now he found a vent for his thoughts in taking one of these languid women, and raising her, as Leda or Pomona, as Modesty, or Vanity to the seventh heaven of symbolical expression."  

It is important to note that in presenting, in this essay, the conception of art, Pater touches on symbolism. It is evident that Pater had some idea of how symbolism operates in art. In all this Yeats found a similarity with his own thoroughly worked out understanding of symbols. Pater's description of La Gioconda is superbly symbolic. "La Gioconda is in the truest sense, Leonardo's master-piece, the revealing instance of his mode of thought and work. In suggestiveness, only the Melancholia of Dürer is comparable to it, and no crude symbolism disturbs the effect of its subdued and graceful mystery."  

Yeats must have noted that Pater could see whether symbolism in a work was crude, that is, whether it worked at the level of allegory. True symbolism brings home the subdued and graceful mystery of a thing. The most significant word in the passage is "suggestiveness".

46. Ibid., p.123.
47. Ibid., p.123.
which is of primary importance in Yeats's conception of symbolism too.

Lisa, as is clear, has been transformed by Leonardo into a symbol. Symbolism of the painting is not merely private symbolism, although in Lisa Leonardo found "his ideal lady embodied, beheld at last." It transcends the personal and becomes universal as Pater describes it:

The presence that thus so strongly rose beside the water is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years man had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all the ends of the world are come, and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty...into which the soul with all its maladies has passed. All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded therein... The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences is an old one; and modern thought has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by and summing up in itself all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.

The soul in Pater's essay may well be compared to Yeats's "Anima Mundi", the store house of all the thoughts and experiences of the world. The portrait has called up in Pater's mind associations which are not just personal but universally accessible associations.

48. Ibid., p.124.
The beauty has been produced by the cumulative experience of man through the ages and the power of the symbol can help in evoking what man has universally experienced. Pater obviously gives credence to "the idea of humanity as wrought upon by and summing up in itself all modes of thought and life." He apparently knew that symbolism can pierce through to what "in the ways of a thousand years man has known" and that any artist who was ambitious of depicting in his art something beyond the outside of things could do so, like Leonardo, through symbolism. But Pater has not pursued the implications of his analysis of Leonardo's symbolic method, nor can we find anywhere in his writings even a semblance of what may be called a theory of symbolism.

The almost sketchy, though penetrating treatment of the symbolic method in Pater's writings has something common with the much better developed theory of Yeats. But it would be hazardous to conclude that Pater influenced Yeats in understanding symbolism and developing a theory of it. What may be tentatively said is that Yeats's reading in Pater encouraged by Symons, who was himself a votary of symbolism, helped him to

50. Ibid., p.125.
51. Ibid., p.124.
a clearer formulation of his own views. In this connection one should bear in mind Yeats's earliest reference to Marius where he speaks of "spiritual beings having abode in all things without and within us and thus uniting all things." This evidence of his understanding of Pater's doctrines about the human condition of which the ideas about symbolism were the natural outcome, may well be a pointer that Pater did partly influence Yeats.

Finally it would not be very wrong to suggest that the statement in the Introduction to the Book of Modern Verse about the Mona Lisa passage being "revolutionary - dominating a generation" implied that it started a line of thinking about symbolism which Yeats, among others of his time, was to pursue.

We find then that Yeats's critical writings have a wide ranging interest. During the Nineties when he was increasingly interested in style and symbolism he took Pater as one of his models. This literary relationship continued up to the end of his career. The affinities that we notice between his theories and ideas and those of Pater on style, sincerity in literature, impersonality of art, as also the theory of symbolism reminiscent of Pater's comments on the symbolic methods are a pointer to the kind of influence which Pater had
on Yeats. That the influence was not a passing one, but deep and lasting is confirmed by Yeats's eulogistic comments in the Introduction to the Oxford Book of Modern Verse. It is true that Pater was not the only influence in Yeats's development as a critic and poet, but the seeds of modernism found in Pater's writings, particularly his study of Leonardo where he investigates the nature of the creative process itself, found a ready and fertile ground in Yeats's mind and bore fruit in the shape of his theories of symbolism and in his stimulating and deeply felt criticism.