CHAPTER VI

ARTHUR SYMONS

If Oscar Wilde gave a distorted interpretation to Pater's critical opinions and Lionel Johnson aimed at correcting the focus, Arthur Symons was one who not only tried to systematise Pater's approach but also saw a connection between Pater and the French symbolists whom he introduced in England. Symons is often described as an impressionist critic for he recreates the experience that the work of art has been for him and he seems to have been interested in sensations. According to him "sensation is the one certainty in a world which may be well or ill-arranged for ultimate purposes, but which is certainly for each of us what each of us feels it to be." Like many writers in the Nineties Symons fastened on the early Pater as a

source of many ideas concerning both poetry and criticism. It has to be said in his favour that he understood Pater better than most of them, as there was in him an awareness of the fact that Pater, like the symbolists in France, gave indications of exploring certain areas of human consciousness in art.

Symons became devoted to Pater from the time he first read *The Renaissance* in 1881. He then realised for the first time that prose also could be a fine art. "That book opened a new world to me or rather gave me the key or secret of the world in which I was living ... It taught me that there was a beauty besides the beauty of what one calls inspiration, and comes and goes, and cannot be caught or followed; that life (which had seemed to me of so little moment) could be itself a work of art ... I caught from it an unlimited curiosity, or at least, the direction of curiosity into definite channels." Symons sent the first critical volume he wrote to Pater and that started a correspondence between the two which went on until Pater died in 1894. Symons was proud of the friendship with Pater and considered him the best


critic living, the only one fit to judge his poems and
to whom he dedicated the first volume of his poems. It was through his influence and advice that he learnt
to be careful in all matters of literature. Pater, he says, meant more to him at that time than he could realise. In fact he looked up to him as a model and it is no wonder, therefore, that one can detect a

closeness of spirit between his and Pater's essays.

The closeness appears in the tone and approach
of Symons in his interpretative writings on Pater.
Symons attempted a comprehensive evaluation of Pater
in two essays (1896 & 1918) and wrote a book on
Pater in 1932. As can be expected they reveal his
esteem for and discipleship of Pater as well as the
extent and depth of Pater's influence on him. Symons,
although a devoted admirer, shows independence enough
to point out weaknesses in Pater's art criticism. For
instance, he says that the essay on Botticelli is
"after all a speculation before a canvas, a literary
fantasy ... it is not a criticism inevitable." But

5. Arthur Symons: Days and Nights, (1889)
   Pater wrote favourable reviews on these books
   which helped in establishing Symons as a critic.
   See "Browning" in Essays from the Guardian,
   pp.41-51 and "A Poet with Something to Say"
   in Sketches and Reviews, (New York, 1904),
   pp.134-141.

   1932)
the admiration far outweighs the scattered adverse criticism. In the introduction to *The Renaissance*, for example, he says: "Pater seemed to draw into himself every form of earthly beauty or of the beauty made by men, and many forms of knowledge and wisdom, and sense of human things." Pater, he believes, gives the vraie Verité about the world in which he lived, and he caught the tangible moments as they passed. He possessed a delicately attuned temperament, a kind of purely mystical sensuality. What Pater cared most for at all times was that which could give "the highest quality to our moments as they pass." He spoke of pleasure as the essence of all knowledge, all experience; "only be sure it is passion", he said, of "that spirit of divine motion to which it appealed for the quickening of our sense of life, our sense of ourselves." In the work of Pater, according to Symons, "thought moves to music ... and does all the work as if in play. And Pater seems to listen for his thought, and to overhear it, as the poet overhears his song in the air." What is more than obvious in the quotations from Pater given by Symons is the younger man's admiring tone. Nobody can miss the fact that he found in

The Renaissance a theory of art and literature which he warmly approved. The intellectual excitement that he found in the book, particularly the Conclusion is evident in the eulogistic comment "I have always thought that Pater's Conclusion to his book on The Renaissance is one of the most imaginative and perfect and intensely personal confessions that he ever wrote." Similarly when he touches upon the style of Pater he says:

... and it (thought) comes to us as it does because the style which clothes and fits it is a style in which, to use some of his own words, the writer succeeds in saying what he wills. What is most wonderful in the style is... precisely its adaptability to every shade of meaning or intention, its extraordinary closeness in following the turns of thought, the waves of sensation in the man himself.  

The tone here of an admiring disciple is unmistakable. He hailed Pater as the only English writer who had handled the English language in the manner and spirit of those whose care is "that the phrase shall live, palpitate, shall be alert, exactly expressive super-subtle in expression."  

It is not surprising then, to come across in Symon's writings comments such as the following: "If ever

10. A Study of Walter Pater, p.31.
11. Figures of Several Centuries, p.318.
there was a religion of the eyes ... I practised that
religion ... always the same eager hope of seeing
some beautiful person, some gracious movement, or
delicate expression which would be gone if I did
not catch it ... Life ran past me continually, and
I tried to make its bubbles my own."\textsuperscript{13} This is
Pater via Symons who in the quoted passage is paying
tribute to Pater by trying to convey his thought in his
manner. Following the urgings of his master he sets
forth his belief that sense impressions are the
only reality and that it is art which gives the highest
quality to our moments as they pass.

In The Decadent Movement in Literature (1893)
which according to Symons' biographer, Roger Lhombreaud,
was written by way of a reply to the criticism levelled
against Decadence, of which Pater was said to be
begetter, Symons puts up an enthusiastic defence of the
new literature of the Nineties, which was described

\textsuperscript{13} Quoted by John Pick, "Divergent Disciples of
Walter Pater" in Thought, Vol.23 (March, 1948),
p.124.
as perverse in tone and style. He believes that the new kind of literature which appeals to the younger generation is neither classic nor romantic but has the qualities that make the end of a great period of literature as one of "intense self-consciousness, a restless curiosity in research, an over

14. For instance, Richard Le Gallienne defined Decadence in literature as:

"more than a question of style, nor is it, as some suppose, a question of theme. It is in the character of the treatment that we must seek it. In all great vital literature, the theme, great or small, is considered in all its relation to the sum total of things, to the Infinite, as we phrase it, in decadent literature the relations, the due proportions, are ignored. One might say that literary decadence consists in the euphistic expression of isolated observations. Thus disease, which is the favourite theme of decadents, does not in itself make for decadence; it is only when, as often, it is studied apart from its relation to health, to "the great vital centre of things, that it does so. Any point of view, seriously taken, which ignores the complete view, approaches decadence.

To notice only the picturesque effects of a beggar's rags as Gautier, the colour-scheme of a tippler's nose, like M. Huysmans, to consider one's mother merely prismatically, like Mr. Whistle-these are examples of the decadent attitude. At the bottom, decadence is merely limited thinking, often insane thinking ..."

subtilizing refinement upon refinement or spiritual and moral perversity."  

He further speaks of Decadence as "a beautiful and interesting disease."

Impressionism and Symbolism, according to Symons convey some idea of the new kind of literature as they define the two main branches of the movement, both seeking the same end, the essence of truth and not merely the general truth, but in two different directions. Impressionism seeks "the truth of appearances in the visible world and Symbolism seeks the truth of spiritual things. Elaborating the meaning Symons says:

The Impressionist in literature as in painting, would flash upon you in a new, sudden way so exact an image of what you have just seen, just as you have seen it ... The Symbolist, in this new, sudden way, would flash upon you the soul of that which can be apprehended only by the soul - the finer sense of things unseen, the deeper meaning of things evident."  

This preliminary distinction made, Symons goes on to speak of the representatives of impressionism in French literature because the movement began and flourished in France. He describes Goncourt and Verlaine as the inventors of the impressionistic prose and poetry respectively. At the end of the essay Symons asserts that the qualities found in the Decadent

16. Ibid., p. 859.
literature in France are not wanting in English literature and the same kind of influences are at work in England too. He mentions Walter Pater as one of the prominent examples, the other being W.R. Henley. Symons praises Pater's prose as the most beautiful English prose being written at that time and comparing it with the prose of Goncourt says that unlike his prose "it has done no violence to language, it has sought after no vivid effects, it has found a large part of mastery in reticence, in knowing what to omit."17 But it has moved far away from the classic ideal of style, "the style in which words have their colour, their music, their perfume, in which there is some strangeness in the proportion of every beauty."18 Commenting on Pater's writings he remarks that "The Studies in The Renaissance have made of criticism a new art - have raised criticism almost to the act of creation."19 And Marius the Epicurean in its study of sensations and ideas and the Imaginary Portraits in their "evocations of the Middle Ages, the age of Watteau - have they not morbid subtlety of analysis, that morbid curiosity of form, that we have found in

17. Ibid., p.365.
18. Ibid., p.366.
19. Ibid., p.367.
the works of the French Decadents?"  

Similarly the Prefaces to the second edition of Silhouettes (1896) and of London Nights (1897) indicate Symons' position. He attempts to offer a justification for artifice in literature and for the separation of morality from the choice of subject matter of art by adducing arguments apparently influenced by Pater. Symons had been accused of writing poetry that was unwholesome, that had the smell of Patchouli about it. The National Observer, citing the indecencies of London Nights commented: "We have no intention of wasting many words over a most disagreeable volume. It is given to a majority of mankind at one time or another to have some such experiences as Mr. Symons describes, but for the most part, thank heaven! they do not gloat over them and roll them on the tongue."  

There is no valid reason, Symons says, why art should not concern itself with the artificially charming, for all art is after all, a form of artifice. A work of art can be judged from two stand-points: "the stand-point from which its art is measured entirely by its morality and the stand-point from which its morality is measured entirely by its art."  

22. Ibid., p.162.
position does not do justice to Peter Symons claims freedom for the artist in his search for new and quaint sensations, to depict every mood of the variable, inexplicable and contradictory creature that is man, and to apprehend "the beauty and strangeness and curiosity of the visible world." He finds hardly any difference in artistic value between "a good poem about a flower in the hedge and a good poem about the scent in a satchet." Symons is surprised at the amount of prejudice his critics have shown on the publication of London Wights, for in his opinion there is no place for prejudices in art. His book was condemned on moral grounds and not for bad art thereby confusing moral and artistic judgements. He denies that morals have any right of jurisdiction over art.

"Art may be served by morality, it can never be its servant," for principles of morality keep on changing whereas those of art are eternal.

The defence by Symons is based on a partial misreading of Peter. Now this is precisely the kind of misapprehension that Peter wanted to guard against when he withdrew the Conclusion from the 1877 edition of The Renaissance. His fear that it might mislead some

23. Ibid., p. 163.
24. Ibid., p. 165.
of the young men proved true, for it seems that even after the revised version young writers like Symons in the nineties found sufficient matter to excite their minds to take direction somewhat different from the one in the Conclusion. It is true that Pater pleaded for more freedom for the arts and for doing away with constrictions imposed by Victorian values and a recognition of the importance of form and technique. But at no time did he lose sight of a sense of austerity and proper disciplining of the temperament of the artist without which it is not possible to produce a worthwhile work of art. And as for the "dreary indecencies" which many a decadent accommodated in his work in the name of art, there is no good reason to believe that Pater ever assented to such a position. To him art bereft of morality could never be great art. Symons' statement that Pater disliked "whatever seemed to him either morbid or sordid"25 partially contradicts his standpoint in the essay on Decadence. One may recall here Pater's comment on receiving George Moore's Confessions of a Young Man (1866) "Thou comest in such a questionable shape, I feel inclined to say, on finishing your book; "shape" morally I mean not in reference to style."26 Similarly, Pater commented on The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde:

A true epicureanism aims at a complete though harmonious development of man's entire organism. To lose the moral sense, therefore, for instance, the sense of sin and righteousness, as Mr. Wilde's heroes are bent on doing as speedily, as completely as they can, is to lose, or lower organisation, to become less complex, to pass from a higher to a lower degree of development.

Symons has been stigmatized as a decadent for his almost delirious worship of Beauty in his writings. His views about beauty in art and poetry no doubt show the influence of Pater but there obviously is some distortion of his ideas. Pater sought beauty and perfection and was aware at the same time that his passion for beautiful sights, beautiful sounds and beautiful experiences might if misinterpreted lead other men into the "primrose path of merely delectable dalliance." The stigma attached to Symons' writing is because of the fact that quite a few of his descriptions of beauty are doused in sensuality. And for such an attitude there is no sanction in Pater's essays. When Symons looks at a work of art as a thing of beauty existing for its own sake having little relevance to life, he is again deviating from the view held by Pater. For instance, Symons says in the Preface to Studies in Two Literatures: "A work of art has but one reason for existence ... it should be a work of art, a moment of

27. Sketches and Reviews, p.132.
beauty in eternity ... whatever has been beautifully wrought is a work of art."

The implication in such a statement that art has nothing to communicate by way of meaning, message, or suggestions for the problems of the world, and the further development of the idea in the Symbolist Movement that art should be and not express are only remotely connected with Pater's conception of beauty, which symbolises goodness, truth and the ideal of perfection and deeply influences the mind, elevates and ennobles human beings.

While Symons slightly distorted Pater's position on the relation between art and morality as also his conception of beauty, he understood rightly Pater's critical theory and his views about the object and function of criticism. The aim of criticism, he says in A Study of Walter Pater, is to distinguish "what is essential in the work of a writer." The critic may praise or condemn but that is scarcely a part of his job, his chief office being to trace to its "remote home or centre of gravity" why we are moved in a particular way in a work of art. He seeks to discover origins in effects and his criticism is not

just a record of his personal likes and dislikes and for this he must know himself and take into consideration his emotional and mental variations. The critic's skill lies "in finding vital energy concentrated or diffused in a cell or throughout an organism" and the most valuable criticism, "the only quite essential criticism" is the work of creative writers who have "gone deep down into the substance of creation and almost reached that unknown point where creation begins." Such criticism becomes a source of illumination to the readers. Pater too considered it the duty of a critic to objectively analyse a work of art to find out its essence or virtue and then to elucidate it to the reader.

How closely Symons followed Pater's example and applied his formulæ almost completely is evident in The Romantic Movement in English Poetry (1909) about which Richard Le Gallienne remarked: "The best criticism of this brilliant book would be to reprint the famous Preface to Pater's The Renaissance, but a sentence from it will suffice to show with what

32. Ibid., p.108.
33. Ibid., p.109.
34. Ibid., p.112.
devotion and skill Mr. Symons has applied the formula of his master." 35 One can unhesitatingly agree with Le Gallienne's opinion that Symons was one disciple of Pater who carried out "the mandate of his master to the last minutiae of instruction." 36

Symons tells us in his preface to the book what his business is:

It is each one of these poets whom I want to study, finding out, if I can, what he was in himself, what he made of himself in his work and by what means, impulses and instincts. The poet, the poem, it is with these only that I am concerned ... I have tried to get at one thing only: the poet in his poetry, his poetry in the poet, it is the same thing. 37

35. Richard Le Gallienne: "A Vivisectionist of Literature" in Attitudes and Avowals, (New York, 1910), pp. 309-10. Sentence quoted from the Preface is—"The function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, analyse, and separate from its adjuncts. The virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book produces its special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others."

36. Ibid., p. 309.

37. Ibid., pp. 319-20.
Symons carries out his task in a spirit of detachment, weighs the gifts and qualities alien to the bias of his mind or his own personal predilection, and his criticisms of the poets born between 1722 and 1799, are indeed penetrating and subtle. This is true not only of the great poets like Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, but of minor figures like William Gifford, Southey and Thomas Hood too. Symons endeavours and "manages to get emphatically beneath the surface and discover the real urge that animates these figures." Symons had the ability to spot out merits and gifts, however small, of half-forgotten and obscure writers. His analysis and interpretation clearly reveal how he had evolved the scientific critical method of Pater. The following comments about Thomas Hood are a fine sample of Symons' critical gift and method:

Eugene Aram is a masterpiece of horror, and in it Hood perfects that style which has an emphasis far beyond epigram, because it comes straight from the heart, and carries with it an awful inwardness of thought ... Since "The Ancient Mariner" there has been no such spiritual fear in our poetry, and the nightmare comes to us as if out of our own bed, the sensations translate themselves into our own nerves. The words reach us like a whisper from which it is impossible to escape. That imagination, which had hardly shown itself among the thick flocks of fancy in all the other poems, is here, naked, deadly, and beautiful. In "The Song of the

Shirt**, this drama passes into an indignant song, not less human, and coming with its splendid lyric quality to prove that a conviction, a moral lesson if you will, can turn red-hot and be forged into a poem. Here, too is "modernity", but of a kind that can be contemporary with every age. Only one more human thing exists in the work of Hood, and that is one of the greatest English poems of its kind, "The Bridge of Sighs"... The fragility of the metre, its swiftness as of running water, the piercing daintiness of the words, which state and denounce in a song, go to make a poem which is like music and like a cry, and means something terribly close and accusing. A stone is flung angrily and straight into the air, and may strike the canopy before it falls back on the earth. The saying of

Anywhere, anywhere,  
out of the world!

has passed through interpreters, and helped to make a rare corner modern literature, and the pity of the whole thing is like that of a great line of Dante, not less universal. 39

Performing the double function of a critic as envisaged by Pater, Symons reveals the true merit and virtue of a writer and interprets it for the benefit of the reader who too might appreciate what he is likely to miss. The introduction to this volume of criticism is also admirable and valuable from this point of view. There may be a great deal to quarrel with in this introduction "yet there are few

pronouncements in English about poetry equal to it for making clear the very nature of poetry. 40

There has often been some confusion and misunderstanding regarding Symons' views on the element of form in literature. Critics seem to find a resemblance between his attitude and Pater's in this regard, whereas in point of fact, there is no such resemblance. Max Beerbohm, for instance, welcomes the publication of Symons' Plays, Acting and Music (1903) because in it he sees "for the first time the Pateresque manner and method of criticism applied to current dramatic art." 41 He believes that Symons carries forward the work of Pater and asserts that the most salient point of likeness between the two men, that which is at once their cardinal strength and their cardinal weakness is that for each of them art matters more than life and form in art more than meaning.

Symons' emphasis on the element of form in literature extends Pater's ideas to a degree Pater did not intend. We have seen how Pater in some of his writings stressed the importance of form, but the


confluence of form and matter was his ideal of perfect art. He had in his Giorgione essay pronounced that all art constantly aspires to the condition of music, because in music form cannot be distinguished from matter. He was opposed to any artificial distinction between form and matter, for he did not regard form as extraneous to matter or as something imposed upon it. He values poets like Dante and Rossetti for their "delight in concrete definition" and Rossetti for his "chosen type of beauty ... whose speech Truth knows not from her thought. Nor love her body from the soul." For Symons form was the fundamental question. Here he seems to be more inclined towards Theophile Gautier's position. In describing Gautier's love for form he expresses his own love for verse "for its solid strictly limited, restrained form, which remains unalterable, indestructible." Symons, like Gautier, considers perfection of form as a virtue and the choice of subject matter as a secondary thing. He adopted his position rather than Pater's because it made criticism independent of moral judgement. His studies of French symbolist poets

42. Appraisations, p.213.
43. The Symbolist Movement, p.133.
show his interest in their struggle to achieve exact form to articulate their experiences. Stephane Mallarmé struggled against words that they might precisely communicate the idea. Similarly, he held up Baudelaire as a useful influence for English writers because "Baudelaire desired perfection and we have never realised that perfection is a thing to be aimed at." In the Introduction to the Symbolist Movement Symons says that in most of the writers he has dealt with "form is very carefully elaborated" with the object of "perfecting form that form may be annihilated." All this suggests that Symons understood Pater's remark, that "all art must aspire to the condition of music", in a way not intended by Pater.

Symons takes up the question of the relation between form and matter in a number of essays. This obviously is a baffling question to which Symons returned many times. The form he speaks of is very different from the rigid traditional form. In the Decadent Movement in Literature Symons speaks of a revolt against the bondage of the rigid traditional form because it had become almost impossible to achieve

44. Ibid., p.140.
45. Ibid., p.5.
perfect truth to one's impressions, to one's intuition. So there was a search for a new form, "a search after the painted image, the rare epithet." This search however was not "a search after harmony of phrase for its own sake, but a desperate endeavour to give sensation, to flash the impression of the moment, to preserve the very heat and motion of life." His insistence on form is for the reason that he did not want to import moral assumptions into the discussion of art and literature. Infact, he was an early proponent of the view that literature should be discussed as literature.

In the Symbolist Movement Symons asserts that in the attempt to "spiritualise literature" description is banished that "beautiful things may be evoked magically", form is annihilated for art is "in bringing verse to a bird's song, to the song of an orchestra." This statement could well be compared with what Yeats says in the Symbolism of Poetry: "If people were to accept the theory that poetry moves us because of its symbolism, what change should one look for in the manner of our poetry? A

47. Ibid., p.138.
return to the way of our fathers, a casting out of descriptions of nature for the sake of nature, of the moral law for the sake of the moral law ..." Symons also mentions that Mallarmé in his writing always sought "to evoke, by some elaborate, instantaneous magic of language, without the formality of an after all impossible description— to be rather than to express." Symons declares that the further direction of literature is on the lines of "that spiritualising of the word, that perfecting form in its capacity for allusion and suggestion." The prediction did prove right for at least two major English poets W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot have acknowledged that The Symbolist Movement gave direction to their work.

The significance of the theory of literature presented in the book for our purpose lies in Symons' revealing a relationship between Pater's criticism and contemporary criticism and also a continuity from Pater to the New Criticism of the twentieth century. Frank Kermode in his book The Romantic Image has made an attempt to associate Symons with the theoretical aspect of modern poetics and finds him to be "a Crucial figure."

50. The Symbolist Movement, p.71.
51. Ibid., p.75.
He asserts that Symons "more explicitly and more influentially than any of his contemporaries, saw how to synthesize the earlier English tradition—particularly Blake, ... with Pater and those European Symbolists he knew so well." Arthur Symons wrote a book on Pater in 1932 and a few statements from it may throw light on this connection. He says, for example, that Leonardo "created ambiguously for all the rest of the world flesh that is flesh and not flesh, bodies that are bodies and not bodies." And further: "that figure is not good which does not express through its gestures the passions of its soul." About the Botticelli essay Symons says that till Pater wrote on him there was no sympathetic English interpreter of this painter who had much concern for rhythm and was indifferent to character so that the Virgin and Judith and Venus have all alike "in their eyes the look of those who do or endure great things in a dream." Symons admires the essay on Giorgione and says that in this essay Pater, "came perhaps nearer to a complete final disentangling of the

54. Ibid., p.23.
meaning and function of the Arts that any writer on Aesthetic has yet done." He quotes the well known passage wherein Pater says that all arts aspire to the condition of music for in "music the end is not distinct from the means, the form from the matter, the subject from the expression; they inhere in and completely saturate each other." That there is some resemblance between the statements quoted above and the new theory presented by Symons is obvious. It is not suggested however that Pater was responsible even remotely for this new theory. Evidently the stray remarks picked out by Symons cannot be claimed legitimately to form the basis of a theory or movement. The fact is that Symons was influenced by the Decadent and Symbolist literature of France and by Yeats too, and had found certain affinities between Pater's approach and that of the French writers. For instance, in his essay on Edmund and Jules Goncourt, he mentions that Pater seems to him the only English writer who used language in the Goncourt's manner or spirit: "with both there was that passionately intent preoccupation with the delicacies of fine literature, both achieved a style of the most personal

55. Ibid., p.24.
56. Ibid., p.25.
sincerity. From his reading and understanding of French literature Symons came to hold that literary theory and practice were moving in a certain direction and Pater's pronouncements are early anticipations of those directions. This is all that can be said of the connection that Symons' criticism hints at between Pater and modern criticism. For Pater, in what may be called his prophetic statement such as that all art constantly aspires to the condition of music never intended that art should become all form and no matter, or that art should cease to have any ethical purport.

Being at the centre of the Symbolist Movement, Symons undoubtedly knew the central importance of the symbol in literature. This is clear when he quotes Carlyle: "It is in and through symbols that man, consciously or unconsciously lives, works, and has his being; those ages, moreover, are accounted the noblest which can the best recognise symbolical worth and prize it highest." While paraphrasing The Migration of Symbols by Comte Goblet d'Alvielle he says: "Gradually the word extended its meaning, until it came to denote every conventional representation

57. The Symbolist Movement, p.145.
58. Ibid., p.1.
of idea by form, of the unseen by the visible." In the chapter on Huysmans he proclaims that "truth can be reached and revealed only by symbols." Literary criticism in the twentieth century has singled out imagery as the most important element in the works of literature. Now it is not difficult to find the connection between Symbolist and Imagist Movements. Graham Hough has revealed how the religion of the symbol in French and English writers of the eighteen nineties gave way to the cult of the image among avant-garde writers in the second decade of the twentieth century.61

The basis of the use of symbol or the image is the desire of the writer to present his state of mind, his feelings about his subject, without recourse to discursive thinking. The Symbolist and the Imagist writers preferred what T.S. Eliot calls, "the logic of the imagination." They wished to do away with all except the phenomenal element in their writings, to leave out all the abstract, expository or argumentative matter. How closely the image resembles the symbol may be seen in Ezra Pound's definition of the image:

59. Ibid., p.2.
60. Ibid., p.30.
"An image is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." The image is thus a variation of the symbol. To put it in Graham Hough's words, "The symbol naked and unexplained, trailing no clouds of glory, becomes the image."

The preoccupation with an immediacy of presentation is similar in both movements. This reminds us of Pater's concern with suggestive, evocative, sensuous manifestation of thought in his writings. His literary criticism supplied something like an equivalent to symbolist theory and a point of view quite similar to that of the symbolists. This is manifest in some of Pater's statements. He says, for example, that experience gives us "not the truth of eternal outlines, ascertained once for all, but a world of fine gradations and subtly linked conditions, shifting intricately as we ourselves change."

The manner in which the complexity of life and the forces shaping it are presented in art is described by Pater in his essay on Giorgione:

63. Image and Experience.
64. Appreciations, p.68.
How it is part of the ideality of the highest sort of dramatic poetry that it presents us with a kind of profoundly significant and animated instants, a mere gesture, a look, a smile perhaps—some brief and wholly concrete moment—into which, however, all the motives, all the interests and effects of a long history have condensed themselves, and which seem to absorb past and future in an intense consciousness of the present.65

The passage brings to mind Pater's praise of Gioconda, who becomes a symbol which "is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire."66 Pater in his endeavour to find a clue to the qualities of Leonardo's art says that he was "seeking in an instant of vision to concentrate a thousand experiences" and like a clairvoyant sought among the manyfold flux of his perceptions to fix in art images saturated with meaning and that his "problem was the transmutation of ideas into images."67

If the stages of the sequence from Pater to Symbolist and then to Imagist movement may thus be recognised, Symons' contribution to the theory of modern poetics would be difficult to deny and it would be equally difficult to obscure the role of Walter Pater as a herald of some of the new tendencies and techniques which dominate twentieth-century criticism.

65. The Renaissance, p.150.
66. Ibid., p.124.
67. Ibid., p.112.