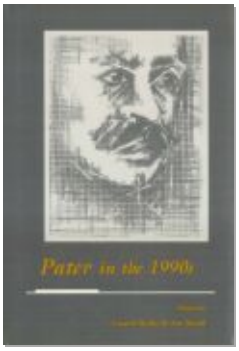
Editing Pater's Gaston de Latour: The Unfinished Work as "A Fragment of Perfect Expression"



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WHAT MAKES THE TEXT of *Gaston de Latour* problematic is that Pater published the first five chapters in monthly installments in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1888; then, unable to sustain the monthly pace, he abandoned serial publication but continued to work on the novel intermittently until his death in 1894. Several years after his death, his colleague at Oxford, Charles L. Shadwell, published the five *Macmillan's* chapters and two additional ones as *Gaston de Latour: An Unfinished Romance* (1896). Shadwell spoke of Pater's remaining half dozen unpublished holograph chapters as "for the most part unfinished: and they have certainly not received that revision which he would have been careful to give them before he allowed them to appear among his published writings." Hence Shadwell withheld the rest because he and Pater's sisters felt that "nothing more remains of his writings in a shape sufficiently finished for publication," and that it is "not their wish that any work of his should appear in a form less complete than he would himself have approved."[1] Fortunately, neither Shadwell nor Pater's sisters destroyed these—what they called—"fragments," suggesting that for them a certain amount of *déshabillé* among intimates was proper and

accepted: Pater's family and most intimate colleagues could enjoy his unfinished thought, if not the world at large. Describing a number of Pater manuscripts at Harvard's Houghton Library, Elizabeth Falsey reported in the 1984 issue of *English Literature in Transition* that

> [s]ome are undated, scattered notes from Pater's reading, bits of translations, isolated sentences or phrases written on the slips of paper which we know Pater kept by him to be used (or not) in lectures and essays. Even in the longer pieces there are sentences with blank spaces in them, as though the right thought or the right word would be visible only from a different "perspective." To consult them is to be aware of some of Pater's preoccupations at work in the process of his own writing, the movement of his own thought. The tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces, for example, is present in our—and perhaps, his—provisional ordering and reordering of the sheets, bringing them into different relationships, one to the other. Pater's description of the "home-grown method of Socrates" in "The Doctrine of Plato" is useful in approaching his own papers: in them one sees the "philosophic temper," a long and complex dialogue of a mind with itself.[2]

The *Gaston de Latour* holographs at both Harvard and (eventually) at Brasenose reflect the same tensions of ordering and re-ordering, Pater's preoccupations at work in the process of writing, and the movement of his thought.

Heretofore, in *Gaston* as edited by Shadwell, little of that quality has emerged. Indeed, for Shadwell the unfinished and unpolished must be decorously hidden away—a certain amount of his editorial energy seems to have gone into constructing the equivalent of those fig leaves which so proliferated on nineteenth-century statuary. Not only did Shadwell withhold substantial passages of Pater's working drafts, but he disregarded many of Pater's emendations—presumably because he may have felt they were not finally decided upon. Quite simply, Shadwell's decision not to print the inchoate chapters of *Gaston* is largely a function of what may be called the concept of the single meaning. But language in general and literary language (or the visual arts) in particular is made of signs which function so that even the work of perfect expression is a fragment that resists "dogmatic interpretation"[3] and gives rise to multiple meanings. Like Shadwell, Charles Lamb in

"Oxford in the Vacation" cannot tolerate the different readings of manuscripts that have not arrived at a perfected and definitely settled meaning: "Those ***variae lectiones***, so tempting to the more erudite palates, do but disturb and unsettle my faith." In a footnote he added:

> There is something to me repugnant at any time in the written hand. The text never seems determinate. Print settles it. I had thought of the Lycidas as of a full-grown beauty—as springing up with all its parts absolute—till, in an evil hour, I was shown the original copy of it, together with the other minor poems of its author, in the library of Trinity, kept like some treasure, to be proud of. I wish they had thrown them in the Cam, or sent them after the latter Cantos of Spenser, into the Irish Channel. How it staggered me to see the fine things in their ore! interlined, corrected! as if their words were mortal, alterable, displaceable at pleasure! as if they might have been otherwise, and just as good! as if inspirations were made up of parts, and those fluctuating, successive, indifferent! I will never go into the workshop of any great artist again, nor desire a sight of his picture till it is fairly off the easel; no, not if Raphael were to be alive again, and painting another Galatea.[4]

Shadwell and Pater's sisters would have agreed with Lamb—whom Pater admired also—although Pater himself, according to William Sharp, preferred reading the Greats in their own hands (certainly the poetry, perhaps the prose also, but most assuredly their letters). But now a century later I and my colleagues at work on the *Collected Works* of Pater have taken it upon ourselves to overrule Shadwell and the sisters and to publish these "fragments." What I am doing with the *Gaston* holograph would certainly seem strange, perverse even, to the nineteenth century—Pater caught, as it were , without clothes. In effect, I propose to go into Pater's "workshop" (if not his dressing-room) because I think we in the twentieth century have a different way of regarding art. Indeed, deliberately flying in the face of the previous assumption that the latest text is the best, the Pater edition takes as its copy-text not the last version Pater revised for publication but its first published appearance. I would like to explain why, contrasting present editorial principles and assumptions with those of Shadwell; and I believe Pater's own imagery characterizing the handwriting of authors in some measure may be transferable to a scholarly edition including

verbal variants and, possibly, a "formulaic" descriptive transcription of the unpublished holographic chapters: "Imagine the pleasure of reading the intimate letters of Michael Angelo, of Giorgione, of Leonardo, of Dante, of Spenser, of Shakespeare, of Goethe, in the originals! It would be like looking on a landscape in clear sunlight or moonlight, after having viewed it only through mist or haze."[5]

Some of Pater's unpublished material is indeed hurried and fragmentary, but other chapters are, as Samuel Wright described them, "good, clear and incisive." Of course, Wright is suggesting there a value judgment—some material is "good," whereas other is markedly less valuable. Yet what is hurried and fragmentary—even though not regular, ordered, and complete—may nevertheless be informative, fertile, and afford a glimpse of excellence, *comely*, to use a Paterian word. Indeed, the fragmentary, looked at from the perspective of Romantic poetry or music, is perhaps one of the most significant genres of the nineteenth century. Lamb may pretend not to like literature in process, but his own essays are themselves celebrations of spontaneity, haphazardness, and non-closure (trailing off in rambling afterthoughts). In short, in the nearly one hundred years since Shadwell's first and only editing of *Gaston* (I am excluding mere reprints, here) critical and aesthetic standards have taken a major turn. If it is no longer important that biography serve to idealize its subject—Wordsworth can have an illegitimate French daughter and still be an important poet; Swinburne is now universally seen as justified in making use as an artist of his pathologic condition—then, if this is so, perhaps also the more spontaneous, less polished writings of any author should be judged not in terms of some ideal of finished Platonic form, but as process. To paraphrase remarks of some years ago by G. Thomas Tanselle, one might say that apart from canceled passages, it is often not possible to know what a writer or his publisher finally may have done with insertions, substitutions, blanks or false starts; but these idiosyncrasies are an essential part of the writer's compositional habits and personal make-up. For Tanselle, to preserve the inadvertencies, to make no more than a provisional decision between or among superscripts or alternative words and

phrases, is to recognize that all art is process, and any closure provided by the editor is a mere superficial ornament.

A work of art is not like an engineer's blueprint—a configuration that attains within certain tolerances the single archetypal ideal, and the closer the engine comes to this single, final shape the nearer its approach to perfection. In contrast, the artist theoretically could revise his work in mutually exclusive directions: the *King Lear* Quarto of 1609 and its 1623 Folio version, for example, do not belong to a single Ur-text but present essentially different yet equally valid versions of well-known passages. Or take, for example, Thomas DeQuincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*: it first appeared in 1823 anonymously in the *London Magazine*; many years later DeQuincey revised it carefully, but its expanded, polished 1853 form lacks the spontaneous, candid immediacy of the earlier version. Which is the real *Confessions*? At times the final form or meaning of art is necessarily provisional: consider the Homeric epics and folk-tales altered generation by generation—who is to say which of the versions hundreds of years apart is better or worse, which is the perfected version? At other times the indefiniteness of closure is highly self-conscious, as in the double ending of John Fowles's *French Lieutenant's Woman*; but no less here the reader must live with ambivalence as his permanent legacy.

Were one to make an argument for the principles behind Shadwell's editorial practice, one could do worse than cite Hans Walter Gabler's 1984 edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Joyce's novel underwent constant compositional revisions and expansions, so much so that Gabler rejected the first edition of 1922 as too corrupt to serve as a copy-text:

> The deeper faults of the text as published originated throughout the pre-publication transmission from drafts to fair copies to typescripts to print. The rich array of surviving documents that record the work's development made it possible to catch the text before these corruptions occurred and to rebuild *Ulysses* as Joyce wrote it. . . A new original text established from the acts of writing as recorded in the documents through which the novel developed, this reading text for *Ulysses* is thus, as nearly as editorial skill and critical understanding have been able to render it, a non-corrupted counterpart to the first edition of 1922.[6]

Gabler explicitly promises "an ideal text freed of the errors with which *Ulysses* was first published"; however, his edited version is based on a copy-text that "is not assembled in a unified holograph manuscript at a state of development corresponding to the first edition text" but is, rather, what he calls "a continuous manuscript text . . . extending over a sequence of actual documents." The key to such an editorial undertaking, of course, is the "rich array of surviving documents" enabling Gabler to make emendations and reconstructions based on principles that are rooted in objective editorial criteria derived from very precisely established relationships between versions.[7] Yet to speak of rebuilding *Ulysses* "as Joyce wrote it" is, for all Gabler's data and precision, still a conjectural process—Joyce never wrote it that way, never on any day held it in his hand completed in that form. And so one cannot say with certainty that on that hypothetical day Joyce would not have rejected or incorporated textual bits according to personal urgencies about which Gabler's objective principles knew nothing. For classroom purposes one might like to have a Gabler-like reading text of *Gaston*; however, scholars would have to admit that it would *not* quite be Pater's text. Moreover, although Shadwell might have been able to assemble a Gabler-like collection of drafts and proofs, he clearly belonged to an age which lacked both the inclination and the technical command to undertake that sort of editing; and at this present temporal distance the necessary data are no longer available.

I would like to consider, however, one small example of the text of *Gaston* from Chapter II, "Our Lady's Church." Monseigneur Charles Guillard, here described as the Bishop of Chartres, is a Paterian version of Robert Browning's Bishop who orders his tomb. No Tertullian whose "Credo quia absurdum est" ratifies belief in a spiritual reality, the worldly Guillard nevertheless is judged by Gaston as Browning invites readers to judge the Bishop of Saint Praxed's church: "equitably; the religious sense too, had its various species." What I am about to recreate for this passage is the simplest possible stemma, perhaps conflating stages in Pater's often tortuous progress from draft to finished literary work; however, this hypothetical set of relationships will

serve to illuminate Shadwell's editorial principles. Bearing in mind that numerous permutations complicating the stemma are certainly possible, the reader nevertheless may be able to envision something of the textual transmission of the whole novel, from manuscript through magazine to the book edition of Shadwell.

Plate number 1 is Pater's holograph in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library:

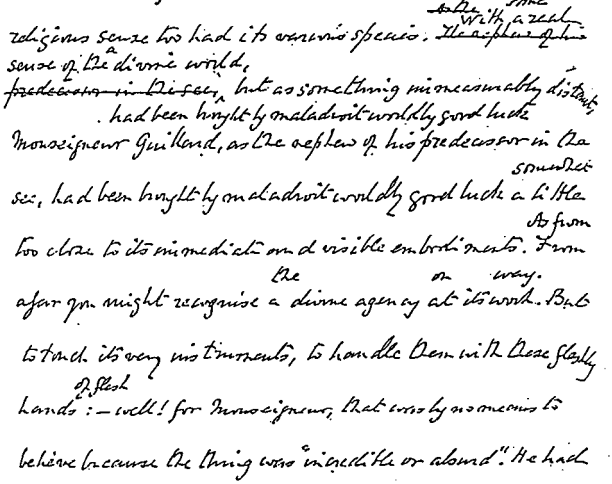

Plate 1

Though one generally assumes a holograph precedes first publication, the passage on pages 396-97 of the *Macmillan's* version of "Peach Blossom and Wine," later moved to *Plato and Platonism*, is not in the holograph, raising the interesting possibility that Pater here copied anew already published material, as he did just before his death with "Hippolytus Veiled" (although for "The Child in the House," he instead revised the offprint).[8] In numerous places the Berg holograph contains emendations of published passages, suggesting that Pater may have copied and then revised—or even revised *as* he copied—the *Macmillan's* text. Edmund Gosse recalled that Pater characteristically made *several* handwritten copies of his manuscripts.[9] This raises another possibility: that because choices in wording are left open in the Berg holograph (as Pater's "Rossetti" and "Sir Thomas Browne" prepared for the printer did not do) the Berg may be a penultimate draft prior

to *Macmillan's* publication. Pater possibly may have saved his selections for a final fair copy, no longer extant, in which he included the passage later moved to *Plato.*

Whether prior to or subsequent to *Macmillan's*, the revision toward which Pater was working in the Berg holograph is given in Plate 2. Superscripts are omitted unless a clear choice is indicated by a caret or by cancellation of the original wording. Thus, in the penultimate line of the holograph example, the superscript, "hands of flesh," would be the rejected variant; but the superscript beginning the passage *is* chosen because Pater canceled the original:

> With a real sense of the divine world, but as something immeasurably distant, Monseigneur Guillard, as the nephew of his predecessor in the see, had been brought by maladroit worldly good luck a little too close to its immediate and visible embodiments. From afar you might recognise a divine agency at its work. But to touch its very instruments, to handle them with these fleshly hands:—well! for Monseigneur, that was by no means to believe because the thing was "incredible or absurd!"

Plate 2

The holograph version clearly is quite distinct from the magazine version given in Plate 3:

> The nephew of his predecessor in the the see, with a real sense of the divine world, but as something immeasurably distant, he had been brought by a maladroit worldly good fortune a little too close to its immediate and visible embodiments. Afar, you might trace the divine agency on its way. But to touch, to handle it, with these fleshly hands—well! with Monseigneur it was not to believe because the thing was "incredible or absurd." He had smiled,

Plate 3

How does Shadwell deal with these different passages? Is his 1896 *Gaston* a product of sound editorial practice or possible malpractice? Plate 4 shows the changes in the *Macmillan's* text needed to produce Shadwell's 1896 edition, given in Plate 5. Certainly the least problematic correction would be the silent elimination of the redundant article—"predecessor in *the the* see":

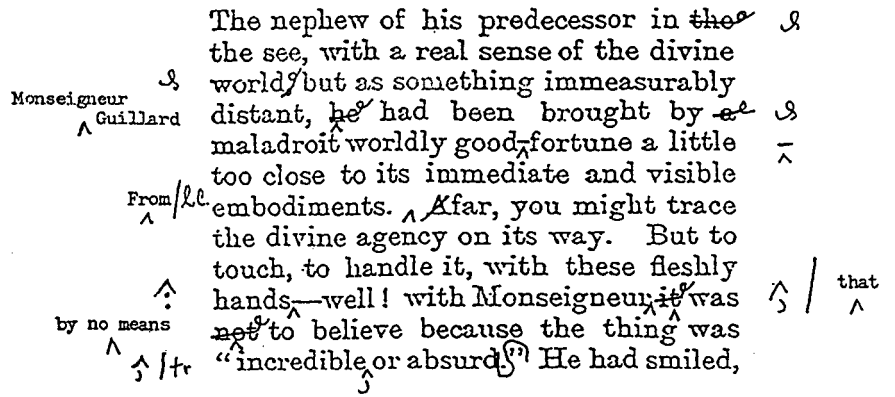

Plate 4

sense too, had its various species. The nephew of his predecessor in the see, with a real sense of the divine world but as something immeasurably distant, Monseigneur Guillard had been brought by maladroit worldly good-fortune a little too close to its immediate and visible embodiments. From afar, you might trace the divine agency on its way. But to touch, to handle it, with these fleshly hands:—well! for Monseigneur, that was by no means to believe because the thing was "incredible, or absurd". He had smiled, not

Plate 5

Shadwell's text of 1896 follows the *Macmillan's Magazine* large-scale variants. For example, Shadwell's text gives the *Macmillan's* wording for the opening sentence: "The nephew of his predecessor. . . ." But Shadwell omits many of the smaller-scale variants: the short middle sentence that in the Berg reads "From afar," reads in the magazine "Afar"; but Shadwell follows the manuscript wording: "From afar." If Shadwell instead had taken the Berg as his copy text, he then would have rejected many of its readings, including several that seem settled; he would have accepted fully just a single eight-word emendation—"well! for Monseigneur, that was by no means"—and, though incorporating in his opening sentence the Bishop's name, would have utilized only this smallest part of the most extensive variation.

Why does Shadwell fail to follow a single Edition text, critically constructed? Just possibly his choice of readings for his 1896 edition may reflect reliance upon a lost fair copy (more like the Berg than like *Macmillan's*). The penultimate sentence in Chapter V of Shadwell's 1896 text is found nowhere else and clearly was meant to bridge from the chapter on Montaigne to the following one on the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. Since Pater discontinued publication in *Macmillan's* with Chapter V (all the previous chapters had been marked "To be continued," but not this chapter), one might assume that Pater did write such a sentence but canceled it and that Shadwell restored it for his edition. Moreover, such a transition sentence is more characteristic of a later than an earlier draft; and if the Berg holograph is the most complete and corrected text, that sentence ought to have been found in it. Still, this is tenuous evidence for a fair copy. Yet if there was no fair copy, Shadwell can be accused of substantial editorial tampering, regardless of where in the order of compositional development the Berg holograph belongs.

Assuming that Shadwell created a hybrid text in 1896, the most likely explanation of why he combined the holograph with *Macmillan's Magazine* for his edition is that by his own standards Shadwell wished to guard against corruptions—to be absolutely certain that the words we read are the words not only that Pater wrote but that they were the

choices he would have made had he lived long enough to complete his novel. In a letter of 25 January 1895 to Gosse, Clara speaks of Shadwell liking "to make his own emendations from the original MS rather than from the printed article."[10] But Shadwell employs guidelines that destroy any meaningful concept of a critically constructed Edition text—he is intuitive, graceful, reluctant to concede authority to either holograph or magazine versions unless they agree. In the case of divergence, he prefers the holograph, but by no means all of the time. Shadwell does not really have a single text; he blends the manuscript and the magazine texts together to produce the ideal archetypal version, Pater's Platonically perfect full-grown beauty. Shadwell would have thought of this as his posthumous tribute, justifying it in scholarly terms as more correct than the hurried product of periodical publication or incomplete revision. But, of course, this ideal text is the creation of final choices not Pater's, howsoever he may have generated the options among which these choices are made. Shadwell even made small changes in punctuation on his own authority—he hyphenated "good-fortune"; he deleted one comma, added another.

Unlike Shadwell, I will choose the *Macmillan's Magazine* version as my Edition text. To forego Shadwell's apparently subjective, hybrid version and select a single text is to select a flawed, less than perfected version. This is not to say that the double "the" in lines 1 and 2 of the *Macmillan's* sample would not be edited out; nor does it mean that other objective emendations are precluded; rather, it is to accept failures of euphony, to risk word choices that may have been contributed by the compositor, to tolerate ambiguous antecedents, to forego more felicitous phrasing—in short, it is to recognize the limitations of any single text. This is very much analogous to the decision to publish the unpolished drafts which Shadwell had suppressed. But it is also to privilege the author's compositional process in a manner that Shadwell, seeking some text finally free of process, never did. Seeking Pater's ideal perfected expression, Shadwell obscured the actual Pater. However much Pater himself may have loved a heavy layer of varnish on his oils, the "varnish" Shadwell applied to *Gaston* is about to be stripped away.