

THE DANIEL PRESS EDITION
OF WALTER PATER'S LAST BOOK

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By a curious coincidence, the first of Walter Pater's imaginary portraits, "The Child in the House" (1878), ended up as his last book, the very last text he revised for publication before his unexpected death on 30 July 1894. In early June 1894, he received in the post his very own personalized copy of *An Imaginary Portrait*, number one out of 250 copies just published by the Daniel Press in Oxford. Bound in white vellum, with dainty gold lettering on the spine, issued with marbled end-papers in blue, flesh, white, and pink, the small duodecimo volume contained a lightly revised version of his text, first published in *Macmillan's Magazine* some sixteen years previously.¹ In the intervening years it had become one of Pater's much-loved portraits, and several of his friends expected it to be included in the 1887 volume of *Imaginary Portraits*. Replying to William Sharp's query about the reasons for its exclusion, Pater confessed: "I pondered the inclusion among the other pieces of 'The Child in the House,' but found it would need many alterations, which I felt disinclined to make just then. I hope it may be included in some future similar series" (*Letters* 72; 23 May 1887). After Pater's death, Arthur Symonds expanded on Pater's notion of the incompleteness of his text and presented it as a troubling fragment with which its author had never fully come to terms:

It was because he always dreamed of going on with it that he did not reprint this imaginary portrait in the book of *Imaginary Portraits*; but he did not go on with it because, having begun the long labour of *Marius the Epicurean*, it was out of his mind for many years, and when, in 1889, he still spoke of finishing it, he was conscious that he could never continue it in the same style, and that it would not be satisfactory to rewrite it in his severer, later manner. It remains, perhaps unfortunately, a fragment, to which no continuation could ever add more essential completeness. (128)²

Yet the little volume published by the Daniel Press for sale at a charitable