

Kirk Nessel

NOT WALTER PATER

I am not Walter Pater, morbidly sniffing
the old spilled religion, always elsewhere
when the hammer drops, flaring gem-like
in lemon kid gloves and silk apple-green tie,
viewing the hill of teeth from a distance.
I'm not James or Jane Austen or Hopkins,
Empson, Dr. Fowles from Cal State L.A.—
I swallow fear and dry oats, embrace
the pay-per-view juries, the fluid rock edict,
the lessons you learn but will not adopt,
if more or less cherish—another poor soul
face down in raw sewage, perversely unwhole,
perversely on foot while the saddled horse follows,
half bitten in half, still shadowed by hill,
heart stuck awake in its socket.