

Art striving to otherness: Walter Pater’s Anders-streben as a Historical Precursor to Intermediality

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Abstract

This paper proposes positioning the idea of British writer Walter Pater (1839-1894) *Anders-streben* (Pater, 1873) as a precursor to the concept of intermediality, thereby shedding light on the historical perspectives of intermediality. Both *Anders-streben* and intermediality share a remarkable resemblance in their reliance on bridging media boundaries. The concept is even briefly mentioned in more recent literature on intermediality (Rippl, 2015, p. 4-5), but is not further elaborated upon. In today's artistic climate, characterized by the celebration of crossing artistic boundaries and hybridity in artworks, *Anders-streben* demonstrates its relevance more than ever. The term, which Pater introduces in his influential book *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), refers to the possibility of arts to transgress the boundaries of their own medium into another art form.

I argue that *Anders-streben* can be seen as a liminal space or the ‘in-between’ where different art forms enter into dialogue with each other and, moreover, transcend their own mediums. This claim will be supported by linking *Anders-streben* to Irina Rajewsky’s ‘as-if’ theory (Rajewsky, 2002), illustrating how it fosters an immersive experience within a single medium, which in turn allows for the interplay of imagined other art forms. Through a focus on the medium-specific and transcending qualities of specific artworks, I aim to illuminate how Pater’s concept of transcending artistic borders can enrich the spectator’s aesthetic experience. In essence, I want to show how *Anders-streben* invites viewers to immerse themselves in a multidimensional artistic journey, blurring the lines between different mediums and enhancing the overall aesthetic encounter.

Keywords

Walter Pater, Anders-streben, ‘as-if’ experience, immersive experience

Bio

Lina Vekeman obtained master's degrees in Art History, Literary Studies and Educational Studies at Ghent University and KU Leuven. In 2021, after being awarded a Special Research Fund Scholarship, she started her PhD research under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Bart Vandenabeele and Prof. Dr. Brecht de Grootte at Ghent University. Her research focuses on the work of the 19th century British writer Walter Pater in general **and his concept of *Anders-streben* in particular. Specifically, the connection between Anders-streben and more contemporary notions of intermediality is explored.**

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