

Call for Papers

The Conference of the International Walter Pater Society:

Trans/Pater

Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

September 5-7, 2025

Organizers: Barbara Black, Skidmore College
Michael Davis, Le Moyne College
Ellis Hanson, Cornell University

Organized with the support of the Central New York Humanities Corridor

Walter Pater (1839-1894) was a major presence in late-nineteenth-century British intellectual life, a foundational figure of the Aestheticism & Decadence movements, and one of the early exponents of many ideas that would come to underwrite much of Modernism and Postmodernism. Working variously as a critic/critical theorist and a fiction writer, Pater engaged with the history of European thought from the classical period, through the Middle Ages, and into the Renaissance, which he helped to conceptualize in his most well-known book, originally published under the title *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873). This famous study continues through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and up to the contemporary “moment,” which Pater also helped to shape, most notably in his famous “Conclusion.” Pater addressed the most important issues of his day and set down a number of major theoretical precepts concerning the nature of criticism and interpretation itself, leading the way into the impressionist and subjectivist turns of the early twentieth century. Moving across historical epochs, he also worked across a wide range of intellectual and imaginative forms: cultural, literary, and art criticism; history, history of art, poetry, and philosophy. His criticism was often creative, and his fiction was frequently critical, as in his historical and philosophical novel set in second-century Rome, *Marius the Epicurean* (1885). Pater is considered one of the great prose stylists in the history of English literature. Through all of this, he remained deeply interested in exploring and understanding the nature of desire and sexuality.

Taking its cue from the current cultural and intellectual concern with the concept of “Trans,” this conference focuses on the theme of Trans/Pater, in order to explore how this idea might be operating within and “across” Pater and how it might be in play “beyond” or “on the other side” of Pater. Pater was deeply interested in historical, cultural, and intellectual transitions (including the epochal transition from the pagan to the Christian, from the Medieval to the Renaissance, and, indeed, from the Medieval to the Modern), and was himself a major figure in the transition from the Victorian to the Modernist period. Some of his most important ideas concerned the transitory nature of modern experience, the transition points among different modes of art (“transaesthetics”), as well as various kinds of transformation. As a prose stylist, he was concerned with ways to transmit knowledge, while the singularity of his style raises questions of translation—of both affective and linguistic conversion.

We welcome papers on any aspect of Pater’s life and work, especially on the idea of “Trans/Pater.”

Possible topics might include:

Transition
Translation
Transformation
Transfiguration
Transgression
Transience
Transportation
Transnational (ism)
Transcultural (ism)
Transgender
Transexuality
Transvestitism
Transfixation
Transactions
Transcendence
Transference
Translucence
Transparency
Transmission
Transmigration
Transmutation
Transvaluation
Transposition
Transpiration
Transcription
Transients
TransAmerican (the)

TransAtlantic (the)
TransWorld (the)
Transubstantiation
Transverse (the)
Transhistorical (the)
Transaesthetics

Please send proposals of maximum 250 words for 20 minute-papers, along with a short biographical note, to: paterincny@gmail.com

Deadline: 15 January 2025