Call for Papers
C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists
THE END
Pasadena, California, March 14-16, 2024

C19: The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists seeks submissions for its seventh biennial conference, which will take place March 14-16, 2024, in Pasadena, California. We invite individual papers or group proposals on literature and culture in and beyond the United States during the long nineteenth century.

The 2024 conference theme, THE END, speaks to the catastrophes of various scales, speeds, and epicenters in which we are living—from increasingly apocalyptic climate events to the dire state of our profession, threatened by the casualization of academic labor, budget cuts, ballooning student debt, and political attacks. Our conference location in California, a state that has recently experienced both devastating wildfires and floods, prompts us to ask: How can looking to the endings of the past help us confront those we face in the present and imminent future? We invite panels and papers that explore the manifold meanings of the end in the nineteenth century. Despite the conference theme's associations with disaster and impasse, we hope that it will suggest a wide array of openings.

Many in the nineteenth-century United States sensed they were living in end times: think of Nat Turner's assertion that he was the agent of a "great day of judgment," the Millerites' joyful anticipation of apocalypse, or Wovoka's vision of the fall of settler colonialism and the emergence of another world. Abolitionist movements fought for the end of entire systems, including slavery, marriage, prisons, and capitalism. Yet the end proved elusive. The century's most celebrated end, Emancipation, brought less the cessation of slavery than the ceaseless invention of new forms of Black unfreedom. At the same time, panicked predictions of the end of whiteness, masculinity, and the family proved all too illusory.

The end was a geopolitical concern, as people in the United States wrestled over empire; borders; expansionist designs on Mexico, Cuba and other areas to the south; the territory of slavery; Indigenous sovereignty; secession; and the racial constitution of the body politic. The physical body's own ends—whether and how to differentiate humans from other living things; the limits of individual agency; the fact of death and the mystery of what follows; anality and all the erotic, social, and aesthetic possibilities it animates—raised pressing questions, too.

The matter of endings has particular resonance for the study of literature and culture. What problems and opportunities did narrative closure raise for nineteenth-century writers in the United States? How do we as literary historians know when "periods" end, and what unfamiliar periodizations should we consider? What works of nineteenth-century literature remain

unfinished? We often focus on the origins of ideas, literary forms, institutions, and so on in the nineteenth century, but what can we learn from studying those in decline? Such questions also offer an opportunity to reflect on the vitality of our own critical practices: what do we need to give up?

We encourage investigation of how nineteenth-century encounters with the end illuminate, challenge, or extend our twenty-first-century perspectives, as well as the new ideas and relations they forge by living with the end in sight. We especially welcome papers situated in Indigenous and Native studies and critical race and ethnic studies. In addition to submissions related to our theme, we invite papers and panels on other topics, especially those engaging literary, cultural and historical perspectives on nineteenth-century California and its location within the trans-Pacific.

Format

C19 welcomes proposals for roundtables, workshops, dialogues, and novel presentation formats, as well as traditional panels and individual paper submissions. We prefer that panel proposals reflect a diversity of institutional affiliation, academic rank, and disciplinary background. Please include at least four presenters on a panel, one of whom might be a respondent. Each session is 90 minutes long, and all group proposals must leave time for discussion. Individuals seeking potential collaborators may wish to use the C19 listserv, the discussion board on C19's Facebook page, or Twitter (by tagging @C19Americanists), or to email CFPs or requests for co-panelists to the chair of the C19 Communications Committee, Travis Foster (travis.foster@villanova.edu) for posting on the conference website.

C19: 2024 will once again feature a series of seminars, which will provide participants the opportunity for a collaborative conversation around a particular topic. Each seminar will be capped at 15 participants and will be run by leaders with expertise in the topic. Each participant will submit a five-page position paper before the conference to be read in advance by the other participants; time in the seminar itself will be reserved for discussion. Seminar participants will be listed in the program. Topics and seminar leaders will be announced soon.

Conference participants are limited to one appearance on the program as A) a presenter, roundtable participant, or respondent, and one appearance as B) a session organizer, chair, seminar participant, or speaker/facilitator in a professional support session. Please submit a maximum of one proposal for a panel paper.

The deadline for submissions is September 1, 2023. The conference website will open for submissions in late May. Instructions will be posted there.

Program Committee:

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