

CFP: MLA Conference Panel: "Plants in 19th-Century German Culture", San Francisco (18.3.22)

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Call for Papers

Plants in 19th-Century German Culture

19th- and Early-20th-Century Form in German LLC Panel

MLA Convention in San Francisco, CA (January 5-8, 2023)

Submission deadline: March 18, 2022

The vegetal world—its varieties, its morphology (Goethe), its reproduction, and collectability— becomes increasingly prominent in 19th-century German spheres. Both scientific and popular understandings of plant forms go through a number of radical changes, from Wilhelm Hofmeister’s discovery of the alternation of generations to Alexander von Humboldt’s naturalist revolution and the paradigm shift of Darwin’s natural selection theory. At the same time armies of amateur naturalists roamed the countrysides, collecting plant specimens and sharing their knowledge via popular botanical journals; the vasculum became a recognizable field tool; and the herbarium was no longer limited to the museum or natural science collection. In literature, too, plants begin slowly to emerge from the haze of the Romantic bedazzlement with Nature to take on new roles, no longer serving merely as metaphorical vehicles for abstractions but rather appearing as complex life forms with unique materialities and histories.

We invite papers that explore the different cultural roles of plants during this period in the spheres of science, recreational hobby, arts, and letters, where vegetal life variously becomes the site of new knowledge, materiality, agency, poetological potential, and the source of community. Topics may include but are not limited to: the flourishing of naturalist societies and their impact; the work of literary authors who were also botanists (e.g. Chamisso) or amateur collectors (e.g., Hebel, Stifter); the influence of new developments in botany on representations of plant life; the semiotics and materiality of plants; representations of non-indigenous plants and the "exotic" in literature and the visual arts; contemporary philosophies of planthood (e.g. Marder) in dialogue with 19th-century German botany and philosophy; the problem of "borderline" vegetal life (e.g., fungi, moss, mold). We also welcome

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approaches to plants in the 19th century that intersect with other disciplines, such as queer and gender studies, environmental humanities/ecocriticism, new materialism and posthumanism, or post- and decolonial studies.

Please submit 350-word abstracts and a short bio to **Samuel Frederick** (smf35@psu.edu) by **Friday, March 18, 2022**. If your proposal is accepted, you must be an MLA member by April 7, 2022. You may only have two roles at the convention.

Redaktion: Constanze Baum - Lukas Büsse - Mark-Georg Dehrmann - Nils Gelker - Markus Malo - Alexander Nebrig - Johannes Schmidt

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