



UNIVERSITÀ
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AISNA ASSOCIAZIONE ITALIANA
DI STUDI NORD AMERICANI



UNITED STATES MISSION
TO ITALY

This 2019 marks the 500th anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), the universal genius, the twofold engineer of defense walls against the enemy as much as swing-bridges for overtaking them; of impenetrable dams for stopping natural waterways as much as artificial water-channels for the penetration of commerce and the mixing of peoples and cultures; of barricades for puzzling the enemy on the ground as much as flying machines and futuristic prototypes of inspection drones, anticipating our transcontinental connections. By electing Leonardo da Vinci's anniversary as symbol and metaphor of all the statics and dynamics of the world we live in, AISNA invites you to participate to its 25th International Biennial Conference by joining the following call for panels:

25th AISNA Biennial Conference

Gate(d) Ways. Enclosures, Breaches and Mobilities Across U.S. Boundaries and Beyond

SDS of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Ragusa, September 26-28, 2019



Call for Panels

This is a time in which walls and fortifications, either physical or metaphorical, are put up as a response to the mobilization of the Global South. This fosters a necessary reflection upon the role of barricades in our contemporary times. Indeed, walls are a concrete and ideal impediment to the free circulation of peoples and cultures, their existence necessarily imposing the creation of borders, with the implicit corollary of liminality, periphery, ex-centricity and the obvious distinction between what/who is inside and what/who is outside.

After exactly 30 years from the collapse of the Iron Curtain divide, the growing appearance of border walls and barriers across the world - from 7 in 1961 to 77 in 2019 - according to the *New York Times* and *USA Today* - shows that their occurrence keeps separating warring people, protecting trade and communication routes, and patrolling the flow of migrants and refugees. At the figurative level, the capital importance of the WWW, for instance, must elicit consideration on the

virtual barriers of network security systems erected against the access to knowledge and its availability to people, such as firewalls.

However, history also shows that walls, apart from sealing off communication and connections, can be structural elements instrumental to the creation of long-lasting edifices, parts of a theoretical founding for a different future. They invite intense interrogations on trans-border dynamics across, under, above and along boundaries and passageways, thus promoting new challenges on exchange and interaction.

The 25th AISNA Biennial Conference proposes to reflect critically on issues of seclusion and openness to transit on both U.S. national and global stages, and on the complex scenarios that the loosening and/or forting up of borders generate.

Panel proposals are solicited in all areas and disciplinary fields of AISNA. Possible questions/issues to address can be related but not limited to:

Questions:

1. - To which extent are walls intimately related to the concept of visibility/to the gaze?
We build walls to prevent people from looking at us, from casting their gaze onto us, and we build a wall mentality/social walls to prevent people from looking inside our own personal and political spaces. The wall-sopic nexus also invites to look beyond, to look differently.
2. - What is the effective power of walls on people, what do walls *do* and how do they shape all those people *enclosed/entrapped/secluded in*, and at the same time, *protected by* national barriers?
3. - How does a “wall mentality” continue to be nurtured and cultivated by border humanities in order to secure one’s identitarian, historical and political boundaries?
4. - Ideological and material walls function as a metonymy of a “fortress” ready to resist siege: to which extent an “under siege mental state” prevents critical thinking from embracing a more complex view of concrete and ideological boundaries? Is wall rhetoric more problematic and somehow powerful in its exclusionary potential than a real, concrete wall?

Keywords and expressions:

Forting up - Gated communities - *Limes* - Guarded barriers - Contested territories/No man’s lands - Living/Dwelling in walls - Frontier and *Frontera* - Walls and ladders/walls as bridges - Waterwalls and waterways – Securitization – Patrolling – Hybridization – Barricades–Fences.

Topics include but are not limited to:

North American and World Literature - Translation: new metaphors and challenges - Trans-border textualities - Geopolitical strategies of containment/securitization/patrolling/governmentality - International relations and protectionism - New aspects of Colonialism - The WEB and digital infrastructures - Border, Hemispheric Studies - Race relations, *ethnicities* and multiculturalism - Gender Studies - Globalization and its never-ending power of expansion - Domesticity/Public sphere - Communities and collective identities - Conflict management – “Breaking the fourth wall” in visual culture, theatre and literature - Supernatural passages across enclosures (in Gothic Literature, Ghost Stories, Science Fiction) - Mirrors on walls: identity and self-reflectivity.

The deadline for panel proposals is April 20, 2019. The submitted proposals will be reviewed by the conference organizer committee and the AISNA board. A selection of max. 20 panels will be issued by May 5, notified to the submitters by email, and published on the Conference website.

Submissions should be written in English and include:

- a panel title
- a clearly stated description of the proposed topic in no more than 300 words
- contact details of the panel's coordinator or coordinators (max. 2), including professional affiliation.

Each panel will host no less than two and no more than four papers, including the coordinator's or coordinators'. We remind aspiring coordinators that their task will include a brief introduction of the speakers, a strict monitoring of the observance of the allotted 20-minute time for each presentation, and a supervision of the following question and answer session, aimed to stimulate a fruitful discussion in the last but essential part of each panel.

All panel proposals should be sent by e-mail to the conference organizer, Gigliola Nocera (noceragi@unict.it), as well as to the secretary of AISNA, Simone Francescato (segretario-aisna@unive.it).

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