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EPISTEMES OF CONTAGION: TOUCH, CONTACT, DISTANCE

Co-editors: Cristiana Giordano, Rhiannon Welch

From the introduction:

“This volume of California Italian Studies is dedicated to Italy and the Epistemes of Contagion: Touch, Contact, Distance. [...] Long before it became ground zero for the coronavirus in the West, the thought of contagion had persistently inspired cultural production in Italy. From Boccaccio to Tiepolo and Manzoni, to Agamben, Cimatti, and Esposito, Italian art and philosophy have long pondered the contours, colors, and textures of contagion, and its paradoxical status as both a condition of and a threat to the human community.”

“A question that runs through each of the essays contained in this issue [concerns] the degrees of closeness between apparently discrete forms of knowledge (novels, poetry, philosophy, painting, human and more-than-human, etc.), categories (shame/pudore; genius/insanity; individual/community), historical periods (ancient, medieval, early modern, modern, contemporary, yesterday, tomorrow), conventional disciplines and fields (anthropology, art history, critical theory, history, literary analysis, psychiatry, politics) and our engagements with them today.”

“In addition to article-length essays that look back to works from the Trecento through the 1960’s, we gathered contributions that speak more immediately from the present: the interview with Lala Hu on the experiences of sino-italiani at the outset of the pandemic; the “Notes from the Field” section, which contains reflections from anthropologists doing fieldwork in Italy during the pandemic (dell’Oca, Blais-Mcpherson), along with a contribution by philosopher Luisa Bonesio; and Giovanna Parmigiani’s ethnographic work on neo-animist conceptions of care among pagan communities in Salento will all draw readers into the immediacy of the pandemic’s impact in Italy. Essays on works by Boccaccio, (Muyo, Rosaldo), Alessandro Manzoni (Trigg), Giovanni Antonelli and Enrico Moraelli (Rozenblatt), Annie Vivanti (Albaum) Primo levi (Miglianti), and Amelia Rosselli (Dani) reflect instead on the distant and not-so-distant past from the perspective of our pandemic present, shedding new light on familiar and less familiar works from across the Italian tradition, while critically questioning some of the presuppositions of both theoretical and literary canonicity along the way.”

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