

California Interdisciplinary Consortium of Italian Studies (Stanford University, March 8–9, 2019)

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In the Spring of 2019, Stanford University hosted the California Interdisciplinary Consortium of Italian Studies (CICIS) symposium entitled “Italy’s Centers and Peripheries.” “We encourage considerations of the elusive space between center and periphery: the margin, the threshold, the border, the limit” read the call for papers, which also included references to Italy’s unification and its long history of regionalism. The symposium addressed the intersections between literary studies and geography, theoretical and textual reflections on space and place, and inquiries on migrations of people, commodities, and ideas. The keynote speaker was Roberta Morosini (Wake Forest University), whose paper offered a compelling overview of textual and paratextual *loci* in Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio’s oeuvres, focusing on real and imaginary 14th-century Italian shores and the motif of navigation. In addition to the keynote address, CICIS 2019 featured a presentation of the latest issue of California Italian Studies, “Ends of Poetry” (2018), a short *in memoriam* session, and three panels of four speakers each.

The first panel only included works in progress by PhD students. In addition to a short précis of her doctoral dissertation on interspecies communication in literary texts, Bristin Scalzo Jones (UC Berkley) analyzed the case study of Giovanni Verga’s short story “Jeli il pastore” in order to highlight the concepts of center and periphery in the Sicilian author’s works. Scalzo Jones showed how the 1880 short story diminishes the difference between what is human and what is animal through the protagonist Jeli and his relationships with other characters and the environment. Federica Di Blasio (UCLA) then provided an overview of her dissertation, in which she examines the aesthetic negotiations of “no-border” and “no-global” ideologies—as she defines them—in the literary and cinematic works by Cesare Pavese, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Gianni Celati, and Andrea Segre. Through a geopolitical lens, Di Blasio’s doctoral project looks at early reflections on displacement (Pavese), utopian visions of global coalitions of subaltern subjects (Pasolini), the intersections between globalization and tourism (Celati), and representations of post-colonial mobility (Segre). She argues that anti-global and global ideological stances inform the four authors’ aesthetic representations of mobility and local space, often operating simultaneously. The third presenter,

Elena Festa (UC Santa Barbara), spoke about her ongoing digital humanities project on social media and colonial memory in Italy. The project's goal is to verify if Italian Facebook and Twitter accounts present any evidence of a national and institutional "memory aphasia" in the aftermath of key events (2009–2015) characterizing the relationship between Italy and its former colony Libya, and whether these accounts are triggers and symptoms of a submerged postcolonial and transcolonial memorial culture in Italy. Lastly, Nicholas Virzi (Stanford) presented his project on Salvatore Sciarrino's melodrama *Morte di Borromini*. Virzi argued that the 19th-century musical piece is both an account of the architect Francesco Borromini's suicide and an embodiment of Borromini's perspective, in contrast to the more common reading devoted only to the descriptive aspects of the melodrama.

The second panel opened with Nina Bjekovic (UCLA), who investigated the conceptions of otherness in the literary works by the Triestine contemporary authors Claudio Magris and Boris Pahor. Bjekovic's argument centered on the two authors' contrasting literary constructions of subjectivity: if Magris conceptualizes borders as a physical construction that may be surpassed by a transcending subject, Pahor struggles with cultural borders as restricting limits to marginalized and oppressed "others." Nelson Shuchmacher Endebo (Stanford) also explored the margins of the Italian canon by presenting on Juó Bananére, the fictional Italian-Brazilian comic writer and persona invented by Brazilian satirist Alexandre Marcondes Machado. By studying excerpts from Bananére's 1915 work *La divina increnca*, Shuchmacher Endebo proposed an example of non-Italian Italian literature within the Italian diaspora in the Americas. The third presentation, by Todd Olson (UC Berkeley), addressed yet another issue at the geographical peripheries of Italian studies: the transformation of a Tuscan image of Marian consolation into a processional object that accompanied Jesuit penitential missions in 18th-century Mexico. According to Olson, the image underwent a metaphorical translation that influenced the expulsion of the Society of Jesuits from Mexico. Tatiana Sizonenko (UC San Diego) closed the session with a talk on the dissemination, transformation, and interpretation of the Venetian Renaissance canon in Eastern Mediterranean architecture. Sizonenko's case study was 15th-century architect Alvise Lamberti da Montagnana, whose work both in the Crimean Khanate and Muscovy questions the cross-cultural mediation between center and periphery.

Amy Hough-Dugdale (UC Riverside) began the third and last panel with a presentation on Federico Fellini's *La voce della luna*, featured in her dissertation on Gilles Deleuze and Italian cinema. Hough-Dugdale argued for a reading of sound and hearing as Deleuzian "lines of leakage," or rhizomatic movements away from everyday banality and oppressive structures, in Fellini's 1990 film. This reading encourages its spectators to hear between or at the margins of the images. Marianna Nespoli (UCLA) followed with an exploration of the Po Valley's environmental degradation as depicted by Michelangelo Antonioni's films,

Gianni Celati's writings, and Luigi Ghirri's photographs. Nespoli posited the Po Valley, the fertile yet polluted valley formed by the Po river in Northern Italy, as the unwitting protagonist of the three authors' works, which thus anticipate the current worldwide ecological debate. The third presentation of the panel by Claudio Fogu (UC Santa Barbara) recalled the 1820 plan for the realization of an artificial canal that would have connected Sicily to the Italian mainland. In contrast with the prejudices and ideologies underlining Italy's "Southern Question," Fogu proposed reading the Italian south from a Mediterranean viewpoint, namely, as an integral component to the industrialization plan of the Italian Kingdom and the island's centuries-long Mediterranean vocation. Rossella Pescatori (El Camino College) concluded the meeting by exploring Tullia d'Aragona's *Dialogo dell'infinità d'amore*. Pescatori focused on d'Aragona's challenging of the dialogue genre, questioning of literary authorities, and positionality as woman as well as writer.

CICIS 2019 was a productive and intellectually stimulating symposium. As several presentations show, there were connections with the previous two CICIS meetings, "Italia senza frontiere / Borderless Italy" (2016) and "*Genius loci – genius populi / Italy: A Genius of Place and a Place of Genius*" (2017), which also focused on the politics of place and the relationships between its local and its global geopolitical and socio-cultural dimensions. Most importantly, such a recurrence of themes indicates CICIS's participation in the current transnational conversation that attempts to bridge the gap between the humanities and social sciences in light of pressing topics such as movements across borders, a sense of place, and issues of belonging.

