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Introduction

While the first issue of each yearly volume of *California Italian Studies* is dedicated to a specific topic, in this case “Italian Futures,” the second issue is open to essays, interviews, translations or other scholarly products on any Italy-related topic which meet one or more of the general criteria laid down for any contribution to the journal. These, as defined in *CIS*’s charter (see the clickable menu in the left-hand column), are:

- 1) *interdisciplinarity*, that is, work that either combines within itself the practices of multiple disciplines, makes significant use of the tools of one discipline in the service of another; or relates to a cluster of other scholarly works representing the approaches of multiple disciplines to a single topic.

- 2) *comparativity*. that is, work that places the study of the history, culture, society, artistic products, and languages of the Italian peninsula and islands, and of Italian diasporas, in relation to other geographical, cultural, and linguistic formations—for instance in the areas of Mediterranean and European studies; the study of migration to and from Italy and of regional and dialect cultures; as well as colonial, post-colonial and transnational studies.

- 3) *criticality*, that is, work which not only studies a given object but also engages in theoretical and/or methodological reflection on its own approach and on its implications within larger disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts.

The six essays contained in this issue have been deemed by the issue editors to meet these criteria, and by peer reviewers to reach a rigorous scholarly standard. They range historically from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to the mid to late twentieth century. They represent separately and/or in combination approaches deriving from literary criticism and theory, media studies, sociology, and history. Amyrose J. McCue Gill and James O. Ward combine major currents in today’s Renaissance scholarship—the analysis of rhetorical strategies, close reading, attention to historical context—to offer provocative reinterpretations of their classic texts: the vindication of erotic love and conjugal friendship in Alberti’s *Della famiglia*; a republican reading of *The Prince* through the filter of classical rhetoric as subtly devastating critique of

Italian princes, particularly Cesare Borgia and the Medici. Dylan Riley reconciles a seemingly irreconcilable conflict of prevalent interpretations to show how Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* actually combine an appreciation for liberal democracy and a Leninist conception of revolutionary politics. By contrast, Maria Truglio insists on incommensurabilities in her theoretically informed and historically situated analysis. Dino Buzzati's celebrated picturebook, *La famosa invasione degli orsi in Sicilia* (1945), far from paying tribute to the conventions of children's literature, radically subverts them. The last two essays, for all their differences, are linked as case studies of explorations of performativity and community across media. Amit Wolf documents a largely forgotten 1968 "happening," *Superurbefimero n. 7*, that enacted Umberto Eco's early semiological ideas during his tenure in the Faculty of Architecture in Florence—and scandalized the good citizens of San Giovanni Valdarno. Monica Seger, finally, shows how television-modeled narratives of the 1990s, Silvia Ballestra's *La guerra degli Antò* and Aldo Nove's *Woobinda*, replay in fiction the attempt—and the failure—to create some sense of belonging and community in the youth audience of the period's television culture.

While each volume of *California Italian Studies* has a specific closing date for submissions (for issue # 3, this is February 1, 2012; for issue #4 this is February 1, 2013), items falling under the "Open Theme" rubric may be submitted at any time and will, if accepted for publication, appear in the issue whose closing date they immediately precede. We also welcome submissions that pick up or in some way respond to themes treated in earlier issues, as well as to specific essays and other contributions published in those issues.