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Editorial

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EDITORIAL

This belated double-issue DIFFERENTIA ends a cycle, begun in 1986, of anthology-sized issues of a journal dedicated to contemporary Italian thought. As can be seen by our Cumulative Index, during these past fourteen years the journal has published some of the most stimulating and innovative essays concerning various aspects of Italian culture, introduced poets and artists, and reviewed books not on the basis of publisher's timetables but on the strength of their content. By virtue of its having been strategically positioned in the lacunae opened among existing or even more recent specialized publications, and circulating in-between official disciplines or departments (the bane of our universities), DIFFERENTIA can certainly claim to have "introduced" a number of authors and issues which would probably have had greater difficulty in surfacing in the Angloamerican cultural panorama. The theoretical premises as penned down in 1986 have remained much the same: to question universalizing canons, manifest skepticism toward the notion of a way thinking identified exclusively with a nation-state, express doubts as to whether such constructions as "philosophy" or "literary criticism" or "intellectual history" have any reason to continue to exist in their "Modern(ist)" garb and structure, and shouldn't perhaps make room for alternate rhetorics, or more experimental and positive modes of understanding time, cognition, aesthetics, history and the writing and representations of cultures.

During the time of its existence, DIFFERENTIA witnessed and intervened in the sweeping changes occurring not only in Italy and Angloamerica, but also throughout the entire Western World, which it is agreed registered epochal reconfigurations in the distribution of wealth, demographics and knowledge. If and when DIFFERENTIA will be reborn it will wear an even greater plurality of masks and relate to an alternate sort of difference, one which is necessarily "virtual" but *also* and most importantly geographically and regionally grounded. If as we held in the premier issue, "thinking is [known to us as] ultimately what comes *after*, what is *other than* any one expression or experience of a purported Original," and if "in its verbal attire thinking is forever [what has been] thought, a second or third order" of discourse, the pursuit of the *differentiae* will now shift toward a metaphorical archaeology, stirring the ethnographies and the arguments of peoples and their values as they negotiated, concretely, the dissemination and recreations of meaning in a more circumscribed geographic area. And these areas are Europe and the Mediterranean, open-ended loci replete with countless journeys with the double-talk of officialdom, with allegories of greatness and decline, with the vanished records of the unspoken for, the contrived silences of capital, the abject pandering of politicized identities and other vested-interest groups.

The thinking of cultures and civilizations should now be sought in the *translations of sense*, in the shifty and elusive exchanges, conjunctions, encounters that dot and scratch the surfaces of human spacetime, orienting the archipelagoes of contingency, addressing the paradoxes of diasporas and

start "thinking" the enigmas of boundaries.

Although there exists a demonstrable presence of "things Italian" just about everywhere, the Italian world is perhaps best understood as the plurimillennial meeting point of three continents where the objects, the images, the books, and the persons involved are not simply abstracted commodities for this or that constituency, but, rather, meaning-constructing and thinking/talking subjectivities, real evidence of interpersonal transcultural processes which disclose the manifold traits of beings, informing the Many as opposed to conforming (to) the One, and impacting on the entire educational and historical dimensions of our lives in the next few decades.

Once again I would like to thank readers, subscribers, and supporters of the journal during these past fifteen years. Above all I would like to thank those intellectuals (editors, distributors, essayists, art critics, translators and poets) who have been willing to forgive us the annoying publication delays that seemed to mark the appearance of each issue, while in the long run ultimately sympathizing with and supporting our cultural project. Perhaps the editor believed their contributions to be, more than timely, prophetic. And in this key, their "thought" will live on.

Finally, my appreciation goes to the following people from the Queens College Press: Lynda Callahan, John Cassidy, Miyoung Kim Chun, Regina Preziosi DeRise, Stephanie Goldson, Dyanne Maue and Naomi Rivlin for their generous, unstinting help and patience over the years. They made it all possible: thank you.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Giorgio Tagliacozzo.

Peter Carravetta
Founding Editor