

**Transatlantic Interdisciplinary Research Colloquium Small
Forms. Aesthetics – Media – Modernity**

Abstract

Nora Siena (Cornell)

Inoperative Brevitas: The Contamination of Literary and Philosophical Short Forms in Giorgio Agamben's Work

Since the 1970s, Giorgio Agamben has embraced the late Heidegger's philosophical/formal project of bridging the gap between philosophy and poetry, connecting in an unprecedented way the idea of *Erfahrung der Sprache* with the emergence of a new political community. The point of intersection of politics and language lies for Agamben in the concept of inoperativity, namely the necessity to rethink politics, language, aesthetics, and philosophy in terms that could neutralize the productive force routinely governing them. Agamben's rethinking of politics is hence grounded on the transformation of philosophy into an inoperative use of language, aimed at deactivating from within the canonical forms of philosophical writing. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's fragmentary and icastic writing and the tradition of the Italian *narratio brevis*, Agamben's philosophy incorporates short literary forms such as the fable, the apologue, the sentence, the parable, and the aphorism. My paper wants to interrogate the correlation between short forms and inoperativity by investigating what historical, rhetorical, and formal features of *brevitas* approximate an inoperative use of language.