

CALL FOR PAPERS

for a topical issue of "Open Cultural Studies"

PLAGUE AS METAPHOR

"Open Cultural Studies" (www.degruyter.com/CULTURE) invites submissions for a topical issue on "Plague as Metaphor," edited by Nahum Welang (University of Stavanger, Norway).

From Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1602) to Edvard Munch's painting *Self-Portrait After the Spanish Flu* (1919-20) to Albert Camus's *The Plague* (1947), works of literature and visual culture have a rich tradition of contemplating the impact of plagues on everyday life, and in Susan Sontag's seminal text *Illness as Metaphor*, she argues that artists have historically relied on the literary device of metaphors to characterize illnesses associated with plagues (1978: 39-40).

Sontag goes on to problematize this enduring metaphorization of illnesses, pointing out that metaphorical mythologies and mysteries tend to simplify and even dehumanize the layered lived experiences of patients. For example, metaphors of dread associated with cancer have often led to the shunning of cancer patients "by relatives and friends...as if cancer...were an infectious disease" (Sontag 1978: 6). Moreover, diseases in the ancient world were incorrectly metaphorized as "divine wrath," a defective diagnosis that naturally led to the persecution of plague afflicted individuals (Sontag 1978: 39) and scapegoated minority groups (Sontag 1978: 71). "My point is that illness is *not* a metaphor," Sontag decries. "And that the most truthful way of regarding illness—and the healthiest way of being ill—is one most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric thinking" (1978: 3).

Without wholly discrediting the legitimacy of Sontag's argument, this topical issue aims to make a persuasive case for the artistic validity and vitality of metaphors in pandemic discourses. While some metaphors undercut the agency of patients, the papers in this issue will argue that the trope of illness as metaphor endures because it is uniquely capable of unpacking and problematizing the complex realities, both physical and psychological, of living through a plague or pandemic.

We are thus interested in papers that competently illustrate how literary and visual metaphors remember and culturalize pandemics. The issue's focus on literature and visual culture means contributors have a wide range of primary materials and topics to choose from. However, all papers must examine the idea of "plague as metaphor" in their text(s) and unpack the significance of the addressed metaphorical figurations.

If you have questions or concerns about possible ideas or interpretations, please feel free to contact the editor at nahum.n.welang@uis.no

HOW TO SUBMIT

Submissions will be collected by April 30, 2023 via the on-line submission system at <https://www.editorialmanager.com/culture/>

As the article type, choose “Research Article: Plague as Metaphor”.

Before submission authors should carefully read the Instructions for Authors, available at https://www.degruyter.com/publication/journal_key/CULTURE/downloadAsset/CULTURE_Instruction%20for%20Authors.pdf

All contributions will undergo critical peer-review before being accepted for publication.

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Further questions about this thematic issue can be sent to Nahum Welang (e-mail: nahum.n.welang@uis.no). If you have any technical or financial questions, please contact the journal’s Managing Editor Katarzyna Tempczyk at katarzyna.tempczyk@degruyter.com