

During the Ancien Regime, the reports of events of public interest were often suspended between reality and fiction. The dividing line between the actual event and its representation was often weak and undefined. Authors were used to pursuing different purposes through a variety of means so as to appeal to the taste of readers, serve the needs of printers, the requirements of their patrons, as well as the aims of propaganda for both secular and religious powers.

For all of these reasons, these primary sources are very difficult for historians and literary experts to analyze. The borderline between fiction and reality is actually undefined. The disclosure of information is rarely neutral and it strongly influences the audience and audience perception of reality. Not surprisingly, the readers of the past - more or less educated - were not always able to recognize nuances and differences in the texts.

While this symposium intends to focus on the so called “relazioni” or “ragguagli” (reports or accounts) circulating in the Italian States from the end of the seventeenth century until the early nineteenth century, some of the participants will also focus on other national contexts (England, France, Spain). These texts, in fact, enjoyed good circulation throughout Europe. They can be considered as objects of interest in the book trade and the market of information. They deal with natural disasters, battles, wars, discoveries of new lands, religious missions, purported miracles, unexplained healings, murders and executions. They fall exactly halfway between documented chronicle and fiction. They are written in prose, but sometimes contain passages (excerpts or quotations) written in verse. They were addressed to audiences from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Their aim was to educate and inform, as well as to simply entertain.

It is questionable whether the history of these texts underwent a major turning point in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. According to the preliminary results of this ongoing research, several publishers and authors (especially in cities such as Venice, Florence, and Naples) began to adopt new strategies, intended to anticipate the needs of the public and to contend with the competition of newspapers whose popularity was on the rise.

In the frantic search for the reader's attention, the reports became less and less grounded in reality as invention occupied an ever-growing space. They incorporated increasingly complicated plots, accompanied by an impressive amount of data, anecdotes, exotic or fanciful settings, elements of tragedy, comedy, and adventure.

It is likely that the success of the novel in the Italian States stimulated the authors of reports and accounts to devise strategies of emulation. In like manner, we also have good reason to believe that these same reports provided sources of inspiration for the emerging novelists of the eighteenth century. In fact, the connections among different literary genres became more and more frequent; this, in turn, appears to have encouraged the development of a diversified production in Italy, conversant with a rapidly changing book market.

The one-day symposium “Fiction and Reality” constitutes a groundbreaking moment in scholarship on the emergence of the novel in Italy, a topic that has only recently begun to receive attention for its unique profile rather than its heretofore status as a derivative production. By joining scholars from different fields to address the Italian novel both intrinsically and in comparative context, we intend to provide a set of preliminary studies and pathways for future work in this promising, nascent area of interest.

# FICTION & REALITY, FUSION & CONFUSION

## Reports of “real” events and invention literature in Italy and Europe (XVIII century)



A one-day symposium organized by Clorinda Donato and Pasquale Palmieri, in collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute, under the auspices of the The U.S.-Italy Fulbright Commission

**Istituto Italiano di Cultura - Los Angeles**

*April 30 2015 | 10:00am - 5:30pm*

# FICTION & REALITY, FUSION & CONFUSION

## 10:00 am: WELCOME

IIC Los Angeles: Valeria Rumori (IIC Director)

## 10:15 am: Session 1

Chair: Clorinda Donato (*California State University Long Beach*)

## 10:20 am

Patrizia Delpiano (*Università di Torino*), *Processo ai Philosophes: Inventare un Nemico nel Secolo dei Lumi*

## 10:40 am

Anna Maria Rao (*Università di Napoli "Federico II"*), *La Repubblica Napoletana del 1799. Storia e Finzione*

## 11:00 am: Discussion

## 11:20 am: Coffee Break

## 11:30 am: Session 2

Chair: Enrico Vettore (*California State University Long Beach*)

## 11:40 am

Sienna Hopkins (*California State University Long Beach*), *The Fictitious Veil of Female Biographies and Occasional Glimmers of Truth*

## 12:00 pm

Rebecca Addicks Salerno (*University of California Riverside*), "This strange doctor that no body knows": Ann Radcliffe, *Anatomy and the "Medical Marketplace" in Eighteenth-Century England*

## 12:20 pm

Susan Carlile (*California State University Long Beach*), *When Fictionalizing 'Fact' Becomes a Dangerous Act*

## 12:35 pm: Discussion

## 1:00 pm: Lunch Break

## 2:00 pm: Session 3

Chair: Anna Maria Rao (*Università di Napoli "Federico II"*)

## 2:10 pm:

Pasquale Palmieri (*California State University Long Beach*), *Heroes, Impostors, and Criminals. Accounts of "Real" Events between Fiction and Reality*

## 2:30 pm:

Sabrina Ferri (*University of Notre Dame*), *Writing the Catastrophe: Reality and Poetic Transfiguration of the 1783 Messina and Calabria Earthquake*

## 2:50 pm: Discussion

## 3:10 pm: Coffee Break

## 3:20 pm: Session 4

Chair: Jon Snyder (*University of California, Santa Barbara*)

## 3:30 pm:

Clorinda Donato (*California State University Long Beach*), *Queer Narration in Giovanni Bianchi's Breve storia della vita di Catterina Vizzani 1744 and John Cleland's English Translation 1751*

## 3:50 pm:

Enrico Vettore (*California State University Long Beach*), "Il vero solo è bello": Alessandro Manzoni's *Story of the Column of Infamy and historical truth in The Betrothed*

## 4:10 pm: Discussion

## 4:30 pm:

## Final Roundtable

Moderator: Jon Snyder (*University of California, Santa Barbara*)  
Susan Carlile, Patrizia Delpiano, Clorinda Donato, Sabrina Ferri, Anna Maria Rao, Enrico Vettore