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MAPPING THE RECEPTION OF ENGLISH NOVELS IN ITALY
DURING THE LONG 18TH CENTURY:
A DIGITAL APPROACH

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The article aims at presenting a research project that is being conducted between the Vrije Universiteit of Brussels (VUB, Belgium) and the University of Guelph (Canada). Its title is *The reception of the English novel in the Italian literary press between 1700 and 1830: a transcultural enquiry into the early shaping of the modern Italian literary and cultural identity*, and it has been funded by the FWO (*Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek — Research Foundation Flanders*). The Flemish foundation awarded Andrea Penso a Post Doctoral fellowship that is co-supervised by Prof. Dirk Vanden Berghe (VUB) and Prof. Sandra Parmegiani (Guelph). The project, which will complement Parmegiani's work related to the project *Transcultural Journalism in the Long Eighteenth Century* (a recent development of the project *A Glimpse of England. The Reception of English Novels in Italy, 1750–1850*), investigates the reception of English novels in the Italian literary press during the Long Eighteenth Century (1700–1830). Its main purpose is the collection, analysis, and digitalization of a set of data concerning the publication, dissemination, translations, critical reviews, and editorial advertisements of English novels in the Italian literary press in the era of the Enlightenment and early Romanticism. The corpus consists of 500 reviews published in the most relevant literary journals of the time across the Italian peninsula. The project aims also to address a still uncharted aspect of Anglo-Italian intercultural relations: the question of the Italian reception of the English novel during the Enlightenment and the early Romantic culture is crucial to understanding the impact of a genre that has been a primary vehicle for social, political, and moral ideas, and is fundamental in order to outline the process that has defined modern subjectivity for three

centuries. The study will offer insights into the links between the endorsement of the Italian social structure and the development of the readers' self-consciousness through the diffusion and knowledge of English fiction as presented by the output of Italian 18th and 19th century literary journals.

In the Long Eighteenth century the periodical press was the main instrument for the national and international dissemination of hundreds of novels. It represented, in broader terms, the most direct and widespread medium that put eighteenth- and early- nineteenth century European readers in touch with foreign literature. The reception of the English novel in Europe is a still largely unknown aspect of Enlightenment and early Romantic culture, of particular relevance at a time when the European inter-cultural dialogue was being shaped according to interpretative lines that were to influence the European perception of foreign culture for centuries to come. This project, which is currently in its early stages, explores the processes that enabled the transnational circulation of ideas and texts in the modern age, and promotes awareness of the boundaries of cultural traditions and of their influence on identity formation. The research has three main objectives. The first consists in pinpointing the distinctive characteristics of Italian literary journalism, by carrying out a thematic, stylistic and discursive survey of the corpus. The second is to understand how English novels were introduced to the Italian readership, censored and translated, which moral values they disseminated, and how their reception influenced the Italian process of political and cultural unification. The third is to create a methodological paradigm that can be extended to the study of the reception of English novels in other national traditions through a combined use of Digital Humanities tools, sociology of literature and comparative literature approaches.

State of the art

The ancillary scholarly literature on the topic of Italian journalism and its role in the Italian reception of the English novel in the Long Eighteenth Century is considerably old. To this day, critics have focused on specific aspects of the role of the Italian literary press in the Long Eighteenth Century and of the reception of English novels: bibliographical enquiries,¹ studies about England's cultural

¹ See for example Harold Wade Streeter, *The Eighteenth-Century English Novel in French Translation: A Bibliographical Study* (New York: Blom, 1970), or Robert Balay, *Early Periodical Indexes: Bibliographies and Indexes of Literature Published in Periodicals before 1900* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2000).

influence in Italy;² surveys on the reception of English novels in Great Britain and the role of the press in the Long Eighteenth Century;³ studies on the development and function of English readership,⁴ and studies about Italian journalism.⁵ Even if these works provide an understanding of the cultural and socio-political context in which the press operated during the Enlightenment and early Romantic period, at a time of political and social fragmentation in pre-unified Italy, to this day there is no comprehensive study on the reception of foreign novels in Italy via the periodical press. Very few significant contributions on the topic have been produced in the past two decades. The project builds on studies that have focused on specific aspects of the reception of English novels in Italy and in Europe, and of the role of the Italian literary press as a vehicle for information in the “long 18th century.”⁶ The primary comparative frames of reference for this research project are the critical literature on the reception of English novels in England and the role

² See Manfred Pfister, ed. *The Fatal Gift of Beauty. The Italies of British Travellers* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), and Rosamaria Loretelli and Frank O’Gorman, eds. *Britain and Italy in the Long Eighteenth Century: Literary and Art Theories* (Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010).

³ As in the essays by Antonia Forster, *Index to Book Reviews in England, 1775–1800* (London: British Library, 1997); Clifford Siskin, “Eighteenth-century Periodicals and the Romantic Rise of the Novel,” *Studies in the Novel* 26.2 (Summer 1994): 26–42; Mark Parker, *Literary Magazines and British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000); Franco Moretti, *Atlante del romanzo europeo. 1800–1900* (Torino: Einaudi, 1997), and *The Novel. 2 Vols* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton UP, 2006); Doug Underwood, *Journalism and the Novel: Truth and Fiction, 1700–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008).

⁴ See for instance Jon P Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790–1832* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1987); Isabel Rivers, *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays* (London and New York: Leicester UP, 2001); Mary H. MacMurrin, *The Spread of Novels: Translation and Prose Fiction in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2010).

⁵ Among the others, see Ugo Bellocchi, *Storia del giornalismo italiano* (Bologna: Edizioni Edison, 1974); Paolo Murialdi, *Storia del giornalismo italiano* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000); Ilaria Crotti, Piermario Vescovo and Ricciarda Ricorda, *Il mondo vivo: aspetti del romanzo, del teatro e del giornalismo nel Settecento italiano* (Padova: Il poligrafo, 2001); Mario Infelise, *Prima dei giornali: alle origini della pubblica informazione, secoli XVI e XVII* (Rome: Laterza, 2002).

⁶ As described in Frank O’Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688–1832 (The Arnold History of Britain Series)* (Hodder Arnold, 1997); and Paul Baines, *The Long 18th Century* (London: Arnold, 2004).

of the press in the long 18th century,⁷ the studies on the development and function of English readership,⁸ and the bibliographical and critical investigations on the reception of English novels in 18th century France.⁹ Studies of Italian journalism provide an understanding of the cultural and socio-political context in which the press operated during the Enlightenment and the early Romantic period, at a time of political and social fragmentation in pre-unified Italy.¹⁰ In 1962, Maria Rosa Zambon published a *Bibliographie du roman français en Italie au 18e siècle*,¹¹ which—thanks to a substantial amount of bibliographical information and a selected anthology of text—represents a pioneering study of both early translations of French novels into Italian and novels that were printed and read in Italy in the original French language. Very little has been done with regard to the reception of English novels in Italy during the long 18th century.

To date a systematic examination of the reviews of foreign novels in the 18th century Italian literary press is still missing, as Daniela Mangione points out in her study *Prima di Manzoni*, which explores authors and readers in 18th century Italy.¹² The ancillary scholarly literature is quite outdated and dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century. In this regards, it is worth to mention the seminal work by Giambattista Marchesi entitled *Studi e ricerche intorno*

⁷ Points of reference in this sense are the work by Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700–1830* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1998); Donald H. Reiman, *The Romantics Reviewed: Contemporary Reviews of British Romantic Writers* (New York: Garland, 1972); William S. Ward, *Literary Reviews in British Periodicals 1788–1826: A Bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977); Robert Mayo, *The English Novel in the Magazines, 1740–1815. With a Catalogue of 1375 Magazine Novels and Novellettes* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1962).

⁸ See Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790–1832* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1987); Isabel Rivers, *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays* (London and New York: Leicester UP, 2001).

⁹ See the studies by Streeter and MacMurrin quoted above.

¹⁰ In this regard, also fundamental are Mario Infelise, *L'editoria veneziana nel Settecento* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1989), Luigi Piccioni, *Il giornalismo letterario in Italia* (Turin-Rome: Loescher, 1984), and Marino Berengo, *I giornali veneziani del Settecento* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1962).

¹¹ Maria Rosa Zambon, *Bibliographie du roman français en Italie au 18e siècle* (Florence: Sansoni, 1962).

¹² Daniela Mangione, *Prima di Manzoni: autore e lettore nel romanzo del Settecento* (Rome: Salerno editrice, 2012).

ai nostri romanzi e romanzieri del Settecento coll'aggiunta di una bibliografia dei romanzieri editi in Italia in quel secolo.¹³ Marchesi's book presents a substantial amount of data, but the inventory is incomplete and includes only a selected number of Italian translations of foreign novels. It thus ignores a large repertoire of titles made available to Italian readers through French translations (a language used by large portions of the learned community in most states and territories of pre-unified Italy) or whose existence was acknowledged through the many announcements of foreign titles in their original languages and their reviews in the literary press. In fact, all this data still needs to be thoroughly collected and analyzed today, from a stylistic, historical, geographical and sociological point of view. The project will indeed give particular importance to the role played by the French mediation (translations, book circulation and advertisements) in the Italian reception of English novels.

Maria Rosa Colombo's *Lo Spectator e i giornali veneziani del Settecento* is the only study of how British journalism influenced the 18th century Italian literary press, and is still a valuable source of information on the reception of English novels in Italy, even though it focuses on one major periodical publication.¹⁴ The influence of English culture at large has been addressed in two studies, but they are limited to the Milanese area: Franca Rossi's *La cultura inglese a Milano e in Lombardia nel Seicento e nel Settecento*, and *La stampa periodica milanese nella prima metà dell'Ottocento. Testi and concordanze*, by Stefania de Stefanis Ciccone.¹⁵ This research project will uncover a transcultural network of European journalism that will reveal for the first time the extent of the circulation of ideas and cultural practices around the reception of the English novel in Italy. Compared to previous studies, this project aims to engage in a more comprehensive and systematic inquiry. Beyond episodic and geographically limited areas of enquiry, the reception of English novels in Italy in the long 18th century is still an open field of research, waiting to be addressed and thoroughly studied. From the 18th through the early

¹³ Giambattista Marchesi, *Studi e ricerche intorno ai nostri romanzi e romanzieri del Settecento coll'aggiunta di una bibliografia dei romanzieri editi in Italia in quel secolo* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1903).

¹⁴ Rosa Maria Colombo, *Lo Spectator e i giornali veneziani del Settecento* (Bari: Adriatica editrice, 1966).

¹⁵ See Franca Rossi, *La cultura inglese a Milano e in Lombardia nel Seicento e nel Settecento* (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1970); and Stefania De Stefanis Ciccone, ed. *La stampa periodica Milanese nella prima metà dell'Ottocento. Testi e concordanze* (Pisa: Giardini, 1983).

19th century a fully-fledged inter-European cultural dialogue developed on the continent, thanks to the wide dissemination of knowledge made possible by the so-called “second printing revolution.” The periodical press was instrumental in such dissemination: the Italian literary press acted as a vehicle for the propagation of English novels through announcements and reviews, and played a key role in the propagation of new ideas and moral values, together with new stylistic and narrative features.

Objectives of the project

The research will outline specific readers’ response to the English novels, related to the revolutionary social ideas and the new narrative features they spread, according to geo-political areas. The study will trace different characteristics of the Italian reviews (concerning style, language, authors, objectives), and will delineate the particular function they played in the Anglo-Italian intercultural dialogue.

As stated above, the corpus consists of 500 critical reviews and editorial advertisements published in the literary journals of the time across the Italian peninsula in the pre-unitarian states, which have been collected in recent years during archival research. Particular emphasis will be given to the Venetian Republic, which at that time was the most active publishing hub in Italy (1/3 of all books published in Italy were printed in Venice). Among the 66 journals that have been examined, all published within the years 1700–1830, some of the most relevant are *Giornale de’ Letterati d’Italia* (1710–40); *Giornale de Letterati di Europa* (1727); *Giornale Enciclopedico di Liegi* (translation with additions of the Belgian journal *Journal encyclopédique de Liège*, 1756–60); *Biblioteca antica e moderna di Storia Letteraria* (1766–1768); *La Frusta letteraria* (1763–65), an example of the English influence on Italian culture as its model was the English journal *Spectator* (1711–12); *Il corrier letterario* (1766–1768); *L’Europa Letteraria* (1768–1773); *Giornale Enciclopedico* (1774–83) founded by the most important female journalist of the time, Elisabetta Caminer Turra; *Antologia Romana* (1774–1796); *Gazzetta Letteraria* (1774); *Nuovo Giornale enciclopedico d’Italia* (1787–1794); *Nuovo Giornale letterario d’Italia* (1788–1792); *Giornale bibliografico universale* (1807–1810); *Giornale italiano* (1811–1812); *Annali di Scienze e Lettere* (1810–12); and *Biblioteca italiana* (1815–1840). This material is nearly completely inaccessible in digitized form and it represents an untapped source on intellectual debates, trends in reader reception and popular culture, and the

transcultural dimension of intellectual exchanges in an increasingly cosmopolitan Europe. To carry on the research on the corpus effectively, the research team will create an open access, annotated and searchable digital repository (in the form of a dedicated website which will include a relational database) on the reception of English novels in Italy during the long 18th century. The repository with the encoded reviews will allow the application of modern Digital Humanities tools. An example of how the reviews will be classified and catalogued in the repository is shown in the following images, concerning the novel *A True and Genuine Narrative of Mr. and Mrs. Tenducci*, written by Dora Maunsell Tenducci in 1768. The first image (figure 1) shows the original review of the novel in the journal *L'Europa Letteraria* through a picture :

Figure 1

The next image (figure 2) represents the data provided for the description of the novel and of the journal where the review was published:

A True and Genuine Narrative of Mr. and Mrs. Tenducci

View Edit Revisions

• **Notes**

Title: A True and Genuine Narrative of Mr. and Mrs. Tenducci
 Author: Dora Maunsell Tenducci
 Place of Publication: London
 Date of Publication: 1768

• **Periodical**

Title: Europa Letteraria (L)
 Volume: I, ottobre 1768
 Issue: Tomo I, Parte II
 Type: Review
 Place of Publication: Venice
 Date of Publication: 1768

Figure 2

The last image (figure 3) provides the transcription of the review and its translation into English, annotated to facilitate the comprehension of the content or to integrate the bibliographical information. Each text will be the object of the analysis, as described below in *Methodology*.

Text:

A genuine history ec. Storia vera del Signore, e della Signora Tenducci, in 8. A Londra 1768. Il Sig. Tenducci è un Musico Italiano, il quale deve le delizie della sua voce a quella barbara operazione forse troppo comune nel suo paese. Le sue maniere oneste, e civili, la dolcezza del suo canto fecero la conquista d'una giovane Dama colla quale si maritò in Irlanda nel 1766. Ciò che parerà più singolare si è, che la tenerezza della sua Sposa non è diminuita dopo due anni di matrimonio. È ella stessa che scrive la sua Storia ad un suo amico di Bath, partecipandogli le persecuzioni ch'ella, e suo marito soffersero per parte de' suoi Parenti, quali non videro di buon occhio questa unione, e che restarono ogni sorta di mezzo per romperla, ma la Tenducci si è sempre opposta. Questa Storia indipendentemente dalla singolarità, che la rende curiosa, perché è vera, offre dettagli interessanti. Fanno fremere gli eccessi, a' quali si trasportò la famiglia dell'eroina. Questo straordinario matrimonio cagionò solo degli affanni alla Sposa, la quale non ha nemmeno avuta cosa che la risarcisca. Non è meno straordinario il suo affetto per il Sig. Tenducci, e reca meraviglia la costanza, con cui gli sacrifica il riposo della sua vita. Fu molto scherzato sopra la sua avventura, ma si doveva piuttosto compiangere.

Translation:

A True and Genuine Narrative of Mr. and Mrs. Tenducci, in 8. London 1768. Mr. Tenducci is an Italian Musician, who owes the delights of his voice to that barbarous surgery, probably far too common in his country. His honest and courteous manners and the sweetness of his singing won over the heart of a young Lady with whom he got married in Ireland in 1766. What will appear most curious is that the tenderness of his Wife was not diminished after two years of marriage. She herself is the writer of this Story, addressed to a friend in Bath, with whom she shares the persecutions that she and her husband suffered because of her Parents, who did not view their union highly, and who tried to break it off in every possible way, with Mrs. Tenducci's steady opposition. This Story, independently from the singularity that makes it curious because it is true, offers interesting details. The excesses reached by the heroine's family make one shiver. This extraordinary marriage was but a cause of troubles for the Bride, who has not even received any form of compensation for it. Her affection for Mr. Tenducci is no less extraordinary, and the constancy with which she sacrifices her life's peace to him is a cause of wonder. Her adventure was very much joked about, but it should have been pitied instead.

Notes:

See the 2011 study of *Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci and his wife Dorothea Maunsell*.

The Castrato and His Wife
 Helen Berry
 336 pages | 8pp black and white plates | 216x135mm
 978-0-19-956981-6 | Hardback | 22 September 2011
<http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780195569816.do>

Figure 3

The project has three primary objectives:

- a. To explore the transcultural dimension of the corpus of data relative to the information about the English novels, their translation and their diffusion in the Italian literary press during the long 18th century. The preliminarily created digital database will allow in-depth textual and geographical analysis and visualizations of popular reading trends in 18th and early 19th century Italy. Also, the tagging process which will help to categorize not only the thematic aspects but

also the lexicon of the corpus, allowing both a stylistic and linguistic analysis. A stylometric analysis will provide understanding of the specific features of Italian literary journalism at the time, unveiling the communication strategies that were adopted to disseminate knowledge and information.

b. The interpretation of the content of the reviews. This critical work will lead: 1) to understand the content's relevance when compared to reviews of Italian and French novels published in the same journals; 2) to comprehend the extent to which the Italian press was receptive to the innovative nature of English fiction; 3) to outline the debate the English fiction sparked and how this played a role in the definition of Italy's discourse about modern cultural identity (i.e. in which sense and by what means the Italian process of cultural and later political unification was influenced by the reception of the English novel). The research will uncover how English novels were introduced to the Italian readership, censored and translated. A preliminary reading suggests that the questioning of social hierarchies in the English novel, its examination of moral ambiguity, its interplay of gender roles, and its scrutiny of the ethical, religious, and psychological foundations of social norms, were in fact more shocking to the Italian cultural milieu than, for example, the clichéd 'looseness of morals' of French literature, whose dissemination had been structural in the construction of the 18th century social fabric. The controversial nature of English novels started a debate on their moral values, which in Italy was carried on under specific circumstances (i.e. the Catholic groundings of ethics and the predominance of Cartesianism in the philosophy of knowledge and in psychology).

The study of the readers' response to the contents spread by the novels via their reviews is deeply connected to the stylistic analysis of the reviews the research team will achieve with the work related to "Objective a." In fact, the outlining of the reviews' stylistic features is crucial to understanding in which ways the contents were revealed to the public, and how the audience was influenced in the perception of the moral values and the social messages of the novels (see below, under "Methodology," the details concerning the approach to this aspect of the research).

c. To create a methodological paradigm to examine the reception of English novels in the literary press of other Western European countries during the long 18th century. Even though the phenomenon of the reception of the English novels presents particular aspects for each country (e.g. morality was different in each nation, the importance of religion varies from country to country etc.), there are

well defined functional aspects that can be studied with the same methodology that will be developed in the project: the reviews' stylistic characteristics, their geographical distribution and the sociological impact of the divulgation of the novels are only a few of a series of important aspects that can be considered as constant features of this cultural phenomenon.

Methodology of the research

In order to explore the complexity of the reception of English novels via the literary journalism in the long 18th century, the study draws a line of continuity between history of the press (specifically, the peculiar history of the English and Italian press in the period),¹⁶ comparative literature,¹⁷ and reader response and reception studies.¹⁸ Furthermore, to investigate the interconnectedness of the cultural discourse in 18th century journalism, a combined approach of traditional exploration of print sources¹⁹ and digital repositories (18th Century Collections Online, 18th Century Journals Portal, Hathi Trust Digital Library, Internet Culturale, Nines, Orlando) will be needed.

The research has also a gender dimension. Notably, a woman, Elisabetta Caminer Turra, was among the most prolific reviewers. To this day, however, there are no in-depth studies about the role women had in the Italian literary press of

¹⁶ As defined in James Basker, "Criticism and the Rise of Periodical Literature," *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 4: *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. by H. B. Nisbet and C. Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997). 316–32; and in Giuseppe Farinelli, *Storia del giornalismo italiano: dalle origini ai giorni nostri* (Turin: UTET, 1997).

¹⁷ See for example Giovanni Magnani, *Giornalismo e attività letteraria dell'Ottocento* (Florence: Bulgarini, 1974); Stephen Botein, Jack R. Censer and Harriet Ritvo, "The Periodical Press in Eighteenth-Century English and French Society: A Cross-Cultural Approach," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 23 (1981): 464–90.

¹⁸ See Frank Donoghue, "Colonizing Readers: Review Criticism and the Formation of a Reading Public," *The Consumption of Culture, 1600–1800: Image, Object, Text*. Ed. by A. Bermingham and J. Brewer (New York: Routledge, 1995. 54–74); Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1998).

¹⁹ Beside the work by Forster, Reiman, Sgard, Taylor and Ward mentioned so far, see also Jean Sgard, ed. *Dictionnaire des journaux (1600–1789)*. 2 Vols. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation (Paris: Universitas, 1991), and *Dictionnaire des journalistes 1600–1789*. Rev. ed. 2 Vols. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1999).

the period. The project will apply women's studies methodologies²⁰ to investigate the topic of women's reading practices (the novel was considered a "female genre"),²¹ and it will also deal with all the moral issues connected to the novels.

Each study mentioned so far provides us with a precise analytical method and an interpretative key that unlocks certain hidden aspects of the role literary journalism had in the dissemination of knowledge and culture in the long 18th century. A transcultural approach to literary studies like the one pursued with this project is not yet mainstream in academia, especially in Italian studies, and needs to be developed and fostered. In this new perspective, the project will consider the reviews as a privileged source of information to understand the reception of English novels. The strategies will include a significant implementation of the methodologies for the study of the 18th and early 19th century literature and culture. To translate the research into an organized, meaningful and accessible discourse without compromising its complexity, the research team will use an innovative approach based on computational techniques to bring the data to fruition. The synergy between Digital Humanities and literary criticism will allow the research team to develop a new methodological paradigm for 18th century studies, which will guarantee the exploration of the intellectual network connected to journalism in that era. The corpus will initially undergo a process of cataloguing and digitization, with the help and supervision of Sandra Parmegiani and the THINC Lab in Guelph, a preliminary operation necessary to allow the following steps of the theoretical and critical work.

The text encoding process will be conducted using the software "Oxygen", and according to the standards set by the TEI (*Text encoding initiative*). The digital database will consist of a Drupal-based software for corpora, and it represents a straightforward way to develop the research and organise the information. This will be the basis of the subsequent computational, textual and critical analyses. Once completed, in fact, the encoding and mark-up process will make the texts

²⁰ See Fiorella D'Alia, *La donna nel romanzo italiano del Settecento* (Rome: Fratelli Palombi), 1990; Sharon Marie Di Fino, *The Intellectual Development of German Women in Selected Periodicals from 1725 to 1784* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990); Silvia Franchini and Simonetta Soldani, eds. *Donne e giornalismo: Percorsi e presenze di una storia di genere* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2004).

²¹ As described in Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain, 1750–1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1999).

completely searchable. The database will allow a variety of data visualizations and analyses (style, language, contents), which will be the basis of the critical study.

The digital-oriented research on the corpus will follow four lines of enquiry. The first consists in a stylistic and linguistic analysis, which will be pursued equalizing and comparing stylistic and lexical constellations belonging to different discursive practices from various journals and authors. Digital stylometry, word frequency and statistical analyses tools such as MiniTab and Intelligent Archive will be used during this phase. The analysis will unveil the peculiar stylistic features and elements of the Italian literary journalism of the time, a neglected aspect of the studies on the history of Italian journalism to date (with repercussions also on the history of foreign culture reception). The categorization of the lexicon will also allow us to understand which novels were the most read and translated, and also which translations were the most widespread in the country. A preliminary survey shows that the reviews cover mostly realistic (e.g. Gibbes, Defoe), experimental (e.g. Sterne) and sentimental (e.g. Turner-Smith, Inchbald, Richardson) novels.

The second approach will concern the spatial analysis of the data, which will be mapped thanks to *GIS* (Geographical Information System) digital tools integrated with Geo-criticism.²² The analysis will be supported by a careful survey of sources and their circulation, with a methodological approach combining material culture and philology.

The third approach consists in the analysis of the database's "genealogical dimension", i.e. the comparative analysis of reviews that were taken from French or English periodicals and made their way into the Italian press. These sources have already been identified, and the research team will be able to understand the extent of the influence French and English journalism had on the Italian press (see also above in "Objectives"), and to outline the specific Italian input. In the examination of each review, the research team will point out the elements that are original and innovative with respect to the French reviews of the time, which the Italian press copied from, often adapting the contents. Conversely, the research team will also focus on the re-interpretations of Italian reviewers who drew on the Italian literary tradition but challenged its subjects, genres and linguistic structures.

The last approach seeks to establish a crossover between sociological and historical elements by blurring the borders between them: in order to fully understand what impact the reception of English novels had on the Italian readership,

²² See Bertrand Westphal, *La Géocritique. Réel, Fiction, Espace* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 2007).

an analysis of the relationship between the literary journals and their target audience will be required. This analysis will lead to describing the involvement of the literary press in the process that led to the construction of a national cultural identity, and will therefore be nourished also by imagology and imagined communities' theories tools.²³

The existence of a link between literature, journalism and sociology in the study of the reception of the English novels is the reason why this research project also includes as a theoretical and analytical framework sociology of literature, which will constitute one of the principal methodological tools.²⁴ This choice is motivated by the observation that the English novel's redefinition of social hierarchies, its examination of the feeble boundaries between decorum and virtue, between aristocracy and the nobility of the individual, its frequent empowerment of women, its empathy towards common people, its overt realism and Protestant ethics, had a bigger impact on the Italian cultural scene than, for instance, the deprecated French laxity of morals, as explained above. The study of the reception of the moral values divulged by the novels' reviews will be conducted following the approach theorized by Jouve and aimed at identifying, in a semiological perspective, the values clearly shown by a text, the so-called "effet-valeur."²⁵ The study of the relation between literature and social and moral values is based on a double perspective: firstly, it is to investigate how literature influences social values, i.e.

²³ As theorized in Menno Spiering, ed. *Nation building and writing literary history* (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999); Manfred Beller and Joep Leersen, *Imagology. The cultural construction and literary representations of national characters. A critical survey* (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 2007).

²⁴ See for instance Jonathan Rose, "Rereading the English Common Reader: A Preface to a History of Audiences." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53 (1992): 47–70; Isabel Rivers, *Books and their readers in eighteenth-century England: new essays* (London and New York: Leicester UP, 2001); Barbara M. Benedict, "Readers, Writers, Reviewers, and the Professionalization of Literature," *Cambridge Companion to Literature, 1740–1830*, ed. by T. Keymer and J. Mee (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004).

²⁵ Vincent Jouve, *Poétique des valeurs* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2001). Jouve's work is based on other studies such as Jean Paul Sartre, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (Paris : Gallimard, 1948); Roland Barthes, *Le degré zéro de l'écriture* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1953); Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1953); Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni, *L'énonciation. De la subjectivité dans le langage* (Paris : Armand Colin, 1980); Claude Lafarge, *La valeur littéraire* (Paris: Fayard, 1983); Algirdas Julien Greimas, *Sémantique structurale, Du Sens, et Du Sens II* (Paris : Le Seuil, 1966, 1970, 1983).

how the diffusion of the texts (and in the case of this project, the diffusion of reviews and discussions), contributes to shaping people's mentality. According to this theory, every literary work has always been perceived as an active action on the world, effective thanks to style (Sartre) or to contents (Barthes). The second approach is complementary and seeks to analyse what social circuits develop "literary value", and how, i.e. the process that leads to the rise and popularity of a certain literary genre (the novel, in the case of the project) in precise geopolitical areas and historical moments. By applying this dual approach and the methodology conceived by Jouve to the analysis of the corpus, and thanks to the aforementioned study of the reviews' style and contents, of the historical context and of the journals' diffusion and impact, the research will allow a deeper understanding of the audience's reception and perception of the values spread by the reviews. The combination of the aforementioned methodological approaches makes it possible to relocate inside the canon of Italian literature and history the role of the reception of the English novel, and paves the way to an interdisciplinary methodology (literary, social, historical) that, if applied to the corpus under examination, gives us an insight into the communication techniques through which the values of the novels reviewed were spread and perceived. The reception of the English novel in Italy seems particularly suitable for a critical approach of this kind, and could therefore become a landmark case-study for broadening the scope of critical analysis. Indeed, as noted above, this study has a comparative perspective, so its methodology could also be applied to the analysis of the reception of foreign literature in other, non-Italian, literary press.

Dissemination of the research results

The open access form of dissemination through an institutional repository, and the availability of data will ensure the accessibility of the research material inside and outside the international academic community. Beyond academia this project will change the understanding of the impact of the English novel as a vehicle for cultural diversity and identity formation in pre-global environments, and as a benchmark of fictional practices in pre-unified Italy. It will allow non-expert audiences to access a network of transcultural debates that they were previously precluded from by linguistic barriers and logistic inaccessibility. This will change the mode of enquiry into a whole historical epoch, opening up fresh and new

perspective on the literary, sociological, cultural, and political role of the long eighteenth-century English novel outside of Great Britain.

This project will also serve educators who wish to present concrete examples of cosmopolitanism and transnational cultural practices at the dawn of modern Europe through textual and visual tools. The open access form of dissemination will also serve members of the public at large who are interested in the Enlightenment, the age of the novel, the Italian connection to English culture and the Grand Tour, and who seldom have the opportunity to access the popular culture of the period, such as journalism, in English translation. The wide dissemination of the research results will thus provide an easy access to the role played by cultural differences and expectations within Europe at an early stage of European cosmopolitanism.