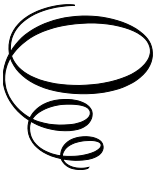
Fact and Ideology in the Reporting of News about Italy from 1600 to the Unification

Fact and Ideology in the Reporting of News about Italy from 1600 to the Unification

Edited by

Nicholas Brownlees, Brendan Dooley
and Stefano U. Baldassarri

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



Fact and Ideology in the Reporting of News about Italy from 1600 to the Unification

Edited by Nicholas Brownlees, Brendan Dooley and Stefano U. Baldassarri

This book first published 2026

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-0364-6764-7
ISBN (Ebook): 978-1-0364-6765-4

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

BRENDAN DOOLEY, NICHOLAS BROWNLEES,
STEFANO U. BALDASSARRI

This volume has its origins at a conference organised at ISI Florence (International Studies Institute) in Florence on 23-24 October 2024. On the first day of the conference, proceedings were held at ISI's premises at Palazzo Rucellai while on the second day they moved to ISI's other quarters at Palazzo Bargagli, another historic residence in the Renaissance quarter of the city. The conference was entitled "'News from Italy': Fact and Ideology in the Reporting of News about Italy from 1600 to the Unification". The conference topic had been chosen by the three colleagues and friends presently editing this volume: Stefano Baldassarri, Nicholas Brownlees and Brendan Dooley. Each one of us had worked in the topic area but from rather different perspectives. Now we felt the time had come to pool our resources and create a forum for an informed discussion on both the content and mode of reporting Italian news in the European and American press from the seventeenth century until the Unification of Italy (1860-1871). What we wanted to privilege at the conference and in this subsequent volume was ground-breaking research regarding not just the kinds of news stories reported about Italy in the international press but, as important, the news language, structure and occasional ideological bias adopted in the reporting of such news.

The conference was a success and spurred by exciting, new research emerging from the event we decided to further develop the project for the purposes of a publication. A general Call for Papers was sent out and on the basis of what was received a careful selection was made of not only the contributions of some conference participants but other researchers who had not attended.

There is no question our volume has benefitted from the recent powerful trend towards the internationalisation of media history (see, for example, Raymond and Moxham (2016), Ciappelli and Nider (2017), Brownlees (2023), Dooley and Molino (2025)) but where this collection differs from preceding work is by beginning with one location, Italy, and drawing in the

international perspective on events occurring there, including the modifications in the stories due to the purposes and viewpoints of the writers and their masters. This focus also determines a concentration on the actual content of news, an element often missing in accounts of international news flows, thus permitting contributors to examine language use by close and distant reading. The broad chronological reach allows the application of this approach to a period of extraordinary transformations, from the Thirty Years War to the Spanish Succession, and from the Napoleonic wars to the age of Garibaldi and everything in between, from the cultural offshoots of the Baroque and modern science, to those of the Enlightenment to those of Romanticism to those of early Modernism.

For much of the period under study here, knowledge about Italy was regarded as an asset, and even, occasionally, to some, as a social or cultural accoutrement. In any case, the place could not be ignored. But what kind of place was it, really? Contrary to the dismissive usage by the baron von Metternich, "Italy" was far more than a mere geographical expression. Long before nationhood, numerous features distinguished this region in respect to others, engaging the interest of readers and travellers while inspiring action by powers abroad, for reasons that will be explored in due course. The chapters here convey a vast array of experiences—political, social, artistic, culinary, and more—communicated within Europe over some 270 years and constituting the shared conception of a highly diverse land that would eventually be fully unified in 1871.

The particular features of this land, at least from a cartographical standpoint, were well understood by the ancient Romans, whose term "Italia," already in the time of Pliny the Elder, encompassed the main areas of Latium, Campania, Etruria, Umbria, Samnium, Venetia, Transpadania, Liguria, Aemilia, Apulia, Calabria, Lucania, Sardinia, Corsica, Histria and so forth (Salmon 1982). These areas were bounded in the north by Raetia, comprising parts of modern-day Austria, Switzerland and Germany, along with Norica, Pannonia superior, Alpes, and Narbonensis. The fall of the Roman Empire under pressure from inside and outside created a power vacuum, followed by various aggregations and disgregations over the centuries, including the geographically limited Carolingian "kingdom of Italy".

From the thirteenth century writers began to build upon the theme of an Italy free to flourish without the burden of domination by external powers (Rossi 1973). Dante famously referred to "a slave, hostelry of sorrow, a ship without a helmsman in a great storm" (*Purgatorio* Canto VI), while finding regional unity in the particular post-Latin tongue in use outside the elite realms of the learned (*De vulgari eloquentia*). In the following century

Petrarch returned to the theme of the downtrodden region in need of guidance, perhaps from the Italian lords: "virtue will take up arms against madness, and cut short the warring: for ancient courage is not yet dead in Italian hearts" (n. 128 of the Canzoniere).

Machiavelli wrote his prescient masterpiece of political thought, *The Prince*, in the midst of yet another among many attempts by Italian states to draw Transalpine powers into Italian affairs for vengeance or for gain, namely, the War of the League of Cambrai. After a dedication to Lorenzo di Piero, duke of Urbino, the current protagonist of the Medici family, followed by a brilliant characterisation of the authoritarian ruler, he concluded the work by appealing to an unnamed hero who might, as he says, "liberate Italy from the Barbarians" (chap. 26, tr. Marriott 1908; and Najemy 2022:2). The words would resound across the centuries, that "this opportunity" ought not to be missed, "for letting Italy at last see her liberator appear." Lest there should be any doubt about the family ties of a possible liberator, Machiavelli reverts to the Medici connection, pointing out that there was "not to be seen at present one in whom [Italy] can place more hope than in your illustrious house." The suggestion would not have been lost on Lorenzo's grand nephew, Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, the future Pope Clement VII.

For any such liberator, the possible glories would be great. Machiavelli goes on, suggesting that "one cannot express the love with which" such a unifier "would be received in all those provinces which have suffered so much from these foreign scourings, with what thirst for revenge, with what stubborn faith, with what devotion, with what tears." Indeed, "what door would be closed to him?" He exclaimed, "To all of us this barbarous dominion stinks. Let, therefore, your illustrious house take up this charge with that courage and hope with which all just enterprises are undertaken, so that under its standard our native country may be ennobled." In Machiavelli's view, it was only a matter of time.

The wave of so-called Tacitism (i.e., studies loosely based on Tacitus) ushered in by the Counter Reformation explicitly denounced the secular morality and political realism that had landed Machiavelli's work on the Index, while implicitly condoning the basic principles (Burke 1969, Tuck 1993: 31-65, Waszink 2024). And part of this realism was the emergence of the state as the fundamental unit of human survival, with all the attendant features, including ministries, bureaucracies and standing armies. An idealistic view of Italian unity was sidelined in the search for sufficient practical political equilibrium to prevent the ever-present Transalpine powers from ceding too much to a single peninsular authority, while

keeping the peninsula in check by the threat of ever more violent weaponry wielded against ever more powerfully fortified cities.

Intellectual movements at the turn of the seventeenth century focus attention once again on the specificity of Italian culture amid the diversity of the political arrangements. A famous "querelle" erupted, with Italian cultural figures (Ludovico Antonio Muratori and others) on one side and, on the other side, their French counterparts (for instance, Dominique Bouhours and followers), arguing about the quality of post-Antiquity Italian literary production (Viola 2001). A new academy is born, called the Repubblica letteraria, focused on values shared across the various Italian states and regions, followed by a journal, the *Giornale de' letterati d'Italia*, dedicated to encouraging new literary and scientific productivity (Vecchi 1979).

The Italian Enlightenment movement (Illuminismo) formed the context for pre-Risorgimento murmerings in the sphere of ideas (Trampus 2006). For instance, in an account of "the country of the Italians" written for the Milan-based opinion journal *Il Caffè* (1765, no. 2), Gian Rinaldo Carli decried the jealousies, the localisms, that divided those native to the country, quite apart from the control by foreign powers fomenting divisions based on interests. Meanwhile, collective cultural chauvinism was thwarted, he says, by modesty regarding important accomplishments, in science and in art, in comparison with other countries. Nonetheless, he claimed that empirically there was no doubt about a shared culture, and the most basic confirmation of the essential sociocultural qualities was that "an Italian is never a stranger in Italy."

Toward the end of the century, tensions began to increase within Illuminismo between reform-minded rulers and constitution-minded intellectuals. The example of the French Revolution inspired many, while some, such as the Milanese writer Pietro Verri, considered that local divisions were still too great to make possible a collective movement of any sort in the political realm (Capra 2012). The arrival of the French armies with Napoleon in 1796 began to change things to some degree, by throwing existing state structures into confusion, and abetting somewhat open-ended regime change (Broers 2005). That year Matteo Galdi launched the idea of a united Italy while writing about the need to establish a Republic in the kingdom of Naples. Three years later Gregorio Mattei wrote: "the Neapolitan Jacobins were the first to give a loud voice to sleepy Italy" (*Il Veditore Repubblicano,* 21 March-20 aprile, 1799, and see Croce 1961: 234). Soon the French conquests under Napoleon gave birth successively to a Cisalpine Republic, an Italian Republic, and finally a Kingdom of Italy as

a vassal state to the French Empire, all comprised of various configurations including Lombardy, the Veneto and Emilia Romagna.

The 1815 Congress of Vienna is often said to signal the onset of the political Risorgimento per se. Replacement of the Napoleonic order by a restoration of dynastic rule overall, and a new attempt to redraw state boundaries and create interdependencies on an ever larger scale, triggered more explicit and determined actions in regard to a possible nation-state (Romani 2018). From the "Carbonari" insurgency to Giuseppe Mazzini's "Giovine Italia" movement, and from the 1830s insurrections to Giuseppe Garibaldi's return from exile in South America in 1848, a movement was gathering adherents; and the eventual outcome, after many momentous occurrences, including the engagement of the kingdom of Sardinia, along with the various cultural features distinguishing the peninsula from time to time, is discussed in the chapters below. The following discussion gives an idea of what the reader may expect.

Volume Contents

The first decades of the seventeenth century saw the tentative beginnings of periodical print news in Europe (Dooley 2026). Although the published news reported on events occurring throughout Europe there was one geographical area that dominated much of the news: Italy. It was through early news pamphlets, gazettes, corantos and other miscellaneous print formats that avid or merely curious readers of the time could learn about Italian affairs. However, while important in shaping the seventeenth-century image of Italy it would be simplistic to believe that the early press was the sole print genre of the time to report on Italy and its inhabitants. As the European press evolved, it became the primary source for the acquisition of knowledge about Italian politics, society and culture but in the seventeenth century, especially the first decades, much general knowledge of Italy was acquired through another print genre: travelogues. We have therefore decided to open the volume with a chapter on seventeenth-century travel writing about Italy, focusing on not only why it was such an important source of information about contemporary Italy but the extent to which the stylistic features of travelogues emulate and differ from news discourse features of the time.

In this first chapter Birte Bös argues that seventeenth-century travel writing can, at least to some extent, be considered as news, given the shared informational purposes, intended audiences and common linguistic practices of the two genres. In illustration of this, Bös explores processes of self-positioning in ten travelogues about Italy. Self-positioning is defined

here as the way in which travel writers strategically constructed their identities and stances in their publications. After historically contextualising seventeenth-century travel writing, and its links to news discourse, the author outlines processes of metadiscursive positioning in the ten selected travelogues. These processes are manifested in the macrostructural elements framing the publications. They include titles, dedications and addresses to the reader (found also in news pamphlets of the time), but also microlinguistic elements such as references to essential news values including novelty and credibility.

The next two chapters take us into the emerging seventeenth-century Spanish news market and how the Spanish press engaged with Italian events throughout the next two centuries. Inmaculada Solís García, Italo Cosentino and Margarita Fernández González examine the manner in which the Spanish media shaped the portrayal of Italy from the first seventeenth-century newspapers up until the end of the Ancien Régime and the Napoleonic wars. Focusing, in particular, on the reporting of Italian politics, economic news and culture, the study illustrates how the reporting reflected changing Spanish interests, both political and otherwise, in the Italian peninsula. By the first decades of the nineteenth century the prominence the Spanish press had given to Italian politics—and Spain's often preeminent role in shaping that politics especially in the south of the country—was now superseded by a greater focus on Italy's cultural heritage and commercial significance given the two countries' close economic ties.

Marco Cipolloni also investigates the reporting of Italian news in the Spanish press over the same period, though his focus is on the representation of Italian cities. In particular, the chapter analyses the manner in which the press contributed to the creation and perception of Italian cities in the media, thereby influencing public opinion and the political sphere. In the author's investigation, prominence is given to how the reporting of Italian cities and city space is influenced by Spain's and Portugal's own changed commercial and cultural interests following the opening up of markets and new societies in the Americas.

The next three chapters, instead, investigate the reporting of Italian news in the British and Irish press of the eighteenth century. Carlotta Paltrinieri begins the examination with a close study of essays, travel accounts and news reports about Italy in *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1731–1735). The author explores the ideological perspective which is found not only in the selection of news but also its framing. In drawing attention to the contrast between Italy's celebrated classical past and its perceived present-day decline, much of the writing is shown to serve British ideological aims by constructing narratives of British superiority.

Massimo Sturiale also detects an ideological perspective in how British newspapers reported and framed the devastating 1783 Calabrian and Sicilian earthquakes. Drawing on a corpus of seventy articles published in the British press between March and October 1783, the study combines digital humanities methods with comparative discourse analysis to explore the interplay of factual reportage, rhetorical strategy and ideological framing. The author argues that not only did the press carry out an informative function, through the provision of scientific information and often detailed reportage, but also a diplomatic one in that the positive representations of King Ferdinand—an ally of the British government—acted as a form of soft diplomacy in support of British foreign policy.

Davide Mazzi also investigates the interplay of fact and ideology in the reporting of Italian events but this time in two Irish newspapers during the last sixty years of the eighteenth century. The two publications in question, the *Freeman's Journal* and *Belfast Newsletter*, representing respectively a pro- and anti-Catholic outlook, provide substantially different news and hence viewpoints about Italy. By adopting frame analysis (Entman 1993; Chong and Druckman 2006) Mazzi investigates the strategies adopted to enhance the credibility of the different sets of news stories designed to propagate contrasting ideological standpoints.

The next two chapters are also situated in the eighteenth century, though now the focus is on how Italy is reported in the American press. In her chapter Elisabetta Cecconi examines how archaeological discoveries in Italy were reported in eighteenth-century American weeklies. Drawing on Bednarek and Caple's Discursive News Values Analysis (2017), she analyses the linguistic features of newsworthiness in articles taken from the *Early American Newspaper Series 1 (1690-1876)* for the period from 1740 to 1799. The analysis leads the author to consider how narratives about Italian antiquities shaped the representation of Italy as a site of classical grandeur and to what extent such news altered America's own self-image in a period of acute political change.

Polina Shvanyukova also investigates the reporting of Italian news in the American press, though in her case study she examines the reporting of the conflict between France and Austria (and its allies) in northern Italy in 1796-1797. Prioritising news reports regarding the town of Brescia in northern Italy, she explores news content and transmission, aligned with a linguistic analysis of temporal and spatial references, to not only investigate the internal coherence of the reports but also the extent to which the focus on military and political matters detracts from the very human travails suffered by local Italians at the hands of the foreign armies.

Matylda Włodarczyk's focus is instead on the portrayal of women, and more particularly on sensational and gossip-like accounts of women in Italy and other European countries in the Polish press from the 1760s to the 1820s. Combining the frameworks of sociopragmatics of person reference and discursive representations of sex and gender, the author examines the referential forms used in relation to women in the selected texts. On the basis of this exploratory research, Włodarczyk concludes that while there would seem to be an overall pattern in that Polish news generally achieved trivialisation of femininity by means of recurrent motifs, there is one notable exception in the reporting of an Italian woman. The chapter concludes with proposals for further research in this new transnational area of research.

The last three chapters of the volume examine British reporting of events leading up to and including the Unification of Italy. In the first chapter Isabella Martini analyses the linguistic representation of the Italian Carbonari, a secret and in part revolutionary society, which gained much notoriety not only in Italy but in the British press in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Focusing, in particular, on Letters to the Editor (LTEs), the author identifies the recurrent linguistic features that characterise the representation of the Carbonari in LTEs and what these tell us about a specific ideological stance in the reporting of the society. In evaluating the ideological representation of the Carbonari, Martini considers whether they are seen as directly or indirectly associated with a general understanding of social well-being.

Christina Samson also investigates LTEs in the British press, though in her study the focus is on their content and language in relation to the Unification of Italy. Adopting a corpus driven approach integrated with discourse analysis, the author analyses a select but representative corpus of British newspapers between 1853-1864 to identify key words regarding the Unification and how they are used in context. The findings not only underline the presence in LTEs of personal viewpoint and evaluation but more particularly indicate how such features are designed to both move British public opinion towards an acceptance of the Italian patriots' legitimate right to free Italy and concurrently foster a sense of national consciousness amongst Italians themselves for social well-being.

The last chapter of the volume appropriately examines the reporting of the final events in the Unification of Italy. In the chapter Giovanni Iamartino explores what a substantial, representative sample of the British Press wrote about events immediately leading up to and following the Capture of Rome on 20th September 1870. In particular, the author examines four main themes connected to the event: (a) the dogma of Papal infallibility; (b) the so-called *Questione Romana* or Roman Question; (c) the capture of Rome

on 20th Sept 1870, and (d) the plebiscite for the annexation of Rome and the Papal States. The author investigates not only the events themselves but how they are reported in the British press and what such reporting tells us about British attitudes of mind to the Italians and Italy of the day. Although such attitudes were specifically related to contemporary Italy, they had their roots in the age-old traditional mixture of strong British admiration and undisguised contempt for all things Italian.

References

Bednarek, Monika and Helen Caple. 2017. *The Discourse of News Values. How News Organizations Create Newsworthiness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Broers, Michael. 2005. *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy, 1796-1814. Cultural Imperialism in a European Context?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Brownlees, Nicholas (ed.). 2023. *The Edinburgh History of the British and Irish Press: Volume 1: Beginnings and Consolidation 1640–1800*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Burke, Peter. 1969. "Tacitism". In *Tacitus*, edited by T.A. Dorey, 149–171. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Capra, Carlo. 2012. "The rise of liberal constitutionalism in Italy: Pietro Verri and the French Revolution". *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 17/5. 516-526

Chong, Dennis and James N. Druckman. 2006. "A theory of framing and opinion formation in competitive elite environments". *Journal of Communication* 57. 99-118.

Ciappelli, Giovanni and Valentina Nider. 2017. *La invención de las noticias: las relaciones de sucesos entre la literatura y la información (siglos XVI-XVIII)*. Trento: Università di Trento. Dipartimento di lettere e filosofia.

Croce, Benedetto. 1961. *La rivoluzione napoletana del 1799*. Bari: Laterza.

Dooley, Brendan. 2026. *Making News in Renaissance Europe 1500-1640.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dooley, Brendan and Paola Molino (eds.). 2025. *Years of News: Event and Narration in Early Modern Times*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols.

Entman, Robert M. 1993. "Framing: Toward a clarification of a fractured paradigm". *Journal of Communication* 43/4. 51-58.

Marriott, W. K. 1908. *Machiavelli's Prince*. New York: Dutton.

Najemy, John. 2022. *Machiavelli's Broken World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Raymond, Joad and Noah Moxham (eds.). 2016. *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*. Leiden: Brill.
Romani, Roberto. 2018. *Sensibilities of the Risorgimento. Reason and Passions in Political Thought*. Leiden: Brill.
Rossi, Joseph. 1973. "National consciousness in Italian literature". *The Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association* 27/3. 159-166.
Salmon, Edward T. 1982. *The Making of Roman Italy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
Trampus, Antonio. 2006. "Gianrinaldo Carli at the centre of the Milanese Enlightenment". *History of European Ideas* 32/4. 456–476.
Tuck, Richard. 1993. *Philosophy & Government, 1572-1651*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Vecchi, Alberto. 1979. "La nuova academia letteraria d'Italia". *Accademie e cultura: aspetti storici tra Sei e Settecento*, 39-72. Florence: Olschki.
Viola, Corrado. 2001. *Tradizioni letterarie a confronto. Italia e Francia nella polemica Orst-Bouhours*. Verona: Fiorini
Waszink, Jan. 2024. "Introduction". Tacitism. Special Issue of *History of European Ideas* 51/1. 1–9.

"I ONLY TELL YOU WHAT IS BELIEVED AT ROME, AND NOT WHAT I BELIEVE MY SELF": PROCESSES OF SELF-POSITIONING BY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY TRAVEL WRITERS

BIRTE BÖS

Abstract

This contribution examines travel writing as a source of news from Italy, which, over the course of the seventeenth century, developed into an indispensable destination on the "Grand Tour" of Europe. Based on a corpus of ten travelogues extracted from *Early English Books Online*, it explores how travel writers positioned themselves and their writing vis-a-vis their readers. The self-positioning is indicated by macrolinguistic elements, particularly the editorial metadiscourse framing the publications, as well as microlinguistic features, e.g. references to novelty and trustworthiness, the use of evaluative adjectives and features of involvement such as first- and second-person pronouns. The study thus sheds light on the ways in which travel writers negotiated their roles as objective observers, moral judges and engaged interactants in a country that was still unchartered territory for many of their contemporaries at home.

1. Introduction

At first glance, a contribution on seventeenth-century travelogues might seem to fall somewhat outside the scope of a volume regarding the reporting of news from Italy. However, I argue that travel writing can, at least to some extent, be considered as news, given their shared informational purposes, intended audiences and common linguistic practices. Both news and travel writing were in their formative period in the seventeenth century. While this pivotal phase has been extensively studied in relation to news discourse (e.g. Brownlees 2011), there is still a significant need for linguistic research on travel writing (notable exceptions being Pinnavaia 2013, Tosi 2020, Sturiale 2021).

This study explores processes of self-positioning in ten travelogues about Italy. Self-positioning is defined here as the way in which travel writers strategically constructed their identities and stances in their publications. After a historical contextualisation of seventeenth-century travel writing with its links to news discourse (section 2) and an introduction of the corpus (section 3), I will outline processes of metadiscursive positioning (section 4). These processes are manifested in the macrostructural elements framing the publications, such as titles, dedications and addresses to the reader, but also microlinguistic elements dispersed in the texts, e.g. references to values such as novelty and credibility. Together, they elucidate how the authors envisioned their roles and publications. The metadiscursive perspective is complemented by an investigation of selected aspects of evaluation (positive and negative evaluative adjectives) and involvement (first- and second-person pronouns) in section 5, shedding further light on the writers' stances.

The variability of the research results indicates that genre conventions were not yet fully established and travel writers adopted different and also fluctuating roles, as objective observers, enthusiastic admirers and fierce critics, experienced mentors and loyal travel companions. Their publications brought information and entertainment from a country that still felt exotic to many of their contemporaries at home (cf. Pinnavaia 2013: 132).

2. Travelogues and/as News

Travel writing has a long, varied tradition. While there are different definitions of travelogues, it is commonly agreed that

> the content has to describe travels—usually referring to the movement of people in time and space—that have a starting point and lead the traveller via a variable set of further points outside of her or his familiar cultural environment. (Gruber 2022: 1).

Thus, seventeenth-century travelogues often contained news, unheard of information about distant places, events, and experiences, political, social and cultural matters, particularly at a time when first-hand access to far-off lands was still limited. Yet, what exactly was reported in travelogues and how it kept changing over time, depended on the travellers themselves, their reasons for travelling and motives for travel-writing, their audiences and emerging and shifting genre conventions.

Over the course of the seventeenth century, Italy became an indispensible destination on the 'Grand Tour' of Europe. The motives of British travellers evolved from primarily educational pursuits to including elements of social

status, cultural refinement and aesthetic appreciation. At the beginning of the century, young British gentlemen travelled "with a programmatic set of introductions to continental aristocracies", the experiences abroad being considered an important part of scholarly education and a major asset for a government career (Tosi 2020: 6). By the mid-seventeenth century, a new class of affluent travellers developed a keen interest in collecting Italian art as a symbol of status and sophistication, and, towards the turn of the eighteenth century, a growing number of travellers explored Italy's architecture, ancient ruins, and refined urban life (Brennan 2004: 37; Tosi 2020: 7).

While travel and writing have long been closely related, it was in the sixteenth century that "writing became an essential part of travelling; documentation an integral aspect of the activity" (Hulme and Youngs 2002: 3), and during the seventeenth century, travel writing found increasingly larger and diversified audiences. As noted by Sell, "one of the […] prime motives of a traveller-writer is to produce exophoric representations, to describe realities beyond the geographical and cultural reality he himself sets out from" (2017: 16). Yet, approaches varied, from detailed factual descriptions of travel routes, places and sights to more personal observations regarding people and culture, which, Tosi (2020: 9) argues, contributed to the development of national identities and the modern notion of "otherness".

Clearly, the accounts were influenced by the writers' own backgrounds and positions, which "strongly shaped what they perceived as foreign or other and how they described it" (Gruber et al 2019: 129). Furthermore, being "caught up in the turbulent political history within which they were produced", many travelogues also reflected on contemporary states of affairs at home (Hadfield 1998: 2), and could thus unfold news value not just with regard to foreign matters, but also domestic politics.

In the seventeenth century, genre boundaries in print were not yet well-defined or firmly established, and travel writing, just like news, was still characterised by experimentation (Brownlees 2015: 4; Din-Kariuki 2024: 322, Hadfield 1998: 1). In the sixteenth century, pilgrim narratives had provided a model for early travel accounts, featuring similarities in narrative style and their conceptualisation as *relation* or *report*, as indicated by their titles. However, when, during the seventeenth century, in addition to pilgrims and merchants, more and more young aristocrats travelled abroad, they "felt under a moral obligation to compile a personal memoir as evidence of their educational experience" (Tosi 2020: 11). This also had an impact on the format of travel writing, which was frequently published in the shape of letters and journals (Kinsley 2019: 408).

Indeed, letters had a formative role in many genres, including travelogues and news. As pointed out by Bazerman, they seem "to have served as a transitional form to allow genres to emerge with some sense of defined communicative task with some moorings of social relationship" (2000: 23, see also Bös 2015: 35ff.). In travel writing, the epistolary format gave writers a chance "to utilise formal conventions to familiarise the unfamiliar" (Kinsley 2019: 414). It allowed for "chapterisation" (Kinsley 2019: 421), a certain degree of interactivity and the expression of subjective stances.

Letters, just like journals and diaries, were "ego documents" (Gruber 2022: 8) which promised authentic eye-witness accounts. However, the travelogues finally published had usually undergone complex processes of editing and revision (Kinsley 2019: 409). "[T]orn between giving pleasure and providing practical guidance, between logging and narrating, between describing what happened and suggesting what could have happened" (Sherman 2002: 31), travel writers faced serious challenges. They solved them by drawing on a rhetoric that did not necessarily adhere to the empirical truth (Sell 2017: 13, see also Din Kariuki 2024: 320; Kinsley 2019: 415). In fact, writing and publishing the travel experiences can be considered as "a secondary journey, with its own rules and realities" (Hulme and Youngs 2002: 31), and the boundaries between factuality and fictionality are blurred in all travelogues (Gruber 2022: 2).

While the increasing popularity of travelogues brought greater diversification, material was also heavily reused, rearranged and translated (Gruber 2022: 8; Tosi 2020: 13). Again, these are practices also common in early news writing. The traveller was not necessarily the (sole) author, and translations were adjusted and enriched. For example, it is assumed that Raymond's (1648) *An Itinerary Contayning a Voyage Made through Italy*, which is included in the dataset of the study at hand, draws heavily on the notes of John Bargrave, his uncle and guardian on the journey (Brennan 2004: 43; Stoye 1989: 135). Also, Barri's (1679) *The Painters Voyage of Italy* was not just translated by William Lodge, but complemented by a self-compiled catalogue of works of art in Milan and Lodge's own illustrations (Stoye 1989: 137f). The notion of "authentic authorship" is thus hard to maintain for travelogues (Gruber 2022: 9).

In conclusion, early news and travel writing shared several key characteristics, including their informational purposes, similar readerships, preferred formats and rhetorical strategies, and the undeniable subjectivity influenced by the authors' perspectives. Despite differences in volume, publication rhythm, contents and further communicative purposes, both news and travel writing ultimately satisfied the public's curiosity about the world.

3. Data and Methods

This study examines a corpus of travelogues (439,909 tokens) extracted from *Early English Books Online* (EEBO). The data selection was based on the more comprehensive list of travelogues compiled by Pinnavaia (2013). The corpus comprises 10 travelogues published in the seventeenth century which are available as TXT files on EEBO: Acton (1691), Anon. (1660), Anon. (1674), Barri (1679), Burnet (1688), Cogan (1654), Dallington (1605), Gabin (1691), Lassels (1670) and Raymond (1648).[1]

All of the travelogues selected feature a clear focus on Italy. However, they vary with regard to length, from relatively short (30 pages) to very comprehensive (almost 700 pages), and also in their approaches, from diary-like descriptions of routes, sights and events (e.g. Acton 1691) and catalogues of churches, monasteries, palaces and the artworks housed within them (e.g. Barri 1679) to topical epistolary comments on Italy's political, religious, and cultural climate (e.g. Burnet 1688).

The study draws on the methodologies of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) and corpus pragmatics. It combines qualitative insights obtained in horizontal reading with a quantitative approach, i.e. "vertical reading" (Rühlemann and Aijmer 2015: 12; see also Baker et al 2008). The quantitative analysis was performed with AntConc.

4. Metadiscursive Positioning in Travel Writing

4.1 Metadiscourse as a site of positioning

Just like any other genre, travelogues do not stand in isolation, but are surrounded by other material, e.g. titles, prefaces, postscripts, etc. These elements have been captured by different, but closely related concepts such as paratext, metadiscourse and framing (see Bös and Peikola 2020 for a detailed discussion). Here, I adopt the term "metadiscourse" in a broad conceptualisation, which covers both macro- and micro-level perspectives by considering elements operating outside as well as inside the main texts.

For the seventeenth-century travel writer, these elements opened up distinct opportunities for self-positioning. As Table 1 shows, the macrostructure of the selected travelogues was relatively uniform (cf. also Pinnavaia's findings, 2013: 131).

[1] For the complete titles, see Table 6 (Appendix).

	Title page	Epistle dedicatory	Address to reader	Table of Contents	**Text(s)**	Postscript / *FINIS*	Remarks, further elements
Acton (1691)	X	X			X	X	
Anon. (1660)	X		X		X	X	Book advertisements
Anon. (1674)	X				X	X	
Barri (1679)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Frontispiece, map of Italy, illustrations
Burnet (1688)	X		X	X	X	X	Separate metadiscursive framing for each of the three letters, Errata
Cogan (1654)	2	X	X	X	X	X	Two parts, "An Index of every dayes walke", book recommendations
Dallington (1605)	X	X		X	X	X	Marginalia, tables
Gabin (1691)	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Lassels (1670)	2	X	X		X	X	Two books, illustrated frontpage, marginalia, table of towns
Raymond (1648)	X	X	X	X	X	X	Letter from friend, marginalia, illustrations, appendix, errata, backpage

Table 1: Macrostructural composition of the travelogues

All the travelogues in the corpus are of a composite nature, consisting of one or more main texts and various framing elements. With regard to self-positioning, it is important to note that not all of these were necessarily authored by the person whose name was printed on the title page. Frequently travelogues brought together material from different sources, including notes by fellow travellers, original Italian and translated texts, addresses by

the printer, letters addressed to the author, etc. Acts of self-positioning in travelogues thus often comprised different people's perspectives.

While the main texts of the travelogues took different shapes (such as letters, diaries, reports), they all contained at least one title page and a closing, even if it was as short as a simple *FINIS*. Many also included a table of contents, epistle dedicatories and/or addresses to the reader framing the publication. The latter two are particularly interesting with regard to authorial self-positioning.

With the epistle dedicatories, authors often devoted their works to patrons who had provided financial support, protection, or social connections (and would hopefully continue to do so in the future). These dedications also offered the authors a good opportunity to signal their connections to powerful circles. Addressing a work to a respected figure furthermore added credibility and authority to the book, making it more appealing to potential readers and thus opening up marketing potential.

While dedications of this kind were sometimes found in contemporary news publications as well, the address "To the reader" was a very regular feature shared by both books and news publications, particularly the first editions of newspapers (Bös 2017). These addresses helped to form connections between authors and readers. They provided a space to establish the author's credibility, explain the rationale behind their work, and clarify potential biases. Authors also used these addresses to preemptively defend their work from critics or to position themselves within existing debates. This is aptly illustrated by ex. (1), an extract from Lassels' (1670) *PREFACE TO THE READER, CONCERNING TRAVELLING*.

(1) *WHEN I first set pen to Paper to handle this subject, I had not the least thought of the presse; nor of erecting my selfe into an Author. J onely discharged my memory hastily of some things which J had seen, in Italy; and wrapt vp that vntimely Embrio in fiue sheets of paper, for the vse of a noble person, who set me that taske. Yet this Embrio likeing the person for whom it was conceiued, obliged me to lick it ouer and ouer againe, and bring it into better forme. Second thoughts, and succeding voyages into Italy, haue finished it at last; and haue made it what it is; A compleat Voyage, and an exact Itinerary through Italy.*
And here I thought to haue drawne bridle and rested, after so long a iourney; when a learned friend hauing perused this my Description of Italy, desired much to see a Preface to it, of my fashion, and Cōcerning Traueling. I could refuse nothing to such a freind; and haue done it here willingly, both for my owne, and my countryes sake.
For my owne sake; to preexcuse some things in my booke, which some perchance may dislike. […] (Lassels 1670: n.p.)

Together with the other metadiscursive devices in the travelogues, including closing comments, but also metadiscourse interspersed in the main texts, these elements took over a broad range of functions. Going beyond stance-making and authorial positioning, they helped readers navigate the texts, negotiated genre expectations, provided cultural contextualisation and fulfilled important commercial functions (see Bös and Peikola 2020: 12).

4.2 *Journey and Discourse*: Perspectives on travel writing

A salient means of positioning a publication is its title, which typically include labels hinting at writers' and editors' perspectives on travel-writing, their approaches to presenting the travel experiences and attracting readers. The titles of the travelogues under investigation indicate two major foci. Nouns like *itinerary*, *tour* or *voyage* foreground the journey as such (ex. 2); whereas metatextual terms like *discourse*, *correspondence* or *intelligence* are more focused on the modes and concepts of presentation (ex. 3). Some titles also combine both perspectives (ex. 4).

(2) *AN **ITINERARY** Contayning A **VOYAGE**, Made through ITALY, In the yeare 1646, and 1647* (Raymond 1648)

(3) *A **Discourse** of the DUKEDOM of MODENA* (Anon 1674)

(4) ***OBSERVATIONS** ON A **JOURNEY** TO NAPLES* (Gabin 1691)

Admittedly, the titles did not always faithfully reflect the contents of the books (cf. Tosi 2020: 9), so it appears useful to go beyond the frontpages. Based on previous studies (Bös 2015, Brownlees 2015) and close reading, two sets of nominal labels were identified in the corpus (Table 2).

Metatextual terms	Travel-related terms
advice(s)/aduice, correspondence, discourse(s), dispatch(es), intelligence, journal, letter(s), narration, narrative, news/newes, observation(s), press/presse, relation(s), remark(s), report(s), story/stories, survey(s)/suruey	*itinerary/itineraries, journey(s)/iourney(s), tour/tours, travels/trauels, voyage/voyages*
678 tokens	143 tokens

Table 2: Sets of metatextual and travel-related terms in the corpus

For a systematic overview, the labels (including plural forms and spelling variants, where available) were searched automatically and then sifted manually. The corpus reveals a strong prominence of metatextual labels related to the modes and concepts of presentation which are very similar to those observed in seventeenth-century news publications (Brownlees 2015: 10). Indeed, the set even includes terms strongly associated with concepts of news (*advice*, *intelligence* and *news*) itself.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the labels across the travelogues in the corpus (per thousand words, ptw), with the metatextual terms in the light grey column and the travel-related terms in the dark grey one.

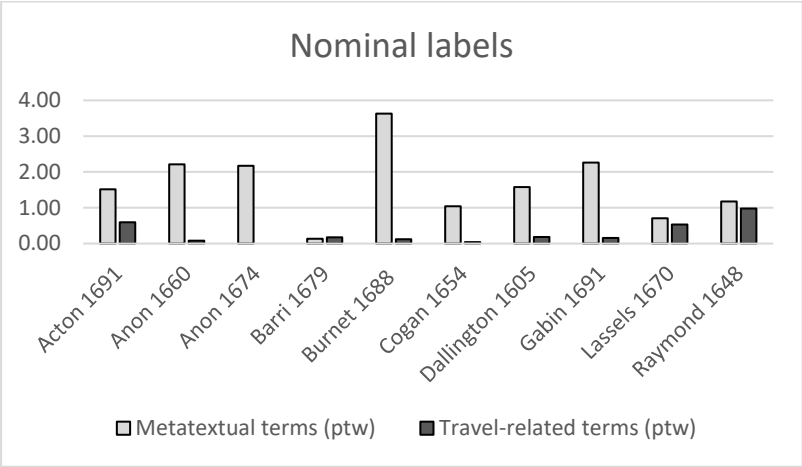


Figure 1: Nominal labels: Metatextual vs travel-related terms

The ten travelogues in the corpus display substantial individual differences, which already hint at genre-internal variation as a sign of genre experimentation. For example, both kinds of labels are very rare in Barri (1679), whereas the metatextual terms are quite prominent in Burnet (1688), particularly the mode-/concept-related labels *account*, *discourse*, *relation*, *story* and—most importantly—*letter*. Indeed, the two travelogues are diametrically opposed in their approaches, with perennial lists of cultural treasures in Barri and up-to-date reflections on Italy in Burnet.

4.3 *New* and *true*: Values of travel writing

Further insights regarding the authors' perspectives on their work are provided by metadiscourse relating to novelty, truth and credibility—values that early news and travel writing share.

Novelty is the defining criterion of news. It is thus hardly surprising that early English newsmakers frequently made explicit reference to the freshness of their information, marketing it as a precious commodity (cf. Bös 2015: 32). The same strategy was also employed by travel writers who, particularly in the dedications and addresses to the readers, repeatedly related to the value of novelty and discussed the newsworthiness of their publication.

While in some cases travel news indeed travelled relatively fast and publications included information on current matters (ex. 5), in most cases, the newsworthiness of travelogues was not necessarily rooted in topicality. Instead, their news value typically rested on the claim that the information provided had either never been published before (ex. 6) or at least not in English (ex. 7).

(5) […] *the Dispute which is* ***now*** *on foot, and of which tho all the* ***Gazettes*** *make mention, yet I may perhaps tell you some particulars, that* ***may be new to you****, for I was in Naples while this matter was in its greates heat* (Burnet 1688: 115)

(6) *In the Galleries are admirable statues, and amongst them the old, old Egyptian Idoll Osiris, of a black strange stone, the forme of it* ***because I never saw it printed, I will not omit****.* (Raymond 1648: 103f. + illustration)

(7) *SIR, HAving met by accident with this insuing Treatise in Italian, and read it over, I judged it, in respect of the* ***rarity*** *and* ***curiosity*** *of the matters therein contained,* ***so little knowne*** *to our Nation, worth my labour to translate it into English* (Cogan 1654: n.p.)

Negotiations of the news value also served as a useful tool for the authors to position themselves as experienced, yet modest travel writers, to elevate the addressees, and forestall potential criticism (ex. 8).

(8) *I have discoursed all these matters often over and over again since I came into Italy: but I have read very little concerning them; therefore there may be many things here, that I mention because they were* ***new to me****, that* ***perhaps are no newes to those that are much more Learned than my self****.* (Burnet 1688: 135)

As the more successful travelogues were going through various editions, the novelty might admittedly have worn off over time. Yet, this is not so different from the way early news publications were gathered and preserved in bound volumes.

Another value that proves similarly important in travelogues and news publications is that of trustworthiness, including issues of truth and credibility (see also Bös 2015: 31). For instance, in ex. (9), the length of the account is justified by reasons of accuracy, whereas in ex. (10) the virtues of brevity and factuality are emphasised.

(9) ***If I haue been a little too long*** *in this digression you will pardon me: We are all debtors to* ***Truth****.* […] (Lassels 1670: 111)

(10) *Having given you* ***a court and true account*** *of the Government, Riches, Force, Religion, Manners and Qualifications of the People of this ancient and illustrious Dukedom* […] (Anon 1674: 23)

Authors often indicated that they provided authentic, first-hand information achieved by "ocular experience" (ex. 11), yet they also relied on "second-hand sources" (Sturiale 2021: 44-46) and, Sherman (2002: 31) reminds us, "outright invention". Authors boosted their credibility by explicitly addressing the evidential basis of their knowledge (cf. Bednarek 2006: 53) and commenting on the reliability of the information (ex. 12).

(11) ***I saw*** *two gallants in Pisa fight* [...] (Dallington 1605: 65)

(12) *Every one spoke so differently of the Matter,* ***that it was very difficult for us to learn the precise Truth****; but* ***the greatest certainty we could gather from their Relations*** *were,* [...] (Gabin 1691: 135)

In a particularly elaborated fashion, these acts of epistemic self-positioning were performed by Burnet (1688). As illustrated by ex. (13), his metadiscourse abounded in comments on his role as the author ("I have invented and added nothing my self"; "I will tell you things nakedly and simply", but also: "I […] made […] use of my Judgment"), comments on his informants ("men of Probity and of Sense") and attempts to preempt criticism ("there may be many defects, and possibly some mistakes […], yet […] it is all that I could gather").

(13) *I will assure you very positively, that I have Invented and added nothing my self. I leave those arts to the Italians, and the Court of Rome: therefore I will tell you things nakedly and simply, as I found them, without adding so much as one Circumstance out of my own Invention.*

> *I also made as much use of my Judgment as was possible for me to do, both in considering the Circumstances of those with whom I talked on those heads, and the things themselves that they said to me; so I let pass all that seemed to be the effect of Passion or Prejudice, and only marked down that which seemed to be true, as well as that which I had from men whom I had reason to believe. My Informers were men of Probity and of Sense; they were not indeed easily brought to talk of this Subject, and they spoke of it with great Reserves: so that there may be many defects, and possibly some mistakes in the account that I am to offer you; yet you must be contented with it; for it is all that I could gather; and it is not corrupted with any mixture of my own.* (Burnet 1688: 11f.)

Burnet did not tire of emphasising the credibility and impartiality of his account, not only explicitly reflecting on his own position ("I only tell you what is believed at Rome, and not what I believe myself"), but also considering the addressee's perspective ("nor what I would have you to believe" and "what you will not easily believe", see ex. 14).

(14) *But here I must add a thing which comes very uneasily from me, and yet I cannot keep my word to you, of giving you a faithful account of all that I could learn of this matter at Rome, without mentioning it. I do not pretend to affirm it is true, for I only tell you what is believed at Rome, and not what I believe my self, nor what I would have you to believe; for I know you have so high an esteem of Cardinal d'Estrees, that you will not easily believe any thing that is to his Disadvantage.* (Burnet 1688: 35)

Practices like these certainly boosted the credibility of the travel writers and their accounts. In order to complement these qualitative insights by a more systematic quantitative search, terms relating to novelty and trustworthiness were extracted from the corpus in a CADS approach (Table 3) and the results were cleaned manually. Some potentially relevant items (e.g. *fresh*, *new*) did not occur in relation to news value and were thus excluded from the list.

Newsworthiness	Trustworthiness
current, *curiosity*, *latest*, *new(e)s*, *novel**, *now*, *at/the/this present*, *surpris**	*authentick*, *credib**, *exact**, *faithful**, *precise*, *true/tru(e)th*
720 tokens	291 tokens

Table 3: Terms relating to newsworthiness and trustworthiness

All in all, the value of newsworthiness was more frequently related to issues of authenticity, accuracy and credibility. Figure 2 demonstrates that some authors placed particular emphasis on novelty and truth (e.g. Anon 1674, Burnet 1688). In other publications, relevant tokens are generally less frequent, and particularly truth-related aspects are less explicitly mentioned. This might particularly be the case where the subjects were uncontroversial and their presentation largely descriptive and not argumentative, and also in translated texts (e.g. Acton 1691, who pointed out that his "small tract" had "no room for Politicks", Barri 1679, Cogan 1654, Raymond 1648).

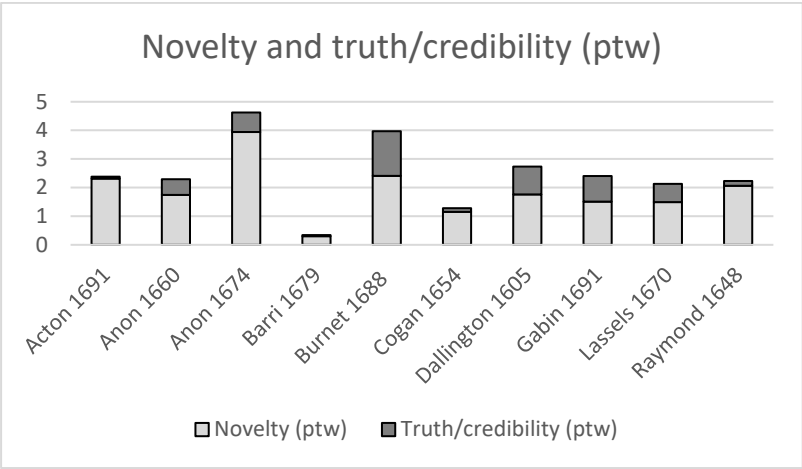


Figure 2: Novelty and truth/credibility

Thus, values such as novelty and trustworthiness are not just relevant in news discourse. While credibility is likely an asset most writers strive for, novelty has always been a powerful marketing argument, and may also have prompted the extensive commentary found in seventeenth-century travelogues.

5. Evaluation and Involvement in Travel Writing

5.1 Evaluation and involvement as means of positioning

This section explores selected aspects of evaluation and involvement, two complex, multifaceted concepts that have received much attention in linguistic research (for an overview see e.g. Bednarek 2006, Landert 2014) and are vital in both early news discourse and travel writing. As important

means of (self-)positioning, they contribute to the construction of the dynamic relationships between writers, contents and readers, thereby influencing how the works are experienced and interpreted.

Evaluation refers to the way in which writers express their stances, subjective assessments, judgments and attitudes (cf. Bednarek 2006: 1). "[O]ne peculiar aspect of early modern travel writing is the degree to which it swung from objective observation to moral judgement without batting an eyelid," Mucklejohn (2020) claims, attributing these shifts to "this 'otherness', a sense of alienation which likely overwhelmed many travellers." From the broad range of linguistic features that can be used to express evaluation, the focus selected here is on positive and negative evaluative adjectives, which are captured by Bednarek's (2006: 74) parameter of emotivity.

Involvement, on the other hand, pertains to the degree in which the writer engages with the reader and is closely associated with the concepts of personalisation and linguistic immediacy (Landert 2014: 18). Amongst other means, involvement can be achieved through the use of first- and second-person pronouns which can create a sense of closeness and inclusivity, thus fostering reader engagement (see also Biber's 1988 seminal work).

5.2 *Admirable* and *terrible*: Positive and negative evaluation

Throughout the seventeenth century, English travellers regarded Italy with shifting and often ambivalent attitudes. While the country's Renaissance heritage continued to attract praise, anti-Catholic attitudes triggered critical views and the overall prestige of Italians declined (Stoye 1989: 11; Tosi 2020: 37f).

The analysis presented here focuses on the use of evaluative adjectives as a central means of expressing stance. In line with the CADS-approach, relevant types were identified by close reading of the corpus material, complemented by a systematic search with intensifiers (*very*, *extremely*) and typical morphological material (suffixes *-al, -able, -ful, -ous*; prefixes *dis-, -im-, in-, un-/vn-*) for further items. The tokens extracted were checked manually in order to deal with issues such as negation and semantic ambiguity. Some adjectives that were semantically too ambiguous were excluded (e.g. *great, noble*). For practical reasons, the focus was kept on uninflected forms, complemented by the superlatives of the two basic adjectives *good*/*best* and *bad*/*worst*.

The search procedure yielded a set of 179 types/3689 tokens of positive adjectives and 168 types/851 tokens of negative adjectives. Figure 3 provides an overview of their distribution across the corpus, the light grey