

The Department of French & Italian presents:

# The Materiality of Battle: Warfare between Fiction and Reality in Italian Renaissance and Baroque Literature, Music and Theater

A Dissertation Defense by Lucia Gemmani

This research investigates fictional representations of battle in Italian culture of the Renaissance and the Baroque periods, inspired by the concept of “humanization” of the battlefield introduced by John Keegan. The aim of this study is to reveal the realism of these expressions, within the historical and cultural contexts of their creation. Therefore, fictional battles can be appreciated not only as artistic, allegorical, and imaginative products, but also as inklings of reality, material remnants that bring the reader a truthful experience of the battlefield.

There are two parts, which explore six case studies that interest three forms of art deeply intersected during the early modern period: literature, music and theater. The first part analyses the epic-chivalric poem, in three chapters corresponding to three works describing the evolution of the genre in Italian literature. Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* portrays a society struggling with the ideals of chivalry, which must find a place between the idealism of the knights and the pragmatism of the new war. Torquato Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata*, after the Council of Trent, mitigates between old traditions and new expectations, by transforming battle into a sacrifice for God, and reveals a discrepancy between an ‘outdated’ chivalric and a ‘winning’ modern approach to war. Giovan Battista Marino’s *Adone* becomes an ode to the dissolution of the genre, where real battles are substituted by pure fiction, through games, theater and celebrations. The second part of this study addresses the use of battle as a thematic material in what we could call ‘wide’ genres, those that were consumed by a larger group of society. In Venetian music, the religious reuse of battle features from secular *battaglie* is a means to re-establish the city’s identity. Theater, through the evolution of the Spanish Captain’s mask, portrays characters at the intersection between satire of and concern about contemporary wars. Baroque prose genres manifest a complex recycling of battle’s tropes, used to discuss issues involving medicine, politics, social and human rights, and to entertain the reader.

Throughout all these case studies battle comes out as a complex set of meanings, experiences, and artifacts that portray a moment of crisis and changes, a society moving towards modernity, and the audience’s personal negotiation of the materiality of battle between fiction and reality.

Thursday  
April 12th, 2018  
9:00am  
Persimmon Room  
IMU

## Committee

**Marco Arnaudo,**  
Chair  
*French & Italian*

**Andrea Ciccarelli**  
*French & Italian*

**Massimo Ossi**  
*Musicology*

**Massimo Scalabrini**  
*French & Italian*

If you’d like to attend,  
please contact the chair:  
[marnaudo@indiana.edu](mailto:marnaudo@indiana.edu)

