

Early Modern Sensationalisms: Micro-Histories in Comparison

This paper will explore a set of micro-histories that circulated across Europe as shared sensationalistic phenomena between 16th and 17th centuries, such as Mary Queen of Scots' execution, Elizabeth I's presumed engagements (Dooley and Baron, 2001; Bethencourt and Egmond, 2007), and news about pandemics and natural disasters (Caracciolo, 2016). Particular attention will be paid to the language and rhetoric of news reporting, and to the reporters' effort to persuade their readers that the information they are reporting is *to the best of their knowledge* (Petitjean, 2011). This paper will show how this element of persuasion, especially when in stark contrast with the rampant spread of fake news and rumors, gradually becomes the driving force behind the linguistic and stylistic choices, regardless of the place of production and dissemination of the news items (Paltrinieri, 2024). The sources presented will be mainly handwritten newsletters (*avvisi*) held at the Archivio di Stato di Firenze and the Biblioteca Vaticana, in comparison with contemporary accounts and news media coming from the United Kingdom (Barker, 2013; Brownlees, 2014).

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