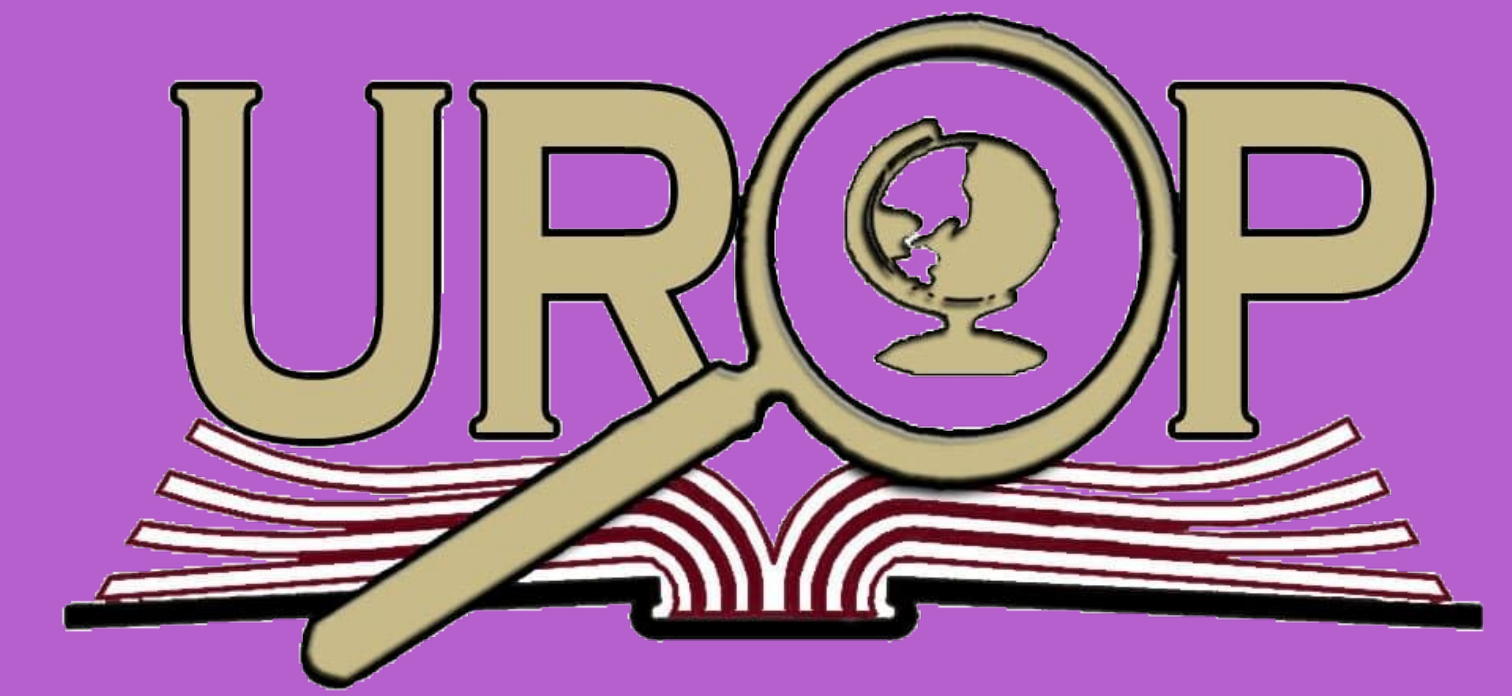


Culture, Conversations, and Social Networks in 18th and 19th-century Italy



Women in Arms Female Agency in Writing & Action



Emma Clark and Dr. Irene Zanini-Cordi

Background

- In Italy, growing class divisions, new political thought, and struggles with economic development contributed to an unstable political climate that would ultimately succumb to Napoleon's rule at the end of the 18th century.
- 18th-century Venice, immersed in Enlightenment culture, was losing its political and economic power. Women were becoming increasingly visible in the public sphere both in daily life and cultural activities. This paved the way for exceptional noble women to make a name for themselves despite gender limitations.
- By the end of the 18th-century, women who had developed a crucial role in the civic public sphere by hosting cultural salons were considered vital to Venetian society. They successfully blurred the private and public spheres and also actively contributed to literary output through writing and translation. For example, Giustina Renier Michiel (1755-1832) was the granddaughter and niece of two Dogi (head of state) of Venice and a salon hostess who wrote and inspired patriotic action.
- Further down the Italian peninsula, at the court of Naples, the poet Eleonora Fonseca Pimentel (1752-1799) turned into one of the organizers of the Neapolitan revolution (1799). She directed the revolutionary newspaper *Monitore Napoletano*, and paid with her life for her support to the short-lived Neapolitan republic.
- I analyze these women's writings and actions through the theory of political obligation, which explores an individual's inclination to follow authority and the factors that influence resistance to it. These women's involvements in politics and their legacy of writings served as models for future female political activism which led to the Risorgimento and Italian unification.

Methods

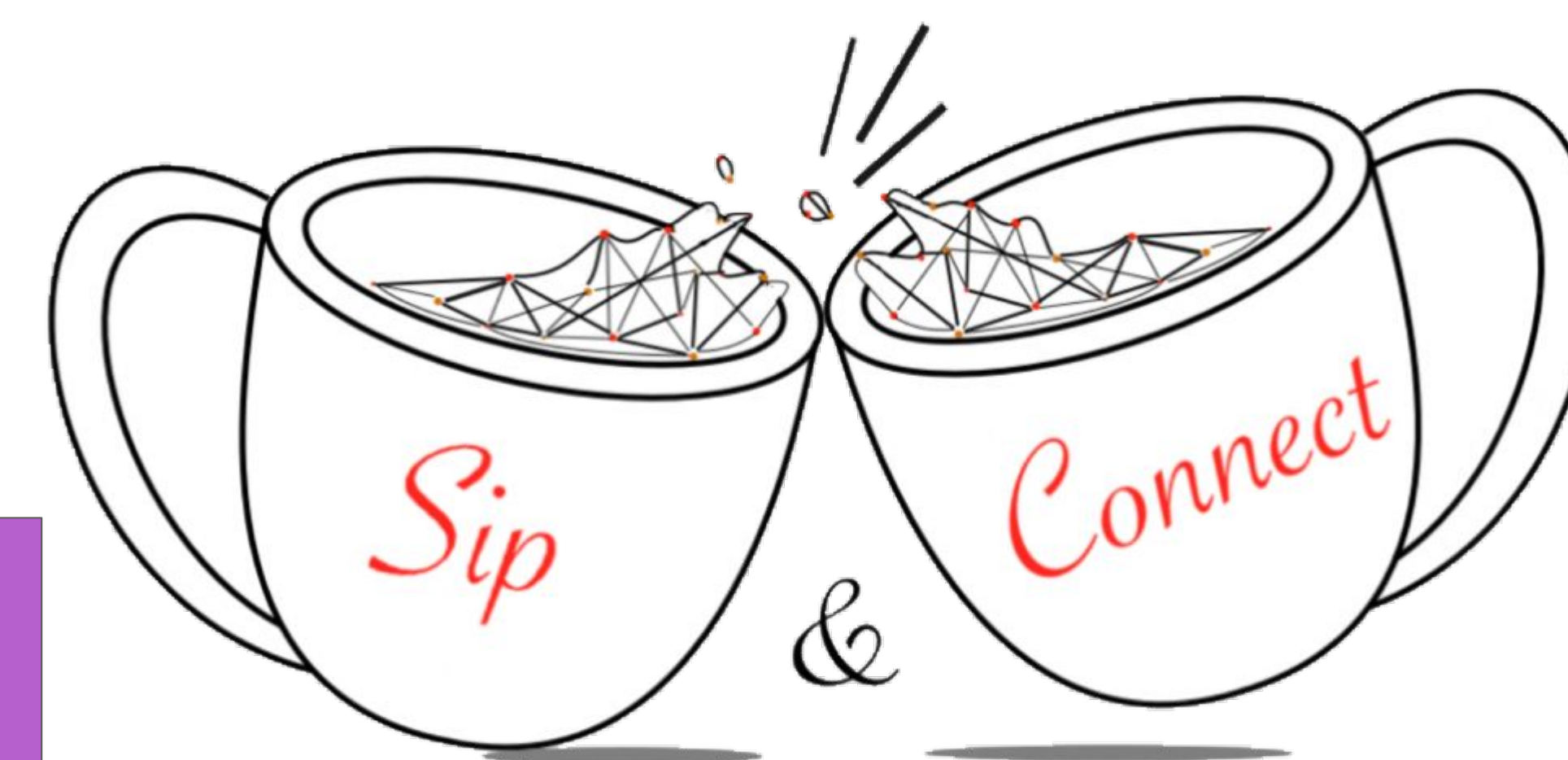
- Close reading and literary analysis of primary writings from Pimentel's newspaper, *Monitore Napoletano*, and Michiel's *Origins of Venetian Festivities* (1817).
- Cross analysis of relevant secondary sources that comment on the greater context of the period and the relevance these writings (and their authors) had in its happenings.
- Evaluation and application of scholarly sources that outline characteristics of Social Network Theory and the concepts of political obligation, civil obligation, and fair play.



Figure 1. Portrait of Eleonora Pimentel



Figure 2. Portrait of Giustina Michiel



Social Networking :
Italian Style

Figure 3. *Sip & Connect* logo

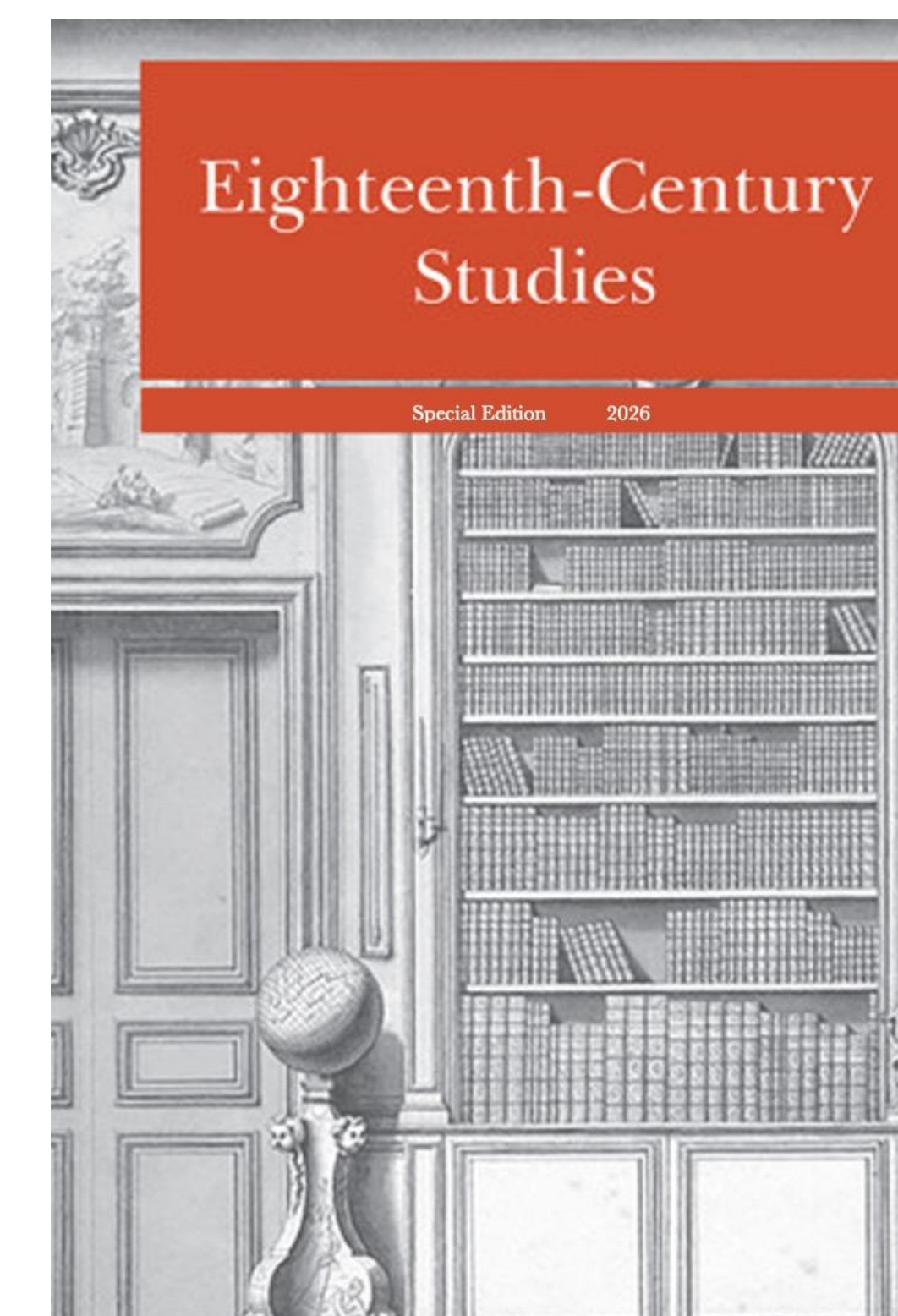


Figure 4. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* cover

Conclusions

- The theory of political obligation is defined as the need to abide by political authority; however, it also considers resistance to unjust forms of power. These two salonnières and patriots exemplify political obligation as resistance to foreign power.
- Renier Michiel's publications popularize specific historical information in order to foster political morals in her readers. Patterns of resistance first surfaced in her married life and then blossomed into active political resistance. She supported the ideals of a defunct Venetian Republic against the new foreign ruling of Venice by offering the history of Venetian traditions - she intended to keep alive Venetians' memory of their great Republican past.
- Eleonora Pimentel, in her political publications and propaganda, actively pushed for the diffusion of moral education and literary instruction, specifically targeted at the lower classes. As a Jacobin revolutionary in Italy (Naples) who tried to resist the extremism of the movement, she serves as supporting evidence for the theory of civil obligation.
- My research will be expanded upon through an episode of *Sip & Connect*, a collaborative podcast with my UROP teammates and mentor.
- I will integrate the experience gained while conducting this research in a scholarly article on pedagogics that has already been accepted for publication in a special issue of the journal *Eighteenth-Century Studies* focusing on women. "Conversations that Shape Identity: What 18th-Century Italian *Salonnières* Can Teach Modern Students," will be written in collaboration with my UROP teammates and Prof. Zanini-Cordi

Selected References

- Bhikhu Parekh. *A Misconceived Discourse on Political Obligation*. Political Studies. 1993
- Dalton, Susan. *Gender, Mediation and Popular Education in Venice, 1760-1830*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2023.
- Pimentel. *Monitore Napoletano*, Feb. - June, 1799.
- Pocklington, Thomas C. "Political Philosophy and Political Obligation." *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne de Science Politique*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1975, pp. 495-509. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3230681>.
- Renier-Michiel, J. *Origine Delle Feste Veneziane*. Dalla tipografia di Alvisopoli, 1817
- Simmons, A. John. "The Principle of Fair Play." *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, vol. 8, no. 4, 1979, pp. 307-37. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2265067>. Accessed 29 Feb. 2024.
- Zanini-Cordi, Irene. "From Queen's Librarian to Voice of the Neapolitan Republic: Eleonora de Fonseca Pimentel." *Economic Imperatives for Women's Writing in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Carme Font Paz and Nina Geerdink, Brill, 2018, pp. 167-91. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv2gijwmq2.12>. Accessed 7 Mar. 2024.