

## Between Poetry and Politics. Reconnecting the Lives of Carlo Pepoli

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When in 1838 the author of Bellini's libretto for *I Puritani* was appointed Professor of Italian at University College London – the first University founded in England after Oxford and Cambridge – he used his inaugural lecture to evoke the «fraternizing spirit of the age, which tends to unite the whole world into one family».<sup>1</sup> For Carlo Pepoli, one of the new institution's many foreign professors, Britain's bonds with the continent were at the core of this movement for the fraternisation of peoples, a key concept of nineteenth-century liberal internationalism.<sup>2</sup> Running contrary to Pepoli's historical idea of fraternisation, the twenty-first century has seen changes in Britain's relationship with Europe that obscure the role Europeans have played in British culture and at the same time seem to ignore Britain's impact on the emergence of the continent's modern system of states.<sup>3</sup> Cultural and musical exchanges are among the many aspects of a relationship that has been damaged by the British government's decision to hold a referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union and its subsequent choice to leave it.<sup>4</sup> Historians (and historians of music) have a role to play in placing these recent developments within their historical contexts. In the following, Carlo Pepoli serves as an example of the close musical, cultural and political exchanges that for centuries have shaped Italy's relationship with Britain, as well as Britain's relationship to Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> CARLO PEPOLI, *On the language and literature of Italy. An inaugural lecture, delivered in University College, London, on the 6th November, 1838*, London, Taylor and Walton, 1838, p. 7. For a modern history of University College London see NEGLEY HARTE, JOHN NORTH, *The World of UCL, 1828-2004*, London, UCL Press, 2004, pp. 25-77.

<sup>2</sup> On the notion of a 'liberal international', see MAURIZIO ISABELLA, *Introduction*, in ID., *Risorgimento in Exile. Italian émigrés and the liberal international in the post-Napoleonic era*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> For a historical perspective on Brexit see AXEL KÖRNER, 'Britain – the Sicily of Europe?' *Continental Perspectives on Britain's Amour Propre*, «Contemporary European History», xxviii/1, February 2019, pp. 23-26. For an evaluation of Britain's role in the European system of states see PAUL W. SCHROEDER, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994. For an eighteenth-century perspective see STEPHEN CONWAY, *Britain, Ireland and Continental Europe in the Eighteenth Century: Similarities, Connections, Identities*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> For recent scholarship on Anglo-Italian musical exchanges see *Italian Musical Migration to London*, «Journal of Modern Italian Studies», Special Issue, xxvi/1, 2021; *London Voices 1820-1840. Vocal Performers, Practices, Histories*, ed. by Roger Parker and Susan Rutherford, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2019. Also, KATHERINE HAMBRIDGE, JONATHAN HICKS, *The Melodramatic Moment*, in *The Melodramatic Moment. Music and Theatrical Culture, 1790-1820*, ed. by Katherine Hambridge, Jonathan Hicks, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2018, pp. 1-24: 14-17. On the consequences of Brexit for the musical world see SIMON RATTLE, *Brexit has not had any upside in the arts*, «Financial Times», 4 April 2021. For an assessment of legal and economic consequences see *Impact of Brexit on UK musicians performing in the EU*, UK Parliament, House of Lords Library, 22 January 2021 (<https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/impact-of-brexit-on-uk-musicians-performing-in-the-eu/>, accessed 18 May 2021).

Not much has been written about the author of Bellini's opera *I Puritani*; and what there is usually points to weaknesses in the libretto as well as to the author's more general poetic limitations.<sup>5</sup> Not infrequently, such judgement is worded in absolute aesthetic terms, taking a rather ahistorical perspective on the libretto of *I Puritani*, and overlooking the specific circumstances from which it emerged and the author's own impact on the success of Bellini's last opera. Even more sympathetic accounts of Pepoli's contribution to music and opera often ignore basic facts of his life, including his long experience as a music critic. These accounts usually disregard easily available documents relating to his political and his literary career, especially during his early years. For instance, not even the frequent references to Pepoli in Mazzini's correspondence have found their way into musical scholarship. These and many other documents provide us with insights into his life and they also help explain the international success of *I Puritani*.<sup>6</sup> Emphasising cultural and political exchanges between Italy and Britain, the following article seeks to shed light on Carlo Pepoli's experience of revolution and exile, as well as on his encounter with European Romanticism and Risorgimento politics.<sup>7</sup> The article argues that Pepoli's political and literary experiences combined in an

<sup>5</sup> For a summary of the criticism directed at Pepoli and a detailed record of the related correspondence between composer and poet see FABRIZIO DELLA SETA, *Introduzione*, in VINCENZO BELLINI, *I Puritani*, a cura di Fabrizio Della Seta, vol. 1, Milano, Ricordi, 2013 («Edizione critica delle opere di Vincenzo Bellini», 10), pp. XI-XLIII, XIX. See also ID., *'I Puritani' di Carlo Pepoli e Vincenzo Bellini. Il libretto e il dramma musicale*, «Atti e memorie dell'Arcadia», III, 2014, pp. 341-359. The introduction provides an excellent and up-to-date account of the opera's emergence, including an un-prejudiced account of Pepoli's role (see for instance p. XX). This article does not aim for a critical discussion of Bellini scholarship, but concentrates on recent work that has looked at Pepoli's role. My own interest in Pepoli goes back to his role as mayor of Bologna: AXEL KÖRNER, *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy. From Unification to Fascism*, New York, Routledge, 2009; for help in locating sources on Pepoli I am grateful to Maurizio Isabella, Elsa Körner and Valeria Lucentini.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, Mary Ann Smart dedicates most of a chapter to Pepoli but claims that «documentation of [Pepoli's] political sympathies begins only once he arrived in London in 1837». See MARY ANN SMART, *Waiting for Verdi. Opera and Political Opinion in Nineteenth-Century Italy, 1815-1848*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2018, p. 209. Contrary to this claim, there is rich material on the leading role he played in the Papal States during the revolutions of 1830-1831 (and before), providing an important context for analysing connections between his political ideas and aesthetic concepts. See in particular, *L'Archivio dei Governi Provvisori di Bologna e delle Provincie Unite del 1831. Studi e Testi*, a cura di Lajos Pásztor e Pietro Pirri, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1956. For unpublished material see *Sunto di memorie, Noterelle biografiche C. Carlo Pepoli*, Forlì, Biblioteca Comunale "Aurelio Saffi", Collezione Piancastelli, Autografi XIX sec., busta 151, Carlo Pepoli. For an overview of Pepoli's political career and available sources see AXEL KÖRNER, *Carlo Pepoli*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2015, vol. LXXXII, pp. 261-266. For a critical discussion of Smart see SUZANNE STEWART-STEINBERG, *Verdi Studies in the World of Posteritque*, «Studi verdiani», XXIX, 2020, pp. 167-176.

<sup>7</sup> On the role of exile in Risorgimento politics see ISABELLA, *Risorgimento in Exile* cit.; AGOSTINO BISTARELLI, *Gli esuli del Risorgimento*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2011. For the historiographical debate of the issue see FRANCESCA SOFIA, *Esilio e Risorgimento*, «Contemporanea», XIV/3, 2011, pp. 557-564. Fundamental to the discussion of Romanticism as an aspect of Risorgimento politics was ALBERTO MARIO BANTI, *La nazione del Risorgimento. Parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita*, Torino, Einaudi, 2000, as well as various contributions in *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, vol. 22, *Il Risorgimento*, a cura di Alberto Mario Banti, Paul Ginsborg, Torino, Einaudi, 2007. For a critical debate of Banti's approach see AXEL KÖRNER, LUCY RIALI, *The New History of Risorgimento Nationalism*, «Nations and Nationalism», XV/3, July 2009, pp. 396-401; GABRIELE B. CLEMENS, *Geschichte des Risorgimento. Italiens Weg in die Moderne (1770-1870)*, Wien, Köln, Böhlau, 2021, pp. 8, 117-158. On the

unique way encompassing both local and transnational dimensions. Unfortunately, this experience left few traces in later conceptions of Italy's political and operatic past, which are too often based on narrow teleological ideas of historical time.

Count Carlo Pepoli was born on 22 July 1796 in Bologna, then the capital of the Papal Legations and part of the Papal States. A few weeks earlier, French troops had occupied the city, pushing a centuries-old state into the turmoil of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Pepoli's many Christian names – Maria Antonio Amos Nicolò Gasparre – are an indication of his patrician background as one of Bologna's most prestigious families, who owned further property in the province of Ferrara, also in the Papal States.<sup>8</sup> The Pepoli had a confirmed presence in Bologna since the early fourteenth century, when Carlo's ancestor Taddeo Pepoli held Bologna's *signoria*. Taddeo also built the family's city palace in Via Castiglione, today among Bologna's most impressive architectural monuments and home of the Museo della Storia di Bologna. Carlo was the only son of Count Ricciardo Pepoli, also known as Rizzardo, and of Cecilia Cavalca (Cavalla). He had two older sisters: Anna Sampieri Bugami, born in 1783 and known as Nina, a distinguished writer, and Teresa Mariotti di Fano, born in 1794. Despite the family's prestige, Carlo grew up under the financial constraints of a family that struggled to maintain its aristocratic life-style in a rapidly changing world. In literature and official documents Carlo is sometimes mistaken for a distant relative of the same family, the Marquis Gioacchino Napoleone Pepoli, also from Bologna, a direct cousin of the later Emperor Napoleon III and husband of Princess Friederika von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, the Catholic-Swabian branch of the Hohenzollern dynasty from South-Western Germany. Pictures presenting Carlo Pepoli in younger years confirm the widely held view that he was a handsome man – an important element of his career as a European exile.<sup>9</sup>

### 1. *Classical legacies*

Early in his life Carlo developed a passion for ancient history and classical literature, music and the arts. For several generations, opera had played an important role in the different branches of the family and several of their palaces included small private theatres. Educated at home, Pepoli was taught literature by padre Romualdo Cartusiani and classics (*antiquaria*) by *abbé* Filippo Schiassi. Subsequently, he studied Greek and Hebrew under Giuseppe Gaspare Mezzofanti, a future Cardinal and director of the Vatican library, mathematics under

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philosophical foundations of the transnational flow of ideas in Risorgimento Italy see ALESSANDRO DE ARCANGELIS, *Towards a new philosophy of history. European Vichianism and Neapolitan Hegelianism (1804-48)*, «Journal of Modern Italian Studies», XXIV/2, 2019, pp. 226-243.

<sup>8</sup> Some sources give 1801 as his date of birth, others, including records of the Italian parliament, give 1802. Guglielmo Pepe refers to him as Cesare Pepoli: see GUGLIELMO PEPE, *Memoirs. Comprising the Principal Military and Political Events of Modern Italy*, vol. III, London, Bentley, 1846, p. 345.

<sup>9</sup> For a collection of images see *Facies*, in Biblioteca comunale dell'Archiginnasio. Biblioteca digitale: [http://badigit.comune.bologna.it/facies\\_new/vista\\_generale.aspx?IDSogg=4073&Oggetto=pe&n=Carlo%20Pepoli&q=](http://badigit.comune.bologna.it/facies_new/vista_generale.aspx?IDSogg=4073&Oggetto=pe&n=Carlo%20Pepoli&q=) (last accessed 18 May 2021). For contemporary comments see *Jane Welsh Carlyle to her mother-in-law, 23 December 1835*, in *Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle, Prepared for publication by Thomas Carlyle*, ed. by Anthony Froude, vol. I, London, Longmans, 1883, p. 50.

Giambattista Magistrini, and botany under Antonio Bertoloni, all three famous professors at Bologna's Alma Mater. Having concluded his studies, he was nominated to the position of *dottore collegiato* at Bologna's Faculty of Philosophy and Philology. He also worked for the Accademia di Belle Arti of his home city and for the municipal administration, covering positions as municipal magistrate and in the administration of prisons.

An important framework of Pepoli's poetic and cultural activities was Bologna's strictly aristocratic Società del Casino, which was linked to the socially more inclusive Accademia Felsinea. Throughout the 1820s he regularly read his poetry at the Accademia and soon became its vice-president. In 1827 he published a first volume of poems, written in the classical style of Dante, Petrarch and Tasso, before adopting a more modern romantic style. Between 1827 and 1828 he published at least eight small volumes of poems, some of them collected in larger bounded copies, which he distributed among friends and foreign acquaintances, including the famous French historian Jules Michelet. Many of his poems were written to commemorate illustrious personalities such as the sculptor Canova, or personal friends and members of the local aristocracy. Over his lifetime he also wrote hundreds of epigraphs, celebrating and commemorating artists, composers and figures of public life, which he periodically published as *Centurie delle Iscrizioni*. Later generations of scholars, who dismissed Pepoli's qualities as a poet, usually ignore the role of this typically Italian genre of occasional poetry. At the time, however, the genre was held in high regard and discussed by respected international critics such as August Wilhelm Schlegel, Germaine de Staël's friend and travel companion.<sup>10</sup> In a review of her novel *Corinne ou l'Italie*, Schlegel comments on the specific aesthetic qualities of Italy's occasional poets and improvisers:

Dieses Talent wird in Italien, mitten im Verfall der Literatur, noch immer häufig gepflegt [...]. Wir hatten Gelegenheit, manche Proben davon zu hören, die durch Anmut des Ausdrucks, Fülle der Bilder und Leichtigkeit der Wendungen erfreulich waren, ja durch unglaubliche Meisterschaft in den schwierigsten Silbenmaßen und durch schnelle Empfindsamkeit in Erstaunen setzen.<sup>11</sup>

Schlegel precisely describes the social and cultural context from which this poetry emerged, and the aesthetic qualities it stands for.<sup>12</sup> Its public declamation formed part of specific structures of sociability that were characteristic also of music making around the turn of the

<sup>10</sup> ANGELICA GODDEN, *Madame de Staël. The Dangerous Exile*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 146. On de Staël's impact in Germany see JULIA SCHMIDT-FUNKE, *Mme de Staël und der 'Correspondent de l'Europe'. Staël-Rezeption und europäischer Kulturtransfer bei Karl August Böttiger*, in *Germaine de Staël und ihr erstes deutsches Publikum. Literaturpolitik und Kulturtransfer um 1800*, hrsg. von Gerhard R. Kaiser, Olaf Müller, Heidelberg, Universitätsverlag Winter, 2008, pp. 241-260.

<sup>11</sup> AUGUST WILHELM SCHLEGEL, *Corinne ou l'Italie par Madame de Staël-Holstein (1808)*, in *Kritische Schriften*, hrsg. von Emil Staiger, Zürich, Stuttgart, Artemis, 1962, pp. 326-341: 327.

<sup>12</sup> For Schlegel, Italy's classical tradition represented by poets like Pepoli, also served as a means against the excesses of romanticism that he recognised behind developments such as the French-style melodrama. See KATHERINE HAMBRIDGE, JONATHAN HICKS, *The Melodramatic Moment* cit., pp. 1-24, 9.

century, which recently has attracted the attention of new scholarly debate.<sup>13</sup> Pepoli's work is to be seen in this same context.

As a young man, Pepoli started struggling with the Papal censors of his hometown. For instance, in a volume he published in 1828, the censors deleted a long section of the *Canto Secondo* in which he referred to the Greek insurrection against the Ottomans, understood at the time as a potential reference to the Italian uprisings of 1821.<sup>14</sup> Dedicated to Leopardi, Pepoli wrote the poem in commemoration of Livia Strocchi, the recently deceased daughter of the highly distinguished classicist and poet Dionigi Strocchi, underlining once more the social context from which this kind of poetry emerged. Some copies of the volume, which Pepoli distributed among his acquaintances, included an insert, written in the author's own hand, adding the lines that the censors had lifted from the printed version.<sup>15</sup>

Pepoli's relationship with Leopardi dates back to the summer of 1825, when they first met in Milan and soon became close friends, at a time when Leopardi maintained only very few social relations beyond the close circuit of his family. Leopardi also formed an affectionate relationship with Pepoli's sister Anna, mentioned above. A letter to Pepoli from October 1826 includes details of a *curriculum vitae*, which is considered an important source for the poet's early life and underlines the importance of Pepoli's network for the history of literature.<sup>16</sup> On Easter Monday, March 1826, Bologna's Accademia di Belle Arti invited Leopardi to read one of his *Canti*, dedicated to Pepoli (*Canti*, XIX, Al conte Carlo Pepoli). Bearing only indirect references to his relationship with Pepoli, the cantus questions the purpose of life, presenting his audiences with a depressing critique of modernity, which resonates with themes discussed at length in Leopardi's famous *Zibaldone*.<sup>17</sup> Pepoli's poem in memory of Livia Strocchi, which exists in several versions, was written in reply to this Cantus. Correspondence between Leopardi and Pepoli bears witness to their intimate friendship and mutual appreciation, although letters directed to other acquaintances suggest that Leopardi was

<sup>13</sup> See in particular W. DEAN SUTCLIFFE, *Instrumental Music in an Age of Sociability. Haydn, Mozart and Friends*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020. Also, MARK FERRAGUTO, *Beethoven 1806*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019 (AMS Studies in Music); HANS JOACHIM HINRICHSEN, *Ludwig van Beethoven. Musik für eine neue Zeit*, Kassel, Bärenreiter und Berlin, Metzler, 2019, pp. 44-50.

<sup>14</sup> For a perspective that connects the Italian events of 1821 to their wider transnational context see JENS SPÄTH, *Revolution in Europa 1820-23. Verfassung und Verfassungskultur in den Königreichen Spanien, beider Sizilien und Sardinien-Piemont*, Köln, SH, 2012; ID., *Turning Constitutional History Upside Down: The 1820s Revolutions in the Mediterranean*, in *Remapping Centre and Periphery: Asymmetrical Encounters in European and Global Context*, ed. by Tessa Hauswedell, Axel Körner and Ulrich Tiedau, London, UCL Press, 2019, pp. 111-134.

<sup>15</sup> See CARLO PEPOLI, *L'Eremo. Versi di C.P. in morte de Livia Strocchi*, Bologna, Tipografia di Emidio Dall'Olmo, 1828 [British Library, 11436.e.1 (5)]. On the different versions of this poem see SANDRA SACCONI, *Carlo Pepoli e Giacomo Leopardi: Un rapporto sotto il segno dell'ozio*, in *Leopardi e Bologna. Atti del Convegno di studi per il secondo centenario leopardiano (Bologna, 18-19 maggio 1998)*, a cura di Marco Antonio Bassocchi, Firenze, Olschki, 1999, pp. 247-257.

<sup>16</sup> Leopardi a Pepoli, ottobre 1826, in GIACOMO LEOPARDI, *Lettere*, a cura di Rolando Damiani, Milano, Mondadori, 2006, p. 706.

<sup>17</sup> FERNANDO BANDINI, *Al Conte Carlo Pepoli*, in *Leopardi e Bologna* cit., pp. 221-231.

not too impressed by Pepoli's art.<sup>18</sup> The two poets had many friends in common, including the influential liberal writer and literary scholar Pietro Giordani, another early exponent of liberal ideas in the Papal States. In later years Pepoli and his sister distanced themselves from Leopardi: the awesome cultural and political pessimism overshadowing the poet's earlier expressions of patriotism was irreconcilable with their own belief in the future of mankind.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. *The Revolution of 1831 in the Papal States*

As a liberal idealist within the circles of Bologna's aristocracy, Pepoli became an outspoken supporter of constitutional government in the Papal States and a central figure of the 1831 revolution in the Legations. There are few or no signs that his role in these uprisings was connected to larger ideas of Italian unification that went beyond the confines of the Papal Legations within the Papal States. Pepoli's correspondence in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano constitutes a major though largely unexplored source for research on the 1831 Revolution in the Papal States. On 4 February 1831 the *prolegato* of Bologna, mons. Niccola Paracciani Clarelli, nominated eight local dignitaries, including Pepoli, to form a *Commissione provvisoria* with the aim of assisting the Papal government in keeping the mounting civic and political unrest in the province under control. When the following day the *prolegato* fled Bologna, the *Commissione* reconstituted itself as *Governo Provvisorio*, ruling the Legations from 5 February to 3 March. On 8 February, as a member of the provisional government, Pepoli signed the declaration abolishing papal rule («potere temporale dei papi») in the province.<sup>20</sup> Pepoli first served as the government's delegate in Fano (Marche) and then led the government's *Comitato militare*, holding the rank of Colonnello.<sup>21</sup> His position was considered crucial in coordinating the government's military operations and securing supplies and weapons for the army. In official correspondence his unit was referred to as the *Vanguardia*.<sup>22</sup> The troops under Pepoli's command included the brothers Napoléon-Louis and Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, the later emperor Napoléon III, both nephews of Napoléon I.

Beyond his role as a military leader, Pepoli played an active part in transforming the different provinces that had seceded from the Papal States into the *Provincie Unite Italiane*.<sup>23</sup> The new state's assembly met in Bologna, nominated a council of ministers and proclaimed a provisional *Statuto costituzionale*, which was based on the separation of powers. Under the command of General Giuseppe Sercognani, Pepoli's troops advanced south to Otricoli in Umbria, 44 miles from Rome. Contrary to the view of the parliamentary assembly and

<sup>18</sup> Giacomo Leopardi a Paolina Leopardi, 24 marzo 1828, in GIACOMO LEOPARDI, *Lettere cit.*, p. 810.

<sup>19</sup> For a recent musical contextualisation of Leopardi's pessimism see EMANUELE SENICI, *Music in the Present Tense. Rossini's Italian Operas in Their Time*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2019, pp. 269-273.

<sup>20</sup> *Decreto sulla cessazione del Dominio Temporale del Pontefice*, in *L'Archivio dei Governi Provvisori di Bologna e delle Provincie Unite del 1831 cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>21</sup> *Notificazione sul Comando militare*, Bologna, 6 febbraio 1831 (*ivi*, p. 59).

<sup>22</sup> LAJOS PÁSZTOR, PIETRO PIRRI, *Introduzione* (*ivi*, pp. XI-LXXX).

<sup>23</sup> Carlo Pepoli a Vicini, 16 febbraio 1831 (*ivi*, pp. 266).

General Sercognani himself, during the campaign Pepoli and the other members of the *Commando militare* remained opposed to the idea of conquering the capital, located outside the borders of the former Legations and therefore considered a foreign territory. They considered any such operations a threat to the success of the political transformation taking place at home. On 15 March Pepoli was made *prefetto* of Pesaro and Urbino, two key locations in the new State.

Then the course of events suddenly turned. On 21 March 1831 Austrian troops occupied Bologna and the Romagna, and reinstated the Pope. After several days of resistance, the provisional government and the military command moved towards Ancona, where they agreed to capitulate on the promise of a Papal amnesty. Together with ninety-eight government officials, including General Carlo Zucchi, Count Terenzio Mamiani della Rovere, and Antonio Zanolini, Pepoli embarked on the ship “Isotta” to go into exile. Against the terms of the capitulation agreement, the ship was captured by Austrian troops. Considered insurgents, they were made prisoners of war and deported across the border to the Austrian kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia. Held first at the Fortress of S. Andrea in the Venetian lagoon, and then at the prison of S. Severo, they endured the harsh conditions of Austrian military internment. In captivity, Pepoli caught a severe eye infection, which for many years would affect his ability to read.<sup>24</sup> Attracting the attention of the diplomatic corps in Rome, the British and Prussian ministers made presentations to the Papal government that they considered the situation of the prisoners a violation of international law. After several more months, and a long journey at sea, the surviving members of the group were exiled to Toulon.

Arriving on French shores, Pepoli continued his journey to Marseille, where Mazzini had recently set up *La Giovine Italia*. Pepoli collaborated briefly with the group’s periodical «Tribuno», aimed at involving the popular classes in the movement for Italian unification.<sup>25</sup> Moving on to Paris, he was invited to join the salon of Princess Cristina Trivulzio di Belgiojoso, who had taken part in the Italian commotions of 1831. Like Pepoli a citizen of the Papal states, though by marriage, her salon was frequented at the time by a distinguished circle of European literary figures, including Fryderyk Chopin, Dumas *père*, Heinrich Heine, Victor Hugo, Alexander von Humboldt and George Sand. Among the many Italian exiles forming part of Belgiojoso’s salon were Giuseppe Ferrari, Terenzio Mamiani, Guglielmo Pepe, Alessandro Poerio, and Niccolò Tommaseo. It was here that Pepoli first met Vincenzo Gioberti, who later referred to him in his *Del primato morale e civile degli Italiani* as «uno dei più cari e onorandi a chiunque ama le gentili lettere nobilitate dalla bontà dell’animo e dal decoro della vita».<sup>26</sup> Their mutual sympathy was in line with their shared political views.<sup>27</sup> Vincenzo

<sup>24</sup> The medical condition also affected his work on the libretto for Bellini: DELLA SETA, *Introduzione* cit., p. XVI. Still in the mid-1840s Mazzini enquired about his eye infection. See Mazzini to Giuseppe Lamberti, 7 and 8 May 1844, in GIUSEPPE MAZZINI, *Edizione nazionale. Scritti editi ed inediti di Giuseppe Mazzini*, a cura di Mario Menghini, vol. XXVI, Imola, Galeati, 1906-43, pp. 175-180: 179.

<sup>25</sup> FRANCO DELLA PERUTA, *Mazzini e i rivoluzionari italiani. Il “partito d’azione” 1830-1845*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1974, pp. 69, 120.

<sup>26</sup> VINCENZO GIOBERTI, *Del primato morale e civile degli Italiani*, Bruxelles, Melines, Cans, 1843, vol. II, p. 528.

<sup>27</sup> The souring relationship raises questions over the idea that Pepoli stood for «a hot-headed patriotism», as Smart argues in *Waiting for Verdi* cit., p. 128. Up until then, Pepoli’s political role did not go beyond fighting

Bellini joined the circle of the princess at about the same time and it is likely that it was there that Pepoli and the composer first met. In Paris Pepoli also met General Lafayette, widely admired among the European exiles as a champion of political liberty. During a short period in Geneva, in 1833, Pepoli made contacts with Jean-Charles-Léonard Simon de Sismondi and with Pellegrino Rossi, and again met Mazzini, whom he introduced to the Neapolitan nobleman and publicist Giuseppe Ricciardi.<sup>28</sup> In Geneva Pepoli published a volume of short essays and another volume of his poems, extracts of which he later reused in his libretto for Bellini's opera *I Puritani*.<sup>29</sup>

### 3. Pepoli's exile

In 1835, Pepoli moved to London, where he was already known as the poet of the libretto for Vincenzo Bellini's *I Puritani*.<sup>30</sup> That same year the opera of the recently deceased composer had been a great triumph at the King's Theatre and subsequently the work remained in the local repertoire. Before looking at Pepoli's role as librettist more closely, it is useful to consider further details of his political ideas and his social life as an exile. In London Pepoli started writing for the Paris based literary journal «L'Esule», which counted Giuseppe Mazzini and Aurelio Saffi among its collaborators, although it was not necessarily read as a particularly radical publication. At that time Mazzini still regularly attended receptions given at Pepoli's London home.<sup>31</sup> In recognition of his classical education Pepoli became a corresponding member of the Society of Antiquaries, a sign of great distinction for an exile.<sup>32</sup> One of Pepoli's first acquaintances in London was another poet, the Dante scholar and exiled patriot from Abruzzo, Gabriele Rossetti, who was then teaching at King's College London. Pepoli also became an intimate friend of the influential Scottish writers Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle.<sup>33</sup> During those years, alongside his historical writings, Thomas Carlyle produced a number of significant studies on European Romanticism, including commentaries on

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for a constitutional regime in the Papal States. Political commotion elsewhere in the peninsula he regarded as an issue of 'foreign politics'. It is precisely this reason that he considered his incarceration in Venice a violation of international law.

<sup>28</sup> ANGELA RUSSO, 'Nel desiderio delle tue care nuove'. *Scritture private e relazioni di genere nell'Ottocento risorgimentale*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2006, p. 35.

<sup>29</sup> DELLA SETA, *Introduzione* cit., p. xx.

<sup>30</sup> On Bellini's London reception see DANIELA MACCHIONE, *Dal Pirata ai Puritani: la ricezione critica di Bellini a Londra*, «Bollettino di studi belliniani», 1, 2015, pp. 47-65. The same volume includes a  *rassegna stampa* of the first London production of *I Puritani*. Pepoli is praised in several of the reviews: see «The Morning Post», 22 May 1835, and «The Spectator», 23 May 1835.

<sup>31</sup> See Mazzini's reports on invitations hosted by the Pepoli's: Mazzini to his mother, 11 November 1837, in MAZZINI, *Edizione nazionale* cit., vol. xiv, pp. 143-148, 147; Mazzini to his mother, 28 May 1840, *ivi*, vol. xix, pp. 138-144, 140; Mazzini to Luigi Amedeo Melegari, 2 October 1840, *ivi*, pp. 293-297, 293.

<sup>32</sup> For a historical overview of the organisation see <https://www.sal.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/our-history/> (last accessed 31 May 2021).

<sup>33</sup> Jane Welsh to Thomas Carlyle, 26 October 1835, in *Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle* cit., vol. 1, p. 41.



authors like Schlegel and de Staël.<sup>34</sup> Pepoli taught Mrs Carlyle Italian, and in return she helped him to place his first English language publications with a publisher.<sup>35</sup> At the time when Thomas was finishing his three-volume history of the French Revolution, the Carlyles hosted many Italian and European exiles, again including Mazzini, although they both were critical of his political ideas. At the Carlyles, Pepoli made the acquaintance of the scientist Erasmus Alvey Darwin, brother of Charles Darwin, whose theories would profoundly mark the new disciplines at Bologna's University after Unification, at a time when Pepoli was closely involved in the reorganisation of the institution's academic curriculum. Another of Pepoli's friends in London was the French Republican Godefroi Cavaignac, brother of the General Louis-Eugène Cavaignac, later Prime Minister of the French Second Republic.

In 1839 Pepoli married the wealthy Elizabeth Fergus from Kirkcaldy in Scotland, a life-long friend of Jane Welsh Carlyle, who herself had family in Italy.<sup>36</sup> The relationship provoked surprise among their friends, with Thomas Carlyle describing the bride as «elderly, moneyed, and fallen in love with the romantic in distress».<sup>37</sup> Equipped with a good education and a writer in her own right, Fergus's works include an Italian translation of the *Physical Geography* by the Scottish scientist Mary Somerville.<sup>38</sup> Her brother John Fergus was a Member of Parliament for Kirkcaldy and Fife. Pepoli and Fergus settled in a house named Felsina Cottage, a reference to Bologna's Etruscan origins, at 11 St. George's Terrace, in Kensington. At the time, it became increasingly obvious that Pepoli distanced himself from the more radical members of the London community of exiles and sought solutions to Italy's national question that looked beyond Mazzini's democratic republicanism.<sup>39</sup> Pepoli even stopped at

<sup>34</sup> See THOMAS CARLYLE, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays: Collected and Republished*, vol. II, London, Chapman and Hall, 1872.

<sup>35</sup> Carlo Pepoli to Jane Welsh Carlyle, s.d. (1835?), in *British Library, Correspondence of Leigh Hunt, 1807-1859: Add MS 38109*, 149.

<sup>36</sup> Two recent books have made reference to the diary of Elizabeth Fergus Pepoli at the Biblioteca Universitaria in Bologna: *Giacomo Leopardi e Bologna. Libri immagini documenti*, a cura di Cristina Bersani, Valeria Roncuzzi Roversi Monaco, Bologna, Pàtron, 2001, p. 336; and SMART, *Waiting for Verdi* cit., p. 209.

<sup>37</sup> *Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, vol. 1, p. 20 (inserted by Thomas Carlyle). For further correspondence giving inside in the relationship see JANE WELSH CARLYLE, *Letters to her family, 1839-1863*, ed. by Leonard Huxley, London, Murray, 1924. Also, *The Carlyle Letters Online* (CLO), ed. by Brent E. Kinsler, <https://carlyleletters.dukeupress.edu/home> (last accessed 3 June 2021). See also CHARLES RICHARD SANDERS, *Some Lost and Unpublished Carlyle-Browning Correspondence*, «The Journal of English and Germanic Philology», LXII/2, 1963, pp. 323-335: 323; MARGARET C. W. WICKS, *The Italian Exiles in London, 1816-1848*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1937, p. 177.

<sup>38</sup> MARIA SOMERVILLE, *Geografia fisica*, trad. di Elisabetta Pepoli, Firenze, Barbèra, 1861<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> Earlier, Mazzini had praised Pepoli for financially supporting Italian exiles: Mazzini to Giuseppe Giglioli, 6 February 1839, in MAZZINI, *Edizione nazionale* cit., vol. xv, pp. 365-367: 365; Mazzini to Fortunato Prandi, s.d. [but 1840], *ivi*, app. vol. II, pp. 200-201. From the early 1840s relations seem to have turned sour and in 1844 Mazzini complained about Pepoli: «peggio che nullo, occupato di sé e de' suoi comforts esclusivamente, e che non dà né darebbe un scellino, o un quarto d'ora di tempo al paese: pare impossibile.» See Mazzini to Nicola Fabrizi, 15 February 1844, *ivi*, pp. 63-68, 66. Differences in financial background frequently created divisions within the London exile communities: HELÉNA TÓTH, *An Exiled Generation. German and Hungarian Refugees of Revolution, 1848-1871*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 199. On the different political milieus among the exiles see MARCELLA PELLEGRINO SUTTCLIFFE, *Victorian Radicals*

tending charity events at Mazzini's school in London, despite the fact that Mazzini understood his educational efforts not as 'a political, but a national' project.<sup>40</sup> Pepoli's political socialisation in London shows that not all exiles shared Mazzini's radical and republican ideas, and that supporters of more moderate liberal positions were able to form their own independent networks.<sup>41</sup>

Pepoli initially taught private courses on Italian history, art and music in Brighton and London. His lectures on the history of music at the Marylebone Literary and Scientific Institution were advertised and praised in the widely read «The Musical World», a clear sign of his recognition in this field.<sup>42</sup> In March 1838 he was appointed to the chair of Italian at University College London, where he taught three weekly lectures on Italian literature.<sup>43</sup> Succeeding the famous Antonio Panizzi, who had become curator of books at the British Museum, his application for the chair was supported by numerous influential referees, including the philosopher and political economist John Stuart Mill, himself a former student of UCL, whose father James had been among the founders of the institution. In his reference, Mill referred to advice sought from Giuseppe Mazzini, who expressed himself highly complementary about Pepoli's talent, despite the political differences that had started to emerge between the two exiles.<sup>44</sup> At a time when Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* were still on the Papal Index, London's recently founded University maintained close connections to many European exiles. Created by a circle of radical thinkers around the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, the 'godless place on Gower Street', as the University was widely known, offered a home to religious minorities and dissenters, who were barred from taking degrees at the Anglican institutions of Cambridge and Oxford. Mazzini, Panizzi, and later also Quirico Filopanti, who was to become *segretario generale* of the Roman Republic of 1849, all lived in close proximity of University College, where many of them taught.<sup>45</sup> Pepoli

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and *Italian Democrats*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2014. On Pepoli hosting meetings of exiles see EMILIA MORELLI, *L'Inghilterra di Mazzini*, Roma, Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano, 1965, p. 50.

<sup>40</sup> Mazzini to Contessa Elisabetta Pepoli, 31 October 1845, in MAZZINI, *Edizione nazionale* cit., app. vol. III, pp. 57-59.

<sup>41</sup> For a wider spectrum of transnational exchanges informing the political ideas of the Risorgimento see MAURIZIO ISABELLA, *Nationality before Liberty? Risorgimento Political Thought in Transnational Context*, «Journal of Modern Italian Studies», XVII/5, 2012, pp. 507-515; AXEL KÖRNER, *America in Italy. The United States in the Political Thought and Imagination of the Italian Risorgimento, 1763-1865*, Princeton, Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2017, pp. 78-113.

<sup>42</sup> See «The Musical World. A Weekly Record of Musical Science, Literature, and Intelligence» Vol. CXIX (New Series XXV) 21 June 1838, p. 137. For Pepoli's growing influence in London see also Mazzini to Giuseppe Giglioli, 8 November 1838, in MAZZINI, *Edizione nazionale* cit., vol. XV, pp. 248-251: 250.

<sup>43</sup> University College London, College Correspondence 4334, 28 July 1838.

<sup>44</sup> Mazzini remained interested in Pepoli's appointment and wrote about it to Filippo Ugoni in Zurich: see Mazzini to Filippo Ugoni, 27 April 1838, in MAZZINI, *Edizione nazionale* cit., app. vol. I, pp. 119-125: 124.

<sup>45</sup> HUGH HALE BELLOT, *University College London 1826-1926*, London, University of London Press, 1929, p. 121. On Filopanti see *Un democratico del Risorgimento: Quirico Filopanti*, a cura di Alberto Preti, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1997. Teaching for UCL was not lucrative at the time, with Mazzini complaining to his mother about the lack of a public education sector in Britain and giving Pepoli as example: Mazzini to his mother, 1 October 1838, in MAZZINI, *Edizione nazionale* cit., vol. XV, pp. 195-202, 199.

held his academic position until 1846 and was succeeded, on his own recommendation, by another prominent exile of the 1831 revolutions, Antonio Gallenga.<sup>46</sup> Appointed mainly on the basis of his literary reputation, many of Pepoli's poems were published during his years in London, at a time when he enjoyed the worldwide fortunes of his most successful theatrical work, the libretto for Bellini's *I Puritani*.

In 1847, shortly after the election of a new pope, and an amnesty for political prisoners and exiles from the Papal States, Pepoli and his wife returned to Bologna. After the proclamation of the constitution in the Papal States, he became a member of the *consiglio dei deputati* in Rome and was appointed as the new institution's vice-president. During Piedmont's war against the Austrian Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia he served as *Commissario con poteri civili e militari* and Inspector General of the Papal States. Under the command of general Giovanni Durando, he briefly took part in the Venetian campaign of the *esercito pontificio*, before it was recalled by the pope. Replaced in his position by another former protagonist of the 1831 revolution, Filippo Canuti, in 1849 Pepoli was sent on a secret mission to London, where he used his former circle of political acquaintances to arrange a number of meetings with Lord Palmerston and other prominent figures of Her Majesty's government.<sup>47</sup> The aim of this mission was to secure British support for the Pope's constitutional regime, so as to prevent the republicans around Mazzini from taking power in Rome. Pepoli's intervention shows the widespread support, also internationally, for solutions to the Italian question that included the papacy and a federal order of the Italian states. These circumstances notwithstanding, Pepoli's efforts came too late. Ill advised by his cardinals, the Pope refused to reach out for a compromise with the liberal forces, resulting in the proclamation of the Roman Republic under Carlo Armellini, Mazzini and Saffi, which was then crushed by the French Second Republic.<sup>48</sup>

#### 4. Towards Unification

Pepoli returned to Italy after another decade of exile in London, shortly before the annexation of the Papal Legations by Piedmont in 1859. He joined the *Assemblea Costituente delle Romagne* and finally abandoned his federal convictions to agree to the peninsula's political unification under the House of Savoy. Having always opposed Mazzini's republican radicalism, he accepted the annexation of his Papal homeland as the only viable solution to the Italian question. In February 1860, in a rare piece of political anthropology, he described for his political friends in London the political and societal transformation taking place in Central Italy:

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<sup>46</sup> University College London, College Correspondence, 1846-50, Galenga.

<sup>47</sup> Pepoli to Palmerston, 24 January 1849, University of Southampton, Hartley Library, Palmerston Papers: PP/GC/PE/50 Conte Carlo Pepoli. The letter is an impressive document showing Pepoli's opposition to the republican regime and his hope to restore the Pope's constitutional government as a mean to achieve a federal order in the peninsula.

<sup>48</sup> MAURIZIO ISABELLA, *Italian Exiles and British Politics before and after 1848*, in *Exiles from European Revolutions. Refugees in Mid-Victorian England*, ed. by Sabine Freitag, New York, Berghahn, 2003, pp. 59-87: 69.

Qui si diverte la gente in questi giorni carnevaleschi in modo straordinario tra la neve altissima caduta e crescente sotto un cielo cupo, mentre a stento sui carri vengono a centinaia li cannoni, li mortuari le palle e le bombe e le munizioni di ogni guisa per fortificare la città seguendo li piani del Generale Menabrea. [...] Io credeva che qua campagnoli sarebbero stati o indifferenti o forse avversi, perché intimoriti dal clero. – Ma che? – Partito io alle 5 del mattino, giunti alle 9 e trovai il paese come a festa, come ad una fiera. Tutto in moto. Appena giunto sulla piazza fui circondato dalla folla, e sempre delle nuove politiche drammattissime. La votazione fu numerosa [...], e senza la minima cosa non conveniente. [...] Io ricevetti le visite innumerevoli de' paesani che volevano discutere sulle contingenze politiche nostre, e tutti tutti aspettando drammosamente l'annessione delle Provincie a formare un Regno Italico forte. V'erano giovani, vecchi d'ogni classe ed alcuni ricchi molto. Poi rammentai il nome e la faccia di un vecchio, il quale discuteva di cose politiche prima e dopo della sua votazione... E chi era? Il sacrestano che da 45 anni ha questo ufficio. E bene, quando veggonsi li villani, e li chierici e li sacrestani discutere con senno e fare le votazioni venendo da 10 miglia lontani a tal fine nel cuore d'un severo inverno, bisogna dire veramente che la rivoluzione intellettuale è un fatto compiuto: e così essendo, non si possono più aver dubbi sulle conseguenze!<sup>49</sup>

Pepoli resumed his position as *professore di lettere e filosofia* at the University of Bologna and became an advisor for the provincial and municipal government. For the short period of Bologna's political transition, he also served as interim rector of the University.<sup>50</sup> Despite his declining health, he played an active part in the establishment of a national education system in the new Kingdom of Italy and in the restructuring of his old Alma Mater, which was directly inspired by his academic experiences in London. The University came to play a crucial part in positioning Bologna as one of the leading cultural and academic centres within the new nation state. In the first election to the Italian parliament, in 1860 (legislatura VII), Pepoli won the vote in the constituencies of Finale and Castel San Pietro, opting for Finale. In 1861, for the VIII legislatura, he was elected in Mirandola. On 30 November 1862 he was nominated to the Senate. Earlier in 1862, he had briefly returned to England to be with his ailing wife, who died three days after his arrival.<sup>51</sup> From 1862 to 1866 Pepoli served as mayor of Bologna, succeeded in this office by his distant relative, the Marquis Gioacchino Pepoli.<sup>52</sup> In the Senate he kept a low profile, mostly a consequence of his involvement in Bologna's local politics, but served as "Membro della Commissione per la verifica dei titoli

<sup>49</sup> Pepoli to Austen Henry Layard, 11 February 1860, in *British Library: Layard Papers, vol. CXXXVIII, Italian papers on Cavour* etc. Bequeathed by Lady Layard. BM Add.MS.39068, p. 76.

<sup>50</sup> *Università di Bologna, Serie dei rettori dello studio e dell'Università*: <https://www.unibo.it/annuari/annu0103/indice/p0s1a-1.htm> (last accessed 1 June 2021). Pepoli's revived academic reputation in Italy also drew attention in Britain: see «The Medical Times and Gazette», 19 November 1859, p. 509.

<sup>51</sup> Jane Welsh Carlyle to Mary Russell, 14 April 1862, in JANE WELSH CARLYLE, *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, annotated by Thomas Carlyle, ed. by Alexander Carlyle, vol. II, London, Lane, 1903, pp. 243-245.

<sup>52</sup> On the moderate nobility in local government in Bologna see KÖRNER, *Politics of Culture* cit., pp. 21-46.

dei nuovi senatori” (4 May 1872 - 3 October 1876). During those years he reprinted many of his earlier editions of verses and published a popular translation of St. Mathew’s Gospel into Bolognese dialect.<sup>53</sup>

### 5. *Political Thought between Federalist Ideals and National Unity*

Even as far back as the 1831 revolution, Pepoli had always spoken of Italy as «una sola famiglia: la sacra famiglia italiana».<sup>54</sup> He was committed to the idea that Italy should form some sort of political unity, although for him this should have taken the form of a federation based on the peninsula’s existing states. Pepoli’s political thought stands for the wide appeal of federalist concepts, that reached beyond the ideas of more famous federalists such as Vincenzo Gioberti, Alberto Mario or Carlo Cattaneo. Pepoli’s political project was informed by Italy’s different municipal and political traditions that for him made the essence of the Italian nation. As a member of the Legations’ revolutionary government in 1831, he considered any contacts with the other Italian states as ‘foreign’ relations, holding up the principle of non-intervention. His spatial framework for political action was the province of Bologna, rejecting the temptation of forcing its political regime upon the other Papal provinces. Only provinces which had freed themselves from Papal government were to join the political and military forces of the United Provinces. Despite his firm commitment to the idea of the nation’s resurgence, for there is little to suggest that Pepoli imagined the borders between Italy’s existing states to disappear. While in 1831 he signed the decree abolishing papal rule in Bologna, in 1848 he fought up to the last minute for a constitutional government under the Pope, understood as the only way to avoid the kind of republican centralism Mazzini and his followers were aiming for. His political vision for Italy remained the idea of constitutional government and civil liberties within a federal order. It was the events leading to the Second War of Independence that made him abandon his federalist convictions and accept the nation’s political unification under Piedmont.

Pepoli’s federalist convictions might easily be overlooked when one confronts them with his passionate belief in the Italian nation. His most explicit pronouncement in favour of Italy’s political resurgence we find in poems such as *La corona dei morti per l’Italia*, *Il fido bersagliere* and *Canzone di guerra*, all included in his 1837 collection of *Prose e poesie* and later republished in separate editions.

Già suonò la grand’ora di Guerra,  
Italiani, corriamo alle spade...  
Ognun d’un ferro s’armi

<sup>53</sup> CARLO PEPOLI, *Il Vangelo di S. Matteo, volgarizzato in dialetto bolognese dal Conte Carlo Pepoli*, London, Bonaparte, 1862.

<sup>54</sup> Pepoli to Vicini, 19 February 1831, in *L’Archivio dei Governi Provvisori di Bologna e delle Provincie Unite del 1831* cit., p. 270. ALESSANDRO GALANTE GARRONE refers to the same quote, questioning the idea that unitary political solutions played a decisive role in 1831: see his *L’albero della libertà. Dai Giacobini a Garibaldi*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1987, p. 168.

L'Italia a liberar;  
All'armi, all'armi, all'armi,  
Morire o trionfar.<sup>55</sup>

The poem was many times reprinted and appeared in a special edition of his works shortly after his return to Italy. Pepoli's patriotic vision for his Bolognese homeland, and for Italy as a nation, however, was never intended to undermine his cosmopolitan ideals, quoted at the beginning of this article. During the military campaign of February 1831, he insisted that the liberation of the Papal Legations was indeed part of an international movement:

Viva li Bolognesi, Viva il suo Governo, Viva la libertà. Io vidi molti commossi allo spettacolo che presentavasi agli occhi nostri nella Marcia di giovani italiani, greci, belgi, che unitamente sotto vessillo cosmopolita della Libertà, correvano (non badando all'agiatezza abbandonata della casa loro e della loro vita) anelanti di combattere colle strade faticose, colle tempeste del cielo che loro piombavano addosso tra molta pioggia, e cogli uomini che, schiavi dell'oro, sono nemici della Libertà!<sup>56</sup>

It was this vision of liberal internationalism that informed the ideas outlined in his inaugural lecture in London, when he spoke of the «fraternizing spirit of the age, which tends to unite the whole world into one family, of which the several nations shall be individuals.»<sup>57</sup> He was convinced that the future would unite these different nations: «Every railway that is established, every additional coach, all in the present day tends to increase the communication between nations; everything shows the desire for fraternization; and for the accomplishment of this object the various languages are a powerful means.»<sup>58</sup> Here Pepoli's words resemble the belief in the connection between economic and civic progress associated with the writings of exiles such as Giuseppe Pecchio and Antonio Galenga, but also with Mazzini's cosmopolitanism of nations.<sup>59</sup> These connections notwithstanding, Pepoli's political programme shows that there existed forms of cosmopolitan nationalism among Italian exiles that shared little ground with the radical programme of Mazzini's Young Italy.

Only subsequent to the failed project of constitutional government in the Papal States, in 1848, and after the collapse of his hopes for a federal league of Italian states, Pepoli came to accept the Piedmontese approach to Italian unification under the House of Savoy. Previous tensions between different strands of moderate liberalism were mostly resolved. After his return to Italy, in 1859, Pepoli associated himself with the forces of the *Destra Storica* around

<sup>55</sup> CARLO PEPOLI, *Canzone di guerra*, in *Prose e poesie di Carlo Pepoli*, vol. 1, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1880, p. 154.

<sup>56</sup> Carlo Pepoli al Governo Provvisorio di Bologna, 23 febbraio 1831, in *L'Archivio dei Governi Provvisori di Bologna e delle Provincie Unite del 1831* cit., pp. 276-279.

<sup>57</sup> PEPOLI, *On the language and literature of Italy* cit., p. 7. On the notion of 'liberal international' see note n. 2.

<sup>58</sup> PEPOLI, *On the language and literature of Italy* cit., p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> See *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's Writings on Democracy, Nation Building and International Relations*, ed. by Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbinati, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009.

Count Camillo Cavour and their local leader in Bologna, Marco Minghetti.<sup>60</sup> His principal opponents in politics were no longer radical republicans, but clerical legitimists in the former Papal States, who did everything to undermine the new nation state.<sup>61</sup> Despite Bologna's complex legacy as a former capital of the Papal Legations, in his public pronouncements as mayor of Bologna, Pepoli was keen to write Bologna's own experience of the Risorgimento into the nation's collective memory, inviting his fellow citizens «to repay its debt of gratitude to the memory of the many prominent men who in all times made the city's name known». To Pepoli, this meant that «Bologna should follow the example of other towns which compete in erecting monuments, putting up epigraphs and naming central squares and streets after their most famous citizens».<sup>62</sup> This vision was very much in line with his former role as a poet and epigrapher. Pepoli reminded the younger generations, that «one can only be proud of one's native city if it contributes to the universal pride of the nation».<sup>63</sup> His poetry and his many public lectures during those years were understood as a contribution to the idea of an Italy «delle mille città», representing the nation's unity in its diversity. Within this framework of commemorative politics, he remained a strong supporter of Bologna's musical tradition, which he saw as an important aspect of Italy's civic resurgence. As a politician who continued to regularly frequent his hometown's theatres, he complained about those many people who saw an evening at the theatre as nothing more than a social occasion, «reading, dreaming or sleeping» during the performance.<sup>64</sup>

## 6. *The author of I Puritani*

Despite the prominent role he played in the local, national and international history of Italy's Risorgimento, most modern scholarship on Pepoli reduces him to the author of the libretto for Vincenzo Bellini's last opera *I Puritani*, premiered in Paris on 24 January 1835. Apart from the fact that the significance of his contribution to Italian musical life goes beyond this collaboration, most Bellini scholarship disregards the wealth of material documenting Pepoli's political and academic life when assessing his role in the success of *I Puritani*. Both his choice of the plot, as well as his own social standing as an exiled poet and member of a well-known noble family, played a significant part in the work's international

<sup>60</sup> For a recent overview of Minghetti's political thought see DAVID RAGAZZONI, *Silvio Spaventa and Marco Minghetti on party government*, «Journal of Modern Italian Studies», XXIV/2, March 2019, pp. 293-323.

<sup>61</sup> *British Library: Layard Papers*, vol. CXXXVIII. Italian papers on Cavour etc. bequeathed by Lady Layard. BM Add.MS.39068, f. 76. Pepoli to Austen Henry Layard, 11 February 1860.

<sup>62</sup> Archivio Storico Comunale di Bologna, Atti del Consiglio Comunale, 2 October 1864, sindaco Pepoli. For elements of Pepoli's theory of history see CARLO PEPOLI, *Sul Congresso Archeologico internazionale in Bologna l'anno 1870. Lettere al Conte Professore Albicini*, in ID., *Ricordanze biografiche. Discorsi accademici*, Bologna, Società Tipografica dei Compositori, 1877, vol. III, pp. 95-103. For Albicini and Pepoli see CESARE ALBICINI, *Carlo Pepoli, saggio storico*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1888.

<sup>63</sup> CARLO PEPOLI, *Allocuzione a Giovani Alunni del Ginnasio Premiati*, in ID., *Prose e poesie di Carlo Pepoli*, 2 voll., Bologna, Zanichelli, 1880, vol. I, p. 5.

<sup>64</sup> CARLO PEPOLI, *Del dramma musicale*, Bologna, Società Tipografica dei Compositori, 1871, p. 8.

success. Pepoli's libretto was based on the then popular play by Jacques-Arsène Ancelot and Joseph-Xavier-Boniface Saintine, *Têtes Rondes et Cavaliers*, first given in Paris in September 1833. Pepoli suggested the play to Bellini, who enthusiastically endorsed the idea. It was an astute choice for an Italian libretto. A French drama on a Cromwellian subject, it was a perfect example of Europe's romantic imagination, but also a product of the transnational exchanges that characterised the experiences of European exiles in cities like Paris and London. The plot's (admittedly thin) historical background was not 'liberation' from foreign oppression, but a fight for constitutional government, reflecting Pepoli's own revolutionary experience in 1831. It is for the same reason that French audiences during the years of the July monarchy could relate Pepoli's «Gridando: Libertà!» to their experience of the *Trois Glorieuses* in 1830, in which the French people freed itself from Bourbon government to introduce new constitutional rights.

Pepoli used the opportunity of writing the libretto to substantially modify the plot's original structure, concentrating on the relationship between its protagonists, mostly at the expense of the historical context. As is well known, since *Il pirata* of 1827, Felice Romani had produced all of Bellini's libretti, including *La sonnambula* and *Norma* (both 1831). After tensions during the work on *Beatrice di Tenda* (1833), but keen to stage a new work in Paris, Bellini turned to Pepoli for what was to become his final opera. Contrary to conventional accounts of the encounter between composer and poet, in the circles where the two men met Pepoli was considered a poet of considerable prestige, whose experience of the recent revolution in Central Italy and his subsequent imprisonment had attracted considerable attention among *letterati*, political activists and members of the liberal nobility in Paris. What is more, *I Puritani* was commissioned by the *Théâtre des Italiens*, where two men from Bologna occupied influential positions, both of them fully aware of the social standing of Pepoli's family and of the young man's recognition as a poet: Carlo Severini, the theatre's *Régisseur général*-Caissier, and Gioachino Rossini, serving in a semi-official role as the theatre's *Directeur de Musique*.<sup>65</sup> Although their correspondence attests to affectionate friendship and mutual recognition of artistic talent, Bellini came to regret Pepoli's lack of experience in writing libretti.<sup>66</sup> Much of this conflict might have been due to the fact that Pepoli's poetic ambition went beyond writing words for the sole purpose of being turned into music. Meanwhile, Bellini was keen to work with a poet who, unlike Romani, was not overcommitted, and in a position to deliver his work within a reasonable framework of time. The libretto's final version was the product of a close collaboration between poet and composer. For his work Pepoli received 1000 Francs from the *Théâtre des Italiens*, the same fee Romani would have asked for, and a considerable sum only paid to the most distinguished and accomplished poets at the time. As we know from a letter to Olympe Pélissier, when Rossini saw *I Puritani* in October 1835

<sup>65</sup> On Rossini's role in securing the contract for *I Puritani* see DELLA SETA, *Introduzione*, in BELLINI, *I Puritani* cit., p. XII.

<sup>66</sup> For an overview of the collaboration on the libretto see FABRIZIO DELLA SETA, *Il librettista*, in *Storia dell'opera italiana*, ed. by Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli, vol. IV (*Il sistema produttivo e le sue competenze*), Torino, EDT, 1987, pp. 231-291: 267. For Bellini's correspondence see VINCENZO BELLINI, *Carteggi*, ediz. critica a cura di Graziella Seminara, Firenze, Olschki, 2017.



he had to leave half way through the first act, because he was tired.<sup>67</sup> Rather than reading his departure as a sign of disapproval, as the theatre's *Directeur de Musique* Rossini had been closely involved with the work's production and knew much of it by heart.<sup>68</sup> Considering that the same year Rossini used several of Pepoli's poems for his *Soirées musicales*, it is unlikely that his departure during the performance was intended to express contempt for the poet.<sup>69</sup>

The great success of the premiere of *I Puritani*, in January 1835, has often been discussed with emphasis on the role of the cast, including Giulia Grisi (Elvira), Giovanni Battista Rubini (Arturo), Antonio Tamburini (Riccardo) and Luigi Lablache (Luigi), later economically referred to as the 'Puritani Quartet'. While *I Puritani* was not received as an explicitly political work, during their later career in London, Grisi, Lablache and Tamburini established connections with Mazzini, and were involved in activity supporting Italy's national cause, which was popular with parts of the London audience. In its first Paris season the opera was presented eighteen times, moving to London in May, where the famous Michele Costa conducted it at the King's Theatre, again to great acclaim of audiences and critics. In London in particular, Pepoli's experiences during the Italian revolution and his imprisonment under the Austrians attracted considerable attention, a story the English public related to the fate of Silvio Pellico, whose account *Le mie prigioni*, according to Metternich, had done more damage to Austria's reputation than any of the Empire's lost battles. In this widely read work, Pellico directly acknowledged Pepoli as a fellow-prisoner and exile, which added considerably to the poet's reputation among the many sympathisers of the Italian cause.<sup>70</sup> At the time, several English translations of Pellico's work were available in London, while educated readers also used the various Italian editions circulating in Britain to improve their language skills.<sup>71</sup>

The prompt publication of piano reductions of *I Puritani*, and multiple arrangements of excerpts, were further signs of the opera's success, helping to substantially increase Pepoli's fame, without that reviews of the opera made much of the libretto's alleged weaknesses. Bellini and Pepoli produced a revised version of the opera for a performance in Naples, starring Maria Malibran and Gilbert Duprez, but due to an outbreak of cholera blocking the steam ships in Marseille, the work arrived late and gave the financially troubled theatre a pretext to break the contract.<sup>72</sup> There is some evidence suggesting that Bellini and Pepoli

<sup>67</sup> Rossini to Olympe Pélissier, October 1835, cfr. ALESSANDRO DI PROFIO, *Inediti rossiniani a Parigi. Il Fondo Rossini-Hentsch alla Bibliothèque G. Mabler*, «Bollettino del Centro Rossiniano di Studi», xxxv, 1995, pp. 5-95: 15.

<sup>68</sup> For a critical account of the Rossini versus Bellini debate see SENICI, *Music in the Present Tense* cit., pp. 267-269.

<sup>69</sup> GIOACCHINO ROSSINI, *Serate Musicali (Soirées Musicales)*, 2 voll., Milano, Ricordi, s.d. For a recent reading see SMART, *Waiting for Verdi* cit., pp. 128-151.

<sup>70</sup> SILVIO PELLICO, *Opere compiute di Silvio Pellico di Saluzzo*, Leipzig, Fleischer, 1834, p. 71. The close association between Pellico and Pepoli might be the reason why some commentators wrongly assume that Pepoli was imprisoned in Moravia. See for instance SMART, *Waiting for Verdi* cit., p. 130. On British sympathies with the Italian Risorgimento see MAURA O'CONNOR, *The Romance of Italy and the English Imagination*, Basingstoke and London, Macmillan, 1998.

<sup>71</sup> SILVIO PELLICO, *My prisons: memoirs of Silvio Pellico*, Cambridge, Folsom, 1836; ID., *My imprisonment: memoirs of Silvio Pellico da Saluzzo*, translated from Italian by Thomas Roscoe, Paris, Thieriot, 1837.

<sup>72</sup> RAFFAELLO MONTEROSSO, *Introduzione*, in VINCENZO BELLINI, *I Puritani. Versione per Napoli*, ed. by Raffaello

were discussing plans for a project on Cola di Rienzo, but the composer became ill in August of the same year and died the following month. The doctor who treated him during his last days, Luigi Montallegri from Faenza, was a personal friend and political companion of Pepoli. In December 1835, a pirate version of *I Puritani* opened the season at La Scala in Milan, at the Ducale in Parma and at the Carolino in Palermo.<sup>73</sup> In many places the event was accompanied by public commemorations of the composer, although they made no mentioning of a potential political context.<sup>74</sup> The following year the opera was presented all over Italy, including in Pepoli's Bologna, in Rome, as well as in several other cities of the Papal States. Even where Pepoli's name did not appear in the libretti, his position as a poet of famous descent, and his public role as an exile were well known, a background which increased the public interest in Bellini's last work at least among some sections of the audience.

There were other factors contributing to the work's success that were related to Pepoli's role. His plot for the opera directly spoke to Italy's romantic imagination, which for educated Italians represented an important root of the Risorgimento. Although *I Puritani* was not directly based on Walter Scott, it reminded Italian readers of what they knew from the popular Scottish writer.<sup>75</sup> Several of Scott's works were based on the political history of early modern England and Scotland, and had been explored by Italian librettists before, most famously for Rossini, and later for Donizetti. While in the case of Bellini's opera political utterances are rare, for Pepoli writing a libretto on the English Civil War, so shortly after the uprisings in Italy, stood for an important aspect of his identity as an Italian poet in exile, with Arturo, in act III of the opera, evoking the fate of the «esiliato pellegrin». On Riccardo's question «senza speme ed amor... in questa vita | or che rimane a me?», his puritan fellow soldier Bruno answers «la patria e il cielo» (I, 3), a passage included in both the Paris and Naples versions of the opera. It is difficult to imagine that these lines had no personal significance for the poet, and similarly audiences were likely to relate them to what they knew about Pepoli's own life.

The political significance of these references, however, should not be overstated, especially regarding the composer's intentions. Bellini's principal aim was to write operas that suited his cast. Individual numbers were produced as singers for the premiere became available, tailoring each piece exactly to the voice, often at the expense of the overall conception of the score. The *Inno di guerra* chorus, which Pepoli was keen to place in the opera's first part,

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Monterosso («Edizione Nazionale delle opere di Vincenzo Bellini», serie II, vol. II), Cremona, Fondazione Claudio Monteverdi, 2008, pp. xv-liv: xx-xxv. See also DELLA SETA, *Introduzione*, in BELLINI, *I Puritani* cit., p. xiv.

<sup>73</sup> See FABRIZIO DELLA SETA, «*I falsi Puritani*»: *A Case of Espionage*, in *Fashions and Legacies of Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera*, ed. by Roberta Montemorra Marvin and Hilary Poriss, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 76-110.

<sup>74</sup> See for instance the following leaflet: LAZZARO DAMEZZANO, *Alla Memoria di Vincenzo Bellini*, Genova, Paganò, 1835: «Oh piangi Italia, un pianto [...] | Creatore d'armonici prodigi | Sull'Istro, sulla Senna e sul Tamige [...]» (Genova, Istituto Mazziniano: 001450).

<sup>75</sup> On the relationship between *I Puritani* and Scott see GIUSEPPE SPINA, *Origine de 'I Puritani'*, «Nuova rivista musicale italiana», XII/1, gennaio-marzo 1978, pp. 29-33; ID., *Scott-Ancelot-Pepoli-Bellini. Genesi del libretto de 'I Puritani'*, «Nuova rivista musicale italiana», XXIII/1-2, gennaio-giugno 1989, pp. 79-97.

was relegated into the position of a cabaletta for the two basses, at the end of the second act. Notwithstanding this decision, the passage became the poet's most frequently quoted line («Suoni la tromba»),<sup>76</sup> although it was eliminated from the version for Naples, due to the lack of a baritone of sufficient vocal capacity, but also because too political.

Despite the opera's thin political content, in his inaugural lecture in London (rarely quoted by Bellini scholars), Pepoli insisted on his political intentions behind the libretto, and presented himself, as well as Bellini, as the victims of vicious censors.<sup>77</sup> Possibly overstating the case, this view was intended to appeal to pro-Risorgimento opinion in London, and to the many European refugees among the University's teaching staff. Likewise, Pepoli's poem *In morte di Bellini* serves as an early example of myth-making, which intended to increase the composer's popularity by reading his work in a patriotic key. In reality, political references were at best marginal in the opera's overall plot; and rather than for fear of the censors, it was for musical reasons that Bellini was not keen on Pepoli's idea of an *Inno di guerra*.<sup>78</sup> In order to move his audiences, Bellini regarded the representation of passion through individual characters as more important than the drama behind the plot.<sup>79</sup> As he explained in a frequently quoted letter to Pepoli, dated June 1834, «il dramma per musica deve fare piangere, inorridire, morire cantando.»<sup>80</sup> It is for ideas such as this that Bellini's correspondence with Pepoli is still regarded as an important source for the composer's understanding of lyric drama. While Bellini's approach to composing limited the role of the librettist as dramatist, Pepoli still played an important role in fashioning each of the work's characters; and because he survived the composer by many decades, he had the opportunity to directly impact the work's reception, in particular in London.

### 7. Pepoli as Musicologist

Was Pepoli the librettist of limited ability we still encounter in works on Bellini? Although he had no direct experience in writing libretti when the two started their collaboration, he had an excellent understanding of the history of opera since its beginnings in the seventeenth century and he was extremely well aware of the debates that emanated from

<sup>76</sup> PIERLUIGI PETROBELLI, *Notes on Bellini's Poetics: Apropos of 'I Puritani'*, in ID., *Music in the Theatre. Essays on Verdi and other composers*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 162-175: 169-171. On the duet's reception see MARK EVERIST, «Tutti i francesi erano diventati matti»: Bellini and the duet for two basses, in *Vincenzo Bellini et la France. Histoire, création et réception de l'œuvre*, Actes du Colloque international (Paris, Sorbonne, 5-7 novembre 2001), sous la dir. de Maria Rosa De Luca, Salvatore Enrico Failla, Giuseppe Montemagno, Lucca, Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2007, pp. 327-354. Everist's sources shed doubt over the idea that the success was due to the duet's potential patriotic content, emphasizing instead its poetic qualities and the fact that it was sung *unisono*. There is evidence that for productions of the opera in 1850s Havana the term «libertà» was usually replaced with «lealtà»: see MAX MARETZEK, *Revelations of an Opera Manager in Nineteenth-Century America*, vol. II (*Sharps and Flats* 1890), New York, Dover, 1968, p. 29.

<sup>77</sup> PEPOLI, *On the language and literature of Italy* cit.

<sup>78</sup> MONTEROSSO, *Introduzione* cit.

<sup>79</sup> Cfr. PIERLUIGI PETROBELLI, *Bellini e Paisiello: altri documenti sulla nascita dei 'Puritani'*, in *Il melodramma italiano dell'Ottocento. Studi e ricerche per Massimo Mila*, a cura di Giorgio Pestelli, Torino, Einaudi, 1977, pp. 351-363.

<sup>80</sup> Letter to Carlo Pepoli, Puteaux, June 1834, in BELLINI, *Carteggi* cit., p. 355.

Rousseau's eighteenth-century critique of the genre. In a lecture of 1830 to students of the *Liceo musicale* in Bologna he had outlined his view of the social and political purpose of modern music drama. He showed himself critical of a tradition where music no longer supported the dramatic sense of the work.<sup>81</sup> Playing on the opposition between Italian melody and Germanic harmony, his lecture encouraged Italians to study the foreign masters, but without trying to imitate them. Explaining how music has the capacity to provoke political feelings, his lecture quotes the Marseillaise as the example of a song, which had made an entire continent shout for 'liberty'. His remarkable plea for a new and modern operatic aesthetic shows surprising parallels to Mazzini's *Filosofia della musica*.<sup>82</sup> Both works were first published in 1836, but Pepoli had held his lecture six years before its publication, which then appeared in several reprints. As Mary Ann Smart has demonstrated, Pepoli applied the basic concept outlined in the lecture to his libretto for Bellini's *I Puritani*. The opera's famous duet «Suoni la tromba», relegated into a secondary place by Bellini, echoes almost the exact wording of his comment on the Marseillaise, «gridando libertà», which became very popular among the Parisian audiences.<sup>83</sup> Not without irony, the principal ideas of his lecture also reverberate in his poem *Il maestro di musica*, included in his 1837 collection *Prose e versi*.

#### 8. Pepoli's Songs and further Libretti

Regarding Pepoli's lack of experience, and Bellini's alleged disappointment over his new librettist, it is worth noting that when they started their collaboration, Bellini had already composed *Quattro sonetti* by Pepoli, only one of which is known today (*La ricordanza*, dated April 1834 and dedicated to Count Anatole Demidoff).<sup>84</sup> Pepoli's art was in high demand among the composers active during the 1830s.<sup>85</sup> A volume of poems, published in London in 1836, contains a list of composers who had set his verses to music, including among lesser

<sup>81</sup> Cfr. CARLO PEPOLI, *Prose e versi*, vol. I, London, Rolandi, 1836, pp. 1-62; also ID., *Del dramma musicale* cit.

<sup>82</sup> For a recent reading of sections of the work in the context of Risorgimento opera see SMART, *Waiting for Verdi* cit., pp. 109-120: Smart argues that «it was Donizetti whom Giuseppe Mazzini singled out as pointing the way toward a properly social and morally informed 'music of the future' in his 1836 essay» (p. 105). However, while Mazzini found much to be admired in Donizetti, as an example of 'new music' affecting social experiences, his «favourite composer» Meyerbeer seems to have played a far more prominent role in Mazzini's aesthetic debate. For a detailed discussion of this position see AXEL KÖRNER, *From Hindustan to Brabant: Meyerbeer's 'Africana' and Municipal Cosmopolitanism in Post-Unification Italy*, «Cambridge Opera Journal», XXIX/1, March 2017, pp. 74-93; ID., *Da Puccini a Rossini, andata e ritorno: ripensare l'opera italiana oltre le narrazioni nazionali*, «Bollettino del Centro Rossiniano di Studi», LIX, 2019, pp. 11-27: 21.

<sup>83</sup> MARY ANN SMART, *Parlor Games: Italian Music and Italian Politics in the Parisian Salon*, «Nineteenth-Century Music», XXXIV/1, Summer 2010, pp. 39-60: 42.

<sup>84</sup> For an overview see VINCENZO BELLINI, *Musica vocale da camera*, a cura di Carlida Steffan, Milano, Ricordi, 2012 («Edizione critica delle opere di Vincenzo Bellini», 14).

<sup>85</sup> On Pepoli and the *musica da salotto* see SMART, *Waiting for Verdi* cit., pp. 128-151, and also GIUSEPPE VECCHI, *Un poeta e melico: Carlo Pepoli tra Bologna, Parigi e Londra*, in *L'Italie dans l'Europe Romantique. Confronti letterari e musicali*, a cura di Annarosa Poli e Emanuele Kanceff, Moncalieri, Centro Interuniversitario di Ricerche sul 'Viaggio in Italia', 1996, vol. II, pp. 585-608: 589.

known figures Costa, Gabussi, Mercadante, Paër and of course Rossini.<sup>86</sup> The volume was published by Pietro Rolandi's London bookshop, which distributed the works of numerous Italian exiles, including the above-mentioned Silvio Pellico.<sup>87</sup> Among Pepoli's most popular chamber songs are those set by Rossini, comprising frequently reprinted poems such as *I marinari*, *La danza (tarantella)*, *Ricordi*, *La luna*. Eight of the twelve pieces included in Rossini's *Soirées Musicales* were based on texts by Pepoli.<sup>88</sup> They were first performed in Parisian salons, including that of Princess Cristina Trivulzio Belgiojoso.<sup>89</sup> The songs of this period evoke an idea of Italy defined as a space of shared culture and customs, often playing on stereotypes, but unlike some of Pepoli's later poems from London, largely free of political undertones. Several of Pepoli's songs in Rossini's collection were later set for piano, larger ensembles, and for chorus, and frequently reprinted. Among the most famous arrangements are those by Franz Liszt and Sigismund Thalberg.<sup>90</sup> After Pepoli had left for London, Giulio Alari set Pepoli's *Il menestrello italiano* for voice, French horn and piano, and dedicated the work to the Queen of the Belgians.<sup>91</sup> In the twentieth century, Benjamin Britten set a selection of his songs for orchestra.<sup>92</sup> Published and translated all over Europe, they represent an important aspect of the popular reception of Pepoli's poetry. As Mary Ann Smart has shown, it is no coincidence that the principal female character in the song collections set by Rossini and Mercadante is called Elvira, an open reference to Bellini's *I Puritani*, the most famous work associated with Pepoli's name.<sup>93</sup> These arrangements continued to perpetuate Pepoli's role as a poet well beyond the success of *I Puritani*. Although the success of these works says little about his qualities as a librettist, it presents a noteworthy challenge to subsequent academic criticism of Pepoli as a poet. His contribution to music was acknowledged when, on 25 December 1846, he was elected an honorary member of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome.<sup>94</sup>

Pepoli's career in music did not end with his numerous chamber songs and Bellini's last opera. In 1836 he wrote the libretto for *Giovanna Gray* (Grey) by the composer and fellow poet Nicola Vaccai (Vaccaï, 1790-1848). Like Bellini, Vaccai had previously worked with Felice Romani, who wrote the libretto for his *Giulietta e Romeo*, first performed in Milan in 1825.

<sup>86</sup> CARLO PEPOLI, *Prose e versi*, London, Rolandi, 1836, pp. 203-206.

<sup>87</sup> On Rolandi see ISABELLA, *Italian Exiles and British Politics before and after 1848* cit., p. 62.

<sup>88</sup> For a close reading and a table of these works, see SMART, *Waiting for Verdi* cit., p. 132.

<sup>89</sup> RAFFAELLO BARBIERA, *La principessa Belgiojoso. I suoi amici - il suo tempo*, Milano, Treves, 1902, p. 190.

<sup>90</sup> FRANZ LISZT, *Soirées musicales de Rossini*, Mainz, Schott, s.d. On the reception of the *Hexaméron*, the collective variations on Bellini's «Suoni la tromba» put together by Liszt, see PAULA REHBERG, *Liszt. Eine Biographie*, München, Goldmann, 1978, pp. 112, 151.

<sup>91</sup> GIULIO ALARI, *Mes concerts de 1838*, Paris, Gentile, s.d.

<sup>92</sup> BENJAMIN BRITTEN, *Soirées musicales*, op. 9, London, Boosey & Hawkes, s.d.

<sup>93</sup> SMART, *Waiting for Verdi* cit., p. 136; see also pp. 146-147.

<sup>94</sup> Pepoli's membership number in the Accademia is 3936. For information on his membership I am grateful to Daniele Carnini and Cecilia Nanni. On the Accademia's history see <https://santacecilia.it/en/about/our-history/>, last accessed 10 January 2022.

The work was much talked about and an international success. For his return to the stage, Vaccai then approached Pepoli. Bearing a number of similarities to the libretto for *I Puritani*, Pepoli's *Giovanna Gray* was based on the life of an English noble woman, who was executed for high treason, fitting Italy's romantic fascination with English and Scottish historical plots. While Vaccai enjoyed a considerable reputation as a singing teacher (his *Metodo pratico di canto italiano per camera* had been published in London in 1832), his reputation as a composer was in decline by the time he started his collaboration with Pepoli. By approaching Pepoli, Vaccai hoped to take advantage of the success of *I Puritani* to revive his own fortunes. The opera was premiered at La Scala in 1836, starring Maria Malibran for her last production at this theatre, but Vaccai's style no longer met the expectations of audiences and critics, resulting in an almost complete failure.

The following year Pepoli wrote the libretto for Michele Costa's *Malek Adel*, a tragic opera in three acts, premiered at the Théâtre Italien in Paris in 1837, followed by a production at the King's Theater in London in May of the same year, when Pepoli also took up his chair at University College London. The cast was based on the celebrated Puritani-Quartet (Grisi, Rubini, Tamburini, Lablache), in itself a sign of the importance accorded to the work.<sup>95</sup> The collaboration with sir Michael [Michele] Costa, a major figure of the nineteenth-century musical world, demonstrated Pepoli's recognition as a librettist. Originally from Naples and director of Italian opera at the King's Theatre (becoming Her Majesty's Theatre the same year), Costa introduced the position of the modern conductor several decades before Italian theatres were to adopt this practice, leading to considerable improvements in the quality of performances.<sup>96</sup> Based on Sophie Cottin's popular and frequently reprinted 1805 novel *Mathilde et Malek-Adel*, the plot spoke to Europe's orientalist tastes at the same time, while also testifying to Pepoli's own humanist cosmopolitanism.<sup>97</sup> The powerful dramatic action, set during the third crusade, sees the brother of Sultan Saladin and the King of Cyprus competing for the love of Matilda, sister of the English King Richard Coeur-de-Lion. Pepoli then manipulates the novel's action into a scene that sees Mathilde despair over her love for Adel, which stands against her vow to take the veil. The action turns into a mad-scene not dissimilar to the scene in Act II of Bellini's *I Puritani*. Adel dies as a Christian, in the arms of his lover and spouse.

As Claudia Cefalo has shown, the topic of Pepoli's libretto was by no means eclectic. Throughout the nineteenth century, Mathilde and Malek Adel were omnipresent figures of Europe's literary imagination, quoted by Pushkin alongside Goethe's Werther, and read as a major source of romantic inspiration.<sup>98</sup> Previously, the plot of Cottin's novel had been adapt-

<sup>95</sup> CLAUDIA CEFALO, *Mathilde e Malek Adel: storia di un soggetto, dal romanzo, al teatro, al libretto d'opera*, «Quaderni di Musicologia dell'Università degli Studi di Verona», III, 2012, p. 51.

<sup>96</sup> Cfr. JOHN GOULDEN, *Michael Costa, England's first conductor: the revolution in musical performance in England, 1830-1880*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2015; and NAOMI MATSUMOTO, *Michael Costa at the Haymarket: The Establishment of the Modern Role of 'The Director of Music'*, in *Orchestral Conducting in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Roberto Illiano and Michela Niccolai, Turnhout, Brepols, 2014, pp. 25-60.

<sup>97</sup> On operatic orientalism see in particular MARK EVERIST, *Meyerbeer's 'Il Crociato in Egitto': mélodrame, opera, orientalism*, in ID., *Giacomo Meyerbeer and Music Drama*, Aldershot, Burlington, Ashgate, 2005, pp. 101-140.

<sup>98</sup> Cfr. CEFALO, *Mathilde e Malek Adel* cit., pp. 49-69.

ed for the stage by Alexandre Joseph Le Roy de Bacre and Balisson de Rougemont in 1816, with music by Louis Alexandre Piccini, (grandson of Niccolò), and was explored for an opera by Giovanni Pacini (Trieste, 1828). Numerous adaptations for the stage, including several ballets, were to follow. Although Pepoli's libretto for Costa was not faultless, according to contemporary critics it was the composer who was to blame for the opera's failure, described as noisy and lacking melodic inspiration. Pepoli's libretto was used again by Ventura Sánchez de la Madrid for a *tragedia lirica*, premiered in Cadiz in 1850. The failure of Costa's opera should not distract from the fact that Pepoli had once again worked with a highly respected figure of the musical establishment. Considered by Meyerbeer the world's greatest conductor, Costa went on to create The Royal Italian Opera at the newly renovated Covent Garden Theatre and became conductor of the Philharmonic Society.<sup>99</sup>

Neither Pepoli's international recognition as a poet, nor his societal success in London, or his subsequent political career in Italy, make *I Puritani* a better libretto; but they make it difficult to simply dismiss him as an amateur poet. What is more, combining a unique Italian tradition with wider literary influences, his art spoke to Europe's and Italy's romantic imagination at a very specific moment of these countries' historical-political development. Any attempts to contextualise *I Puritani* should take account of the dramatic events of Pepoli's political life, as well as of their impact on his reception as an exiled poet, abroad as well as at home. Bellini scholarship has yet to acknowledge this part of Pepoli's biography. While his collaborations with Bellini, Costa, Mercadante and Rossini serve as a proof that Pepoli had arrived as a poet, he struggled with the economic rationale of London's theatre industry, a fact that was widely reported in the local and national press. Pepoli wrongly believed that as author of *Malek-Adel* he owned the exclusive right to publish his libretto. When the theatre's manager Pierre-François Laporte (1799-1841) printed and sold the work, Pepoli disputed his rights and was granted an injunction. On Laporte's appeal, however, Pepoli not only lost the case but was asked to pay legal charges of £70.<sup>100</sup> «The Musical World» was sympathetic, reporting that a local group of Italian artists organised a benefit concert to help him cover the cost. Allegedly, Pepoli then distributed a great number of tickets for free among his friends, reducing his revenue.<sup>101</sup> Pepoli's reputation as a poet for the leading composers of his day survived in the worldwide success of *I Puritani*, and in many collections of accompanied songs, reprinted countless times until the first decades of the twentieth century, when they lost their place in the middle class home due to the recent fortunes of the recording industry.

Pepoli died in Bologna on 7 December 1881. On that day, the Italian Senate held an official commemoration at which its President, Sebastiano Tecchio, recalled his contribution to the nation's Risorgimento and to the political life of the Kingdom.<sup>102</sup> Today academic

<sup>99</sup> Cfr. GOULDEN, *Michael Costa* cit.; MATSUMOTO, *Michael Costa* cit.

<sup>100</sup> «Morning Post», 10 July 1837.

<sup>101</sup> «The Musical World», vi, June-September 1837, p. 96.

<sup>102</sup> Senato della Repubblica: Senatori d'Italia, Senatori del Regno, Scheda Senatore, Pepoli, Carlo: <http://notes9.senato.it/web/senregno.nsf/9a29a2e73f195df7c125785d0059b96c/9b18626109bad8b-c4125646f005e5169?OpenDocument> (last accessed 2 June 2021). For other appraisals of that period see *Dizionario biografico degli scrittori contemporanei*, a cura di Angelo de Gubernatis, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1880, p.

interest in Pepoli concentrates mostly on his libretto of Bellini's last opera. He is mentioned in works on Leopardi but occupies just a marginal place in the history of the Risorgimento. Opera scholars ignore much of the archival material relating to Pepoli's position in 1831 and 1848, his exile in London and his political career after Unification. One of the reasons for this lack of interest in his work can be found in the teleological approaches that until today still characterise much Risorgimento historiography. These histories leave little space to the many participants of the movement who chose a less straight forward path towards Italian unification that was less straight forward than that of the Risorgimento's principal protagonists. Carlo Pepoli is buried at the Certosa of Bologna, where a bust by Diego Sarti (1859-1914) remembers him as a poet, patriot and mayor of Bologna.<sup>103</sup>

#### WORKS BY CARLO PEPOLI

- [CARLO PEPOLI] *In morte di Livia Strocchi. Versi*, Bologna, Nobili e Comp., 1827.
- [CARLO PEPOLI] *L'eremo. Epistola in versi (al Conte G. Leopardi)*, Bologna, Tipografia di Emidio Dall'Olmo, 1828.
- [CARLO PEPOLI] *L'eremo. Versi di C.P. in morte di Livia Strocchi*, Bologna, Tipografia di Emidio Dall'Olmo, 1828.
- [CARLO PEPOLI] *Versi di C.P.*, Bologna, Tipografia di Emidio Dall'Olmo, 1828.
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- [CARLO PEPOLI] *L'amicizia. Versi di C.P.*, Bologna, Tipografia di Emidio Dall'Olmo, 1828.
- [CARLO PEPOLI] *La luna. Versi di C.P.*, Bologna, Tipografia di Emidio Dall'Olmo, 1828.
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801; GIUSEPPE SILINGARDI, *Il Conte Carlo Pepoli*, «Rivista Europea. Rivista Internazionale», Roma-Firenze, xxvii/5, 1 March 1882, pp. 841-859.

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ABSTRACT – Carlo Pepoli is known to opera scholars as the author of Vincenzo Bellini’s *I Puritani*. Despite frequent political readings of the libretto, Pepoli’s role during the revolutions of 1831 and 1848, as well as his political contribution after Italy’s unification, is usually ignored. His understanding of Italian politics, including his federalism, was deeply marked by local developments in the Romagna, as well as by his experience of exile and his numerous transnational exchanges with political and cultural activists in Britain. As a consequence, his views of the Risorgimento differed from those of many other protagonists of the movement. His career as poet and writer of libretti went clearly beyond his authorship of *I Puritani*.