Comedy between Two Revolutions: *Opera Buffa* and the Risorgimento, 1831–1848

FRANCESCO IZZO

For more than a century discussions of the relationship between the operatic stage and the socio-political scene of the Risorgimento have relied almost exclusively on serious operas, and—in particular—those of Giuseppe Verdi. The supposedly inflamed reactions of audiences throughout Italy at the notes of "Va pensiero" and other choral statements of patriotism; the metaphorical meaning of the stories of political subjugation and rebellion that fill his operas of the 1840s; the notions of homeland and nationalism that surface more or less overtly in those works; and Verdi's own response to the events of 1848, with his hurried trip from Paris to Milan immediately following the outbreak of the Milanese uprising in late March, have all contributed to

Portions of this study were presented at the Eleventh International Conference on Nineteenth-Century Music (University of London, Royal Holloway College, June 2000), the Symposium Politische Mythen und nationale Identitäten im (Musik-) Theater (Universität Salzburg, Austria, August 2001), the Ottavo Convegno Annuale della Società Italiana di Musicologia (Palermo, Italy, October 2001), and the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society (Columbus, OH, November 2002). An earlier version appears as chapter 6 of my dissertation, "Laughter Between Two Revolutions: Opera Buffa in Italy, 1831–1848" (Ph.D. diss., New York Univ., 2003). I am deeply grateful to Stanley Boorman, Martin Chusid, Philip Gossett, Hilary Poriss, David Rosen, and Jesse Rosenberg, who read drafts of my work and improved it in a number of ways.

The Journal of Musicology, Vol. 21, Issue 1, pp. 127–174, ISSN 0277-9269, electronic ISSN 1533-8347.

reinforce the myth of a composer who, in his works and in his deeds, was wholeheartedly devoted to the Italian national cause.[1]

Following in the wake of suggestions by Frank Walker[2] and John Rosselli,[3] Roger Parker has recently reexamined the reception of Verdi's patriotic choruses, calling for a reassessment of the composer's role in the context of the Risorgimento.[4] According to Parker, there is hardly any evidence to demonstrate that Verdi or his audiences intended the popular choruses in his early operas as inflammatory calls to action in preparation for the *Quarantotto* (the name commonly given to the Italian revolutions of 1848–49), or that his music was a significant presence in the theaters or on the barricades when revolutions finally broke throughout the Italian peninsula. This is especially true of the celebrated chorus "Va pensiero" from *Nabucco,* whose metaphorical meaning seems to have been construed much later than usually thought, after the political liberation and unification of Italy.[5] In the revised scenario drawn by Parker, Verdi's quintessential contribution to the Risorgimento, the opera *La battaglia di Legnano,* premiered at Rome's Teatro Argentina during the short-lived Roman republic of 1849, stands out as an exceptional *unicum* rather than as part of an elaborate polyptych.

Indeed the *Quarantotto* marks a turning point in Risorgimento culture, and its impact on opera is clearly visible. In works like *La battaglia di Legnano* or the lesser-known patriotic *melodramma* by Gualtiero Sanelli, *Gennaro Annese* (Florence: La Pergola, 1848), one finds librettists and composers uniting their voices with those of literati and politicians, commenting on the contemporary events in far more direct and explicit terms than ever before, and bringing the enthusiasm for the revolution into the spotlight on the operatic stage. The attitude of Italian political authorities towards opera and other forms of artistic expression also changed around mid-century. John Rosselli has gone so far as to remark that "censorship […] did not become an acute problem until the last decade before Italian unity, when governments severely shaken by the

[1] The revolution known as the "cinque giornate" (five days) broke in Milan on 18 March 1848. Verdi arrived from Paris on April 5, greeted by an official announcement in the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* of that same day.

[2] Frank Walker, *The Man Verdi,* repr. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982), 150–51.

[3] John Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), 165.

[4] Roger Parker, *'Arpa d'or dei fatidici vati': The Verdian Patriotic Chorus in the 1840s* (Parma: Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani, 1997); " 'Va pensiero' and the Insidious Mastery of Song," in *Leonora's Last Act: Essays in Verdian Discourse* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997), 20–41; "Il 'vate del Risorgimento': 'Nabucco' e 'Va pensiero'," in Francesco Degrada, ed., *Giuseppe Verdi: L'uomo, l'opera, il mito* (Milan: Skira, 2000), 35–43.

[5] See Parker, *'Arpa d'or dei fatidici vati',* 31–47.

1848 revolutions met the full tide of literary romanticism."[6] The winds of change in cultural politics that accompanied the *Quarantotto* continued to blow through the 1850s, as the censorship cases of Verdi's *Rigoletto*, *Les Vêpres siciliennes*, and *Un ballo in maschera* demonstrate.[7] It is indicative that those cases—rather than any pre-1848 examples of interaction between opera and politics—have become the exclusive focus of recent scholarly studies.

The danger inherent in the current perspective on Verdi and the Risorgimento is evident. The emphasis on the post-1848 period may induce us to regard the phase prior to the *Quarantotto* as one in which political themes and dynamics were only a marginal aspect of the contemporary operatic discourse. As Mary Ann Smart has recently argued, the debate over the construction of Verdi's myth in modern historiography and the assessment of the anecdotal and biographical evidence associated with that myth threaten "to obscure [...] the variety and subtlety of the patriotic 'fantasies' in the operas themselves."[8] And while in her discussion Smart refers to Verdi's operas alone, her argument is equally valid if applied to the entire operatic repertory of the time.

Recently much light has been shed on the cultural politics of the Risorgimento. Notably, Italian historian Alberto M. Banti has effectively determined the importance of the cultural (literary, artistic, and philosophical) works to which the intellectual protagonists of the Risorgimento were exposed during the period leading to the mid-century revolutions.[9] Banti goes so far as to delineate and discuss a "canone risorgimentale" (Risorgimento canon), consisting of dozens of novels, plays, poems, memoirs, as well as historical, philosophical, and political essays, which were widely read and undoubtedly perceived as expressions or sources of inspiration (sometimes literal, other times symbolic or metaphoric) of the spirit of the Risorgimento.[10] In this broadened view, a

[6] Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy*, 82. Rosselli's extreme statement underestimates important cases of censorship involving some of the most important operas by Rossini and Donizetti from the 1810s through the 1830s. It is true, however, that the censors became stricter after the 1848 revolutions.

[7] See Martin Chusid, "On Censored Performances of *Les Vêpres siciliennes* and *Rigoletto:* Evidence from the Verdi Archive at New York University," *Verdi Newsletter* 25 (1998): 3–19, and David Rosen, "A Tale of Five Cities: The Peregrinations of Somma's and Verdi's *Gustavo III* (and *Una vendetta in dominò* and *Un ballo in maschera*) at the Hands of the Neapolitan and Roman Censorship," *Verdi Forum* 26–27 (1999–2000): 53–66.

[8] Mary Ann Smart, "Liberty On (and Off) the Barricades: Verdi's Risorgimento Fantasies," in *Making and Remaking Italy: The Cultivation of National Identity Around the Risorgimento*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna von Henneberg (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), 103.

[9] Alberto M. Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento: Parentela, santità, e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000).

[10] For a detailed discussion of the "canone risorgimentale," see Ibid., 3–55.

number of diverse threads concur to form the cultural imagery of this period, providing unprecedented insights into the ways in which intellectuals of the Risorgimento interpreted the cultural stimuli to which they were exposed.

In the field of opera studies, the diversity of those stimuli remains largely underestimated. While recent studies have often indicated that a historiography of 19th-century Italian opera that privileges the most prominent personalities will inevitably result in a partial or obstructed view of relevant cultural trends, discussions of opera and the Risorgimento continue to focus exclusively on Verdi's personality and work.[11] Now that a clear line of demarcation has been drawn between historical evidence and the post-unification legend of Verdi "bard of the Risorgimento," we have the opportunity to reassess the politics of Italian opera prior to 1848, considering also other composers and works. My purpose here is to discuss the interaction between opera and the Risorgimento in a group of comic works composed between the revolutions of 1831 and 1848. While many of these operas are virtually unknown today, most of them enjoyed remarkable success in the mid 19th century, circulating widely throughout the Italian states. Their texts reveal numerous affinities with the political discourse inherent in contemporary serious *melodramma*, showing that warlike themes, choruses, and other statements of patriotism were not a prerogative of Verdi's operas, nor an exclusive feature of the serious genre. Furthermore, their authors used conventional *buffa* procedures, such as modern-European settings and encoded allegories of national character, in ways that reveal an affinity with the tensions and aspirations of the Risorgimento.

National Identity in Luigi Ricci's Il nuovo Figaro

Let us begin in 1832, when Luigi Ricci's *Il nuovo Figaro*, a *melodramma giocoso* in two acts to a libretto by Jacopo Ferretti, received its premiere at the Teatro Ducale in Parma.[12] This work marked the composer's first great *buffa* success, and toured Italy extensively, with productions in more than 30 cities during the 1830s and 40s. As such, it deserves to be con-

[11] A noteworthy exception to this trend is Philip Gossett's "Becoming a Citizen: The Chorus in *Risorgimento* Opera," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2 (1990), 41–64, which focuses on the "long" Risorgimento, beginning in the Napoleonic period and offering insightful commentary on composers earlier than Verdi.

[12] Before his encounter with Luigi Ricci, Jacopo Ferretti was already known as one of Italy's most prominent librettists. His greatest success was the text for Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (1817). Also for Rossini he wrote *Matilde di Shabran*, while for Donizetti he provided *Zoraida di Granata* and his first great comic success, *L'ajo nell'imbarazzo* (both 1824), as well as three more librettos during the 1830s. His collaboration with Luigi Ricci began in 1829 with *L'orfanella di Ginevra*, and after *Il nuovo Figaro* led to *Eran due or sono tre* (1834), *Chi dura vince* (1834), *Il colonnello* (1835), and *Il disertore per amore* (1836).

sidered carefully as an important and influential specimen of post-Rossinian comic opera. Here, however, I will use *Il nuovo Figaro* to illustrate some of the ways in which an opera buffa of this period could relate to the Italian cultural and historical context of the early 1830s.

The literary source of *Il nuovo Figaro* is the Italian adaptation by Luigi Marchionni of Eugène Scribe and M. Mélesville's comedy *L'ambassadeur*.[13] Ferretti had an active hand in the publication of Marchionni's text and recommended this subject to Ricci at the end of October 1831. Previously, he and Ricci had considered *Don Giovanni*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, and *Il ventaglio*, all of which were discarded, at least in part due to problems with censorship in the Duchy of Parma.[14] Marchionni's *Il nuovo Figaro* is set in Rome, and tells the story of a French servant named Leporello. This man, who likes to call himself "il nuovo Figaro," works in the household of the Polish Count Valdemiro Bruloski, and helps the Count's daughter, Anna, make her love-dream come true, in spite of the opposition of her suspicious father.

Ferretti retained all the essential elements of the plot, but he also introduced a few significant changes. He moved the action from Rome to Naples (where it had been originally set by Scribe and Mélesville); he changed the nationality of Valdemiro Bruloski and Anna from Polish to Prussian, renaming them as Baron Sigismondo di Warthenkoppenburgen and Amalia; and he expanded significantly the role of the servant Demetrio, making him the third *buffo* character of the opera. Finally, in Ferretti's work the Baron and Demetrio became retired army officers. The possible reasons for these changes will be discussed later.

Despite the apparent conventionality of the plot, the depiction of characters and situations in Ferretti's libretto deserves a closer look. Leporello is not simply an astute servant gifted with eminently practical wits, but a far more reflective personality. His first appearance on stage has nothing of the frenzy of Rossini's Figaro. Instead, he is presented in the libretto as "Leporello, thoughtful, with newspapers, notices, and

[13] Scribe and Mélesville's comedy first appeared in France in 1826. The derivation of the libretto of *Il nuovo Figaro* from both the French original and Marchionni's Italian adaptation is acknowledged in the printed libretto for the premiere. The French text of *L'ambassadeur* is available in a number of early editions. Luigi Marchionni's adaptation appeared in print in Rome in 1831 as *Il nuovo Figaro: Commedia dei Sig. Scribe, e Melesville, ridotta da L. Marchionni*, Museo drammatico italiano e straniero 5 (Rome: A spese della Società Editrice, 1831). This edition also contains Jacopo Ferretti's "Notizie storico-critiche" on the play.

[14] See Francesco Paolo Russo and Fabrizio Scipioni, "L'epistolario Ferretti: I compositori," in *Jacopo Ferretti e la cultura del suo tempo: Atti del convegno di studi, Roma: 28–29 novembre 1996*, ed. Annalisa Bini and Franco Onorati (Milan: Skira, 1999), 23–26. Eventually Ricci did compose a version of *Le nozze di Figaro* (libretto by Gaetano Rossi; Milan: Scala, 1838).

many sealed letters in his hand [...] and talking to himself."[15] In line with this description, the short orchestral prelude that accompanies his entrance begins with a chromatic descent in the bass, which underscores his thoughtful mood (see Ex. 1).

Ricci was well aware of the dramatic difference between this entrance and that of Rossini's Figaro, when he wrote to Ferretti three days after the successful debut of the opera: "That blessed title Il nuovo Figaro could have compromised us, because everybody wanted to see Figaro enter while dancing."[16] The different nature of this character compared to Rossini's Figaro was also pointed out, not without disapproval, in a review published in the weekly journal *Il barbiere di Siviglia* after a performance of the opera at La Scala:

> Now ask for news about *Il nuovo Figaro* by Ricci, and I will tell you that instead of a dexterous busybody in a good mood, instead of a downright footman, gifted at plotting, ready to get out of difficult situations, apt to put others in every kind of trouble, and then with tireless mobility of action and with inexhaustible fickleness of speech, [able] to invent nonsense, to make up lies (and thus should be the Leporello in Ricci's opera); instead of this Figaro you have a placid veteran usher, a sort of retired doorman, who sings to you between confiding and serious, who, if he fixes some scrapes, if he commits some sponging, he does so more for the mechanical impulse of the prompter, who from his pit blows his part into his ear, than for susceptibility of character, for eccentricity of humor, for his pleasure, and for the sake of his art.[17]

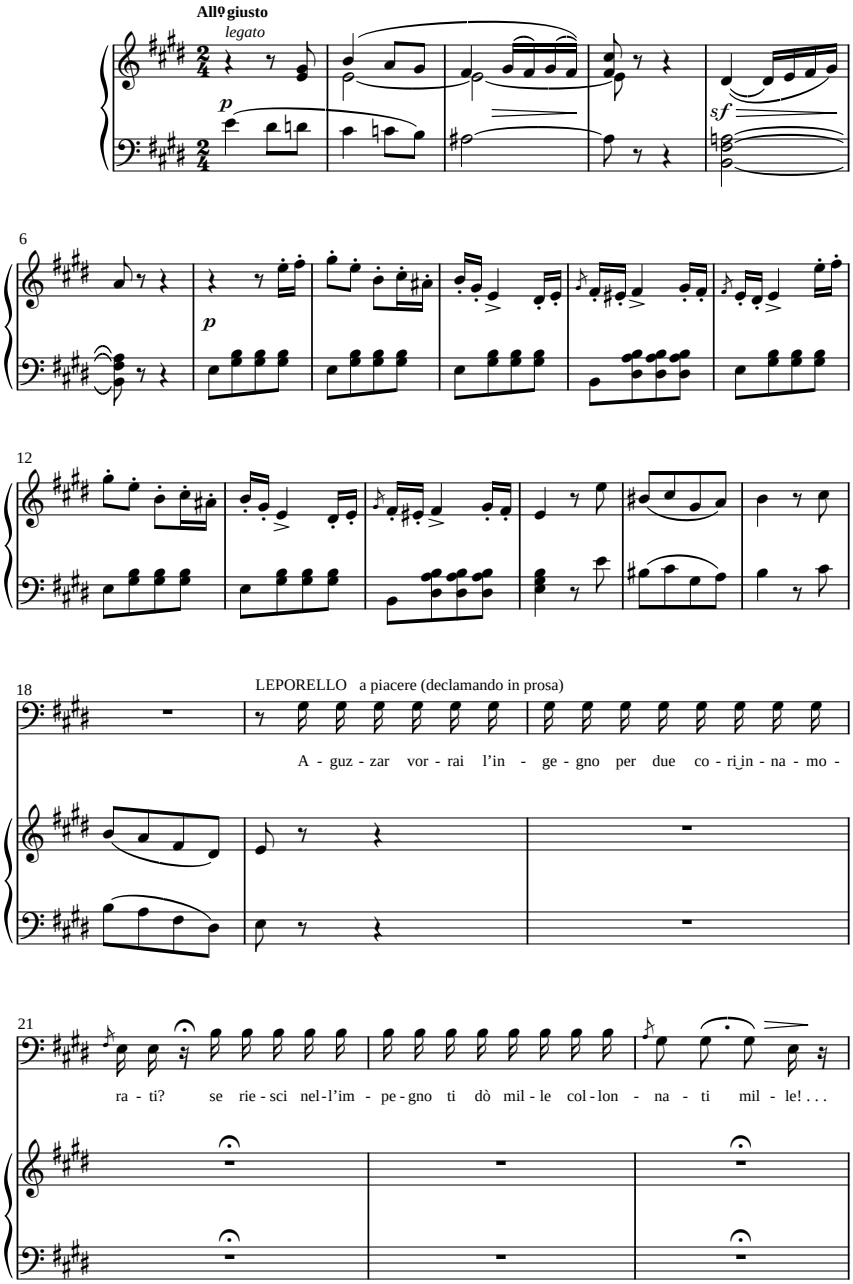
In fact, unlike his distinguished colleague from Seville, the "new Figaro" does not plot with disguises and stolen keys, but forges a letter, inducing the Baron to believe that his daughter's beau, Andrea, is the

[15] "Leporello pensoso con giornali, avvisi e molte lettere suggellate in mano [...] e dialogando da sé." Jacopo Ferretti, *Il nuovo Figaro: Melodramma giocoso da rappresentarsi nel Ducale Teatro di Parma il Carnevale MDCCCXXXII* (Parma: Stamperia Carmignani, 1832), 2. All subsequent citations are to this edition.

[16] "Quel benedetto titolo Il nuovo Figaro poteva comprometterci perché tutti volevano veder Figaro sortir ballando." Cited in Russo and Scipioni, "L'epistolario Ferretti: I compositori," 29.

[17] "Ora chiedetemi notizie del Nuovo Figaro del Ricci, e vi dirò, che invece di un destro faccendiere di buon umore, invece di uno staffiere matricolato, fertile in imbrogli, pronto a trarsi da ogni impaccio, atto a mettere altri in ogni briga, e quindi con mobilità instancabile di azione e con inesauribile volubilità di favella impiantarvi frottole, inventarvi panzane (e tale dovrebbe essere il Leporello dell'opera di Ricci); invece di questo Figaro avete un pacato veterano di anticamera, una specie di *guarda-portone* giubilato, che vi canta mezzo tra il confidente e il serio, che se v'annoda qualche piastriccio, e vi commette qualche scroccheria lo fa più pel meccanico impulso del suggeritore che dalla sua bucca [sic] gli soffia nell'orecchio la parte, che non per suscettività di carattere, per bizzarria di umore, per gusto e per passione di arte." *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, I, no. 6, 7 February 1833: 24.

example 1. *Il nuovo Figaro,* Act I



son of an old family friend. Literacy is indeed a point of resemblance between this Leporello and his namesake in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. But while Don Giovanni's unfortunate servant uses his writing ability only to keep track of his master's achievements, this Leporello uses his literacy against his master. Indeed, the new Figaro is a remarkable case among opera buffa servants of his time. Rossini's Figaro, for example, prudently suggests to Rosina that she should write a letter, but in the entire opera he is never seen reading or writing.

In the opening scene of the opera, the Baron's butler, Demetrio, despises Leporello's "aria d'importanza" (air of importance), and mocks his knowledge of the Latin language:

Leporello?… Leporello?…	Leporello?… Leporello?…
Dov'è andato?… Dove sta?…	Where has he gone? Where is he?
Ne domando a questo, e a quello…	I ask this person, and that one…
Niun lo vide; niun lo sa.	No one has seen him, no one knows.
Con quell'aria d'importanza!	With that air of importance!
Protoquamquam, Cicerone…	*Protoquamquam*, Cicero…
Finirà che dal Barone…	In the end, from the Baron
Vada, parta, sentirà.	he will hear "Go, and leave."
E se va, senza speranza	And if he goes, without hope
Dal palazzo uscir dovrà.	He will have to leave the palace.
[p. 1]	

Leporello does consider himself important, and far superior to the other servants in the Baron's household. At the close of his opening cavatina, referring to the servants who surround him, he remarks:

(Poveri stupidi! – Non sanno leggere	(Poor idiots! They cannot read
Le idee fantastiche, – Che bollon qua!	the fantastic ideas that simmer in my head!
Son come pecore, – Senza sospetto;	They are like sheep, without suspicion;
Ma il mio progetto – Gli stordirà.)	but my plan will leave them amazed.)
[p. 4]	

Leporello's self-confidence and individualism are diametrically opposed to the idea of respect for the master's authority expressed by Demetrio at the beginning of Act II. Reproaching a chorus of servants, who are gossiping about their master instead of doing their work, he says:

Bravi! Evviva! A coro pieno!	Good for you! Hurrah! In a full chorus!
Tutti uniti in armonia!	All united in harmony!

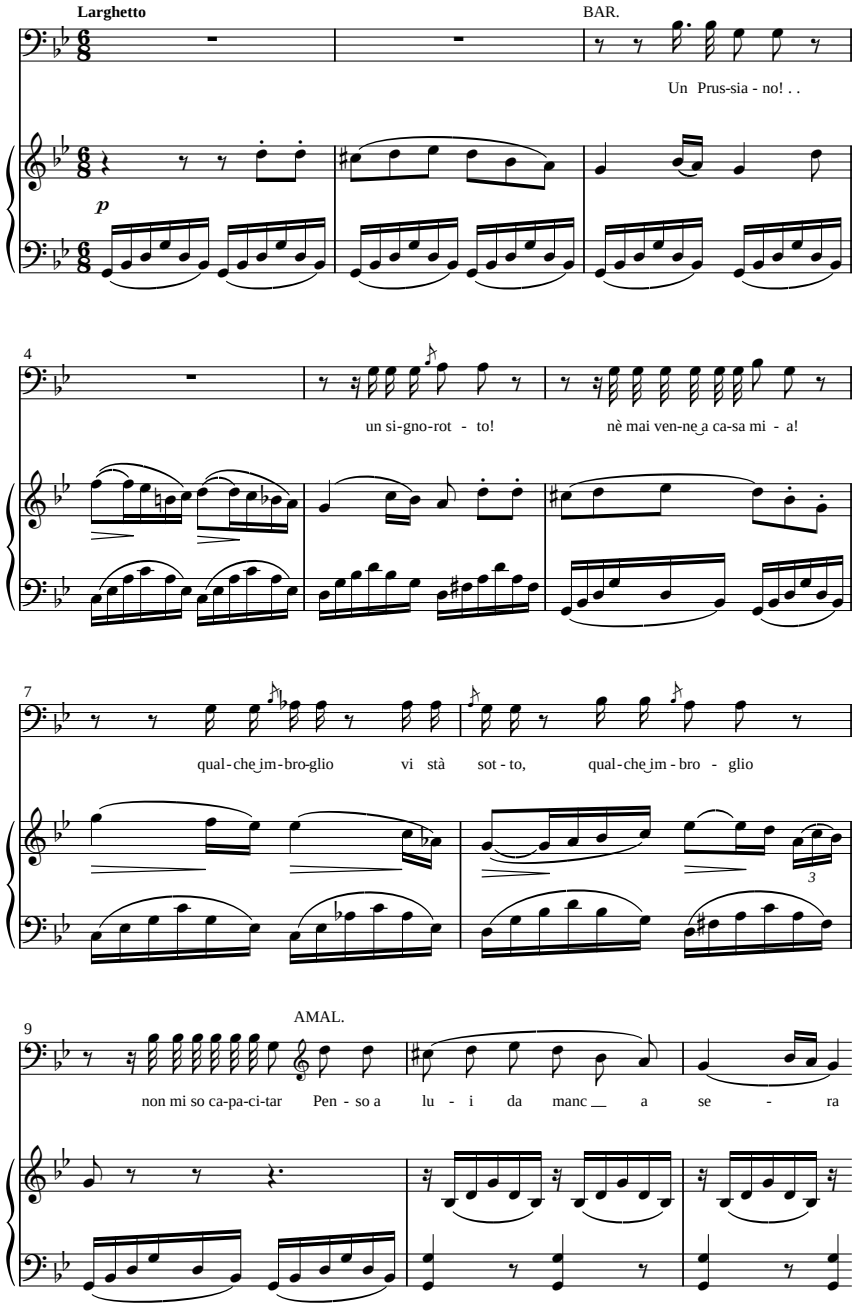
A trinciar di quel Signore,	All prating about that Signore,
Che vi sfama, che vi veste,	who feeds you, who clothes you,
Ch'è un modello di buon core…	who is a model of good heart…
Per la rabbia mi fareste	Out of anger, you would make
Un'arteria in sen scoppiar.	an artery explode in my chest.
Non vo' scuse. È legge il cenno:	I want no excuses. His signs are law:
General fu il Padron mio;	my master was a General;
Caporal son stato anch'io:	I was a Corporal as well:
Marchs! [sic] e tutti han da marciar…	Marsch! And everybody must march…
[p. 35]	

It is not difficult to imagine how Italian audiences of that time would react to such a statement. It is likely that the vainglorious militarism of both the Baron and Demetrio (a new trope from Ferretti's pen) would lead the audience to draw a connection between the Prussian characters in the opera and the Austrians, who at the time ruled in most Italian states. Such a connection would undoubtedly be reinforced by the command "Marsch!" so often heard in the streets of the Italian cities patrolled by Austrian troops. (The depiction onstage of Austrian characters inevitably would have been forbidden by the censors. Prussians, as German-speaking characters, were their most viable substitutes.) The fact that Demetrio's tirade comes from a character who a moment later expresses a complete lack of interest in women ("Fugge le donne un militare antico"—"An old army officer must flee women" [p. 36]) could only make matters worse.

Coining the Baron's name, Warthenkoppenburgen, Ferretti clearly had the intention of mocking the clashes of consonants and the long compounds characteristic of the German language.[18] But his derision of the Prussian characters goes far beyond that. In Act I, when the Baron first hears that Amalia has a lover, he speculates sarcastically that the man in question will probably not be Prussian: "Sarà un povero Romano, / O un Francese sventatello" ("He must be a poor Roman, or a little scatter-brained Frenchman" [p. 6]). This passage brings to the fore the opposition between different national groups, which was only a marginal feature in the literary source of the opera. At the girl's reply that the boy is Prussian, her father remains doubtful (not without reason, as we shall see). The irony of his ensuing *parlante*, set against the lyrical melody that introduces Amelia's *cantabile*, is one of the most successful moments of the opera (see Ex. 2).

[18] This type of mocking is not at all unusual. One of the characters of Donizetti's *Le convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali* (1827), for example, is the German impresario Guglielmo Knollemanhilverdinchspraichmaister, a name that derives directly from Simeone Antonio Sografi's late 18th-century plays.

example 2. *Il nuovo Figaro,* Act I



The compound meter, the plaintive melody in minor accompanied by a simple arpeggio, and the Neapolitan sixth at measure 8 contribute to making this passage a quintessential expression of Mediterraneanness, suggesting that there is indeed an "imbroglio," and that Amalia's beau is not Prussian. (The young man is in fact a Frenchman named Andrea Cernay.)

At the end of the opera, the fear of being "gazzettinato" (mocked in the newspapers) convinces the Baron to permit the marriage of Amalia and Andrea, granting Leporello a generous monetary reward for his silence. The following passage of the duet between the Baron and Leporello in Act II explains the situation eloquently:[19]

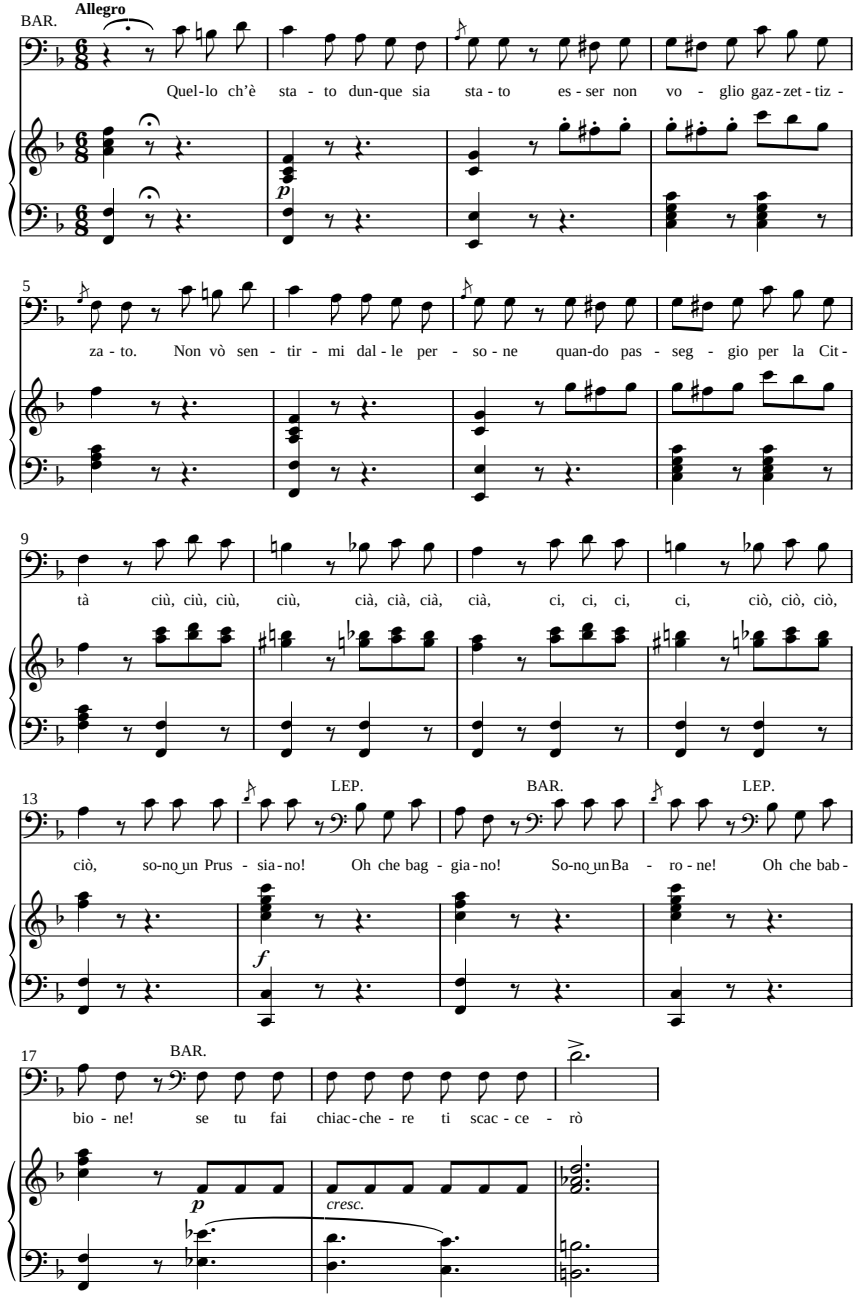
Bar. Quello ch'è stato – Dunque sia stato,	Bar. Whatever happened – has happened,
Esser non voglio – Gazzettinato.	I don't want to be – in the newspapers,
Non vo' sentirmi – Dalle persone,	I don't want to hear – people
Quando passeggio – Per la Città,	When I walk – around town
Ciù, ciù, ciù, ciù, – cià, cià, cià, cià,	Ciù, ciù, ciù, ciù, – cià, cià, cià, cià,
Ci, ci, ci, ci, – ciò ciò, ciò, ciò.	Ci, ci, ci, ci, – ciò ciò, ciò, ciò.
Sono un Prussiano – Sono un Barone,	I am a Prussian – I am a Baron,
Se tu fai chiacchiere – Ti caccierò.	If you gossip – I will send you packing.
Lep. Come un oracolo – Ella ha parlato:	Lep. Like an oracle – you have spoken:
Anche il respiro – sia sequestrato.	Even my breath – will be sequestered.
Non dee sentire – Dalle persone,	You will not have to hear – people
Quando passeggia – Per la Città,	When you walk – around town
Ciù, ciù, ciù, ciù, – Cià, cià, cià, cià,	Ciù, ciù, ciù, ciù, – Cià, cià, cià, cià,
Ci, ci, ci, ci, – Ciò ciò, ciò, ciò.	Ci, ci, ci, ci, – Ciò ciò, ciò, ciò.
Ella è un Prussiano – Ella è un Barone,	You are a Prussian – you are a Baron,
No: non si dubiti – non fiaterò.	Do not doubt – I'll not breathe a word.
[pp. 49–50]	

Setting this passage to music, Ricci added two derogatory rhymes to Ferretti's text, making the irony against the Baron's nationality all the more explicit: "prussiano" rhymes with "baggiano" (stupid), and "barone" with "babbione" (see Ex. 3).

Thus, the opposition between the Baron and Leporello is not merely that of a master and a servant, but also that of a Prussian and a Frenchman —or, broadly viewed, that of Teutonic and Latin national identities. A

[19] The use of exposure in a newspaper in order to mock a strict father or other buffo characters is a common feature in earlier comic operas, including Rossini's *La pietra del paragone* (Milan: La Scala, 1812) and *La gazzetta* (Naples: Fiorentini, 1816).

example 3. *Il nuovo Figaro,* Act II



similar contrast encompasses the other characters of the opera, isolating Warthenkoppenburgen and his stiff butler Demetrio not only for their authoritarian views, but also for their nationality. The audiences that attended the premiere of this opera in Parma and its subsequent productions all over Italy could not but sympathize with the characters of French nationality, Leporello and Andrea, and with Amalia, who is indeed of Prussian origin, but has become far more Italianate than her father, as her tune in Example 2 suggests.

The positive attitude towards the French characters in this libretto acquires special significance if viewed in the context of the period, and the location for which it was written. Early in 1831, during the uprisings that shook much of Italy, including the Duchy of Parma, the revolutionaries had hoped that the French army would intervene in northern Italy against the Austrians. That was not to be the case. However, Francophile politics continued to play a crucial role during the Risorgimento, as much as French characters and themes continued to play an important role in *opera buffa*. Eventually France did side with the Piedmont in the second war of independence (1859), and was pivotal in the liberation and unification of Italy. Writing this libretto shortly after the rebellions of 1831, Ferretti was likely influenced by the recent events when he chose to modify the nationalities of Marchionni's characters, and to bring the contrast between (Franco-)Italian and Germanic groups on the operatic stage. Be that as it may, such changes could hardly be casual and may well be among the reasons that contributed to the opera's success. Marchionni's play, whose characters bore little or no relation to the socio-political scenario of the early 1830s, declined inexorably.

A natural objection to my attempt to relate *Il nuovo Figaro* to the contemporary socio-political context could be made on the grounds that individuals of various nationalities had been present in *opera buffa* practically since the origins of the genre, and that for a long time prior to this opera librettists and composers had exploited differences of language, culture, and *modus vivendi* for comic purposes. Famous examples in the early 19th century include Rossini's "exotic" operas, *L'italiana in Algeri* (libretto by Angelo Anelli; Venice: San Benedetto, 1813) and *Il turco in Italia* (libretto by Felice Romani; Milan: Scala, 1814), and his lesser-known *farsa comica*, *La cambiale di matrimonio* (libretto by Gaetano Rossi; Venice: San Moisè, 1810), which centers around the contrast between an Englishman and a Canadian. But during this age of political unrest, in which the idea of nationality had acquired unprecedented importance, traditional comic devices such as the mocking of a foreign character gained a more complex meaning and were increasingly used to depict existing cultural and political conflicts. While it would indeed be excessive to read *Il nuovo Figaro* as a thoroughly subversive work, let

alone a call to action, it is certainly plausible to interpret Ferretti and Ricci's work as a reflection of the situation in Italy after the uprisings of 1831. Exploring the interaction between *Il nuovo Figaro* and its sociopolitical context enriches our perception of Risorgimento culture of the early 1830s, suggesting that the ideals of the time circulated on the operatic stage in more subtle and complex ways than we have hitherto assumed.

We do not know whether the censors of the Duchy of Parma perceived the overtones of the national conflicts depicted in *Il nuovo Figaro*. If they did, they must have deemed them harmless, and they did not raise any objections to the performance of the opera, whose text circulated completely undisturbed through numerous opera houses in Italy during the 1830s and 40s.[20] Meanwhile, as *opere buffe* with exotic settings or characters rapidly disappeared,[21] the opposition encountered in *Il nuovo Figaro* between individuals or groups of different European nationalities became a common element in comic opera libretti of the period. Often such national themes became an opportunity for librettists and composers to display their favor or hostility towards particular national groups, fostering native pride among Italian audiences or conveying revolutionary ideas far more explicitly than in *Il nuovo Figaro*. In those cases the censors did intervene, and their reactions are worth considering.

Militarism, Nationalism, and Censorship in Risorgimento Opera Buffa

In spite of its unrealistic and geographically remote setting, Gioachino Rossini's *L'italiana in Algeri* (Venice: San Benedetto, 1813) contains a poignant statement of Italian patriotism. Near the conclusion of the opera (Act II, scene 11), the brave Isabella has incited the Italian slaves of the Algerian bey Mustafà to take up arms and flee his palace. As the slaves gather and prepare for action, they sing a short chorus:

Pronti abbiamo e ferri e mani	We have ready our weapons and hands
Per fuggir con voi di qua.	to escape with you from here.
Quanto vaglian gl'italiani	You will see how much Italians are worth
Al cimento si vedrà.[22]	in the struggle.

[20] None of the printed librettos I have examined contains changes of names, locale, or relevant details.

[21] One of the last comic operas set in distant exotic lands is Felice Romani and Feliciano Strepponi's *L'ullà di Bassora*, whose premiere performance at La Scala in 1831 enjoyed a modest success. The opera was never revived.

[22] Angelo Anelli, *L'italiana in Algeri*, in *Tutti i libretti di Rossini*, ed. Marco Beghelli and Nicola Gallino (Milan: Garzanti, 1991), 220. On the political relevance and censor-

Not surprisingly, this text, as well as the patriotic words of Isabella's ensuing rondo "Pensa alla patria," was often censored during the Risorgimento.[23] The frequent replacement of this passage provides evidence that the censors kept a close eye on *opera buffa* well before 1848. Indeed, during this period explicit statements in praise of Italy appear as rarely in comic opera as they do in its serious counterpart. A noteworthy exception is Luigi Ricci's *Un'avventura di Scaramuccia* (libretto by Felice Romani; Milan: La Scala, 1834). The opera, exploiting a theme that goes back to the *Querelle des Bouffons* and earlier, tells how the Italian *commedia dell'arte* troupe led by Tiberio Fiorilli, also known as Scaramuccia, performed in Paris, becoming a threat to Molière's company. The contrast between two national groups (Italian and French) is played out entirely on cultural grounds. In the Introduzione (Act I, scene 1), during the intermission of a comedy produced by Scaramuccia, a chorus of spectators praises the ability of the Italian comedians:

1.°	Che vi sembra della Farsa?	What do you think of the farce?
2.°	Non ci è male a quel prim'atto.	That first act was not bad.
Tutti	Ma finor la sua comparsa	But so far
	Scaramuccia non ha fatto.	Scaramuccia has not yet made his appearance.
1.°	Il brav'uom che è Scaramuccia!	He is a good man, that Scaramuccia!
2.°	Un gran Comico davver!	A great Comedian indeed!
Tutti	La più insulsa commediuccia	He makes one like
	Egli arriva a far piacer.	even the most banal little comedy.
1.°	Contro i drammi italiani	Against Italian dramas
	Sorga pur la Francia intera;	let all of France arise;
2.°	Di Molière i partigiani	let Molière's partisans
	Ciarlin pure a lor maniera,	chatter in their usual manner,
Tutti	A chi vuol lasciam decidere	let whoever wants decide
	Chi ha maggiore abilità.	who has the greatest ability.
	Scaramuccia ci fa ridere,	Scaramuccia makes us laugh,
	Bravo è assai chi rider fa.[24]	he who makes us laugh is good indeed.

Ricci's musical setting of this passage begins with short exchanges between the two groups over a fast-moving orchestral accompaniment

ship of this chorus, see Gossett, "Becoming a Citizen: The Chorus in *Risorgimento* Opera," 45–47. Gossett also suggests that the piece contains a free quotation of "La Marseillaise," a tune whose ties to the French revolution were certainly known in Italy during the Napoleonic era and beyond.

[23] In a well known letter of 1864 to Filippo Santocanale, Rossini cited this piece in defense of his patriotism, which was often questioned during his lifetime. See Luigi Rognoni, *Gioachino Rossini*, rev. ed. (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), 315.

[24] Felice Romani, *Un'avventura di Scaramuccia: Melodramma comico in due atti da rappresentarsi nell'Imp. Regio Teatro alla Scala il Carnevale 1834* (Milan: Luigi di Giacomo Pirola, 1834), 9–10.

(see Ex. 4, mm. 1ff.), which emphasize the conversational nature of the scene, and give little weight to the words. However, as soon as the text shifts to celebrate the superiority of the Italians over the French ("Contro i drammi italiani"), the repetitive 16th-note figures of the accompaniment disappear, giving way to a four-phrase, 32-measure passage in which orchestra and chorus are joined together (see Ex. 4, mm. 60ff.). As the two choral groups unite to present a formal encomium of Scaramuccia and his "drammi italiani," the casual attitude of the spectators at the beginning of the chorus is all but forgotten. There is little doubt that this tuneful episode is the emotional center of the Introduzione.

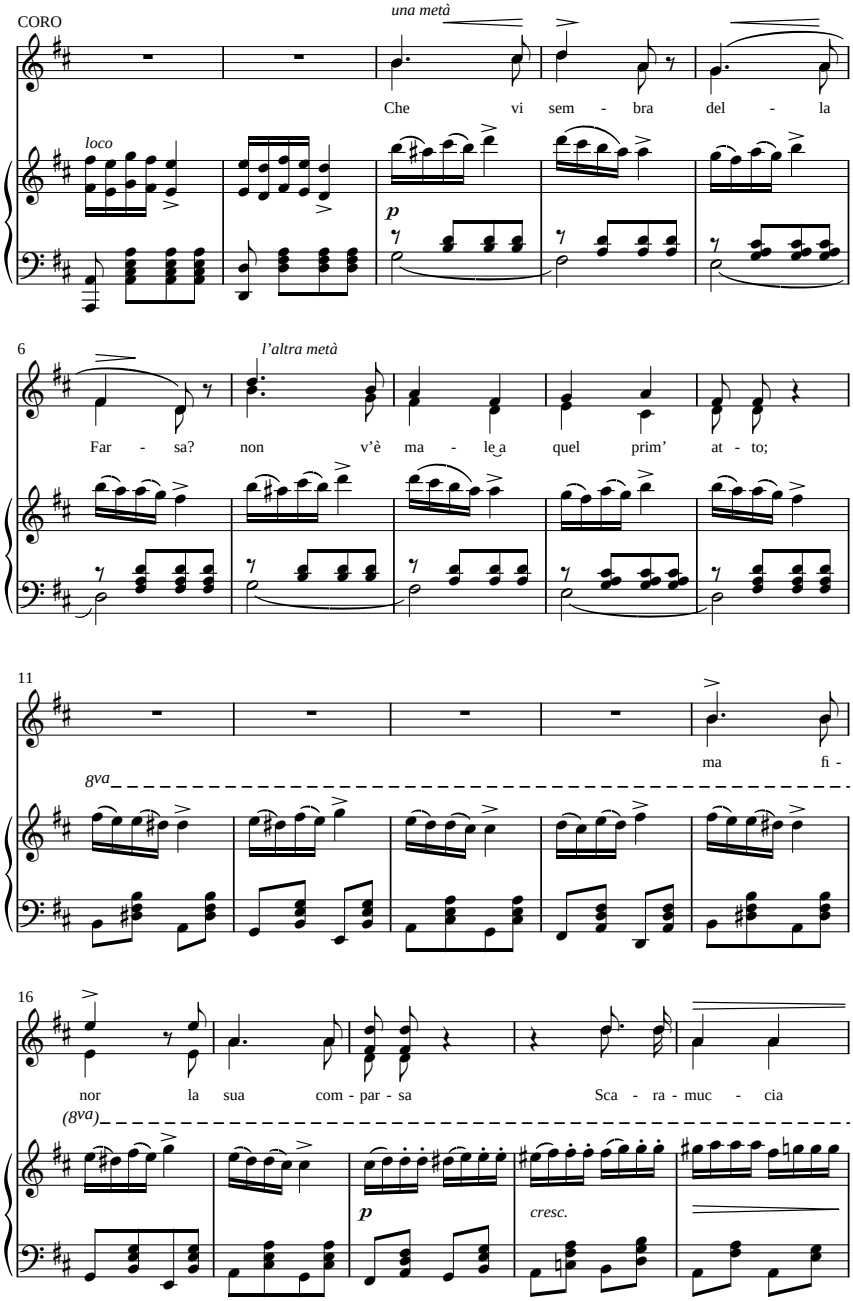
Italophile comments such as those found in this chorus are unusual. If other national groups were involved, however, librettists and composers could enjoy a little more freedom. The frequent use of backdrops of war between different contemporary European nations allowed librettists and composers of *opera buffa* to incorporate military situations or characters in their operas, using them for more than simple dramatic ends. As we have seen in *Il nuovo Figaro,* army officers are usually associated with *buffo* roles so that they could be ridiculed or treated with contempt. Aside from Baron Warthenkoppenburgen and his butler Demetrio, another retired Prussian army officer is Gottofredo di Bibrak in *La festa della rosa* by Jacopo Ferretti and Pietro Antonio Coppola (Milan: La Scala, 1836). In Act I, scene 6, Bibrak recollects his military career in a passage of his duet with Rodolfo:

Dopo un aspro noviziato,	After a difficult novitiate,
Caporal venni e Sergente,	I became Corporal and Sergeant,
Nel quart'anno poi creato	Then, in the fourth year,
Là sul campo fui Tenente,	there on the battlefield, I was made a Lieutenant,
E così di mano in mano	and so, gradually,
Diventando Capitano	I became a Captain,
Fatta ho più d'una campagna	while I did more than one campaign
Nella Olanda, nella Prussia,	in Holland and in Prussia,
Nella Francia, nella Spagna,	in France and in Spain,
Nella Scozia, nella Russia.	in Scotland and in Russia.
Or all'ombra della gloria	Now, in the shadow of my glory,
Sto i miei soldi qui a mangiar.[25]	I am here, squandering my money.

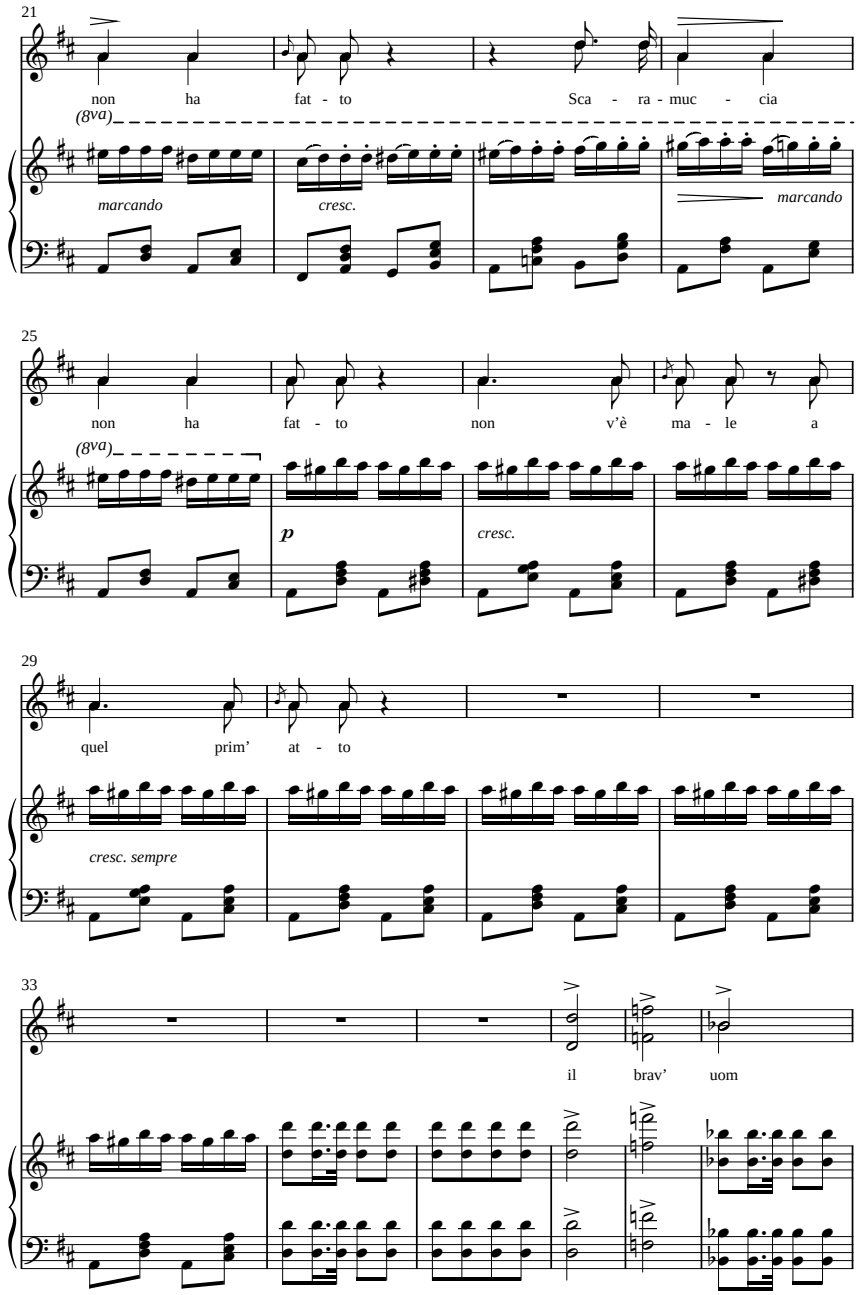
In Coppola's setting of the final two lines, the fast-moving orchestral motive supporting the *parlante* of the *buffo* gives way to an ironic little march, whose musical worth reflects the intellectual stature of the character (see Ex. 5).

[25] Jacopo Ferretti, *La festa della rosa: Melodramma giocoso in due atti da rappresentarsi nell'I. R. teatro alla Scala l'Autunno 1836* (Milan: Luigi di Giacomo Pirola, 1836), 21–22.

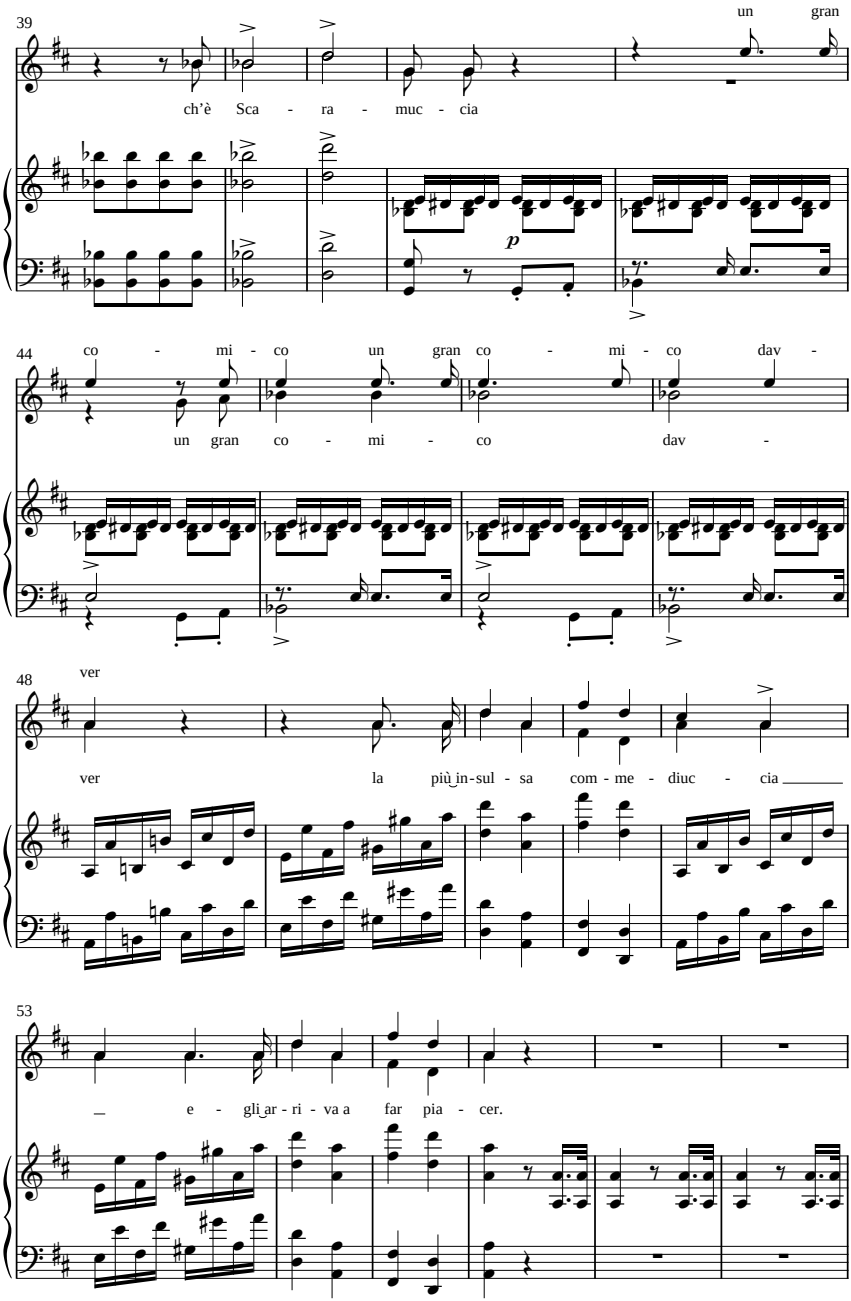
example 4. *Un'avventura di Scaramuccia,* Act I



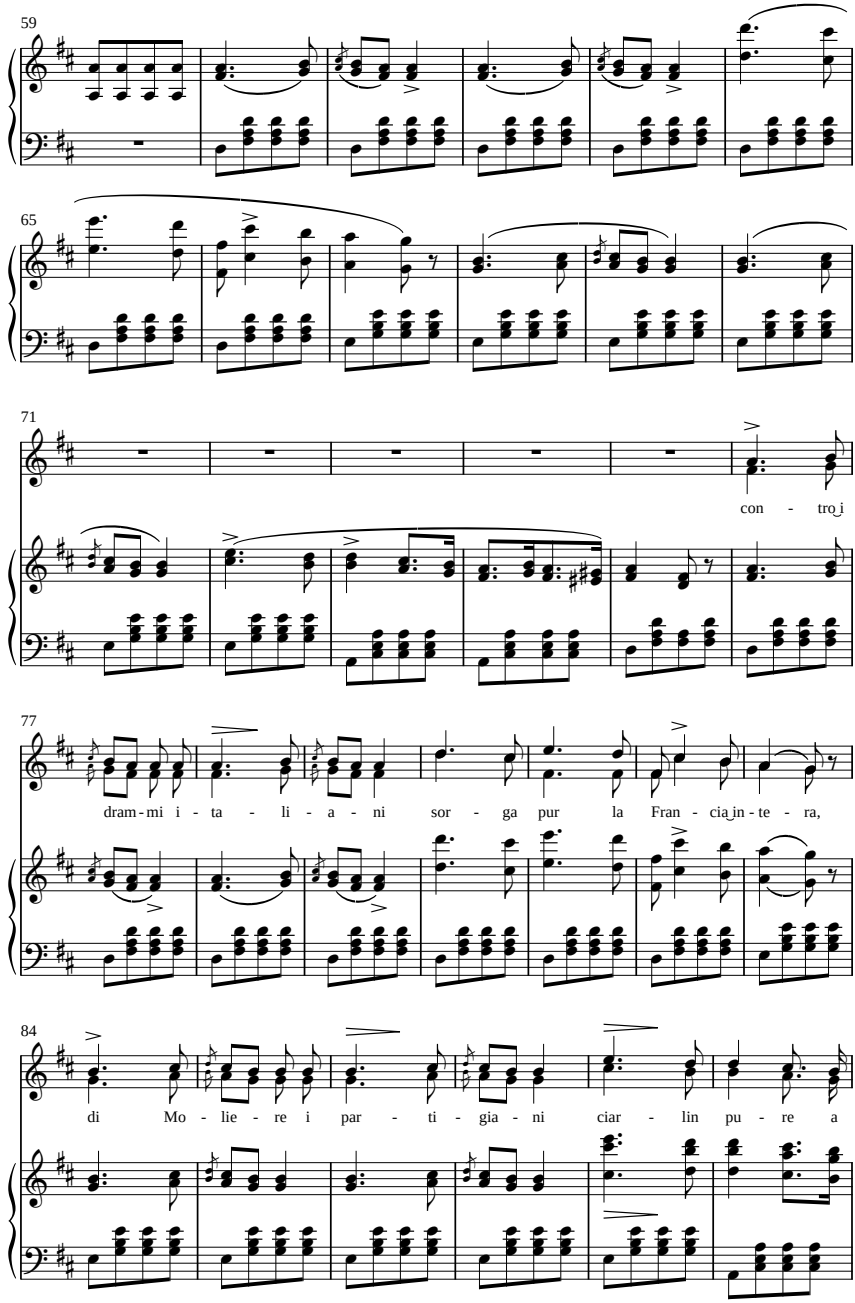
example 4. (*continued*)



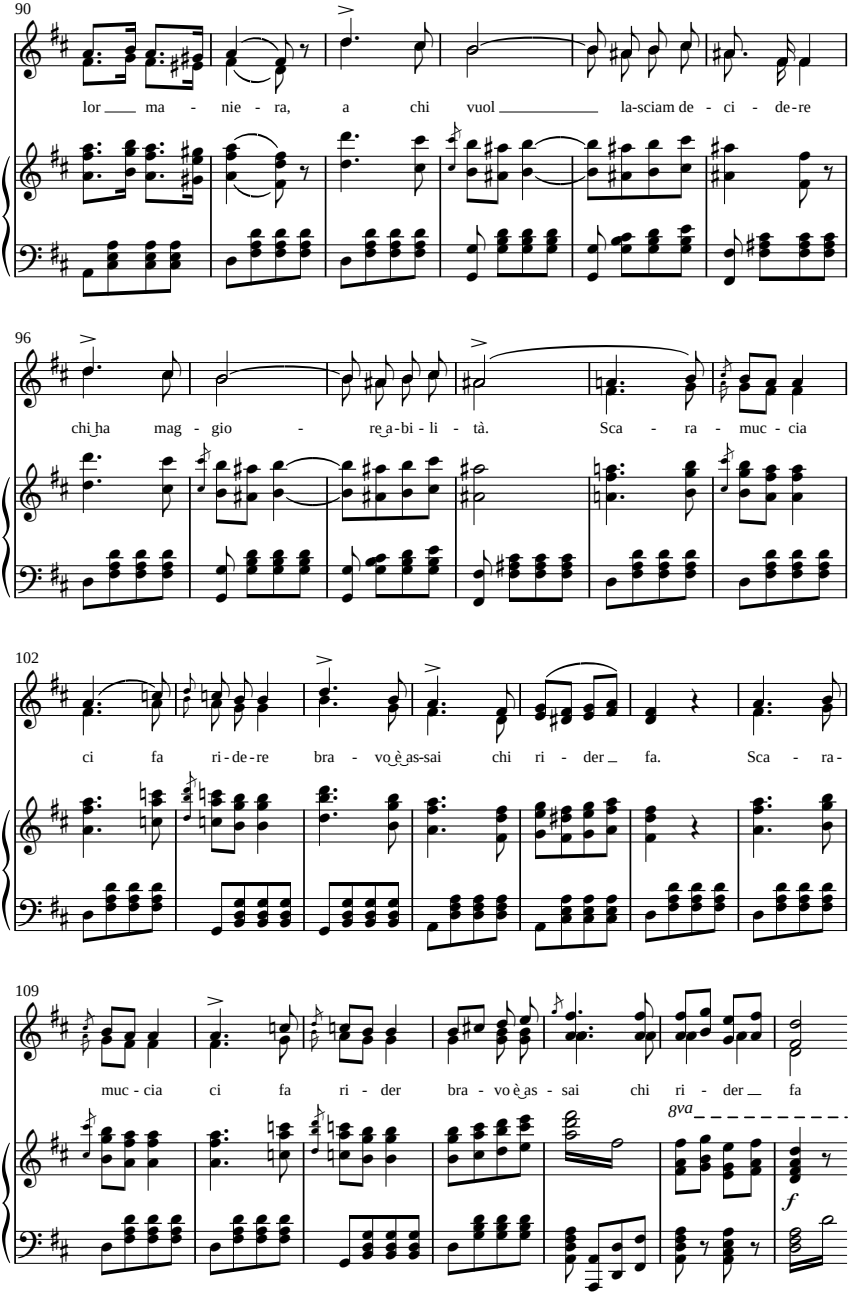
example 4. (*continued*)



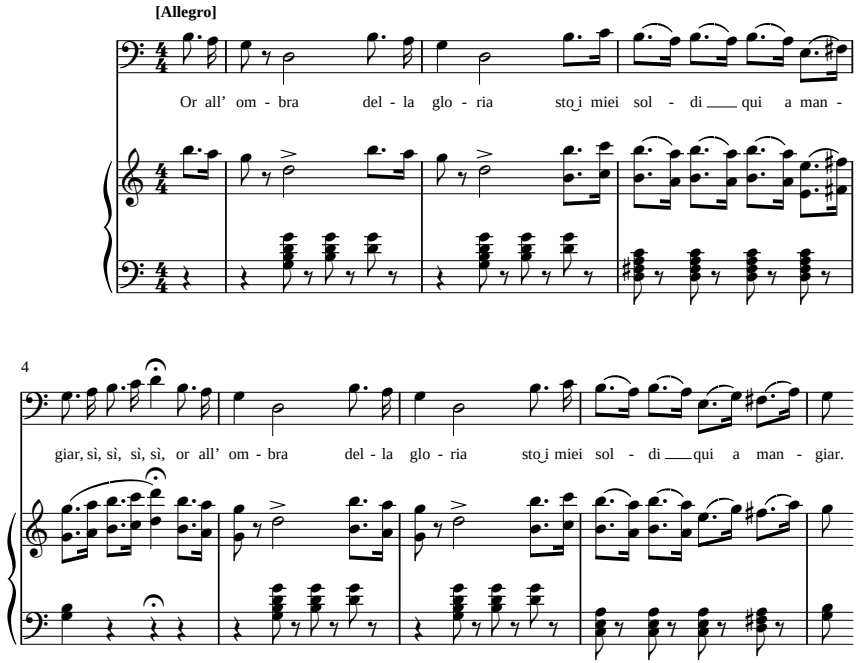
example 4. (*continued*)



example 4. (*continued*)



example 5. *La festa della rosa,* Act I



The source used by Ferretti is a libretto by Gaetano Rossi also entitled *La festa della rosa,* originally set to music by Stefano Pavesi and premiered at Venice's La Fenice in 1808. As with *Il nuovo Figaro,* Ferretti preserved all the essential elements of his source; but his conception of Bibrak's role is radically different. Gaetano Rossi had not stressed the nationality of this character, but merely hinted at it a few times (especially in his name, which he spells "Wibrach"), nor had he mentioned that he was a retired army officer. Ferretti, however, regarded Bibrak's nationality as a fundamental trait, and emphasized that he was an "ufficiale prussiano" as early as on the cast page. Other military characters in *opera buffa* of the 1830s include Count Mammalucchi in Pietro Raimondi's *A mezza-notte* (libretto by Andrea Leone Tottola; Naples: Fondo, 1831), a colonel whose name, which means "nitwit" while suggesting a Turkish origin, is revealing enough. And of course there is Belfiore in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore,* who in his entrance aria boastfully proclaims: "Son galante, son sargente"[26] ("I am gallant, I'm a sergeant"), only to

[26] Felice Romani, *L'elisir d'amore: melodramma giocoso in due atti da rappresentarsi nell'I. R. Teatro alla Canobbiana la primavera dell'anno 1832* (Milan: Gaspare Truffi, [1832]), 9.

lose the woman he is pursuing to the simple but good-hearted (and eminently civilian) Nemorino.

The hostility shown towards army officers in so many *opera buffa* librettos of this period is easily explained: since the Napoleonic wars, foreign military forces had become a regular presence in Italy, one that that could hardly substitute for the absence of local regular armies. In his extraordinary novel *Confessioni di un italiano* (1859), Ippolito Nievo described the absence of indigenous Italian military forces as follows:

> In fact, it has been said and said again a hundred times, demonstrated and demonstrated again, that man to man, one of our own can face and make turn around the strongest man of any other nation. Instead, unfortunately, there is no other nation in which it would be harder than in our own to raise an army and make it strong and disciplined as modern military art demands. Napoleon, however, taught everyone once and for all that for this it is not national valor that is lacking, but the will and the constancy of our leaders. Besides, our reticence to abdicate free thinking, as well as our independent and rational character, can be excused because of our complete lack of military traditions.[27]

Indeed, at this time in history, the typical comic topos of martial characters and themes could only be perceived as a depiction of a foreign occupying force, thus provoking the hostility of the audience. By also encouraging their laughter, such depiction aimed at denigrating the authority of the armies stationed in Italian states.

But the abundant military presence in *opera buffa* sometimes acquired a different meaning, similar to that of many warlike situations in serious melodramma. Martial themes provided precious opportunities for the expression of patriotic feelings, and for calls to action. Jacopo Ferretti's libretto for Luigi Ricci's *Il colonnello* (Naples: Fondo, 1835) is a good case in point. As in *Il nuovo Figaro*, Ferretti based this text on a play by Eugène Scribe—*Le colonel*, published for the first time in 1821, and known in Italy by 1832 in the Italian translation by Gaetano Barbieri.[28] The Italian version of the play does not contain any nationalistic traits, and is entirely centered on the personal intrigues of Colonel Gondreville

[27] "Infatti l'è cosa detta e ridetta le cento volte, provata e provatissima, che petto contro petto uno de' nostri tien fronte e fa voltar le spalle a qualunque fortissimo di ogni altra nazione. Invece pur troppo non v'è nazione dalla quale con più fatica che dalla nostra si possa levare un esercito e renderlo saldo e disciplinato come è richiesto dall'arte militare moderna. Napoleone peraltro insegnò a tutti, una volta per sempre, che non fallisce a ciò il valor nazionale, sibbene la volontà e la costanza dei capi. E del resto, di tal nostra ritrosia ad abdicare dal libero arbitrio, oltre all'indole indipendente e raziocinante abbiamo a scusa la completa mancanza di tradizioni militari." Ippolito Nievo, *Confessioni di un italiano* (Milan: Garzanti, 1984), 1:35.

[28] See Eugène Scribe, *Teatro di Eugenio Scribe: Tradotto dal francese* (Livorno: Tipografia di G. P. Pozzolini, 1832).

and his wife Adele, who is forced by a series of circumstances to take up her husband's identity and disguise herself as a man. In his reading of this story, Ferretti significantly amplified the military component of the plot, using it as a pretext for expressing a fascination with military life, specifically with the French army. The strong role of the chorus in *Il colonnello* goes well beyond the needs of convention, but serves a functional purpose. The extensive praise of the French nation makes all but explicit the sympathy towards the French expressed by the same authors in a more concealed fashion in *Il nuovo Figaro*. The stretta of the Introduzione (Act I, scene 1), for example, culminates with the following choral passage:

Perché tace, e ancor non s'ode	Why is the fierce sound of the trumpets
Delle trombe il fiero squillo?	still silent, and not heard?
Dell'onor sotto al vessillo	Under the flag of honor,
Ogni prode avvamperà.	every heart will burn.
Sacro amore d'illustre lode	The sacred love of illustrious praise
L'alme nostre ognora accese!	always inflamed our souls!
Chi non sa che al cor francese	Who doesn't know that for a French heart
Nome ignoto è la viltà?[29]	cowardice is an unknown word?

At the end of Act I, when Elisa is already disguised as her own husband, and under the effect of a generous dose of wine, she intones what the libretto defines as a "canzone di guerra:"

Sventolar de' gigli d'oro	Do you not see
Non vedeste il gran Vessillo?	the great flag of the golden lilies that waves?
Che già scoppia la tenzone	Did not a warlike sound warn you
Non gridò guerresco squillo?	that battle is already breaking out?
Chi d'onor favilla ha in petto	He who has a spark of honor in his breast
A tor l'armi balzerà:	will run for his weapons.
Svergognato, maledetto	Shame and curses
Chi l'ascolta e inerme sta.	on who hears that sound and remains unarmed.
I Brandi snudate	Draw your swords,
Nel campo volate	hasten to the battlefield,
Tardar la vendetta	to delay vengeance
Da prode non è.	is not worthy of the brave.
C'invita, ci affretta	We are called upon, we are urged
La patria, ed il re.[30]	by our homeland, and by the king.

[29] Jacopo Ferretti, *Il colonnello: melodramma giocoso in due atti da rappresentarsi nel Real Teatro del Fondo nella Primavera del 1835* (Naples: Tipografia Flautina, 1835), 9.

[30] Ibid., 33.

And in Act II, scene 4, during a military parade in the town of Joigny, the people greet the French troops with the following exclamation:

Della Francia la bandiera	The flag of France
Ogni cor saluterà.[31]	Will be welcomed by every heart.

It is well known that the censors who controlled the publishing and performance activities in Italian states were not always pleased with this sort of statement. Their alterations provide an excellent key to the social construction of opera librettos.[32] The expressions of praise in favor of France found in *Il colonnello* were allowed in Naples, where the Bourbons did not consider France a likely military opponent. If the use of the word "patria" at the closing of Elisa's song may have been slightly problematic, King Ferdinand could not have been displeased with the homage to the "re" contained in the same sentence. But when the following year *Il colonnello* reached Venice, things stood quite differently. Even though the Austrian censors did not demand a change of locale, the expressions mentioned above disappeared. In the printed libretto for the production of the opera at La Fenice in 1836, "cor francese" was changed to "cor cortese" ("a courteous heart"); "Sventolar de' gigli d'oro / Non vedeste il gran Vessillo?" ("Did you not see the great flag of the fleur-de-lis wave?") became "Sventolar della nazione / Non vedeste il gran vessillo?" ("Did you not see the great flag of the nation wave?"); and "Della Francia la bandiera" ("the flag of France") was modified into "Gioventù sì bella e fiera" ("youth so beautiful and proud").[33] The piano-vocal excerpts published by Ricordi in Milan (under the same Austrian rule that dominated in Venice) bear the censored version of the text, no doubt reflecting the Venetian sources of the opera.[34]

A woman disguised as a man and wearing a military uniform is a typical *opera buffa* device, present for example in Rossini's *La pietra del*

[31] Ibid., 44.

[32] The censorship of Italian opera during the Risorgimento has been discussed in a number of valuable studies. Particularly worth mentioning are Jeremy Commons, "Un contributo ad uno studio su Donizetti e la censura napoletana," in *Atti del 1.º Convegno Internazionale Donizettiano*, ed. Pieralberto Cattaneo, 2 vols. (Bergamo: Azienda Autonoma di Turismo, 1983, 1: 65–106; Giorgio Pestelli, "L'opera al Teatro Regio di Torino durante il regno di Carlo Alberto," in *Opera e libretto I* (Florence: Olschki, 1990), 253–64; and Andreas Giger, "Social Control and the Censorship of Giuseppe Verdi's Operas in Rome (1844–1859)," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 11 (1999): 233–65. See also the bibliography in n7 above.

[33] Jacopo Ferretti, *Il colonnello: Dramma buffo in due atti nuovo per Venezia […] da rappresentarsi nel Teatro San Benedetto l'Autunno 1836* (Venice: Edit. Tipografia Rizzi, [1836], passim.

[34] Ricordi published eight excerpts from *Il colonnello* in 1836, with plate numbers 8588–8595.

paragone. However, the martial character of Elisa's music, as well as the words she sings in the original version of the text, argues for a more serious response (see Ex. 6).

In the mid-19th century, the idea of a woman leading a nation was hardly a comic stereotype, as Eugène Delacroix's famous pictorial homage to the revolution of July 1830—*Liberty Leading the People*—indicates. It is remarkable to see this icon make its way through the cultural imagery of the Risorgimento in the apparently innocuous context of an *opera buffa*. In other operas of the following years, this dramatic archetype became a common feature of comic opera, with significant implications.

A military setting, a female leader, and an abundance of French flags are all present in full force in Donizetti's most successful *opéra comique*, *La Fille du régiment*. Premiered at the Opéra-Comique in Paris on 11 February 1840, the opera was soon translated by Callisto Bassi and revised by Donizetti, and received its first Italian performance at La Scala on 6 October 1840. Despite its lukewarm reception in Milan, where it was withdrawn after only six performances, the Italian version of the opera (*La figlia del reggimento*) toured Italy extensively during the 1840s, and became an important component of the *buffa* repertory of that period. Its protagonist, Marie, the little foundling raised by a regiment of French soldiers, added to the martial feminine presence on the contemporary operatic stage. At the same time, the national themes present in the original version of *La Fille du régiment* underwent several transformations as the opera traveled through the Italian states. In the present context, these transformations deserve particular attention.

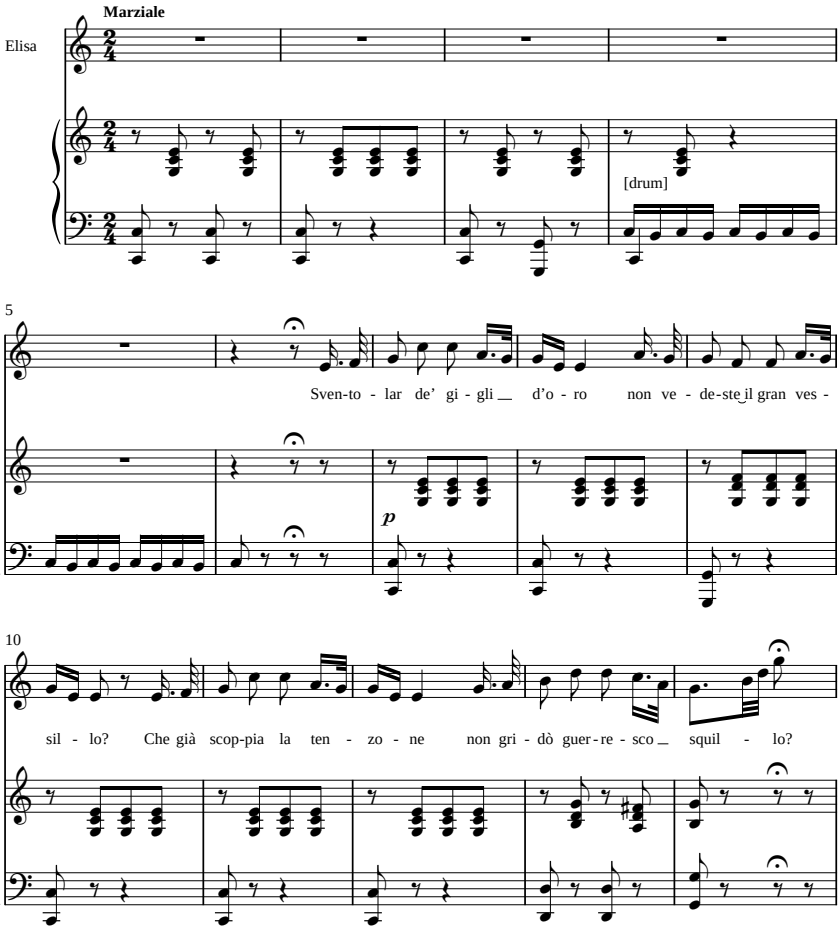
In the French libretto, Marie's first appearance in the opera tells as much about her strong personality and her patriotism as it does about her supposedly humble origins:

Au bruit de la guerre	To the roar of war
J'ai reçu le jour,	I was born.
à tout je préfère	To everything else I prefer
le son du tambour.	the sound of the drum,
Sans crainte à la gloire	without fear towards glory
je marche soudain.	I march all of a sudden.
Patrie et victoire,	Homeland and victory,
voilà mon refrain![35]	that is my refrain!

Marie's homeland is of course France, whose glory is celebrated throughout the opera, but first and foremost in the cabaletta "Salut à la

[35] Jean François Bayard and J. H. Vernoy de Saint-Georges, *La Fille du régiment*, in *Tutti i libretti di Donizetti*, ed. Egidio Saracino (Milan: Garzanti, 1993), 1025.

example 6. *Il colonnello,* Act I



France," sung by Marie as she welcomes the arrival of her former comrades to the castle of the Marquise de Berkenfield, and repeated chorally at the end of the opera to celebrate the union of Marie with her beloved Tonio.

Ah! salut à la France!	Hurrah for France!
A mes beaux jours!	For my happy days!
A l'espérance!	For hope!
A mes amours!	For my loves!
[…]	
Salut à la gloire!	Hurrah for glory!

Voilà pour mon coeur,	Together with victory,
Avec la victoire,	here is
L'instant de bonheur.[36]	the moment of happiness for my heart.

It will not come as a surprise that, as the Venetian censorship suppressed the references to the nation, army, and flag of France in the libretto of *Il colonnello,* the French nationalism of *La Fille du régiment* would alarm the censors once the opera traveled south of the Alps. The plot unfolds against the backdrop of the French invasion of the Tyrol, and manifestations of French nationalism pervade the entire text. It is obvious that the Milanese censors could not allow the onstage representation of France taking military action against a territory of the Austrian empire. Therefore, when Bassi translated the libretto he was forced to move the setting from the Austrian Tyrol to neutral Switzerland. The new setting is stressed on the cast page, which reads: "The action takes place in Switzerland at the end of the 1700s."[37] Tonio is described as a "giovane svizzero," and the chorus consists in part of "paesani svizzeri." But a new geographic setting was not sufficient. France was altogether removed from the libretto and replaced by Savoy. The translation of Maria's first appearance cited above[38] incorporates the word "Savoja" instead of the generic but politically charged "patria:"[39]

Apparvi alla luce – sul campo guerrier:	I was born on the battlefield:
È il suon del tamburo – mio solo piacer.	the sound of the drum is my only pleasure.
S'affretta alla gloria – intrepido il cor:	The brave heart hastens to glory:
Savoja e vittoria – è il grido d'onor.[40]	"Savoy and victory" is the cry of honor!

The text of "Salut à la France" lost most of its sentimental traits, and, upon the suggestion of Donizetti himself, became a straight-forward warlike passage:[41]

[36] Ibid., 1055.

[37] "L'azione ha luogo nella Svizzera sul finire del 1700." *La figlia del reggimento: opera comica in due atti da rappresentarsi nell'I. R. Teatro alla Scala l'autunno del 1840* [trans. Callisto Bassi] (Milan: Gaspare Truffi, 1840), [3].

[38] See above, n35.

[39] In 1840 nothing suggested that Savoy could become a military opponent of Lombardy-Venetia.

[40] *La figlia del reggimento,* 9.

[41] See Donizetti's letter to Francesco Lucca, Milan, 2 September 1840, in Guido Zavadini, *Donizetti: Vita, musiche, epistolario* (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1948), 520. In this letter Donizetti included eight verses of his own, of which the final four became the first quatrain in Bassi's version of the piece ("Chi nacque al rimbombo").

Chi nacque al rimbombo	Who was born to the roar
Del bronzo guerriero	of the cannon,
Disprezza l'impero	despises the empire
D'un vano splendor.	of a vain splendor.
Ah! viva la gloria	Ah! long live the glory
Che cinge gli eroi!	that surrounds the heroes!
Mi reca vittoria	The peace of my heart
La pace del cor.[42]	gives me my victory.

And the final reprise of the piece at the end of the opera was dropped, replaced by the love duet "In questo sen riposati."[43]

As *La figlia del reggimento* left Milan, an intense phase of transformation began for its Italian text. In the summer of 1841 the opera reached Naples's Teatro Nuovo, a destination that Donizetti considered ideal for this work.[44] Andrea Passaro, "poeta e concertatore" at the Nuovo, prepared a new translation of the libretto for this production.[45] Although this version shows the influence of Bassi's first translation, it is notable for a stricter adherence to the original French poetry. Given the conventions in use at the Teatro Nuovo, the spoken dialogue of the original was not transformed into recitative, but was faithfully translated into Italian prose. From our point of view, Passaro's translation is important

[42] *La figlia del reggimento*, 29.

[43] See William Ashbrook, *Donizetti and his Operas* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), 440. Surprisingly, Ashbrook did not discuss the change of locale in Bassi's translation nor its political overtones. His only comment is that "there was no reason to exploit the French patriotic motif in Italy." The changed locale in the Italian version of *La Fille du régiment* went unnoticed also in Herbert Weinstock, *Donizetti and the World of Opera in Italy, Paris, and Vienna in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), 356–57, and in an extensive chapter on the Italian version of *La Fille* in Charles Patrick D. Cronin, "The Comic Operas of Gaetano Donizetti and the End of the Opera Buffa tradition" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford Univ., 1993), 133ff. A brief discussion of the possible political reasons for the elimination of France in Bassi's version is found in Karl Loveland, "Reading Donizetti's 'La Fille du régiment:' Genesis, Transformations, and Interpretations" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Rochester, 1996), 271. Loveland, however, does not comment on the change of setting from the Tyrol to Switzerland.

[44] See Donizetti's letter to Tommaso Persico, Paris, 7 April 1840: "Why doesn't Barbaja give *La Fille du régiment* at the Nuovo? It is a subject that can be done: the Neapolitan *buffo* will fit it excellently […]" ("Perché Barbaja non dà al Nuovo la *Fille du régiment*? È soggetto che si può fare: il buffo napoletano ci sta benissimo […]"). Zavadini, *Donizetti: Vita, musiche, epistolario*, 509.

[45] The existence of a version by Andrea Passaro is mentioned in Alfred Loewenberg, *Annals of Opera, 1597–1940*, 3rd ed., rev. and corr. (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978), 804. I am deeply grateful to Giuseppe Montemagno, who gave me a photocopy of the printed libretto for the Nuovo production. Dr. Montemagno was also so kind as to share with me his valuable paper "A propos des traductions en langue italienne de 'La Fille du régiment' de Gaetano Donizetti: Un cas d'adaptation de genres," delivered at the conference *La traduction des livrets: aspects théoriques, historiques et pragmatiques*, held at the Université de Paris-Sorbonne in 2000. The conference proceedings are expected to appear in print in 2004.

because it returns the opera to its original setting. As six years earlier the Neapolitan censors had permitted the manifestations of French nationalism in *Il colonnello,* they now saw nothing wrong in the French army invading the Tyrol. Nonetheless, they deemed prudent to soften the Francophile fervor of the original. In the libretto of *La figlia del reggimento* for the Teatro Nuovo, the references to France are all veiled. For example, Passaro's version of "Salut à la France" carefully avoids mentioning France itself:

Evvivano i bravi, e i lor lieti dì	Long live the brave, and their happy days,
Evvivan le gioje, che amore nutrì.	Long live the joy nourished by love.
Evviva la gloria che cinge il valor	Long live the glory that surrounds valor,
Mi reca vittoria la pace del cor.[46]	The peace of my heart provides my victory.

Passaro's translation did not remain confined to Naples. The spoken dialogues were once again arranged into recitatives, and in only a few months this version of the libretto reached the Teatro Civico in Cagliari. Here, in the Kingdom of Sardinia, dealing with one of the most permissive political censorships in Italy, one finally hears the wealth of "Evviva la Francia" cries found in the original French text, including the one in Maria's cabaletta, which is repeated at the end of the opera as in the original version:

Evviva la Francia e i suoi lieti dì	Long live France, and its happy days,
E vivan le gioje – che amore nutrì.	Long live the joy nourished by love.
Ah viva la gloria – che cinge il valor,	Long live the glory that surrounds valor,
Mi reca vittoria – la pace del cor.[47]	The peace of my heart provides my victory.

During the following several years, *La figlia del reggimento* was produced at numerous locations throughout Italy, and the locale continued to commute between Tyrol and Switzerland. Closer to the *Quarantotto,* as it became clear that the Piedmont was a likely military opponent of the Austrian empire in the Italian struggle for independence, Savoy disap-

[46] Andrea Passaro, trans., *La figlia del reggimento: Commedia per musica in due atti da rappresentarsi nel Teatro Nuovo nell'Està dell'anno 1841* (Naples: n.p., 1841), 30.

[47] *La figlia del reggimento: opera comica in due atti da rappresentarsi nel Teatro Civico di Cagliari l'Autunno del 1841* [trans. Andrea Passaro] (Cagliari: Tipografia Timon, [1841]), 25.

peared, and France regained a stable presence in the opera. The libretto for a production at Rome's Teatro Valle in 1846 presents the combination of a Swiss setting with French invaders. By that time, the cabaletta "Salut à la France" had reached a state that had little to do with the original. I have not been able to ascertain the paternity of this text:

Di gioja bramata,	Of a desired joy,
Di tenero affetto	of a tender affection,
Già sento nel petto	I already feel in my breast
L'arcano poter.	the arcane power.
È l'ira calmata	It is the soothed anger
Degli astri nemici,	of my enemy stars,
A giorni felici	to my happy days
Ritorna il pensier.[48]	my thought returns.

It was this version of the poetry, stripped of all national references, which finally prevailed, surviving well into the 20th century. After the unification of Italy political censorship ceased to constitute a problem, and the call "Evviva la Francia" made its way back into the scene, but only to mark the intervention of the chorus in the conclusive cadential passages.

After the revolutions of 1848–49 the number of Italian performances of *La figlia del reggimento* diminished drastically. One of the rare productions of the opera before the unification of Italy was at Ancona (in the Papal States) in 1850. In the libretto printed on that occasion, references to nation are down to a minimum, although mentions of Savoy and Tyrol do appear in the text.[49] It is impossible to establish whether the decrease in popularity of this opera had to do with difficulties with the censorship, or whether its falling out of favor depended on other matters. But since the opera rapidly regained its lost ground after 1861, and thereafter remained among Donizetti's most popular operas on the Italian stage, it is likely that censorship was an important factor in the temporary decline of *La figlia del reggimento*. Indeed, the evidence collected here strongly suggests that behind the tale of changing locales and attitudes towards nationalism in the Italian versions of the opera stand precise political meanings. Research through censorship documents preserved in libraries and archives throughout Italy is likely to bring to light further elements to complete the picture of what already appears to be a fascinating case of political censorship in opera of the Risorgimento.

[48] *La figlia del reggimento: melodramma comico in due atti da rappresentarsi nel Teatro Valle il Carnevale dell'anno 1846* (Rome: Giovanni Olivieri Tipografo, 1846).

[49] *La figlia del reggimento: melodramma comico in due atti da rappresentarsi nel Teatro delle Muse la primavera del MDCCCL* (Ancona: Tipografia Baluffi, [1850?]).

Close to the outbreak of the *Quarantotto,* while the various versions of *La figlia del reggimento* continued to tour the Italian peninsula, Luigi Ricci returned to a comic military subject with *Il birrajo di Preston*. This *melodramma* in three acts was premiered on 5 February 1847 at Florence's Teatro della Pergola, the same venue that only a month later would witness the premiere of Verdi's *Macbeth*. It is well known that Francesco Maria Piave's libretto for *Macbeth* contains some stirring moments, particularly the chorus "Patria oppressa!" at the opening of Act IV—in which the Scots lament their oppression under the tyrannical rule of Macbeth—and a rousing choral passage following Macduff's aria in the same act:

La Patria tradita	Our betrayed homeland
Piangendo ne invita!	invites us with a cry!
Fratelli! gli oppressi	Brothers!
Corriamo a salvar.	Let us hasten to save the oppressed ones.
Già l'ira divina	The divine anger
Sull'empio ruina;	already falls upon the evil one.
Gli orribili eccessi	His horrible excesses
L'Eterno stancâr.[50]	have tired the Eternal.

To find similar sentiments in the text of a new *opera buffa* performed during the same season at the same opera house is quite surprising. Like *Macbeth*, *Il birrajo di Preston* is set in the British isles. The action takes place during the second Jacobite revolution of 1745. Daniele Robinson, who runs a brewery in Preston, is about to marry his beloved fiancée Effy, but instead is forced to substitute himself for his twin brother Giorgio, who is believed to have deserted the army. Easily disguised as his brother, the inexperienced officer Daniele takes part in a battle, wins and becomes a hero, while Sir Oliviero Jenkins, mistaking him for Giorgio, challenges him to a duel for refusing to marry his sister, Anna. All ends well when Giorgio returns after having been held prisoner by the Scots. Daniele can finally marry Effy, and the two happily return to Preston.

The entire second act takes place outside a tavern in the vicinity of the English camp. As Daniele is forced to take his brother's place, the situation provides numerous opportunities for warlike moments, most of which are of an eminently comic nature. In scene 8, the reluctant

[50] [Francesco Maria Piave and Andrea Maffei], *Macbeth: Da rappresentarsi nell'I. e R. Teatro in Via della Pergola la quaresima dell'anno 1847* (Florence: Tipografia di G. Galletti, [1847]), 25. A facsimile reproduction of this libretto is found in David Rosen and Andrew Porter, eds., *Macbeth: A Sourcebook* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1984), 471–78.

Daniele is forced to brandish a sword, to march, and to smoke as would a true soldier. In a terzetto with Daniele and sergeant Tobia, Effy proves to have a far greater talent for military matters than her betrothed:

A me date una spada, un moschetto,	Give me a sword, give me a musket,
L'ardimento d'un prode ho nel petto:	I have the courage of a valiant man in my heart;
Alla guerra, alla guerra corriamo,	to war, to war let us run,
Della patria l'onor difendiamo!	let us defend the honor of our homeland!
Marche… allons… en avant! en avant![51]	Marche… allons… en avant! en avant!

The use of idiomatic French expressions in the final line of the quotation, as well as the ensuing iteration of the unfailing onomatopoeia "rataplan," shows the indebtedness of this scene to the trio from Act II of *La Fille du régiment* (noted with disapproval by the reviewer of *Il Figaro*),[52] and forces a comparison between Effy and Marie in Donizetti's opera, as well as Elisa in *Il colonnello*. The cheerful "Allegro marziale" to which this passage is set represents a successful synthesis (and humorous contrast) between the *buffa* gaiety of the dramatic situation and the warlike contents of the text, written in the conventional Risorgimento meter, the *decasillabo*, also present in several of Verdi's early patriotic choruses (see Ex. 7).

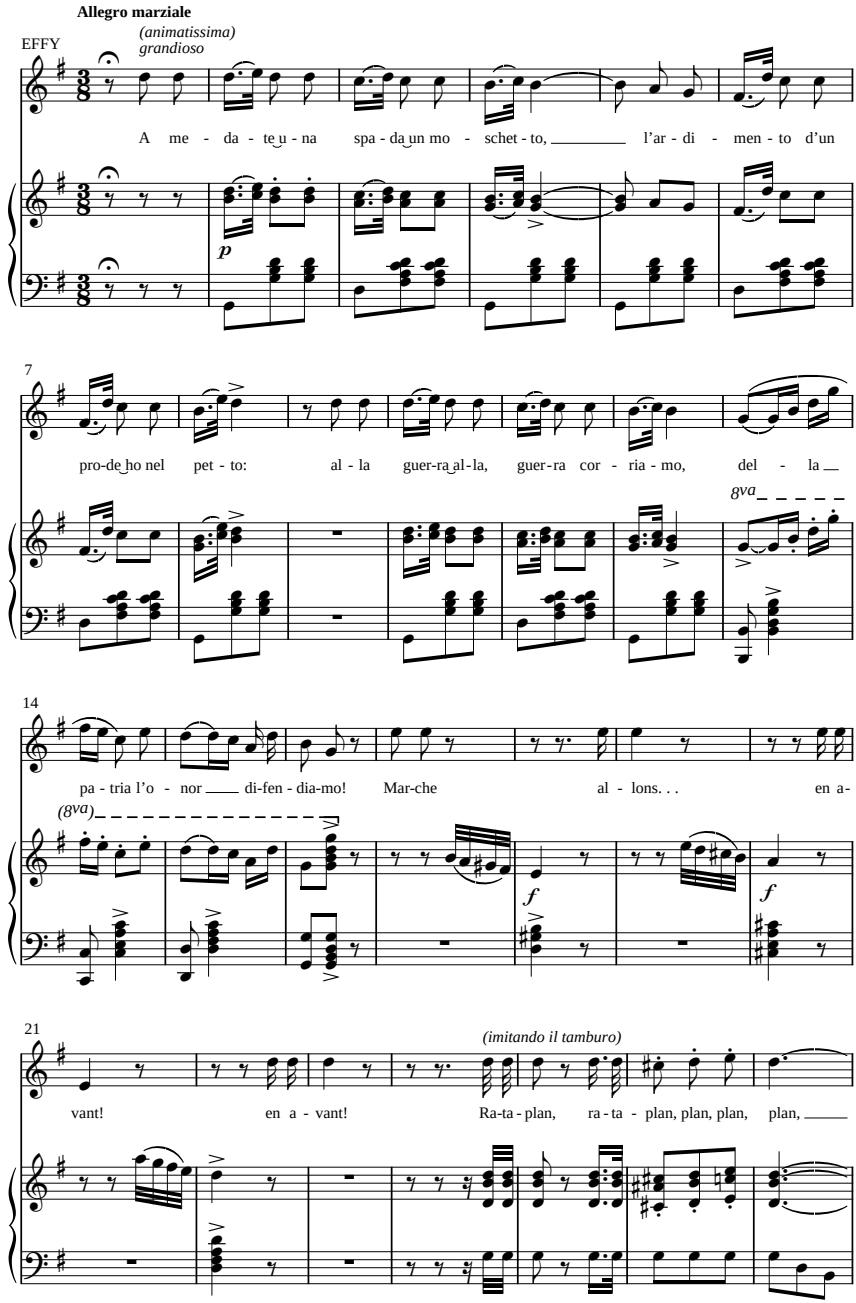
Another far more intriguing comparison is the trans-generic association between these comic characters and Verdian warlike heroines such as Giovanna d'Arco, Odabella in *Attila*, Hélène in *Les vêpres siciliennes*, and of course Lady Macbeth. Mary Ann Smart has recently argued that the topos of the woman warrior in Verdi's operas of the 1840s "could […] yield believable contexts for reading the early operas as Risorgimento documents."[53] The presence of several strong female leaders on the contemporary comic stage reinforces Smart's case considerably. If a warlike woman in 18th-century opera buffa could be easily dismissed as an entertaining absurdity, the military talents of Elisa, Marie, and Effy stand for something rather different, and indeed could be viewed as an expression of pre-1848 revolutionary spirit, perhaps even the Italian equivalent of Delacroix's metaphor of Liberty. In addition, they also

[51] Francesco Guidi, *Il birrajo di Preston: Melodramma in tre atti […] da rappresentarsi nell'I. e R. Teatro in Via della Pergola il Carnevale 1847* (Florence: Tipografia di G. Galletti, [1847]), 23.

[52] See *Il Figaro* 15 (1847), 52.

[53] Smart, "Liberty On (and Off) the Barricades," 109.

example 7. *Il birrajo di Preston*, Act II



seem to refer to earlier models, rooted in the heart of the Napoleonic period, as the Rossinian heroic situations in *La pietra del paragone* and *L'italiana in Algeri* indicate.

Later in Act II of *Il birrajo di Preston,* as the sound of trumpets and drums calls the English army to the battlefield, the chorus has an occasion for a patriotic display of its own:

Corriamo all'armi,	Let us run to our weapons,
Alla vittoria;	to victory;
La patria gloria	our homeland's glory
Ne infiamma il cor!	inflames our heart!
In questo giorno	On this day
Noi pugneremo,	we shall fight,
Trïonferemo	we shall triumph
Dei traditor![54]	over the traitor!

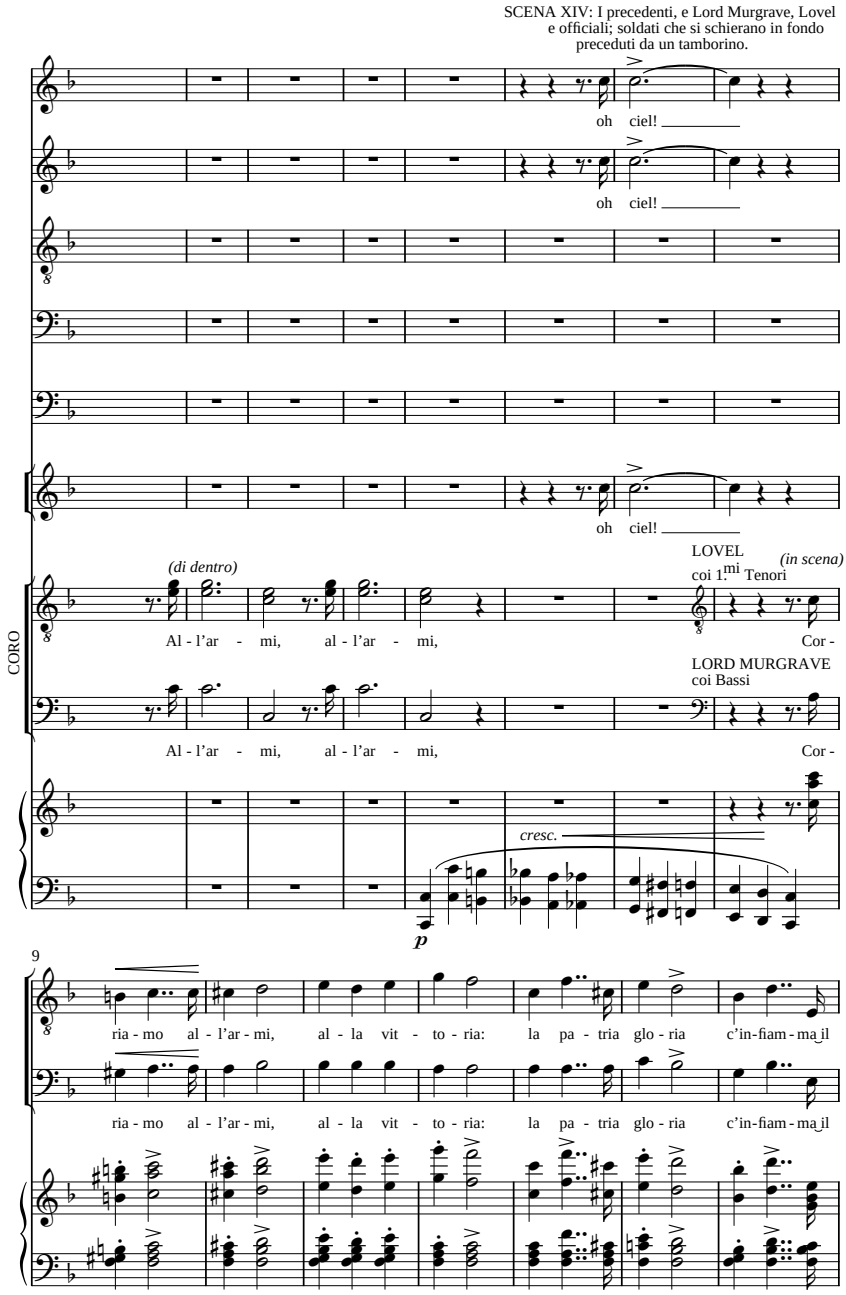
The music for this passage hardly compares to the melodies of Verdi's contemporary "Risorgimento" choruses, and maintains the prevailing waltz-like atmosphere of the rest of the opera (see Ex. 8). However, the central section of this short number (mm. 16ff.) does incorporate passages in unison, paying playful homage to a sonority that had become extremely familiar from Verdi's choral numbers.

The famous impresario Alessandro Lanari, who at the time managed the Teatro della Pergola, was an ardent supporter of the Italian national cause. Before the revolutions broke, he promoted frequent public performances of patriotic hymns in Florence; during the seasons of 1848–49 he commissioned a patriotic opera from Gualtiero Sanelli (the melodramma *Gennaro Annese,* premiered at La Pergola on 5 April 1848 and revived in Reggio Emilia a few months later), and in February 1849 he organized the Florence premiere of Verdi's *La battaglia di Legnano* only a few weeks after its world premiere in Rome.[55] Indeed, Lanari must have welcomed the opportunity to produce two new operas —*Il birrajo di Preston* and *Macbeth*—that, in different ways, contained references to patriotism and calls to action. These works are the logical antecedents to the more explicit outbursts of patriotism in Lanari's theaters during the *Quarantotto.*

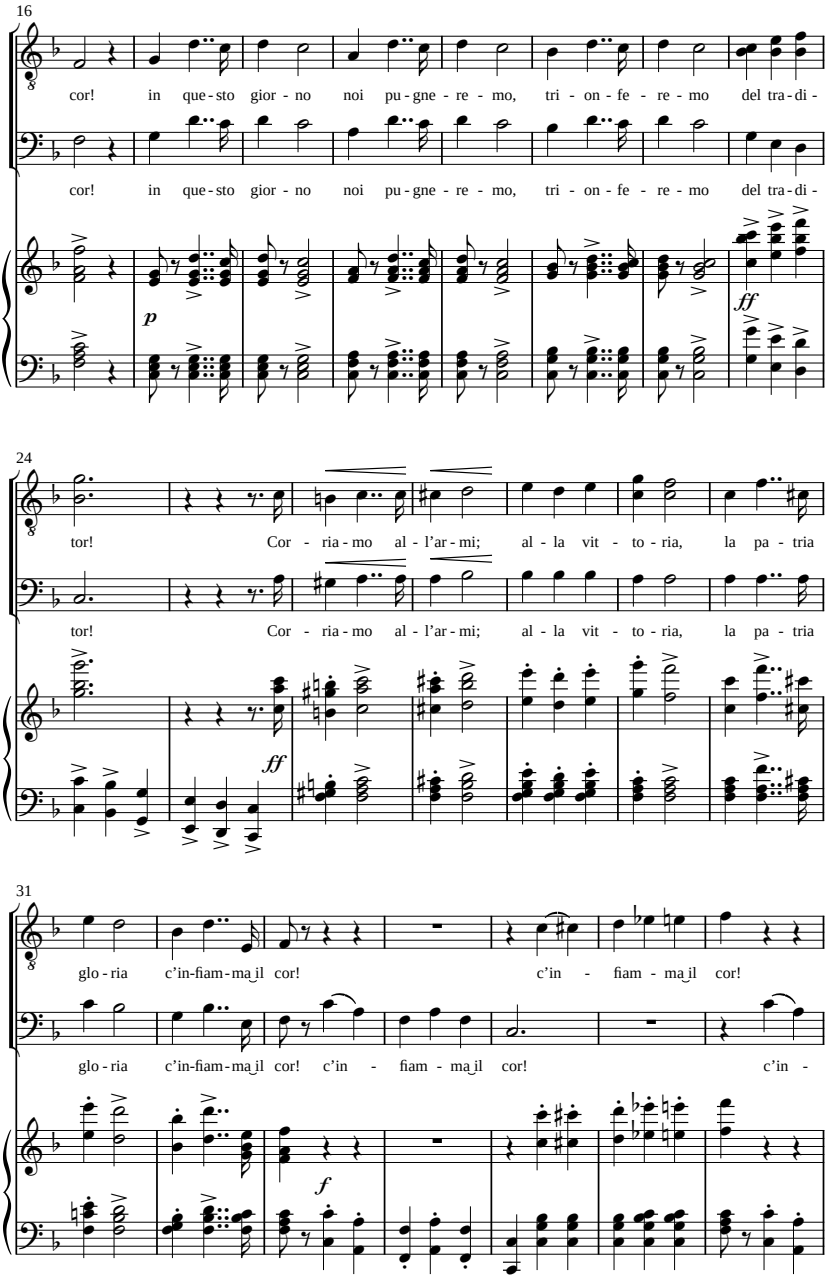
[54] Guidi, *Il birrajo di Preston,* 27.

[55] Further details on Lanari's activity during the *Quarantotto* are found in Marcello De Angelis, *Le carte dell'impresario: Melodramma e costume teatrale nell'Ottocento* (Florence: Sansoni Editore, 1982), 120–28. Sanelli's *Gennaro Annese* was greeted in Reggio Emilia as the first opera "representing the magnanimous deeds of Italian citizens" ("rappresentante magnanime geste di Cittadini Italiani"), and Lanari was credited with having commissioned it. See Paolo Fabbri, "Il melodramma tra metastasiani e romantici," in *Teatro a Reggio Emilia,* ed. Sergio Romagnoli and Elvira Garbero Zorzi (Florence: Sansoni Editore, 1980), 2:123.

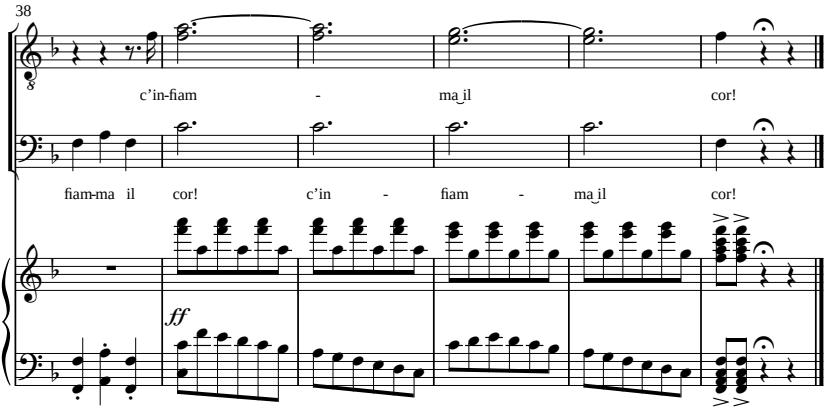
example 8. *Il birrajo di Preston*, Act II



example 8. (*continued*)



example 8. (*continued*)



The tolerant censors of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany allowed the passages quoted above to appear in print in the libretto of *Il birrajo di Preston*, and to be performed onstage at La Pergola. Furthermore, the text of *Il birrajo* made its way undisturbed into Lombardy-Venetia, where it appeared unaltered in the piano-vocal score published by Lucca that same year. As *Il birrajo* continued to circulate in Italy after the revolutions of 1848, however, such passages were systematically purged. The printed libretto for a production at Milan's Teatro Re in the spring 1854 season gives a good picture of the alterations demanded by the Austrian censors. Effy's words in Act II, scene 8 ("Della patria l'onor difendiamo!") became "Del bel sesso l'onor difendiamo!" ("Let us defend the honor of the fair sex!").[56] The first stanza of the chorus "Corriamo all'armi" was also censored, eliminating the references to "armi" and "patria:"

Andiamo o prodi,	Let us go, brave men,
Alla vittoria;	to victory;
L'amor di gloria	let the love of glory
Ne infiammi il cor![57]	inflame our hearts!

A similar fate, as is well known, befell the libretto of the other Florentine opera of 1847, Verdi's *Macbeth*, which reached the Milanese stage in February 1849, shortly after the Austrians had severely suppressed the insurrection of spring 1848. The exiles' chorus and "La patria tra-

[56] Francesco Guidi, *Il birrajo di Preston: Melodramma giocoso in tre atti . . . da rappresentarsi al Teatro Re la Primavera del 1854* (Milan: Francesco Lucca, [1854]), 26.

[57] Ibid., 31.

dita" were both censored,[58] and that was only the beginning of a long sequence of heavy interventions by the censors on this opera.[59] Indeed, it is well known that the period following the *Quarantotto* was a busy one for the censors of the Italian states, who made every effort to limit the subversive action of literature, periodical press, theater, and opera. It is fascinating to see two works such as *Il birrajo di Preston* and *Macbeth* follow a common path after the failed revolutions of 1848, and to realize that, in terms of the expression of nationalistic sentiments, of revolutionary political ideals, and the reaction of the dominant political powers to these subversive traits of opera, Verdi (and serious *melodramma*) did not enter the second half of the 19th century in splendid isolation, but side by side with *opera buffa*.

Verdi, Bassi, and Cambiaggio on the Quarantotto

On 21 April 1848, Giuseppe Verdi wrote to his librettist Francesco Maria Piave from Milan:

> Imagine whether I wished to remain in Paris, hearing of a revolution in Milan! I left immediately [after] I heard the news, but was only able to see these stupendous barricades. Honour to these brave men! Honour to all Italy, which at this moment is truly great!
>
> The hour has sounded—be convinced of it!—of her liberation. It is the people that wills it, and when the people wills there is no absolute power that can resist. […]
>
> You talk of music to me!! What are you thinking of? Do you imagine I want to occupy myself now with notes, with sounds? There is, and should be, only one kind of music pleasing to the ears of the Italians of 1848—the music of the guns! I would not write a note for all the gold in the world: I should feel immense remorse for using up music paper, which is so good to make cartridges with.[60]

The letter stands out for its striking combination of genuine enthusiasm and high rhetorical tone, and today reads almost as a manifesto of this crucial moment of the Risorgimento. The implications of the last paragraph are fascinating for the opera scholar: now that the revolution

[58] See "A Note on Censorship," in Rosen and Porter, *Macbeth: A Sourcebook*, 356.

[59] It is worth recalling that other Verdi operas had been heavily censored even before the *Quarantotto*. See Martin Chusid, *A Catalog of Verdi's Operas* (Hackensack, NJ: Joseph Boonin, 1974), 175ff. An important example is discussed in Linda B. Fairtile, "Censorship in Verdi's 'Attila': Two Case Studies," *Verdi Newsletter* 24 (1997), 5–7. See also above, n7 and n32.

[60] Cited in Walker, *The Man Verdi*, 187–88. The Italian text is found in the Italian edition of Walker's book, *L'uomo Verdi*, trans. Franca Mediola Cavara (Milan: Mursia, 1964), 229–30. According to Mary Jane Phillips-Matz, *Verdi: A Biography* (Oxford and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), 816, the letter is preserved in a private collection.

has flooded the streets, Verdi felt no need to write music. Only a year earlier he had set the chorus "Patria oppressa," and now he wished to remain silent, for the "music of the guns" was a more pleasing sound in the hearts of the *Quarantotto*. This priceless document may prompt a variety of reactions. For example, it may suggest to the (post)modern reader that at the peak of the revolutionary experience, Verdi regarded opera as an inappropriate or altogether useless medium. In other words, the letter may be read as evidence against the political involvement of Verdi and his works up to this time. It is also possible, as Roger Parker has suggested, to imagine these words materialized in poetic and musical form in *La battaglia di Legnano*.[61] And of course one may hear in this letter the echo of the aspirations of Verdi's pre-1848 operas, now fully fledged and expressed without the need to resort to symbolism and metaphor.

Examining this letter in context may help us to understand its significance. Just as in 1847 Florence the patriotic overtones of *Macbeth* existed alongside those of *Il birrajo di Preston*, Verdi's sentiments from the newly liberated Milan were supported by all sorts of patriotic writings, including some by prominent personalities of the operatic establishment. Among many works that appeared in print in the spring of that year, there is a long poem (293 stanzas in *ottava rima*) by librettist Callisto Bassi, entitled *Strange Adventures Befalling a Librettist during the Five Memorable Days of March 1848*.[62] The poem recounts the events of the Milanese revolution:

Era il diciotto marzo, e come d'uso,	It was the eighteenth of March, and as usually,
Me ne stavo in teatro passeggiando:	I was walking about in the theater,
Riflettendo fra me, come deluso	reflecting by myself on how
Venisse l'uomo in ciò che sta sperando:	people are disappointed in their hopes;
E le risorse andassero quaggiuso	and on how our resources down here
Deperendo ogni giorno e declinando,	decay every day, and decline;
Così aspettando l'ora della prova,	thus I awaited the time of the rehearsal
Che doveva farsi d'un'opera nuova;	for a new opera;

[61] See Parker, *'Arpa d'or dei fatidici vati'*, 28–29.

[62] Callisto Bassi, *Strane avventure occorse ad un poeta di teatro nelle cinque memorabili giornate del marzo 1848* (Milan: Tipografia Patriotica Borroni e Scotti, 1848).

Quando un amico mi si fa vicino,	When a friend comes close to me,
E mi sussurra in tuon confidenziale: —	and whispers in a confidential tone:
Non sai la gran novella del mattino? —	"Don't you know the great news of this morning?"
La censura abbollita? — Eh! il minor male	"That censorship has been abolished?"
Sarebbe questo!… Un altro biscottino! —	"Ah, that would be the least!… another cookie!"
Ci voglion dar la legge marziale? —	"Do they want to impose martial law?"
Niente men che in Milan vi si dispone	"Nothing less than in Milan they are preparing
Di far scoppiar la rivoluzione! —	to have the revolution break out!"
In Milano? — In Milan!… tutti i signori	"In Milan?" "In Milan!… all the men
Si sono già portati al Municipio,	have already gathered at City Hall,
Perché assolutamente voglion fuori	because they absolutely want to free
Quelli che per politico principio	those who for political reasons
Furon messi in prigion coi malfattori!	were jailed together with the evildoers!
Esser nessun di noi più dee	None of us must be a slave anymore;
Si vuol la guardia civica, e che sia	We want the civic guard, and want that
Scommiatata la vecchia polizia! —	the old police be dismissed!"
Piccola bagatella! — Ogni bottega	"No kidding!" "Every shop
Vien chiusa in sulle piazze e per le strade!	is being closed on the piazzas and the streets!
Il ricco al pover'uom già si collega;	The rich are already joining the poor;
Già si vedon pistole, e schioppi, e spade;	Pistols, rifles, and swords can be seen already;
Già questo e quello un'eloquenza impiega	And this and that already employ their eloquence
Che il popolo dispone e il persuade:	to prepare and persuade the people:
Per cui si son già in qualche parte alzate	so that in some quarters
Delle belle e possenti barricate! —[63]	beautiful and mighty barricades have been erected!"

Bassi was well versed in all operatic genres, and narrating his personal experience of the *Cinque giornate*, he pulled out all the stops of his

[63] Ibid., 11–12.

rhetorical organ. Some passages of the *Strane avventure* are as solemn and high-sounding as Verdi's words to Piave:

Sì, combattete, o prodi! e sappia il mondo	Yes, fight, brave men! And let the world know
Che santa causa ell'è la causa vostra;	that your cause is a holy cause;
Che alfin dei ceppi vi toglieste al pondo;	that finally you removed yourselves from the weight of the chains;
Che alfin scendeste a incomparabil giostra;	that finally you descended into an incomparable joust;
E quel Dio che soccorre al gemebondo,	and that God who aids the unhappy one,
Che inesorato ad ogni reo si mostra;	who shows himself inexorable to every guilty man,
Discenderà con voi nel gran certame,	will descend with you into the great contest,
Per tutto desertar quel seme infame!…[64]	to completely destroy that infamous seed!…

Most of the poem, however, is written in a humorous and satirical tone, rather reminiscent of the style of Giuseppe Giusti. In an *avvertimento* printed at the beginning, Bassi refers to the *Strane avventure* as a *scherzo*, sealing his creation with a line attributed to Horace: "Who can keep from telling the truth while joking?"[65] The following exchange between Bassi and an usher from the theater—who, having recognized him as he tries to return home, invites him to join the rebels on the barricades—provides a good idea of his rendition of the Milanese events of March 1848:

S'io vi dovessi raccontare le strane	If I had to tell you the strange
Vicende che da Sabato incontrai… —	events that I have witnessed since Saturday…
Eh! ci vuol altro! Udite le campane,	"Ah! We need something else! Do you hear
Ed i cannoni che non cessan mai?	the bells, and the cannons, that never cease?
Alla patria in periglio, non rimane	Our endangered homeland only lacks
Che il nostro braccio… a lei si vada omai…	our arms… let us go to her at last…
Ma prima tutti quanti in compagnia	But first, all together in company,

[64] Ibid., 21.
[65] "Chi toglier può di dire il ver scherzando?" Ibid., 6.

Un sorso se ne bevi [sic] all'osteria.[66]	let us drink a sip at the tavern."

Bassi's contribution to the historiography of the *Quarantotto* is indeed noteworthy, and deserves better knowledge not only among opera scholars, but also among historians.[67] Filled with human pathos and enticing anecdotes, his *Strane avventure* draws the reader's attention throughout. Here the poem is significant for its approach to the *Cinque giornate*. While Verdi, in the letter to Piave cited above, took up the lance of the Italian revolution with an exhuberance not unlike that of his eminently serious operatic heroes, Bassi chose to blend his patriotic statements with humor, in a poetic gesture resonating with his experience translating *La Fille du régiment* and authoring several *opera buffa* texts during the 1830s and 40s.[68]

Towards the end of the summer 1848, Carlo Cambiaggio, the most prominent *buffo* bass of the post-Rossinian era and author of several comic libretti, wrote two letters to Alessandro Lanari from Milan. By that time the situation in the Lombard capital had taken a turn for the worse. The Austrian commander, Marshal Radetzky, after spending several months in the strongholds of the Lombard-Venetian "Quadrilateral" (Peschiera, Verona, Legnago, and Mantua), on July 25 attacked and defeated the Piedmontese army at Custoza, and on August 6 entered Milan to little resistance. On August 31, Cambiaggio described the changed scenario in the following terms:

> Milan has become a monastery, or rather, to explain it better, it seems to be in the countryside, because one doesn't see anyone, except for the little troops, who make noise like the devil dragging their swords on the ground. The day before yesterday they executed a young man of 25 years because they found a small dagger on him; today they say they will execute another; I, not to be executed, don't even carry a cane, and go home at eight o'clock. We have Garibaldi who kills Croatians like birds in the areas of Varese, Luino, and Comaseo, and he has arrived at Morazzone, so that, if the parish priest did not play the spy for the Germans, the day before yesterday he would have taken 500 prisoners with General Aspre [?]. The other day he provided them with a beautiful comedy; he lay in ambush in a corn field; the Croatians

[66] Ibid., 55.

[67] Aside from the *Strane avventure*, Bassi also published the ode *Ai lombardi* (Milan: Valentini e C., 1848).

[68] The most important comic librettos Bassi wrote during this period include *Amelia, ovvero otto anni di costanza* (music by Lauro Rossi; Naples: San Carlo, 1834); *Il postiglione di Longjumeau* (music by Pietro Antonio Coppola; Milan: La Scala, 1838); *Don Bucefalo* (music by Antonio Cagnoni; Milan: Conservatorio, 1847); *Il testamento di Figaro* (music by Antonio Cagnoni; Milan: Re, 1848).

> tried to surround him, he opened fire, and afterwards, as fast as a hare, he withdrew; the Croatians had made a sort of semi-circle, and they kept firing from the right and from the left, both wings believing that they were firing against the enemy; instead, later they realized that they had been killing themselves for two hours, and Garibaldi was already six miles away from there. Last Monday, had he arrived five minutes earlier, at the Villa del Pizzo he would have made the best coup ever; nothing less than taking prisoner two Archdukes sons of the Viceroy. This blow failed too, because someone from the bell tower advised that the Americans were near (thus say the peasants). What I can tell you is that this Garibaldi is a Devil in the flesh, and the Germans say in the cafés: "Imagine Garibaldi, kills he more soldiers than entire army Karl Albert!"[69] Now he is here, and after an hour he is gone; now he is at the side of the Germans, and now he is behind their backs; in sum, he is the elfish spirit, and that's what they call him here. In the meantime he still keeps the war alive, because it is impossible to catch him given his position, and this is a good reason for which the Italian deputies push the French, letting them know that both in Venetia and in Lombardy there is still a War for Nationality.[70]

In mid September, Cambiaggio provided further details about the Milanese situation:

[69] The reference of this deliberately ungrammatical passage is to the king of the Piedmont, Charles Albert of Savoy.

[70] "Milano è diventato un monastero, anzi per spiegarmi meglio mi sembra d'essere in Campagna perchè non si vede nessuno, se eccettui i militaretti che fanno un fracasso del Diavolo colla loro sciabola strisciata per terra. L'Altro ieri hanno fucilato un giovine di 25 anni per avergli trovato indosso uno stiletto; oggi dicesi ne fucileranno un'altro; io per non esser fucilato non tengo neanche la Canna, e vado a casa alle ore otto. Abbiamo Garibaldi che ammazza Croati come uccelli sul territorio di Varese, Luino, Comaseo, ed è arrivato fino a Morazzone, che se non c'è il Curato a far da spia ai Tedeschi l'altro ieri fa 500 prigionieri con il Generale Aspre [?]. L'altro giorno gli fece una bella Commedia; fece un imboscata in un gran campo di gran turco; i Croati tentarono di circondarlo, lui fece fuoco poscia lesto come una lepre si ritirò; i croati avevano fatto una specie di semi cerchio e seguitavano a far fuoco, a destra e sinistra, credendo queste due ale reciprocamente di far fuoco contro il nemico; invece tardi si accorsero ch'erano due ore che si ammazzavano tra di loro, e Garibaldi era gia distante 6 miglia dal posto. Lunedi scorso se arriva 5 minuti prima fa il più bel colpo che mai sia successo; niente meno che fa prigionieri alla Villa del Pizzo i due Arciduchi figli del Vicerè. Anche questo colpo andò fallito p.chè uno dal Campanile avvisò che erano vicini gli Americani (dicono i foresi). Quello che ti so dire che questo Garibaldi è un Diavolo in Carne ed ossa, ed i Tedeschi dicono sui caffè = bugurate Garibalde, mazza lui più soltati che tutta armata Call'Alberto = Adesso è qui da li ad un ora non c'è più; ora è di fianco ai Tedeschi ora gli è alle spalle, insomma è lo spirito folletto, e così qui lo chiamano. Intanto tien viva ancora la guerra perchè di prenderlo è impossibile atteso le sue posizioni, e questo è una buona ragione che le deputazioni Italiane appogiano presso i Francesi facendo conoscere che tanto nel Veneto come nel Lombardo ancora susiste una Guerra per la Nazionalità." Carlo Cambiaggio to Alessandro Lanari, Milan, 31 August 1848, I-Fn Carteggi Vari 351, 125. Perhaps for fear that his correspondence might be intercepted, Cambiaggio left these and other letters of this period unsigned, referring to himself as "sai chi sono" ("you know who I am").

> Here we are always in the customary cavern… [there is] not one drop of liquor in Milan; a gloom to make one grow stupid. Milan is not filled except with troops. All houses and buildings are full of them; in the magnificent apartments and gilt halls, the soldiers prepare their mess. The famous Casino dei Nobili [?], the entire archbishop's palace, and many churches are all occupied by Croatians and other insects… in sum, a Gaiety!!! to strike one dumb. In Monza a father and son were shot because buried in their garden they found a poor fowling piece, useless, and which did not belong to them. New orders are issued every day… if you were here at night, you would not believe that you were in Milan; in less than 15 minutes you find 20 patrols fully armed, with their advanced sentries, avant-guards, and rear-guards. The debates are many; what is certain is that the mayor has protested in order to have more means to keep going. Meanwhile the Theater goes on, Merelli laughs, and the soldiers have a good time. Today there was a rumor… but I think it is one of the usual lies, that is, that peace has been made with Piedmont, but that the three powers—France, England, and Austria—will gather here to negotiate the question of Lombardy-Venetia, so that it can be emptied of German troops… actually, some maintain that a large unit left last night… I was sleeping, and didn't see them leave… I will hear the rest today.[71]

These letters are wonderful samples of Cambiaggio's spontaneous comic vein. His patriotic feelings are expressed in a humorous manner in references to Giuseppe Garibaldi's guerrilla tactics as a "beautiful comedy," and to the Croatian mercenaries as "insects." He makes priceless mockery of the Austrian ungrammatical manner of speech in the first letter and offers a playful but bitter rendition of the counter-revolutionary atmosphere in Milan in the second. His writing style, based on simple figures and short repetitive sentences, resembles closely the lively and colloquial verbosity of the *buffo* characters he

[71] "Qui siamo sempre nella solita spelonca..... non un liquore in Milano; una tretragine da rimpiconire. Milano non è ingombro che di Militari. Tutte le case e Palazzi pieni; Nei magnifici appartamenti, e sale dorate si fanno dai soldati il loro rancio. Il famoso Casino de nobile, tutto l'arcivescovado e molte chiese tutt'ingombrate da Croati ed altri insetti….. insomma una Cucagna!!!! da far sbalordire. A Monza si fugillarono padre e figlio per aver loro trovato sepolto in giardino un meschino schioppo da caccia inservibile, e non suo. Le imposizioni sortono tutti i g.ni..... se tu fossi qui di sera non crederesti d'essere a Milano; in meno di un 1/4 d'ora trovi 20 patuglie in stato di guerra con le loro Sentinelle avanzate, avanguardie, e retroguardie. I discorsi sono molti, quello che è certo si è che il Podestà ha protestato di aver più mezzi p. andar avanti. Intanto il Teatro va, Merelli ride, e i militi se la sgavazzano. Oggi correva una voce..... ma la credo una delle solite Ballografie, cioè che è fatta la pace col Piemonte, ma che qui si raduneranno i tre potentati Francia Inghilterra e Austria p. trattare l'affare Lombardo veneto, p.chè questo sia sgombrato dalle Truppe tedesche.... anzi alcuni asseriscono che già un grosso corpo è partito questa notte.... io dormivo e non li ho visti partire..... sentirò il resto oggi." Carlo Cambiaggio to Alessandro Lanari, Milan, 16 September 1848, I-Fn Carteggi Vari 351, 124.

created onstage. Indeed, this middle-class, middle-aged man, who sympathizes warmly with the popular Garibaldi while he will not even carry a walking stick for fear of being killed, is a plausible and enticing *buffo* anti-hero, and one rooted in the context of the Risorgimento no less than Verdi's warlike heroes and heroines.

Writings such as those presented above place two of the most prominent artists of *opera buffa* of this time at the heart of the Risorgimento, unveiling their patriotic feelings, and, most importantly, allowing a connection to be made between their views of the Milanese revolution (and, by extension, of the Italian situation at mid century) and their artistic expressions. Just as Verdi's letter of April 21 may appear at once as a sum of his political creed up to 1848 and as an anticipation of what was to come in *La battaglia di Legnano,* it is tempting to fancy Bassi and Cambiaggio transforming these texts into *opera buffa* verse, or to listen for echoes in them of the *buffa* poetry and music of this period. And it is enticing to see that even on the Milanese barricades, Verdi did not stand alone.

In closing, the evidence presented here strongly suggests that the social and political ramifications of opera of this period deserve serious reassessment, of which a revision of Verdi's ostensibly exclusive role as "bard of the Risorgimento" is only the first step. In light of the constructs of nationality outlined in the works examined here, there is good reason to believe that by 1848 the ideas and conflicts of the Risorgimento had found not a single bard, but rather broad and varied expression on the operatic stage. Mid-century *buffa* authors knew perfectly well that comedy could go beyond mere entertainment. The censors showed a similar awareness, especially in Lombardy-Venetia, where they systematically intervened on those texts that contained Francophile statements and other expressions of patriotism. That awareness was indeed to grow stronger after the *Quarantotto*—witness the heavier censorship of *Il birrajo di Preston* and the temporary disappearance of *La figlia del reggimento*—is solidly rooted and abundantly documented in the period prior to 1848.

Expressions of nationalism, patriotism, and military valor in these operas are important reminders that the generic boundaries of 19th-century *opera buffa* were becoming increasingly blurred, and that many of its characters and dramatic situations overlapped with contemporary serious opera.[72] Indeed, warlike female characters and patriotic choruses

[72] The generic identity of post-Rossinian o*pera buffa* is discussed at length in my "Laughter Between Two Revolutions: Opera Buffa in Italy, 1831–1848" (Ph.D. diss., New York Univ., 2003), 74–132, and passim.

unite Risorgimento opera buffa with its serious counterpart, and the affinities in the creation and reception of Ricci's *Il birrajo di Preston* and Verdi's *Macbeth* are emblematic of this connection. On the other hand, with its contemporaneous settings and references to modern European nationalities, political contexts, and social models, *opera buffa* appears to have gone beyond the allegories of oppression and revolution contained in several of Verdi's operas of the 1840s, and to have expressed the ideals of the time in a more subtle and complex fashion than contemporary serious *melodramma*.

In the preface to *La casa disabitata*, a libretto written for Lauro Rossi in 1834, Jacopo Ferretti praised his literary source, a comedy by the Roman playwright Giovanni Giraud, referring to the latter as

> […] a fellow citizen of mine, who possessively hides, with no small loss for the art of comedy and for the glory of the Italian Thalia, many valuable works filled with comic wit and eloquent lessons against social defects and ridiculous customs.[73]

In Ferretti's librettos, and in those by his contemporaries, we often find the same qualities that he praises in Giraud's work. While far from the extreme melodramatic idealism of the plots of serious opera, and though beyond the boundaries imposed by the latter's geographical or chronological remoteness, *opera buffa* of the age of the Risorgimento clearly served an educational and civilizing purpose, in accordance with the postulates of Italian romanticism.[74] The comic operas discussed here

[73] "[…] un mio concittadino, amico e maestro, che serba geloso, con danno non lieve dell'Arte comica e delle glorie dell'italica Talìa, molti pregiati lavori sparsi di sali comici ed eloquenti lezioni contro sociali difetti e ridicoli costumi." Jacopo Ferretti, *La casa disabitata: Melodramma giocoso da rappresentarsi nell'Imp. Regio Teatro alla Scala l'Autunno 1834* (Milan: Luigi di Giacomo Pirola, 1834), [3].

[74] As early as 1816 the writer and critic Pietro Borsieri expressed the need for an educational purpose in Italian literature in his *Critiche letterarie d'un giorno:* "I am convinced that our writers do not attend to their duties as they ought; and that since we are lacking the novel, spoken theater, and good journals, we are lacking three integral parts of every literature, and precisely those that are destined to educate and to civilize the masses" ("[I]o sono persuaso che i nostri scrittori non adempiono come dovrebbero l'ufficio loro; e che mancando noi di romanzo, di teatro comico e di buoni giornali, manchiamo di tre parti integranti d'ogni letteratura, e di quelle precisamente che sono destinate ad educare e ingentilire la moltitudine.") And a few years later Alessandro Manzoni's *Lettera sul romanticismo* stated similar ideas in a passage that was rapidly adopted as the creed of Italian Romanticism: "Poetry, and literature in general, should pursue the useful as a goal, truth as a subject, and the interesting as a means" ("[L]a poesia, e la letteratura in genere debba proporsi l'utile per iscopo, il vero per soggetto, e l'interessante per mezzo.") See Pietro Borsieri, *Avventure letterarie d'un giorno,* in *Letteratura italiana Zanichelli: CD-ROM dei testi della letteratura italiana*, ed. Pasquale Stoppelli and Eugenio Picchi (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1997), and Alessandro Manzoni, *Sul Romanticismo: Lettera al marchese Cesare D'Azeglio*, in Alessandro Manzoni, *Tutte le opere*, vol. 5, bk. 3, ed. Alberto Chiari and Fausto Ghisalberti (Milan: Mondadori, 1991), 248.

represent significant witnesses to the debate over nationality and political power that served as a preparation for the dramatic events of the *Quarantotto*. They belong fully in the "Risorgimento canon," and a better knowledge of them can only improve our understanding of the rich and varied politics of opera during this crucial period of Italian history.

New York University

ABSTRACT

For more than a century discussions of the relationship between the operatic stage and the socio-political scene of the Risorgimento have relied almost exclusively on serious operas (particularly those of Giuseppe Verdi) and especially on the period after 1848. Roger Parker's recent revision of Verdi's ostensibly exclusive role as "Bard of the Risorgimento" provides an opportunity to reassess the politics of Italian opera during this period, considering also other composers and works. The purpose of this study is to discuss the interaction between opera and the Risorgimento in a group of comic works composed between the revolutions of 1831 and 1848, focusing in particular on the representation and implications of national identity in Luigi Ricci's *Il nuovo Figaro* (1832) and in two Italian versions of Donizetti's *La Fille du régiment* (1840), as well as on the significance of military themes. Furthermore, relevant cases of censorship in these and other comic works are examined. These operas uncover numerous affinities with the political discourse in contemporary serious *melodramma*, showing that warlike themes, choruses, and other statements of patriotism were not a prerogative of Verdi's operas, nor an exclusive feature of the serious genre. Their authors used conventional *buffa* procedures, such as modern European settings and encoded allegories of national character, in ways that reveal connections with the tensions and aspirations of the Risorgimento. A better knowledge of this repertory can only improve our understanding of the politics of opera during this crucial period of Italian history.