

## Amazons and fallen women: transgressive female behaviour in the novels of Giuseppe Garibaldi

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This article draws attention to the understudied literary career of one of Italy's most famous patriots, Giuseppe Garibaldi. From 1868 to 1874, Garibaldi wrote and published three novels: *Clelia* (1870), *Cantoni* (1870), and *I Mille* (1874). Scholars have recognised the works as evidence of Garibaldi's anticlericalism and dissatisfaction with Italy's political moderatism, but have not yet sufficiently shown how the novels reveal the influence of Garibaldi's involvement with the female emancipation movement and his personal relationships with unconventional women. While Garibaldi is less well-known for his feminism than other men of the left, like Giuseppe Mazzini, his fictional heroines celebrate female physical strength and violence, offer women a means of participating in the nation outside the home, and challenge the predominant sexual double standard. While acknowledging that Garibaldi often conformed to prevailing patriarchal literary conventions, this article argues that his novels simultaneously offer support for the values of female emancipation.

**Keywords:** Garibaldi; feminism; literature; Amazon; Risorgimento.

### Introduction

Though Italian patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–82) is better known for his involvement in republican rebellions in Brazil and Uruguay in the 1830s and 1840s, the Roman Republic of 1848–9, and the conquest of Sicily and southern Italy in 1860–1, he was also a novelist. Garibaldi wrote three novels: *Clelia: il governo del Monaco* (1870), *Cantoni il volontario* (1870), and *I Mille* (1874). Garibaldi began his literary career while imprisoned for a revolutionary attempt to conquer the city of Rome for the Italian state in the autumn of 1867. Fervently anticlerical, he had grown frustrated with the political moderatism of the state and its conciliatory approach towards the Vatican (which remained in control of Rome until 1870) and he launched attacks on the Eternal City in 1862 and 1867. The Italian state quelled both attempts and imprisoned Garibaldi for his actions. During his confinement, Garibaldi composed his first work, *Clelia*, a retelling of the failed 1867 campaign intended to justify and glorify his actions. The other two novels provide fictionalised accounts of previous pivotal moments in his career, with *Cantoni* covering the Roman Republic and *I Mille* discussing his famed campaign of the Thousand in Sicily and southern Italy.

In the preface to *Cantoni*, Garibaldi explains his three reasons for writing his novels: to ensure the memory of Italy's fallen patriots; to alert the youth of Italy to the debt they owe these patriots and of the potential 'betrayals of rulers and priests'; and, finally, to obtain 'an honest profit from [his] work' (1870a, 5).<sup>1</sup> In a letter to his friend and translator Esperanza von Schwartz (1818–99) from

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November 1871 announcing the composition of *I Mille*, Garibaldi expressed similar sentiments. He wrote, ‘having no pretensions as a novelist, I have no other purpose than to satisfy my need for activity, to make my ideas known, and to earn a small amount’ (Curatulo 1926, 88–9). Despite Garibaldi’s enduring fame and interest to scholars, few historians have focused on his literary career. Paolo Orvieto’s monograph comparing Garibaldi’s novels to those of the staunch Jesuit Antonio Bresciani contains the only extensive examination (2011). Keeping with Garibaldi’s own description, most historians who have referenced the works cite them as evidence of Garibaldi’s anticlericalism, anger at Italy’s political moderatism, and need for funds later in life (Griffiths 1975; Pick 2004, 12–15; Scirocco 2007, 392–5; Riall 2008, 370–4; Borutta 2012, 202–3). In his *L’onore della nazione*, Alberto Mario Banti has also discussed the novels’ connection to gendered and sexualised national patriotic discourses in the nineteenth century (2005, 208–9, 222–8, 256–8, 327–35).

Scholars have not yet fully explored, however, how Garibaldi’s novels suggest his engagement with the movement for female emancipation and his support for a wider range of female behaviour than was typical for the time. Through his fictional heroines, Garibaldi celebrated female physical strength and violence and indirectly challenged the sexual double standard that irrevocably condemned women who engaged in premarital sex. While Garibaldi’s primary goal in composing his works was not to advocate for female emancipation, his construction of strong female characters nonetheless reveals his underlying support of and familiarity with Italy’s burgeoning feminist movement.

To explore the connection between Garibaldi’s literary heroines and his support for female emancipation, I first provide an overview of the Italian feminist movement in the decades after unification and Garibaldi’s connection to it and discuss the existing scholarship on his view of and relationships with women. This is followed by two sections that review the existing cultural models available to Garibaldi of warrior heroines and fallen women. The remainder of the article then explores his female characters in greater detail. I reveal how Garibaldi glorified both women who fought in self-defence against sexual assault as well as those women who fought as patriots for Italy, and finally argue that he provided not only sympathy, but also redemption for the fallen women in his narratives. Throughout, the article reveals Garibaldi’s support for female emancipation while simultaneously acknowledging his limitations and the moments when he upheld traditional patriarchal customs to the detriment of his female characters.

### **Garibaldi, female emancipation, and relationships with women**

The republican values of the Risorgimento emphasised domesticity and bourgeois morality as a reform from the ‘libertine’ morals of the absolute monarchy and aristocracy (Riall 2015, 39). This national discourse prioritised women’s roles as mothers, suggested that a woman’s ideal contribution to the nation was through her maternity, and offered little challenge to women’s long-standing subordinate legal position (D’Amelia 2005). As numerous historians have demonstrated, however, women participated in the Risorgimento in a variety of ways, as political hostesses, fundraisers, propagandists, conspirators, and even warriors, and not just as mothers (Doni 2001; Amarena 2003; Gazzetta 2003; Isastia 2010; Fazzini and Lucarelli 2011; Fabbri and Zani 2011). After unification was complete, these women found themselves pressured back into the domestic sphere and official histories began to erase the contributions of women who had violated gender norms by cross-dressing or fighting for unification (Guidi 2007; 2010; Gennaro 2010; Mori et al. 2014; Riall 2015). This cult of domesticity was further intensified by Pope Pius IX’s promotion of the immaculate conception in December 1854 and subsequent increased veneration of the Virgin Mary (Rutherford 2013, 116).

Despite this generally more conservative culture, a burgeoning feminist movement emerged in Italy in the 1860s and 1870s to challenge the legal and societal subjection of women. Two of the movement's biggest leaders and theorists were Anna Maria Mozzoni (1837–1920), who composed *La donna e i suoi rapporti sociali* (1864) and *La donna in faccia al progetto del nuovo Codice Civile Italiano* (1865), and Salvatore Morelli (1842–80), who wrote *La donna e la scienza* (1861). Morelli also started a committee for the emancipation of Italian women in 1867. Under the leadership of Countess Giulia Caracciolo Cigala (1835–81), the organisation became national, with Caracciolo, Mozzoni, and Gualberta Beccari (1841–1906) running branches in Naples, Milan, and Venice respectively (Russo 2010, 49). Beccari is better known for her work establishing and running *La Donna*, the leading Italian feminist journal of its time. In 1881, Mozzoni founded the *Lega promotrice degli interessi femminili*, though large-scale feminist organisation did not truly emerge in Italy until the 1890s (Nicolaci 2004, 73).

The Italian movement for women's emancipation, like most of its nineteenth-century counterparts, was grounded in a belief in the complementarity of the sexes and the idea that women were more caring, moral, and pious than men (Offen 1995, 54). Rather than demanding that men and women be treated the same, these reformers demanded equality under the law and equal access to opportunities. Mozzoni, for instance, asked for women to have both political and administrative suffrage (Murari 2008, 53). Early feminists also argued that women were only inferior because of their limited education and that full and widespread female education was necessary for the progress of Italy. Finally, these feminists attacked what they viewed as tyranny within the household and the injustice of the sexual double standard. Mozzoni wrote her 1865 work in response to the Pisanelli Code, the new Italian state's first civil code, and condemned its enforcement of marital authorisation, its double standard on marital infidelity, and its prohibition on paternity searches (Nicolaci 2004, 52–3). Italy's early feminists likewise attacked the sexual double standard through their opposition to Italy's system of state-regulated prostitution and involvement in Englishwoman Josephine Butler's (1828–1906) international campaign against the practice (Moore 2020, 21–5).

Garibaldi repeatedly demonstrated approval of these early efforts for female emancipation. In July 1867, only a few months before beginning work on his novels, Garibaldi wrote a letter supporting Morelli's proposal for a series of laws that would guarantee the emancipation of thought, conscience, and of women. Revealing his linkage of anticlericalism and feminism, Garibaldi applauded Morelli for recognising that the lack of moral and economic progress in Italy was due to 'the ignorance of the population, the degradation of woman, and the evil influence of the priest.' Clearly stating his support, he added that 'with the emancipation of woman, the initiative of greatest reform would be given to Italy' (Morelli 1867, 5–7). *La Donna* recognised Garibaldi's continuing support of Morelli's endeavours and listed him alongside other famed male proponents of female emancipation, including Mazzini and John Stuart Mill (Maddalozzo 1874). The journal also supported Garibaldi's literary efforts by publishing an advertisement for the subscription for *I Mille* (Riboli 1874).

After the publication of his novels, Garibaldi continued his engagement with Italy's early feminists and their campaigns. Like many members of the Left, for example, Garibaldi opposed the system of state-regulated prostitution in Italy and supported Josephine Butler's efforts (Gibson 1999, 40–1).<sup>2</sup> In September 1880, when Butler's abolitionist federation held its Second International Congress in Genoa, Garibaldi met with her and other attendees. In her memoirs, Butler recalled that he 'spoke to us cheering words concerning the ultimate triumph of our cause, which was the cause of truth and justice' (1911, 218). In 1879 Garibaldi, along with Alberto Mario, Adriano Lemmi, Agostino Bertani, and Felice Cavallotti, then notably included the legal and political emancipation of women as part of the platform of their newly-founded *Lega della Democrazia* (Riall 2008, 356–7).

While scholars have recognised Mazzini's feminism and receptivity to female intellectual contributions, fewer scholars have examined Garibaldi's feminism or productive relationships with women (Amarena 2003; Falchi 2012; 2015). In contrast, historians often focus on Garibaldi's intentional aura of masculinity as well as his sexual appeal to women and his multiple, sometimes simultaneous, affairs with several women. Even a supportive biographer and personal friend like Jessie White Mario (1832–1906) recognised his somewhat cavalier approach to women. In a supplement to the English translation of Garibaldi's autobiography, White Mario revealed that one day Garibaldi told her, 'When a woman takes my fancy, I say, "Do you love me? I love you! You do not love me? Too bad for you!"' She believed him, stating: 'I have not the least doubt that he acted up to his self-set maxims, and never twice asked a woman for her love or herself' (1889, 449).

More recently, however, historians have argued that Garibaldi's appeal to women formed a vital part of his political strategy and have highlighted his professional relationships with women (Benussi 2011; Pesman 2012). Lucy Riall, in particular, has claimed that Garibaldi was exceptional in his recognition of British women's political potential, stating: 'No one else, except perhaps Mazzini before him, made political use of British women in quite this way at this time' (2008, 343). Three of these British-born women, Jessie White Mario, Esperanza von Schwartz, and Mary Chambers (c.1823–81), played an important role in the production and publication of Garibaldi's novels. White Mario arguably served as the inspiration for the character of Giulia in *Clelia*, an Englishwoman who travelled to Italy and fell in love with both Italian patriotism and an Italian patriot.<sup>3</sup>

More importantly, she and von Schwartz translated *Clelia* for the English public. Acknowledging that he was not a great writer, Garibaldi asked the women through a series of letters in December 1867 to translate the book. In one letter to von Schwartz from 24 December 1867, Garibaldi, recognising that his work was 'very much imperfect', asked the women to 'fill in the gaps in my literary knowledge', add details, make the text appropriate for a literary public, and help to publicise it. He specifically asked them to make the writing more appropriate for female ears and 'to sweeten certain expressions that could injure female sentiments'. Showing a great deal of trust in their judgement, Garibaldi wrote: 'I give you both full power over my poor work, as long as you are in agreement' (2006, 235). Chambers and her husband then directed the sale of the book and she even selected the English title, *The Rule of the Monk* (Garibaldi 2006, 255). While Garibaldi and von Schwartz were sometimes romantically involved, his relationships with White Mario and Chambers appear to have been platonic and thus provide an important balance to the focus put on his amorous affairs with women.

### The Amazonian tradition

Though much of nineteenth-century cultural discourse praised female domesticity and submission to male authority, Garibaldi was able to draw on a long history of female fighters when constructing his warrior heroines. He was likely inspired by stories from the Bible of women who utilised violence for the good of their people, including that of Judith and Holofernes or Jael and Sisera, and by figures from antiquity like the goddess Diana, Virgil's warrior maiden Camilla, the queen of the Amazons Penthesilea, and the legendary Clelia, who swims across the Tiber to escape her captor and is released as a reward for her bravery (Warner 1981, 200–2; Orvieto 2011, 246).<sup>4</sup> Renaissance authors like Ariosto, Boiardo, and Tasso carried on the tradition of Amazonian heroines with the characters of Marfisa and Bradamante, who fought alongside and were accepted by their male comrades (Tomalin 1982, 223). While these characters were not as popular in the nineteenth century, some contemporary poems contained warrior heroines, including Luidberge from

Angelo Maria Ricci's *Italiade* (1819) and Finalba from Gaetano Palombi's *Il Medoro Coronato* (1828) (Tomalin 1982, 211–15).

Susan Rutherford has shown how Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) similarly constructed female characters that challenged the prevailing dictates of acceptable femininity. She notes that nearly all of Verdi's heroines before 1849, 'availed themselves directly or indirectly of a weapon'. Some of these women, like Elvira (*Ernani*, 1844) and Amalia (*I masnadieri*, 1847), use knives or swords to defend their honour against sexual assault while others, including Abigail (*Nabucco*, 1841), Odabella (*Attila*, 1846), and Giovanna (*Giovanna d'Arco*, 1845), challenge conventional dictates of femininity by adopting 'the full trappings of soldiery' (Rutherford 2013, 49–50). Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco* was one of the many cultural productions about Joan of Arc that emerged across western Europe in the nineteenth century (Banti 2005, 335). Rutherford notes, however, that Verdi's heroines were from earlier historical periods rather than the recent past, and were not intended as models for the viewing audience (2013, 50). In contrast, Garibaldi wrote about the recent past and constructed his heroines as inspirational figures for the young women of Italy to follow. Unlike Verdi, he also composed his unconventional women during what is considered the more conservative period after unification, making his work that much more subversive.

The strongest single model for Garibaldi's heroines was his first wife, Ana Maria de Jesus Ribeiro da Silva (1821–49), more commonly known as Anita Garibaldi. Historian Marjan Schwegman has argued that Garibaldi, participating in the post-unification suppression of female radicalism, was complicit in the erasure from historical memory of some of the more transgressive and martial tendencies of his wife. As evidence, she notes Garibaldi's support for Alexandre Dumas fils' French version of his memoirs (1860), which largely relegated Anita's impact to the fringes of Garibaldi's life and downplayed much of her violence and fighting (2010, 419–22). In contrast, I argue that Anita Garibaldi had a profound and continuing influence on her husband's view of women and provided the model for his novels' patriotic warrior heroines.

In his memoirs and autobiographies, Garibaldi proudly recounted his wife's participation in battle during the early days of their love affair in South America. In a tale repeated in multiple versions of his autobiography, Garibaldi claimed that Anita played an invaluable role in a difficult naval battle against the Brazilian state. Describing Anita as having more bravery than the male soldiers around her, Garibaldi recounted that:

Others remained mutinously on shore, not choosing to expose themselves to the risk of hard fighting at heavy odds....When I arrived, my Anita had already, with her wonted fearlessness, levelled and fired the first cannon, while her words reanimated the flagging spirits of the crew (1889, 79).

In a different description of the battle he claimed that 'Anna gave incredible proof of courage, self-possession and coolness. Our cannon having been dismantled by the enemy, she took a musket, and continued firing it as long as the enemy were passing us' (1859, 217). Tragically, Anita Garibaldi lost her life as a result of this desire to fight alongside her husband, dying in 1849 while fleeing the falling Roman Republic heavily pregnant, sick, and malnourished. By the time he wrote his novels, Garibaldi had been a widower for nearly 20 years and had engaged in numerous affairs, including an unsuccessful second marriage. His inclusion of Amazonian heroines, however, revealed how he clearly still upheld Anita Garibaldi as his ideal woman.

### **Cultural models of fallen women**

Garibaldi's novels also conformed in many ways to the national patriotic narrative tradition that cast women as potential victims in need of defence by male patriots against rape by the nation's enemies, either foreigners or traitors. Banti has traced the centrality of rape in national mythology

back to the moment when the rape of Lucretia, virtuous wife of Collatinus, sparked the revolt against the last king of Rome and the formation of the ancient Roman Republic (2005, 67–8). He also argues that there was an ‘obsession’ with plotlines involving rape (or attempted rape) by a traitor or foreigner in the national-patriotic narratives of the nineteenth century. In Massimo d’Azeglio’s patriotic epic *Niccolò de’Lapi* (1841), for instance, the evil Troilo not only threatens the heroine, Laudomia, but also the republic by acting as a spy for the Medici (Banti 2005, 244–5). According to Ann Hallamore Caesar and Michael Caesar, in most Risorgimento literature, the female protagonist was prized above all for her virtue, and ‘if and when her honour is taken, she faces either death or exclusion from the community’ (2007, 103). Though Garibaldi’s patriotic heroines were constantly threatened and sometimes seduced by priests, whom he viewed as the enemies of Italy, they contrastingly did not face immediate death or social ostracism after losing their honour and were able to fight for their country, exhibit moral behaviour, and earn a worthy man’s love.

Even those authors who offered a more sympathetic treatment of so-called fallen women created characters that conformed to a traditional archetype described by Charles Bernheimer as the ‘prostitute with a heart of gold, a whore purified through love’. This character model can, in part, trace its origins to Laurette Pisana in Rousseau’s ‘The Loves of Milord Edouard Bromston’ (1780) and reappeared in France through the characters of Esther Gobseck from Balzac’s *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1838–47), the eponymous heroine of Victor Hugo’s play *Marion de Lorme* (1831), and Fleur-de-Marie in Eugène Sue’s *Les mystères de Paris* (1842–3) (Bernheimer 1989, 42–6). Verdi created similar characters in his works, most notably Violetta from *La Traviata* (1853), which was itself based on Alexander Dumas fils’ *La dame aux camélias*, a novel (1848) and then play (1852) about his love affair with the courtesan Marie Duplessis (Hipkins and Mitchell 2017, 198–9). These women always accept that they are irredeemably tainted, unworthy of respectable marriage, and sacrifice themselves in some way to save the man they love. Nearly all face endings of poverty, disease, or death. As a result, Bernheimer argues that this type of work maintains a ‘fundamental respect for a conservative, patriarchal social structure’ and ‘sets a strict limit to the aspirations of the sexually deviant woman whose capacity for purification it celebrates’ (1989, 44).

Literary and cultural scholars argue that a few of these works offer the possibility of a fuller redemption for these fallen women. Danielle Hipkins and Katharine Mitchell argue that Verdi attempted to redeem his heroines in a unique way by claiming: ‘Where Bellini, Donizetti, and their librettists had sacrificed their heroines for love alone, Verdi sought redemption and social acceptance for his.’ As evidence, they note his sympathetic treatment of Gilda in *Rigoletto* (1851) as well as Violetta from *La Traviata*. By truly loving the men in their lives, willingly sacrificing for them, and eschewing personal claims for social responsibility, they argue, these women gain the audience’s favour (2017, 200). British literary scholars have similarly noted how Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–65) atypically offered redemption and honour to the eponymous heroine of *Ruth* (1853) through reincorporation into a familial home. Though Gaskell’s reliance on evangelical rhetoric is typical of much of the mid-nineteenth-century women’s movement, some scholars have argued that these discourses problematically offered women salvation within the confines of the same restrictive middle-class behavioural conventions that may have led to their initial fall (Hattaway 2014, 672–3). In contrast, Garibaldi’s fallen heroines largely earn their redemption outside of the narrow enclosure of the domestic sphere through patriotism and service to the nation.

### The violent self-defence of Garibaldi's heroines

While many nineteenth-century Italian works discuss the potential rape or seduction of their heroines by foreigners, traitors, or the clergy as a metaphor for Italy's oppression and domination, Garibaldi's novels atypically allow those female characters to violently rebel against their attackers. Banti claims that most heroines in similar works are either saved by the male heroes or find escape through 'a liberating or purifying suicide, or through a psychophysical collapse brought on by the violence endured' (2005, 253). Though Garibaldi's female heroines are ultimately unable to save themselves and rely on the typical salvation from a male patriot, they first launch the aggressive self-defence that Garibaldi wanted all Italians to enact against the Catholic Church in Rome and the Austrians in the Veneto.

Garibaldi's novels include numerous scenes of his heroines fiercely fighting in self defence against men, usually Catholic priests, who attempt to sexually assault them. Many of these scenes celebrate the violence these women inflict upon their persecutors with vivid imagery. In one scene in *Cantoni*, the young heroine Ida is recovering from a head wound in a carriage after being abducted by Don Gaudenzio. After a failed attempt to woo her with words, Gaudenzio 'bowed his snakelike face over Ida's gagged mouth and tried to kiss her.' At the last moment, however, Ida wakes up from her stupor and 'a solemn punch fell on the face of the impudent cleric, which made the carriage appear to him like a starry room, and blood, particularly from his nose, smeared across his robe, making him appear like a butcher, even in the dim lighting' (1870a, 96–7). Similarly, when the evil Monsignor Corvo approaches Marzia, the heroine of *I Mille* in her prison cell, her first instinct is 'to launch herself at him and tear him to pieces' (1874, 77). Corvo flees Marzia's wrath, but later re-enters the cell, believing Marzia to have fainted. Having feigned her faint, Marzia swiftly and fiercely attacks him. Celebrating her fury, the novel explains 'lightning does not hit the lofty oak or the bell tower as quickly as our heroine hit the criminal would-be seducer.' She knocks over the Jesuit with the force of her attack, 'and as if they were made of steel, stuck her fingers in his neck' (1874, 82). The graphic depictions of violence in each scene, from Gaudenzio's blood to Marzia's nails, reveal that Garibaldi did not try to sanitise the physicality of their attacks. They also challenge the prevailing idea that women were physically weak and incapable of any degree of self-defence.

These stories often parallel each other. In both *Clelia* and *Cantoni*, the respective heroines Clelia and Ida each attack licentious priests with a dagger hidden on their bodies. In *Clelia*, when the evil Cardinal Procopio attacks the eponymous heroine, she 'pulled from her hair a dagger typically carried by Roman women and – after having considered it and tasted its tip – she hid it under the folds of her dress' (1870b, 90). In the comparable scene in *Cantoni*, Ida reveals that she too, 'religiously had hidden under her clothes' a type of Roman brooch-dagger (1870a, 129). Both Clelia and Ida also claim that they would rather plunge their daggers into their own hearts than submit to rape. Before attacking him, Ida yells at her persecutor Gaudenzio, 'cowardly reptile!' and adds, 'I will die a thousand times rather than give in to your wicked desires. Do you see this pin? I will look for your viper heart and there I will fully immerse it' (1870a, 130). Challenging the idea that women, due to their physical weakness, rely on covert methods like poison, Garibaldi makes a dagger a woman's weapon.

Garibaldi also describes his heroines as bravely fighting against great odds. Ida's attacker Gaudenzio relies on his two henchmen to subdue Ida in his carriage. After her defeat, Garibaldi praises her efforts, claiming, 'she had attempted what was humanly possible for a girl of fourteen years; bites, scratches, punches, countered with death threats by the assassins and brutal violence' (1870a, 103). The villainous Procopio also requires assistance from his two henchmen Don

Ignazio and Gianni to disarm and subdue Clelia. In each situation, it takes three depraved men to defeat one robust and worthy Italian woman. While the women were clearly acting as stand-ins for Italy, by allowing them to stand up for themselves and fight back, Garibaldi constructed strong models of female strength and independence.

In all of these moments, however, Garibaldi placed clear limits on how well his heroines could fight. Though the women valiantly resist their attackers, they are ultimately unable to defend themselves and rely on *deus ex machina* rescues by heroic male patriots. The male patriots Cantoni and Zambianchi rescue Ida at the last moment during her struggle with Gaudenzio, while Attilio and Muzio rescue Clelia from her battle with Procopio and his henchmen. While he celebrated female Italian physical strength and emotional courage, Garibaldi would not allow it to come at the expense of heroic male strength and saved the key victories for his chosen male figures who thereby redeemed their honour and Italy's.

### Amazons and patriots

Garibaldi's heroines do not just fight for themselves, but for Italy as well. In *Clelia*, the eponymous heroine and her comrade, Irene, both fight alongside the republicans against papal forces near Viterbo, after which Garibaldi described them as 'new amazons in search of a fight' (1870b, 265). *Cantoni's* Ida likewise dresses in boy's clothing to volunteer for the army of the Roman Republic. Lina and Marzia, the heroines of *I Mille*, however, are Garibaldi's most warlike female characters. Though most of their fighting is discussed in retrospect rather than described directly, Garibaldi repeatedly mentions that Lina and Marzia had each fought in 20 battles. Emphasising their valour, rather than their sex, the novel introduces the women without reference to their gender, stating: 'but who were those two youths who in the group of the most daring among the Argonauts still wanted to precede them towards the enemy, competing to see who would confront him first?' Despite their youth, 'they handled the musket like veterans'. Moreover, as the muskets often failed, they more often resorted to the use of bayonets, a more personal and forcefully violent weapon (1874, 29–30).

Recognising that he had actually forbidden women to participate in the battles of 1860, Garibaldi included a scene where he (as the historical figure of General Garibaldi) is sitting around a campfire after a battle and hears Lina's brother and a friend discussing how their female companions had refused to follow orders and stay behind. As the women had fought bravely and were always in the front, however, he decides to pardon them, claiming 'when a transgression earns one such heroines as your sister and her companion, I, who am no model of order, can easily get comfortable with it' (1874, 31). In doing so, Garibaldi the author attempted to reconcile his historical exclusion of women from the Mille with his literary promotion of patriotic female warriors.

While some narratives of female involvement in warfare excuse female violence as a necessary evil due to the exigencies of war or show women participating against their desires and instincts, Ida is happy to fight alongside Cantoni. The novel states:

Great was the happiness of our heroine! She had obtained her objective and found the adored object of her thoughts – she lived a life of adventures, of danger, of Glory alongside the one who mastered her entire soul and whose look had become the supreme need of her existence (1870a, 36).

Ida enjoys military life and its dangers and is not afraid or alienated by it, echoing Garibaldi's description of Anita in his memoirs, where he claimed that 'she looked upon battles as an amusement, and the inconveniences of life in the field as a pastime' (1859, 69). In *I Mille*, Marzia and Lina also feel at home in the army and 'disdained to march on horseback', wanting 'to share the



hardships of the basic militia'. Moreover, they urgently want to acquire muskets, which were 'much more comfortable than a parasol to these Amazons in the troops of the Mille' (1874, 305). Marzia, Lina, and Ida, therefore, do not fight against their feminine natures when acting violently, but embrace the full spectrum of possibilities for female behaviour.

Engaging in warfare, moreover, does not diminish the women's sexual attractiveness. In one scene in *Cantoni*, Ida fights alongside Cantoni with the spear of a fallen lancer and Garibaldi enthuses: 'I would never have believed the beautiful girl capable of such heroism: she resembled a demon with the face of an angel' (1870a, 267–8). Her beauty and ferocity coexist and do not negate each other. Throughout the novels, Garibaldi repeatedly mentions the beauty of both his male and female patriots as a way to emphasise their perfection. Banti argues that Garibaldi's descriptions of the physical beauty of the very young, often beardless, male volunteers strongly parallel those of the androgynous beauty of the women and claims that, as a result, the love stories between the warrior women and their compatriots take on a homoerotic cast (2005, 329).

Much of Garibaldi's language, however, emphasises the particularly feminine aspects of the heroines' beauty. An earlier scene in *Cantoni* provides one such example. Though Cantoni has previously not seen past Ida's male disguise and believes her to be just another male youth, after a policeman attacks her in the street, he carries her unconscious body to a fruit vendor's shop, and taking off her shirt to tend to her injuries, discovers her female form. In a noticeably sexual description of a fourteen-year-old, Garibaldi writes: 'when he untied the red shirt, he discovered the ivory-white apples, which nature had sculpted with a master hand, that neck, that delicate flesh, that slope of the shoulders that had nothing of the virile to it, but had all the delicacy of the most beautiful of the daughters of Eve.' The pair then passionately kiss after Ida awakens (1870a, 84). Garibaldi likewise places all of his heroines into heteronormative relationships. In doing so, he participates in the traditional practice of making potentially fierce Amazonian heroines less threatening and more conventional by casting them as sexualised objects for the male gaze and emphasising their desire for the male heroes (Warner 1981, 212, 216–7).

Though Garibaldi continually upheld the primacy of his male patriots and cast them as protectors of their female counterparts, he did not deny all of his heroines the glories of martyrdom. In the final battle scene of *Clelia*, Irene's husband Orazio dies from a revolver bullet and with his dying breath utters Irene's name, prompting her to run over to the barricade and 'heedless of her own danger started to climb up, but fell, struck in her beautiful brow by a musket ball' (1870b, 452). The final scene of *Cantoni* emphasises this ideal of martyrdom even more. While the work primarily covers the campaign of 1848–9, the final scene jumps forward to 1867 and the failed attack upon Rome. In the aftermath of the battle, the narrator comes across Ida and Cantoni, 'two corpses, wounded in the chest and embracing'. Garibaldi laments the loss of this physically beautiful couple, who represented Italy's potential, but maintains that it was a good death because they died fighting against priests and foreigners (1870a, 290). As Anita Garibaldi had done in 1849, Irene and Ida die in service to Italy while fighting alongside their male partners.

In contrast to his celebration of both male and female violence, Garibaldi also echoed the more traditional language of the complementarity of the sexes promoted by early female emancipationists and tasked women with promoting restraint and kindness. The story of Talarico in *I Mille*, for example, suggests the civilising power of women. Initially a villain and brigand, Talarico is converted to the cause of justice and Italy after falling in love with the virtuous and patriotic Lina, proving 'the power of woman over our sex as hard and depraved as it is' (1874, 163–9). Garibaldi uses these arguments to justify female authority. A passage in *Cantoni* argues: 'Man in his arrogance conceived God in his own form: and yet, the Almighty would have the form of a woman, if he had a form at all.' Furthermore, the novel claims that a woman should naturally govern a man: 'if the

spirit is to command matter – intelligence over brute force, the man over the elephant – the woman should lead the human family’ (1870a, 31). Many advocates of female emancipation similarly argued that a woman’s claim to power and influence in society came from her moral authority and civilising restraint.

### Fallen women and patriotic redemption

Garibaldi not only allowed his heroines to violently fight back in their own defence against the predatory attacks of the clergy, but also provided moments of love, acceptance, redemption, and even glory for those characters who had been seduced. As these women represented Italy, he needed to give them the redemption he believed Italy deserved. In doing so, moreover, he challenged the sexual double standard and echoed many arguments of the contemporary feminist movement.

Garibaldi’s favourable treatment of fallen women is evident most clearly in the characters of Camilla in *Clelia* and Virginia and Marzia in *I Mille*. Camilla is a Roman peasant, beloved by the good patriot, Silvio, but seduced by Cardinal Procopio when selling fruit in the Piazza Navona in Rome. Ashamed of her initial fall, unable to hide her growing pregnancy, and fearful of what her father and Silvio would say, Camilla moves into the Cardinal’s palace. After Procopio has her new-born infant killed, Camilla goes insane and is sent to an asylum. Her story parallels Virginia’s in *I Mille*. Virginia is a young woman from a good Roman family when she is seduced by Corvo, a lecherous cleric. Like Camilla, Virginia becomes pregnant, but in contrast gives her child away and remains in a longstanding affair with Corvo, who also seduces a thirteen-year-old Marzia by making frequent visits to her adoptive father’s store in Trastevere. At the novel’s end, Garibaldi reveals that Virginia was Marzia’s mother and Corvo her father. This theme of incest, while intentionally shocking, was actually quite common in Gothic literature (DiPlacidi 2018, 3).

These fallen women symbolised how Italy itself had been seduced and debased by the priesthood. Garibaldi repeatedly describes Italy as the prostituted victim of foreigners and the clergy. In *I Mille*, he argues:

We Italians must finally understand, that those invaders whom the priests welcome with the crucifix in their hands to deceive the poor people, are thieves, assassins sent under false pretences to rob us of the sweat off our brow and to prostitute out our domestic hearths (1874, 337–8).

Further drawing comparisons between the seduced women and Italy, Garibaldi explains that Camilla, like Italy, had ‘the fatal gift of beauty’ (1870b, 22). He likewise describes Virginia as a victim of the priesthood and of Jesuits, in particular. Virginia even publicly calls herself ‘the victim of that infamous black sect, to which Italy owes all its misfortunes’ (1874, 222).

Just as good patriots accept and love their tarnished homeland, Garibaldi’s heroes embrace rather than ostracise those women seduced by the clergy. Camilla first appears in the narrative bursting into a meeting of patriots in the Colosseum in a craze after having escaped from the asylum. Those men who know her story do not judge her and their leader Attilio calls Camilla ‘more unhappy than guilty’, before asking her former lover Silvio to protect and care for her again. Silvio agrees and his love soothes Camilla’s suffering (1870b, 25). A later passage explains that Silvio, who ‘had an angel’s heart’, accepts Camilla, even though society would not. Attacking the sexual double standard, the passage explains that Silvio

knew that society tolerated any kind of shamelessness, on the sole condition that appearances are maintained; but that it shows itself inexorable against a girl’s error, whether or not she has been the victim of snares or violence. He knew that because of this prejudice sin walks with its head held high while betrayed innocence is vilified, and in his heart he protested against this evident injustice.

Even though she had already lost her purity, therefore, Silvio, ‘would defend the poor girl against an army’ (1870b, 51).

Garibaldi also allows his characters a measure of redemption and reintegration into society. At first a villain, complicit with Corvo in capturing Marzia, Virginia later redeems herself after a near-death experience through her love for Muzio and becomes a friend to the heroines and a good patriot (1874, 206). More notably, *I Mille* constantly celebrates Marzia’s strength, beauty, and patriotism, even after revealing the details of her youthful seduction. Marzia’s sexual impurity does not make her any less worthy of the reader’s esteem or particularly distinct from her companion Lina until the novel’s end.

The final moments before her death, however, display Garibaldi’s ultimate ambivalence towards the role of fallen women in Italian society. After dramatically revealing the details of her illegitimate parentage and seduction as a young teen, Marzia’s adoptive father, Elia, reasserts his unchanging love for her (1874, 376). Similarly, both Lina and her brother, a character referred to only as P, who has steadfastly loved Marzia, ‘did not abandon the bedside of the dying one for a single instant, and both would have given their lives to save that of their beloved damsel’ (1874, 379). Neither the revelation of her parentage, nor the confirmation of her history of premarital sex, alter their love for her. Moreover, upon hearing her story and seeing her suffering, ‘all complained about Italian society, so troubled by the lying institution of the priest; and lamented that such treasures of beauty, value, and intelligence, were contaminated and fell into a pigpen, for the indecent lust of that filthy sect’ (1874, 381). Garibaldi’s desire to malign the clergy required him to categorise Marzia’s fall as a tragedy. The novel notably does not, however, condemn her for her own personal failings.

Conforming to the conventional stereotype of the good-hearted fallen woman acutely aware of her own lack of worth, Marzia then reveals that while she had dreamed of living alongside Lina and her brother, she knew that it was just a dream and that ‘I was aware that I did not deserve such happiness! That I was unworthy of your precious friendship, of the love of such a brave man!’ She adds her relief at knowing she would die before ‘infesting the sanctity of your home and prostituting the marital bed of my hero’ (1874, 381–2). Banti has noted how Marzia’s guilt is focused on the loss of honour experienced by her father or lover and that she dismisses her own suffering (2005, 257). In her guilt, Marzia even negates some of her own patriotic glory, admitting, ‘not only the holy cause of our country inspired me towards danger, but also a desire to end an abhorred and contaminated life’ (1874, 382). In this way, Garibaldi takes away the glory for her bravery that he had spent the novel creating. Marzia’s beloved P. and Lina both kiss her after this speech but say nothing to contradict her and let her die quietly. While both Virginia and Marzia’s tragic deaths conform to the model of nineteenth-century literature and opera, they are somewhat atypical in that they result from wounds incurred on the battlefield and to some extent parallel the martyrdom of Garibaldi’s more conventionally ‘pure’ heroes and heroines.

In a more notable break with convention, Camilla survives until the end of the story. In line with the prevailing belief that fallen women must suffer for their sins, however, she has lost everyone she loved, including Silvio who dies in battle, and she suffers more deeply than the other mourning heroines at the novel’s close. Though Clelia and Giulia have also lost their beloveds, Camilla is uniquely destroyed by her grief. Though she is still beautiful, ‘misfortune had too clearly furrowed her forehead and a certain air of madness was evident upon her face’ (1870b, 461–2). While his desire to challenge the sexual double standard prompted Garibaldi to experiment with the possibility of a happy ending for Camilla, his more pressing need to condemn the Catholic Church and argue for revolution in Italy caused him to emphasise her sufferings and victimisation by the Church.

## Conclusion

As this article has demonstrated, Garibaldi created literary heroines who complicated nineteenth-century cultural conventions. Though Garibaldi's priority in writing his novels was not female emancipation but rather the removal of the Catholic Church and its influence from the Italian peninsula as well as the glorification of male patriotism, his vision for Italy's anticlerical republican future included a more expansive role for women. By focusing on his novels, this article has drawn attention to understudied elements of Garibaldi's support for female emancipation and relationships with women. It has shown the continuing influence of Anita Garibaldi on his thought through his depictions of physically strong women who would fight to protect both themselves and their nation. Moreover, it has shown how his involvement with the female emancipation movement prompted him to reconsider the justice of Italy's sexual double standard and allow some degree of redemption for fallen women in his narratives.

Additionally, this article acknowledges the limits of Garibaldi's treatment of his female characters and the many ways in which he upheld traditional patriarchal values. While his ideal female patriot was physically strong, she largely remained submissive to male patriots, who were the true heroes of Garibaldi's tales. Moreover, Garibaldi ultimately could not offer Marzia or Camilla full redemption without diminishing the sins of the priests who seduced them. Their virtue needed to be invaluable and irreplaceable in order to maximise his readers' outrage against the priests who had stolen and coerced it from them. Inciting outrage against the clergy thus proved more important for Garibaldi than fighting the sexual double standard.

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## Notes

1. All translations from French and Italian in the quotations are my own.
2. On 15 February 1860 Prime Minister of Piedmont Camillo de Cavour promulgated a ministerial decree establishing a system of state-regulated prostitution. Under the regulations, prostitutes were required to register with the police, undergo bi-weekly health examinations, and accept treatment in state-run hospitals for the treatment of venereal disease. Supporters of the law argued that male sexual needs made prostitution inevitable but that proper regulation would ensure the moral and hygienic safety of the Italian people. The regulations were put into effect immediately in Piedmont and the Italian territories under Piedmontese control at that time (Lombardy, Tuscany, Modena, Parma and the Romagna). The jurisdiction of the Cavour

- Regulation then spread as Piedmont gained control of other Italian territories, including the Papal States and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in 1861, Venice in 1866, and Rome in 1870. For more, see Gibson 1999, 13–29.
3. White Mario was active in the leftist propaganda campaigns of the Risorgimento starting in the mid-1850s. In 1857, she travelled to Genoa to participate in the failed Pisacane expedition and met the patriot Alberto Mario. The pair fell in love while plotting the conspiracy, continued their courtship via letter during their respective imprisonments, and were married in a civil ceremony in England upon their release.
  4. Showing a strong interest in the figure of Clelia, Garibaldi chose her as the namesake of not only his first book, but also his daughter, born in February 1867.

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**Italian summary**

Quest'articolo esamina la carriera letteraria poco studiata di uno dei patrioti più famosi d'Italia, Giuseppe Garibaldi. Dal 1868 al 1874, Garibaldi scrisse e pubblicò tre romanzi: *Clelia* (1870), *Cantoni* (1870) e *I Mille* (1874). Le opere sono riconosciute come prova del suo anticlericalismo e insoddisfazione per il moderatismo politico italiano, ma non come evidenza della sua partecipazione nel movimento di emancipazione femminile e le sue relazioni personali con donne non convenzionali. Mentre Garibaldi è meno noto per il suo femminismo rispetto ad altri uomini della sinistra, come Giuseppe Mazzini, le sue eroine letterarie celebrano la forza fisica e la violenza femminile, offrono alle donne un mezzo per partecipare nella creazione della nazione fuori casa e sfidano le ingiuste leggi sessiste per le donne. Sebbene si possa riconoscere che Garibaldi si conformasse spesso alle convenzioni letterarie patriarcali, quest'articolo sostiene che allo stesso tempo i suoi romanzi supportino i valori dell'emancipazione femminile.