

Faculty of Arts

Faculty of Arts - Papers

University of Wollongong

Year 2006

Raffaello Carboni's perception of
Australia and Australian identity

G. Rando

University of Wollongong, grando@uow.edu.au

Gaetano Rando
University of Wollongong

RAFFAELLO CARBONI'S PERCEPTION OF AUSTRALIA AND AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY

*Based on a paper presented at the Eureka 150 Democracy Conference, University of
Ballarat, 25-27 November 2004*

Carboni's role both as participant in and chronicler of the Ballaarat uprising has historically been the subject of some controversial debate. Although the controversy regarding the veracity of Carboni's account has long been settled (see below), Green, Serle and others who have commented on Carboni's work have tended to relegate it to a mere chronicle without considering that *The Eureka Stockade* does in parts also present broader perspectives on Australia and Australian society, themes that Carboni was later to pursue in his subsequent Italian works displaying an Australian content. This paper examines the perceptions of Australia presented in both *The Eureka Stockade* and Carboni's Italian works with a view to determining their author's views of Australia and an emerging Australian identity and the way this is projected for an Italian audience. What is revealed by this investigation is that *The Eureka Stockade*, more than a mere chronicle, does in fact provide a partial albeit idiosyncratic view of mid 19th century Australia from a non angloceltic perspective that is subsequently transported to an Italian context.

The genesis of this paper is an on-going project that aims to examine and analyse from an interdisciplinary perspective writings, oral accounts, theatre and cinema produced by short and long term Italian migrants to Australia and subsequent

generations of Italian Australians. To date the project has brought to light a considerable corpus of published and unpublished texts produced from the mid 19th century up to the present time. Some hitherto unpublished literary texts have been published in anthologies¹ and a monograph-length critical study was published in 2004.² This study examines how the long-term Italian Australian migration experience has been expressed in the memoirs, autobiographies, narrative, poetry, theatre and film produced by its protagonists and presents some specific examples of the more general issues covered in a previous co-edited book.³ The way in which specific aspects of the Italian Australian experience is expressed in the corpus has also been addressed in a number of book chapters and journal articles, recent examples being the analysis of written and oral accounts of internment during the second world war⁴ and the introduction to Rosa Cappiello's translated novel *Oh Lucky Country*.⁵ As part of this project two monographs have been dedicated to Raffaello Carboni. One⁶ provides a lengthy essay in Italian on Carboni as a political activist and as a writer together with an Italian translation of

¹ G. Rando (ed.) *Italo—Australian Poetry in the 80's*, Wollongong, 1986 provides a collection of 74 poems (written mostly in Italian, some in English) by eighteen first generation migrants.

G. Rando (ed.) *Italo—Australian Prose in the 80s*, Wollongong, 1988 provides a collection of sixteen short fiction texts written by sixteen first generation migrants with English translations of texts written in Italian.

² G. Rando, *Emigrazione e letteratura Il caso italoaustraliano*, Cosenza, 2004

³ S. Castles, C. Alcorso, G. Rando and E. Vasta (eds) *Australia's Italians. Culture and Community in a Changing Society*, Sydney, 1992.

⁴ G. Rando, 'Italian Australians during the Second World War: some perceptions of internment', *Studi d'italianistica nell'Africa australe/Italian Studies in Southern Africa*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2005), pp. XX-XX.

⁵ R. R. Cappiello, *Oh Lucky Country. Translated with an introduction by Gaetano Rando*, Sydney, 2003, pp.i-v [Sydney University Press Classic Australian Works series]

⁶ G. Rando, *La Barricata dell'Eureka. Una sommossa democratica in Australia*, Rome, 2000.

The Eureka Stockade. The other⁷ is a detailed linguistic analysis of Carboni's text that includes an exegetical appraisal of its non-English elements.

Carboni is one of an extremely small number of Italian Australian writers to have been awarded recognition by the Australian literary canon, recognition which, however, has not come about without some controversy. Initial charges of inaccuracy were to prove unfounded despite Henry Turner's⁸ claim of the untrustworthiness of Carboni's account and Ernest Scott⁹ who — among other early historians he argued for a justification of the government position in relation to the events of Eureka — cast doubt on the validity of the book by stating that it was the work of a foreign agitator who hated all forms of constituted authority given that he had learned to hate the Austrians. The controversy surrounding Carboni's competency as a writer in the English language was to develop into a long-running debate that has been conducted on substantially anglocentric lines that do not consider Carboni's linguistic usage in its appropriate context as well as in terms of the generic types present in his texts. In the introduction to the 1942 Sunnybrook edition of *The Eureka Stockade* (significantly the first to appear after the original print run of 1855), H. V. Evatt enthusiastically compares Carboni to Conrad¹⁰ and although Evatt's position was based on political and cultural rather than literary parameters there nevertheless seems some genuine sincerity in his appraisal of Carboni as a writer. H. M. Green, however, finds himself at a loss in classifying *The Eureka Stockade* in terms of the literary parameters that form the

⁷ G. Rando, *Great Works and Yabber-Yabber: The Language of Raffaello Carboni's "Eureka Stockade,"* St Lucia (Qld), 1998.

⁸ H. G. Turner, *Our Own Little Rebellion. The Story of Eureka*, Melbourne, 1913.

⁹ E. Scott, *The History of Victoria*, Melbourne, 1917.

¹⁰ R. Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade The Consequence of some pirates wanting on quarter-deck a rebellion*, Sydney, 1942, p. 2.

basis of his historical survey of Australian literature and claims that much of what Carboni wrote is broken English,¹¹ a view that is to some extent shared by Geoffrey Serle who states in his introduction to the 1975 edition that the 'book is a literary freak of extraordinary vividness and entertainment value'¹² albeit 'unusual and so little susceptible to most canons of criticism'¹³ although he admits that Carboni does 'rise here and there to great narrative heights'¹⁴ while Thomas Keneally's introduction to the 1993 edition, focuses on Carboni's 'passionate observations, laced with polyglot whimsy and occasional bombast'.¹⁵

Literary critics and historians have thus tended to acknowledge with some reluctance Carboni's role as the writer of the only substantial eye-witness chronicle of the Eureka episode despite Brian Fitzpatrick's convincing arguments regarding the accuracy of the account.¹⁶ Nevertheless Carboni's book has been used as a source for subsequent accounts of the events of Eureka such as W. B. Withers' *History of Ballarat* (1870), Richard Butler's *Eureka Stockade* (1893) and William Hill's *The Golden Quest* (1926). It has also seems to have provided material for some literary works such as the goldfields chapters in Marcus Clark's *For the Term of his Natural Life* (1874), Rex Rienits' *Eureka Stockade* (1949) and Leslie Haylen's *Blood on the Wattle* (1948). Cinematic productions of the Eureka Stockade have however tended to downplay Carboni's role and to depict him as something of an Italian stereotype. The 1949 film, produced by Harry Watts with Chips Rafferty in the role

¹¹ H. M. Green, *A History of Australian Literature Pure and Applied*, Vol.I, Sydney, 1971, p. 312.

¹² R. Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade*, Melbourne, 1975, p. ix.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. xv.

¹⁴ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁵ R. Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade*, Melbourne, 1993, p. x.

¹⁶ B. Fitzpatrick, 'Introduction' in R. Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade*, Melbourne, 1947, pp. iii-v.

of Peter Lalor, presents Carboni as a not overly courageous “operatic” character while the 1985 television miniseries transmitted by ATN7 stresses not only Carboni’s flamboyant personality but also the view that he deliberately hid in the chimney of his tent during the battle and Carboni is not mentioned in the publicity materials issued in 2003 by the Eureka Film Co for its proposed production of a feature film.¹⁷

There is little doubt that Raffaele Domenico Crescentino Carboni (Urbino 1817 – Rome 1875) was an idiosyncratic figure both as a person and as a writer. As a young man he was attracted to Rome in the 1830s because of its cosmopolitan ambience and the opportunities it offered for acquiring foreign languages and learning about other places. More by chance than by specific intent he was drawn into Mazzini’s Young Italy movement for the unification of Italy under a republican system. This event was to inspire both life-long identification with Mazzinian idealism and an inclination to participate in revolutionary uprisings. He became actively involved in the 1848-49 Roman uprising, the Eureka Stockade, Garibaldi’s successful 1860 Sicilian campaign and, possibly, Garibaldi’s ill-fated Aspromonte incident of 1862. His role in the Italian events was, however, to prove far less prominent than at Eureka.

It was his participation in the 1848-49 Roman uprising which led to the establishment of a short-lived republic headed, among others, by Mazzini and Garibaldi, that, together with a passion for travel and the attraction of gold, ultimately led Carboni to Australia after he was forced to flee the city as a consequence of French military intervention which restored papal power. Carboni

¹⁷ <http://www.eurekastockadefilm.com/> (accessed 15 September 2005).

had contributed to the fierce resistance against the French by serving in the ambulance corps (an experience later to prove valuable in tending the wounded diggers after the Eureka battle) as well as an interpreter and had been wounded during the course of the fighting.¹⁸

Carboni was not the only political exile from the events of the Italian *Risorgimento* to find his way to Australia,¹⁹ nor was he the only migrant from the Italian peninsula to write about his impressions of the new land. Rudesindo Salvado had written about Australia before him, Ferdinando Gagliardi and Pietro Munari were to write about Australia later in the 19th century.²⁰ However, Carboni was the only one to write in English and to publish in Australia and while parts of Salvado's account are as vivacious and picaresque as *The Eureka Stockade*, the latter can to some extent be considered a more passionate and animated text than the other three. Carboni's perceptions of Australia both coincide with and differ from the views presented by the other 19th century Italian Australian writers. He substantially concurs with Salvado on the positive values to be found in Australia's

¹⁸ R. Carboni, *Buffi e Buffoni* in R. Carboni, *Lo Scotta-O-Tinge: Parte seconda*, Rome, 1873, p. 780. *Buffi e Buffoni* is a dramatized representation of the 1848-49 Roman uprising against corrupt and autocratic papal rule and its subsequent defeat by the French army sent to support the pope.

¹⁹ Gerolamo Carandini, Marquis of Saranzo, arrived in Australia in 1842 subsequent to participation in revolutionary activity against the Austrians, Giovan Battista Cattabeni's period of residence in Australia during the 1850s was also the result of the failure of the 1848-49 Roman uprising (Cattabeni was a member of the same Roman Young Italy cell as Carboni) and Nino Bixio visited Australia briefly in 1855.

²⁰ R. Salvado, *Memorie storiche dell'Australia particolarmente della Missione Benedettina di Nuova Norcia e degli usi e costumi degli Australiani*, Rome, 1851.

F. Gagliardi, *Australia: Lettere alla Gazzetta d'Italia*, Florence, 1881.

P. Munari, *Un Italiano in Australia: Note e Impressioni*, Milan, 1897.

See also R. Pesman Cooper, 'Some Italian views of Australia in the nineteenth century', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 69, 1984, pp. 171-189.

natural setting and the Aborigines,²¹ and presents an opposing position to Munari who adopts a pointedly racist stance on Australia's Indigenous people, despite his adherence to a substantially socialist post-Mazzinian ideology.²² However, Carboni's appraisal of the positive values of the Australian working class coincide to some extent with Munari's views,²³ while he rejects the materialistic and capitalist aspects of Australia that Gagliardi promotes so enthusiastically.²⁴

An ever-curious observer and commentator of the events that he witnessed and the people who were their protagonists, Carboni displays in his writings a consistent tendency not only to record his observations but also to digress and examine the wider context as well as to provide his own appraisals.²⁵ Carboni's appraisals are consistently overtly subjective, operate at various levels (not only the literal one) and are coloured by his own experiences and attitudes.²⁶ This *modus operandi* is also evident in *The Eureka Stockade* which contains a number of passages that can be considered somewhat more wide-ranging than the strict partisan reporting of the uprising and the associated victimological theme that have provoked adverse past criticism of Carboni's account.²⁷ More than a mere chronicle, *The Eureka Stockade*

²¹ Rando, *Emigrazione e letteratura*, p. 28.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 38-39.

²³ *Loc. cit.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²⁵ Rando, *La Barricata dell'Eureka*, pp. 12-15, 31-43.

²⁶ F. Vitelli ('Gilburnia and Eureka: Raffaello Carboni's Freedom Narratives,' paper presented at the Eureka 150 Democracy Conference, University of Ballarat, 25-27 November 2004) has overlooked the fact that most of Carboni's other writings can also be interpreted as freedom narratives.

²⁷ Those who in the past have criticised *The Eureka Stockade* on the grounds of its subjectivity, claiming that the account is little more than Carboni windging about the way he had been treated, have failed to recognize that victimological themes present a constant and long-standing element in Australian writing (for example Marcus Clark, *For the Term of his Natural Life*, Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*) —

needs to be considered as a mixed genre text type that also presents the author's views, opinions, appraisals and judgments on Australia and Australians seen as a two-class society with both classes having collective negative characteristics, although particular individuals within both classes are viewed positively.

Within the immediate context of the Eureka episode Carboni presents the Australian ruling class and its minions as arbitrary, dictatorial and corrupt. The fees levied from the gold licences, as well as the fines imposed on diggers who did not have one, are seen as a revenue-raising instrument certainly not employed for the benefit of the people — 'We want money says some of the paternals at Toorak . . . come down on a few storekeepers and unlicenced miners . . . We can manage a thousand or two that way.'²⁸ In some cases Carboni implies that the fines imposed and the confiscation of the sly-grog sellers' supplies was for the personal benefit of the police and administrators.²⁹ An idiosyncratic user of language both in his Italian and English writings, Carboni often employs the term *gold-lace*, sometimes attributively ('gold-laced Webster'³⁰), to refer to the government officials and also to the bureaucracy or the government, while the bureaucracy and military combined are referred to as 'silver and gold lace.'³¹ Commissioner Rede is very graphically described as an 'ass in the form of a pig . . . [possessing] in his head the brains of both the above-mentioned brutes'³² while magistrate Sturt who presided

see R. Grainger, 'Refugees, Minorities and Australia's Victimological Culture: The Case of the SIEV X Tragedy,' paper presented at the Minorities and Cultural Assertions Conference, University of Wollongong, 8-10 October 2004.

²⁸ R. Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade*, Melbourne, 1963, p. 25.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23-25.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 130, 163.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

at the committal hearing has 'an odious face, whose plumpness told me at once he was not friend to fasting.'³³ Carboni's critique of officialdom, although generated by the immediate events surrounding the Eureka uprising, contains at times comments that are more wide-ranging as he reflects on a ruling class that, despite some exceptions, is attached to its privileges, its status and money and rules the colony in a manner that is decidedly undemocratic, arrogant, uncompassionate and merciless. Like the British ruling capitalist class the 'money-grubbing expertness'³⁴ of Australia's colonial rulers leads them to see people as 'tools to make money. A dead man needs no further care.'³⁵

The people, on the other hand, are seen collectively as extremely rough and ready, attached to money like their masters and prone to consume vast quantities of alcohol, particularly rum and beer. When on arrival in Melbourne he is charged the exorbitant sum of five pounds to land his luggage, Carboni comments that 'Rapacity in Australia is the alpha and omega.'³⁶ His first experience of a licence hunt triggers the comment 'Inveterate murderers, audacious burglars, bloodthirsty bushrangers, were the ruling triumvirate . . . in this bullock-drivers' land'³⁷ and the proliferation of pubs and sly-grog establishments on the goldfields leads him to conclude that this is the reason why 'this land has produced so many bullock-drivers.'³⁸ The word *vandemonian*, meaning 'thug, ruffian',³⁹ occurs fourteen

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5. Carboni consistently uses *bullock driver* rather than the more Australianised term *bullocky*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

³⁹ G. Rando, *Great Works and Yabber-Yabber*, p. 10.

times, nine when referring to thuggish behaviour and five in relation to traps, troopers and soldiers. An example of the latter can be found in Carboni's description of the fiendish 'Vandemonian-looking trooper'⁴⁰ who set fire to the north end of the stockade immediately after the battle while the behaviour of the 'sulky ruffian . . . a "Vandemonian," made up of low vulgar manners and hard talk, spiked at each word, with their characteristic B'⁴¹ who together with his fellow ruffians attempts to bail up the Prince Albert hotel can be considered Carboni's most emblematic depiction of the worst characteristics of Australia's lower class.

Carboni often implies, and in some instances states explicitly, that Australia presents the worst aspects of British colonialism with a racist and oppressive colonial government. Specifically he comments on the similarity between Australia's colonial government and the government in the Italian territories occupied by Austria, well known for its oppressive nature and harsh treatment of attempts at insurgency. Although he had never lived under Austrian rule, this did not prevent him from stating that the foreign diggers 'object to the Austrian rule under the British flag'⁴² when he participated in the digger's delegation to Rede. However, unlike the situation in Europe where sections of the middle class were active in progressive democratic movements, he considers that there are no groups in Australian society concerned with the ideals of truth, liberty, equality and democracy, although he finds individual exceptions in some of the Eureka leaders - Peter Lalor, Timothy Hayes, John Manning,⁴³ as also Father Patricius Smythe,⁴⁴ all

⁴⁰ Carboni, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-63.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

good men and true in Carboni's books although lacking a coherent political ideology as well as the nonce to stage a proper revolution.⁴⁵ Carboni is also appreciative of the sense of justice displayed by the jury that acquitted him and of the popular support given by the people of Melbourne to the diggers' cause after the government victory at Eureka.

In the final analysis, however, Carboni seems somewhat two-minded in his appraisal of Australian society. Its perceived materialism is seen as a highly negative attribute as when, for example, he writes about enraging John Bull by pricking him 'at his £ s.d.'⁴⁶ and the obsession with moneymaking rampant in Victoria ('In this colony, however, make money; honestly if possible, but make money; or else the vagabonds here would humble down a gentleman to curry-powder diet'⁴⁷) is underscored by a very liberal translation of a poem by the Roman poet Horace.⁴⁸ While Carboni is not particularly optimistic of the white man's social future in Australia, he does however realize that Australia can offer something more than old Europe, at least in a material sense. There is a liberating sense of independence in being able to undertake the hard work of digging for gold and earning more than he did in the old country 'without crouching or crawling to Jew or Christian'⁴⁹ while the dream of taking up land and producing his own food and wine seems an attractive one.⁵⁰ He was also attracted, perhaps to the point of fascination, by Australia's natural setting, seeing Australia as a primordial land of often savage beauty which offers much to those who can

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

understand. Even extreme manifestations of nature such as violent storms, bushfire and drought can present a positive element of renewal. Chapter XVII presents a brief but graphic description of the storm seen as a cleansing element to the point that 'kind Providence must be blessed even in the whirlwind,'⁵¹ a concept that Carboni further elaborates in *Gilburnia*⁵² (see below).

Carboni applied for British citizenship in November 1855 and seems to have considered settling on the land and producing wine and olives.⁵³ This dream was not to be realised. He left Australia in January 1856 never to return,⁵⁴ but he was never to forget his Australian experience. One of his Italian theatrical works (*Gilburnia*) is entirely based in Australia. Australian elements are also incorporated in two other works based in Italy (*La Santola*⁵⁵ and *Schiantapalmi*⁵⁶) while an implicit comparison is to be found in *La Campana della Gancia*.⁵⁷ In these Carboni tends to highlight the positive aspects of his Australian experience such as the pristine natural setting, the opportunity to better one's socioeconomic condition and the spirit of democracy.

Gilburnia is a fantasy pantomime in eight scenes based on Carboni's brief

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵² R. Carboni, *Gilburnia: Translated and annotated by Tony Pagliaro*, Melbourne, 1993.

⁵³ D. O'Grady, *Raffaello! Raffaello! A Biography of Raffaello Carboni*, Sydney, 1985, pp. 204-205.

⁵⁴ O'Grady (*op. cit.*, p. 205) suggests that Carboni's departure was inspired by the thought that he might as well be misgoverned in his own country. A more plausible explanation might lie in the resurgence of revolutionary activity in Italy after the defeats of 1848-1849.

⁵⁵ R. Carboni, *La Santola*, Turin, 1861.

⁵⁶ R. Carboni, *Schiantapalmi* in R. Carboni, *Lo Scotta-O-Tinge: Parte seconda*, Rome, 1873, pp. 205-403.

⁵⁷ R. Carboni, *La Campana della Gancia*, Palermo, 1861.

experience with the Tarrang tribe (related in Chapter V of the *Eureka Stockade*) and is set at Tarrengower in the Loddon Valley. Gilburnia, daughter of the tribal elder, is captured by a party of diggers who clearly intend to 'force her to do [their] pleasure'⁵⁸ and are then pursued by the men of the tribe. She manages to escape but the pursuing tribesmen are ambushed by the diggers. Rang, Gilburnia's suitor, saves her father's life by killing the leader of the digger band but the surviving Aborigines are captured by troopers, put on trial, found guilty and sentenced to death. The situation is resolved by a miraculous storm, which destroys the white man's court and frees the Aborigines. The white man's invasion of the tribe's territory has brought with it evil, vice, materialism and chaos and it is only by divine intervention that the pristine natural order is restored. *Gilburnia* is one of the first literary works to deal with the clash between whites and Aborigines and to condemn the former.⁵⁹ Somewhat reminiscent of the pastoral genre developed by 17th and 18th century Italian poets and librettists such as Pietro Metastasio, it also presents an idyllic view of the "natural" and carefree life led by the Aborigines whom Carboni regards as emblematic examples of Rousseau's concept of the noble savage. By contrast it contains a scene⁶⁰ describing the work of the goldfields which causes destruction of the environment and brutalisation of the human spirit. A third element introduced at the end of the pantomime is Carboni's acquittal at the Eureka trail brought about by the respect of 'God's / law of Love and Liberty'⁶¹ and 'the Briton's pride that man's most precious right be protected from a tyrant's whim.'⁶²

⁵⁸ Carboni, *Gilburnia*, p. 15.

⁵⁹ Tony Pagliaro, 'Preface' in Carboni, *Gilburnia*, p. viii.

⁶⁰ Carboni, *Gilburnia*, pp. 15-18.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

The perception of Australia presented in *Gilburnia* parallels to a large extent ideas and concepts presented at times, somewhat hastily and almost *en passant*, in the *Eureka Stockade* on the greater vitality, primordiality and potential purity of life in Australia where humankind can live in closer communion with nature than in an European context. A specific example can be found in the storm metaphor cited above which, as Pagliaro points out,⁶³ is also used by other contemporary sources in reference to the Eureka uprising. Carboni also uses the storm metaphor with reference to events of the Italian *Risorgimento* but in a manner which represents nature as a much less vital, and "pure" force.⁶⁴ Carboni's criticism of the treatment of the Aborigines by the white invaders, his condemnation of dispossession and his view that they too are worthy of justice,⁶⁵ is substantially coherent with his expression of empathy for the overbearing treatment and lack of justice displayed by the Italian occupiers of Sicily towards the island's peasants and urban proletariat.⁶⁶

La Santola and *Schiantapalmi* provide Carboni's "before" and "after" perceptions of specific aspects of Australia. In the melodrama *La Santola*, the protagonist, Pastorello, falls in love with Concetta, the daughter of the Duke of Dolce-far-Niente, but is told by his prospective father-in-law that he will have to accumulate wealth as a condition to the Duke's acquiescence to the match. As Pastorello sets out on his long voyage, Australia is seen as a golden land of easily obtained riches — 'Sotto il polo a l'antartica spiaggia / Noi per l'oro e l'argento si viaggia' (To the

⁶³ Pagliaro, *op. cit.*, pp. xxxi – xxxiv.

⁶⁴ Rando, *La Barricata dell'Eureka*, p. 224.

⁶⁵ Pagliaro, *op. cit.*, p. xxxiv.

⁶⁶ Rando, *La Barricata dell'Eureka*, pp. 31-34.

antarctic shore under the pole / For gold and silver we travel).⁶⁷ This promise, however, turns out to be a mirage since Pastorello does not strike it rich nor does his love story with Concetta have a happy ending.

Conversely, Nazzareno, the protagonist of *Schiantapalmi*, does make his fortune on the Australian goldfields, although success has come at a high price — 'a me prese la Satannica mania di farmi d'oro per essere adorato da tutti . . . e amato da nessuno' (the satanic mania took hold of me of making myself of gold to be adored by all . . . and loved by no one)⁶⁸ — having returned to Italy from the Australian goldfields with silver hair and feeling something of a stranger in his native land. He nevertheless talks about Australia with more than a touch of nostalgia as a primeval and unspoiled place that has not as yet acquired the problems and complications of old Europe, a somewhat mythical and idealised view that parallels the passages in the *Eureka Stockade* where he describes his life with the Aborigines, the grandeur of the countryside which reminds him of *Bella Italia*,⁶⁹ and the dream of a bucolic life⁷⁰ which becomes one of the central themes of *Gilburnia*.

NAZZARENO: Dove non trovi preti! là non vi sono monache; là non vi sono bastardi!; e dove mancano i bastardi non si conosce la legge scritta sul pampano del fico per Adamo ed Eva!. Ecco l'Australia, qual desideravo di farvene persuasa!; dove l'uomo vive, ama e . . . muore per legge di natura che governa le bestie *et universa pecora*.

⁶⁷ Carboni, *La Santola*, p. 94.

⁶⁸ Carboni, *Schiantapalmi*, p. 371.

⁶⁹ Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade*, pp. 9, 128.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

(Where there are no priests there are no nuns and there are no bastards! And where there are no bastards you don't find the law that's written on Adam and Eve's fig leaf! That's how I wanted to describe Australia to you! Where man lives, loves and . . . dies by universal laws that govern beasts *et universa pecora*)⁷¹

NAZZARENO: Nei boschi dell'Australia i selvaggi sono abituati a vedersi giorno e notte e viceversa, uomini e donne ricoperte, ossia, vestiti o dalle ombre dei gommi; o dal chiaro del sole; o dal lume di luna.

MARGHERITA: Narra un poco; allora non hanno alcuna religione? avete capito, nessuna chiesa?

NAZZARENO: Certo, manca loro il Duomo di Milano!

VITTORIO: Qui hai battuto il chiodo a posto, caro. I fondatori della Chiesa Papale in Italia furono i Raffaello, i Michelangelo e socii di pennello e scalpello!: non c'è che dire!

NAZZARENO: *Eppur si muove* come disse Galileo!

(NAZZARENO: In the Australian bush the natives are used to seeing each other day and night and vice versa, men and women covered, or rather, dressed by the shadows of the gum trees or by the sunlight or by the moonlight.

MARGHERITA: You don't say; so they haven't any religion? Get it, no church?

NAZZARENO: They don't have the Milan cathedral, that's for sure!

VITTORIO: Here you've hit the nail on the head, old chap. The

⁷¹Carboni, *Schiantapalmi*, p. 316.

founders of the papal church in Italy were Raffaello, Michelangelo and the brush and scalpel brigade! That's for sure!

NAZZARENO: *But it still goes round as Galileo said!*)⁷²

Schiantapalmi presents the most idealised vision of an Australia unblemished by the contamination of white “civilization” to be found in any of Carboni’s writings. The comparison between Australia and Europe is clearly in favour of the former and is coloured in part by Carboni’s selective recall of Australia’s positive attributes without reference to the negative aspects treated in the *Eureka Stockade* and, to a lesser extent, in *Gilburnia*. The comparison, however, also serves another quite different purpose — that of supporting Carboni’s Mazzini-inspired stance against institutionalised Catholicism (members of the clergy, especially Jesuits, are invariably depicted as villains in Carboni’s Italian works). This stance however did not prevent him from depicting Father Smythe in a very positive light as one of the heroes of the Eureka episode⁷³ (possibly a case of the singer not the song?).

An implicit Australia/Italy comparison is found in the lyric tragedy *La Campana della Gancia*. Like the *Eureka Stockade* this theatrical piece was published on the first anniversary of the attempted uprising in Palermo (4 April 1860) against the Bourbon regime. Like Eureka this uprising too was to prove initially unsuccessful but was to trigger Garibaldi's expedition to Sicily and ultimately the unification of Italy, an event that Carboni was later to view with mixed feelings (contrasting with Carboni's substantially positive view of the Eureka aftermath). Despite the vastly different spatial and contextual aspects of the two events Carboni's treatment is

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 325.

⁷³ Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade*, pp. 39, 81, 101.

substantially similar. The number of leaders is the same, the commander in chief of the rebels, Francesco Riso, is presented very much as a Sicilian version of Peter Lalor and the head of the government forces, Maniscalco, is a close parallel to Commissioner Rede. Garibaldi 's landing at Marsala is marked with the same verses that are found in chapter XXXI of the *Eureka Stockade* which reports the public meeting of 29 November and the diggers' decision to oppose further licence hunts: 'Si cessi il pianto; l'ira si gusti: / Lo schiavo che vuol finir le sue pene; / Vendetta! Gridando al Dio de' giusti, / deve schiantar le proprie catene.'(Cease your tears; / savour your anger: / O Slaves who desire to end your suffering; / Vengeance! Shouting to the God of the Just, / you must burst free of your shackles.)⁷⁴

As in the *Eureka Stockade* this band of Sicilian revolutionaries too is locked in a struggle to affirm the principles of justice, liberty and democracy against oppression and tyranny.⁷⁵ There is, notwithstanding, a fundamental difference between the two episodes. Eureka, in Carboni's perspective, represents the eventual defeat of an inefficient and corrupt government and is the initiator of a number of significant democratic reforms that benefit the people, while the promise of freedom and democracy represented by the overthrow of the Bourbon

⁷⁴Carboni, *La Campana della Gancia*, p. 50, and Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade*, p. 54. The second and third lines are also found in Raffaello Carboni, *Buffi e Buffoni*, p. 780. In his introduction to the 1993 edition of *The Eureka Stockade* (p. xv) Thomas Keneally considers lines such as these as skirting along the edge of flatulence. This appraisal however fails to recognize the presence of an operatic sub-genre in Carboni's text.

⁷⁵ Yet another close comparison between the two texts is found in: 'Morire o vincere: / Ti porgo il *Piano* / Di propria mano / Pel tuo dover' (To win or die: / I give you the *Plan* / By your own hand / For your duty) (*La Campana della Gancia*, p. 63) and 'On to the field, our doom is sealed, / To conquer or be slaves' (*The Eureka Stockade*, p. 55).

regime in the *Campana della Gancia* is soon to be negated through the subsequent occupation of Sicily by the northern military and bureaucracy of the newly established Kingdom of Italy⁷⁶ It is certainly not considered an event that benefits ‘the proletarian people.’⁷⁷

Carboni’s perception of Australia is thus coloured not only by his experiences down under but also by his individualistic brand of Mazzinianism shaped by the events of the Italian *Risorgimento*. His coherent and consistent opposition to all forms and types of oppressor – whether French, Bourbon or British — and his sympathy for the “underdog” lead him to identify and to appreciate similar characteristics in his comrades at Eureka (more those of Irish than British origin, though), in ‘the brave people of Melbourne’⁷⁸ who come out in support of the state prisoners and in the twelve good and true Australians who made up the jury at his trial. It is through the common people (not through the ruling class) that he senses the emergence of identifiers of Australian identity such as mateship, justice and the “fair go,” and the idea that individual worth is determined by personal attributes rather than by class or status.

Despite these not insignificant observations, Carboni’s principal view of the Australian society of his times presented in the *Eureka Stockade* was to remain one that underscored pervasively materialistic elements. Carboni’s appropriation of and claim on Australian space in the longer term is, however, somewhat different

⁷⁶ Rando, *La Barricata dell’Eureka*, pp. 31-36.

⁷⁷ Letter from Raffaello Carboni to Francesco Crispi, 4 October 1860, *Carteggio Crispi* — *Palermo*, fasc. 54, LXXVIII, Archivio Centrale dello Stato (Rome).

⁷⁸ Carboni, *The Eureka Stockade*, p, 143. *Brave* is quite possibly an Italianism — *brava gente* ‘good people’ — but also possibly an ironic comment on Carboni’s part (the people of Melbourne being *brave* after the event).

in that the piece of Australia he takes back to Italy is the vitality of its natural setting and a Rousseau-coloured idealisation of the “noble savage.” It was these aspects that he was to promote among his Italian friends and acquaintances, although a sensation would certainly have been caused had he ever managed to present a stage performance of *Gilburnia* which included a ballet of nude Aboriginal women! Despite its contradictions - “evil” white men but true Britons who respect God’s laws and Justice, materialism versus altruism - Carboni’s view of Australia is in the final analysis a potentially positive one in that it offers the possibility for the final triumph of good and the recognition of democratic values. By contrast the contradictions Carboni perceives in the Italian *Risorgimento* - ideals of fraternity and liberty contrasted by fratricidal war, the imposition of yet another undemocratic system on “the people” - lead to a substantially negative conclusion.⁷⁹ While his role as a participant in the events of Eureka can be seen as a relative modest one in practical terms, [[i.e. his legacy (book) far more important than his active participation]] during his stay in Australia he documented an important episode that was to become one of the emblematic moments of a process leading towards the achievement of nationhood and in doing so also presented his somewhat individualistic views of Australian in the mid 19th century.

⁷⁹Rando, *La Barricata dell’Eureka*, p. 41.