

Gendered lights of reason

Cultural and educational perspectives

edited by
ANTONELLA CAGNOLATI



iblioteca
di Sofia

«[...] quando eravamo più giovani, ragazzine, [...] si leggeva ad alta voce per rimanere più uniti e per apprendere meglio la lingua». Queste le parole usate da Maria Luisa Muscatello, la donna che ha donato all'Associazione Orlando di Bologna la sua libreria di bambina e ragazza, dando vita così alla “Biblioteca di Sofia” – un fondo ora conservato presso la Biblioteca italiana delle donne. L'importanza della lettura nella formazione è il focus di questa collezione, che dal nucleo originario di testi di fine Ottocento e primi del Novecento, si è andata arricchendo con volumi più contemporanei.

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UNIVERSITÀ

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Jacobin women and political speech in the Gran Circolo Costituzionale of Bologna

On the patriot banquet on 28 May 1798¹

by Milagro Martín-Clavijo
University of Salamanca

1. Jacobin women in the Gran Circolo Costituzionale of Bologna

The Jacobin triennium², also known as revolutionary or pa-

1. This text has been translated into English by Nadia M. Arias González.

2. On the Jacobin triennium, some contributions of interest are those from: G. Zanibelli, *Il triennio rivoluzionario in Italia. Parte I – prove di democrazia negli antichi stati italiani*, in «Instoria.it.» (CXIII), n. 81., 2014, http://www.instoria.it/home/italia_triennio_rivoluzionario_I.htm (last consulted on 12/02/2022); G. Zanibelli, *Il triennio rivoluzionario in Italia. Parte II – prove di democrazia negli antichi stati italiani*, in «Instoria.it.» (CXIII), n. 82, 2014, http://www.instoria.it/home/italia_triennio_rivoluzionario_II.htm (last consulted on 12/02/2022); C. Capra, *L'età rivoluzionaria e napoleonica in Italia (1796-1815)*, Loescher, Turin 1978; M. Salvadori, N. Tranfaglia, *Il modello politico giacobino e le rivoluzioni*, La Nuova Italia, Florence 1984; M. Formica, *Storia d'Italia e identità nazionale. 1796-1799: triennio rivoluzionario e questione italiana*, in «emagazine Tor Vergata», 2010, <http://emagazine.torvergata.it/wpcontent/uploads/2010/11/SETTIMANA-DELLA-STORIA-STORIA-D%E2%80%99ITALIA-E-IDENTITA%E2%80%99NAZIONALE-Relazione-della-prof.ssa-Marina-Formica3.pdf> (last consulted on 19/02/2013); M. Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy 1796-1814. Cultural Imperialism in an European Context*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2005; A.M. Rao, *Introduction: L'expérience révolutionnaire italienne*, in «Annales historiques de la Révolution française», Numéro spécial sur le Triennio Révolutionnaire, 313, 1998, pp. 387-407; R. De Felice, *Il triennio giacobino*

triotic, refers to the span of time which goes from 1796 to 1799, years during which the ‘sister republics’ of France are created in Italy. These republics are the Italian territories which follow the model and institutions from the revolutionary France. The Jacobin triennium is generally referred to as a period of three years, although some of these republics will not be active during the whole time. Despite its brief existence and the return to the former institutions at the beginning of the 19th Century, this period is utterly important because it marks the passage from Modern to Contemporary History and it settles the pillars, namely political, social, and cultural, which will be the basis for later historical events, especially the Risorgimento and the new Italian state. Among these sister republics³ it is worth mentioning the Transpadane, the Cispadane – later merged into the Cisalpine –, the Venetian, the Ligurian, the Roman and the Parthenopean.

In this context, it is of special interest to analyse the activities developed in Bologna, an important Jacobin city from the Cisalpine Republic⁴, and notably the speeches giv-

in Italia (1796-1799), Bonacci, Rome 1990. On the Italian Jacobins, see D. Cantinori, R. De Felice (a cura di), *Giacobini italiani*, vols. I and II, Laterza, Bari 1964. On the Italian Jacobin newspapers, see R. De Felice (a cura di), *Giornali giacobini italiani*, Feltrinelli, Milan 1962.

3. J. Oddens, M. Rutjes, E. Jacobs (eds), *The Political Culture of the Sister Republics, 1794-1806: France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Italy*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2015; C. Zaghi, *L' Italia di Napoleone dalla Cisalpina al Regno*, in G. Galasso (ed.), *Storia d'Italia*, vol XVIII, tomo I, UTET, Turin 1986; D.P. Harsanyi, *Sidestepping a historical wave: a cancelled revolution in northern Italy. 1796-1797*, «Napoleonica. La Revue», 2, 2020, pp. 2-24. All these authors have covered the subject of the sister republics in detail.

4. The Cisalpine Republic comprehends a wide territory which would correspond to the current regions of Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna as well as

en by women⁵ in the Gran Circolo Costituzionale⁶ from this city. This institution acknowledges the right of women to not only attend the sessions and be educated in the circle⁷, but also to speak and be heard as well as to organise events. Although few of these patriot women publicly⁸ voice their

part of the Veneto and Tuscany, and whose capital was Milan. This republic is confirmed in October 1797 and dissolved in April 1799.

5. It should be noted that these speeches have left a mark in the records of the circles and that on many occasions, when the Circolo considered it so, they were also published.

6. These constitutional circles, also of education and public health, are found in the new Italian republics mainly in the cities which were particularly important for the Italian Jacobinism, such as Bologna. The Gran Circolo Costituzionale, active between 1797 and 1798, holds its meetings in the Sala della Scuola delle Arti, in the Palazzo dell'Archiginnasio, on Sundays. The Circolo "Democratic Spirit", named after the printing house where the newspaper was printed, is also active in this city and during this period. On the Gran Circolo Costituzionale of Bologna, see U. Marcelli (a cura di), *Il Gran Circolo Costituzionale e il "Genio Democratico" (1797-98)*, 3 vol., Analisi, Bologna 1986.

7. Patriots from the city usually gather in these institutions to discuss revolutionary ideas and to find the way to disseminate them among the people and put them into practice in their territory. They are essential for the political education of the new citizens, both men and women, from all social classes and of different ages. On the constitutional circles, see N. Bianchi, *I Circoli Costituzionali durante la prima Repubblica Cisalpina nella Romagna, nelle Marche, e nell'Umbria*, in «Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento», fasc. III, 1919, pp. 411-413; M.A. Galdi, *Saggio d'istruzione pubblica rivoluzionaria (1798)*, in D. Cantinori, R. De Felice (eds), *Giacobini italiani*, Laterza, Bari 1964, pp. 223-253; and G. Schettini, *La "fucina dello spirito pubblico". L'organizzazione dei circoli costituzionali nella prima Cisalpina (1797-1799)*, in «Società e storia», n. 150, Instoria.it. (CX-III), 2015, pp. 689-719.

8. In order to gain an idea of their participation, only in the Circolo Costituzionale of Milan between December 1797 and March 1798 "eleven women spoke, almost all of them more than once, delivering a total of thirty speeches, all of which are recorded, more or less completely, in the newspaper", L. Pisano, Ch. Veauvy, *Parole inascoltate. Le donne e la costruzione dello Stato-nazione in Italia e in Francia (1789-1860)*, Editori Riuniti, Rome 1994, p. 28 ("furono undici le donne che vi presero la parola, quasi tutte più di una volta, per un totale di una trentina di interventi, tutti più o meno completamente ricordati dal giornale"). On the participation of women in the Jacobin constitutional circles, see also R. Bonini,

support to the revolutionary cause, it is the first time in Italy that we will find a united group of women who discuss politics and are proposed as active citizens in this regenerated homeland. Therefore, we witness the admission of women on the political scene, “the appearance of a female prominence which reveals a new subjectivity and cognizance of citizenship”⁹.

This new role of women is broadly accepted by the patriots, since the speeches given by the Jacobin women did not usually “mean a real danger for the patriots, but they helped to increase the participation of women in the fight for the republic, without deliberately threatening their male privileges”¹⁰. In any case, the revolutionary speech “was a tool massively used by women [...], since it seemed to invest au-

L'educazione femminile dal privato al pubblico. La partecipazione delle donne ai circoli costituzionali giacobini (1796-1799), Clueb, Bologna 2001.

9. “[...] l'emergere di un protagonismo femminile che esprime una nuova soggettività e consapevolezza di cittadinanza”, N.M. Filippini (a cura di), *Donne sulla scena pubblica: società e politica in Veneto tra Sette e Ottocento*, FrancoAngeli, Rome 2006, p. 81. The participation of women in politics, however, does not entail their consideration as full citizens. Some interesting studies on the debate on women in this period are those of L. Ricaldone, *Il dibattito sulla donna nella letteratura patriottica del triennio (1796-1799)*, in «*Italianische Studien*», VII, 1984, pp. 23-46; N.M. Filippini (a cura di) (2006), *Donne sulla scena pubblica...*, cit.; A. Buttafuoco, *Straniere in patria. Temi e momenti dell'emancipazionismo femminile dalle Repubbliche giacobine al fascismo*, in A.M. Crispino (ed.), *Esperienza storica femminile nell'età moderna e contemporanea*, UDI-La Goccia, Rome 1988, pp. 1-123; Ead., *Virtù civiche, virtù domestiche. Letture del ruolo femminile nel triennio rivoluzionario*, in G. Benassati, L. Rossi (eds), *L'Italia nella Rivoluzione 1789-1799*, Grafis edizioni, Bologna 1990, pp. 81-88; Ead., *La causa delle donne. Cittadinanza e genere nel triennio 'giacobino' italiano*, in *Modi di essere. Studi, riflessioni, interventi sulla cultura e la politica delle donne in onore di Elvira Badaracco*, EM Ricerche, Bologna 1991, pp. 99-106.

10. “[...] no suponían un peligro real para los patriotas, sino que ayudaban a incrementar la participación femenina en la lucha por la república, pero sin atentar explícitamente contra sus privilegios como hombres”, M. Martín-Clavi-

thority to the position, otherwise compromised, of the female voice in the public sphere"¹¹.

The Jacobin women give their speeches in Bologna¹² mainly in the Gran Circolo Costituzionale during 1798. All these speeches and many others are published in three volumes edited by the Consiglio Regionale dell'Emilia-Romagna¹³.

2. Speeches of women in the presence of the Circolo Costituzionale of Bologna

Only five speeches were given by the Jacobin women from Bologna and they all present a common and rare characteristic compared to those of other women from this period: their name and surname¹⁴ appear in all of them: Geltrude Sgargi (23 March 1798), Claudia Stella (28 May 1798) and Teresa Negri

jo, *La esclavitud de las mujeres* de Carolina Lattanzi y el discurso político de las mujeres en el Trienio jacobino, Arcibel, Seville 2013, p. 25.

11. "[...] era uno strumento che le donne usavano in gran numero [...] a causa del modo in cui sembrava produrre autorità per l'altrimenti compromessa posizione della voce femminile in un'arena pubblica", D. Outram, *Le langage male de la vertu: Women and the Discourse of French Revolution*, in P. Burke, R. Porter (eds), *The Social History of Language*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1987, p. 131.

12. On the Jacobin women in Bologna, see U. Marcelli, *Donne giacobine a Bologna*, in «Bollettino del Museo del Risorgimento di Bologna», 1984-5, pp. 100-112.

13. U. Marcelli (a cura di) (1986), *Il Gran Circolo Costituzionale e il "Genio Democratico" (1797-98)*..., cit. All the speeches which were worthy of publication and claimed as such by the other members of the Gran Circolo Costituzionale can be found in these volumes in chronological order.

14. This is important because many of the speeches delivered by women in other institutions during this Jacobin triennium appear as anonymous, signed under initialisms – as is the case of the speech signed with I.P.M. – or with a simple 'a free citizen'.

Rasinelli (22, 25 January and 28 May 1798). Despite the visibility of their names, we know very little about these women, which prevents us from offering a detailed portrait of them¹⁵. The only one who introduces herself and provides biographical information in her speeches is Teresa Negri Rasinelli¹⁶: in her first speech on 22 January 1798, she briefly describes herself as a young and educated woman, born in Imola, who, from reading mainly History books, has built her 'democratic spirit', which she considers the strongest and most insuperable feeling¹⁷. She also explains that she has been persecuted for her ideas, for having embraced the 'rights of truth', and that she has been able to escape and face numerous obstacles before reaching what she calls a 'second homeland', the Cisalpine Republic. All these details are important because, being a foreigner, she needs to make herself known in the circle and, moreover, express her gratitude for her reception in Bologna¹⁸. From this information, Teresa Negri introduces herself as a woman with firm ideals who is capable of defending them over her own wellbeing and safety.

We can imagine that the two other women who will also speak publicly in these Italian republics during the Jacobin Triennium would share at least these characteristics: a solid

15. The speeches of Domenico and Luca Sgargi, who probably belong to the same family as Geltrude, appear in this publication. In the case of Claudia Stella, we only know that she is the president of the patriot banquet, as it is stated in her speech.

16. In her first speech the author provides only the surname Negri, whereas she will sign the rest of them as Teresa Negri Rasinelli.

17. T. Negri Rasinelli, *Discorso pronunziato dalla Cittadina Teresa Negri imolese al Circolo Costituzionale in Bologna. Che chiese la stampa nel dì 3. Piovoso Anno VI. Repubblicano*, in U. Marcelli (ed.), *Il Gran Circolo Costituzionale e il "Genio Democratico" (Bologna 1797-98)*, vol. I, tomo II, *Analisi*, Bologna 1986, p. 436.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 438.

republican education, firm ideals, and the wish of being able to contribute, through their own words and actions, to this regenerated homeland. Evidently, the three of them often attend the circle and hold discussions with other Jacobins from the city, while they are aware of what is happening in other cities from the Cisalpine, in the other sister republics and in France.

Giovanni Pirani, patriot from the Gran Circolo Costituzionale of Bologna, notes the objectives of that institution: education and assistance to those in need.

Citizens, our Circle has two objectives. One is to teach the uneducated by instilling in them the democratic spirit which is necessary to support this Republic and entirely overthrow the aristocratic government, that is, the *odious despotism*. The other is to think about the most suitable and valid means to assist our needy fellow men and women, since this is the main evidence of being truly democratic and not enjoying, as *insensitive egotists*, the commodities of life without worrying about the misery of others.¹⁹

19. "Il nostro Circolo, o Cittadini, ha due oggetti: Uno d'istruire gli Indotti loro infondendo il necessario, spirito di democrazia a sostenimento di questa Repubblica, ed a totale rovesciamento dell'Aristocratico Governo, che è quanto dire dell'odioso Dispotismo; l'altro di pensare a que' mezzi più atti, e vevoli per sollevare li nostri simili più bisognosi, giachè questa è la prova più invincibile di essere veramente Democratici, e di non godere, quali insensibili Egoisti, li comodi della Vita senza punto curare le altrui miserie", G. Pirani, *Discorso pronunciato dal cittadino avvocato Giovanni Pirani nel Gran Circolo Costituzionale concernente l'urgenza di provvedere alla mendicizia de' più Poveri tra li Poveri, che ne chiese la Stampa nel dì 23 Piovoso Anno VI. Repubblicano, Genio Democratico, Bologna, 1798*, p. 4, https://books.google.es/books?id=FavIYrMEyAwC&pg=PA1&lpg=PA1&dq=Discorso+pronunziato+dal+cittadino+avvocato+Giovanni+Pirani&source=bl&ots=f3ysHbvRZJ&sig=ACfU3U12wYdFy2xZoZ91LPVuhPOI3DU2P-w&hl=es&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewiK_O2Z7ub2AhUH3xoKHS_MA6oQ6AF-

These two objectives are also crucial in the speeches given by the Jacobin women who take the stand in the Circle of Bologna. This chapter focuses on this second objective, that of assisting whoever needs it, and on how patriot women face it in a very specific action, the public banquets for the indigent.

Of the five speeches given by women in the Gran Circolo Costituzionale of Bologna, two take place during the celebration of the patriot banquet led only by women in this city on 28 May 1798: Claudia Stella and Teresa Negri Rasinelli²⁰. The fact that they are almost half of the speeches given by women in the circle gives us an idea of the importance of these banquets for the republican cause, but also of the exceptionality of the female prominence.

3. The patriot banquet on 28 May 1798

Patriot women from Bologna organise a fraternal banquet on 28 May 1798. This event is highly exceptional since its

6BAgMEAM#v=onepage&q=Discorso%20pronunziato%20dal%20cittadino%20avvocato%20Giovanni%20Pirani&f=false (last consulted on 27/03/2022). Capital letters and punctuation marks have been adapted in the translation into English to facilitate the reading of all the speeches. Italics by the author.

20. In addition to these two speeches, Giovanni Pindemonte is the author of *Ode, in debita laudazione del convito patriottico delle virtuose, ed amabili cittadine Bolognesi* (2 June 1799), in which he praises the celebration of such event by women. Schettini states that the main reason for this ode would be a different one: “to recuperate the affection of the patriots after the being widely criticised for a controversial speech about the false patriotism of atheists, deists and materialists” (“ricquistare le simpatie dei patrioti dopo essersi attirato numerose critiche con un controverso intervento sul falso patriottismo di atei, deisti e materialisti”), G. Schettini, *Un rito rivoluzionario. I banchetti per i poveri in Emilia e Romagna, 1797-1798*, in «Contemporanea», a. XVIII, n. 2, aprile-giugno 2015, p. 215.

main protagonists are exclusively women: it will be the first of its kind to be organised in this city and one of the few in the sister republics during the triennium²¹. There is scarce information about this occurrence, essentially that provided by «Il Monitore Bolognese»²² newspaper and by the research conducted by Schettini²³, who claims that Teresa Negri was the first to suggest that the women form Bologna should organise this banquet and not only be admitted in it, as requested by the citizen Fornasini in January 1798. This proposal was later resumed by Claudia Barbiroli Pistorini and they finally met on 27 April to organise the banquet and choose the organising committee, which would be presided by Valeriani and Claudia Stella.

This commission faced numerous difficulties, especially, as it was common in all the actions performed by the Jacobins, the opposition of the counterrevolutionaries, above all members of the Church and aristocrats, but also due to the exceptional fact of the prominence of women. In order to counteract this opposition, patriots initiate an important informative campaign, as it can be confirmed in issue 42 of «Il Monitore Bolognese», which, on the one hand, praises

21. A private patriot banquet, exclusively for citizens, had been celebrated not long before, on 22 April. The orators in this patriotic celebration were Vincenti, Morandi and Valeriani. On this banquet, see the information which appears in issue 33 of «Il Monitore Bolognese».

22. This is a local newspaper firstly published every two weeks and later, every three weeks. It consisted of four big pages focused on providing information about “the government’s peaceful revolt” (“pacifico rivolgimento del Governo”) and the return of Bologna to its former statute as a free republic. It is considered the most important newspaper in Bologna during the Jacobin triennium («Il Monitore Bolognese», 2 agosto 1796).

23. G. Schettini (2015), *Un rito rivoluzionario. i banchetti per i poveri in Emilia e Romagna, 1797-1798...*, cit., pp. 207, 212.

the women's initiative and, on the other, attacks those who want to boycott the celebration of the banquet and ridicules the reasons they adduce²⁴.

In any case, the banquet is held with more than a thousand diners between indigents and patriots, as it is described in detail in issue 43 of «Il Monitore Bolognese». All the representative women – Stella, Gambari, Ragani, Pistorini, Barbazzi, Valentini, Bovio, Becadelli, Brogli, Mellini, Zucchi – are there reviewed, and a detailed description of the decorations, the hymns recited, the music, the parade and even the food served during the meal²⁵, is provided. The banquet

24. "The main voices belong to shavelings, sanctimonious men, holier-than-thou women, and petty monks. Do you want to know what they say? Do you want to know what they do? Things to be laughed at and pitied. They say, for instance, that a woman and a girl must not show themselves in front of thousands of people. Hypocrites! They used to show themselves, and very well indeed, in your processions... with beautiful bouquets, elegant clothes; but these used to be the holy businesses which filled your pockets, my dear priests and monks, whereas now it is about feeding the poor... Good women will be filled with glory and blessings. The shavelings will bite their lips, the sanctimonious men will blaspheme devotedly, those holier-than-thou women will be furious, and the petty monks will huff and puff out of spite, and everything will run surprisingly well" («Il Monitore Bolognese» issue 42). ("Gli Agenti sono alcuni pretuccoli, alcuni bigottoni, alcune pinzocchere, alcuni fratacchioni. Se sapeste cosa dicono? Se sapeste cosa fanno? Cose degnissime di riso e di pietà. Dicono, per esempio, che una donna, ed una ragazza non debbono esporsi alla vista di migliaia di persone. Ipocriti! Si esponevano bene alle vostre processioni ... con bei mazzetti di fiori in petto, con tutte l'eleganza della moda indosso; ma allora si trattava di sante botteghe, che vi empivano la borsa, miei cari Preti, e Frati, ed ora si tratta di dar da mangiare ai poveri... Le brave cittadine si copriranno di gloria e di benedizioni. I pretuccoli si morderanno le labbra, i bigottoni bestemmieranno devotamente, le pinzocchere creperanno di rabbia, i fratacchioni sbufferanno per il dispetto, e tutto andrà sorprendentemente bene").

25. In addition to «Il Monitore Bolognese», information about this banquet can be found in M. Gavelli (n.d.), I pranzi patriottici in epoca rivoluzionaria 1798, in «Storia e memoria di Bologna», <https://www.storiaememoriadibologna.it/i-pranzi-patriottici-in-epoca-rivoluzionaria-2275-evento> (last consulted on

itself starts without any problem, but it is interrupted by heavy rainfall, which prevents it from continuing outdoors. As indicated by Gavelli “The obstacle of the weather evidently caused the inappropriate comments of all who had previously criticised the idea of bringing women into the public sphere. Nevertheless, the evening ended peacefully with a party in the theatre”²⁶.

Issue 43 of «Il Monitore Bolognese» also informs about the two speeches given by the president citizen Stella and the representative citizen Negri Rasinelli, describing such speeches as elegant. They do not conform long parleys, they are on the contrary very brief, especially the one given by Claudia Stella. However, they are of importance since their protagonists are two women who are active and whose words place them in the centre of the Jacobin discourse from the revolutionary triennium and in the same direction of the speeches and actions of other patriots around them. In this way, they become genuine Jacobin patriots from the Cisalpine republic.

The patriot banquets were no novelty for the Jacobins. They had already become common in France and numer-

25/03/2022), and in Redazione Bologna Channel.tv, *Quando i bolognesi si sedevano a tavola in Piazza Maggiore* (2020), 13 giugno 2020, <https://www.bolognachannel.tv/quando-i-bolognesi-si-sedevano-a-tavola-in-piazza-maggiore/> (last consulted on 20/03/2022).

26. “Il dispetto del tempo provocò ovviamente le inopportune considerazioni di tutti coloro che già avevano criticato l’idea di portare le donne sulla pubblica piazza, ma in ogni caso la serata terminò in tranquillità, col veglione offerto al Teatro”, M. Gavelli (n.d.), *I pranzi patriottici in epoca rivoluzionaria 1798...*, cit. Schettini remarks that, according to other sources, disturbance occurred after the rain, which could lead to talk about the failure of the banquet (G. Schettini [2015], *Un rito rivoluzionario. i banchetti per i poveri in Emilia e Romagna, 1797-1798...*, cit., p. 214).

ous fraternal meals²⁷ are also organised in Italy during the patriotic triennium. As pointed by Schettini²⁸, Enrico Michele considers these banquets as essential to preserve harmony and good order among citizens while Girolano Bocalosi believes they are the best way to unite men in fraternal love.

Overall, the idea is to offer a public meal to an elevated number of indigents from the city and, in some cases, such as the one we are describing, both patriots and the poorest people²⁹ sit at the same table to eat the same food. These meals are principally organised by the Jacobins and mainly men participate, although there was also room for women³⁰ in some of them. The banquet in Bologna on 28 May 1798, as well as that in Faenza on 3 December 1797³¹, presents the peculiarity of being organised and addressed

27. Even though this type of celebrations would not last for long, 24 banquets taking place between February and July 1798 have been documented (*ibid.*, p. 201).

28. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

29. "The two banquets in Bologna on 22 April and 28 May, the one in Imola on 15 April and those in Cento, Mordano, Fiesso, Sant'Agata and Ferrara – as well as the lunch in Reggio Emilia on 12 February and the two in Faenza on 19 November and that on 3 December 1797 – are the only cases in which the poor have been witnessed to be sitting regularly at the table next to other citizens who served them or shared their food with them" (*ibid.*, pp. 201–202). ("I due banchetti bolognesi del 22 aprile e del 28 maggio, quello imolese del 15 aprile e quelli di Cento, Mordano, Fiesso, Sant'Agata e Ferrara costituiscono – assieme al pranzo reggiano del 12 febbraio e ai due faentini del 19 novembre e del 3 dicembre 1797 – gli unici casi attestati in cui i poveri prendano programmaticamente parte ai pranzi sedendo a tavola accanto agli altri cittadini, che li servono o comunque condividono con loro il cibo").

30. Schettini provides one example (*ibid.*, p. 203): women are admitted to the banquet in Reggio on 12 February 1797.

31. Strumia also analyses patriot banquets organised by women in Faenza and Bologna (E. Strumia, «Rivoluzionare il bel sesso». *Donne e politica nel Triennio repubblicano*, Guida, Naples 2011).

only by and to women. Jacobin women are highly aware of the importance of these banquets and their purpose; therefore, and despite the opposition they had to face³², they decide to organise them. When communicated to the press on 17 May 1798³³, it is spoken of as a spectacle of the republican virtue and all the women citizens who love their homeland and love virtue are invited to set an example by sitting next to a poor woman from the city; in this way, it could be claimed that “the weaker sex has overcome the stronger in virtue”³⁴. By constantly repeating the word «virtue», women of all kinds are encouraged to participate fearlessly: “Chaste wives, demure virgins, come and fear not”³⁵.

What are the reasons which lead these women to organise and participate in this banquet? They can be basically summarised in three which are, actually, closely related: the need to bring the people closer to the revolutionary cause, to fight poverty and to put into practice the principles from the French Revolution, especially those of fraternity and equality, through charity.

32. “It was not a trivial occurrence: bringing in front of an audience women of ‘good families’ who traditionally led a life inside their homes and did not participate in public events and call them to share their table with ‘the poorest women’, was undoubtedly a special occurrence”, M. Gavelli (n.d.), *I pranzi patriottici in epoca rivoluzionaria 1798...*, cit. (“Non era un evento banale: chiamare in piazza le donne di ‘buona famiglia’, che per tradizione vivevano una vita all’interno delle mura domestiche e non partecipavano ad eventi pubblici, e chiamarle a condividere la tavola con ‘le più povere’, era senz’altro un evento speciale”).

33. *Ibidem*.

34. “[...] il sesso debole ha superato in virtù il più forte!”.

35. “Caste spose, vergini pudiche, venite, e non temete” (*ibidem*).

4. Patriot women from Bologna and the people

Reaching popular consensus on politics³⁶ is one of the key issues for the Jacobins of the revolutionary triennium³⁷ since very often the people seem indifferent or even hostile to these doctrines.

There is an attempt to educate the citizens³⁸ during the sessions of the Circolo Costituzionale, but it is difficult for the people to understand the abstract concepts which are at the core of the republican proposal. It thus becomes necessary to implement those ideas through clear and unquestionable gestures; however, convincing the people³⁹ of the kindness of the revolutionary ideals and the benefits these could bring will become an arduous task.

36. M. Degli Esposti, *La Repubblica Bolognese nel triennio 1796-1799 e la prima costituzione italiana*, in «Scienza & Politica. Per Una Storia Delle Dottrine», 8(15), 1996, p. 83

37. "It is known that the Italian Jacobins were unable to organise big events comparable to the one on 14 July or 4-5 October or 31 May; but they indeed tried (is the Milanese celebration on 14 November 1796 meaningless?) and they never neglected the urban masses or the rural ones", A. Saitta, *Momenti e figure della civiltà europea. Saggi storici e storiografici vol. 1-2*, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, Rome 1991, p. 671 ("I giacobini italiani non riuscirono, si sa, a fare grandi giornate paragonabili al 14 luglio o al 4-5 ottobre o al 31 maggio; ma pur lo tentarono (non significa proprio nulla la giornata milanese del 14 novembre 1796?) e non persero mai di vista né le masse cittadine né quelle delle campagne").

38. On the education of the people, see: L. Guerri, *Mente, cuore, coraggio, virtù repubblicane. Educare il popolo nell'Italia in rivoluzione (1796-1799)*, Tirrenia stampatori, Turin 1992; Id., *Istruire nelle verità repubblicane. La letteratura politica per il popolo nell'Italia in rivoluzione (1796-1799)*, il Mulino, Bologna 1999.

39. "The people about whom our Italian Jacobins speak is not an undifferentiated people, but the big mass of Italian peasants and manual workers", A. Saitta (1991), *Momenti e figure della civiltà europea...*, cit., p. 671 ("Il popolo, del quale parlano i nostri giacobini, non è per lo più un popolo indifferenziato, bensì la grande massa dei contadini e dei lavoratori manuali italiani").

In a speech addressed to the representatives of the Italian people, citizen L'Aurora⁴⁰ advises that:

If the revolution is only for them, if the whole nation must depend on their pride, if the misery of the majority of the indigent class of the poor is not to be relieved, then I tell you, oh Italian people, that far from being free, far from being sovereign, far from being independent and equal, you are more miserable than you ever have been. Italian people, remember you are a man and do not feel discouraged at the dawn of your freedom, do not be restrained when you must be utterly free. Yes, oh Italian people, if the revolution has been only for those few ambitious and rich men, if you must be despised and disheartened, then wake up, exercise your rights, and let the revolution be yours.⁴¹

As we can see, he highlights the fact that the revolution is made also for the people and that this fact is essential to achieve a regenerated homeland. Hence why it is not surprising that such matter alongside others related to

40. E.M. L'Aurora, *Indirizzo del Cittadino L'Aurora ai rappresentanti del popolo italiano sopra l'aristocrazia ed i mali attuali dell'Italia*, in *Giacobini italiani*, vol. II, 1964, pp. 473-474.

41. "Se la rivoluzione non è fatta che per quei tali, se la totalità della nazione deve dipendere dal loro orgoglio, se la miseria della maggior parte della classe indigente del povero non deve essere sollevata, allor io ti annuncio, o popolo italiano, che ben lunghi di essere libero, che ben lungi di essere sovrano, che ben lungi d'essere indipendente ed eguale, tu sei più infelice che giammai lo fosti. Popolo italiano, ricordati che sei uomo, non avviliti nella prima aurora della tua libertà, non ti lasciar porre il freno nel tempo in cui devi essere totalmente libero. Sì, o popolo italiano, se la rivoluzione non si è fatta che per quel picciolo numero di ambiziosi e di ricchi, se tu devi essere sprezzato ed avvilito, svegliati, corona i tuoi diritti e fa' che la rivoluzione sia fatta per te".

the problems of the lower classes, namely the peasantry⁴² but also urban masses, are discussed in the constitutional circles.

In this respect, in the constitutional circle of Milan, G.B. Sacco gives his speech entitled *Dissetazione sull'importanza d'impegnare il popolo della campagna perché cospiri più deciso ed unanime nella democratica libertà; e sul mezzo d'ottenere l'intento* (1797), which concerns the peasant masses but that could also apply to the urban masses: "I firstly say that, in order to set the foundations for a solid Republic, it is necessary to interest also the people from the countryside, so that they too devote themselves more decisively and unanimously to the common cause"⁴³.

The Jacobins will perform different actions to end people's indifference and guide them in the process of regenerating their homeland. One of them is the patriotic celebration⁴⁴, be it a patriot banquet or of any other kind. In this

42. Peasants are actually the most numerous of the popular classes towards the end of the 18th Century, as it is confirmed by Compagnoni: "Peasantry represents the biggest part of the people; they are the ones who are typically addressed as 'the people' in our chapels" ("Il villano è la porzione più grossa del Popolo; è quello che per antonomasia ordinariamente dai nostri Oratori si chiama Popolo"). G. Compagnoni, *Il vocabolario democratico, alla voce Avvocazione*, in R. De Felice (ed.), *Giornali giacobini italiani*, Feltrinelli, Milan 1962, p. 479.

43. "Io dico dapprima, che per base di soda Repubblica bisogna interessare esso pure il Popolo della campagna, perché cospiri anch'esso più deciso, ed unanime nella comun causa". G.B. Sacco, *Dissertazione sull'importanza d'impegnare il popolo della campagna perché cospiri più deciso ed unanime nella democratica libertà; e sul mezzo d'ottenere l'intento* (1797), in L. Guerri (ed.), "Mente, cuore, coraggio, virtù repubblicane". *Educare il popolo nell'Italia in rivoluzione (1796-1799)*, Tirrenia-Stampatori, Turin 1992, p. 3.

44. On the patriotic celebration, see F. Mastropasqua, *Le feste della Rivoluzione Francese 1790-1794*, Mursia, Milan 1976; J. Ehrard, P. Viallaneix (dir.), *Les Fêtes de la Révolution*, Société des études robespierristes, Paris 1977; M. Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire (1789-1799)*, Gallimard, Paris 1976.

way, popular fraternal meals become a “prime element of social peace”⁴⁵. That is also the intention of the meal organised by Jacobin women. In fact, in issue 43 of «Il Monitore Bolognese» it is emphasised that the people as a group attend the patriot banquet on 28 May, both as participants and mere observers: at the arrival of the attendants “the streets are crowded with people; but it is a peaceful crowd, a calm crowd, a republican crowd who cheers, applauds, cries with emotion”⁴⁶.

5. Patriot women from Bologna against poverty

The way to attract the people to the revolutionary cause is also clear for the Italian patriots: in the first place, the misery of the people must be eradicated. In fact, during the last years of the 18th Century, poverty had become a major social problem which extremely worried the Jacobins and which made them consider a programme of social measures amongst which were the public acts of charity; hence the numerous speeches about this subject which can be found in the different circles from the Italian sister republics and not only in the Cisalpine. On this matter, G.B. Sacco, in

45. “[...] elemento di pacificazione sociale per eccellenza”. E. Leucci, *La città «rigenerata»: i giacobini italiani e la questione urbana fra eguaglianza e libertà*, in Y. Carola, A. De Palma, M. Donolo, F. Kulberg Taub, B. Minczewa, M. Pigliucci (eds), *La città*, UniversItalia, Rome 2014, p. 69.

46. “Le vie sono ingombre d’immenso Popolo; ma di un Popolo tranquillo, ma di un Popolo quieto, ma di un Popolo Repubblicano, che grida evviva, che batte le mani, che piange di sensibilità”, «Il Monitore Bolognese», n. 43, 29 maggio 1798, <https://www.storiaememoriadibologna.it/i-pranzi-patriottici-in-epoca-rivoluzionaria-2275-evento> (last consulted on 17/03/2022).

his formerly mentioned speech before the Circolo Costituzionale in Milan, indicates that “the most valid means to interest the people is to work so that they feel considerably eased from the utterly horrific misery in which the tyrannical aristocracy has kept them thus far oppressed”⁴⁷ and he appears convinced that the peasantry will not be able to fight for the republican ideals “until they find themselves free at least from the yoke of real misery, which every day becomes more and more disheartening for them”⁴⁸. If they continue being poor, they will never join our projects with true determination.

Only after alleviating their primary needs, will it be possible to take pedagogical action, to actually educate citizens in the fundamental ideals of the revolution: “and then, seeing their cruel hunger and their terrible nakedness far from themselves, they will start to open their eyes to the light which shines, to be aware of their rights, to bless their liberators, to delight in the freedom which brings them from death back to life”⁴⁹. The need to undertake social measures is therefore highlighted.

Citizen Enrico Michele L'Aurora is of the same opinion as Sacco:

47. “[...] il più valido mezzo a così interessarlo si è il dar opera, che venga sensibilmente sollevato dalla in vero desolante miseria, in cui lo tenne finora oppresso la prepotente aristocrazia”. G.B. Sacco (1992), *Dissertazione sull'importanza d'impegnare il popolo della campagna perché cospiri più deciso ed unanime nella democratica libertà...*, cit., p. 3.

48. “[...] finché il contadino non verrà alleviato almeno dal giogo di una reale miseria, che gli si va rendendo sempre più desolante”. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

49. “[...] ed allora vedendosi da sé allontanata la cruda fame, e la rincescibile nudità comincerà ad aprir gli occhi ai rischiaranti lumi, ad apprezzar diritti, a benedire i suoi liberatori, a diventare entusiastico d'una Libertà, che lo ridona da morte a vita”. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

If you want the ignorant and poor to become good patriots [...], eradicate their misery, there is currently no other way. The method of education is excellent but it takes too long: our children and grandchildren will be strong patriots when, once things are settled, the Italian Republic is established; then the public spirit will be formed by instructing them in the sacrosanct rights of freedom and equality.⁵⁰

These banquets are the direct result of a serious debate on poverty within the Gran Circolo Costituzionale of Bologna. On 11 February 1798 Giovanni Pirani delivers a speech focused on poverty in which he advocates for the need to perform actions which attract the people to the revolutionary cause:

The people will then know that it is true that democracy is founded on the law of Christ, because the strongest reason to persuade the people are facts and not speeches, because the latter are either not understood by many, or are so only as far as their poor intellect is capable [...]. When the people see facts, they are rapidly convinced and then they immediately believe that what we claim is true, and democracy promptly becomes their friend. [...] We teach them what democracy means and with our work we show them how we consider our fellow men and women our equals.⁵¹

50. "[...] se volete far dei buoni patrioti nella gente ignorante e povera adoperate lo specifico dell'interesse: sollevate la sua miseria, non vi è altro mezzo al presente. Il metodo dell'educazione è eccellente, ma è troppo lungo: i nostri figli e nepoti saranno energici patrioti allorché, sistemate le cose, stabilita la repubblica italiana, si andrà formando lo spirito pubblico coll'istruzione de' sacrosanti diritti di libertà ed eguaglianza". Quoted in A. Saitta (1991), *Momenti e figure della civiltà europea...*, cit., p. 667.

51. "Conoscerà poi così il Popolo, che egli è vero che la Democrazia è fon-

This speech is highly likely to have been first heard and then read by both Claudia Stella and Teresa Negri, as well as other speeches delivered in the Gran Circolo Costituzionale of Bologna between 1797 and 1798, and which prove that the Jacobins worried, and not only a little, about the issue of poverty. They are Orazio De Atellis (8 February 1798), don Luigi Morandi (15 February 1798) and Father Barrati (18 February 1798).

Citizen Oratio De Atellis [Datellis, in the original document], affirms that the happiness of the people, which is only possible within democracy, will only be achieved if poverty is eradicated, “therefore, while poverty exists among you, you will not be able to consider yourselves happy” or be truly democratic⁵².

data sulla legge di Cristo, perché la ragion più forte che persuade il Popolo, sono i fatti, e non i discorsi, perché questi, o da molti non si intendono bene, o solo in quel senso s'intendono, di cui il loro cortissimo intelletto è capace [...]. Quando il Popolo vede de fatti, subito si persuade, e crede allora subito che è verissimo quello, che predichiamo, e la Democrazia diviene subito sua amica. [...] Noi insegniamo loro cos'è Democrazia, facciam loro vedere coll'opera che riputiamo i nostri simili eguali”. G. Pirani, *Discorso pronunziato dal cittadino avvocato Giovanni Pirani nel Gran Circolo Costituzionale concernente l'urgenza di provvedere alla mendicizia de' più Poveri tra li Poveri, che ne chiese la Stampa nel dì 23 Piovoso Anno VI. Repubblicano*, Genio Democratico, Bologna 1798, pp. 13, 14, 17. In https://books.google.es/books?id=FavIYrMEyAwC&pg=PA1&lp-g=PA1&dq=Discorso+pronunziato+dai+cittadini+avvocato+Giovanni+Pirani&source=bl&ots=f3ysHbvRZJ&sig=ACfU3U12wYd-Fy2xZoZ91LPVuhPOI3DU2Pw&hl=es&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiK_OzZ7ub2AhUH3xoKHS_MA6oQ6AF6BAgMEAM#v=onepage&q=Discorso%20pronunziato%20dal%20cittadino%20avvocato%20Giovanni%20Pirani&f=false (last consulted on 27/03/2022).

52. “[...] dunque finché esiste fra voi la mendicizia voi non potrete chiamarvi felici”. O. De Atellis, *Discorso pronunziato dal cittadino Orazio Dattellis nel Gran Circolo Costituzionale concernente l'urgenza di bandire la medicità. Che ne chiese la stampa nel dì 30 Piovoso anno VI Repubblicano*, Genio Democratico, Bologna 1798, p. 5, https://books.googleusercontent.com/books/content?req=AKW5QafRUu2qDIMLc8f_kHQX2NBbhyM7e4fb_CgZ9aYnI3Ct1_kGYDDRWZoiWDXBQp5leS53LeSifWRUoiLHAoolrYaEqSWGK5OoTu7zdtEXTVFVftB3qBF97orJ0jtVWwnn

This speech is linked to the one given by Giovanni Pirani and entitled *L'urgenza di provvedere alla mendicizia de' più Poveri tra li Poveri*, although this speech goes further than "arbitrary funding to benefit the poor"⁵³ to come closer mainly to those who need it the most, the poor amongst the poor. At the beginning of his speech, he focuses on showing who these are and continues to request the citizens to be consistent in their democratic being and to show sympathy towards their fellow men and women⁵⁴. In this speech the Jacobin citizen insists on the combination of democracy and charity and proposes to implement their lessons: "So that the aristocrats, and all those priests and monks who exaggerate in this Circle will see that we do not declare *freedom, equality* and *democracy* for the sake of fanaticism; we will show them with our deeds what democracy symbolises and what it means to be a real democrat"⁵⁵.

Qg3iveYzO1HGN3guSaoVTMnviY9P7iuuSF8dBuLfxSZWwh7uYo88xnGKbqAopRR2IAKUeyv_eUaWiDbQ2uwh_alONBdiXkcgVz5Q1L9nqh6O6Zb9DioZrSDngO6w2snWjFLF911czK10JYNai6wZK5tL3FxoWrij8oMiibcVNKo-qb7Yjs (last consulted on 27/03/2022).

53. "[...] arbitraria sovvenzione a beneficio de' Poveri". G. Pirani (1798), *Discorso pronunciato dal cittadino avvocato Giovanni Pirani nel Gran Circolo Costituzionale concernente l'urgenza di provvedere alla mendicizia de' più Poveri tra li Poveri...*, cit., p. 5.

54. Pirani focuses on the "miserable mothers who, surrounded by their children, beg for bread, beg for fire, beg for something to drink" ("infelici, che da loro figlj circondate, chiedono pane, chiedono fuoco, chiedono bere") and who feel the only thing they can do is let their children die so that they no longer suffer. G. Pirani (1798), *Discorso pronunciato dal cittadino avvocato Giovanni Pirani nel Gran Circolo Costituzionale concernente l'urgenza di provvedere alla mendicizia de' più Poveri tra li Poveri...*, cit., p. 8.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 13, Italics by the author ("Vedranno così gli Aristocratici, e tutti que' Preti, e que' Franti che esagerano sù questo Circolo, che noi non predichiamo per solo fanatismo *Libertà, Eguaglianza, Democrazia*, ma bensì che loro insegniamo coi fatti cosa vuol dire *Democrazia*, e cosa vuol dire essere veramente *Democratico*").

It is obvious the connection established in these speeches between this need for charity and the Christian philanthropy. Two of the speeches delivered by men in the Gran Circolo Costituzionale of Bologna about the issue of poverty belong to two priests, Morandi and Barrati, and Christian and Jacobin virtues⁵⁶ intertwine in their words. However, it is Giovanni Pirani who explicitly defends real philanthropy against this Christian charity which many priests should learn since “the democratic government is the one closest to the law of Christ”⁵⁷. In this respect, Pirani concludes that democrats are more charitable than the men of the Church: “We have the charity they currently lack, we have the sensitivity which they cannot feel”⁵⁸.

On 15 February 1798 don Luigi Morandi delivers the speech *Sopra la povertà e sopra la maniera di ripararla*. The priest from the Church of Saint Fabiano and Saint Sebastia-

56. For don Luigi Morandi, charity, philanthropy is “one of the premises of the duties of the man, of the citizen, of the Christian: always do the good you would like to receive”. L. Morandi, *Discorso pronunciato dal cittadino D. Luigi Morandi nel Gran Circolo Costituzionale concernente Sopra la Povertà, e sopra la maniera di ripararla. Che ne chiese la Stampa nel dì 27. Piovoso Anno VI. Repubblicano, Genio Democratico, Bologna 1798*, p. 24, https://books.google.es/books?id=KNf-YLttZgAC&pg=PA1&lpg=PA1&dq=Discorso+pronunziato+dai+cittadini+D.+Luigi+Morandi&source=bl&ots=jB46j8aRbj&sig=AC-fU3U3oHUZ9oYFonZ3hwN7dNvHU5Ixn_w&hl=es&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwikmqz37eb2AhUlxoUKHTJBDDAQ6AF6BAgCEAM#v=onepage&q=Discorso%20pronunziato%20dal%20cittadino%20D.%20Luigi%20Morandi&f=false [last consulted on 27/03/2022] (“una delle gran basi, cui poggiano i doveri dell'uomo, del Cittadino, del Cristiano: 'fate costantemente agl'altri quel bene, che ne vorreste ricevere'”).

57. “Il Governo Democratico è l'unico, che più si uniforma alla Legge di Cristo”. G. Pirani (1798), *Discorso pronunciato dal cittadino avvocato Giovanni Pirani nel Gran Circolo Costituzionale concernente l'urgenza di provvedere alla mendicizia dei più Poveri tra li Poveri...*, cit., p. 20.

58. “Abbiamo, noi quella carità che Essi presentemente non hanno, abbiamo noi quella sensibilità, che Essi non sentono”. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

no speaks publicly to present the “most human argument in the gathering of the most human patriots [...], an argument worthy of the sanctity which I am granted as a pastor and worthy of the democratic spirit which encourages you”⁵⁹. The poor and how to remedy poverty are the questions which structure his speech. From the first moment, don Luigi declares himself aware of the danger which he assumes by speaking publicly and of the fact that the other patriots will defend him from the evil words of his enemies⁶⁰.

In the first part of his speech, he focuses on the poor, who are “the most respectable individuals in society and those who suffer the cruellest consequences”⁶¹ and he divides them according to a certain typology: the innocents, who have been born poor or are justifiably unable to work, and delinquents, those who have squandered their wealth or who refuse to work⁶².

Despite the great benefits brought by the revolution, don Luigi claims that the number of innocent poor has increased, as has the number of delinquents who are the poison of society⁶³. On the other hand, he considers that the wealth in which certain individuals live is detrimental to the fundamental rights of freedom and equality, whereas poverty endangers other two which are no less important,

59. “Un'argomento umanissimo nell'assemblea di umanissimi. Patrioti, di un argomento degno del carattere sacro che mi investe di Pastore d'anime, degno dello spirito democratico che vi anima”. L. Morandi (1798), *Discorso pronunziato dal cittadino D. Luigi Morandi nel Gran Circolo Costituzionale concernente Sopra la Povertà...*, cit., p. 3.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

61. “Gl'individui più rispettabili della società. E veramente sono essi, che risentono i più crudeli effetti delle umane vicende”. *Ibidem*.

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

safety and property⁶⁴. He firmly believes that every republic must support the poor, whether good or bad, like the head of the household must help his children without distinction and with all the means at his disposal⁶⁵.

In the second part, don Luigi focuses on the matters which should be dealt with by the government in the case of the poor: morals and subsistence⁶⁶. Since the ills in society are both excessive richness and poverty, the government must always assist the poor by favouring the widespread practice of charity, by taking responsibility for their subsistence⁶⁷ and also their morals, through a good doctrine which illustrates the duties of men and citizens⁶⁸. All this is necessary because “virtue is the basis for a real democracy. No freedom or equality of any kind can exist without it [...], but the most important of all virtues is fraternal charity towards everyone and above all towards the poor”⁶⁹.

Father Barrati delivers a speech entitled *La virtù sociale della beneficenza* in which he seems very pessimistic about the situation in Bologna and insists on the need to devote

64. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

67. Morandi presents a detailed list of the measures to ensure the subsistence of the poor and he provides examples which have been followed by some Italian governments such as the one in Genoa, and national governments such as Switzerland. He suggests that the best usage of wealth is to promote industry, assist the indigent and make men useful to the nation, not a burden to it. L. Morandi (1798), *Discorso pronunziato dal cittadino D. Luigi Morandi nel Gran Circolo Costituzionale concernente Sopra la Povertà...*, cit., pp. 22-23.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

69. “La virtù è la base della vera Democrazia. Senza di essa non vi può essere né Libertà, né Egualità di sorte alcuna [...] ma dessa importa massimamente fraternevole carità per tutti, e sopra tutto pei Poveri”. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

themselves to the public purpose⁷⁰ and on the possibility to defeat the enemy through fraternal union, “daughter of charity”⁷¹.

Father Barratti insists on charity being the first social virtue, the result of love which “does good to others, both the nation and the universal and the individuals [...] and assists them in their needs” and considers “the charitable spirit” as true patriotism⁷². This speech focuses on the need of the new regenerated homeland to count on the citizens who are concerned about others and who apply “the internal principle, which symbolises the natural equality of men”⁷³.

For all this, citizens from the Cisalpine Republic cannot be “trees without fruit, useless burdens to the earth who, in their idleness, their ignorance, their indolence, consume all those goods”⁷⁴.

As we can see, the issue of poverty and the need for charity are matters of importance for the Jacobins from Bologna. Therefore, it is not surprising that they were also relevant

70. Father Barratti focuses on charity as something of public use and shared use (M.O. Barratti, *Discorso sopra la virtù sociale della beneficenza pronunciato nel Gran Circolo Costituzionale di Bologna dal cittadino Padre Barratti M.O., acclamato a Stampa nella Seduta dei 28 Ventoso anno VI. Repubblicano*, Genio Democratico, Bologna 1798, pp. 11, 15. <https://books.google.es/books?id=uhLdrBnIyMwC&pg=PA11&dq=Discorso+sopra+la+virt%C3%B9+sociale+della+beneficenza&hl=es&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewj674Ch7Ob2AhWat6QKHxrgB-4Q6AF6BAgIEAI#v=onepage&q=Discorso%20sopra%20la%20virt%C3%B9%20sociale%20della%20beneficenza&f=false> [last consulted on 27/03/2022]).

71. “[...] figlia di beneficenza”. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

72. “[...] si occupa in far bene agli altri, sia alla Patria, e all’universale, sia ai particolari [...] e li aiuta né loro bisogni, e sparge sopra di essi la rugiada dei benefici”. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

73. “[...] principio interno, che l’uguaglianza naturale degl’Uomini ci rappresenta”. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

74. “Alberi infruttuosi, e pesi inutili della terra, che consumano nell’ozio, nella ignoranza, nella mollezza tutti quei beni”. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

issues for Claudia Stella and Teresa Negri Rasinelli, who presumably attended the sessions of the Circolo assiduously. The holding of the patriot banquet is conceived as a clear sign of the perception that Jacobins have of the urgency to eradicate poverty if democratic values are to be transmitted to the people.

In their speeches, which are very brief and celebratory, neither Stella nor Negri focus on the meaning and causes of poverty. However, Orazio De Atellis deals with these matters in his discourse about *L'urgenza di bandire la medicità*. This citizen introduces nature, fate, vice and oppression as the causes of what he refers to as "tolerated beggary"⁷⁵ and undertakes an overview of its consequences for both the individual and society: "tolerated beggary [...] incites indolence, increases idleness, which later leads to the decay of the industry, then to the decadence of trade, afterwards to the discredit of the market and subsequently to a disheartened nation"⁷⁶.

As patriot women present this banquet as a means to alleviate poverty and come closer to the people, other Jacobins, such as Orazio De Atellis, suggest a different way to

75. "[...] la medicità tollerata". O. De Atellis (1798), *Discorso pronunciato dal cittadino Orazio Dattellis nel Gran Circolo Costituzionale concernente L'urgenza di bandire la medicità...*, cit., p. 5.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 9. ("la medicità tollerata [...] fomenta l'infingardaggine, moltiplica gli oziosi, onde poi nasce la diminuzione dell'industria, indi la decadenza del commercio, indi il discreditto della piazza, e poscia l'avvilimento della nazione"). It is interesting the way they approach the prostitution of women as an evil consequence of tolerated begging: "the lack of bread does not admit excuses, delays, arguments, or morals. We have to live: I have no one to help me, I sell myself or trade my own body", *ibid.*, p. 8 ("*la mancanza di pane non ammette scuse, dilazioni, sillogismi, e morale. Bisogna vivere: non ho chi mi soccorre, mi vendo, o metto a traffico le mie carni*").

eradicate beggary in the city which has been implemented by four patriots whose names are not given, but who refer to themselves as enlightened⁷⁷, and which encourages patriots to go to the bookshop of the Democratic Spirit every Friday. As for Pirani, he also presents an initiative: that the priests from Bologna present the Circolo with a list of those most in need. Funding for the poor would be organised from there and a contest would be held to choose which parish would be assisted. This procedure is described in thorough detail to avoid any suspicion of corruption.

To Morandi, democrats must support the poor⁷⁸ with the most suitable means: prevent the closure of pawn shops to avoid usury, improve the distribution of alms, create jobs in factories and other places, as well as improve hospitals, orphanages, and hospices⁷⁹.

6. Jacobin women from Bologna and their defence of equality and fraternity

This debate about the need to come closer to the people and fight poverty is clearly the background of the speeches given by Negri and Stella and it presents the reasons for the common charity, as we have seen before, including two of the main principles of the revolution: equality and fraternity.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

78. Morandi divides the innocent poor in four subgroups: the invalid elderly, the sick, the orphan children and the pilgrims. Different measures are applied to each of them (L. Morandi [1798], *Discorso pronunziato dal cittadino D. Luigi Morandi nel Gran Circolo Costituzionale concernente Sopra la Povertà...*, cit., p. 23).

79. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

The speeches of the two Jacobin women are based on the idea of equality⁸⁰ stated in Article 1 of the Declaration of Rights from 1798: men are born and remain free and equal in their rights. These rights are natural and they are detailed in Article 2: liberty, property, safety and resistance against oppression. Therefore, these are imperative rights of the revolution⁸¹.

Patriot banquets appear as particularly useful for the promotion of these ideals of the revolution, namely equality; furthermore, fraternity and charity are publicly joined in them. The speech of Giovanni Pirani before the Gran Circolo refers precisely to this act of putting into practice what is preached.

What is the use, pray tell, what is the use for these unfortunate souls tenaciously tangled in the intractable maelstrom of labour and misery; what is the use, I ask, of the democratic instructions and the explanations of freedom, of equality, and of providing means to democratise all the individuals from the republic? What is the use of all this for those miserable

80. Celia Amorós Puente considers that equality was the least developed of the three basic ideas of the French Revolution. Therefore, it is not surprising that patriot women from Italy devoted themselves to equality and strove to put it into practice (C. Amorós Puente, *Mujer. Participación, cultura política y estado*, Ediciones de la Flor, Buenos Aires 1990, p. 31). Regarding the debate on equality in the revolutionary Triennium, see L. Guerci, *Aspects du débat sur l'Égalité durant le Triennio républicain* in «*Annales historiques de la Révolution française. L'Italie du Triennio révolutionnaire 1796-1799*», n°313, 1998, pp. 409-430, in https://www.persee.fr/doc/ahrf_0003-4436_1998_num_313_1_2193 (last consulted on 21/03/2022).

81. As it would be seen before long, such equality is not universal since it does not extend to all citizens and there are differences among these. Therefore, there are active citizens, that is, those who have full political rights, and passive citizens who lack such rights.

souls, if they do not see in us the true evidence of a democratic heart, if they do not see the effects of our sensitivity, if they do not see that we intend to liberate them from that misery, which makes them worse than beasts?⁸²

«Il Monitore Bolognese» from 9 June 1798 remarks this realistic equality reached through the banquet organised by the patriot women and which is clearly perceived by the common people: “The people understood the great difference between the old and the new government by seeing the former princess, the countess, the marquess and the lady, all mingled together, sitting at the table with the craft woman, the peasant and the poor, whom they now fed, helped, embraced and kissed”⁸³.

From the very first moment, Teresa Negri remarks in her speech that fraternity and equality are the core of a regenerated homeland which cannot be built unless the rich and the poor embrace each other sincerely and live in peace. That meal becomes the beacon of an important

82. “Che Giova, ditemi in fede vostra, che giova a quest’anime misere, negli ostinati vortici dell’affanno, e della miseria involuppati tenacemente, che giova io dico, e le Istruzioni Democratiche, e le spiegazioni di libertà, di Eguaglianza, ed il proporre de’ mezzi per democratizzare tutti gli Individui della Repubblica? Che giova tutto questo a quest’anime infelici, se Elleno non vedono in Noi le vere prove di un Cuor democratico, non vedono gli effetti della nostra sensibilità, non vedono che non si pensa a toglierle da quella miseria, che peggiori le rende della condizione delle Bestie!”. G. Pirani (1798), *Discorso pronunziato dal cittadino avvocato Giovanni Pirani nel Gran Circolo Costituzionale concernente l’urgenza di provvedere alla mendicizia de’ più Poveri tra li Poveri...*, cit., pp. 8-9.

83. “Il popolo, vedendo la già principessa, la contessa, la marchesa, la dama confuse, unite, assise a mensa accanto alla artigiana, alla contadina, alla povera, che nudriva, beneficava, abbracciava, baciava, ha capita la somma differenza dell’antico col nuovo governo”. Quoted in G. Schettini (2015), *Un rito rivoluzionario. i banchetti per i poveri in Emilia e Romagna, 1797-1798...*, cit., p. 216.

virtue: affability, that is, to welcome and treat people in a warm, simple, and open way, which is “not a shallow virtue [...] but a sentiment born from tenderness and kindness from the heart”⁸⁴. There is where the true greatness of the human being lies: “defeating prejudice and appearing greater than the depraved desires in order to follow the virtuous incitement of humanity and reason”⁸⁵. This banquet becomes an unmistakable sign of fraternity and genuine equality⁸⁶, a lesson of kindness towards our fellow men and women.

Despite generally addressing all the women who participate in the banquet, Negri clearly defines the purpose of every separate group: in the first place, her audience are the most educated and richest women, the patriots; and in the second place, she addresses the poorest women.

She urges the wealthy women to acknowledge in those most in need the same rights they have or aim for, “because they are all equal, daughters of the same creative hand”⁸⁷ and to leave behind the humiliation and disdain towards the other. She also asks them to listen to the least fortunate, to

84. “[...] non è virtù superficiale [...] ma un sentimento, che nasce da tenerezza, e da bontà di cuore”. T. Negri Rasinelli (1986), *Discorso pronunciato dalla Cittadina Teresa Negri imolese al Circolo Costituzionale in Bologna...*, cit., p. 1097.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 1096 (“Nel vincere il pregiudizio, e nel rendersi superiori alle basse passioni per seguire lo stimolo virtuoso dell’Umanità, e della ragione”). Negri considers that only in this period, during the sister republics, is equality observed. Before them, it used to be subject to ridicule and disdain since only ambition, prejudice and division were predominant among men (*ibid.*, p. 1095). In the past, joining the miserable and fraternising with them was considered a foul deed and greatness comprised only pride and arrogance (*ibid.*, p. 1096).

86. *Ibid.*, p. 1095.

87. “[...] perché tutte eguali, figlie della medesima facitrice mano”. *Ibid.*, p. 1097.

help them to the extent possible, to visit them in their houses and comfort them⁸⁸ and, above all, not to treat them condescendingly and contemptuously. This would be the only way to achieve true equality and fraternity because “virtue and the love for the laws of the homeland and humankind are the only object of your actions”⁸⁹.

Later in her speech, Teresa Negri continues to address the other women, the poor, whom she also calls sisters and citizens in order to convince them that in this new homeland social differences do not exist and that “equality and fraternity are celebrated everywhere”⁹⁰. For this reason, she asks them to celebrate the virtue, the unity of your citizens who were able to embrace “the beautiful light of truth”⁹¹. Next, Teresa Negri makes a list of what is expected from these women: “love for their homeland, zeal for tranquillity and its proper order. Provide children with a good education and encourage them to defend their homeland”⁹². Thanks to the fall of that wall standing between equals, also these women will be able to regenerate themselves and follow the example of Spartan and Roman women, who knew how to educate their children in such ideals for them to pledge their life to their homeland⁹³. She asks the indigent women to behave as citizens, as true patriots: they should bring their children and friends to the celebrations and the

88. *Ibid.*, p. 1098.

89. *Ibidem* (“Unico oggetto delle vostre azioni la virtù, e l'amore alle Leggi della Patria, e dell'umanità”).

90. *Ibid.*, p. 1099 (“Da per tutto si canta Eguaglianza, Fraternità”).

91. *Ibidem* (“i bei lumi della verità”).

92. *Ibidem* (“l'amore alla Patria, Zelo per la tranquillità, ed il buon ordine di essa. Buona educazione a Figli, animarli alla difesa della Patria”).

93. *Ibidem*.

patriot gatherings and fix the ideas of union and virtue in their minds. She also reminds them that dying is always better than living without freedom⁹⁴.

As we can see, in her speech she tries to make women aware of the role they play in society, which is the same as that of the wealthier and more educated women with whom they sit at the table: being good mothers, wives and citizens, who love and obey the republican laws and remain united for the good cause⁹⁵. All of them, without distinction, are citizens of the regenerated homeland and they all have a clear mission: to keep the revolutionary ideals alive in the hearts of their children and husbands.

Teresa Negri concludes her speech by praising the Cisalpine Republic as the most glorious of all the republics on account of the virtues it represents.

On her part, Claudia Stella, as president of the delegation of the patriot lunch, delivers a shorter speech aimed at women in general, in which she considers this banquet as a public example of civil equality and charity. Stella is convinced that with this event women have “emulated, and not so much imitated, the virtue of the stronger sex” and that they are also here to provide “a public and enlightening example of that republican charity and that civil equality on which lie the most solid fundamentals of the current order of things, and the sweetest and most promising hopes for the common happiness”⁹⁶. From the very first

94. *Ibid.*, p. 1100.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 1101.

96. “[...] emule più che imitatrici della virtù del Sesso più forte, siam giunte anche Noi a dare un pubblico, e luminoso esempio di quella Repubblicana beneficenza, e di quella civile Eguaglianza sulle quali sono collocate le basi più sal-

moment, the president of the patriot banquet on 28 May praises the principles of charity and equality as fundamental for humankind and states that they have nothing to do with what has hitherto existed and with which she compares in disgust and horror: "the foolish pride, the fruitless and tedious distinctions which for so long have nurtured human weakness"⁹⁷.

In essence, this speech is very similar to Negri's: all women, rich or poor, illiterate or educated, are equal and have the same rights: "we are all equal in rights, in duties, in moral faculties, in appearance, in essence [...] noble and great, and beautiful and wealthy; but we are noble because of our virtue, great because of our charity, beautiful because of our honesty, wealthy because of our patriotism"⁹⁸.

The patriot women who sit at the table with poor women become, according to Stella, an example to be followed, and that lunch marks "the total destruction of old prejudices, the glorious rebirth of common rights, the constant fulfilment of universal duties"⁹⁹. In this way, darkness becomes light, that regenerated homeland which is being built by all

de del presente ordine di cose, e le più lusinghiere e dolci speranze della comune felicità". C. Stella, *Discorso pronunciato dalla cittadina Claudia Stella presidente della deputazione del pranzo patriotico delle cittadine bolognesi. Celebrato il dì 9. Pratile Anno 6 Repub.* (28. Maggio 1798. v.s.), in U. Marcelli (ed.), *Il Gran Circolo Costituzionale e il "Genio Democratico" (Bologna 1797-98)*, vol. III, 1986, p. 1103.

97. *Ibid.*, p. 1104 ("al folle orgoglio, alle sterili, e noiose distinzioni, di cui si è per tanto tempo pasciuta l'umana debolezza").

98. *Ibid.*, pp. 1104-1105 ("siam tutte eguali in diritti, in doveri, in facoltà morali, in sembianze, in sostanza [...] nobili, e grandi, e belle, e ricche; Ma nobili per virtù, grandi per beneficenza, belle per onestà, ricche per patriotismo").

99. *Ibid.*, p. 1105 ("la totale distruzione degli antichi pregiudizj, il risorgimento glorioso dei comuni diritti, l'adempimento costante degli universali doveri").

and in which women, also citizens of the republic, play a role, that of fuelling the fire “until the last day of our lives”¹⁰⁰.

As we have seen, on 28 May 1798, the Jacobin women from Bologna were able to celebrate the women’s patriot banquet, deliver their speeches, create a hymn (written by a woman, citizen Giulia Bovio), gather a thousand diners and implement two very abstract concepts from the revolutionary cause: fraternity and equality.

It is also true that some patriots, such as Compagnoni, complain about the limited effect of such action and suggest that it would have been preferable to “feed the poor women and their families in their own homes and not publicly, or to relate the banquet, as in the case of the bridal lunch held in Ferrara, to the allocation of dowries for the poor young women, which was the only possible ‘opportunity of social redemption’ for the ‘fortunate beneficiaries’”¹⁰¹. However, what cannot be denied is that in the speeches of Teresa Negri Rasinelli and Claudia Stella “there is a purpose of public and political endorsement of the female identity which is born from the enhancement of the exercise of charitable activities in a way which is bound to be successful in the Italian emancipation process during the 19th Century”¹⁰².

100. *Ibid.*, p. 1104 (“sino agli ultimi momenti di nostra vita”).

101. “[...] sfamare le cittadine povere assieme alle famiglie nelle loro case, piuttosto che sulla pubblica piazza, oppure associare al banchetto, come nel caso del pranzo ‘epitalamico’ celebrato a Ferrara, l’assegnazione di doti alle giovani povere, che costituivano per le fortunate beneficiarie l’unica ‘occasione di riscatto sociale’ possibile”. Quoted in G. Schettini (2015), *Un rito rivoluzionario. I banchetti per i poveri in Emilia e Romagna, 1797-1798...*, cit., p. 215.

102. “[...] si assiste ad un tentativo di affermazione pubblica e politica dell’identità femminile che scaturisce dalla valorizzazione della pratica delle attività di beneficenza, secondo un modulo destinato ad una grande fortuna nell’emancipazionismo italiano del XIX secolo”. S. Rosa, *Armi e coccarde, suocere*

Both women, who describe themselves as citizens, participate directly in the construction of a regenerated homeland and they do so through words and actions.

7. As a conclusion

The study of these two speeches in the broader frame of the Jacobin triennium as well as those of other male patriots mainly from Bologna, has allowed us to confirm several aspects. Firstly, that women were allowed to attend the circles in the sister republics of the revolutionary France during this brief period. This means that they were not prohibited from entering these core institutions of the education of the Italian patriots and therefore, they could also be educated in those circles, especially in political matters, and that they had access to everything which was being discussed at that moment. Furthermore, they did so on a regular basis because, as we can see in the few speeches that we keep, many of them refer to speeches delivered by other Jacobins in the same circle within the same time frame. Secondly, these women take the floor and at a certain point they address the audience and deliver a speech which, given its subsequent publication, we know interests their male colleagues. Besides, these speeches are about issues which were also being discussed in the circle and, therefore, which were of general importance for the Jacobins around.

In the speeches of Stella and Negri there is also evidence of other important aspects: on the one hand, the enthusiasm

shown by both Teresa and Claudia, a strong faith in the revolutionary ideals and the will to help in fulfilling them in order to regenerate the society, the homeland, and to create a new order. When they decide to organise this patriot banquet, they do so with the certainty that this gesture will allow them to put into practice some abstract concepts, such as equality and fraternity, and that it will somehow help to solve a major issue in that moment and not only in Bologna, as it was the serious problem of poverty. In this way, women will participate directly and not only on a theoretical level, but also practical, and they will fulfil the principles which are being discussed, also by them, in the Circle.

It is true that these speeches, as it is common in these Jacobin institutions, are very rhetorical and do not really delve into the real cause of such a significant number of poor people, neither do they go further in suggesting or implementing a programme of social measures which lead to eradicate poverty or to eliminate the obvious differences of class. It is undeniable that these speeches and these banquets will not solve that serious problem which affects society at the end of the 18th Century and for which the collaboration of the local administrations and also of the Church would be needed, but what is also clear is that they show the patriots' intentions as well as the reality of certain concepts, such as equality and fraternity, to the people. Also, for the women and among women.

These banquets have a clear function: to educate new citizens, and exceptionally women citizens, and promote the ideals of the French revolution among the most disadvantaged, those deprived of any kind of education. Sitting everybody, including women, at the same table is a clear and public way of showing the ideals of equality and fraternity.

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