



**‘Maria Carolina and Marie
Antoinette: Sisters and Queens in
the Mirror of Jacobin Public
Opinion’,**

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Abstract: Marie Antoinette of France and Maria Carolina of Naples, both consorts, contributed to a flourishing of matronage, reproducing conceptions of royal femininity that embraced both the private and public roles they were expected to fulfil. However, while the political role of the first Queen has been largely reconsidered, her sister Maria Carolina has not yet been adjudicated impartially. This is somewhat curious, because Maria Carolina inherited from her sister the same disregard towards the Revolution and this, as perceived by the Jacobins, was duly proposed in their acrimonious criticism of her political role.

This paper aims to focus on this criticism, analysing how the charges against Maria Carolina in the post-French revolutionary period were a political duplication of the Jacobin attacks on Marie Antoinette from 1791 onwards. From this point of view, the paper will focus on the portrait of Maria Carolina in 1793 revolutionary Paris by Giuseppe Gorani, an Italian Jacobin noble. His *Mémoires Secrets* – where Maria Carolina was represented as a wicked woman in the same terms previously employed to denounce her sister Marie Antoinette by the French Republicans – was well known across Italy. This subject dominated the main pamphlets and brochures published in Naples in 1799, during the brief duration of the Neapolitan Republic, because it legitimized the rebellion against the monarchy. After the fall of the Neapolitan Republic, the political attacks on Maria Carolina continued likewise in France, where many Neapolitan patriots were obliged to flee. Analysing Giuseppe Gorani's *Mémoires* we gather that the portrait of Marie Antoinette's sister was painted according to the main stereotypes of French revolutionary political culture.

Marie Antoinette of France and Maria Carolina of Naples were both Mediterranean queens who embodied power within European society at the end of the Ancien Régime. During their childhood the two sisters were inseparable, sharing the same governess, Countess Walburga von Lerchenfeld. But as soon as Maria Theresa noticed that the two girls behaved badly, always getting in trouble together, her displeasure at their actions led to her decision to separate them in August 1767. Despite this separation they continued to maintain a strong bond through a dense correspondence of letters¹ of which today, unfortunately, there is no trace. Their destinies as queen consorts, planned by the empress, were different according to the magnificence of the respective Court in which they were to rule. However, one similarity shared by the sisters was in the reception and reaction to their presence within their new realms. Both in France and in Naples, the first label that the two queens acquired was that of being a foreigner. This article will analyze the main features of the negative portraits of these two queens in the French and Neapolitan pre- and post-revolutionary periods. As a case study

¹ Marie Antoinette and Maria Carolina, after their respective weddings, exchanged letters. See: *Marie-Antoinette Correspondance (1770-1793)*, ed. E. Lever (Paris: Tallandier, 2005), 50.

we first focus attention on French pornographic literature spread via pamphlets which lead to the end of the Ancien Régime as a political and social system.

According to the topos theory, which describes the French pamphlets, they were a vicious and brutal representation of the aristocratic world's private life, with details of how they expressed themselves through deviant sexual practices. These accusations were hurled at the opponents of the Revolution and always dwelled on sickness, lack of physical and moral vigor, and embarrassment: all predominantly negative qualities of the French aristocrats which were the opposite of the coveted 'patriotic energy'.² The aim of the pamphlets was to destroy the political legitimacy of the monarchs and consequently to overthrow the monarchy. In France, the favorite and most popular character of the pamphlets of this period was Queen Marie Antoinette. The pamphleteers always brought to the fore the origins of the queen. From a simple foreigner she became the traitor of the nation. This paper demonstrates that the same allegations were addressed to Maria Carolina by Neapolitan Jacobin patriots and illuminates connections between the celebrated political pornographic pamphlet attacks on Marie Antoinette and those in 1799 against her sister, Maria Carolina of Naples. Its central focus is a two-volume work by the Milanese Jacobin writer and traveler, Giuseppe Gorani, published in 1793 and considered a link between the two.

1. *Marie Antoinette in French pamphlets: a chronological study*

Historiography has long dedicated much attention to the many controversies surrounding Queen Marie Antoinette of France. The numerous pamphlets and brochures that began to circulate during the years of Louis XVI's long reign have been the subject of many studies which have served the fields of general cultural history and gender history.³ The appearance of such publications did not have a regular pattern, as proposed by Henry Fleischmann, but subsequently there had been a particular development reflected by an exponential growth in publications against the queen from between 1774 and 1775 and followed by from 1788, with an increased intensity from 1789 to 1792.⁴ Over these four years, the freedom of press and developments in the political struggle in revolutionary France restored the controversy surrounding Marie Antoinette. It would be pertinent to report the titles of the most common and popular pamphlets of those years.⁵

² A. de Baecque, *Pamphlets: libel and political mythology*, in *Revolution in print. The press in France 1775-1800*, eds. R. Darnton and D. Roche (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 170.

³ Many studies have pointed to the exploitation of satiric representation of Marie Antoinette in pamphlets and prints in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary period. The following have been especially important: A. de Baecque, *Pamphlets: libel and political mythology*, in *Revolution in print. The press in France 1775-1800*, eds. R. Darnton and D. Roche (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989); C. Thomas, *La reine scélérate, Marie Antoinette dans les pamphlets* (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1989); E. Colwill, "Les crimes de Marie Antoinette: Images d'une femme mutine dans le discours révolutionnaire", trans. G. Mahler in *Les femmes et la Révolution Française, Acte du Colloque International, L'individuel et le social: apparitions et représentations*, vol.2 (Toulouse, Presses Universitaire de Mirail, 1990), 207–20; L. Hunt, "The Many Bodies of Marie Antoinette: political pornography and the problem of the feminine role", in *Eroticism and the Body Politic*, ed. L. Hunt (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); V. Gruder, "The question of Marie Antoinette: the queen and the public opinion before the revolution", *French History*, vol. 16(3) (2002), 269–98.

⁴ H. Fleischmann, *Les pamphlets libertins contre Marie Antoinette. D'après de documents nouveaux tirés de l'Enfer de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris: Les Publications Modernes, 1908); H. Fleischmann, *Marie Antoinette libertine, bibliographie critiques et analytiques, des pamphlets, galants et obscènes contre la Reine. Procédé de la réimpression intégrale des quatre libelles rarissimes et d'une pamphlétaire du règne de Louis XVI* (Paris: Bibliothèque de Curieux, 1911).

⁵ Regarding the content of each pamphlets mentioned on the list of the following pages, see H. Fleischmann, *Marie Antoinette libertine*, 277–358.

They all have a common satirical theme written in a lascivious⁶ tone using an identical technique of political denunciation: the degeneration of the queen's body due to an abnormal sex drive placing her beyond the norm of 'normality' and thereby encouraging political ambiguity.

A chronological list of pamphlets dedicated to Queen Marie Antoinette published between 1762–1796 reveals an apparently strong line of continuity.⁷ This trend is confirmed by exploration of the contents, in which allegations regarding the queen's immorality are repeated, continually being embellished with new details, yet preserving substantial uniformity. Through careful study of the bibliography of the pamphlets published by Fleischmann, the main accusations against the queen emerge. They can be grouped into three recurring types: the first concerns **identity**, which is related to the profile of the national character of the country of origin (Austrian/German anger, miserable Austrian). The second is about **individual psychology**, and refers to aspects of the queen's character and behavior (Messalina, degenerate daughter, degenerate wife, vicious, wanton, unfaithful, prostitute, lesbian, incestuous, vile wicked, murderous, cannibal monster, like a fierce panther, double agent, monster, tiger). The third is purely **political** (troublemaker of the nation, responsible for the French Revolution, bestower and usurper of executive power over the French kingdom, hatred against France and guilty of crimes against the nation).

All the pamphleteers focus on the national origin of the queen, treating her as a foreigner, an Austrian to boot and later as traitor of the French nation.⁸ This stereotype dates back to the first attacks on the queen in 1774, four years after her arrival in France. Some clandestine pamphlets, such as *The list of all persons with whom the queen had lustful relationships, including all tribades of Paris* were found in the public rooms of the royal palace. In this pamphlet, Marie Antoinette was described as the embodiment of vileness: lesbian, prostitute and sex maniac. This concentration of sexuality in the queen was very much the opposite of her husband, who was branded an inferior helpless male.⁹ In *Le Godemiché royal* (1789), the queen is presented as a victim of the king's sexual inability. She is also described as responsible for the weakness of the monarchy, of her husband and of her people.¹⁰ The majority of the portraits of Marie Antoinette depicted by the pamphleteers highlight a certain charge of misogyny underpinning the defamation of a queen who has too much power and intends to become the real leader of the kingdom. In opposition to the weak king, the pamphleteers present an extremely powerful queen. Marie Antoinette is greatly responsible for the decline of the regime, she is guilty of the general disorder which was a consequence of the perversion at Court and her intention was for sexual passion to predominate political reason. The queen is guilty of the debasement of the king and of his inferiority. Above all she is the one who endangers the people of France as she

⁶ We are reminded, for example, of the most well-known pamphlet in which Marie Antoinette's sexual vicissitudes were mixed with a fierce political criticism: *Les amours de Charlot et Toinette, L'Autrichienne en goguettes, Fureurs utérines de Marie Antoinette, femme de Louis XV, Bordel national, Le Godemiché royal, La Journée amoureuse, 'Bordel royal'*. See A. de Baeque, *Le Commerce du libelle interdit à Paris, Dix-huitième siècle* (Paris: Calamann-Léry, 1989).

⁷ For a chronological list of pamphlets directed at Marie Antoinette, see the appendix at the end of this article.

⁸ As de Baeque noted, from the analysis of xenophobic recurrences in revolutionary caricatures, Marie Antoinette is considered primarily a foreigner. See A. de Baeque, *La caricature révolutionnaire* (Paris: CNRS, 1988), 187.

⁹ D. Danna, *Amiche, compagne, amanti. Storia dell'amore tra donne* (Trento: UNI Service, 2003).

¹⁰ In the *Godemiché royal*, the sexual metaphor assumes the characteristics of a political speech. Here, in fact, using bellicose vocabulary, there is an equivalence between the queen's sexual ability and military power.

is seen as a whimsical, carefree and viscerally hypocritical foreigner: she is the *Autrichienne*.¹¹ Around the queen is created what Thomas defines as the *mythe de la superpuissance érotique de Marie Antoinette*.¹²

The first major fault ascribed to Marie Antoinette was her failure to provide a rightful heir to the throne of France, thus making her guilty of sacrilege to the monarchy.¹³ In pamphlets, the constant charge is having too many lovers, casting doubt on the true paternity of the royal children. If her constant infidelity could be justified as a consequence of the impotence of the king, why would all the pamphlets have considered her behavior highly reprehensible? They charged Marie Antoinette guilty of insulting the monarchy by bringing perversion to the Court. From a purely political point of view, the role of the queen's body was central: it was the site for the procreation and birth of the future rulers.¹⁴ In short, the place of maximum power in the kingdom of France. This body was described as that of a deity in *Les amours de Charlot et Toinette*, where she is referred to as the *Déesse*. However, in the eyes of the public, the queen's beauty was also something sinister and disquieting. If Marie Antoinette lacked respect for her husband, with all her turpitude, there was also a more general lack of respect towards the monarchy. The pamphlets also describe her as a manipulator, able to use her feminine power and sensuality on the king to obtain particular favors.¹⁵ Persuasion allowed her to deceive the king without him noticing.

The queen was also considered guilty of giving bad advice to the king. In *La Journée amoureuse*, it is Louis XVI himself who describes his wife as a 'wicked and dangerous woman', who with her 'infamous advices' led France to a disastrous situation.¹⁶ Thus, the pamphleteers contrasted the queen with the weak king presenting her as too politically powerful. Poor counsellor to the king, the queen was held responsible for devastating decisions on subjects related to tax affairs during the Revolution, and throughout the revolutionary propaganda we can see the queen metamorphose into an animal.¹⁷ In fact, there are caricatures of her in the form of wolf, hyena, ostrich, and the mythological monster, the harpy.¹⁸

It is therefore clear that the charges levied at Marie Antoinette during the revolutionary years became an instrument for political struggle within of those patriotic circles which made a radical Republican choice that began with the royal flight to Varennes. Subsequently it was reported that, between 1791 and 1793, the traditional accusations against the queen, though repetitive in appearance, acquired a different tone.¹⁹ It is easy to

¹¹ The appellation of l'*Autrichienne* was a negative slur emphasizing her origins from the House of Hapsburg in Austria. Marie Antoinette would always be seen as a stranger willing to sacrifice the interests of her husband for those of his brother, the Emperor Joseph II. On the denunciation of queen as *autrichienne* see Thomas Kaiser, "Who is afraid of Maria Antoinette? Diplomacy, austrophobia and the Queen", *French History*, vol. 14 (3) (2000), 241-271 (243).

¹² See Thomas, *La reine scélérate, Marie Antoinette dans le pamphlets*, 122-123.

¹³ M. F. A. de Lescure, *La vraie Marie Antoinette, étude historique politique et morale. Suivi du recueil réuni pour la première fois de toutes les lettres de la reine connu jusqu'à ces jour dont plusieurs inédite et diverses documents* (Paris: Libraire Parisienne, 1863), 15-18.

¹⁴ According to the political theories of Marie Antoinette's body, see J. Revel, "Marie Antoinette in her Fictions: The Staging of Hatred" in *Fictions of the French Revolution*, ed. Bernadette Fort (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 114; Hunt, "The Many Bodies", 111-112; M.D. Sheriff, *The exceptional woman. Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 147-165.

¹⁵ Fleischmann, *Marie Antoinette libertine*, 277-283.

¹⁶ Fleischmann, *Marie Antoinette libertine*, 320.

¹⁷ Fleischmann, *Marie Antoinette libertine*, 140.

¹⁸ A. de Baecque, *La caricature révolutionnaire*, 185-86.

¹⁹ The origin of the pamphlets should not be sought in a tabloid pre-revolutionary press, but in political causes as pointed out by Thomas Kaiser and Simon Burrows, such as deep-rooted Austrophobia, resentment among the courtiers, and the ambiguity of family relationships between Marie Antoinette and the Hapsburgs. To learn more about Austrophobia see, T. Kaiser, "Who is afraid of Maria Antoinette?, Diplomacy, Austrophobia, and the

explain this change, since the denunciation of the licentiousness of Marie Antoinette shifts from the field of morality to politics and this step transforms the very meaning of the charges. In addition, there existed a greater tolerance towards the freedom of the press, which allowed pamphlets to be published more openly.

2. *A revolutionary spirit from Paris to Naples*

A useful example which demonstrates this process of change, from morality to the field of political conflict, can be seen in Naples in 1799 when, during the revolutionary period, the same accusations addressed at Marie Antoinette were made against Maria Carolina, wife of Ferdinand IV and sister of the queen of France. Maria Carolina, daughter of Emperor Francis I and Maria Theresa, was designed to replace her sister Mary Joseph, who had died of smallpox, and was betrothed to Ferdinand IV of Naples and Sicily.²⁰ Contentions between the Hapsburgs and the Bourbons over control of the Italian territories that were at stake in this union meant that the process of arranging the marriage contract between the courts of Vienna and Madrid was an extremely laborious one. The marriage sanctioned the return of Naples to Austrian control via a clause of the contract which stipulated that Maria Carolina, after giving birth to her first heir, would have obtained the right to participate in the Council of State.²¹

The marriage took place by proxy in 1768 in Vienna.²² Although Maria Carolina was just sixteen when she was married to Ferdinand IV, in the Viennese court she had already learned the craft of ruling which she would exercise in Naples.²³ Charming, intelligent and exuberant, Maria Carolina had to live with a king as young as her, but culturally inferior. In the eyes of Europe at the end of the eighteenth century, the primary characteristics of King Ferdinand of Bourbon were his ineptitude and utter inability to govern. He had been brought up in the grossest ignorance possible, with such scarce knowledge of any

Queen”, 241-271; T. Kaiser, “From the Austrian Committee to the Foreign Plot: Marie Antoinette, The Austrophobia and the Terror”, *French Historical Studies*, vol. 26(24) (2003), 579–617; G. Savage, “Favier’s Heirs: the French revolution and the *secret du Roi*”, *Historical Journal*, vol. 41(1) (1998), 225–258; S. Burrows, *Blackmail, Scandal, and Revolution. London’s French Libellistes* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006).

²⁰ On Maria Carolina, queen of Naples, see: A. von Reumont, *Maria Carolina regina delle Due Sicilie e i suoi tempi* (Firenze: M. Cellini e C., 1878); J.A. Helfert, *Königin Karolina von Neapel und Sicilien im Kampfe gegen die französische Weltherrschaft, 1790-1814* (Wien: Braumüller, 1878); J. A. Helfert, *Maria Karolina von Österreich. Königin von Neapel und Sicilien. Anklagen und Vertheidigung* (Wien: Faesy, 1884); A. Gagnière, *La reine Marie Caroline de Naples* (Paris: Ollendorf, 1889); A. Bonnefons, *Une ennemie de la Révolution et de Napoléon: Marie Caroline reine des Deux-Siciles, 1768-1814* (Paris: Perrin 1905); C.M. Bearne, *A sister of Marie Antoinette: the life-story of Maria Carolina, Queen of Naples* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1907); A. Bordiga Amadei, *Maria Carolina d’Austria e il Regno delle Due Sicilie* (Napoli: S.A. Cooperativa ed. Libreria, 1934); E. Caesar Corti, *Ich, eine Maria Theresias Tochter: ein Lebensbild der Königin Marie Karoline von Neapel* (München: Bruckmann, 1950); U. Tamussino, *Des Teufels Großmutter: eine Biographie der Königin M. von Neapel-Sizilien* (Wien: Deuticke, 1991); F. Weissensteiner, *Die Töchter Maria Theresias* (Wien: Kremayer & Scheriau, 1994).

²¹ E. Caesar Corti, *Ich, eine Maria Theresias Tochter: ein Lebensbild der Königin Marie Karoline von Neapel*, 96–97.

²² Soon Maria Carolina faced the journey to Italy, stopping in Bologna, where she was joined by her beloved brother, the Grand Duke Peter Leopold, who would be responsible for accompanying her to Naples. Regarding the journey see the pages of M. Schipa, *Nel regno di Ferdinando IV* (Vallacchi: Firenze 1938), 35–76.

²³ Maria Carolina, of all Maria Theresa’s daughters, was the one who resembled her the most. As Arsenio Frugoni examined in his study, the empress gave minute instructions to all her daughters describing the way in which they should influence and govern their husbands and their kingdoms. See *Consigli matrimoniali alle figlie sovrane, di Maria Teresa d’Austria*, ed. Arsenio Frugoni (Firenze: Passigli Editori, 2000).

foreign tongue, and could not speak a decent Italian. Hunting, shooting, and fishing were Ferdinand's major occupation.²⁴ In a report on the royal couple of Naples written by Emperor Joseph II to his mother, Maria Theresa, King Ferdinand is described as 'an indefinable being, a contradiction between good and evil, the first without merit and the second without sin'.²⁵ His innate disposition to have fun at the expense of anything serious was the typical image of the Royal Majesty King Ferdinand: 'The King is an immature boy. The only thing he writes is a list of nicknames which he has given to all his beaters'.²⁶

Despite the fact that he was neither learned nor a scholar and did not have an aptitude for any kind of literature, Ferdinand had common sense and a high esteem for men who knew how to distinguish themselves among others for both their customs as well as their culture. The King's responsibilities were gradually delegated to his wife. In time, she would become influential.

I wish to God that my husband was diligent, I would have preferred him to do everything by himself. ... As God has decided for him, I should dedicate myself to my home, but his distracting life makes it impossible for him to do his duties. He has not been educated in this and never will be. So rather than see him killed by his ministers or by a bad person or led by his confessor I am forced to act so that he trusts and has confidence in me.²⁷

As a result, Maria Carolina was soon able to dominate the weak personality of her husband, thereby gaining significant weight in the politics of the kingdom.

Maria Carolina is well aware of the ascendancy which she exerts on the king. She knows and she has often confided in me that she could be the owner of all the king's shares, if Spain and her etiquette do not limit her.²⁸

In 1759, Charles of Bourbon left Naples to occupy the throne of Spain. After this King Charles ruled the kingdom of Naples through his right-hand man, Bernardo Tanucci, who continued the reformist politics in the Bourbon kingdom creating the bond which tied Naples to Spain.²⁹ The queen did not hold any esteem for the minister Tanucci. In fact,

²⁴ The personal diary of King Ferdinand reveals his incompetence in ruling, preferring more amusing activities. See Ferdinando IV di Borbone, *Diario di Ferdinando IV di Borbone*, ed. Umberto Caldora (Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1965).

²⁵ When Emperor Joseph II, brother of Maria Carolina, visited the court of Naples on 31 March 1769 he wrote the "Relation de Naples" which recorded his impressions of King Ferdinand IV. The original report is in French and is preserved in the State Archive of Vienna. It has been published and edited by E. Garms-Cornides in Giuseppe II d'Asburgo, *Cortelazzara. Relazione a Maria Teresa sui Reali di Napoli*, ed. E. Garms-Cornides (Napoli: Di Mauro Editore, 1992), 60.

²⁶ Giuseppe II d'Asburgo, *Cortelazzara. Relazione a Maria Teresa sui Reali di Napoli*, 98.

²⁷ Maria Carolina to her brother Grand Duke Peter Leopold, 30 November 1779. Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Sammelbände des Hausarchivs, 10: Korrespondenz Großherzog Leopold von Toskana mit Kaiserin Maria Theresia und Maria Karoline von Neapel, 1779. *Lettres de S.M. Reine de Naples et Réponses, concernant différentes affaires de Gouvernement et surtout l'affaires de grains avec les sentiments de S.A.R.*, f.117v.

²⁸ Giuseppe II d'Asburgo, *Cortelazzara. Relazione a Maria Teresa sui Reali di Napoli*, 40.

²⁹ After the accession to the throne of Spain in 1759 Minister Bernardo Tanucci had, for nearly twenty years, the opportunity to fulfil his personal intentions for the Kingdom of Naples. The task which Tanucci faced was titanic: the country had experienced two hundred years of foreign domination. The rich and independent nobility was opposed to the enlightened reforms. The main problem was also represented by the Church. Under the dominion of the Spanish viceroys, they had acquired important privileges which they did not want to give up. Tanucci's reformist activity was intended to assert the primacy of sovereignty and to reject the abuses and privileges of the clergy, barons and the judiciary. On Bernardo Tanucci at the Court of Naples, see R. Tufano, *La Francia e Le Sicilie. Stato e disgregazione sociale nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia da Luigi XIV alla Rivoluzione* (Napoli: Arte Tipografica, 2009), 242–332.

she considered the prime minister an intrusive and troublesome presence who was, therefore, seen as an obstacle to her total sovereignty.

Maria Carolina, aware of her strong influence on her husband, was convinced she had to bend him to her will and pleasure, so the only solution to emancipate her kingdom from the Spanish influence was to eliminate Tanucci from the political scene. At the same time, Tanucci had perceived that the court of Vienna relied on Maria Carolina to modify the Kingdom of Naples.³⁰ The elder statesman immediately grasped some aspects of the Queen's character that have since been written about by contemporary historians. Tanucci wrote: 'the queen had no shyness, she was bold and nourished a strong aversion toward people who for ages, dress or thought have had a regular way of life, a repugnance toward the utmost of seriousness and discipline'. In Tanucci's opinion, her behavior turned erratic, most likely from the general advice given by her mother and brothers who were causing her 'irritation' and 'anger'.

The queen had labelled Tanucci as 'pedantic and ambitious', accusing him of being an enemy of her house as well as herself, particularly since he opposed her marriage with the king.³¹ The fight between the two was very violent but in the end the queen won. Indeed, thanks to the clause that Maria Theresa had included in the marriage contract, when Maria Carolina had her first son (in January 1775) she gained access to the State Council, thereby familiarizing herself with power and opening the way for her reign. At this point Tanucci could not prevent the rising power of Maria Carolina. From that moment his fate was sealed: after forty-two years of allegiance to the crown, the now senior minister was sacked. At this point Ferdinand had made the decision to suffer the pressures of his wife rather than reacting, worrying primarily about the tranquility of his family and leisure activities. He informed his father of his decision (persuaded, no less, by his wife) to fire Tanucci, and afterwards pretended that he had received a consent which was never given by Carlo III.

Since 1775 the relationship between the spouses had been difficult and Ferdinand confided this to his father, asking what he should do. There are some rather pathetic letters that divulge these confidences and others where the same Carlo III complained that his son listened to his wife's advice rather than to his father:

I assure you that I was filled with affliction seeing how you apologize and how you have not minded what your loving father has told you, as much as you should have, mainly for the sake of your children, your vassals and for yourself and to whom, after God, you should be very grateful.³²

By getting rid of Tanucci, the queen could count on the discontent existing in the reign (Tanucci's reforms had caused displeasure among the nobles) as well as the support of Freemasonry (unlike her husband, Maria Carolina showed open sympathy for this movement). Enmities that Tanucci had accumulated during his long period of domination fuelled, in fact, a strong opposition group which did not accept the government's close ties with the Neapolitan court of Madrid.

Freemasonry was established in England in the eighteenth century, and from there

³⁰ See *Lettere di Bernardo Tanucci a Carlo III (1759-1776)*, ed. R. Mincuzzi (Roma: Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano, 1969), 500. In a letter dated Caserta 31 January 1769, Tanucci wrote to King Carlo III: «The queen aspires to "interfere in the affairs" of the government.»

³¹ R. Ajello, "I filosofi e la regina. Il governo delle due Sicilie da Tanucci a Caracciolo", *Rivista Storica Italiana*, vol. 103 (1991), 419–420.

³² Archivio di Stato di Napoli, *Archivio Borbone*, 99, Estratti di Lettere scritte dal Re di Spagna, 57r.

it had spread across the continent with the initiation of nobles, assuming aristocratic and anti-despotic features.³³ In the Kingdom of Naples, the first lodges were formed in the third decade of the eighteenth century. Maria Carolina leaned immediately toward Freemasonry, forming a strong party opposed to Tanucci. In 1775 Tanucci, concerned by the increase of many influential people belonging to the Masonic order, tried to convince Ferdinand IV to issue a new edict against Masonic meetings (in 1751 Charles had already issued an edict against Freemasonry without much success)³⁴ but he found the young sovereign to be an obstacle. Of course Maria Carolina, with the backing of Freemasonry, concealed her political interests; in fact, her desire from the start was to replace the influence of Charles III of Bourbon with the Austrian influence of her brothers, Joseph II and Leopold II, both supporters of the Masonic movement.³⁵ Therefore with the withdrawal of Tanucci, Maria Carolina and Freemasonry prevailed.

After Tanucci's removal, Maria Carolina's long personal government began. With her the Masonic project took flight on a national basis that would then become the source of the reformism of the eighties. For decades (those of the late eighteenth century) the behavior of European monarchies underwent a singular process of reform, liberating each impediment along the way. The female sovereigns and consorts were at the forefront of these changes. Just think of Catherine of Russia, Carolina Matilda of Denmark and the three daughters of Maria Theresa, placed on the thrones of Paris, Naples and Parma, of which Maria Carolina was undoubtedly the most mentally unbalanced. She inaugurated a new way of governing, based on a personal and individualistic concept of power. In order to implement it, the queen established a close relationship of complicity with her favorites, both public and private. Maria Carolina protected these individuals and, therefore, entering into the good graces of the queen became an important step in occupying significant positions in the court and to advance one's career.³⁶

One of the queen's primary ambitions was to reorganize the navy. A good fleet was required for both commercial and military applications, but Naples lacked naval and military experts because Tanucci had always relied on unskilled people. The queen asked her brother Leopold, Grand Duke of Tuscany, to borrow Acton, an officer equipped with a suitable capacity to lead:

Dear brother and friend ... I am entrusted with a task by my dear husband. I undertake it fearing to bother you but please answer me with your confidence. Our situation needs a good navy since we are surrounded by the sea, close to the pirates and for our business and not to be insulted [the navy] is necessary for us.³⁷

Maria Carolina had the idea to make Naples the coastal base of the Austrian Empire for domination of the Mediterranean. John Acton, belonging to a noble Anglo-Irish family, had served in the French and Tuscan navies. Thanks to his capacities and the support of

³³ G. Giarrizzo, *Massoneria e illuminismo nell'Europa del Settecento* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1994), 311.

³⁴ A. Mola, *Storia della Massoneria italiana dalle origini ai nostri giorni* (Milano: Bompiani, 1992).

³⁵ A. Cuccia, *Dieci Tavole Architettoniche sulla Massoneria* (Catanzaro: Rubbettino Editore, 2005), 333.

³⁶ G. Astuto, "Dalle riforme alle rivoluzioni. Maria Carolina d'Asburgo: una regina «austriaca» nel Regno di Napoli e di Sicilia", *Quaderni del dipartimento di studi politici*, vol. 1 (2007), 33.

³⁷ This is a part of letter written by Queen Maria Carolina to the Grand Duke Peter Leopold (28 April, 1778). Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Sammelbände des Hausarchivs, 10: Korrespondenz Großherzog Leopold von Toskana mit Kaiserin Maria Theresia und Maria Karoline von Neapel, *Lettere della Regina di Napoli e risposte del 1778 relative per la maggior parte all'affari e alla destinazione del General Acton a quel servizio*, ff. 5r–6v. The original version is in a grammatically-poor French written by Queen Maria Carolina.

the queen, Acton started a process of modernization of the state and army with the upgrading of the Bourbon fleet. In addition to the navy, within a few years he had opened shipyards and created schools for officers. From these initiatives derived the strong impetus for international trade and negotiations went on, although repeatedly suspended, with France and England. Also discussed was the establishment of relations with Russia (which was at that time the great Slavic country).

Yet, the domino effect of the French Revolution was to bring about the overthrow of Maria Carolina, who, after twenty years of an ostensibly reformist government, had turned her back on the classes considered the vehicle of the revolution. Consequently, she broke ties with the same reformist forces that had sustained and supported her in previous attempts to modernize the state structure of the kingdom. After the French Revolution, there was a clear fracture between the throne and the most intellectually and politically advanced classes, now considered by the sovereign and her court as enemies. After Marie Antoinette was executed in 1793, the Bourbon couple joined the political alliance between Austria and Great Britain. In 1798, the French occupied Rome and took Naples after a failed attempt to invade Rome. Neapolitan Jacobin conspirators were ready to overthrow the monarchy and establish a Republic.³⁸ Consequently, the Neapolitan patriots did not hesitate to use the same polemic arsenal as had been previously directed at her sister, Marie Antoinette, against the queen of Naples who, in December of 1798, had run away with the whole court to Sicily. From Palermo, the queen promptly set about recovering her kingdom.

On 17 January 1799, ten years after the French Revolution, the Kingdom of Naples was hit by a revolution of its own which led to the institution of the Republic (23 January 1799). But it was overthrown after only six months when royalist forces retook the kingdom and the Bourbon couple returned. Queen Maria Carolina was apparently the ring-leader behind the treachery that brought about the final Republican surrender and the consequent ferocious reprisals. About 1,000 Republicans were tried for treason and 100 were executed by hanging and beheading.³⁹

It was during the Neapolitan Revolution, circulation of the news by the republican press having begun to circulate among the European public, that the first real slanders began to appear against the Bourbons, and particularly against Queen Maria Carolina. The *Monitore Napoletano* was the official newspaper of the Neapolitan Republic, followed by the *Veditore Napoletano*, the *Vero Repubblicano*, the *Giornale Estemporaneo*, and the *Corriere di Napoli e Sicilia*.⁴⁰ By considering all these publications, it is possible to note that accusations against the queen of Naples were not faithfully reproducing the motifs in the French pamphlets.

³⁸ See: M. Giannattasio, *Le due Caroline. Il regno di Napoli tra Maria Carolina di Borbone e Carolina Murat* (Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche, 1999), 85.

³⁹ On the Revolutionary and Republican period in Naples see A. De Francesco, 1799. *Una storia d'Italia* (Milano: Guerini e associati, 2004); A. Rao, *La Repubblica Napoletana del 1799* (Roma: Tascabili Economici Newton, 1997), E. Chiosi, "Il regno di 1734-1799", in *Storia del Mezzogiorno*, vol. IV (Roma: Edizione del Sole, 1986).

⁴⁰ *Il monitore napoletano*, directed by Eleonora de Fonseca Pimentel, was the most popular Republican newspaper, publishing 35 issues and three supplements from 2 February to 8 June; *Il Veditore Repubblicano* was edited by Gregorio Mattei that brought to the press four issues, from 21 March to 19 April 1799; *Il Vero Repubblicano* characterized by the publication of only two issues, 19 April to 10 May 1799 *Giornale Estemporaneo*, weekly, 9 issues spanning 31 March to 21 May, 1799, *il Corriere di Napoli e Sicilia*, ten issues published, from 17 February to 27 April, 1799, marked by the publication in two versions, French and Italian. For further information see, M. Battaglini, *Napoli 1799. I giornali giacobini* (Roma: Libreria Alfredo Borzi, 1988).

The Neapolitan newspaper allegations corresponded to the three themes noted previously; that is, of a threatening female identity (Amazon, Messalina of the north), a psychological one (tribade, infamous, crazy, delusional), and a primarily political one responsible for a corrupt government (tyrant, usurper of the royal treasure, despot, dupe of letters and information).⁴¹ Later, post-revolutionary literature focuses on the personal and political adjectives/characteristics, condensing them to foreign tyrant, vile, wicked and corrupt.

3. *The Milanese adventurer Giuseppe Gorani*

The most interesting aspect of this literature concerns the political channels which promulgated these stereotypes from Paris to Naples. From this perspective, what seemed to be the main link between the Republican France of the first hour and the Neapolitan Republic of 1799 is represented by *Mémoires secrets et critiques des cours, des gouvernements et des mœurs des principaux états de l'Italie* (Secret and Critical Memoirs of the Courts of Italy and particularly of Naples), published by Giuseppe Gorani in Paris in 1793.

Giuseppe Gorani was quite a popular writer and it would be appropriate to briefly touch on some aspects of his biography. Like all intellectual spirits of the mid-eighteenth century, Gorani lived at a time characterized by strong changes due to the crisis of the *Ancien Régime*, including the Revolution and ending with the Restoration.⁴² He was born on 15 February 1740 to a Milanese noble family, whose members had held, and continued to do so at that time, positions of considerable importance in the political life of the city. He spent a far from happy childhood subject to lacerating strife within his family, what he refers to as the ‘conspiracies’ and ‘attacks’ of some family members against others. At the age of six, he entered the Imperial College of Nobles in Milan, where, thanks to the teaching of Barnabites, his intellectual curiosity grew year after year. He remained there until 1757, when, tired of excessive ecclesiastical discipline, he opted for a military career. The Seven Years' War took him to Austria, Bohemia, Silesia, Saxony, and, in 1759, to Prussia where he was taken prisoner.

He soon became a great traveller and in Berlin began to deal with the political scientists of Europe. Here he met prominent figures of German culture, such as Kant and

⁴¹ On the accusations mentioned see the following newspapers: *Il monitore napoletano*, N. 4, 12 February 1799; *Il monitore napoletano*, N. 7, 26 February 1799; *Corriere estemporaneo*, 3 March 1799; *Vero Repubblicano*, N.1, “Repubblica Francese dal Quartier Generale di Napoli 25 Germile. Il Commessario del Governo Francese al Popolo Napoletano”; *Giornale Estemporaneo*, N.2, 6 April 1799; *Giornale Estemporaneo*, N.5, 27 April 1799; *Corriere di Napoli e Sicilia*, N.3, 24 February 1799; *Corriere di Napoli e Sicilia*, N.4, 3 March 1799.

⁴² On the life-story of Giuseppe Gorani, see among the others, F.Cusani, “Il conte Giuseppe Gorani, cenni biografici”, *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, vol. 5 (1878), 615–635; A. Ademollo, *Il conte Gorani e i suoi recenti biografati* (Firenze: Tipografia della Gazzetta d'Italia, 1879); M. Monnier, *Un aventurier italien du siècle dernier: le comte Joseph Gorani, d'après ses Mémoires inédits* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1884); L. Rava, “Giuseppe Gorani (1744-1819)”, *Nuova Antologia*, vol. 1153 (April 1920), 239–256; A. Simioni, *Una storica persecuzione. Maria Carolina di Napoli e Giuseppe Gorani* (Padova: Draghi, 1925); A. Giulini, “Per la biografia di Giuseppe Gorani”, in *A Milano nel Settecento. Studi e profili*, ed. A. Giulini (Milano: La famiglia Meneghina, 1926), 107–119; G. Natali, “Un gentiluomo patriota e cosmopolita del secolo XVIII”, in *Idee costumi, uomini del Settecento*, ed. G. Natali (Torino: Società Tipografico Editrice Nazionale, 1926), 319–340; A. Casati, “Giuseppe Gorani e la guerra dei Sette anni”, *Archivio storico lombardo*, vol. 58 (1931), 1–125; P. Chappuys, “Joseph Gorani et la Suisse”, *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, vol. 2 (1952), 363–385; F. Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, vol. 5, *L'Italia dei lumi* (Torino: Einaudi, 1987), 88–90, 500–511, 781–785.

Formey, following a training course strongly influenced by natural law and party-political German culture, which subsequently induced him to become profoundly hostile towards Catholicism and very pro-German Protestant. In 1763 Gorani obtained leave from the Austrian army, returned to Milan and was again involved in family conflict. He visited Turin and Genoa, which was to prove the earliest stages of a process that could be safely described as the most adventurous of his life. Animated by the desire to pursue his dream of conquest, young Gorani developed the idea of founding a monarchy of islands including Corsica, Sardinia and Elba Island, on which he would govern with dedication and perseverance, with the ultimate aim of providing public welfare for its subjects.⁴³ After failing to find the resources for his project, he moved eastwards in the vain hope of finding a revolution that would overthrow the Ottoman Empire. When he could not, Gorani set off for Spain and Portugal, where in the latter he served Prime Minister S. J. de Carvalho, the future Marquis of Pombal. Observations made in Portugal would suggest a major impact on his political thinking had been made. These, together with the failure of his utopian dream and disillusionment with the policies of the Portuguese Prime Minister (initially admired for his fight against superstition and the power of Rome, later regarded as nothing more than a cruel tyrant), induced him to return home in 1767.

Motivated by disappointment and renowned for his reformist efforts and the enormous obstacles encountered in trying to implement them, Gorani decided to pursue a diplomatic career with his sovereign, Maria Teresa of Austria, but the regard which Gorani enjoyed at court suffered a gradual decline due to his criticisms of the Hapsburg government in Lombardy. Among the various diplomatic missions undertaken, his stay in Paris was particularly influential as he had the opportunity to meet the Encyclopedists. Attracted by the intellectual world of the philosophes, he decided to devote time and energy to studies and letters, thus abandoning his earlier aspirations. In 1768, Gorani returned to Milan where he soon frequented the circles of *Il Caffè*, becoming particularly close to Cesare Beccaria. In the same year, he wrote *Real Despotism*, published in 1770 in two volumes, in which he exasperated the ideas of the great reformers of Milan.⁴⁴ An eighteenth-century critic described Gorani as ‘a young man whose travels to Europe had made him too fatigued to divest himself of prejudice’ and introduced him to the Italian public in his debut as a novice Milanese author, highlighting his main limitation as trying to ‘encompass too many subjects’.⁴⁵

Giuseppe Gorani availed himself of an unusual intellectual and political-diplomatic profile (thanks to his intellectual curiosity as a traveller) which allowed him to embrace the ideals of freedom and political participation which had emerged in revolutionary Paris.⁴⁶ The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 led Gorani away from the political scene to an entirely different one. He had played a minor role compared to the great protagonists of the Revolution, but his assiduous study of the Orleanist, Jacobin and Girondin circles, contributed to grafting onto his political thought ideas which were loathed by ‘Italian’ culture: political philosophy and themes such as political suffrage, public education to empower the people, electoral procedures and the organization of a Republican

⁴³ See: F. Venturi, “Giuseppe Gorani” in *Illuministi italiani. Riformatori lombardi, piemontesi, toscani*, ed. Franco Venturi, vol. III (Milano-Napoli: Ricciardi, 1958), 482.

⁴⁴ Venturi, “Giuseppe Gorani”, 501.

⁴⁵ Venturi, “Giuseppe Gorani”, 501.

⁴⁶ See V. Ferrone, *I profeti dell'illuminismo* (Roma and Bari: Laterza, 1992), 305–308.

Executive.

The Milanese reformer took refuge in France, after the promulgation of a decree which expelled him from the Hapsburg territories under the accusation of having acted contrary to the government. Once he had developed a close relationship with the Jacobin clubs of the capital, he very actively pleaded the causes of the new Italian Revolution. He wrote several booklets and articles, collected in *Pétition à la convention nationale de France, pour les habitants de Francfort, pour Joseph Gorani, citoyen français*, published in *Le Moniteur* in 1792 and *Project d'une constitution républicaine pour le milanéz*, which remained unpublished. His close collaboration with the Girondin group, led him to acquire positions somewhere between espionage and political activism.

The fall of the monarchy, as a result of the revolutionary wars launched against Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette (April 1792), favored his role, since he was seen by the public as one of the main witnesses of Austrian tyranny and a supporter of the need to overthrow. On 26 August 1792, he was given French citizenship for having defended the cause of reason and freedom along with George Washington, James Madison and Thomas Paine. The day after his French naturalization, Gorani was assigned to carry out propaganda to denounce the Austrian dynasty. After the condemnation of the death of Louis XVI (21 January, 1793), he published the *Secret and Critical Memoirs of the Courts of Italy and particularly of Naples* for the well-known patriot and republican publisher Buisson and the first volume of this work offers a description of the political and moral makeup of the Kingdom of Naples. In this work, touching on a close relationship between Marie Antoinette and Maria Carolina, Gorani describes the Court of Naples as a gathering place for the opponents of Republican France. His purpose was twofold. First, to demonstrate the perverse nature of the Hapsburg family thus favoring revolutionary expansionism in Europe, an objective pursued by the Girondin government; additionally, to focus public attention on the controversy over Marie Antoinette's imprisonment.

After the fall of the Gironde, and fearful for his own safety, Gorani went to Geneva to a new diplomatic post. But he was quickly dismissed from his new position, due to the thirst for vengeance of both Robespierre and Maria Carolina of Austria, queen of the Two Sicilies who were aggrieved by the offensive revelations contained in his *Mémoires*. Gorani was forced into a life of exile among the valleys of Switzerland, where he died on 13 December 1819 in Geneva, having spent the last years of his life there.

4. *His enigmatic Mémoires*

Did the charges against Maria Carolina in Gorani's *Mémoires* reflect a direct working knowledge of the Neapolitan court, as he says, or was he just repeating the accusations traditionally addressed towards Marie Antoinette against Maria Carolina? A first reference to the French polemic may be found even in the choice of title. The title of the *Mémoires* is in fact not very original, although it might include a reference to the hostile discussion prompted by the *Mémoire Justificatifs* of the Countess Jeanne de la Motte, a work published in 1789. In fact, Jeanne de la Motte's libel had a strong influence on gender and political revolutionary pornography. Thus it offers a dubious story of the diamond necklace affair, and painting the countess as a tool and a naive victim of the cold, ambiguous, libertine queen who deceived her to get the jewel.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Burrows, *Blackmail, scandal, and Revolution. London's French Libellistes*, 152.

The portrait of Queen Maria Carolina by Gorani outlines two distinct themes: on one hand, he emphasizes the intention of the queen to establish Austrian hegemony in Naples; while on the other, the theme of the queen's personality functionally validates the Austrian master plan of European hegemony. In the account of Maria Carolina, the Milanese first provides an overview of the House of Lorraine from which the Queen came.⁴⁸ It was filled with an excessive pedantry of family members, who in his opinion bordered on the ridiculous, pointing his finger at some of them, such as Joseph II, Archduke Ferdinand and Leopold.⁴⁹ According to Gorani, they had not engaged in educating their people. Moreover, the editors promulgated by them were written using expressions full of amplifications and rhetoric embellishment, making them appear to Gorani as more rhetoricians than legislators.⁵⁰ This haughty mania of 'being able' and 'knowing' was even more evident in the women of the house. Were the women themselves to decide, with their matrimonial destinies, the future prosperity of the Hapsburg dynasty? A true *deus ex machina* of the house was the Empress Maria Theresa, who immediately realized that, to ensure the survival of the empire, the fate of Austrian politicians in both France and Spain had to be assured. Her plan involved her daughters being 'married off' to the Bourbon princes. In fact, upon the death of Maria Josepha who had been betrothed to King Ferdinand IV, in order not to derail her plan, Maria Teresa instead married off her daughter Maria Carolina to the king.⁵¹

The behavioral rules that Maria Theresa, the empress of Austria, had instilled in her daughters were stiff and varied at the same time. Gorani sees her in Machiavellian light, trying to obtain by any means the prosperity of her family. Maria Carolina took the teachings of her mother fully into consideration, so that, once she had arrived in Naples, she made her own motherly project.⁵² Gorani focuses on the determination and ambition of the queen in pursuing her goal: to enlarge the power of the House of Austria, a very dominant objective set over any other, even over the natural love of a mother toward her children.⁵³ It is easy to see the origin of the slander reference in the French pamphlet, the 'Austrophobia'. According to Gorani, in fact, Queen Maria Carolina used Catherine De' Medici as her model,⁵⁴ to whom he referred as 'the terror and the flagellum of the French

⁴⁸ Gorani, *Mémoires secret et critiques des cours, des gouvernements et des mœurs des principaux états de l'Italie* (Paris: Buisson, 1793), vol. I, 253–254. "Les princes de la maison de Lorraine entrée sur celle d'Autriche, sont tous entichés d'une pédanterie aussi rebutante que ridicule". Here Gorani again seems to stress the defamation of Queen Marie Antoinette regarding the historic of the House of Lorraine. Regarding this consideration, see T. E. Kaiser, "Ambiguous Identities: Marie-Antoinette and the House of Lorraine from the Affair of the Minuet to Lambesc's Charge," in *Marie-Antoinette: Writings on the Body of a Queen*, ed. Dena Goodman (New York & London: Routledge, 2003), 171–98.

⁴⁹ Gorani, *Mémoires*, 254. "Joseph II ne donnoit à personne le temps de lui répondre, [...] l'archiduc Ferdinand étant à Paris, donna des leçons sur le change à quelques banquiers, [...] Leopold, véritable maître d'école ne se plaisoit qu'à entrer dans les détails les plus minutieux".

⁵⁰ Gorani, *Mémoires*, 254–255.

⁵¹ See: Corti, *Ich, eine Maria Theresias Tochter: ein Lebensbild der König Marie Karoline von Neapel*, 24–25.

⁵² Gorani, *Mémoires*, 259. "Plus hardie que sa sœur, ou plus favorisée par les circonstances, Marie Caroline foulant aux pieds tout respect humain, étouffant dans son cœur la voix de la nature, conçu de son avènement au trône de Naples, l'inférieur projet d'agrandir la puissance de la maison d'Autriche aux dépens de son propre sang."

⁵³ Gorani, *Mémoires*, 260. "On a vu des reines, victimes de ce sentiment devenu trop exclusif, payer de leur vie la joie que leur avoit causé ce sexe de leur enfant ; on en a vu d'autres trainer des jours devenus languissans, par la privation de ce bonheur de convenance. Il étoit réservé à Marie Caroline de fournir une exception à cette règle ; toutes les fois qu'on lui annonçoit un prince, elle s'abandonnoit à la plus excessive douleur. Elle n'a paru véritablement mère qu'à la naissance de ses filles."

⁵⁴ Again, Gorani resorts to the comparison between Caterina de Medici and Marie Antoinette made by the pamphleteers as has already been mentioned in several pamphlets, such as: *Antoinette d'Autriche, ou Dialogues entre*

sixteenth century'.⁵⁵ In Gorani's opinion, Catherine De' Medici wished to reign. Her ambition and greed for power was so great that it overruled her role as mother. Instead, Gorani sees Maria Carolina as a loving mother, especially with her daughters, and was particularly attentive to their education. However, with her sons, she was authoritative, punishing them over nothing.⁵⁶ In essence, Gorani believed that this double standard of behavior towards her children was intended to impede the progress of the Bourbon dynasty.⁵⁷

As Gorani argues, Maria Carolina was not linked to Ferdinand IV by a relationship of love, although, over the years, she resigned herself to the marriage. She refined her techniques and her personal strategies to become increasingly able to exert an influence on her husband and on government affairs. Her intention was to carry out the ambitious project of her mother: the subjugation of the kingdom of Naples to the house of Hapsburg through the extinction of the Bourbon dynasty.⁵⁸

As in the French pamphlets of political pornography, which assigned a secondary role to the king, Gorani's memoirs also assign a less important role to King Ferdinand IV. Some caricatures of him may attest to this given the immediacy of the message and the intensity of their purpose. Relative to France, one of them takes aim at Necker, finance minister for Louis XVI. The scene proposes an interesting combination: Necker is seen pushing a woman into bed who is supposed to be Marie Antoinette.⁵⁹ This very raw representation is accompanied by a simple subtitle: *Les torts M. de Necker envers la France* ('The wrongs Mr. Necker towards France').⁶⁰ This was pointing out, metaphorically, that the wrongs of Necker derived from having taken physical possession of the queen, implying the crime of misconduct of the royal finances. In addition, the queen's body was also presented as the power exercised by Necker: a simple picture, very strong on vulgarity and transgression, used to encapsulate all the wrongs of the minister.⁶¹ Gorani refers to a caricature called 'tableau allegorique' in his book, depicting King Ferdinand IV at the wheel of a carriage dressed as a buffoon, occasionally looking behind to see what Queen Maria Carolina and her minister Acton were plotting.⁶²

Catherine de Médicis et Frédégonde reine de France, aux Enfers, pou servirde supplément et de suite à toutce qui a paru sur la vie de cette princesse (1789); *Essais historique sur la vie de Marie Antoinette d'Autriche, reine de France, pour servir à l'histoire de cette princesse*, Londres (1789).

⁵⁵ Gorani, *Mémoires*, "La honte, le fléau et l'effroi des françois de seizième siècle."

⁵⁶ Gorani, *Mémoires*, 261. "Mais Marie Caroline, mère affectueuse, tendre à l'égard de ses filles, leur prodigua les soins le plus soutenus, et s'occupa de leur éducation comme l'auroit pu faire la mère et l'épouse la plus attachée à ses devoirs. Il n'en a pas été de même pour les princes ses fils.[...] la plus légère étourderie étoit punie comme auroit dû l'être un crime. Mère dénaturée, marâtre impérieuse, elle les voua aux peines de l'instant de leur naissance."

⁵⁷ Gorani, *Mémoires*, 263. "Elle a imaginé de faire en sorte que le royaume de Naples rentre sous la domination de l'Autriche, ce qui ne peut avoir lieu que par l'extinction de la branche male des Bourbons de Naples. L'amitié dont elle a donné constant ment la haine qu'elle a manifestée pour les jeunes princes ne peuvent recevoir d'autres interprétations. [...] Plusieurs enfans détesté au moment de leur naissance, c'est à-dire, avant que l'on put rien préjuger contr'eux... Ah ! j'aime a penser que Marie Caroline est l'unique monstre de cette espèce."

⁵⁸ Gorani, *Mémoires*, 261-262. "Elle hérit la famille dont elle descend, méprise son mari et déteste le pays sur lequel il a la foiblesse de la laisser régner".

⁵⁹ Gorani, *Mémoires*, 261. "Mais Marie Caroline, mère affectueuse, tendre à l'égard de ses filles, leur prodigua les soins le plus soutenus, et s'occupa de leur éducation comme l'auroit pu faire la mère et l'épouse la plus attachée à ses devoirs. Il n'en a pas été de même pour les princes ses fils.[...] la plus légère étourderie étoit punie comme auroit dû l'être un crime. Mère dénaturée, marâtre impérieuse, elle les voua aux peines de l'instant de leur naissance".

⁶⁰ See: L. Hunt, *The invention of Pornography. Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800* (New York: Zone Books, 1996).

⁶¹ See De Baeque, *La caricature révolutionnaire*.

⁶² See Gorani, *Mémoires*, 253-254.

The inclination of the king towards the truth and common good is thwarted by a weakness of character which allowed Queen Maria Carolina to always have ‘the last word’ in the administration of the kingdom’s affairs.⁶³ Maria Carolina had one goal: ‘la suppression de tous les corps et Regimens privilégiés, comme les gardes, the Bataillon des cadets et celui des Liparotes’ (the removal of all body and privileged Regimens as the guards, the Cadet Battalion and that of Liparotes),⁶⁴ to position her Kingdom closer Austria: ‘On choisit l’instant favorable de lui faire signer les édits et d’autres actes d’autorité royale’ (we choose a favorable moment to make him sign the decrees and other acts of royal authority).⁶⁵

Even the character of the queen is introduced by Gorani with the purpose of evaluating his reading of the ‘Austrophobia’ policy: So, the negative side of the personality of Maria Carolina, is introduced to demonstrate and further confirm this picture. Indeed, what may be inferred by Gorani’s narrative is that attacks are often on a personal level involving one’s private life. After having painted her as a bad mother, especially with her sons, the writer does not hesitate to describe the queen as the embodiment of all vices related to the sex lives of all the kings of Europe.⁶⁶ Asking himself rhetorically, he continues on the same theme, pointing out the shortcomings of Maria Carolina in her duties as a wife, mother and queen. Also Gorani judges her to be indifferent and contemptuous of her husband, cold and harsh towards their children and, finally, authoritative and despotic in ruling her own people. It catches one’s eyes again, this analogy to the French pamphlets in which her sister Marie Antoinette was judged a degenerate daughter, wife, mother and queen.⁶⁷

At that time, therefore, the most popular stereotypes and clichés in France were overthrown in the Neapolitan context. Apparently, the two sisters seem identical in terms of political image and personal characteristics, but Gorani’s portrait of Maria Carolina is in reality one of his own construction, formed by simply retrieving images, opinions and stories from the French model, which had been circulating for a long time. In essence, the combined accusations against the two sisters in their corresponding political reigns expose a great deal. They were useful in legitimizing political decisions, supporting the needs of the Revolutionary War and overthrowing the two monarchies. The misfortunes of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI in the revolutionary years fall on the royal Neapolitan couple from Giuseppe Gorani and later Eleonora Fonseca Pimentel, Vincenzo Cuoco, and Francesco Lomonaco. It is a perspective where the domestic issue has been emphasized, because the historiography of the German language shows us an opposite key: from Helfert, especially Corti, Tamussino and Weissensteir. The picture is, unsurprisingly, reversed and Maria Carolina becomes a queen who does not seem responsible for hardly any of the negative portrayals of her which exist within Italian historiography.

Therefore, Gorani’s use of the portrait of Maria Carolina was a useful ploy to

⁶³ Gorani, *Mémoires*, 28. “La reine [...], sait choisir les moments pour en obtenir tout ce qu’elle veut, et de cette manière elle a la plus grande influence dans les affaires”.

⁶⁴ Gorani, *Mémoires*, 28–29.

⁶⁵ Gorani, *Mémoires*, 28.

⁶⁶ Gorani, *Mémoires*, 363. “Elle seule a pu rassembler les vices qui’out souillé celle de son sexe qui, pour le malheur des peuples, ont occupé le divers trônes de l’Europe”.

⁶⁷ There is a specific French pamphlet which includes the same words about Marie Antoinette. See *Têtes a prix, suivi de la liste de toutes les personnes avec la Reine a en liaison de débauches* (Paris: Imprimerie de Pierre Sans Peur, 1792) mentioned in Fleischmann, *Marie Antoinette libertine*, 343.

support, in the eyes of French public opinion, the danger of the Hapsburg court as a whole, and consequently the need to continue 'the fight to the death' against Austria. Therefore, austrophobia played a crucial role in both the lives of Maria Theresa's daughters. They were completely different in their personalities but both were accused in the same way. While the image of Marie Antoinette is anchored to her carelessness and arrogance, Maria Carolina is a victim of the brutal and violent fate of her sister Marie Antoinette. The queen of Naples, whose odyssey had changed her personality and decimated her original vision of monarchy and leadership, played a prominent role in the Enlightened Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and in spite of her reversals of fortune which blighted the end of her reign, she went to her grave as a true ruler and queen.

Appendix: A chronological list of pamphlets dedicated to Queen Marie Antoinette published from 1762–1796

Les adieux de la Fayette ou de Cadet Capet à Antoinette et sa dernier correspondance en fuyant les terres de la liberté, s.d., 1762.

Le Lever de l'aurore, 1774.

L'Autrichienne en goguette, 1779.

Le portefeuille d'un talon rouge contenant des anecdotes galantes et secrètes de la cour de France, 1780.

Le Passe-temps d'Antoinette, Londres, 1781.

Histoire d'un pou français ou l'espion d'un nouvelle espèce, tant en France que en Angleterre contenant les portraits de personnages intéressantes dans ce deux royaume et donnant la clé de principaux événement de l'an 1779 et ce qui doivent arriver en 1780, Paris, 1781.

Godemiché royale, 1787.

La reine dévoilée ou supplément au mémoires de la comtesse de la Motte, Londres, 1789.

Les amours de Charlot et Toinette Paris, 1789.

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