

PHYSICIAN AND DICTATOR:  
A PICTORIAL ESSAY ON LUIGI CARLO  
FARINI (1812-1866) IN HIS HOMELAND

LIJEČNIK I DIKTATOR – FOTOESEJ O LUIGIJU  
CARLU FARINIJU (1812.–1866.) U DOMOVINI

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SUMMARY

*Luigi Carlo Farini (1812-1866) was one of the leading figures in the Italian unification, the Risorgimento. As a physician he always took care of the health problems of its people with a broadminded attitude, promoting for example extensive campaigns of Jennerian vaccination or experimenting the effects of electricity on tetanus. As a political leader - he was proclaimed "Dictator" in 1859 - he made possible the annexation of the Adriatic regions of Emilia and Romagna to the Kingdom of Vittorio Emanuele II of Savoy that later, in March 1861, was to become the new Kingdom of Italy. This article, in connection with the project "Himetoρ - The History of Medicine Topographical Database", offers a brief photographic survey of the location and condition of the monuments and memories of the physician-dictator in his homeland, two hundred years after his birth. Not only the tormented history of his monument in Ravenna, but also his birthplace, hospital, tomb, etc., testify that Farini's memory is well preserved among the people he served as a physician and as a statesman.*

**Key words:** *Italian unification; medicine and politics; cultural heritage; monuments.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the night of 4 September 1944, an air raid hit and almost completely destroyed the marble monument of Luigi Carlo Farini in Ravenna, a few metres away from the railway station (main target of the bombing) and the *Canale Candiano*, an 8 km artificial waterway connecting the town with the Adriatic Sea. That night disappeared - but only temporarily, as we will see - the main monumental tribute (Figure 1) the people of Romagna dedicated to the man who had led them within the new Italian State in March 1860.



Figure 1 – The original 1878 monument of Luigi Carlo Farini in Ravenna in an early 20<sup>th</sup> century postcard.

*Slika 1. Izvorni ravenski spomenik Luigiju Carlu Fariniju iz 1878. na razglednici iz XX. stoljeća*

This brief article is not intended to give a full biographical profile of Farini but only a sample of research on how his memory is preserved in monuments and iconography, two hundred years after his birth, in his native land and, in particular, in the little town of Russi, near Ravenna, where Farini was born and where he has been buried since 1877, eleven years after his death.

This article also wants to give an example of the kind of “cultural heritage” research we are carrying on in the framework of the project “Himetop - The History of Medicine Topographical Database”<sup>1</sup>, with the collaboration

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<sup>1</sup> Available from: <http://himetop.net>

of scholars and students interested in the history of medicine and other health-related subjects in different parts of Italy as well as in other countries. Himetop is a web 2.0 project devoted to the location, photographic and bibliographic documentation, and cultural promotion of the material traces left by the history of medical and health sciences, such as ancient hospitals, medical schools, specialised museums and libraries, monuments, and birthplaces and tombs of their protagonists<sup>2</sup>.

In my opinion, the evocative power of monuments and other places of historical relevance has not only a generic cultural relevance but also a specific educational and inspirational value for students and young professionals, especially those in the medical and healthcare fields, which are getting more complex by the minute and present an ethical challenge.

### WHO WAS LUIGI CARLO FARINI?

That said, however, I should start with a few biographical facts.<sup>3</sup> Luigi Carlo Farini was born in Russi, near Ravenna on 22 October 1812, the first son of the village pharmacist, Stefano. During his adolescence and youth he was strongly influenced by his paternal uncle Domenico Antonio Farini (1777-1834)<sup>4</sup>, a naturalist and patriot who, while teaching him the fundamentals of philosophy and mathematics, was also able to transmit the patriotic values of “the love for independence, for the dignity of Italy”<sup>5</sup>.

After a typical basic education at home, Farini studied medicine at the University of Bologna and graduated brilliantly with a work on arthritis on 27 June 1832, when he was not yet twenty<sup>6</sup>. The following year, he married an 18 year old Genevieffa Cassani, to whom he would be bound for life and, even after 23 years of marriage, still propose to write “a love poem”<sup>7</sup>.

He started working as a country doctor and, although restrained now and then in medical career by his liberal ideas, did research, published popular essays on pellagra and malaria, and even experimented with the effects of electricity on tetanus in collaboration with physicist Carlo Matteucci<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Borghi 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Badiali 1878, Pasi 2002, Pasi 2011, De Pasquale 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Montanari 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Badiali 1878, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Pasi 2002, p. 128.

<sup>7</sup> De Pasquale 2011, p. 81; Rava 1911-1935, vol. 4, p. 171.

<sup>8</sup> De Pasquale 2011, p. 85; Pasi 2011, p. 356.

In 1843, when the government of the Papal States became more authoritarian and repressive, Farini was forced into exile, first to France (1843-1844) and then to Tuscany, where he could be reunited with his family.

During this period, Farini became more and more involved in health problems of the rural population and was commissioned by the Health Authority of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany to do a research about health and sanitary conditions in rice-field workers. The results of his work were published in a long essay of 1845: “*Sulle quistioni sanitarie ed economiche agitate in Italia intorno alle Risaie - Studi e ricerche*” (On health and economic issues related to Italian rice fields: Studies and research)<sup>9</sup>.

In that same year, Farini undertook a similar investigation about the organisation and administration of hospitals. We are impressed with the methodological and statistical accuracy of Farini, who designs a 66-item questionnaire and sends it to colleagues and friends in order to collect - “as soon as possible” - reliable and specific information on the hospitals of his beloved Romagna<sup>10</sup>. For example, he wants to know: “*If the number of beds for women is equal to that for men*”(§ 2); “*If the sick with tuberculosis or syphilis are segregated*”(§ 14); or “*If autopsies of all the dead are carried out, and if records of them are taken*”(§ 40)<sup>11</sup>.

While in Tuscany, due to his remarkable professional prestige, he became a personal physician (1845-1847) to Jérôme-Napoléon-Charles-Frédéric Bonaparte, a sickly nephew of Napoleon I, who took Farini with him to Turin and introduced him to the political circles of the House of Savoy, then reigning over the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia. During this short stay in Turin, Farini became convinced that monarchy alone was the future of Italy and finally dissociated himself from the republicans of Giuseppe Mazzini<sup>12</sup>.

Farini entered politics for the first time during the “liberal phase” of the papacy of Pius IX (1847-1848), acting in Rome as Vice Minister of the Interior and later as Director-General of Health, Hospitals, and Prisons, a role that enabled him to promote - among many other measures of sanitation - an

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<sup>9</sup> Pasi 2002, pp. 166-169. For a full list of Farini’s medical and scientific writings, see *ibidem*, pp. 233-236.

<sup>10</sup> Rava 1911-1935, vol. I, pp. 315-323.

<sup>11</sup> Rava 1911-1935, vol. I, pp. 317-319. In January 1849, while acting in Rome as General director of Health, Hospitals and Prisons (see below), Farini will send an extended version of the questionnaire (90 items) to all hospital directors in the Pontifical States (*ibidem*, vol. III, pp. 4-11), .

<sup>12</sup> De Pasquale 2011, pp. 93-96.

extensive campaign of Jennerian vaccination<sup>13</sup>. He wanted cow-pox inoculation to be free for the poor and compulsory for prisoners<sup>14</sup>. On 22 February 1849, Farini wrote a letter to the Directors of Hospitals in the Pontifical State, lamenting the lack of habit of collecting clinical histories of patients, emphasising its importance for the medical statistics, and strongly encouraging the adoption of a standard form to this end<sup>15</sup>. Despite this important reforming activity, once again the political tides in Rome turned against him...

Being looked upon with suspicion by both the republican leaders of the short-lived *Repubblica Romana* (November 1848 - July 1849) and by the clerical leaders of the restored Pontifical Government, Farini took refuge in Piedmont, where he obtained the citizenship of the Savoy State in 1850<sup>16</sup>.

During the 1850s, despite his wish to lead a quiet life close to his family and to pursue his medical profession, Farini was more and more involved in public and political life as a member of the Parliament, Minister of Education and, last but not least, as a highly regarded ghost-writer for the King Vittorio Emanuele II and the Prime Minister Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, who became his intimate friend.

Farini's public career reached its climax during the hectic months following the Second Italian Independence War (April-July 1859), when the Treaty of Villafranca between Napoleon III and Francis Joseph to end the Franco-Piedmontese war against Austria thwarted the plans of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia to legally annex the states of central Italy (including Romagna, which was part of the Pontifical State) deserted by their former sovereigns and authorities. Farini, who was enthusiastically received in Modena in June 1859 as the representative of the King of Piedmont-Sardinia was now proclaimed the "Dictator" of the town and, step by step, of the neighbouring provinces of Emilia and Romagna. The physician-dictator could now set in motion a plebiscite in which the people were to choose whether to establish an independent kingdom or to become part of the Kingdom of Vittorio Emanuele II of Savoy. Farini's wish came true with a landslide vote of 426.006 people in favour of the annexation against only 756 votes in favour of an independent kingdom<sup>17</sup>. On 18 March 1860, Farini arrived in Turin to present

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<sup>13</sup> De Pasquale 2011, p. 101.

<sup>14</sup> Pasi 2002, p. 200.

<sup>15</sup> Letter, 22 February 1849, in Rava 1911-1935, vol. III, pp. 37-38.

<sup>16</sup> De Pasquale 2011, pp. 102 ff.

<sup>17</sup> De Pasquale 2011, p. 118.

to the King the results of the plebiscite<sup>18</sup> that made his homeland Romagna part of what would become Kingdom of Italy a year later.

This success brought new serious responsibilities in the years to come (Minister of the Interior, Deputy of the King in the Neapolitan provinces after their liberation by Giuseppe Garibaldi, and even Prime Minister for a few months between 1862 and 1863). Farini's mental health, however, had quickly deteriorated (a form of Alzheimer?)<sup>19</sup> and in March 1863, he was institutionalised in Novalesa near Turin, and later transferred to Quarto di Genova, where he died on 1 August 1866.

### MEMORIES OF FARINI IN HIS HOMELAND

The gratitude of Italian people for Farini was sincere even though in some ways belated. His fellow citizens of Russi readily welcomed his major political success of annexation to Piedmont and on 23 November 1860, the municipality of Russi named after him the main street, in which Farini was born. On that occasion, a sculptor from Ravenna, Enrico Pazzi, was commissioned to make a marble monument with a bust of Farini, a bas-relief of the "Dictator" handing over to the King the results of the annexation plebiscite, and a laudatory inscription. The monument was inaugurated on 21 December 1862<sup>20</sup> and has been preserved in perfect condition in the town hall (Figure 2).

After his death, Farini was neglected among colleagues and political supporters for a while, possibly due to the embarrassing last days of his life due to a mental illness. As a matter of fact, his body had initially been buried in Turin, to be solemnly transferred to his native town not before 20 May 1877, according to a tombstone inscription at the cemetery of Russi, or the beginning of June 1878, according to other sources<sup>21</sup>.

In any case, the year 1878 was the occasion to pay a nationwide tribute to the memory of Luigi Carlo Farini, when his son Domenico was for the first time elected President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies<sup>22</sup>. After a

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<sup>18</sup> Badiali 1878, pp. 228-9.

<sup>19</sup> Pasi 2002, p. 224.

<sup>20</sup> Pazzi 1887, pp. 95-5 and 366; misc. authors 1894, p. 15; Servizio Civile Volontario 2011, n. 9 (which erroneously states: 31 December 1862).

<sup>21</sup> *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia* 1878, p.2297; Pasi 2002, p. 230; De Pasquale 2011, p. 122, comment.

<sup>22</sup> See the Italian Chamber of Deputies historical website at: <http://storia.camera.it/presidenti/farini-domenico>.





Figure 2 – Bas-relief of Luigi Carlo Farini by Enrico Pazzi (1862), council chamber of the town hall in Russi

*Slika 2. Bareljef Luigija Carla Farinija autora Enrica Pazzija (1862.), vijećnica gradske skupštine u Russiju*

solemn commemoration, the Parliament sent a delegation on 9 June 1878 to attend the unveiling of another marble monument of Farini by Enrico Pazzi<sup>23</sup> in Ravenna. Beside the personal representative of the new King Umberto I, the delegation included the Prime Minister Benedetto Cairoli, the Minister of the Interior Zanardelli, the Minister of the Public Works Baccharini (he too a native of Russi), Farini's son Domenico, and the former Prime Minister Marco Minghetti<sup>24</sup>.

After the Allied bombing in 1944, only the damaged head of the physician was recovered by Riccardo Lanzoni, then honorary inspector at Ravenna's Superintendence of Monuments, and later donated to the Municipality of

<sup>23</sup> Enrico Pazzi was entrusted with this task in 1872. He proposed a preliminary model which was approved in May 1873; then, in May 1876, he sent to Ravenna the definitive marble monument that had to wait two years in a storehouse of Ravenna's Municipality (see Pazzi 1887, pp. 125 ff.).

<sup>24</sup> *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia* 1878.



Figure 3 – Luigi Carlo Farini’s portrait, Town Museum, Russi

*Slika 3. Portret Luigija Carla Farinija, Muzej grada Russi*

of the physician-dictator, the museum visitors can admire an oil on canvas portrait of a middle-aged Farini (Figure 3). This anonymous painting was Farini’s gift to his friend Elisabetta Venturi Bertozzi, whose granddaughter Maria Luisa Casarini Goggia later donated it to the Municipality of Russi<sup>29</sup>.

The day after the inauguration of the monument in Ravenna in 1878, the delegation travelled to Russi by train and attended a commemoration of Farini in the hall of fame of the local cemetery<sup>30</sup>. His mortal remains had been buried some time before in the pedestal of the plaster statue used by Enrico Pazzi to model the marble statue of Ravenna and then donated to the town of Russi<sup>31</sup>. On both Pazzi’s plaster model and the marble statue Farini is represented tearing up the Treaty of Villafranca as the turning point in Farini’s life and political career. On that occasion, Minister Alfredo Baccarini spoke warmly about his late friend and fellow citizen, followed by the Prime Minister Benedetto Cairoli and many others<sup>32</sup>.

Farini’s hometown<sup>25</sup>. This fragment is now on display in the Town Museum of Russi, located in a medieval fortress, which in the 19<sup>th</sup> century served as the local hospital<sup>26</sup>.

As a young physician, Luigi Carlo Farini worked closely with that hospital, having been appointed head physician of the district of Russi since 1839<sup>27</sup>. In 1844, the hospital administration wrote a letter expressing their “most bitter pain” for having lost Farini to exile<sup>28</sup>. It is therefore not surprising that the brand-new Town Museum of Russi treasures Farini’s memory so dearly.

In addition to the marble “head”

<sup>25</sup> Domenicali 2010, pp. 50-51.

<sup>26</sup> Silvagni 1996; Pasi 2006, p. 25 *passim*.

<sup>27</sup> Silvagni 1996, pp. 105-6.

<sup>28</sup> Silvagni 1996, p. 106.

<sup>29</sup> Cavallo 2011, p. 195.

<sup>30</sup> *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d’Italia* 1878, p. 2297.

<sup>31</sup> Pazzi 1887, pp. 131-2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.





Figure 4 – Memorial tablet dedicated to Luigi Carlo and Domenico Farini, Russi

*Slika 4. Spomen-ploča posvećena Luigiju Carlu i Domenicu Fariniju, Russi*

Even though the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* does not give it a mention, the delegation probably also visited the house where Farini was born in 1812, just above the chemist run by his father Stefano and his uncle Pietro<sup>33</sup>. A few days earlier - on 2 June 1878 - the Municipality had placed a memorial tablet (Figure 4) in homage to Luigi Carlo Farini and his uncle Domenico Antonio<sup>34</sup>. The inscription in Italian - dictated by Alfredo Baccharini - says as follows:

LUIGI CARLO FARINI / IN QUESTA CASA L'ALBA  
DELLA VITA / 22 OTTOBRE 1812 / IN NERVI LIGURE IL  
TRAMONTO / 1 AGOSTO 1866 / NELLA PALESTRA MEDICA  
RIFULSE. / STORICO A SE' LA GLORIA, / ALLA PATRIA  
PREPARO' L'AVVENIRE. / SCONFESSATA VILAFRANCA  
/ FU DITTATORE DELL'EMILIA / DANDO ARRA SECURA /  
ALL'UNITA' NAZIONALE / NEI CONSIGLI, COME NELLE VECI  
/ DI RE VITTORIO EMANUELE / AL SOMMO DEL GOVERNO  
/ COME NEI TRIBOLI DELLO ESILIO, / INTEGRA SERBO' LA  
FEDE / NELLA LIBERTA'<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> De Pasquale 2011, p. 77.

<sup>34</sup> Montanari 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Pasi 2002, pp. 230-1. Loosely translated into English, the inscription says the following: *Luigi Carlo Farini saw the dawn of his life in this house on 22 October 1812 and the dusk of his days in Nervi Ligure on 1 August 1866. He excelled in medicine. As a historian, he ensured glory for himself and the future for his country. He denounced Villafranca and ruled Emilia, paying his tribute to the unity of the nation. As a counsellor and the King's deputy, at the height of his rule as much as in his days of exile, he had always preserved intact his faith in freedom.*



Figure 5 – Tombstone of Luigi Carlo Farini and Genevieffa Cassani, Russi cemetery

*Slika 5. Nadgrobnna ploča Luigija Carla Farinija i Genevieffe Cassani, groblje u Russiju*

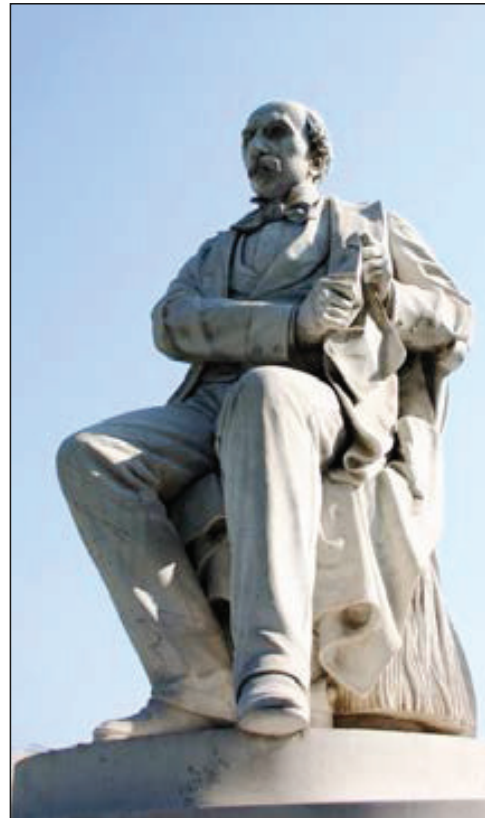


Figure 6 – The new monument of Farini (1995) by Giannantonio Bucci, Ravenna

*Slika 6. Novi spomenik Fariniju (1995.) autora Giannantonija Buccija, Ravenna*

After the commemoration, the spotlights and the memory faded for a while. On 4 November 1887, the remains of Farini were transferred one final time to a nearby family vault, to rest beside his beloved wife Genevieffa, who had died on 4 May 1882 (Figure 5). The inscription by an unknown author puts it quite emphatically:

HIS BODY IS HERE / HIS NAME IN THE HEART OF THE  
ITALIAN PEOPLE.



Figure 7 – The new monument of Farini (1995) in its context, Ravenna  
*Slika 7. Novi Farinijev spomenik (1995.) u svome ravenskom okruženju*

### CONCLUSION: AFTER THE BOMBING

This brief itinerary through Luigi Carlo Farini’s places and monuments in his homeland shows that his memory is kept well alive by “local institutions” and a few connoisseurs, eager not to let the moral legacy of Farini as a physician and as a statesman go to waste. This is particularly evident when, in the 1990s, a committee was established in Ravenna for the reconstruction of Farini’s destroyed monument. The task was entrusted to Ravenna’s artist Giannantonio Bucci, who, relying on the plaster model of the original Pazzi’s statue, sculpted a marble copy of the monument (Figure 6)<sup>36</sup>. The new monument was unveiled on 2 June 1995 and stands today in front of the railway station in a contemporary urban context designed

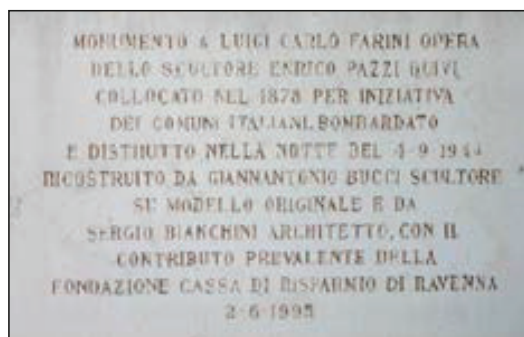


Figure 8. A view of the plaque on the monument

*Slika 8. Tekst ploče na spomeniku*

<sup>36</sup> Pasi 2002, tav. XXIV.

by architect Sergio Bianchini (Figure 7 and 8). Farini had always remained attached to his fellow citizens even if he occasionally would not spare them a dig, for instance about their stinginess: “To the inquisitive people of Russi, who would ask about me, you can tell that I secured myself one thousand crowns a year for serving just one family as a physician; tell it especially to those who thought that I didn’t work enough to earn the 177 crowns a year for serving three thousand people there”<sup>37</sup>.

And his fellow citizens, even if sometimes a little “sparing”, did not forget him!

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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<sup>37</sup> De Pasquale 2011, p. 95; Rava 1911-35, vol.1, p.525.

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## SAŽETAK

*Luigi Carlo Farini (1812.–1866.) bio je vodeća ličnost u pokretu ujedinjena Italije, tzv. Risorgimentu. Kao liječnik, uvijek se širokogrudno brinuo za zdravlje svog naroda, promičući kampanje poput Jennerova cijepljenja ili ispitujući djelovanje električne struje na tetanus. Kao politički vođa – 1859. proglašen je “Diktatorom” – omogućio je pripojenje jadranskih područja Emilije i Romagne kraljevstvu Viktora Emanuela II. od Savoje, koje je poslije, u ožujku 1861., postalo Kraljevina Italija. Ovaj članak, povezan s projektom pod nazivom “Himetop – topografska baza podataka povijesti medicine”, daje kratki fotografski pregled lokacija i stanja spomenika i uspomena posvećenih ovom liječniku-diktatoru u domovini dvjesto godina nakon njegova rođenja. Nesretni događaji vezani uz njegov spomenik u Ravenni, njegovo rodno mjesto, bolnica i grob već dovoljno svjedoče koliko je očuvano sjećanje na Farinija među narodom kojem je služio kao liječnik i državnik.*

**Ključne riječi:** *ujedinjenje Italije, medicina i politika, kulturno nasljedstvo, spomenici*