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Massimiliano Demata

Translation and revolution: the case of Guglielmo Pepe's *Relazione delle circostanze relative agli avvenimenti politici e militari in Napoli, nel 1820 e nel 1821*.

When we talk about Guglielmo Pepe, we refer to a key figure in the history of Italian Risorgimento and a very important military officer in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies who followed the roller coaster-like evolution of revolutionary movements in Italy in the first half of the nineteenth century. He first joined the Neapolitan Republic in 1799, but lost the struggle against Cardinal Ruffo's troops and was exiled to France. In 1813 he returned to Italy and led the Neapolitan army of Joaquin Murat, fighting against the Austrians. On the fall of Murat and the return of King Ferdinand IV, Pepe retained his post and organized the local carbonari into some kind of militia acting as an instrument of pressure to the king, who eventually granted a liberal constitution. However, the king had no intention to respect his promise, and secretly negotiated with the Austrians for a return of the absolute monarchy. This is what happened in March 1821, when Pepe's army was defeated in Rieti by the Austrians and constitutional hopes collapsed. Pepe was forced again into exile, this time to England, but this was not the end of the story: he re-entered the history of Risorgimento later on, when in 1848 he joined the Neapolitan army again, after another false promise of a constitution, then joined the Venetian army, which was then defeated by the Austrians.

For all his life, even facing defeat and despair, Pepe was always on the side of freedom and against despotic or tyrannical governments. Not surprisingly, he has entered the historical canon of Risorgimento. Nowadays, there is nearly no town or village in the south of Italy without a Via Guglielmo Pepe. Yet, his name is remembered better than his many writings, which have fallen into oblivion, and his frequent mention in histories and accounts of Risorgimento is not matched by a full awareness of the content and impact of his works, which enjoyed some degree of popularity beyond Italy itself, as they were also printed in both Great Britain and France.

In my paper I will look at Pepe's first major work, *Relazione delle circostanze relative agli avvenimenti politici e militari in Napoli, nel 1820 e nel 1821*, by addressing two interrelated issues. First, I will look at the English translation of his work, which was published with the title *A Narrative of the Political and Military Events, which took place at Naples, in 1820 and 1821*. In particular, I will analyse the differences between the two texts, the Italian one and the English one, and I will see how the English text, while being a largely literal, almost word-for-word translation of the Italian text, is characterized by certain key differences which to a certain degree modify the meaning of the original text. My point is that the translator altered the text and in doing so he or she presented Pepe's ideas under a different light: the two texts address two different audiences, and the translating strategies adopted for the English text to a certain extent accommodate Pepe's work to the British audience.

The issues related to the English translation of the text point to the second important theme addressed in this paper. Risorgimento historians have largely misread Pepe's first work by firmly associating it to the canon of Italian Risorgimento. Instead, what emerges from a close reading of the *Relazione* is that we should not speak specifically of Italian Risorgimento, but rather of *Neapolitan* Risorgimento. Pepe does not make any mention of an Italian "patria"; rather, he is fighting against the Austrians because he does not want them to interfere with the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, as it had been known since 1816.¹

1.

¹ The two nominally separated Kingdoms, the Kingdom of Naples and the Kingdom of Sicily, were formally united under a single sovereign in 1816.

When Pepe arrived in Britain in mid-August 1821, he admittedly did not know a word of English. He eventually learned English within a few years, but he could certainly not have written or translated the *Relazione* in English which, according to the date that was printed at its beginning, was finished on 30 September 1821. What is certain is that, as soon as he arrived in London, Pepe was befriended by a few fellow Italian exiles, most notably Ugo Foscolo, and enjoyed the company and the respect of some of the leading liberals and Whigs of the time, especially those attending Holland House, the aristocratic circle with the strongest links with continental reformers and revolutionaries, including those exiled from Italy.² Pepe's acquaintances included the poet Thomas Campbell, Lord Holland and Earl Gray as well as ardent reformers such as Sir Francis Burdett, Major John Cartwright and Sir James Macintosh.³ It was indeed Macintosh himself, a leading radical, who reviewed the translation of Pepe's text in view of its English publication. On the other hand, we do not have any indication about the identity of the translator, and no documentary evidence for that has been found so far.⁴ The interesting thing is that Pepe's *Relazione* was first published in its English translation in 1821, with the title *A Narrative of the Political and Military Events, which took place at Naples, in 1820 and 1821*, and then in the following year, in 1822, in its Italian original. This is quite a rare case of a translation published before the original or, in translation studies terms, a target text published before the source text.

Pepe's work was a passionate and detailed account of the military and political events in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies during the momentous years of 1820-21, when constitutional hopes were enthusiastically raised in various parts of Italy, only to be sadly shattered by the ruthless repression of the Austrians. The work, addressed to the King of the Two Sicilies, describes in great detail Pepe's military actions in that period, including the inglorious episode of Rieti, and argues that the final defeat of his troops and of constitutional hopes in the kingdom were due less to military weakness than to the king's scheming and indecision. The book was very well received (in fact, besides its English and Italian versions, it also had a French translation), and among its admirers was Foscolo, who wrote to Pepe and commented on the book, saying "«Viva, tre volte viva»" and claiming that he was moved to tears upon finishing reading the *Relazione*.⁵ We know that it also had some English admirers, including Lord Holland, a major Whig leader and patron, who praised Pepe in an enthusiastic letter.⁶

While we know that Pepe did write a work relating the events of 1820-21, what appeared at the time were actually *two* texts (or indeed *three*, if we count the French translation), addressed to two (or three) different audiences. Did the translation in English fully and faithfully reflect the original meaning of Pepe's work, or were there differences generated in the act of translating itself, differences that then modified the original meaning of the work in some measure? Indeed, a comparative analysis of the Italian and the English texts reveals a few small but significant differences, and while the core meaning of the source text is by and large kept intact in the target text, the differences between the Italian text and the English one may point to the different

² The central role played by Holland House in gathering Italian exiles is discussed in M. Isabella, 2009, *Risorgimento in Exile. Italian Émigrés and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 113-14.

³ Pepe's relationship with Campbell is discussed in some detail by Mary Ruth Miller, "Thomas Campbell and General Pepe", *Notes and Queries* (June 1998), 45, pp. 211-14. On Pepe's place within the community of Italian exiles in London and on his relationship with British liberals and reformers, see M. C. W. Wicks, *The Italian Exiles in London, 1816-1848*, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1937, pp. 67-72.

⁴ In his *Memorie*, Pepe talks about the translation of a pamphlet discussing the reasons of the defeat of the libertarian hopes in Naples, Portugal and Spain in 1820-21. The pamphlet was translated by major Cartwright's niece and was published in the *Pamphleteer* in 1824. However, Pepe fails to give any mention of who the translator of the *Relazione* was. G. Pepe, *Memorie del Generale Guglielmo Pepe intorno alla sua vita e ai recenti casi d'Italia scritte da lui medesimo*, 2 vols., Paris: Baudry, 1847, vol. 2, p. 159.

⁵ *Ivi*, p. 161.

⁶ Lord Holland's letter to Guglielmo Pepe, 3 January 1822, in F. Carrano, *Vita di Guglielmo Pepe*, Torino: Biancardi, 1857, p. 298.

ideological and social perspectives of the two audiences whom the two works, the original and its translation, were addressing.

To begin with, in the Italian “Prefazione”, Pepe explains why he has decided to write his work. At the end of the “Prefazione”, we find a footnote which says:

Prego i lettori di portare la loro attenzione su de' fatti che contiene la mia relazione, e non già allo stile di essa, poichè io non aspiro al merito di scrittore.⁷

The footnote of the Italian text is included in the text of the English “Preface”, but not as a footnote, but rather as the final three lines of the main body of the text of the Preface:

I have farther to request, that he will direct his attention to the facts which it contains, and overlook the imperfections of the style, for which I am sensible I have occasion for all his indulgence.⁸

Judging from his own words, Pepe was clearly anxious of the reception of his work. However, in the English text this rather awkward disclaimer takes on a different meaning: it sounds as if the English translator was trying to bypass Pepe’s humble attitude, as Pepe’s statement that he does not wish to become a writer («io non aspiro al merito di scrittore») is left out in the English version and replaced by his hope for “indulgence”. This may have been caused by the fact that perhaps his book had to be presented in Britain as a serious historical work, while in Italy it was likely to be taken as a personal chronicle as well as a direct attack to the King. If Pepe’s apologetic tone could be suitable for an Italian-speaking audience, who was familiar with, and could easily relate to, the tragedy of Naples and of the book’s author, his tone would not sit well among the British audience, who was less prone to Pepe’s self-victimization as both an author and an exiled general.

Indeed, Pepe’s publisher, Treuttel and Wurtz, were well-established publishers of books of a very high standards, with both a London and a Paris imprint. Examples are Giovanni Battista Spotorno, a historian, whose *Historical Memoir of Christopher Columbus* came out in 1823, and Ferdinando Galiani, a famous Neapolitan economist, whose *Correspondence* was published by the publisher’s French imprint in 1818. Compared to these and other titles, Pepe’s work might have run the risk of sounding quite dilettantesque if it had included such an apologetic disclaimer at the end of its preface.⁹

In the English translation, the subjective tone of the Italian original is softened in other occasions too. For example, Pepe addresses the King of Naples, «Sire», at the beginning of many passages of the Italian text, thus giving a personal, direct tone to his words. In the English text, this address (which is also «Sire» in English) is not always maintained. For example:

Sire, tanti atti spontanei, e l’aver conservato le istituzioni giudiziarie ed amministrative del decennio, alimentarono il genio e le speranze de’ Napoletani pel regime costituzionale. Essi credevano di rinvenire nella vostra condotta una quasi autorizzazione di comperarsi in tutti i modi all’abolizione del potere assoluto. A molti era facile di persuadere se stessi, ed anche il popolo, che V. M.

⁷ G. Pepe, *Relazione delle circostanze relative agli avvenimenti politici e militari in Napoli, nel 1820 e nel 1821*, Parigi, 1822, p. 8.

⁸ G. Pepe, *A Narrative of the Political and Military Events, which took place at Naples, in 1820 and 1821*, London: Treuttel and Würtz, 1821, p. 9.

⁹ Pepe would again highlight his lack of literary pretensions in his own *Memorie*. In his *Memorie*, Pepe talks about the translation of a pamphlet discussing the reasons of the defeat of the libertarian hopes in Naples, Portugal and Spain in 1820-21. The pamphlet was translated by major Cartwright’s niece and was published in the Pamphleteer in 1824. However, Pepe fails to give any mention of who the translator of the *Relazione* was. G. Pepe, *Memorie del Generale Guglielmo Pepe intorno alla sua vita e ai recenti casi d’Italia scritte da lui medesimo*, 2 vols., Paris: Baudry, 1847, vol. 2, p. 161.

desiderava mantener le sue promesse, ma ne veniva frastornato, o da' Ministri, o dalla influenza austriaca.¹⁰

No wonder that so many spontaneous acts, and the preservation of the judicial and administrative institutions of the French government, kept alive the disposition, and the hopes, of the Neapolitans for a constitutional government. They believed that your conduct in a manner authorized them to cooperate in all ways in the abolition of absolute power. It was natural for them to persuade themselves that your Majesty wished to fulfil your promises, but that you were diverted from it by your ministers, or by Austrian influence.¹¹

Through such omissions, something is left out in the English text, which appears somehow more impersonal, with a lessening of the subjective tone. A similar strategy appears in another passage:

E perchè questo cambiamento in poco tempo nelle popolazioni che formavano le guardie nazionali, e perchè queste volentieri eseguivano un servizio sì faticoso? Io parlava loro di bene pubblico, e di gloria patria, ed esse nelle numerosissime riunioni segrete imparavano a valutare si fatto linguaggio.¹²

From whence then arose this speedy change among the population from which the national guards were formed, and how came they to execute so cheerfully such fatiguing duties? The public good, and the glory of their country, were held up to them, and in their numerous secret meetings they had learned to appreciate that language.¹³

The clause “The public good, and the glory of their country, were held up to them” employs passivization, a grammatical transformation by which a verb in the active form is transformed into a passive one and the agent of the action is removed. In the English text, Pepe’s own voice disappears, and the meaning of the whole sentence becomes less personal. Who talked to the Neapolitan revolutionaries about «bene pubblico» and «Gloria patria», the «public good» and «the glory of their country»? In the English text the answer is not clear. As a result of the passivization, there is a personal element missing in the translation. Just like in the previous example, with the disappearance of the personal address «Sire», it sounds as if, in certain key passages, the translator wants to give a more objective tone to the work.

While the above cases may point to a different presentation of the subject matter in the two versions, on a lexical level most of the English text is apparently very close to the English translation. The translator of the *Relazione* was helped by the substantial similarity of the Italian and English military and political terms. Pepe’s lexis is by and large maintained in the English text with close equivalents:

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| bene della patria | the good of our country |
| bene nazionale | the good of the nation |
| carbonari | <i>Carbonari</i> |
| la carboneria | The sect of the <i>Carbonari</i> |
| Costituzione liberale | liberal constitution |
| dittatura militare | military dictatorship |
| esercito | army |
| gendarmeria | <i>gendarmes</i> |

¹⁰ G. Pepe, *Relazione delle circostanze relative agli avvenimenti politici e militari in Napoli, nel 1820 e nel 1821*, Parigi, 1822, pp. 12-13

¹¹ G. Pepe, *A Narrative of the Political and Military Events, which took place at Naples, in 1820 and 1821*, London: Treuttel and Würtz, 1821, pp. 14-15.

¹² G. Pepe, *Relazione delle circostanze relative agli avvenimenti politici e militari in Napoli, nel 1820 e nel 1821*, Parigi, 1822, pp. 14-15.

¹³ G. Pepe, *A Narrative of the Political and Military Events, which took place at Naples, in 1820 and 1821*, London: Treuttel and Würtz, 1821, p. 16.

| | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| giunta | junta |
| giunta governativa | junta of government |
| governo | government |
| governo assoluto | absolute power |
| indipendenza | independence |
| nazione | nation |
| nostra patria | our country |
| la nostra bella patria | our beautiful country |
| Re costituzionale | constitutional monarch |
| Regno di Napoli | Kingdom of Naples |

However, some of the translator's lexical and graphic choices emphasise a sense of distance between Italy and England. This is the case of «Carboneria», the Italian secret revolutionary society which gave a strong impulse to movements against foreign domination in Italy. Indeed, Pepe was a carbonaro himself, although the Neapolitan carbonari under his guidance could do little against the Austrians in 1821. In the English version of Pepe's text, «la carboneria» becomes «the sect of the *Carbonari*», while «carbonari» in the Italian text becomes «*Carbonari*» in the English one. In both cases, the Italian loan word is italicised, a strategy often used in English to signal a foreign word. Furthermore, the carbonari themselves are identified by the English translator as a «sect», a term which, while giving an explanation to the English reading public of the nature of the «*Carbonari*», also carried with it a negative connotation. Indeed, in the early nineteenth-century England, the idea of a secret society is something that would be quite stranger to the local social and political sensibility, and Pepe was assured of this by Lord Holland himself.¹⁴

Another example in the use of italics as a sign of distance between Italy and England can be found when Pepe describes the events of Naples in terms of revolution:

A torto però si è creduto, o si è voluto far credere il cambiamento politico di Napoli una rivoluzione militare, mentre, se anche rivoluzione chiamar si volesse, dovrebbe dirsi nazionale, poichè l'entusiasmo di un giovane sottotenente fù causa che la truppa desse la prima il segno ad un movimento al quale tendevano tutti i Napoletani.¹⁵

It is a great mistake to believe, or to wish to make it believed, that the political change at Naples was a *military revolution*, for allowing the propriety of applying the term revolution to such a movement, it must be admitted to have been national, as the enthusiasm of a young sublieutenant only led his troop to give the signal of a movement in which every Neapolitan was prepared to join.¹⁶

As in the case of carbonari, the translator chooses to signal certain specific terms in the translated text by putting them in italics: by putting «the sect of the *carbonari*» and «*military revolution*» in italics, the translator wants to emphasise the specificity and the exotic nature of certain concepts when presenting them to a British audience: when talking about the military revolution the translator wants to emphasise the strangeness of a concept which Italian audiences were rather familiar with, but which in Britain would be looked at with a certain degree of suspicion.

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¹⁴ G. Pepe, *Memorie del Generale Guglielmo Pepe intorno alla sua vita e ai recenti casi d'Italia scritte da lui medesimo*, 2 vols., Paris: Baudry, 1847, vol. 2, p. 160. See L. Manfredi, *L'uomo delle tre rivoluzioni. Vita e pensiero del generale Guglielmo Pepe*, Foggia: Bastoni, 2009, p. 218, and M. C. W. Wicks, *The Italian Exiles in London, 1816-1848*, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1937, p. 70.

¹⁵ G. Pepe, *Relazione delle circostanze relative agli avvenimenti politici e militari in Napoli, nel 1820 e nel 1821*, Parigi, 1822, pp. 20-21.

¹⁶ G. Pepe, *A Narrative of the Political and Military Events, which took place at Naples, in 1820 and 1821*, London: Treuttel and Würtz, 1821, pp. 21-22.

Another important aspect related to the audience that Pepe wanted to reach with his work is the European dimension that resonates in many pages of the *Relazione*. This aspect is connected to Pepe's own notion of Risorgimento. While an exile in Britain, Pepe did his best to promote revolutionary movements all over Europe. Among his grandiose (and over-ambitious) plans was the foundation of a society which he called the Fratelli Costituzionali d'Europa (Constitutional Brothers of Europe). The aim of this society was the establishment of a network of revolutionaries all over the continent who were supposed to exchange information and make each other aware of any revolutionary project.¹⁷ Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that in his work Pepe was addressing not just an Italian audience, but a European one:

In questo stato di cose, nel primo Ottobre, io deposi il comando in capo nelle mani di V. M. e l'Europa troppo conosce i dettagli di quella giornata, che la nazione Napoletana non dimenticherà mai.¹⁸

In this state of things, on the 1st of October, I resigned the command in chief into the hands of your Majesty, and Europe is too well acquainted with the transactions of that memorable day, which the Neapolitans will never forget.¹⁹

In a work addressed to the King of Naples, Pepe is appealing to a broadly shared knowledge of events. Both a rhetorical and an ideological strategy, Pepe's awareness of the European events which he is communicating to his audience is taken as a point of reference and as an instrument lending persuasive force to his arguments. In the *Relazione* there are also frequent references to the European dimension of the Neapolitan events:

Al primo di novembre si volle imperiosamente ch'io assumessi l'ispezione generale delle guardie nazionali, ed in breve tempo se ne organizzarono al di là di cento ventimila, e di esse più della metà si vestirono a proprie spese, senza comprendere la guardia di sicurezza di Napoli a piedi ed a cavallo, di cui non si era veduta una più bella nelle altre capitali d'Europa.²⁰

On the 1st of November, I was absolutely forced to take the inspection of the national guards, of whom, in a very short time more than one hundred and twenty thousand were organized; half of these were clothed at their own expence, without including the horse and foot guard of safety at Naples, as fine a body of men as were ever seen in any other capital of Europe.²¹

Interestingly, here as in other passages of the work, the issue of a capital other than Naples is not even remotely suggested, as Naples is firmly considered the capital of a European nation – the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. In this sense, Pepe's work does not have an exclusively Neapolitan or local dimension. He is aware of the role played by the Kingdom within Europe's diplomacy, and he also knows that by appealing to non-Italians his message could be more convincing. Another example of Pepe's attitude comes at the end of a long tirade supporting the liberal Constitution in Naples:

¹⁷ G. Pepe, *Memorie del Generale Guglielmo Pepe intorno alla sua vita e ai recenti casi d'Italia scritte da lui medesimo*, 2 vols., Paris: Baudry, 1847, vol. 2, pp. 146-47.

¹⁸ G. Pepe, *Relazione delle circostanze relative agli avvenimenti politici e militari in Napoli, nel 1820 e nel 1821*, Parigi, 1822, p. 31.

¹⁹ G. Pepe, *A Narrative of the Political and Military Events, which took place at Naples, in 1820 and 1821*, London: Treuttel and Würtz, 1821, p. 30.

²⁰ G. Pepe, *Relazione delle circostanze relative agli avvenimenti politici e militari in Napoli, nel 1820 e nel 1821*, Parigi, 1822, p. 33.

²¹ G. Pepe, *A Narrative of the Political and Military Events, which took place at Naples, in 1820 and 1821*, London: Treuttel and Würtz, 1821, pp. 32-33.

Ma qua' sacrificj far non debbe l'uomo per sottrarsi dal potere arbitrario! Me ne appello agl'Inglese.²²

But what sacrifices ought not man to submit to, in order to get rid of the yoke of despotism? I appeal to the English for a reply.²³

Here Pepe is indirectly referring to the place where he wrote his work, and in his words one can see that he implicitly considers Britain as the beacon of constitutional freedom. This is something that is not new, and for a long time Italian (and generally continental) revolutionaries had indeed looked at England as a model of an almost perfect balance of powers between aristocracy and democracy.

Later in his work, Pepe talks about his own patriotic principles and ideals, and in doing so certain interesting cues on his own national identity emerge:

Sire, io sposai la causa dell'indipendenza e della libertà nazionale pel solo bene della mia patria, e non per private ragioni, o per vanità; poiché in tutti i tempi fui saldo ne' miei principj. (...) Ne' la somma bontà che aveva per me quel disgraziato principe [Giacchino Murat], ne' l'attaccamento e la riconoscenza ch'io sentiva per lui, e l'ammirazione pel suo cuore adornato di tante doti, mi facevan dimenticare ch'io nasceva Napoletano.²⁴

Sire! I espoused the cause of national liberty and independence, not from motives of self-interest or personal vanity, but solely with the view of benefiting my country. (...) and neither the exceeding kindness with which I was treated by this unfortunate prince, the attachment and gratitude I felt for him, nor my admiration of the excellent qualities of his heart, made me ever forget that I was a Neapolitan.²⁵

Pepe was from Calabria, a part of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, which was a proper independent nation whose capital was Naples, and here he says he feels Neapolitan. This is not unlike what would happen to this day: local identities are merged into one shared identity, and just like someone, Rome, Milan or Turin would now say «I am Italian», Pepe said that he was «Neapolitan», as this was the appellation of the citizens of that nation – not «Italian».

All such evidence points to the fact that Pepe had no clearly formed idea of what an Italian Risorgimento was like. A hint to some kind of unified idea of Italy only comes almost at the end of the book, when Pepe attacks the Austrian domination and interference. It is a very interesting passage, and we see a heavy intervention from the translator:

E l'Austria potrà per lungo tempo tener soggiogata l'infelice nostra Italia, mentre il desiderio e la volontà, e le ragioni di mutare i governi dispotici in monarchie costituzionali si vanno sempre più radicando in Europa, e mentre gl'Italiani uniti per l'addietro soltanto di nome, e per comunanza di favella, ora il sono ancora per calda brama d'indipendenza?²⁶

Is it to be supposed that Austria will ever be able to keep our unfortunate country long under the yoke, at a period when the determination, and the propriety of converting despotic governments into constitutional monarchies are every day acquiring fresh strength and confirmation – when the

²² G. Pepe, *Relazione delle circostanze relative agli avvenimenti politici e militari in Napoli, nel 1820 e nel 1821*, Parigi, 1822, p. 37.

²³ G. Pepe, *A Narrative of the Political and Military Events, which took place at Naples, in 1820 and 1821*, London: Treuttel and Würtz, 1821, p. 36.

²⁴ G. Pepe, *Relazione delle circostanze relative agli avvenimenti politici e militari in Napoli, nel 1820 e nel 1821*, Parigi, 1822, p. 82.

²⁵ G. Pepe, *A Narrative of the Political and Military Events, which took place at Naples, in 1820 and 1821*, London: Treuttel and Würtz, 1821, p. 75.

²⁶ G. Pepe, *Relazione delle circostanze relative agli avvenimenti politici e militari in Napoli, nel 1820 e nel 1821*, Parigi, 1822, pp. 84-85.

Italians, hitherto united only by a common name and language, are now become still more so by the ardent wish of being independent?²⁷

According to Pepe's Italian text, all Italians share the wish to be *independent* from foreign domination, but he does not say that they want to be politically *united* – they are united by the wish to become independent, but not *unified*. Clearly, then, the Two Sicilies have to become independent from the Austrians, and so has each and every nation in Italy. Furthermore, the interesting thing is that Pepe speaks of «infelice nostra Italia», which is translated in English with «our unfortunate country». Generally, on previous occasions, the translator had used «our country» to translate «la nostra patria», as in «la nostra bella patria»,²⁸ translated as «our beautiful country».²⁹ In all such occasions, Pepe clearly and unequivocally referred to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. In the above passage, instead, the translator seems to take it for granted that for Pepe «l'infelice nostra Italia» is his motherland, «our unfortunate country», something that Pepe did not really mean in the Italian text, which seems to imply that Italy is a geographical entity rather than a possible future political one.

Pepe's vibrant tone of support for a constitutional monarchy in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies represents the most important aspect of its book. Pepe remains a Neapolitan patriot. Indeed, as he says at the end of the book, he wants to shed «tutto il mio sangue per l'indipendenza e per la gloria della nostra patria»³⁰, that is to say «the independence and glory of our country»³¹. That country is Naples, that country is the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, not Italy. No ideological reconstruction of the Italian unity and independence, the Risorgimento, and its place within the imagined community of post-unification Italy can hide this fact.

4.

Looking beyond the veneer of the Risorgimento rhetoric, it is easy to see that Guglielmo Pepe, while certainly one of the firsts to fight the Austrians in Italy with some degree of credibility, should not be unproblematically remembered as one of the key figures of nineteenth-century Italian nationalism. Nowadays Pepe is seen as part of the history of Risorgimento. In fact, a modern editor of the *Relazione*, Enzo Di Grazia, considers Pepe's poorly armed troops defeated by the Austrians in Rieti as the first symptom of the emerging consciousness of the Italian nation. Looking at the events of Rieti, Di Grazia argues that Pepe was «the only to firmly and blindly believe in a glorious destiny for Italy», and he and his troops were the first concrete historically (and militarily) evidence of that nation which would later defeat the Austrians and declare national independence. However, Di Grazia also adds that Pepe never had any clear idea of the future perspectives of the «patria».³² In fact, why would he? Reading the Italian version of the *Relazione*, there is little or nothing regarding any notion of Italy as a unified nation, as the work had been written at a time when a clear idea of Italy had not been elaborated yet. This idea of Pepe as an Italian patriot tells us less about Pepe's supposed inadequacy in elaborating a homogenous nationalist thought than about the largely artificial and arbitrary reconstructions and reassessments of people and events in the hands of a

²⁷ G. Pepe, *A Narrative of the Political and Military Events, which took place at Naples, in 1820 and 1821*, London: Treuttel and Würtz, 1821, pp. 77-78.

²⁸ G. Pepe, *Relazione delle circostanze relative agli avvenimenti politici e militari in Napoli, nel 1820 e nel 1821*, Parigi, 1822, p. 38.

²⁹ G. Pepe, *A Narrative of the Political and Military Events, which took place at Naples, in 1820 and 1821*, London: Treuttel and Würtz, 1821, p. 37.

³⁰ G. Pepe, *Relazione delle circostanze relative agli avvenimenti politici e militari in Napoli, nel 1820 e nel 1821*, Parigi, 1822, p. 88.

³¹ G. Pepe, *A Narrative of the Political and Military Events, which took place at Naples, in 1820 and 1821*, London: Treuttel and Würtz, 1821, p. 81

³² E. Di Grazia, *Un generale ed un sovrano. Relazione di Guglielmo Pepe a Ferdinando IV sui fatti del 1820-21*, Napoli: Athena Mediterranea, 1970, pp. 26-27.

later, official national history. This is what has happened with nationalism all over Europe, and Italy and Pepe are no exceptions.

What emerges from a close reading of the text is that Pepe was a lover and supporter of constitutional monarchy but, at least in the *Relazione*, he certainly meant the *Neapolitan* constitution and monarchy. There is no Risorgimento here, or at least there is nothing comparable to what would happen in 1848 and afterward. The problem with a reading of the *Relazione* along the lines given by Risorgimento is that the work is largely seen as a first hint of things to come. Following this revisionist perspective, it is quite difficult to admit that what Pepe was trying to do was actually different (and unthinkable for any later patriot or historian of Italian Risorgimento): he wanted a constitutional monarchy for the Kingdom of the two Sicilies.

Judging from the comparative analysis of the Italian text and the English one, it is quite clear that the differences between the two audiences may have influenced the translator's choices. Indeed, as seen in the above discussion of the two texts, while the English text preserves the core message of the Italian one, it does also reveal certain adjustments which highlight its European dimension as well as the translator's effort to provide a degree of literary repute to its author. Furthermore, and more crucially, the text is adjusted according to the ideology of the translator: the textual changes in the English translation witness to a view of Italian politics which did not fully correspond to Pepe's, and which relocated the English text within a more Italian and less Neapolitan view of Risorgimento, quite unlike what Pepe supported in his Italian text. However, this textual adaptation to the ideology of Italian nationalism is not consistent throughout the English text: there is evidence of the ideological uncertainty towards Italian affairs which was still current in England and in Europe, and the translator's interpretation of the Italian text is somehow ambiguous. This is not surprising, given the context in which the translation was made, and it can also be explained in view of Mona Baker's notion of translation taking place in the context of «narratives». ³³ According to Baker, translators continually modify, accentuate or undermine certain controversial or contested aspects of the narrative encoded in the source text. A narrative, in this sense, is a story which is subscribed by a community and which informs the community's behaviour towards other people. This takes place more specifically at times of war or conflict, when a translator has to face military and ideological conflicts in the source culture which then have to be transferred in a different social and cultural location. Translators are never neutral, particularly in these conflicting contexts. Indeed, as argued by Baker, «consciously or otherwise, [translators and interpreters] translate texts and utterances that participate in creating, negotiating and contesting social reality». ³⁴ Inevitably, then, a translator can never be neutral, or “in between”, especially if we speak of a political context, as he/she will inevitably have to recontextualise a certain (source) ideology into the (target) one.

In the *Relazione*, the translator displays a shifting position, as he/she negotiates Pepe's narrative of Risorgimento without taking a consistent or straightforward stance towards the ideological and historical framework developed in the text. Using Baker's terminology, we can say that Pepe's work is reframed by following a narrative ideology which at the time was still looking at Italian Risorgimento in rather unstable terms. The translator's uneven reframing of Pepe's narrative is, in this sense, indicative of the rather unfocussed British conception of the Italian events. Indeed, while the majority of British liberal intellectuals and politicians supported – in words and often in deeds – the Italian struggle against foreign domination, an Italian national “narrative” had not been formed yet, and there was no clear idea as to the social and cultural framework which would have been at the basis of Italy as a nation. Indeed, such a thing had never existed before.

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³⁴ *Ivi*, p. 105.

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