THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ITALIAN TRANSLATORS OF LORD BYRON'S *MARINO FALIERO*

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Abstract: The tragic story of Marino Faliero, the Doge of Venice who was executed for high treason in 1355, came to the attention of writers and artists of various European countries during the early nineteenth century thanks to a number of historians who published insightful works on the history of the Venetian Republic. Among those who were fascinated by the irascible old warrior who tried to overthrow the oligarchy on becoming head of state was Lord Byron. In 1821, the English poet published the historical drama *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice* on the tragic end of a hero whose personal grievances with the Venetian Senate intertwined with an ill-fated plebeian rebellion against the nobility. Byron's popularity in Italy brought the story to the attention of Italian romantic literary circles, where it was not only appreciated as a tragedy of honour and revenge, but also for its ideological implications in the context of the Risorgimento. This study focuses on the three translators who produced the first complete Italian versions of Byron's play published in the nineteenth century, namely Pasquale De Virgili, Giovan Battista Cereseto, and Andrea Maffei. Based on André Lefevere's theory on rewriting, it analyses the ideological and poetological reasons behind the translations, how the translators' intentions shaped the target texts, as well as the impact these translations had on Italian literature and the arts. The strategies adopted by the translators are also illustrated through a comparative textual analysis of a sample passage.

1. Introduction

In 1355, the Doge of Venice, Marino Faliero, was condemned to death for high treason following an unsuccessful insurrection against the Senate of the Republic. The tragic event has been a source of inspiration for many writers, artists, and musicians from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present day and

has been rewritten in various epochs, languages, and genres. These rewritings enjoyed varying degrees of success. Whereas most of them were unremarkable and quickly forgotten, others became important and influential works and were translated into other languages. Such was the case of Lord Byron's tragedy *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice* (1821). Despite its lack of success on stage, the historical drama was rewritten and translated on various occasions, especially in Italy and France. This study focuses on the translators who chose to render the tragedy in Italian during the nineteenth century; on their ideological and literary reasons for choosing this particular work; on the strategies they used to achieve their goals; and on the extent of their translations' impact on the target culture. An illustration of the strategies adopted by each translator shall be provided through an analysis of a selected passage in the source text and its three corresponding versions for comparative purposes.

Until the late eighteenth century, the Faliero story was confined to chronicles of Venetian medieval history, save for a brief comment by Petrarch in one of his letters just after the tragic event (*Epistolæ Familiares*, XIX, 9). Early historical accounts written by Venetians holding public office could rely on the testimony of witnesses who had first- or second-hand knowledge of the facts. However, as Lazzarini observed, these accounts are to be taken with caution due to their authors' ideological bias in favour of the Venetian oligarchy they served (see Lazzarini 95–107). Moreover, later chroniclers beefed up the story with interpretations and dubious information that Lazzarini attributed to their desire to render the story more appealing to their readers. The unclear and the historically untrue elements of the story made it particularly appealing to later writers, artists, and composers such as Hoffmann, Byron, Delavigne, Swinburne, Delacroix, Hayez, and Donizetti, who rewrote the medieval event according to what André Lefevere termed the “ideological and poetological” constraints under which rewritings are produced (Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting* 5).

According to Lefevere's theory, rewritings (including translations) assume an identity of their own due to various conditioning elements, related to epoch, culture, language, scope, and the writer's own life experience. Rewriters influence other rewriters, adding new interpretations and adaptations to the corpus of works related to the same story, be it fact or fiction (Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting* 8). Consequently, a comparative study of adaptations of the same story that focuses on their sources provides a kind of genealogical relationship between these works, which in turn sheds light on how the abovementioned conditioning elements

interact with their sources in the production of new rewritings. Moreover, it also allows us to understand how different rewriters manipulated their sources according to their respective objectives.

In this study, I shall focus on the translators who produced the first complete nineteenth-century Italian translations of Lord Byron's version of the Faliero story, namely Pasquale de Virgili, Giovan Battista Cereseto, and Andrea Maffei. The objects of my analysis, based on Lefevere's theory of rewriting, shall be the translators' reasons for choosing to translate Byron's tragedy, their translation strategies, and their contribution to the reception of Byron's tragedy and to the success of Faliero as a literary and artistic figure in Italy.

2. The context

In the early nineteenth century, translation of foreign literary works into Italian was given a new impulse by Madame de Staël's famous article entitled "Sulla maniera ed utilità delle traduzioni" ("On the Manner and Usefulness of Translations"), published in the journal *Biblioteca Italiana* in January 1816. In her article, she especially encouraged Italians to translate northern-European drama, since she considered the genre to be the most inspiring form of literature (de Staël 14). De Staël's article proved very controversial and attracted strong opposition in the subsequent issues of the journal by various intellectuals who sought to defend the Italian literary tradition. However, it provided inspiration to those who wanted to transform Italian poetics and admired the works of the northern-European romantics. In agreement with de Staël's arguments, the Italian followers of foreign romanticism saw in translation a means not only to promote the works of the northern-European writers they admired but also to forge a new poetics intended to re-establish the lost pre-eminence of Italian literature.

The challenge posed to classicism in Italy by romanticism as an emerging poetics was taken to a higher level by its ideological underpinning during the early phase of the Risorgimento. Silvio Pellico observed in a letter to his brother, dated August 1819, that the term "romantic" had become a synonym for "liberal" and that only extremists and spies called themselves "classicists" (qtd. in Branca xli). The classicist-romantic dichotomy encompassed a wider range of connotations than it did in foreign cultural contexts. It was not restricted to the literary domain but extended into a contrast between opposing worldviews: one, inward-looking and traditionalist; the other, outward-looking and open to modern ideas (Camilletti

24). As the dominant poetics in Italy at the time, classicism enjoyed the patronage of the established governmental and cultural authorities, whereas romanticism constituted a strong challenge to the status quo. Romanticism represented change, and it quickly became associated with patriotism and the re-awakening of the Italian people who sought to unite and take their place among the most eminent nations of Europe. As a consequence, northern-European romantics became a cultural beacon for those Italians who wanted change, cultural renewal, and political self-determination.

Among all the European romantic poets, Lord Byron was held in particularly high esteem in early-nineteenth-century Italy. However, the reasons for this admiration were not always the same. As Zuccato (80) pointed out, Byron was admired in Italy for different reasons in different places at different times. In Milan, Italian translations of Byron's works initially provided the classicists of the pro-Austrian *Gazzetta di Milano* with the opportunity to include the English poet in their attacks on romanticism by highlighting the neoclassical elements in his works, particularly in his historical tragedies. On their part, the romantics countered the argument by dwelling on Byron's romantic texts, and after the poet's death at Missolonghi in 1824, they regarded him as a hero who gave his life fighting for freedom and independence on behalf of oppressed peoples, a rebel against authoritarian regimes (Schmidt 84). Translations of his works began in earnest despite the constraints of censorship, and his literary status increased to a point where "Byron's popularity became so great that he came to be regarded as a native Italian poet" (Zuccato 85). In southern Italy, meanwhile, both classicists and romantics saw in Byron mostly a literary model to emulate.

During his stay in Italy from 1816 to 1823, Byron strove to remain outside of the controversy between classicists and romantics, despite his links to the Carbonari in Romagna through Ruggero Gamba, the father of his mistress Teresa Guiccioli. The authorities were very suspicious of Byron and gave rise to rumours about his contribution to the liberal cause. On one occasion, the Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Consalvi, informed the Governor of Milan that a self-styled romantic society had been established in that city, with the aim of teaching that man is not subject to any religious or moral principle. He added that Byron himself had gone to Bologna to set up such a "sect" (Cantù 79). The Governor assured the Cardinal that the information was unfounded, but the episode shows how closely Byron was associated with the "romantics" by the authorities of the Italian states. The publication of Byron's *Marino Faliero* in 1821 was seen by the authorities in

northern Italy as further proof of the poet's involvement in the liberal/romantic movement, since the work could easily be interpreted from a pro-liberal perspective. In fact, in Act V, Scene 3 of the tragedy, Marino Faliero prophesies that Venice will fall to the Austrians as a punishment for the crimes of its government:

[...] she, who built 'gainst Attila a bulwark,
Shall yield, and bloodlessly and basely yield,
Unto a bastard Attila, without
Shedding so much blood in her last defence [...]. (Byron 163)

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the circulation of Byron's play was prohibited in Lombardy and Venetia (Cochran 229).

Notwithstanding censorship, however, the tragedy was readily received into the Italian literary system. From an ideological perspective, the story of the medieval Doge who joined the oppressed populace of Venice to overthrow the oligarchy of the Republic easily fitted into the narrative of those who opposed the authoritarian regimes governing the Italian states, as seen in the verses quoted above. Moreover, Byron's historical dramas were closely linked to the Italian literary tradition, since they followed the same Alfierian model that shaped Italian tragedy as a genre. Byron admired Vittorio Alfieri's moral stance on tyranny and his heroic view of personal freedom, as well as his ability to combine his poetic expression with the precepts of classical tragedy, most notably with the adherence to the unities of space and time (Engelmann 32). An example of how the ideological and literary elements common to the two great poets facilitated the English tragedy's reception in the Italian literary system may be found in Tommaso Zauli Sajani's tragedy *Faliero*, published in 1828. The author focused on the oppressive and devious behaviour of the Venetian senate towards Faliero, a heroic figure who wanted freedom and justice for himself and for the people of Venice. Zauli Sajani, then a liberal exile in Corsica, translated passages from Byron's tragedy and inserted them into his own. However, he rewrote the story from a liberal Italian perspective and adopted the Alfierian tragic hendecasyllable for his own play (see Portelli 75–76). In this way, Zauli Sajani not only adapted the Faliero story and Byron's play according to his own ideological stance but also rewrote them in a form to which his target readers were accustomed.

3. The translators

3.1 *Pasquale De Virgili*

The translation of Byron's works into Italian began as early as 1810. Selections from his poems were included in an anthology entitled *Antologia Britannica*, followed by other works by Byron's earliest Italian translators, namely Silvio Pellico, Michele Leoni, and Giuseppe Nicolini (Cardwell xx–xxix). The first translations of Byron's historical tragedies, including *Marino Faliero*, were made by Pasquale De Virgili (also written as De Virgiliis or De Virgilio [1810–1876]). He was a journalist, writer, and politician from Chieti, but he was active in Naples where he played a significant role in the political events of southern Italy during the Risorgimento. After unification, he retired from politics and joined the public service while pursuing his literary interests until his death in the Apulian town of Trani. De Virgili was a fervent admirer of Byron and formed part of a group of young romantic Byron enthusiasts that also included the journalist and poet Cesare Malpica. De Virgili learned English specifically to read Byron's works and translate them into Italian. In 1846, he also travelled to the Orient to visit the places most associated with his idol, in a kind of lay pilgrimage (Saci 579). Between 1835 and 1837, he published his translations of Byron's historical plays, *Marino Faliero*, *The Two Foscari*, and *Manfredi*. His translation of *Marino Faliero*, published in 1835, indicates Palermo as its place of publication but does not include the name of the publisher.

In the introduction to his translation of *Marino Faliero*, De Virgili addresses his “young friends,” probably referring to the members of the group of Byron admirers in Naples to which he belonged. He starts by explaining the reasons why he chose to translate the play in prose rather than verse. De Virgili states that contrary to the advice he was given by his friends that he translate the tragedy in verse, he opted for a prose translation. He argues that although he agrees that verse would be the best choice for translating poetry, and that in his opinion Italian prose was as yet unable to render poetic expression, there were compelling reasons for his choice. He maintains that a verse translation does not cater for readers who do not know the language of the original; such readers can appreciate the concepts of a poem but not its style and rhyme. A prose version, according to De Virgili, can render the “spirit” of the original and be more “faithful” to it than a verse translation. As proof of his argument, he refers to existing verse translations of

other works without naming them and which he implicitly considers “unfaithful” to their respective source texts. As regards the issue of Italian prose, De Virgili laments the lack of what he calls a *stile nobile* (“noble style”). He therefore presents his translation of *Marino Faliero* as an attempt to help fill this void, stating that Byron’s historical tragedies are more suited to prose translation than his poems are (De Virgili v–ix).

The issue regarding whether poetry should be translated in prose or verse had been actively debated in the previous century, especially in France due to the problems posed by the seventeenth-century translations of Nicolas Perrot D’Ablancourt, which were the first to be described as “*belles infidèles*”. On the one hand, Anne Dacier, the translator of Homer’s *Iliad* into French, held that translating poetry into verse is “impossible” (qtd. in Lefevre, *Translation/History* 12). She judged French poetry to be unable to render Homer’s verse and preferred a type of prose translation that was not “servile,” or too close to the original to be really faithful, but instead tried to capture the “spirit” of the source text. On the other hand, the French translator of Vergil’s *Georgics*, Jacques Delille, maintained that “a translation of verse into prose is always an unfaithful one” (qtd. in Lefevre *Translation/History* 37). Both translators agreed that the highest priority was to render the “spirit” or the “effect” of the original, but they had different objectives in their endeavours. With respect to Dacier’s functional stance, Delille placed more emphasis on the literary quality of the target text when translating poetry.

The French debate, along with its ensuing translation trends, was closely followed by Italian translators, who often worked from French when translating from lesser-known languages. The most notable Italian contribution to the debate was made by Melchiorre Cesarotti, the pre-romantic translator known mostly for his rendering of Macpherson’s Ossian poems. In 1786, Cesarotti published two translations of Homer’s *Iliad*, one in verse and one in prose. The verse version was intended to make the reader enjoy Homer, while the prose version was meant to make Homer known to the reader (Cesarotti vol. I, 197–198). He maintained that it was not possible to reach both aims with the same translation: to make the reader enjoy a foreign text, one has to translate freely, whereas to make the source text known to the reader, one has to be as faithful as possible. Cesarotti highlighted the importance of the scope of a translation, putting the verse-prose translation issue in a different perspective.

De Virgili’s views on verse translation were in agreement with those of Dacier and Cesarotti, in that De Virgili deemed prose to be the best way to translate

foreign poetry when the translator's aim is to acquaint readers with a foreign work or author. Since Byron's historical dramas had not been translated into Italian before, De Virgili wanted to introduce these works to Italian readers who did not know English, rather than to attempt to render Byron's style in Italian. This aim was ideological in that the translator wanted to promote his literary hero among Italian readers not as a poet, as others had done before, but as an author of historical dramas. For this reason, De Virgili also included the whole paratext, consisting of Byron's introduction, notes, and excerpts from his sources, whereas subsequent nineteenth-century translators translated the literary texts only. From a poetological perspective, through his translation, De Virgili wanted to give his contribution towards the formation of a richer Italian literary prose style. In his translation of *Marino Faliero*, he constantly strove to achieve both aims concurrently, adhering as closely as possible to the source text while adopting an elevated style of prose.

An example of De Virgili's translation strategy in the light of the two aims he pursued may be seen when comparing the passage below, taken from Act V, Scene 1:

BYRON

Doge

Noble Venetians! *stir me not* with questions.
I am resign'd to the worst; *but in me still*
Have something of the blood of brighter days,
And am not over-patient. Pray you, spare me
Further interrogation, which boots nothing,
Except to turn a trial into a debate.

(141; italics my own)

DE VIRGILI

Doge

Nobili Veneti! *Non più mi straziate* con delle
interrogazioni; io son rassegnato a tutto ciò
che ci ha di peggiore; *nondimeno io conservo*
ancora nelle mie vene alcuna gocciola del mio
giovanil sangue, e non ho troppo di sofferenza.
Io vi prego, risparmiatevi ulteriori dimande,
le quali a nulla valgono, fuorchè a cangiare un
giudizio in disputa.

(143; italics my own)

De Virgili's translation is very close to the source passage—almost literal—with the exception of the two phrases shown in italics. In the first case, he translates the verb “stir” with *straziare* (“to torture, to torment”), whereas in the second instance he inserts the words *gocciola* (“drop”) and *giovanil* (“of [my] youth”) in the phrase. These instances of intensification and specification give the Doge's words a declamatory tone that is more pronounced than the one in the source

passage. The overall effect is that the resigned Faliero of Byron's version is rendered by De Virgili as somewhat more combative and indignant. In this, the translator followed the overbearing Alfierian model that shaped Italian tragedy. The passage shows how De Virgili tried to be faithful to the source text while striving to adopt a lofty style of prose, inevitably influenced by the Italian literary tradition, according to his stated intention.

The very few differences between Byron's text and De Virgili's rendering are marginal and largely inconsequential. The translator omits certain references to English figures and situations concerning the London theatre scene found in Byron's preface that would have been lost on Italian readers; these include such examples as Byron's allusion to Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* characters Thwackum and Square (Byron x), and the footnote on Byron's involvement in the Drury Lane Theatre and on the state of the theatre scene in the British capital (Byron xviii–xix). In the actual text of the tragedy, the most conspicuous difference is found in Act I, Scene 2: in Byron's version, the furious Doge, after having learnt of the Senate's leniency towards Steno, throws the ducal cap on the ground and attempts to trample on it, only to be restrained by his nephew, Bertuccio Faliero (Byron 11). In De Virgili's version, the Doge actually stomps on the cap and Bertuccio makes no attempt to prevent him from doing so (Byron/De Virgili 7). Considering De Virgili's efforts to remain as close as possible to the source text, it is plausible to assume that the difference was due not to an attempt by the Italian to intervene on the English version but, rather, to an unintentional mistranslation. The source text used by De Virgili was certainly the first issue of the first edition of Byron's work dated 1821, which does not include verses 499–506 of Act V, Scene 1. The same verses, which consist of Faliero's prophetic allusion to the black veil painted over his portrait in the Major Council Hall of the Ducal Palace, are also missing in De Virgili's translation but not in the later ones.

De Virgili's Byron translations, including *Marino Faliero*, were very well received. For many decades, they were considered the standard Italian versions and were re-published various times as part of Byron's complete works. They were included in the Brussels edition of 1841, published by the Société Belge de Librairie, and in the later Pomba and UTET editions, which were published repeatedly between 1851 and 1926. The tragedies also earned De Virgili a good reputation as a translator. The nineteenth-century Florentine intellectual Cesare Trevisani, for example, remarked that "la sua traduzione di alcune tragedie di Byron non fu vinta da altra prima che apparisse quella del Maffei, colla quale cade

ogni confronto” (87).¹ The multiple editions of De Virgili’s translation, as well as Trevisani’s comment, attest to the success of the translator’s poetological aim, since his attempt at providing an example of literary prose that could adequately render foreign literary works was appreciated by Italian readers.

3.2 Giovan Battista Cereseto

The second Italian translation of Byron’s *Marino Faliero*, which appeared before the Maffei version mentioned by Trevisani, was published in 1845 by Giovan Battista Cereseto (1816–1858). A Piarist priest, teacher, poet, and translator born in Piedmont but active in Liguria, Cereseto held moderate liberal views and was a supporter of the Risorgimento. He also appreciated the poetological potential of romanticism as a means to go beyond the classical tradition and to better express the Christian spiritual experience (Costa 28). Cereseto studied English and German and admired the northern-European romantics, especially Friedrich G. Klopstock, whose epic *The Messiah* he translated and published in 1853. However, Cereseto’s first attempts at translation were Byron’s *Marino Faliero* and *The Two Foscari*, which were published together in Savona by Sambolino.

Contrary to De Virgili, Cereseto was not interested in spreading the fame of the English poet among Italian readers; rather, he considered his translation as a mere literary exercise. He was not ideologically motivated and had no poetological ambitions to transform Italian literary expression. Cereseto translated Byron’s tragedies in verse according to the dominant model provided by Alfieri’s tragedies, adopting the tragic hendecasyllable to translate Byron’s blank verse as Zauli Sajani had done before him.

Despite the prosodic constraints of verse translation, Cereseto managed to keep close to the source text of *Marino Faliero* in terms of literalness. The only noteworthy omission is found in Act V, Scene 2, in the lines containing the Doge’s curse against Venice. In the source text, the Doge prophesies the decline of the city:

[...] She shall stoop to be
A province for an empire, petty town
In lieu of capital, with slaves for senates,

¹ “[De Virgili’s] translation of some of Byron’s plays was not surpassed by any other until the appearance of the one by Maffei, to which it cannot be compared.”

Beggars for nobles, panders for a people!
Then when the Hebrew's in thy palaces,
The Hun in thy high places, and the Greek
Walks o'er thy mart, and smiles on it for his [...]. (163)

In Cereseto's version, the references to the decadence of the nobility and to the Hebrews and the Huns are conspicuously omitted and replaced by dotted lines:

[...] Compra e venduta, a mano
Cadrà di chi l'oltraggia, e trasmutata
Di donna in serva, di città superba
In terra di provincia
.....
.....
.....
Passeggerà di te ridendo il Greco! (150)

The typographical relevance given to the omission suggests that it was a case of censorship. In the mid-nineteenth century, censorship in the Kingdom of Savoy was relatively strict. References to Italy, nationhood, freedom, and liberalism could spell trouble for authors and publishers (Boggiani xix), so it is likely that the reference to the enslavement of nobles and foreign domination were removed intentionally by the censors or by the author and publisher themselves. Nonetheless, the translation of the Doge's prophecy on the conquest of Venice by "a bastard Attila" quoted above was left untouched, which could suggest either that it was missed by the censor or that the latter took issue more with the reference to the overthrowing of the nobility than with the Huns conquering Venice.

Cereseto tried to render the tone of the English version but was not always successful. In some of the most emotionally charged sections of the tragedy, he resorted to a declamatory tone that is considerably more marked than in the source text. As it was for De Virgili before him, the Alfierian model was too overbearing for Cereseto to avoid a shift in tone, which was, however, perfectly adequate in the target literary system. This can be illustrated by analyzing the same passage as earlier from Act V, Scene 1 (*italics added*):

BYRON

CERSETO

Doge

Doge

Noble Venetians! *stir me not* with questions.
I am resign'd to the worst; *but in me still*
Have something of the blood of brighter days,
And am not over-patient. *Pray you, spare me*
Further interrogation, which boots nothing,
Except to turn a trial into a debate. (141)

O veneti patrizi!
Non mi tentate con inchieste, io sono
Sommesso al mio destin; *ma nelle vene*
Ferver mi sento in parte ancora il sangue
Della mia gioventù, ne [sic] facil troppo
Sono al soffrir. Cessate, *io vi scongiuro,*
Dal *tentarmi* così; non si converta
Il mio giudizio in una lotta [...]. (131)

The verb “to stir” is rendered by Cereseto as *tentare* (“to tempt”), which is a close correspondence to the English word. However, the translator uses the verb again to translate “to spare,” giving the phrase a stronger effect. The double use of *tentare*, together with that of *fervere* (here in the sense of “to boil”) and *scongiuro* (“I beg”) give a more dramatic effect to Faliero’s words. In the English version, as already noted, the Doge is angry but tired, resigned to his fate, whereas in Cereseto’s version the use of stronger verbs shows that he is struggling to keep his anger in check.

The strong influence of his literary models is even more evident in the fact that Cereseto did not hesitate to include some verses from Dante in his translation, thus creating an intertextual relationship between Byron’s *Marino Faliero* and the *Divine Comedy* that does not exist in the English version. In Act II, Scene 1, Faliero tells his wife Angiolina that “Joy’s recollection is no longer joy, / While Sorrow’s memory is a sorrow still” (Byron 57), to signify that while joy fades in memory, sorrow remains strong. Cereseto overlooks the concept expressed by the Doge in the source text, and includes Dante’s famous verses from *Inferno* V (121–123), “Nessun maggior dolore / Che ricordarsi del tempo felice / Nella miseria” (Cereseto 54). In another instance (Act III, Scene 2), Cereseto translates Israel Bertuccio’s line, “This false compassion is a folly” (Byron 86), by rewriting Dante’s well-known verse from *Inferno* III (15), “Ogni viltà convien che qui sia morta,” as “Or qui convien ch’ogni pietà sia morta” (Cereseto 81). The translator’s casual use of intertextuality as part of his translation strategy corroborates Emilio Costa’s view that Cereseto’s poetical style denotes an excessive influence of his

literary models, which he uses to compensate for his lack of authentic inspiration (39).

Cereseto himself was not pleased with his translations of Byron's tragedies. In a diary entry dated July 1, 1854, he wrote,

Mi venne a mano una nuova edizione delle opere di Byron, ove per mia disgrazia sono inserite le versioni mie del Faliero e dei Foscari. Come diavolo saranno esse capitate a Napoli? Iddio misericordioso perdonerà a me quei versi non buoni, e agli editori di Napoli questa malaugurata ristampa.² (qtd. in Gilardini 482)

Cereseto was referring to an edition of Byron's collected works published by Rossi-Romano in 1853 and later reprinted in 1857 and 1886.³ As shown by Trevisani's comment quoted above, Cereseto's Byron translations largely have been ignored by reviewers and scholars.⁴ Consequently, his translation of *Marino Faliero* did not contribute significantly to the reception of the tragedy in the Italian literary system. It is mostly noteworthy in its being further proof of the attention given to Byron's tragedies and to the Faliero story in the first half of the nineteenth century.

3.3 *Andrea Maffei*

A more successful verse translation of Byron's *Marino Faliero* was published in 1862 by poet, translator, and librettist Andrea Maffei (1798–1885), whom Guido Mazzoni described as the translator who “sovrasta su tutti i traduttori dell'Ottocento dalle lingue moderne” (Mazzoni 662).⁵ Despite being regarded today as a minor figure, Maffei played a very important role in the literary scene of nineteenth-century Italy (see Tonelli 137–214). After having lived in Bavaria

² “I came across a new version of Byron's works, which to my misfortune includes my versions of Faliero and The Two Foscari. How the hell did they end up in Naples? May the merciful God forgive me for those mediocre verses and the Naples publishers for their ill-fated reprint.”

³ Lord George Byron, *Opere / Lord George Byron; precedute da alcune avvertenze critiche sulle stesse e da un discorso di Cesare Cantù* (Naples: Rossi-Romano, 1853).

⁴ For instance, Cereseto's translations are not included in the timeline of Byron's translated works by Cardwell and Barnaby (see Cardwell xxi–lv).

⁵ “[the translator] who overshadows all the nineteenth-century translators from the modern languages.”

for a few years during his youth, Maffei moved to Milan where he befriended Vincenzo Monti and became active in the city's cultural circles. Influenced by de Staël's article on translation in the *Biblioteca Italiana*, Maffei decided to use his knowledge of German and English to introduce the works of northern-European writers to Italian readers. His translations from Gessner, Schiller, Goethe, Shakespeare, Moore, Milton, and Byron brought him literary fame and paved the way for collaboration with other protagonists of the Milanese cultural scene. He wrote librettos for Giuseppe Verdi and provided inspiration for Francesco Hayez, who painted subjects from Maffei's translations, including the beheading of Marino Faliero (*Gli ultimi momenti del Doge Marin Faliero*, 1867).

Differently from De Virgili and Cereseto, Maffei translated Byron's tragedy when he had already become an experienced translator. More than 40 years had passed since his first translation, which was Gessner's *Idyll*, published in 1818. Maffei was an acclaimed translator and a literary figure in his own right, firmly established in the Italian literary system. Consequently, he translated well-known foreign works according to the target culture's dominant poetics. Confident in his skills as a verse translator, he advocated for the translator's right to give his own imprint to the target text (Maffei 1869, iii). His aim was to make the foreign text resonate with its Italian readership, and the translator's means to achieve this goal was, in Maffei's own words, "indovinare come i grandi poeti stranieri, se per nostra ventura fossero nati italiani, avrebbero significato i loro pensieri" (Maffei 1857, xiv).⁶ His attention to the conventional Italian reader's literary taste and his mastery of Italian verse allowed Maffei to succeed in his target-oriented approach, and his edition became the definitive Italian verse translation of Byron's *Marino Faliero* up to and including the present day.

In his version, Maffei adopted the same strategy as Cereseto before him. Unsurprisingly, he chose to follow the traditional Alfierian model, opting for the tragic hendecasyllable as a substitute for the English blank verse. However, he managed to avoid a marked declamatory effect due to his superior poetical skills that allowed him to keep an appropriate tone throughout the text. This can be seen from his translation of the passage already analyzed above (italics added):

⁶ "to guess how the great foreign poets would have expressed their thoughts had they been born in Italy."

BYRON

MAFFEI

Doge

Doge

Noble Venetians! *stir* me not with questions.
I am resign'd to the worst; *but in me still*
Have something of the blood of brighter days,
And am *not over-patient*. Pray you, *spare* me
Further interrogation, which boots nothing,
Except to turn a trial into a debate. (141)

Senatori! A voi non piaccia
Stancarmi di domande. Al mio destino
Rassegnato son io, *ma qualche stilla*
Di caldo sangue giovanil qui dentro
Ribolle tuttavia, nè vanto io meno
Di lunga pazienza. Interrompete
Ogni richiesta ulterior: potria
D'un solenne processo un indecente
Litigio uscirne [...]. (330–331)

An examination of the parts in italics shows how Maffei managed to find solutions that kept the tone quite close to that of the source text. “Stir” is translated by *stancarmi* (“to tire me”), keeping the effect of the Doge resigned to his fate, as does the unmarked verb *interrompete* (“cease”) for “spare.” Admittedly, the use of the verb *ribolle* (“to boil”) intensifies the neutral “have” in the source, but its common use in the expression “far ribollire il sangue” (“to make someone’s blood boil”) could have made the translator overlook the intensification. Particularly interesting in this specific passage is how Maffei managed to translate the negative “not over-patient” by using a negative equivalent “*nè vanto io meno*” (“nor am I endowed with”).

In his version, Maffei kept close to the content of the source text despite the metric constraints of the tragic hendecasyllable. There is, however, one significant exception. Maffei omitted the passage from Byron’s Act I, Scene 2, where Bertuccio Faliero, the Doge’s nephew, remarks upon his uncle’s disproportionate reaction to the leniency of the Senate in punishing Steno for his insolent words against the Duchess (Byron 13–14). In removing such an important passage, Maffei did not render Byron’s intention of highlighting Faliero’s ambiguous motives for attempting to overthrow the Senate. The omission downplays the complexity of Faliero as a Byronic hero and focuses on the emotional aspect of the Doge’s motives, namely his jealousy and desire for revenge. Maffei’s manipulation of the text simplifies the relationship between cause and effect in the drama, possibly to compensate for the seemingly exaggerated reaction of Faliero to Steno’s insult.

Maffei's sensitivity to the style and tone of the text, combined with his mastery of Italian verse, enabled him to replicate the effect of the source text in such a way that the readers in the target culture could appreciate Byron's tragedy as a poetical work in a form that pertained to the dominant poetics to which they were accustomed. Maffei's refined stylistic domestication of the source text allowed the target text to find favour among Italian readers and permitted him to achieve his objective as a translator, that is, to provide his readers with a translation they could enjoy within the comfort zone of their own literary tradition.

4. Conclusion

According to Lefevere, the image of a translated literary work in a target culture depends on two factors: "These two factors are, in order of importance, the translator's ideology [...] and the poetics dominant in the receiving literature at the time the translation is made" (*Translation, Rewriting* 41). These two factors can be seen at play in the three nineteenth-century Italian translations of Byron's *Marino Faliero*. Both De Virgili and Cereseto were romantics and supporters of the Risorgimento. However, they chose different poetological strategies for their rewritings of Byron's tragedy. Wanting to introduce Byron's historical drama to the Italian public, De Virgili adopted a literary prose in order to convey the story and the effect of the source text. His attempt was successful, in that his version, reprinted in various editions of Byron's works, provided a foreign literary model and a story that inspired a considerable number of minor Italian mid-nineteenth-century tragedy writers such as Giulio Pullè, Carlo Dalmazzone, Antonio Dall'Acqua Giusti, Antonio Giuseppe Spinelli, and Enrico Martelli. For his part, Cereseto chose to render the English source text in verse by following the Alfierian model that already existed in the target culture. His effort was undermined by his unremarkable poetical skills and inexperience. However, his translation was published three times, twice of which in Naples, a city of culture and still the capital of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in that period.

By 1861, when most of the Italian unification was accomplished, the *Faliero* story had lost its political relevance, and the pathetic elements of jealousy, love, and revenge became its main source of attraction. In addition, Byron had been definitively accepted into the wider Italian literary system through rewritings such as translations, reviews, and literary criticism. For these reasons, Maffei's aim in translating Byron's *Marino Faliero* in 1862 was chiefly poetological. He sought to

convey the source play according to the traditional Alferian model, as Cereseto had done previously, but he took a more target-oriented approach. Maffei rewrote Byron's work as an Italian tragedy. He focused on the Doge's thirst for personal revenge, a popular traditional theme of the genre, while using his poetical skills to fit the source text in the dominant Alferian poetical style to which his readers were accustomed and that they expected to find in a tragedy. This strategy proved very successful and ensured that his translation remained authoritative since its publication.

Translators shape the way an author and his or her work are received in a target culture within a wider sociocultural and historical context. De Virgili and Maffei played a very important role in the reception of Byron's *Marino Faliero* and the popularization of the Faliero story. Their versions were acclaimed and contributed significantly to the impact of both the play and the story on Italian literature since their publication. Cereseto, on the other hand, had a lesser impact due to the pre-eminence of Maffei's version; however, his translation briefly bridged the time gap between De Virgili's 1835 prose version and Maffei's 1862 verse edition through its reprints in the 1850s. All three translators are therefore to be considered as having contributed to Byron's reception and to the popularization of the Faliero story in Italy.

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