Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Legitimism, liberalism and nationalism: the nature of the relationship between North and South in Italian unification

Marco Meriggi*

Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, University of Naples 'Federico II', Naples, Italy

During the years following national unification, the Mezzogiorno became one of the greatest problems for the Italian government. On the one hand, because of its social and economic backwardness and the loyalty of some sections of the population to the previous illiberal government, it was devalued by the national political and military elite as a part of the large and undeveloped 'South' of the world, which was at that time affected by the criticism of 'orientalistic' Western discourse. On the other hand, it was also the place where the democratic and progressive opposition to the moderate liberal national rulers was stronger. A transnational and transregional perspective shows how the Mezzogiorno contained two different coexisting nations, a reactionary and a progressive one, which were in mutual conflict and, at the same time, on different grounds, in conflict with the central State. Building the state in the South meant, for the Italian liberal elites, discovering an ambiguous and dangerous periphery of the Nation.

Keywords: southern Italy; Italian national unification; orientalism; Bourbon dynasty; political conflicts

In a manuscript among the papers in the Bourbon archives this curious report can be found:

> On 17 August 1863 notices were posted on London streets which read as follows: 'St. James' Hall. Terrible atrocities committed using appalling instruments of torture under the last two Bourbon kings, which will be exhibited and explained by Miss Clara Seyton-Sicard: instruments only recently discovered by Dr Narni of Italy in the Castellammare fortress, Palermo, including the suffocation gag, flesh-burner, foot-burner, etc.'.

The high point of this event, which the informant stated he had read about in the pages of an English daily newspaper, occurred when 'the speaker, Miss Clara, strove to convince the audience that it had amused one of Sicily's rulers to behead 40 prisoners each day personally, in order to drink their blood instead of wine'. This was no doubt a scene heavy with pathos. It seems, however, that the presentation generated reactions entirely different from those intended by Dr Narni and Miss Clara: '[i]n fact everybody laughed about these ridiculous exaggerations', and 'given the failure of his invention, nothing remained but for Dr Narni to commit suicide'.

This account, in August 1866, came from the preface to a pro-Bourbon and anti-Piedmontese (and thus anti-Italian) work of propaganda, whose author masqueraded as 'an Englishman with an interest in politics'. His principal audience was intended to be the British public, which in Europe had latterly shown the most enthusiasm for the Risorgimento and Italian national

---

*Email: meriggi@unina.it

unification (Riall 2007); this had started, if not before, with the publication of Gladstone's famous pamphlet on barbarity in Bourbon prisons and under their rule (Macry 2012, 23). As the manuscript's author recalled, Gladstone had then been forced to retract his statements of 1851 and confess to having been misled by his informants. Fortunately, he continued, criticism of the Italian government was now frequently to be heard, including in the British parliament, because of the methods it was using to suppress revolt in the Italian South, now under way for some years. Despite all this, however, many 'writers and journalists, together in a vast conspiracy against the truth in order to fool Europe, who have spread the most false and ridiculous information regarding the previous administration of that realm' continued to operate freely. Our counterfeit 'Englishman with an interest in politics' therefore concluded that a reliable piece of counter-information was an urgent necessity.

The anonymous author had set about precisely this task. A dossier was compiled by collecting all information that could be used to highlight the failures of the Italian government in the South in the preceding years, and to document the sense of dissatisfaction with this 'invader' government on the part of the overwhelming majority, according to the author, of the population of the former Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. This document, with the sarcastic title '*I Fasti civili e militari del governo italiano nelle provincie napoletane e siciliane dalla fine del 1860 al 1863*' ('Civil and Military Glories of the Italian Government in the Provinces of Naples and Sicily from the End of 1860 to 1863'), was then delivered to the Rome headquarters of the Bourbon government-in-exile, in the expectation that it would serve as anti-Italian propaganda in the international setting, the intention behind its conception and compilation. The Roman entourage of the Bourbon Francis II already had experience of operations like this: the year before, in fact, another dossier with accusations of 'Piedmontese misdeeds' in the southern provinces had been published in Paris, in French, with the title '*De Naples à Palerme (1863–1864)*' and the signature of Oscar De Poli. This consisted of both newspaper articles and more specific information supplied by the network of sympathisers which the Bourbons could still count on (Meriggi 2011).

It does not appear, however, that *I Fasti* was ever actually published, although the legitimist 'International' must certainly have made some use of the material gathered: the tale of Dr Narni and Miss Clara Seyton-Sicard surfaced again, a quarter of a century later, in one of the many volumes that sought to develop a legitimist and reactionary anti-history of the Risorgimento (Mencacci 1891, 123).

Moreover by 1866, with brigandage in clear decline, it was far less likely, if not to be entirely discounted, that the European Right would support the projects to re-establish the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies that had been developed by the exiled Bourbon government. In 1863, there had still been conviction in the efforts of the writers of pro-Bourbon propaganda to draw parallels between the relationship of Russia to Poland and that of Piedmont, or Italy, to the Mezzogiorno, presenting the latter case as an example of the same style of oppression and military occupation of one country by the other. Three years later, nobody was still prepared to entertain this sort of analogy because, as mentioned, the period of serious brigandage was more or less over (Molfese 1966; Lupo 2011). While in the months and years immediately after national unification some importance had been accorded to the issue of the legitimacy of the Kingdom of Italy, newcomer to the group of continental powers, European diplomacy soon largely lost interest.

Up to that point the former Kingdom of the Two Sicilies had certainly represented the most important aspect of this issue. However, my intention in this article is not to propose an interpretation of the relationship between North and South in Italian unification in terms of the history of international relations. Instead, I will be developing ideas that take their cue from 'transnational' history (Budde, Conrad, and Janz 2006; Conrad 2013), and specifically seeking to

re-formulate this relationship as 'transregional' and 'translocal' (Pernau 2011). I will thus be considering the relationship and integration within one single political unit of territories distinguished by reciprocal 'othernesses', and therefore the difficult discovery and assessment of their differences, but also the affiliations held in common by a North and South within the Italian peninsula. These were also parts of the North and South of a Europe which in those decades, and in its turn, was formalising its own internal territorial and civil hierarchies, while at the same time comparing itself with the non-European models of society which Westerners were colonising and 'orientalising', according to Said's well-known definition (Conrad and Osterhammel 2004).

The outcome of the Risorgimento – the achievement, based on a liberal political system and the principles of the modern market economy, of the fusion of regional states and societies which until then had been distinguished by marked economic and social disparities, and generally by the rule of authoritarian political systems which some were tempted to compare to the despotic regimes of the East – was not, in this light, only of interest in relation to Italy. In this respect, an entirely internal perspective on the theme of the nation and nationalism in Italy is in many ways more limited than the perceptions that contemporaries themselves had of the matters in which they were protagonists.

Among the most truly transnational aspects, the 'guerra combattuta' ('war fought'), to borrow the title of Carlo Pisacane's famous essay, was certainly in the front rank. In the conflict that spread in the South, starting with Garibaldi's landing in Sicily, there were combatants on both sides who were not Italian, and who had become involved in the war for varying reasons. With Garibaldi there were a handful of volunteers for freedom who had come from different parts of Europe, and some of these also took positions of authority (Riall 2007); this in some way assisted pro-Bourbon propaganda, at the point when it sought to present Garibaldi's expedition as a foreign invasion (Buttà 1875). On the other side, among the Bourbon forces there were the 'German' (or rather, Bavarian) elements, who had come as dowry with the young queen Maria Sofia. These were the remnants of a supranational aspect that had been normal for the dynastic armies of the *ancien régime*, but which in the context of nineteenth-century nation-states was clearly anachronistic. With this perspective, the presence of 'foreigners' in the theatre of operations in the South seemed not only to be the projection on Italian affairs of a mixture of ideals, customs, professional practices, and finally passions of a transnational character, but also to be the formalisation of two different temporalities which were simultaneously in operation at the heart of the events unfolding. In a Mezzogiorno convulsed by the clash between Bourbon forces and the *garibaldini*, one German, on one side because of his passions or profession, could thus find himself fighting another German on the other (Göhde 2009; Sarlin 2009). On one side the cosmopolitan and romantic Europe of the freedom-loving volunteers had entered the fray, and on the other stood the traditional Europe of armies that were more 'patrimonial' than just regular: the era of revolution was fighting that of the *ancien régime*.

Following unification, however, there was an unexpected reversal of roles and parties on this front. Legitimist military leaders from various countries who rushed towards southern Italy immediately afterwards, to make their contribution to the precarious survival of the Bourbon dream, were still rewarded for their service (Facineroso 2012). The men under legitimist military command were in fact little different, apart from their ideology, from the foreign volunteers who a few years before had fought alongside Garibaldi. Like the latter group, they were essentially motivated by the force of an ideology which knew no national boundaries; in their case, this generally identified a 'just cause' wherever someone had dared to challenge the values of tradition. 'We served for devotion, not for our own advantage', wrote General Borjés in his diary, having come to Italy from Spain in vain pursuit of the dream of counter-revolutionary victory (Monnier 1965, 166).

Legitimist representations in fact promoted an interpretation of the conflict under way in the South along the lines of a real foreign invasion. For the Bourbon sympathisers, foreigners included not just those international volunteers who rallied to Garibaldi's call between the spring and autumn of 1860, but also the Red Shirts from Lombardy, Liguria, Piedmont, Emilia and Tuscany, who arrived by sea to invade an independent national kingdom and destroy its institutions and traditions. In legitimist eyes in subsequent years, as the Garibaldian moment passed, officers and soldiers of the Italian royal army took on the role of foreign invaders; these were almost always labelled simply as 'Piedmontese' in Bourbon journalism and propaganda. The almost 120,000 men deployed in the South by Italian governments at the height of the repression of brigandage therefore constituted, in the imaginary of those yearning for the vanquished regime's return, the operational embodiment of an invader state: the armed fist of one nation which had traitorously subdued another. Even some years on, according to those nostalgic for the *ancien régime*, they were still subjected to a foreign occupation, one comparable to the Austrian occupation endured previously by other parts of the peninsula. Foreign occupation was, in turn, synonymous with exploitation, oppression and colonisation.

In this regard we can consider one of the many cries of protest that came from some parts of post-unification southern society, which the Bourbons tried to use to legitimise their dream of a re-established kingdom:

> The undersigned, and those making their mark hereunder, inhabitants of the city of Monopoli in the province of Terra di Bari, most devoted subjects of your majesty, are now tired of suffering the unprecedented tyranny, shameless robbery, pillage and squandering of public and private wealth, ever-mounting spurious levies, unfair taxes, cruel state laws, abominable scandals, corruption of public tradition, brutalised public education, ungodliness, and the vicious war waged against the religion of our fathers, the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Rome, the great pope Pius IX, Vicar of Christ, the cardinals, the bishops, all those good priests who have been ruthlessly sent to prison or into exile, the despoiled monasteries, and the exiled aristocracy. As if this was not enough, there are also the damages to public safety, arbitrary arrests solely on the basis of suspicion, thousands of citizens who languish miserably in prison without coming to trial, all victims of the abhorrent revolution imported from loathsome Piedmont. Wherever we turn, we only see disaster and suffering, and bloody traces of the bitter civil war.

In documents such as this, a good number of which were in circulation in the Kingdom of Italy's southern provinces during the main period of brigandage, and which were actually signed by tens of thousands of people (Meriggi 2011), the ideological materials that made up the 'Neapolitan nation', contrasted by the Bourbon-legitimist front with the 'Savoyard-Italian' nation, could be clearly made out; so too could the nature of the complaints used by the exiled court to support the idea that the action carried out by the 'usurper' government in the South was essentially colonial in nature. Within this rhetorical construction, the 'Neapolitan nation' – a concept already in development by the eighteenth century (Musi 2012) – could be contrasted with the nation invading it by reference to its allegiance to religion and the Church (the other great loser in the process of national unification), its aristocratic-legitimist leanings, and finally its natural unresponsiveness to the seductive spirit of revolution. Thus by this interpretation the overturning of the ruling order in the South due to the events of 1860–1861, similar to the upheaval generated by the Neapolitan Republic in 1799, should be understood as an unnatural distortion caused by an external force. Just like the Jacobinism of the era of the sister republics, Risorgimento liberalism was the vehicle for a 'passive' revolution, and the real Neapolitan nation remained uninvolved. Indeed, whereas Vincenzo Cuoco, inventor of the idea of the passive revolution (De Francesco 2012), had held that at the time of the short-lived 1799 republic of southern nations there had been two revolutions (one by the intellectual devotees of

events in France, one by the traditionalist mob), for supporters of the Bourbons in the period after 1860 there was only one: the revolution that the Italo-Piedmontese inflicted with taxes, the state of siege, war on religion, mass arrests, and summary justice. As a result the 'civil war', referred to as such by the compiler at the end of the petition quoted extensively above, was to be understood not as a conflict within southern Italian society – as it has been recently interpreted by writers such as Lupo (2011) and Pinto (2011) – but instead as a war on (southern) civilians prosecuted by a foreign armed force (or rather, the Italian army). This war could be narrated and represented as North against South, and as a war launched by one nation, seduced by the myths of modern 'materialism', against another that was still imbued with traditional values. This was certainly not the only perspective to emerge from the world of post-unification pro-Bourbon legitimism (Meriggi 2011), but it was the most widely held and evocative.

This type of contraposition (progress against tradition, North against South) was not in itself something new, even if its relocation from the field of mere theoretical conflict and rhetorical exercise to that of actual warfare made it much more dramatic.

In the decades before unification, the journalism and literature of international travel had drawn both on straightforward factual information, such as the socio-economic backwardness of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the authoritarian nature of its political system, and on a wide range of picturesque imagery and tradition to construct a certain image of the Mezzogiorno as a land of anti-modernity, if not of the outright past. As is well known, this theme has been fully explored in recent years (Petrusewicz 1998; Kufeke 1999; Dickie 1999; Moe 2002). It is perhaps less well known that the orientalising narrative of the South expounded by modernising journalism and travel literature had as its counterpart, at least within part of the journalism produced within the Two Sicilies, an opposing critical representation of the Europe of progress. This Europe was portrayed as the setting for a social and civil transformation which had many dark sides, and which should not therefore be admired without a degree of caution. In this vein, for example, in the decades before 1848 the Neapolitan periodical *Il progresso delle scienze, delle lettere e delle arti*, edited by eminent figures such as Giuseppe Ricciardi, Luigi Blanch and Luigi Dragonetti, while aligned in favour of an economic 'regeneration' for which, according to its writers, the South had all the prerequisites, and while commending (in pieces by Blanch) the industrial progress already under way in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, had repeatedly lambasted the 'monstrosities' resulting from the materialism linked to development of the factory system in Great Britain, citing in support the harshness of working conditions and the uncivilised use of child labour. In brief, barbarism could also be found within the self-styled Europe of progress, in the countries presenting themselves as the most modern and civilised. It could often be read in the columns of *Il progresso* that a good antidote to those ills was the cultural heritage and *humanitas* inherent to the culture of the Mezzogiorno, or in fact to that part of the Italian peninsula where the fusion of classical traditions, from the Greek and the Latino-Roman, had had its best outcome. If Philosophy and Law were to be considered the indispensable and fundamental requirements of a social humanism which had no reason to bow to the debased spirit of the century, where better to find either of these well developed than in the land of the ancient Magna Graecia, latterly the provinces of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (Devecchi 2005)?

The theory of a 'moral and civil primacy of the Italians' (Gioberti 1843), which had argued for the exceptional nature and historical particularity of the peninsula in the context of contemporary Europe, had clearly not been advanced only in the South prior to unification (Hunecke 1977). However, the anti-modernist strand which ran through Italian culture in the Risorgimento era, making itself evident in various ways (Banti et al. 2011), had shown a particular intensity within the setting of the Bourbon kingdom's intellectual life, characterising

many of the regime's opponents as well as its supporters (Pisacane 1970/1858). Alongside the 'orientalisation' aggressively imposed by outside viewers, and as such endured, there was thus also an 'orientality', as it might be termed, within the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies; this was asserted and proudly promoted, and found expression in the sense of the perennial importance of the 'antiquity' of the South, or rather of the present-day vitality of the values of the past: an ingrained cultural and civil reality to be contrasted with any fleeting modern-day xenophilia.

The translocal and transregional dynamics in the southern process of Italian unification should also be considered in relation to these widespread feelings, not least because they were referred to not only by the legitimist front but also by those pro-independence liberals who wished to retain a nation that would be specifically Neapolitan rather than Italian, as distinct from both the pro-unification and pro-Bourbon lobbies.

If, moreover, northern Italy, thrusting itself into the South under arms, beyond being the bearer of a unification to which many southern liberals would have preferred a federation, was also to be seen as representing industrial Europe and its values, then it can be more easily understood why representations of the encounter between North and South which were strongly shaped, by both sides, in terms of fundamental otherness, continued to have some currency for a long while. In just a few years this encounter actually experienced some very different phases, to the extent that discussing it as one unitary event is problematic, however one wishes to interpret it.

In this light it is interesting to revisit a classic work from the literature produced in the South during the unification crisis, the book that Marc Monnier dedicated to southern brigandage in 1862, as some of its passages help us to address the issue in terms that are more sophisticated than those based on a simple dichotomy. Certainly, Garibaldi's volunteers – among whom, as is well known, southerners were a tiny minority in the initial stages – as much as the conscripts of the royal army, under officers largely from Piedmont, actually came from a world that was 'other' to the Two Sicilies; seen from the South they were all in a certain sense foreigners, and yet foreigners in a different way. As Monnier wrote:

> The people of Naples have (or at least had) the same aversion for the Piedmontese as men of the South have for men of the North. The contrast between the Red Shirts and the grey coats was harsh and stark. After the volunteers – passionate, noisy, picaresque, glorious – who threw their money around freely, wishing to live well before dying, after these heroic vagabonds, there suddenly arrived these well-ordered, disciplined, calm, sober, poor, reserved soldiers.... They only had one uniform, and were clothed the same on Sundays as on other days; they did not shout in the streets; they seemed transported beneath the sky of Naples: they spoke a dialect that was almost French. The people shrank away from them. The Piedmontese lived in isolation among them, just as the Swiss had done in previous times. (Monnier 1965, 49)

The encounters with the peoples of the South, while surely as problematic for the *garibaldini* as for the soldiers of the Kingdom of Italy, were in fact very separate processes that ultimately bore no relation to each other. Garibaldi's volunteers were the active bearers of a concept – if not a genuine project – of liberation that had a strong belief 'in the patriotic potential of the southern peoples', and that represented the projection of that democratic sensibility which, starting with the 1820–1821 revolution over the constitution in the Two Sicilies, had especially seen the 'southern tradition' as the vehicle for fulfilment of the Risorgimento impulse (De Francesco 2012, 55). Right through the 1850s, moreover, the axiom of the 'southern initiative' (Berti 1962) was still hardly questioned within the democratic milieu from which most of the *garibaldini* came. As Antonino De Francesco has recently perceptively observed, 'in the aftermath of 1821, nobody dared to dispute the patriotic identity of the Mezzogiorno, and acknowledgement of this confirmed a political pre-eminence for Naples' (2012, 55).

There is no doubt, as De Francesco emphasises, that in the Garibaldian imaginary this primarily political perception was mixed together with exoticising seductions, fed by those elements of the travel literature which dwelt happily on the picturesque orientality of the Italian South, before the men led by the *condottiere* from Nice had actually set foot in Sicily or the southern mainland. In this regard, the Red Shirts belonged to the same limited band of readers that made up the ranks of the moderate liberal grouping. However, the references to Africa, often written as 'Affrica', which repeatedly surface in the writings of the Thousand, should be seen as the expression of a cultural perception very different from that which only a few months later was to mark the attitude of army commanders towards the South. In fact, 'on the island, the proximity of its inhabitants to those of the neighbouring Tunisian coastline both suggested an exotic world and simultaneously emphasised how the fiery, proud character of the local communities had its origins in such a torrid climate' (2012, 55). By contrast, in the 'orientalistic' communications of the Kingdom of Italy's military and political functionaries who were sent, from the North, to ensure public order in the long months of the near-vacuum of power that followed the break-up and fall of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, 'the nearness of the southern regions to Africa seemed to illustrate the brutality of an administration that had left wonderful lands uncivilised and contaminated, and provided the necessary cover to legitimise military intervention' (2012, 85). At the same time, however, at the point when the accusation of southern backwardness in 'africanising' tones by northerners was shifting its focus from the defunct Bourbon regime to the southern populations, and thus largely turning into a condemnation of 'savage' anthropological customs common to both the corruptors and the corrupted, this also in fact assumed the emergence of an entirely political concern, which was now isolated as such for the first time. In that part of Italy, some of whose inhabitants had swiftly been re-classified as barbarians to be disciplined rather than brothers to liberate, those who challenged public order appearing as brigands (and sometimes as legitimists) were not the only ones to concern the national civil and military authorities. There were also those, in various parts of the South, who showed an inclination to keep Garibaldian ideals alive, encouraging the fear that 'a politically and socially backward environment such as the South would inevitably elect illiterates, criminals and republicans' (De Francesco 2012, 90). Thus the theory of opposing extremisms – on the one hand the Bourbon or simply criminal one embodied by brigandage, on the other the democratic-republican one – and the possibility of their damaging contamination took hold, and prevailed for a long time in the relationship between the government and southern territory in the first decade after unification. The ethnocentric gaze of the North had its implicit counterpart, the demonisation of the other – the northern Italian – as a foreigner and invader by those nostalgic for the old order in the South, and to a lesser extent also by the democratic opposition. These positions were not, at that time, just an intimation of the discovery of a reciprocal anthropological otherness, but also one of the expressions of a complex political conflict that, while certainly varying in intensity, ran right through Italy, involving the victors and vanquished of the Risorgimento.

For a number of contingent reasons, this conflict was in fact more explosive in the Kingdom's southern provinces than elsewhere. It fed as much on the extreme precariousness of the conditions for normal public order as on the aftermath of civil war, in this case, however, to be understood as a conflict internal to Mezzogiorno society: as a post-unification reformulation of a clash that had already started in the years before, and that had worsened during the final phase of the Bourbon regime (Pinto 2011). The South of the 'orientalist' cultural articulation, and of the local counter-articulation conducted under a banner decrying the Piedmontese invasion, was thus a many-sided phenomenon: not only a 'paradise inhabited by devils' (Moe 2004) stuck in time or, better, explicitly oriented towards reliving the past, but also the part

of Italy in which republicans, those who in the national picture were temporarily the losers among those who had wanted unification, instead still seemed to be in the game and able to launch a successful challenge to the moderate liberal establishment ruling the nation (De Francesco 2012). That South was 'other' not only because it was socially and civilly backward, but also because in some ways, despite the survival within it of a hyper-conservative legitimist group, it was too politically advanced and restless in relation to the rest of the nation.

Once this has been clarified, what should be made of the interpretation by which the encounter between North and South at the time of Italian unification is described as a conquest or colonisation – political and institutional just as military, and as cultural – of the latter by the former, and thus ultimately as a sort of foreign invasion?

The work done in the last 15 years that focuses on culture is of great assistance in this regard. Taking its conclusions at face value, one might be tempted to endorse the 'colonial' interpretation of Italian unification, which sees the South as the object of an orientalising, barbarising, feminising narration voiced by northerners, and by 'northernised' southerners, in a register so unsophisticated as to make slippage of the debate into quasi-racist terms almost inevitable. However, I believe we should go beyond this. If the Saidian paradigm (Said 1978) is applied too mechanically in this case, the result may be that we miss a key point and fail to grasp that this burst of resistance in the South after unification was indeed a war, but was simultaneously the event that revealed the largest problem that the peninsula's territories, now becoming a nation, were faced with when they sought to bring their historical divisions and geographical diversities within a unitary synthesis, however precarious. At the point when Garibaldi landed in Sicily the Italian nation still did not exist, and it therefore makes no sense to talk of that expedition as the invasion of one nation by another. Instead, it was actually at that point that Italy started to take form as a unified object, thanks to the simultaneous establishment of both its external borders and its no less important internal borders: those that, just as in other European countries (Moretti 1997), marked off its most restless and rebellious areas. The war in the South coincided with the discovery of the depth of the divisions and diversities I referred to above, rather than with these being dismissed from the national conscience. Dickie discusses the attitude of Pasquale Villari, and views his interpretation of the problem as fluctuating between 'his attempts to define the South and its problems as a national concern' and a 'tendency to grasp the South as beyond Italy, or even as its antithesis' (1999, 62); I would argue that the first formulation is more representative of Villari's thinking.

Representations of the South in the years immediately after unification were not in fact only as a place of brigand barbarity, or where the people were lazy and corrupt, such a view leading logically to consideration of the necessity of a 'civilising mission' (Osterhammel 2006) to simply be entrusted to an army licensed to follow the rules for exceptional circumstances. This is clearly the South of Bianco di Saint-Jorioz (1864), but not that of Monnier, in whose exposition of the southern political and military situation the local forces of progress were contrasted with those of reaction or simply of criminality (Monnier 1965; Marmo 2011). The armed groups which ranged some areas for years after unification could certainly only have been seen by the soldiers responsible for their suppression as radically 'other'. However, it can be argued that this is almost always the dominant modality whereby the adversary is identified and described within a war.

On the other hand, the enemy that the 'grey coats' of the royal army found themselves facing not only did not represent all of southern Italian society, this society being the primary victim of its criminal activity, but was at the same time also 'familiar'. Despite everything, members of the two forces in the field had the same religious faith, and the dialects spoken by both the regular troops and the rebel groups all bore some relationship to the same literary language, although the

brigand leaders clearly employed this with somewhat greater difficulty than their counterparts in official uniform, as can be seen from Monnier's work (1965, 80).

It had already happened in the past, especially in historical periods marked by the actions of an established order with a particularly strong desire to enforce its will, that southern Italy and its countryside were related to lands with radically non-Western cultures, as if to barbarism and primitiveness: three centuries earlier, they were sometimes called 'Las indias de acà' ('Le Indie di qua', 'Italy's Indies') by the militants of the Counter-Reformation's Jesuit army, which deplored the disorder and irregularity of popular religious practices and customs. We should note, however, the qualifying 'de acà', or 'nuestras Indias', the Indies of Italy: contradictions and wounds of Italy's own body, not the characteristic traits of the body of another, despite the rhetorical use of fragments of an ethnocentric narrative permeated by hints of racism. For those responsible for public order in the South after unification, the 'Affrica' contained within the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, like the Mediterranean 'Indies' of the later sixteenth century, was 'nostra' and 'di qua'. As Paolo Macry has written recently, if in relation to the South some of the nation's political leaders and some military commanders expressed prejudices of an orientalist nature, meaning ways of showing a 'sense of distance and foreignness typically implicit in the stereotypical images that colonial culture has of its colonised peoples', this was not because a conceptual equivalence of the former Bourbon kingdom to uncivilised 'Affrica' was being imagined, but actually because 'Naples was felt to be too close to London and Paris to not be judged by the same criteria' (2012, 26).

This Africa, moreover, was to such a degree 'ours' in 1861 as already to be fit to nominate its own representatives to the national parliament, in proportion to its population and territory, and like all the other parts of Italy that had belonged to the states of the old configuration. It almost goes without saying that its position of organic inherence to the nation was entirely different from that colonial condition which is usually the natural territory for orientalist discourse.

Conclusions

Alongside the 'wild' South of brigandage, crime, corruption and legitimism, which provided fertile ground for storytelling and literary invention, there existed a South that adhered closely to a progressive outlook, that identified with national institutions, and that therefore had no intention of promoting itself as an alternative to the nation; if anything, it opposed those other fragments of southern Italian society which held different views. This of course had its limitations, which militate against any idealising or rhetorical representation of events in the southern provinces in the decade after Italian unification, and which instead prompt attempts at an accurate delineation of the liberalism of local dignitaries that was very different, here as elsewhere, from the ideal picture assumed by ideology (Civile 1990; Musella 1994). The 'nostalgic' literature on unification in the Italian South has preferred to draw a veil over this unmistakeable fact; I refer in particular to those currents in historiography and journalism, extending from the time of unification itself right up to the present, where they coincide with the re-emergence of anti-unification tendencies in Italian political debate, which tend to portray the dissolution of the old Bourbon kingdom as the outcome of a defeat inflicted on a South that was proud of its traditionalism and its dynastic values, by an anti-religious North that was driven above all by a hidden agenda of economic exploitation.

As in the times of Vincenzo Cuoco, there were in reality two nations in the South at the point of unification. One of these, however, played a full part in the Kingdom of Italy's political establishment, as was to be unequivocally shown by the parliamentary 'revolution' of 1876 and

the opening of a new phase of Italian politics marked by the disappearance of 'Piedmontisation' and a clear widening of the geographical composition of the nation's political, administrative and military class, as well as by the metamorphosis of the 'southern question' from a paramilitary public order emergency into a structural problem for the national political agenda (Musella 2005; Barbagallo 2011).

The Bourbon ruler of Palermo's pleasure in beheading 40 prisoners a day in times gone by to drink their blood rather than wine, as told in the vaudeville turn performed in the early 1860s by Miss Clara Seyton-Sicard and directed by Dr Narni, was in fact surely just a fantasy, which even incoherent legitimist propaganda could take some amusement in denouncing as implausible. It was, however, a sad and inarguable truth, notwithstanding some rather unconvincing recent attempts at a fresh approach to the issue (Daniele and Malanima 2007), that at the point of unification southern Italy was already in conditions of clear economic and infrastructural backwardness when compared with the standards of some of the peninsula's northern areas, which in turn were very moderate in the context of Western Europe. Once the military emergency had passed it was an increasingly flexible and responsive liberalism, rather than an 'orientalism' with a para-colonial stamp, which came forward as the therapeutic tool for relieving the ills suffered at the most unsettled edges of the nation.

Translated by Stuart Oglethorpe (stuart.oglethorpe@tiscali.co.uk)

Notes on contributor

Marco Meriggi is Professor of History of Political Institutions at the University of Naples 'Federico II'. His most recent works include: *Gli stati italiani prima dell'Unità. Una storia istituzionale* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2011); *Atlante culturale del Risorgimento* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 2011, jointly edited with Alberto Mario Banti, Antonio Chiavistelli and Luca Mannori); *World History. Le nuove rotte della storia* (Rome–Bari: Laterza, 2011, jointly written with Laura Di Fiore).

References

Banti, A. M., A. Chiavistelli, L. Mannori, and M. Meriggi, eds. 2011. *Atlante culturale del Risorgimento*. Rome–Bari: Laterza.

Barbagallo, F. 2011. "Il Mezzogiorno e l'Italia (1861–2011)." *Studi Storici* 2: 337–356.

Berti, G. 1962. *I democratici e l'iniziativa meridionale nel Risorgimento*. Milan: Feltrinelli.

Bianco di Saint Jorioz, A. 1864. *Il brigantaggio alla frontiera pontificia dal 1860 al 1863*. Milan: Daelli.

Budde, G., S. Conrad, and O. Janz, eds. 2006. *Transnationale Geschichte*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Buttà, G. 1875. *Un viaggio da Boccadifalco a Gaeta. Memorie della rivoluzione dal 1860 al 1861*. Naples: Savastano.

Civile, G. 1990. *Il Comune rustico. Storia sociale di un paese del Mezzogiorno nell'800*. Bologna: il Mulino.

Conrad, S. 2013. *Globalgeschichte. Eine Einführung*. Munich: Beck.

Conrad, S., and J. Osterhammel, eds. 2004. *Das Kaiserreich transnational. Deutschland in der Welt 1871–1914*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Daniele, V., and P. Malanima. 2007. "Il prodotto delle regioni e il divario Nord-Sud in Italia (1861–2004)." *Rivista di politica economica* 3–4: 257–315.

De Francesco, A. 2012. *La palla al piede. Una storia del pregiudizio antimeridionale*. Milan: Feltrinelli.

Devecchi, D. 2005. *Europa e Mezzogiorno nelle pagine di "Il progresso delle scienze, delle lettere e delle arti" (1832–1846)*, Tesi di laurea, Università degli studi Federico II, Naples.

Dickie, J. 1999. *Darkest Italy: The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860–1900*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Facineroso, A. 2012. "La dimora del tempo sospeso. Il governo borbonico in esilio e le sue trame cospirative." PhD diss., Università degli studi, Catania.

Gioberti, V. 1843. *Del primato morale e civile degli italiani*. Brussels: Meline, Cans.

Göhde, F. N. 2009. "German Volunteers in the Armed Conflicts of the Italian Risorgimento, 1834–1870." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 4: 461–475.

Hunecke, V. 1977. "Cultura liberale e industrialismo nell'Italia dell'Ottocento." *Studi storici* 4: 23–32.

Kufeke, Kay. 1999. *Himmel und Hölle in Neapel. Mentalität und discursive Praxis deutscher Neapelreisender um 1800*. Cologne: SH Verlag.

Lupo, S. 2010. "L'economia del Mezzogiorno preunitario. Ancora su dualismo e sviluppo." *Meridiana* 69: 227–242.

Lupo, S. 2011. *L'unificazione italiana. Mezzogiorno, rivoluzione, guerra civile*. Rome: Donzelli.

Macry, P. 2012. *Unità a Mezzogiorno. Come l'Italia ha messo assieme i pezzi*. Bologna: il Mulino.

Marmo, M. 2011. *Il coltello e il mercato. La Camorra prima e dopo l'unità d'Italia*. Naples: L'Ancora del Mediterraneo.

Mencacci, P. 1891. *Memorie documentate per la storia della rivoluzione italiana*. Rome: Armanini.

Meriggi, M. 2011. "Dopo l'Unità. Forme e ambivalenze del legittimismo borbonico." *Passato e Presente* 83: 37–56.

Moe, N. 2002. *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Moe, N. 2004. *Un paradiso abitato da diavoli. Identità nazionale e immagini del Mezzogiorno*. Naples: L'Ancora del Mediterraneo.

Molfese, F. 1966. *Storia del brigantaggio dopo l'Unità*. Milan: Feltrinelli.

Monnier, M. 1965 [1862]. *Notizie storiche documentate sul brigantaggio nelle provincie napoletane dai tempi di Fra Diavolo sino ai giorni nostri*. Naples: Arturo Berisio.

Moretti, F. 1997. *Atlante del romanzo europeo (1800–1900)*. Turin: Einaudi.

Musella, L. 1994. *Individui, amici, clienti. Relazioni personali e circuiti politici in Italia meridionale tra Otto e Novecento*. Bologna: il Mulino.

Musella, L. 2005. *Meridionalismo. Percorsi e realtà di un'idea (1885–1944)*. Naples: Guida.

Musi, A. 2012. "La nazione napoletana prima della nazione italiana." In *Nazioni d'Italia. Identità politiche e appartenenze regionali fra Sette e Ottocento*, edited by Angela De Benedictis, Irene Fosi, and Luca Mannori, 75–89. Rome: Viella.

Osterhammel, J. 2006. *Europe, the "West" and the Civilizing Mission*. London: German Historical Institute.

Pernau, M. 2011. *Transnationale Geschichte*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Petraccone, C. 2000. *Le due civiltà. Settentrionali e meridionali nella storia d'Italia*. Rome–Bari: Laterza.

Petrusewicz, M. 1998. *Come il Meridione divenne una questione*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino.

Pinto, C. 2011. "Conflitto civile e guerra nazionale nel Mezzogiorno." *Meridiana* 69: 1–30.

Pisacane, C. 1970 [1858]. *La rivoluzione*. Turin: Einaudi.

Riall, L. 2007. *Garibaldi: Invention of a Hero*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Said, E. 1978. *Orientalism: Western Representations of the Orient*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Sarlin, S. 2009. "Fighting the Risorgimento: Foreign Volunteers in Southern Italy (1860–1863)." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 14 (4): 476–490.