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Translation and Ideology in post-war Italy: Left-wing Publishers and the Italian Communist Party

In the transition towards democracy after the war, Italy moved towards an apparently more open dialogue with other European and non-European countries, which was reflected by a growing publishing interest in translations. This cultural exchange was not in any way neutral, but embedded in a specifically national political dimension as well as in the broader context of the Cold War. In the turmoil of post-war reconstruction, the influence of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) on intellectuals and cultural operators was particularly significant,¹ although the party was never able to attain political power in the form of a government. The party also had to find its own identity both in relation to power dynamics on an international level, namely in terms of its proximity to the Soviet Union, and on a national level, with the need to develop a strong opposition to the Christian democrats in power and their allegiance with the United States. The position of the PCI was therefore multifaceted in terms of negotiating its political needs with the orientations of Italian culture at that time. Spanning the period that goes from the electoral defeat of the PCI in 1948 and the crisis following the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, this article aims firstly to chart the PCI's influence on the geo-cultural reception of contemporary foreign literature within the Italian publishing field. Secondly, it explores the extent to which translations were strategic in moulding the intellectual and political identity of publishers and editors in relation to the Italian Communist Party.

Critical debate concerning the relationship between publishing institutions and translation has focused mainly on censorship under the Fascist regime,² while much less attention has been paid to the post-war patterns of dissemination of foreign literature in translation; the critical discourse on the influence of political forces on translations has been

¹ On the relationship between the PCI and Italian intellectuals, key studies include Nello Ajello, *Intellettuali e PCI 1944/1958*, Rome: Laterza, 1979, Stephen Gundle, *Between Hollywood and Moscow. The Italian Communists and the Challenge of Mass Culture, 1943-1991*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2000, and Albertina Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali. La politica culturale dei comunisti italiani (1944-1964)*, Rome: Carocci, 2014.

² See, in particular, Francesca Billiani, *Culture nazionali e narrazioni straniere. Italia, 1903-1943*, Florence: Le Lettere, 2007, and Christopher Rundle and Kate Sturge, eds, *Translation under Fascism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010.

to a certain extent neglected.³ By exploring the strategies adopted in the publication of foreign literature in translation by one key Italian publisher, chosen for both its allegiance with the PCI and its preeminent role in the post-war Italian intellectual field, this article intends to fill, to some extent, this gap. To do so, it investigates the publishing history of the series ‘Piccola Biblioteca Scientifico-letteraria’ (Small Scientific and Literary Library, hereafter ‘Pbsl’), that the left-wing publisher Giulio Einaudi editore began publishing in 1949, in collaboration with the PCI’s leader Palmiro Togliatti, with a particular focus on the literary works.⁴ The article’s main argument is that translations were intended to contribute to the (re)shaping of intellectual identities and aesthetic orientations and in so doing, they tried to challenge the dynamics of the post-war publishing, literary and political fields. Specifically, the article addresses two main questions relating to the relationship between publishing, translation and politics: to what extent can political legacies influence the reception of foreign literature in democratic countries? What is the role played by translation in constructing and contesting the dynamics of not only the literary but also of the political field?

Drawing on archival materials as well as published texts, the article will challenge the Bourdieusian paradigm of a literary field conceived as relatively autonomous from political influences⁵ by charting how political legacies operate in a ‘post-hegemonic’ dimension,⁶ like that of post-war Italian publishing. After a short section outlining these methodological premises, the article will assess how Einaudi’s publishing project was designed and carried out at different historical stages, focusing particularly on years spanning 1949 and 1951, towards 1956. This will help to investigate whether the power dynamics between the publisher and the PCI changed, and how this was reflected in the publishing and editorial work. The sociological analysis of the publication of such authors as Brecht, Pushkin and

³ One exception being Francesca Billiani, ‘Renewing a Literary Culture Through Translation: Poetry in Post-War Italy’, in Jeremy Munday, ed, *Translation and Intervention*, London: Continuum, 138-59, 2007.

⁴ For space constraints, the article will deal exclusively with the literary works published in the series.

⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l’art. Génèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Paris: Seuil, 1992. English translation: *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, translated by Susan Emanuel, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

⁶ Jon Beasley-Murray, *Posthegemony. Political Theory and Latin America*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

even Shakespeare, will thus unveil the multifaceted dynamics underlying Einaudi's plan to attain 'concrete ideological assets'.⁷

Translation and communism: habitus and post-hegemony

As Ioana Popa points out, given that translation was one of the main 'vectors' for communist regimes to determine the circulation of cultural products in accordance with Cold War geopolitics, it has been surprisingly neglected by history and historical sociology on communism until recently.⁸ Conversely, within the field of Translation Studies (and likewise within Italian Studies), the issue has been approached mostly in relation to censorship discourses. Reflecting upon the role of communist influences outside Eastern European countries and the dialectics with democratic dynamics in Western communities from a translation perspective therefore promises to offer new insights. Translations as cultural products can simultaneously shed light both on the dynamics between the literary and political field in a given national context, and those operating between countries. In this sense, a country like Italy appears a particularly interesting case study, presenting, during its passage to a democratic state run by conservative forces, an intellectual field in frequent dialogue with leftist political institutions, especially the PCI, and further complicated by the echoes of its fascist past; this latter element alone marks the situation as rather different from that presented by France, for instance.

In this context, the notion of 'posthegemony' suggested by Beasley-Murray, appears particularly fruitful to our analysis. Relationships between politics and culture do not work simply in terms of control and coercion, but can be more accurately described in terms of 'habits', seen as habitual and repeated practice. This is where the notion of 'posthegemony' encounters that of a Bourdieusian *habitus* considered as an acquired system of perceptions, thoughts and actions that is structured by, and structures, the dynamics of a certain field,⁹ but with a key difference in relation to publishing. In a site of tensions of various forms of capital, as is the case in the concept of an 'autonomous' literary field proposed by Bourdieu, politics does not seem to influence profoundly the functioning of the field itself. However, it would be more accurate to say that though the publishing field still retains its rules for the

⁷ Giulio Einaudi editore archive, State Archive in Turin [later Einaudi Archive], file Palmiro Togliatti, Giulio Einaudi's letter to Togliatti, 28 June 1949, my translation here and throughout.

⁸ Ioana Popa, 'Communism and Translation Studies', *Handbook of Translation Studies*, vol. 4, edited by Yves Gambier and Luke van Doorslaer, Amsterdam: John Benjamin, 2013, pp25-30.

⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, translated by Richard Nice, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, p72.

acquisition of symbolic capital (to gain a more central position within the field), and editors act not just in response to political coercion, but also in relation to their cultural dispositions – that is their habitus – it is necessary to take into account the relationships with political agents – such as, in this case, the PCI – although not in purely hegemonic terms. These relationships cannot be disregarded as they are crucial not only for the publishers’ positioning (in terms of allegiances and distribution support) but also in moulding the perception of their political identity within the cultural sphere (and thus eventually their symbolic capital). In this sense, translations could be more strategic than domestic production as they offer for publishers and editors a more subtle modality to engage with the national political discourses by means of international connections. As researchers, the analysis of the editors’ dialogue over the publication of translations as well as of the paratexts – the elements, such as covers, introductions, or illustrations, that accompany the main text and form its frame, as well as influence its reception – they produce and how these change over time is key to understanding, from an historical perspective, the relationship between politics and publishing. The analysis of the editors’ choices of publishing specific foreign authors can unveil the subtle ways in which the reception of foreign literature can tighten or loosen political allegiances, even when the state does not control and direct these choices. The editorial work, notably in the writing of prefaces or footnotes, can also shed light both upon this political framing and the habitus of the editors themselves, thus revealing any potential tensions and idiosyncrasies. The close investigation of the Einaudi paratextual frameworks in relation to translations will therefore enable us to map the connections between the editors and the PCI, for a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between politics and culture in post-war Italy.

1949-1951: paratextual frameworks for an ideological ‘small library’

In 1949, the left-wing publisher Einaudi launched the ‘Pbsl’.¹⁰ Drawing on the model that the Treves publishing house launched in the 1890s – low price and clarity and reliability of content paired with an attractive format –¹¹ the ‘Pbsl’ aimed similarly to offer essays to a

¹⁰ See Roberta Cesana, *Editori e librai nell’era digitale: dalla distribuzione tradizionale al commercio elettronico*, Milan: Franco Angeli, 2002, p12-13.

¹¹ *La civiltà cattolica*, series XY, volume VII, 1893, bibliography, p335. As far as the title is concerned, the Einaudi series was previously entitled ‘Biblioteca Economica Einaudi’, but this title was criticized by economist – and Gramsci’s friend – Piero Sraffa, who, on 16 February 1949, underlined the ambiguity which could confuse the readers, unable to understand whether Einaudi was publishing political economics at a low price or ‘cheap’ political economics (see Luisa Mangoni,

large readership at a competitive price - the price spanned 200 to 600 Italian lira, depending on the number of pages, in line with the paperbacks that followed in the 1950s-1960s, thus disseminating scientific and cultural awareness. Of the 106 titles published between 1949 and 1961 (which included both essays and literary texts) only fifteen books were written by Italian authors.¹² This dramatic proportion of translations informed the character of the whole series.

The year when the 'Pbsl' was launched, 1949, is key from a political perspective in the Cold War context, as the PCI at that time had to reconsider its relationship with the intellectual field, by looking more closely at specific groups influenced by the US. These were in particular the clericals, tied to the Christian Democrats, those informed by Idealist Historicism and aligned with Benedetto Croce, and the ultra-individualists.¹³ The strategy was therefore that of identifying the opponents in a more specific way and fighting them by multiplying the cultural initiatives related to the PCI.¹⁴ Einaudi, who was not funded by the Party but was not too distant from the Party's orientations, could represent a significant ally.

Their allegiance was made possible by their 'privileged' rapport,¹⁵ since many Einaudi collaborators were indeed left-winged intellectuals. However, in the immediate aftermath of the war, their relationship had signalled the complexity of striking a balance between the need of support from autonomous intellectuals and the need of control of this cultural autonomy. This was evident in the case of *Il Politecnico* (1945-1947) with the polemic between the editor-in-chief, the famously left-wing writer, Elio Vittorini and Palmiro Togliatti.¹⁶ Subsequently, in 1947, the Einaudi publication of Antonio Gramsci's *Lettere dal carcere* represented a way for Togliatti to negotiate between the orthodox line of intransigent

Pensare i libri. La casa editrice Einaudi dagli anni Trenta agli anni Sessanta, Turin: Einaudi, 1999, p443n).

¹² Aa.Vv., *Le edizioni Einaudi negli anni 1933-2013: indice bibliografico degli autori e collaboratori, indice cronistorico delle collane, indici per argomenti e per titoli*, Turin: Einaudi, 2013, p1290-2.

¹³ Fondazione Istituto Gramsci Rome, *Archivio Mosca, Direzione*, meeting on 7 July 1949, 'Risultati del lavoro culturale (Sereni)', contribution by Palmiro Togliatti – in Albertina Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali*, p61-2.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ Gabriele Turi, *Casa Einaudi. Libri, uomini, idee oltre il fascismo*, Bologna: il Mulino, 1990, p195-208.

¹⁶ See Romano Luperini, *Gli intellettuali di sinistra e l'ideologia della ricostruzione nel dopoguerra*, Rome: Edizioni di Ideologie, 1971; Aa.Vv., *La polemica Vittorini-Togliatti e la linea culturale del PCI nel 1945- '47*, Milan: Edizioni Lavoro Liberato, 1974; Franco Fortini, 'Che cosa è stato *Il Politecnico*', in *Dieci inverni (1947-1957): contributi a un discorso socialista*, Bari: De Donato, 1973, p59-79; Giuseppe Muraca, *Da "Il Politecnico" a "Linea d'ombra": le riviste della sinistra eterodossa*, Poggibonsi: Lalli editore, 1990.

opposition against the US, that Stalin imposed upon Italian communists,¹⁷ and the need on the part of the Italian Communist Party to regain a central position within the political field, after the Christian Democrat Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi expelled both communists and socialists from the government.¹⁸ As Francesca Chiarotto has suggested,¹⁹ to support this subtle project, Togliatti managed to frame the life and works of the most representative Italian marxist theoretician and politician, Antonio Gramsci, in a shrewd and effective way. Gramsci's works and Gramsci's status as founder of the PCI became the means to dialogue with contemporary Italian society in terms that were not strictly leninist. After the political defeat of 1947 and the Cominform's formation, the leader of the cultural committee – with the objective of organizing more systematically the relationships and influences with the cultural field –²⁰, Emilio Sereni, strove to promote a 'national' culture, against American influences, and in support of fruitful exchanges with more 'progressive' forces. In this context, the role of the Einaudi publishing house was pivotal into spreading marxist literary as well as scientific publications, in conjunction with the PCI.²¹ However, Sereni's rigidity was not successful in terms of mobilizing intellectual forces to increase popularity: the PCI lost the elections in April 1948 and had to re-discuss its own political strategy.

In 1949, dynamics had also changed at a publishing level. As philosopher and Einaudi collaborator Norberto Bobbio highlighted, during an editorial board on 12-13 January 1949, the enthusiastic *impegno* of the aftermath of the war had had to come to terms with a more critical attitude:

1949 is not 1945, when all the publishers started printing political books, and new publishers were born precisely to print political books. In 1945 it seemed that every political book was fine (but it wasn't true, and all the political series have died, or are about to do so). In 1949, instead, no one prints political books, because today to print these books one needs to distinguish lively works from dead works, useful works for the current generation from useless works, and in order to choose lively and useful works one needs culture (that culture which the other publishers don't have).²²

¹⁷ Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988*, London: Penguin, p114-15.

¹⁸ See Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, p102-3, and 110-12.

¹⁹ Francesca Chiarotto, *Operazione Gramsci. Alla conquista degli intellettuali nell'Italia del dopoguerra*, preface by Angelo d'Orsi, Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2007, p49-50.

²⁰ See for further details Albertina Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali*, p41-52.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p53-55. See in particular the letters exchanged between Emilio Sereni and Giulio Einaudi in February 1948, now in Emilio Sereni, *Lettere (1945-1956)*, edited by Emanuele Bernardi, Rubbettino: Soveria Mannelli, 2011, p113-6.

²² Now in Luisa Mangoni, *Pensare i libri*, p435.

In democratic post-war Italy, the prestige of the publisher should not be identified *tout court* with the party, but allegiance with political agents was nonetheless instrumental in carving out the publisher's own political identity. The struggles within the publishing field to gain a more central position became fiercer as the number of competitors increased, whilst the readership was expanding but at a slower pace. The Turinese publisher had to negotiate its position with other leftist publishers, particularly those supported by the PCI, such as the Cooperativa del libro popolare (Colip), which in June 1949 vied for the attention of Einaudi's politically-oriented target audience with rival cultural products, such as contemporary literary works and scientific essays.²³ Einaudi therefore had to plan its publishing series strategically against these competitors, to insert itself within the party's wider projects outlined above and to maintain some relevant autonomy from more propagandistic ventures. The 'Pbsl' embodied this twofold purpose.

In the same editorial board of mid-January 1949, the Einaudi collaborators had discussed which publishing strategies to adopt for the 'Biblioteca Economica Einaudi' (Einaudi Economic Library), and renamed the series into 'Piccola Biblioteca Scientifico-letteraria'. The communist literary critic Carlo Muscetta suggested publishing very popular works, as Treves had done, but in the choice of these works the collaborators assumed different positions in accordance with their own habitus: writer Italo Calvino proposed not to design the series simply as cultural products to be distributed in the party's local sections; communist and catholic philosopher Felice Balbo accepted that the PCI could from time to time suggest to Einaudi the books to be published. The conclusion was that the series could also accommodate classics, even if from a scientific viewpoint they were not particularly up-to-date, in small but light volumes, with either a red cover (for historical-scientific works) or a grey one (for literary texts).²⁴

The vision of the cultural product offered by Giulio Einaudi and the Einaudi collaborator Scassellati in spring 1949 is also crucial in order to better understand the features of the series. A popular and generalist approach was to be favoured, but, most importantly, the aim was to nourish the PCI's working-class and intellectual readership with more complex views – as opposed to the simplistic dichotomies in force, perhaps in response to the

²³ *Ibidem*, p442.

²⁴ See Tommaso Munari, ed, *I verbali del Mercoledì. Riunioni editoriali Einaudi, 1943-1952*, Turin: Einaudi, 2011, p60-62.

more ideological initiatives promoted by Colip – on current themes. The ultimate goal was nonetheless that of dismantling conservative positions:

Small-shaped books at popular prices. No topic is excluded: the aim is to elevate the general culture of the middle class intellectual, of the specialized worker, of the student enrolled in evening courses, of the teachers at secondary and high schools, etc. It should help to broaden the general culture of our *compagni* and to contribute to breaking certain ideological schemes in the PCI readership. It can be a means to facilitate ‘the basic alliances’ and to ‘neutralize’ the most conservative ideological positions. Therefore, the topics must deal with broad and general issues, large historical periods and wide-ranging topical events, ancient and modern novels of more largely human and progressive content. Readability and imagination are the essential features of these books. It would be appropriate that economic topics would be included both as basic theoretical information and especially as information on the current situation of the economic life.²⁵

In order to carry out this project, the publishing house had to put together a new editorial board, which differed from both the Vittorini-centred *Il Politecnico*. Amongst the new collaborators came, by means of his proximity to Felice Balbo, Ubaldo Scassellati, a graduate of the Scuola Normale – Pisa, and his university friend Giulio Bollati.²⁶ They worked in a team with a young Italo Calvino, who was at that time responsible for the Press Office and had just published his first Resistance novel (*The Path to the Nest of Spiders*, 1947). Luisa Mangoni has already outlined the novelty of the editorial board, composed of young intellectuals formed under the guidance of more experienced Einaudi collaborators,²⁷ but it should be noted that this innovation was not uniform and unproblematic. The different cultural dispositions of the editors, presumably Scassellati for the ‘red’ works, supported by Balbo’s guidance, Calvino for the ‘grey’ texts, outlined in the above discussion on the ‘Biblioteca Economica Einaudi’, could not be wholly resolved, thus suggesting the need to negotiate in the series diverse agendas, namely one which was more ideological and one more open to trends which were not strictly marxist.

The relationship with the communist party was not therefore linear or coercive, but needed to be negotiated within the dynamics of the editorial board, who, at the junction of

²⁵ Letter of Scassellati to Aloisi, 10 June 1949, similar to a letter by Giulio Einaudi to Sraffa on 6 April 1949. See Luisa Mangoni, *Pensare i libri*, p491-2 and 559-60.

²⁶ Ernesto Ferrero, ‘L’altro Giulio. Bollati e lo “Struzzo”’, in *Giulio Einaudi nell’editoria di cultura del Novecento italiano*, edited by Paolo Soddu, Florence: Leo Olschki editore, 2015, p299.

²⁷ Luisa Mangoni, *Pensare i libri*, p445-6.

diverse *habitus*, also had to strike a balance between the allegiance with the PCI and their own search for prestige in their own field. The main issue remained as to how to design the ‘Pbsl’ in relation to the PCI’s assets, so that the series could be perceived as favourable to the party’s guidelines proposed by Togliatti in 1949, but not just as a propaganda act. The ultimate purpose was to help the struggle against the conservative forces by breaking into audiences that other communist institutions could not reach.²⁸ This cultural operation was not straightforward as the space for manoeuvre was limited. The Einaudi publisher needed the PCI’s support so that its books could be distributed through the party’s channels, but it had to gain it in a subtle way, in accordance with its positioning within the publishing field – as a leftist but autonomous agent, separated from other institutions such as Colip – and in agreement with the diverse *habitus* of the editors involved in the project. In this sense, the function of the ‘Pbsl’ was further complicated, carrying more weight than was first expected. Whilst accepting the validity of Mangoni’s suggestions that the Turin publishing house was, through the publication of some more ideological titles in the ‘Pbsl’, strategically circumscribing the PCI’s role of consultation and approval, that is its interference,²⁹ it is also important to stress that, in a moment of redefinitions of political, cultural and publishing powers as 1949 was, this series crucially represented more broadly the dynamics and tensions in which the publisher was implicated. It was not just a question of dealing with the PCI – although this was certainly crucial – but also a question of a struggle between new and old agents in the field (Balbo vs. Calvino) and a struggle for a political positioning within the publishing field in opposition to the initiatives undertaken by PCI-founded agents.

In this multifaceted context, it must be recognized that translations could be highly strategic, and this is presumably why they represent the vast majority of the titles of the ‘Pbsl’. They were able to easily cover two functions: on the one hand, they could immediately create a valid tie with the Soviet Union, as the Cominform required; on the other, even the more classic books suggested to the audience could be re-framed by means of more ideological paratextual elements, such as the prefaces. Paradoxically at first, in a cultural climate where the PCI was promoting a ‘national-popular’ culture, translations could therefore be more malleable than domestic production towards the goal of carving out a site of ideological debate that, at the same time, would not be perceived as entirely propagandistic as the support of national authors and debates could have been. Translations therefore granted

²⁸ Einaudi Archive, Letter from Giulio Einaudi to Palmiro Togliatti, 28 June 1949, also in Luisa Mangoni, *Pensare i libri*, p558.

²⁹ Luisa Mangoni, *Pensare i libri*, p560.

Einaudi the space for manoeuvre that it needed. These translations spanned across centuries and literatures, but in the years 1949-1951 showed a particular focus on Russian modern and contemporary authors and on 19th-century English novels. Between 1952 and 1961, the focus shifted to theatre, most particularly Bertolt Brecht and Shakespeare's works. To varying degrees, all these literary works served the purposes of the 'Pbsl', demonstrating the strategic use that the editors made of them and therefore generating in some cases rather idiosyncratic publishing choices when considered, in relation to the editors' habitus as well as the changing position of Italian intellectuals vis-à-vis the PCI between 1949 and 1956.

As far as Russian novelists are concerned, the second book in the catalogue of the series was Alexander Pushkin's short story *The Queen of Spades* (1834), translated by the anti-fascist Leone Ginzburg (1909-1944). Ginzburg had already published the translation in 1931,³⁰ and this posthumous publication can be read from a political perspective; it was a means of including from the outset the tradition of 'militant russianist studies'³¹ active in Italy since the 1930s until the war.. Pushkin represented one of most published Russian authors in the series as the following year the series reprinted Ettore Lo Gatto's 1925 translation of the novel in verse *Eugene Onegin* (1833). Russian poetry, especially translated not in prose but in Italian verse, may not seem at first glance the most appropriate literary means to attain the goals of a 'national-popular' tradition, as expected by the PCI. However, the preface made it clear from the very beginning that Pushkin's work was one of the first examples of the 'modern realist novel'.³² The editor underlined the distance between the Russian poet and English Romanticism, namely Byron, as the key features of this novel in verses are specifically novel-bound, so that the narrator's moral judgment is made explicit in the plot and characters' actions, and not in comments or digressions. The typical theme of 19th-century novel, such as the conflict between individuals and social *milieu*, was stressed as key in *Eugene Onegin* by the editor and the descriptions were praised as narrative, in that they portrayed the image of a Russia made of nature and hard work, in contrast with futile romantic passions.³³ As a result, Romanticism, as well as an absolute individualism, was highly criticized particularly through the generous and serene figure of Tatiana, who 'affirmed her freedom not in giving herself to passion, but in strengthening her moral

³⁰ As *La donna di picche*, published by Slavia in Turin.

³¹ 'Russistica "militante"', as in Cesare G. De Michelis, 'Russia e Italia', in *Storia della civiltà letteraria russa*, edited by Michele Colucci and Riccardo Picchio, Turin: UTET, 1997, p697.

³² Alexander Pushkin, *Eugenio Onegin*, translated by Ettore Lo Gatto, Einaudi: Turin, 1950, p8.

³³ *Ibidem*, p9.

willingness', and as such fully embodied the 'spirit of Soviet people'.³⁴ Literary works were therefore also used as a vehicle for the description of elements of Soviet thought, re-framed and adapted to suit communist ideology.

If the choice of translating Russian poetry was perhaps not the ideal mode of addressing the challenge of broadening the readership of the series, the editors played more safely with the translation of Vera Panova's novel *L'officina sull'Ural* (*The Factory*) in 1950. Soviet novelist, playwright and journalist, Panova was the recipient of 1947 Stalin Prize, therefore well received in communist countries and widely translated also abroad.³⁵ In particular, this novel carried a double weight for Italian editors: on one hand, it was set during the Second World War, when Leningrad was sieged by the Nazis, thus further nourishing the narrative of European Resistance; on the other hand, it represented a strategic link between the Soviet proletariat and Italian communities. As stressed in the preface,³⁶ the true protagonist of the novel is the plant, symbol of the solidarity and, again, hard and constant work, of the community. The focus on such a key aspect of Soviet working life had sparked political debates in the Soviet press, and heightened the visibility of Panova's work. The editors suggested that the Italian (implicitly working-class) reader would likewise find some interest in this novel as it mirrored the political and everyday issues of a factory: 'the relationships between political organizations and production, the conflicts, and efforts to overcome any deficits, the spirit of the working class and that of the managers in their common work', but also 'the art discussions, the girls' dreams, the way that men approached women in days kept in rhythm by job shifts'.³⁷ However, the editors were also trying to push the literary discourse slightly forward: Italian readers were not only able fruitfully to connect with the themes and characters of the novel, but could also find in Panova a literary model of observing, with a sober irony, the humanity of this working-class setting. Once again, the preface offered some communist-aligned aesthetic directions to be followed or, at least, to be absorbed by the literary tastes of the readership of the series.

From this perspective, the Italian contemporary novel *L'Agnese va a morire* (1949) by Renata Viganò appears to originate from this Soviet tradition as well as being represented in the fashion of neorealism, thus significantly aligning Einaudi with the PCI's ideal perception

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ As Mangoni underlined, Giulio Einaudi himself stressed how the Soviet Embassy would not object to the translation of Panova's works. See Luisa Mangoni, *Pensare i libri*, p560n.

³⁶ Vera Panova, *L'officina sull'Ural*, translated by Giovanni Langella, Turin: Einaudi, 1950.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

of literature.³⁸ As Phil Cooke suggests, ‘the book was the nearest thing to an Italian version of Maxim Gorky’s *The Mother* and quickly established itself as required reading for all party members, especially women’.³⁹ The preface indicates this agenda, by praising the work on two different levels. On the one hand, Viganò is proposed as a proactive example of a literary figure firmly rooted in the domestic and working-class environment. Her characterization as mother, wife, worker *and* writer is upheld as an exemplary model of ‘good will and active goodness’⁴⁰ against misfortune. On the other, the novel itself represented – to a greater extent than other Resistance works – the ‘good popular common sense which turns into a will for justice and ability to organize struggles’; the struggles of the working-class readership who assumed a crucial function in national history is, implicitly or not, reflected in the eyes of the old peasant Agnese.⁴¹ The preface concluded with an appeal to readers to draw on a similar attitude to that of Agnese in order to shoulder the (political) responsibility of their future. The political message thus clearly reinforced the echo of the Resistance narratives supported by the party.

If Russian literary works could more immediately move within the boundaries set by the PCI, the same cannot be said for contemporary Anglophone works, which indeed held only a very marginal position in the series – Shakespeare excepted. The reception of these works lay in the tension between the party’s orientations of the series and the less orthodox habitus of its editors, giving rise to less markedly ideological results. Apart from the modern classics of English literature, which will be analysed below, the only example of an American contemporary novel owed its publication to an anti-American propaganda act, proposed by an author whom Cesare Pavese judged to be a ‘mediocre novelist’, Howard Fast.⁴² Fast’s writing was of dubious quality, but he was a member of the American Communist Party during the Second World War and, most significantly, a political activist and regular contributor to the communist magazine *New Masses*. The choice of publishing Howard Fast in 1950 was therefore not neutral, but the preface to his novel *Sciopero a Clarkton* (*Clarkton*, 1947) reinforced this political framing. One should also note that the title itself strengthened the ideological reading of the text: it is not just the setting of the Massachusetts factory that the editors intended to signal to the readers, but the event which took place there, the strike which immediately built a link between the novel and the strikes happening in Italy in 1948 and

³⁸ See Nello Ajello, *Intellettuali e PCI*, pp200-35.

³⁹ Philip Cooke, *The Legacy of the Italian Resistance*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p50.

⁴⁰ Renata Viganò, *L’Agnese va a morire*, Turin: Einaudi, 1949, p8.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² See Luisa Mangoni, *Pensare i libri*, p560n.

culminating with the assassination attempt against Palmiro Togliatti. The anti-conservative positioning of the preface is attained through two main frames. On the one hand, the editor enhances the literary figure of Howard Fast, listing several novels he has written and praising the attention and interest in such delicate political themes as the historical condition of black people in the US, of Indians as well as anarchists, and stressing that Fast's books had been chosen during the war as the most representative of the democratic ideals to be circulated among the Allies. The American novelist's prestige in his native country decreased when conservative forces joined the power in the US and he was jailed for not disclosing the names of 'Un-American' collaborators; he fell out of favour with the major publishing houses in the US, thus signalling the guilt of the American government at the time – indeed, his imprisonment would give the writer widespread publicity in the International Left in the very early 1950s. Clarkton itself represented the symbol of contemporary American society, in which capitalism is exploiting the working class, as it did the lawyer Goldstein, symbol of justice in the working-class struggle, who in the end dies. The editors stressed these elements as representative of 'the United States of America that few Italians know, an America which clashes with the illusions of the most part of us',⁴³ thus intending – as they were doing with the Soviet novels – to mould an ideological characterization of the Cold War opponents.

As highlighted previously, English works in the series had to follow more subtle and multifaceted routes. The first book published in the 'Pbsl' in 1949 was *Hard Times* (1854) by Charles Dickens. The choice of a 19th-century English author could be perceived as quite conservative, but analysis of the paratexts is illuminating of its ideological framing. Pavese defined the 'ideal scheme' of the small volumes as such: 'presentation of the author, general introduction to the work (from a historical perspective), footnotes should be limited to a minimum and a glossary at the end with names and things'.⁴⁴ The preface to Dickens' novel, translated by Luigi Berti as *Tempi difficili* (1949), is emblematic in its short biography of the English novelist. According to the editor of the preface, the most striking feature appears to be neither the status of Dickens' novels in the literary canon nor the themes of the novel itself, but that Dickens, who grew up in a lower middle-class *milieu*, had to persist in humble, menial jobs before committing himself fully to literature. In some ways, the publication was intended as more of a suggested practice to Italian intellectuals, who had to 'dirty their hands' with less abstract cultural works, in order to fulfil their duties to post-war Italian society.

⁴³ Howard Fast, *Sciopero a Clarkton*, translated by Franco Ferrarotti, Turin: Einaudi, 1950, p10.

⁴⁴ AE, minutes of the 12-13 January 1949, Cesare Pavese. In Tommaso Munari, *I verbali del mercoledì*, p62.

Two years later, in 1951, the preface of the novel *La freccia d'oro* (*The Arrow of Gold*, 1919) by another Anglophone author, Joseph Conrad presents likewise an interesting case when framed ideologically. The choice of translating such a minor work by Conrad was presumably driven by the theme around which the plot revolved, that is the historical theme of the Third Carlist War (1872-76). This conflict was the final act of a long period of rivalry in Spain, with Spanish progressive forces fighting the conservative ones after the end of the *ancien regime* in the Mediterranean country. The war was also very significant as it placed Carlism at the centre of Spanish political history. This traditionalist political movement influenced significantly the history of Spain, and played a key role during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s as well as acting as preeminent political force in Spain throughout the Franco's regime. The publication of the novel therefore could have assumed a much heavier political weight in a moment of clear-cut contrapositions in Italy, as well as in Europe, which the paratext of the novel bizarrely seems to inhibit. In a paradoxical way, if we assume that the 'Pbsl' was conceived as an ideological tool, the preface of *La freccia d'oro* seems to deal only carelessly with the historical significance of the novel, putting instead stronger emphasis on the 'decadent'⁴⁵ atmosphere of the setting in Marseille, and those passions and loves of the main characters (mainly aristocrats and noblewomen) which are presented almost as the love stories by a *fin-de-siècle* ideal man of letters, such as the French writer Anatole France. As a result, the most intriguing feature of Conrad's novel seemed to be the mysterious and hallucinatory representation of the woman who is the object of desire, interestingly a monarchist plotter.⁴⁶

One may postulate that behind the editing of this translation there was a less orthodox – in marxist terms – hand, and a lover of Conrad's works. It is well known that Italo Calvino wrote his BA thesis precisely on Conrad,⁴⁷ and the whole approach to the preface is informed by his light and ironic touch. The debate on the pertinence of publishing 19th-century English novels was indeed quite lively within Einaudi editorial board, demonstrating again a variety of aesthetic orientations and literary interests which could not always peacefully meet. Calvino's intervention in the publishing choices of the series was not always greeted favourably, and the publication of Conrad's *La freccia d'oro* could be seen as just incidental. On 2 December 1949, Calvino wrote to Muscetta suggesting the publication of an early 20th-

⁴⁵ Joseph Conrad, *La freccia d'oro*, translated by Franca Violani Cancogni, Turin: Einaudi, 1951, p10.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ See Martin McLaughlin and Arianna Scicutella, 'Calvino e Conrad: dalla tesi di laurea alle *Lezioni americane*', *Italian Studies* 57 (1), 2002, p113-32.

century novel as Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Calvino stressed the popular character of the novel, nonetheless in line with a 'scientist-positivist' approach, which could be enjoyed for its humour by the new generations who had never read it.⁴⁸ The editorial board, which met at the same time of Calvino's letter, rejected the proposal, as the crime novel was perceived as a backward step if compared to the search for – à la Vittorini – a 'new culture'.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Calvino had been obliged to put forward this proposal in response to the issues Einaudi was experiencing in trying to publish some 'classical' Italian novelists such as Giovanni Verga, Luigi Pirandello or Grazia Deledda. The leading competitor Mondadori held the copyrights of these authors, thus monopolizing the scene of the Italian contemporary novel. As a result, Italian authors occupy notably marginal space within the 'Pbsl'. Excepting Calvino himself, the aforementioned Viganò and the Neapolitan playwright Eduardo De Filippo, whose texts were published three times in the series, the only novelists included in the series were neorealist writers Francesco Jovine and Silvio Micheli. The 1950 novel of the latter, *Tutta la verità*, had been quite emblematically defined by the editorial board as 'well oriented from a political viewpoint [...] notwithstanding some doubts regarding its literary value'.⁵⁰

1951-1961: Drama works and the decline of the series

The literary value of the foreign plays published in the series, on the other hand, was never doubted. However, the paratexts that accompanied them enables a closer examination of the changing habitus of the editors between 1951 towards 1961. In May 1951, Einaudi experienced an internal crisis with the conflict of the two habitus previously outlined – one more orthodox and one less ideological.⁵¹ On this occasion, Bobbio confirmed that 'hegemony' should no longer be interpreted as party control but only as orientation.⁵² Consequently, the future of the 'Pbsl', as a series closely linked with the PCI, became less certain. In the years following the Hungarian crisis of 1956, the distance between Italian intellectuals and the party increased. Communist intellectuals undertook a period of self-criticism, interrogating their own relationships with Soviet models, and questioning the lack

⁴⁸ See Tommaso Munari, *I verbali del mercoledì*, pp85-6 and Luisa Mangoni, *Pensare i libri*, p657n for further details.

⁴⁹ See the preface to Émile Zola, *Germinale*, Turin: Einaudi, 1951, p8, for editorial comments on 'positivist' attitudes in literature.

⁵⁰ Tommaso Munari, *I verbali del mercoledì*, p156.

⁵¹ Luisa Mangoni, *Pensare i libri*, p650-1.

⁵² Tommaso Munari, *I verbali del mercoledì*, p247.

of dialogue and the role of the party in shaping post-war Italian culture. Whilst party members, like Mario Alicata, tended towards more rigid positions that continued to envisage the PCI as a leader in orientating and directing the cultural debate, intellectuals close to Einaudi, like Giulio Bollati, claimed that subscription to the party could no longer be unconditional and that the cultural committee was unable to satisfy the publishing needs of this new, less ideological, cultural climate.⁵³ A closer look at the drama works published in the series – contemporary German theatre and Shakespearean plays – can be even more revealing of the shift of habitus of the editors towards a less ideological position.

Bertolt Brecht's play *Santa Giovanna dei Macelli* (*Saint Joan of the Stockyards*) was published in 1951, anticipating the *opera omnia*, translated by Emilio Castellani for Einaudi series 'I Millenni'. Interestingly, the play was published as the editorial board felt that the series needed to offer a few more drama works not to leave Shakespeare completely isolated.⁵⁴ The stronger focus on theatre was also due to the reorganization of the 'Pbsl' which started in the same year, as a result of more profound tensions with the PCI and internal disagreements with the editors.⁵⁵ Brecht was the only German literary authors who found a place in the series: the reasons may not be surprising from a political viewpoint, marxism having influenced the German playwright's aesthetic theories and theatrical practice and Brecht continuing to represent one of the most expressive authors who was living in the GDR (German Democratic Republic) in the Cold War. The choice of publishing the play, which dated back to the 1930s, nonetheless can provide a particular insight in our analysis in terms of Cold War dynamics if we take into consideration the setting of the play and the tone of the preface. Again, the editors praised Brecht's ability to closely connect with the working class and to embody it 'in flesh and blood' in his works, thus avoiding any ineffective intellectual drift. According to the preface, this ability was particularly revealing in the portrait not only of Joan Dark, the martyr who, as a Joan of Arc transposed into 1929 Chicago, tried to negotiate better terms with the vicious owner of a meat-packing plant, who is representative of American insensitive capitalism, especially in regard to the working class. Once again, the focus is on the workers' capability to organize themselves in a struggle against a corrupted system, which ended unfruitfully due to the crisis and manoeuvre of the industrialist. Despite the fact the text offers no reconciliatory solution, its representation of the American middle class as vile and corrupted effectively played its role towards the

⁵³ Albertina Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali*, p208.

⁵⁴ Tommaso Munari, *I verbali del mercoledì*, p226.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p189, 218, 253 nd 328.

Cominform requests. However, quite a different perspective seems to be encouraged by the preface of Brecht's *L'opera da tre soldi* (*The Threepenny Opera*), published in the series in 1956. Here the focus is not the display of the negative sides of the bourgeoisie; rather, the preface intends to sensitize the readers to the 'ways in which the bourgeoisie is represented'.⁵⁶ In other words, in less propagandistic terms than in 1951, it is the aesthetic interest in Brecht's expressionism, the realism in portraying the criminal setting in Victorian London, and especially the 'estrangement effect' the author develops in this text that made the reading appealing. The shift from the ideological to the aesthetic framing of Brecht's works is even more evident two years later, in 1958. The preface to *L'anima buona di Sezuan* (*The Good Person of Szechwan*), a play about the impossibility of being good in which the world is depicted as dominated by power abuse, clearly detached itself from any social moralism and pedagogical judgements. The moral choice to escape this pessimism was left solely to the reader, and the editors exalted instead the 'poetry' and 'agility' shown by Brecht in the allegoric representation of China.⁵⁷ Political events had significantly changed the relationship between the PCI and Italian intellectuals, and the perception of the German playwright had to be altered accordingly; a closer attention was paid to his style, rather than his ideology.

The political commitment of the series became less and less evident as its original purpose, of aligning with the PCI in the immediate post-war, appeared increasingly irrelevant. Signs of tension had been present since 1951, as demonstrated by some of the more idiosyncratic results of the series, but by 1956 the distance from the party was perceived as irreconcilable, as expressed explicitly by Calvino.⁵⁸ The analysis of the paratexts of Brecht's works suggests this change, but a quantitative analysis of the titles of the translations in the 'Pbsl' is even more revealing. The works of one single author represent almost a third of the approximate total of one hundred texts: starting from 1950, William Shakespeare's plays were published every year in the series. An average of two plays per year was published until 1958, but in the years 1958 to 1961 the publication of the Shakespearean plays doubled each year, and, most significantly, they became the *only* titles published in the series. This signalled the eventual closing of the 'Pbsl', which ceased its publications in 1961. Not even the canonical stature of the English playwright could save the series.

⁵⁶ Bertolt Brecht, *L'opera da tre soldi*, Turin: Einaudi, 1956, p8.

⁵⁷ Bertolt Brecht, *L'anima buona di Sezuan*, Turin: Einaudi, 1958, p8.

⁵⁸ Calvino's intervention at the cultural committee meeting in July 1956 is renowned, in which he voiced the discomfort of the Einaudi intellectuals with regard to the party's cultural policies.

The 1950s project of publishing quite systematically Shakespearean plays illustrated precisely the aim of the 'Pbsl': rather untypically for the series at that point, the editors introduced the translator of the plays, Cesare Vico Ludovici, presenting him as one of the finest dramatists in Italy, capable of getting rid of the pompous language of the 19th century translations, and of offering readers the Shakespearean plays in contemporary Italian language, with all their 'freshness'.⁵⁹ However, it was not simply a way to 'popularize' these literary masterpieces (they could have been published as part of other, more general series, in which they would have been a more natural fit), but a manner of, again, framing them within a more ideological discourse that could guide readers to interpret contemporary historical issues. Almost all of Shakespeare's plays were published in the series, and initially his tragedies were slightly favoured over the histories and the comedies. *Giulio Cesare (The Tragedy of Julius Caesar)* was one of the first works to find a place in the series in 1950, probably due to the plot's mirroring of some issues of Italian history and politics. The preface highlighted, for instance, the risk of a tyrannical government when the republican institutions were in crisis as in the case of decadent Rome.⁶⁰ Similarly, the preface of *Coriolano (Coriolanus)*, published in 1953, emphasized the text as an example of the tragic consequences, of praise of the self, directly referring to 'recent cultural and political phenomena, such as personal dictatorships',⁶¹ which most notably included the Fascist regime and the cult of the Duce. In the second half of the 1950s, these remarks disappeared from the pages of the preface, and the publication of other plays by Shakespeare, spanning the four periods that distinguish his writing, retained the simple function of making the series survive. The editorial intervention in the paratexts also changed accordingly. In a strategy similar to that identified in relation to Brecht's plays, the focus of the paratext shifted from the plot and its politico-historical reflections towards the style and the language of their representation. The examination of the prefaces of the plays published prior to 1956 unveils a common pattern: the disclosing of the plot, accompanied, especially in the case of tragedies in the early years of the series (as the cases of *Giulio Cesare* and *Coriolano* demonstrated) by a few political comments. The translator seemed to remain silent and offered virtually no notes to his version, with the only brief comments in the footnotes being dedicated more generally to the traditions of the Elizabethan theatre (e.g. the typology of actors and characters). This began to change after 1956, when a generally more systematic and

⁵⁹ William Shakespeare, *Giulio Cesare*, translated by Cesare Vico Ludovici, Turin: Einaudi, 1950, p9.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁶¹ William Shakespeare, *Coriolano*, translated by Cesare Vico Ludovici, Turin: Einaudi, 1953, p8.

conspicuous paratextual apparatus was introduced to the detriment of the explanatory prefaces. In 1957, for instance, *Misura per misura* (Measure for Measure) contained a quite large number of footnotes, focusing not on the traditions of Elizabethan drama but rather on the style of the play. The translator tended to explain more fully to the readers the contextual and literary allusions of the text, sometimes even questioning the logic of the succession of the events. He engaged with and even intruded more consistently in the actual text than the editors did in the general introduction, signalling the shift of intervention from an editorial to a translation level. The 'Pbsl' series now seemed to pay more attention to the style and the language of Shakespeare than they had ever done half a decade earlier: the plays were not an opportunity to discuss the political scene in Italy but an occasion for a close reading of the text, its rhetorical and linguistic peculiarities. In 1960, *Tutto è bene quel che finisce bene* (All is well that end's well) and *Pene d'amor perdute* (Love's Labour's Lost) even lacked an introduction, presenting instead a very substantial set of footnotes.⁶² Furthermore, he explored comparisons with other translations, within the Italian as well as the French tradition, therefore reaching a new level of sophistication in the philological analysis of the text. More interestingly, Ludovici's comments tended almost towards stage directions. The perspective of these 'Pbsl' volumes was thus markedly different to those introduced at the beginning of the 1950s: they became platforms for discussion for dramatists and theatre experts rather than texts for a politically-committed working-class readership. The launch of a new dedicated drama series as the 'Collezione di Teatro' (Theatre Series) in 1962 eventually represented a better platform for these classic plays.

Conclusions

In 1961, therefore, the 'Pbsl' had lost its fundamental objective. Although it is difficult to map the reception of the literary works published in the series, due to the lack of reliable figures for print-runs and sold copies, the analysis of the other Einaudi series can shed some light on the dimensions of the 'Pbsl' failure. As Giulio Einaudi wrote to Togliatti when launching the series in 1949, the profits were not certain: 'I don't delude myself [...] on the

⁶² These included: notes on the use of figures of speech and language; contextual notes, explaining the setting as well as the customs and traditions in the Shakespearean age; intratextual notes, based on the textual cohesion and coherence; intertextual notes, in which Ludovici traced parallels with similar scenes/themes developed in other Shakespearean plays; and notes on the validity of the translation and on other translations. Ludovici explained to the readers his doubts when he felt that the translation was too clunky and clarified his intentions behind it (e.g. 'the translation is not solid. [...] I have aimed to grasp the more plausible sense and retain the same tone', William Shakespeare, *Tutto è bene quel che finisce bene*, translated by Cesare Vico Ludovici, Turin: Einaudi, 1960, p13).

difficulties that I have to meet both on the market side and for the delicate choice'.⁶³ At the very beginning of the series, however, Einaudi could rely heavily on PCI for support in distribution, and was able to sell the books to the party's local communities and organizations. Panova's novels, for instance, soon became a relative best-seller and the PCI federations competed over sales figures: 'Livorno is on top with 400 copies, then follows Milan [...] with 300 copies, Venice with 260.'⁶⁴ Viganò's *L'Agnese va a morire* received the Viareggio literary award in 1949, significantly boosting its reputation among the intellectual readership. However, these successful examples did not reflect the whole picture. The 'Pbsl' lacked a proper legacy, since most of the foreign works, including Panova's and Fast's novels, therein published were simply forgotten. Few of the 25 essays published between 1949 and 1950 merged into a more general, and not markedly ideological series (the 'Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi'), while the 19th century classics were republished with new, less ideological prefaces in other series.⁶⁵ The most striking example is Calvino's *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, republished in 1964, framed with a completely different preface, to signal once again the intellectual's new distancing from the project.⁶⁶ Whilst this editorial change was certainly linked to the shifting relationship between the Einaudi editors and the PCI, it is undeniable that the books also came to lack the attention of the potential working-class and intellectual readership for whom they were initially published. Having lost, in the second half of the 1950s, the distribution support of the PCI, the series presumably needed works of established cultural capital, and thus economic capital, to make some profit, and the fact that Shakespearean plays saturated the series in its latter years confirms the need to fill a vacuum.

If one looks only at its reception, the 'Pbsl' seemed to suggest the impossibility of establishing a fruitful allegiance between publishing and politics outside dominating power dynamics. The party could offer a structural and pragmatic support for the foreign novels only in exchange for an ideological discourse. In the years 1949-1951, this was accomplished with the publication of Soviet literature. This confirms the only relative autonomy of the publishing field from politics. However, the article has also shown that ideological discourses are constantly renegotiated as they interact with the habits and habitus of the editors. This is

⁶³ Giulio Einaudi to Togliatti, 28 June 1949, in Luisa Mangoni, *Pensare i libri*, p558n.

⁶⁴ Luisa Mangoni, *Pensare i libri*, p561n.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p560n.

⁶⁶ It should be noted that Calvino had already indicated in the 1954 edition a lack of identification with the Resistance and neorealist framing of 1947. See Amelia Nigro, *Dalla parte dell'effimero, ovvero Calvino e il paratesto*, Pisa: Serra editore, 2007, p33.

evident, for instance, in the contrast between the framing of Soviet and English novels in the series.

In this sense, the 'Pbsl' marked, in a more significant way than other series, the passage of Einaudi intellectuals from a stricter collaboration and alignment with the party to profound distance from the Soviet-driven approach to publishing and culture. In between, there were many particular nuances suggested and encouraged by the combination of dialogue with national political forces and the diverse habitus of Einaudi collaborators, leading to the shift of focus in the paratexts of Brecht and Shakespeare's plays. This enables a reassessment of the more subtle and multifaceted influence of political legacies on the reception of foreign literatures in a post-hegemonic context like that of post-war Italy.

From this perspective, the analysis of paratexts and editorial dialogue has illustrated how translations were key, initially in constructing, and subsequently in contesting the dynamics of the political field. Translations were initially strategic; they proposed, in an effective but somehow less overt manner than domestic works, an ideological perception of the function of intellectuals, as well as alternative readings and 'narratives' of the Cold War opponents. The nature of the relationship between political and cultural forces, clearly not entirely hegemonic, and the dynamic negotiations between more and less ideological habitus within the editorial board also made space for a more creative, and thus multifaceted, framing of the titles published and eventually paved the way for a less markedly biased analysis of literary authors and drama works. Ultimately, as the editors modified their own habitus, and the PCI lost its role in leading the cultural orientation of Italian intellectuals, translation choices and the accompanying paratexts mirrored the strained relationship between the publisher and the party. Their publication implicitly suggested the failure of orientating a series solely within the boundaries of the PCI ideology, and the need for the editors to reappraise their editorial and aesthetic work. In terms of historical research, translations can therefore be considered as strategic lenses, and further scrutiny as objects of study would facilitate a fuller understanding, at a both national and international level, of the mutual exchange between politics and culture.