

# *'The Pasolini translation problem': from Una vita violenta to A Violent Life*

Article

Published Version

Creative Commons: Attribution 4.0 (CC-BY)

open access

La Penna, D. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4197-0041>  
(2021) 'The Pasolini translation problem': from Una vita  
violenta to A Violent Life. *The Italianist*, 41 (3). pp. 465-489.  
ISSN 1748-619X doi:  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02614340.2021.2129407> Available at  
<https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/107998/>

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See [Guidance on citing](#).

To link to this article DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02614340.2021.2129407>

Publisher: Taylor and Francis

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the [End User Agreement](#).

[www.reading.ac.uk/centaur](http://www.reading.ac.uk/centaur)

**CentAUR**

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online



## 'The Pasolini Translation Problem': From *Una vita violenta* to *A Violent Life*

Daniela La Penna

To cite this article: Daniela La Penna (2021) 'The Pasolini Translation Problem': From *Una vita violenta* to *A Violent Life*, *The Italianist*, 41:3, 465-489, DOI: [10.1080/02614340.2021.2129407](https://doi.org/10.1080/02614340.2021.2129407)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614340.2021.2129407>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 03 Nov 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 357



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

## 'The Pasolini Translation Problem': From *Una vita violenta* to *A Violent Life*

Daniela La Penna 

University of Reading, Reading, UK

### ABSTRACT

This article provides a microhistorical analysis of the English translation of Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Una vita violenta*, penned by William Weaver and published by British publisher Jonathan Cape in 1968. By evaluating the archival evidence surrounding this 'translation event', this study reconstructs the transatlantic alliances that the firm tried to forge with American firms between 1959 and 1968 to spread around the translation costs and ensure greater geographical diffusion. Furthermore, it maps the efforts made to secure the best translator for what was judged to be a linguistically challenging foreign title. The study contextualises the translators' articulations of how best to interpret in English the mixture of dialect and slang characterising Pasolini's novel. The analysis of the business and aesthetic discourses surrounding this translation event also takes into account Pier Paolo Pasolini's evolving discourse on dialect and his position in the national and international cultural fields.

### SOMMARIO

Questo articolo offre una micro-storia della traduzione inglese di *Una vita violenta* di Pier Paolo Pasolini, eseguita da William Weaver e pubblicata dall'editore britannico Jonathan Cape nel 1968. Attraverso una valutazione della documentazione archivistica che circonda questo 'evento traduttivo', lo studio ricostruisce le alleanze transatlantiche che l'editore imbastì con ditte americane tra il 1959 e il 1968 per assicurare la condivisione dei costi della traduzione e per ampliare la diffusione geografica del volume. Inoltre, il saggio mappa gli sforzi fatti per selezionare il miglior traduttore per un testo straniero considerato linguisticamente difficile. L'articolo contestualizza le strategie elaborate dai vari traduttori per meglio interpretare in inglese la mistura di dialetto e *slang* che caratterizza il romanzo di Pasolini. L'analisi dei discorsi estetici e manageriali che circondano questo evento traduttivo tiene anche conto dell'evoluzione delle considerazioni sul dialetto di Pier Paolo Pasolini e della sua posizione nel campo culturale nazionale e internazionale.

### KEYWORDS

Pier Paolo Pasolini; William Weaver; translation; publishing history; Jonathan Cape; Tom Maschler

### PAROLE CHIAVE

Pier Paolo Pasolini; William Weaver; traduzione; storia dell'editoria; Jonathan Cape; Tom Maschler

Penned by William Weaver, the English translation of Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1959 novel *Una vita violenta* was published with the title *A Violent Life* by Jonathan Cape in early 1968. Weaver's rendition 'into an idiomatic American English',<sup>1</sup> with 'a faintly Brooklynesse

**CONTACT** Daniela La Penna  [d.lapenna@reading.ac.uk](mailto:d.lapenna@reading.ac.uk)

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group  
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

note, redolent of the Cagney gangster films',<sup>2</sup> of the Romanesco dialect spoken by the characters and inflecting the narrating voice of *Una vita violenta* intrigued the British commentators, eliciting praise but also some strong reactions.<sup>3</sup> The striking language utilised by Weaver was not the only element catching the attention of the reviewers, with several noting the gap between the release of the original and its English translation. Such a delay was considered excessive (for comparison, *Une vie violente* had been published by Buchet-Chastel in 1961),<sup>4</sup> to the extent that, when the translation was published, reviewers noted that Pasolini was renowned only marginally for his literary output and predominantly for his internationally revered film-making. Between collaborations, unrealised scripts, episodes within anthology films and full-length feature films, by January 1968 Pasolini had worked on thirteen projects including the critically acclaimed *Accattone* (1961), *La ricotta* (1963), *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964), and *Edipo Re* (1967), which had all enjoyed a release on the English-speaking film circuits. By the time Weaver's *A Violent Life* was awarded the 1969 John Florio Memorial Prize of the Society of Authors for the best literary translation from Italian into English, Pasolini had consolidated his fame as a film auteur with *Teorema* (1968), *Porcile*, and *Medea* (both released in 1969).<sup>5</sup>

One can see why Stephen Wall lamented the British publishers' 'sluggish' attitude towards foreign high-quality titles and its likely impact on the reception and sales of *A Violent Life*.<sup>6</sup> What Wall ignored, however, is that the novel's publisher – Jonathan Cape – had started negotiations to transpose *Una vita violenta* into English as early as September 1959. Furthermore, several of the issues that commanded the reviewers' attention upon the translation's release – such as the choice of American slang, and whether it appropriately reflected the Romanesco language used by Pasolini to authenticate the sordid life of a group of young men from the *borgate* in Rome – had played a major role in the lengthy proceedings and negotiations that surrounded the effort to bring one of Pasolini's controversial novels to an anglophone public.

In this study, I will consider the English translation of *Una vita violenta* as a 'translation event',<sup>7</sup> as it unfolds in the rich and hitherto unexplored archival holdings concerning this translation held in the Jonathan Cape archive, part of the Records of the British Publishing and Printing held at the University of Reading. This set of papers documents the involvement of several publishers and a considerable number of translators, as well as formal and informal intermediaries, in a transnational and multilateral institutional effort led by Jonathan Cape. Following Jeremy Munday's guidance that archives are 'an indispensable resource for the investigation of the conditions, working practices and identity of the translators and for the study of their interaction with other participants in the translation process',<sup>8</sup> this article will not focus on a textual analysis of the translation but rather explore the interactions between the various actors in the translation workflow, intended as 'the period commencing from the moment the client contacts the translator and ending when the translation reaches the addressee, or when the translator is paid'.<sup>9</sup> The overarching aim of this work is therefore to provide a theory-inflected microhistorical analysis of the translation event that led to *A Violent Life*. I will do so by examining the complex negotiations underpinning the English translation of an acclaimed foreign title and the business alliances required to support its placement in a book market encompassing numerous state jurisdictions, only seemingly unified in language.

This examination pursues a number of intersecting lines of inquiry. The time span of the inter-firm collaboration allows us to map the stages of the translation process not only against the evolving theory of language developed by Pasolini but also against the emerging professional discourse surrounding translation practice. As we shall see, no fewer than twenty translators would be considered for *Una vita violenta*. Each translator provided reasons for accepting or rejecting the commission, and some of the translators tasked with the sample translation also produced some interesting ‘defences’ of their approach. The Jonathan Cape documentation also provides some evidence of the changing professional status of translators and allows researchers to examine the ways translators argued their value in the negotiations for pay and royalties. Building on this, I will evaluate the transnational and inter-firm discourse on translation, allowing us to ascertain the firms’ financial and symbolic investment in the translation of highly reputed but linguistically challenging work. It is an established fact that literary works displaying defining nonstandard linguistic features have a difficult afterlife in translation, especially in English.<sup>10</sup> In this context, the length of the translation event under scrutiny testifies to an extraordinary commitment to Pasolini’s work and to what Anthony Pym would define as its ‘aesthetics of authenticity’.<sup>11</sup> However, my analysis will also highlight the sometimes tense negotiations between the publishing houses, acting as veritable translating institutions, the author and his intermediaries, and the translators.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, the empirical evidence emerging from the documentation surrounding *A Violent Life* provides ammunition for a new approach to the publishing history of translated titles, one that transcends traditional ‘vertical’ historiographic approaches to focus instead on relationships *across* markets and cultures, with the aim of bringing into sharper light the agents and institutions enabling such transnational dialogue.

Considering the status of Pier Paolo Pasolini as a complex and controversial polymath who made experimental traversing across languages and media his unique trademark, Garzanti and its intermediaries took on the role of gatekeepers and played a huge part in ensuring that the English translation would enhance and not betray Pasolini’s linguistic philosophy and style. As we shall see, the archival documentation offers revealing ethnographic insight into the diverse institutional cultures involved in the ten-year dealings surrounding *A Violent Life*. On the one side, the papers detail the significant efforts made to meet the demands and expectations of their domestic constituencies by the British firm Jonathan Cape and the American firms involved in the translation process. On the other, the documentation also illustrates Garzanti’s defiant advocacy on Pasolini’s behalf, to ensure that the English translation could capture the resonance of the book and the author’s complex cultural project underpinning it.

## Un dialettale senza dialetto

To understand the challenges that the translators face when converting *Una vita violenta* into English, or indeed any language, it is vital to situate the linguistic texture of the novel within both the context of Pasolini’s development as a creative writer and the debate surrounding the acceptability of dialect expression in a novel with national ambitions.

Pasolini conceived *Una vita violenta* as part of a larger set of works whose first instalment was the controversial *Ragazzi di vita*, published in 1955. *Ragazzi di vita* and

*Una vita violenta*, together with the films *Accattone* (1961) and *Mamma Roma* (1962), can be considered a multimedia tetralogy examining the rich human and linguistic tapestry of Rome. His fascination with Romanesco was also sustained and nurtured by his study of its literary tradition, which became a key element in Pasolini's dissident cultural project, characterised by an affiliation with cultures considered marginal to and excluded by the dominant canon. This project started with Pasolini's poetic experiments in a Friulian variant that had no written record (the language of his mother's birthplace, Casarsa), which also included – significantly – the translation of European symbolists.<sup>13</sup> Pasolini drew from Gianfranco Contini's early endorsement in 1943 the scholarly encouragement to cultivate his dialectal literary inclinations.<sup>14</sup> With time, these would also come to inhabit his film-making, where dialects (Neapolitan, Abruzzese, Romanesco, etc.) feature prominently.

It is worth noting that when Pasolini moved to Rome in 1950, he did not leave behind his literary experimentation in Friulian; in fact, he continued to consolidate this distinct body of work: *Tal còur di un frut* was published in 1953, *La meglio gioventù: Poesie friulane* a year later. While he was completing the drafts of *Ragazzi di vita* he was also working on his novel *Il sogno di una cosa* (started in 1949), set in Friuli, which was eventually published in 1962. This simultaneous, multilingual, and transmedial literary practice (creative writing in Italian, Friulian, and Romanesco, alongside his intense activity as a literary journalist, scriptwriter, and then film-maker) allowed him to cultivate a view of the national role that dialectal cultures occupied in the making of an Italian national-popular culture in the Gramscian sense. This view manifested itself in the crafting of two major anthologies, *Poesia dialettale del Novecento*, co-edited in 1952 with Romanesco poet Mario dell'Arco, and *Canzoniere italiano: Antologia della poesia popolare*, published in 1954. This was clearly an organised effort, both scholarly and militant, to document literary production in dialect across Italy. The anthologies allowed him to take a strong position in the cultural field that was already animated by a series of scholarly and literary interventions (led by Gianfranco Contini and Carlo Emilio Gadda) highlighting the lively cultural value and expressive range of popular and dialectal literature. His early reading of Dell'Arco's poetry, which he first reviewed in a now notorious essay – 'Un dialettale senza dialetto' – published in 1946, outlines some features that can just as easily be considered to define Pasolini's own creative approach to dialect: a carefully crafted literary tool, whose expressive flexibility and primacy to access the complexity of reality is articulated as an uncontested virtue.<sup>15</sup>

Pasolini's Romanesco is a meticulous, polyhedral construction, a veritable 'romanesco d'autore' built on the painstaking study of revered Romanesco authors and specialised dictionaries.<sup>16</sup> Yet the language of his novels needed to convey the authenticity of slum life, and this could not be achieved by 'candida passione glottologica' alone.<sup>17</sup> Pasolini also relied upon ethnographic linguistic observations and annotations as well as targeted interviews with informants embedded in the groups of *pischelli* he wished to depict in *Ragazzi di vita*, the first of his Roman novels.<sup>18</sup> Garzanti, Pasolini's publisher, persuaded the writer to publish his linguistic annotations in the form of a glossary containing 132 entries to support the reader's (and, indeed, the future translators') understanding of the dialectal expressions. While Pasolini maintained that he did not want to publish the glossaries, it must be noted that several Romanesco poets used this aid, including, amongst others, Giuseppe Gioachino Belli, Filippo

Chiappini, Cesare Pascarella, and Dell'Arco, this last furnishing each of his poetic collections (including *Ottave*, which Pasolini had prefaced) with a rich glossary. Whether willing or not, Pasolini's use of a glossary alone placed him in a time-honoured Romanesco tradition.

Both Roman novels received critical acclaim but also some powerful backlash. Famously, *Ragazzi di vita* was seized on the instruction of the Presidenza del Consiglio, with Pasolini and Livio Garzanti, his publisher, being accused of publishing pornography and 'indegnità morale' for the realistic depiction of male sex workers. This accusation was debated in a trial that occupied Pasolini and Garzanti from the summer of 1955 until their acquittal on 4 July 1956. The book was awarded the Mario Colombi Guidotti prize and was the runner-up for the prestigious Strega prize, but the critical reception was polarised. The Italian Communist Party's flagship journal *Rinascita* had published a damning review in which the use of dialect was condemned as 'arbitrario'.<sup>19</sup> Adriano Seroni's view that Pasolini's dialect was 'assai impreciso e approssimativo' sums up a typical accusation levelled against the author.<sup>20</sup>

With *Una vita violenta*, Pasolini forged a more complex and layered language, where the careful contamination with literary prose revealed mimesis to be not just the result of a sought-after 'osmosi linguistica', but also an aesthetic accomplishment in its own right.<sup>21</sup> This literary hybridisation would also attract the critics' hostility and be used as evidence of Pasolini's inherently unresolved dialectic between 'documentarismo' and aestheticism. Later on, he would state 'Con *Ragazzi di vita* e *Una vita violenta* – che molti idioti credono frutto di un superficiale documentarismo – io mi sono messo sulla linea di Verga, Joyce, Gadda, questo mi è costato un tremendo sforzo linguistico'.<sup>22</sup> Submitted to Livio Garzanti in March 1959, the manuscript was subjected to a series of agonising revisions to tone down the most censorable expressions and scenes. Once again, Garzanti insisted on a glossary which, this time, contained 401 dialectal words and slang expressions.

Considering Pasolini's glottological proclivities, the Roman glossaries have unsurprisingly attracted the sustained attention of linguists and dialectologists. The first wave of scholarly inquiries encapsulates the two most extreme positions in the debate: on the one hand, Monique Jacqmain's 1970 article warned that 'il lessico pasoliniano, lungi dall'essere realistico, è in gran parte così arcaico che denuncia subito la sua origine letteraria', launching the view of Pasolini's dependency on Belli; on the other, Renzo Bruschi's 1981 study stated that 67% of the lexicon had an incontrovertible dialectal origin (noting the Umbrian timbre of much of it), asserting instead that the language could only be the result of the author's direct empirical observation of the lived linguistic reality of the *borgate*.<sup>23</sup> Several subsequent studies have contributed to moving beyond mere lexicographic fact-checking to achieve a more rounded and in-depth description and evaluation of the verbal, phonetic, and morphosyntactic system of Pasolini's 'romanesco ultraperiferico' caught in 'un periodo cruciale dell'evoluzione del sistema dialettale verso la definitiva modernizzazione'.<sup>24</sup>

Luca Serianni asserted that the main difference between Pasolini's dialect and Belli's is that Pasolini's telescoped the language variety to a specific diatopic plane, while Belli's instead explored the full gamut of Romanesco's expressive diastatic and diaphasic possibilities.<sup>25</sup> This consideration has important ramifications in translation practice. According to Claudio Costa, Pasolini's dialect is a carefully constructed *monstrum*,



which not only redeems a marginal variety of Romanesco, but also includes abundant slang expressions with the aim 'di voler portare sulla pagina scritta un linguaggio che non aveva alcun diritto di cittadinanza letteraria, neppure vernacolare'.<sup>26</sup> The dialectal component (whether enriched or depleted by the injections of slang) was, however, only one ingredient of a more complex and nuanced linguistic experiment that also included the dialectal contamination of the narrating voice, which Pasolini interpreted as akin to 'a lungo discorso libero indiretto'.<sup>27</sup> The colloquial nature of the Italian used in the narrative parts alongside the mimesis of the spoken language also challenge the translator to flex the target language to accommodate the often rapid transition between arcs in literary Italian and mimetic 'low'-register solutions. This was a key feature of *Una vita violenta* which, compared to *Ragazzi di vita*, was characterised by the 'accentuarsi delle marche letterarie' and 'l'esplicita riassunzione da parte di Pasolini del ruolo di scrittore onnisciente'.<sup>28</sup>

Amongst the impressive linguistic range of *Una vita violenta* (dialect, slang, colloquial Italian, and literary registers), linguists have noted the conspicuous absence of *italiano dell'uso medio* as well as regional Italian.<sup>29</sup> The absence of these varieties in Pasolini's Roman novels has the effect of polarising the linguistic texture of the novels between the sub-standard/dialect variety on one side and the literary flourishes on the other. In both *Ragazzi di vita* and *Una vita violenta* this stylistic strategy leads to mixed results.<sup>30</sup> However, the absence of the non-marked Italian varieties is also an undoubtedly conscious aesthetic choice, which reflects Pasolini's increasingly vocal opposition to the deleterious effects of national mass media on local and minority languages, and the contextual rise of the abhorred 'parlato italiano medio'.<sup>31</sup> Any translation of *Una vita violenta* would have to be predicated on a diatopic hermeneutics able to capture the sudden changes across registers and variants in an equally plastic and expansive linguistic medium.

### **'It may take us a long time to get the right translator'**

The search for an appropriate translator started in earnest, soon after Robert Knittel's 8 September 1959 letter to Garzanti's UK agent Celina Wieniewska to inquire about the availability of the translation rights for the book. This first approach kick-started two parallel lines of inquiry: the search for a translator, and the selection of the American publishing firm with which to share the costs of the translation. In any publishing firm, these lines of inquiry are underpinned by a push towards transnational isomorphism which, in broad Bourdieusian terms, manifests itself in the search for business partners who have a shared taste and a similar investment in aesthetic distinction. As we shall see, this requires the activation of a transnational gatekeeping network that would assist and, to an extent, influence the managing editors' decision-making process. The archival documentation detailing the search for the right translator for Pasolini's *Una vita violenta* also highlights the social and organisational processes that are embedded in a networked, multidimensional transnational field.

Following the advice of Scottish publisher James MacGibbon, Knittel approached one of the most sought-after translators of Italian, Archibald Colquhoun, at the time working for the British Council in Rome and busy with the translation of Tomasi di Lampedusa's *Il*

*Gattopardo*.<sup>32</sup> In asking Colquhoun to consider the offer, and to produce a succinct reader's report, Knittel was clear about the perceived challenges posed by the translation:

It isn't so much the fact that the book is written to a great extent in Roman dialect, which I think a number of people can understand, but the problem is to find someone who will succeed in finding the English equivalent for it without the book sounding ridiculous by virtue of Teddy-Boy slang being introduced and at the same time departing completely from the original.<sup>33</sup>

In declining the offer, Colquhoun recommended caution regarding 'certain uses of dialect [which] are just impossible to render, like poetry, in another language'. Colquhoun's polite rejection appeared to place Knittel under pressure. In quick succession, he approached Isabel Quigly, one of the most prolific translators into English from Italian, French, and Spanish, who would also turn down the offer. In the meantime, Knittel also established a partnership with Kurt Wolff, the head of the US-based Pantheon Books, to ensure a share in the translation costs, but also to expand the geographical reach of the book in the anglophone market. This was an obvious and tested choice: the greater portion of Pantheon's list emanated from Europe and almost all these titles were contracted via a British publisher. Pantheon's New York editor Gerald Gross concurrently explored recommendations for US-based translators, including those of trusted Rome-based collaborator Marguerite Caetani, the editor and founder of the multilingual journal *Botteghe oscure*, and writer Eleanor Clark.<sup>34</sup> In a letter to Gross dated 20 November 1959, in which Knittel informed his counterpart of Iris Origo's support for the search, the Jonathan Cape managing editor articulated the vision for this translation:

I don't think we should rush this book in any sense. I'd rather wait a year to get the right translator than get someone who would turn in some kind of gibberish. The more I think of it, the less I feel that the slang can be translated into either its American or English equivalent. We should perhaps look to somebody who has some familiarity with the beatnik [*sic*] jargon, which seems to me to be slightly more up to date and universal than what has previously passed for slang.<sup>35</sup>

The American-born Knittel was clearly receptive to the growing relevance of the linguistic experimentation showcased in recently published titles that would become the Beat movement's most celebrated and iconic works: Allen Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems* (1956), Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), and William S. Burroughs' *Junky* (1953) and *Naked Lunch* (1959). One can see why Knittel would implicitly draw parallels and affinities between the Beat project and Pasolini's work. Pasolini's reaction against middle-class and consumerist culture in Italy had several points of contact with the Beat movement's embracing of alternative imaginary social constructs populated by rejects, dropouts, and street hustlers. This human landscape was seen as antithetical to the hegemonic and exclusionary project that shaped the puritanical and racially divided American society during the early phases of Cold War-inspired McCarthyism. The use of substandard variants, demotic cadence, ethnic-inflected parlance, and ephemeral youth slang, as well as the coded language of the persecuted homosexual communities, was a defining feature of Beat literary production.

With Pantheon on board, Knittel started the contract proceedings with the Italian publisher, who was keen to see included some specific clauses. Garzanti's first draft contract makes for interesting reading: dated 29 December 1959 and consisting of

fourteen clauses (a second iteration would contain twenty-four), two would have a significant bearing on the negotiations with publishers and translators. Clause four stipulated that 'la traduzione del romanzo sarà fedele e integrale; ogni eventuale modificazione dovrà essere approvata preventivamente dal Proprietario'. As we shall see, as proprietor Garzanti would exercise their full rights of veto on commissioned translations. Clause twelve stipulated that Garzanti would exact fifty per cent of the royalties deriving from the further commercialisation of the book including paperback editions, radio adaptations, anthologies, and book club arrangements. This latter issue would warrant a modification of the final draft of the contract, as at the time the UK had over fifty-seven book clubs, all operating with their own royalty agreements. Concerned that the profit margins would be too thin, Wolff at Pantheon was reluctant to 'make a split royalty agreement between the author and translator, since we have already made royalty arrangements with Garzanti'.<sup>36</sup>

Knittel's reply to Wieniewska's letter of January 1960 details the changes proposed by Jonathan Cape to the 'Accordo di Traduzione', including an indemnity clause, and an expansion of the time limit on the contract:

this particular book presents very grave translation problems; it may take us a long time to get the right translator, and in any case the translation is in the hands of Pantheon Books and we are to some extent at their mercy. Twenty four months would therefore seem logical, although there is no reason why we shouldn't – if all goes well – publish within twelve months.

But it was Garzanti's veto power that exercised Knittel and Wolff:

With regard to the translation itself, I am quite prepared to make an undertaking that no cuts or revisions will be made without the consent of the author, but I do not wish to have the translation subject to Garzanti's approval, since first of all I think that we and Pantheon jointly are better qualified to decide what constitutes a good translation, and I should be rather worried that Garzanti might at some time or another abuse their privilege to the extent of causing us serious delay and expense.<sup>37</sup>

Negotiations would continue to mitigate Garzanti's position, with very little progress, and a slightly revised contract was eventually signed on 7 June 1960.

Thanks to the brokering of US-based writer and academic Pier Maria Pasinetti, Pantheon tasked the sample translation to Italian academic Dante Della Terza and his American wife Mollie McCush, a husband-and-wife team whose credentials rested on Della Terza's teaching position at the University of California.<sup>38</sup> Their sample translation was evaluated by June 1960 by DG, a Pantheon in-house reader. Rejected because it was likely to require extensive revisions, the Della Terzas' version highlighted some issues that would regularly emerge in the evaluation of subsequent sample translations: the problematic use of a specific variation of English to localise the Roman dialect (the Della Terzas opted for the 'Chicago slum' variety) and the need to tone down the dysphemism, obscenity, and blasphemy of the original. The Della Terzas' trial also helped establish a ground rule (both Jonathan Cape and the American counterpart would have to agree on the viability of the sample translation) and bring to the fore the economics of translation publishing, which were substantially different on the two shores of the Atlantic, and whose financial risk could only be shouldered by business alliances:

With regard to the price, we come of course to the usual drawback with regard to having Americans translate a book. The price of \$15.00 per 1,000 words simply knocks an English publisher's costing into a cocked hat. For one thing, the contract with Garzanti does not provide for such a high cost of translation. For another, we in England (unlike you in America) have to adhere to far lower list prices, and this despite the constantly rising costs of production. Our market too is apt to be considerably smaller. [...] it is a long book and I think it will be almost impossible for us to absorb the cost of the translation, since half of \$15.00 is just equal to the full price which we generally pay an English translator, half of which is then recouped by selling the translation in America.<sup>39</sup>

The Pasolini translation coincided with a period of internal turmoil in Jonathan Cape that eventually led to Robert Knittel leaving the firm to take a leadership position at Collins and ambitious twenty-six-year-old Thomas Maschler taking the role of managing and literary director of the British firm in May 1960.<sup>40</sup> The Berlin-born but British-educated son of a German Jewish publisher, Maschler, a business prodigy, had acquired valuable experience as the assistant director of fiction editor Eunice Frost at Penguin, where he had also founded the successful series 'New English Dramatists', which first showcased the work of Arnold Wesker and Harold Pinter, amongst many others. This change led to a substantial expansion of the firm's list, which acquired a decisively more experimental feel. In 1957, Maschler had edited *Declaration*, a collection of position pieces by eight up-and-coming authors including Doris Lessing, John Osborne, Bill Hopkins, and John Wain.<sup>41</sup> The anthology positioned Maschler as a militant talent scout, invested in developing the career of creative artists who shared 'a certain indignation against the apathy, the complacency, the idealistic bankruptcy of their environment'.<sup>42</sup> Maschler's selection strategy in the acquisition of translation rights for foreign titles would align with the overall direction he imprinted on the house during his leadership. The pursuit of the Pasolini translation project fell within the parameters of Maschler's personal aesthetic vision, Jonathan Cape's own position in the field, and the distinctiveness of its catalogue.

## Untranslatable

Keen on shaping the future direction of Jonathan Cape, Maschler interpreted the roles of managing director and acquisition editor with muscular dynamism, and his boundary-spanning position – bringing together the managerial and the creative sides of Jonathan Cape – gave him a great deal of autonomy to pursue simultaneous and multiple leads to acquire a capable translator. This was a potentially risky strategy, but it was pursued to maximise returns.<sup>43</sup> Maschler approached two esteemed and prolific translators, who acted as a gateway to other professionals: Bernard Wall and (once again) Isabel Quigly. Both turned down the offer, though Quigly suggested some translators based in Rome: Anne Nateson, a journalist; Benita Wells, a former editor at Longmans; and Lynne Lawner, who was known to have already translated some of Pasolini's poetry.<sup>44</sup> Maschler also contacted William Weaver, highly recommended by Joe McCrindle, the editor of the Rome-based journal *The Transatlantic Review*.<sup>45</sup> In a letter dated 4 September 1960, Weaver informed Maschler that Pantheon had already contacted him:

I can only repeat to you what I said to them: while I admire the book in many ways, I feel that it is untranslatable. And I am afraid that the translator would expose himself to a lot of criticism from critics who don't know Italian and can't judge the difficulties involved.<sup>46</sup>

Weaver also added Richard Chase, another Rome-based contender, to the mix. Chase and Vera Wygod had interviewed Pasolini upon the publication of *Una vita violenta* for a feature article to be published in *Encounter*, only for the piece to be turned down by Stephen Spender. When declining Maschler's offer, Chase encouraged him to approach Richard Kamm and Bill Demby, who were both based in Rome as well. At the same time, Pantheon broadened its search for a US-based translator and contacted Raymond Rosenthal,<sup>47</sup> whose sample translation was evaluated by Eleanor Clark. The activation of multiple networks was not an uncommon strategy amongst acquisition editors competing to gain the trust and the continued custom of the foreign publisher, as 'organizational practices emerge in response to specific challenges. In turn, these practices – such as the networked structure of the gatekeeping process [...] – shape various organizational outcomes'.<sup>48</sup> Widening the search was certainly made necessary by the twenty-four-month time frame imposed by the contract with Garzanti.

The approached translators produced ideas, plans, and in some cases reasoned rejections, which illuminate the way these professionals conceived the task of resolving, and the means to resolve, the issue of dialect localisation. Lynne Lawner, who would translate Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Letters* for Jonathan Cape in 1970, articulated her rejection by highlighting Pasolini's linguistic arbitrariness and untranslatability. Her argument is redolent of the dominant views in the Italian criticism of the novel's linguistic features, stressing the composite and artificial nature of Pasolini's dialect:

of all the kinds of books being produced in Italy, this is certainly the most untranslatable. [...] [T]he Roman dialect used (which is neither Roman, nor dialect, really) has no counterpart in any other language; it does not belong in the category of internationally exchangeable slang or colloquialism. If I did translate it, I am afraid that I would have to render it into some kind of arbitrarily chosen American slang. English readers would probably be baffled. Cockney is undoubtedly your best bet, and even there the translator may have difficulty.<sup>49</sup>

Richard Kamm, who at the time was working on a translation of Belli's sonnets, proposed instead a decidedly domesticating approach, which contemplated the use of colloquial English, dotted with words left in italicised Italian, and a glossary.<sup>50</sup> Maschler's reaction to Kamm's proposal was cautiously positive, highlighting the linguistic complexities that even colloquial English posed for the two target markets:

This of course, presents the additional problems since it will be all the more difficult to find colloquial English that is equally acceptable in America and in this country. However, I am particularly interested in getting it right for England. I absolutely agree with your suggestions that some words should be left in italicised Italian and a glossary added at the end of the book, though I am very much in favour of keeping the number of words treated in this way down to a minimum.<sup>51</sup>

Kamm's sample translation was evaluated by readers in both houses. Pantheon's reader EWM's negative verdict was based on tone: the translation sounded too American. Rosenthal's sample translation would not fare better. In a letter to Gross dated 7 March 1961, Maschler articulated his dissatisfaction with 'the Raymond Rosenthal job', which was also largely shared by Pantheon's evaluator, Eleanor Clark. Rosenthal's second attempt was likewise turned down by the firms.

After contacting to no avail Juan Rodolfo Wilcock, recommended to Pantheon by Mary McCarthy, Maschler's search for a translator became more urgent.<sup>52</sup> Rome-based

journalist Antony M. Lo Proto contacted Maschler with a letter dated 27 January 1961, which reveals that the New York-based Grove Press had approached him for the translation of *Una vita violenta* in April 1960 only to back down when Pantheon acquired the rights. Lo Proto's approach to Pasolini's linguistic contamination was to adopt a specific time-constrained diatopic variant of American English:

A note about my translation is in order. To translate Pasolini's speech patterns of the subproletariat Rome, I have had to use a semi-phonetic rendering of low class American-English. The slang used by the boys in *Una vita violenta* is a rather changeless thing; however, as the book was written between the years 1955–1959, I have used a similar, if more transient, element of American slang used in New York about the same period.<sup>53</sup>

Lo Proto's sample translation would also be rejected in late March 1961 as it was deemed too Runyanesque. This rejection would trigger the interest of Richard Chase, who had acted as a scout for both Kamm and Lo Proto. Chase's interference throws light on the restricted nature of the Rome-based network of American expats who acted as translators and agents for a small number of firms.

During 1961, both Lo Proto and Chase worked on revised sample translations, while new translators were considered such as Angus Davidson (who declined the offer), Diana Barran, and James Cleugh (both of whom submitted sample translations with negative results).<sup>54</sup> Each professional's distinctive strategy to tackle the book's foreignness illuminates a different aspect of the linguistic texture of the book while uncovering important facets of the translation process. For Richard Chase and James Cleugh, the book's main challenges lay less in its dialect and more in its syntax and the latter's impact on readability. Each translator attempted to resolve the impasse by sacrificing 'certain subtleties in the interest of intelligibility', thus leading both Chase and Cleugh to defend their alleged 'distortion and recast[ing] of the original meaning of a foreign phrase in the interest of a reader with no knowledge of the [...] country concerned'.<sup>55</sup> Diana Barran instead opted for a distinctly foreignising tactic, leaving 'in the Italian [dysphemic] expressions [...] because these are typical Roman expressions which cannot have any equivalent in English'.<sup>56</sup> Lo Proto's attempts fell midway between these two very distinct positions. The evaluators engaged by Pantheon and Cape objected to the liberality of Chase and Cleugh and the excessive literality and foreignisation of Barran. The objections raised against Lo Proto were to do with the excessive use of connoted expletives and the pervasive use of a specific slang resulting in an extreme geocentric localisation with the potential to undermine the reader's mediated experience of Rome.<sup>57</sup> In this sense, Lo Proto's translation failed on the grounds of informativity and situationality, two of the seven dimensions against which de Beaugrande and Dressler measured textual communicability.<sup>58</sup> Lo Proto vehemently defended his choice – Lower East Side New York slang – while highlighting the challenges posited by Pasolini's contamination of styles:

this is not Roman slang as we know it from the sonnets of Belli, or stornelli romani from Trastevere. What Pasolini used is a slang that belongs to the nebulous world between the criminal underworld and the impoverished sub proletariat [*sic*]. [...] It is a special language, a vulgar language, and a cruel language. Any attempt to translate the book to the level of maiden aunts would be downright criminal. Pasolini in Italy has become the byword for the vulgar spoken language, and whenever he tried to be literary in the

classical Italian sense he comes out with a ridiculous purple passage [...]. Everytime [*sic*] he leaves his element, be it for description or character, he turns up with fantastic prose.

While conceding that ‘through such books as Studs Lonigan, *Catcher in the Rye* [...] the overall advantage of using a New York slang is that it is so readily understood throughout all of the United States and I daresay England as well’,<sup>59</sup> Lo Proto’s defence of the New York variety extended to envisaging – like Lawner before him – a double translation, one for the American market, and one modelled on the Cockney crafted by Norman Frank, who had recently risen to notoriety.<sup>60</sup>

These rich and at times contradictory conversations surrounding the evaluations of the translation samples show how the professional discourse on translation and the reflection on one’s own translation practice (and its limits) aligned, to an extent, with the changing views in the contemporaneous theoretical discourse on the (un)translatability of dialect texts. With the dominance of the structural linguistic paradigm lasting well into the early 1960s, the notion of untranslatability was firmly based on a perceived and unresolvable structural mismatch between source language (henceforth SL) and target language (henceforth TL). Dialect, and all the other linguistic forms commonly perceived as substandard or nonstandard, would fall under this broad heading. As we can glean from the quotations above, the notion of untranslatability is the most commonly cited reason (alongside conflicting commitments) for rejecting the commission. Roman Jakobson’s 1959 essay ‘On the Linguistic Aspects of Translation’ introduced a semiotic understanding of the process of translation that would become very influential. Predicated on meaning as a potentially endless chain of signs, Jakobson sees translation as both a creative practice and a process that ‘involves two equivalent messages in two different codes’.<sup>61</sup> This essay was instrumental in a reconsideration of the absolute limitations deriving from a strictly structuralist theory of translation equivalence. The effect of this is succinctly captured by J. C. Catford’s 1965 study, where translation is described ‘intuitively, to be a *cline* rather than a clear-cut dichotomy. SL texts and items are *more* or *less* translatable rather than absolutely *translatable* and *untranslatable*’ (emphasis in the original).<sup>62</sup> It is on this cline that the translators articulated their approach and the publishing firms evaluated the translation’s readability and therefore future market success. This tendency is certainly visible in the readers’ evaluations that by 1962 led to the rejection of samples on the basis of a localisation of the target language considered too extreme to ensure the promise of marketability.

### **‘To make an impossible book possible’**

John Thompson’s observation that ‘the field of publishing does not consist of only publishers [...] [as] there are other players who inhabit this field and who exercise a great deal of power within it’ captures the frantic transatlantic inter-firm exchanges surrounding the translation event of *Una vita violenta*.<sup>63</sup> By January 1962, Jonathan Cape and Pantheon had approached, evaluated, and rejected the sample translations of seven translators (and in the case of Rosenthal, Lo Proto, Cleugh, and Chase, at least two versions), had approached ten other translators who had in turn rejected the job (in the case of Isabel Quigly, twice), and activated a network of relations and



prestigious gatekeepers that included not just writers who had resided in and had written about Italy (Pier Maria Pasinetti, Iris Origo, Eleanor Clark, Mary McCarthy), but also editors of Rome-based transnational periodicals (Marguerite Caetani and Joseph McCrindle), in addition to counting on the professional evaluation of at least four distinct in-house readers. Furthermore, from the surviving correspondence it emerges that the Rome-based network of translators exchanged information and advice on the sample translation, and in some instances also worked together with colleagues who acted as readers (e.g. Vera Wygod), while drawing on the advice of people at the margins of Pasolini's entourage, and Roman informants to solve the most difficult dialect passages in the novel.

When the managing directors of Pantheon and Jonathan Cape joined forces to share the role of primary risk-takers for the publication of the English translation of *Una vita violenta*, they also activated a complex process of value-adding that included 'the contributions of expertise, promotion, and relationships that other players offer [and that] must be harnessed if books written by authors are to make it across the fields'.<sup>64</sup> It is this fractured and international network of informal intermediators that would lead Maschler to approach John Patrick Brasier-Creagh. An Oxford-educated published poet who had lived in Rome until 1960, Brasier-Creagh submitted his translation sample by the end of February 1962, receiving largely positive feedback on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>65</sup> This would be a turning point. The exchanges that followed focussed on the parameters of the translation, as is evident from this letter by Maschler to Gross detailing the agreement with Brasier-Creagh:

Our feeling is that the word 'borgata' should be used as such throughout the book, and that the problem could be solved by a short note from the translator at the start. We agree with him entirely about the rendering of the dialect, but would like to see the colloquial tone which he tries for a bit more natural; at the moment it still seems too stiff. If he will make an effort to be more vivid and direct in this, and to reject the 'literary' phrases which tempt him, I think that his further work on the novel will be much improved.<sup>66</sup>

Brasier-Creagh received a contract in June 1962 and the translation was submitted in August 1963. The news that *Ragazzi di vita* was being optioned by Grove Press, a rival US firm, escalated the pressure to see Brasier-Creagh's translation out in the market: the joint publication of the book was planned by Cape on 31 August 1964. In accordance with the contract, Maschler sent the complete translation to Paola Dalai at Garzanti who, in turn, sent it to Pasolini in Rome on 11 December 1963. The response from Garzanti in early January 1964 was unexpected and excoriating.

In further triangulations, also involving Celina Wieniewska, the UK representative of Garzanti, Dalai asked for Camillo Pennati, at the time head of the Italian Cultural Institute in London, to revise Brasier-Creagh's translation, but the corrections were rejected by the translator. As transpires from the exchange, while adhering to the parameters established with Maschler (insertion of recurrent Italian or Romanesco words with explanatory footnotes, and a colloquial tone throughout), Brasier-Creagh had also used other strategies to improve the readability of the translation:

My treatment was worked out in the full light of reason and bearing in mind the difference in temperament between Italian & English readers. For example, in descriptions I cut out the



umpteenth parenthesis because in English there is a limit to the amount of trivia one can put up with between one sniff and the next. My job was to make an impossible book possible.<sup>67</sup>

Encouraged by Maschler, Brasier-Creagh approached Pasolini in Rome to ask for further insights regarding the rejection. Pasolini's written reply, cited in the translator's letter to Maschler, reveals what triggered Garzanti's reaction which, in turn, illuminates how Garzanti interpreted its role of proprietor, while also acting as gatekeeper of Pasolini's artistic integrity:

Gentle Creagh, I know only as much English as one needs to ask topographical or culinary information from a Kikuyu in Nairobi or a Sick [*sic*] in Benares, and so I was not able to judge your translation. The experts at Garzanti say that it reduces the crazy slang and linguistic abnormality of my book to normal English (un inglese medio). Ma io non posso verificarlo ...<sup>68</sup>

In the letter, the translator used this statement to advocate further for a translation choice that did not make use of a particular dialect to reflect the extreme localisation of the source language.<sup>69</sup> Brasier-Creagh explicitly cited as a largely unsuccessful example Rosemary Edmonds' English translation of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, where the Cossacks' dialogue was translated employing Cockney.<sup>70</sup> Following this letter, Maschler approached Dalai asking her to reconsider the Brasier-Creagh translation with minor alterations and assuring her that the English used by the translator was 'anything but "medio"'.<sup>71</sup> In her reply dated 22 June, Dalai made explicit her dissatisfaction with Creagh's translation:

The translator has probably spent over two years translating the book, but without doing any effort to translate the language of Pasolini. With language I don't mean the dialect he uses, but his Italian language, his personal selection of Italian words that can be reproduced much better in English. [...] Your intention to publish it with a few minor editorial changes is a mistake and we are strongly against it. It means to ruin the novel and the author.<sup>72</sup>

To contextualise Dalai's reaction to Brasier-Creagh's use of 'inglese medio', one needs to examine how Pasolini's reflections on the Italian language developed in that period. To this end, Pasolini's 1964 essay 'Nuove questioni linguistiche' reveals the author's view on the evolution of Italian literary language: alongside the 'lingua alta' of literary production and the 'lingua bassa' of the 'letterature naturalistico-veristico-dialettali', Pasolini observes the emergence of a new literary variant, the 'lingua media [...] cioè quella che conserva la fondamentale irrealità dell'italiano come lingua media borghese'.<sup>73</sup> Pasolini described the morphology of the *italiano medio* as being characterised by a 'grammatica [...] semplificata, le forme concorrenti sono rare, le sequenze tendono a essere progressive, lo spirito analitico, l'eccessiva disponibilità dei sintagmi limitata'.<sup>74</sup> The essay caused quite a stir for its polemics against the neoavanguardia movement that had emerged in Italy with Gruppo 63, which included Edoardo Sanguineti, Antonio Porta, and Nanni Balestrini. Pasolini considered the language used by Gruppo 63 as symptomatic of a profound 'crisi linguistica' which in his view coincided with 'la fine del mandato dello scrittore'.<sup>75</sup> Pasolini's view of the 'devalizzazione delle più recenti esperienze letterarie' goes so far as to consider the new avant-garde's action as 'antilinguistica', the result of an 'accettazione passiva' of the neo-liberal and technological assault on the inherent vitality of languages.<sup>76</sup>

Any translator of Pasolini's work would have to contend with this important cultural context and be mindful of Pasolini's militant action in the literary field, and the role in it of his theory of language. Garzanti's demands to have the translation either substantially revised or rejected and to push back the publication date to 1965 provoked the exit of Pantheon from the agreement. Maschler had to scabble on two fronts, once again: finding both a translator and a suitable business partner. In close succession, Maschler contacted Marion Rawson and Angus Davidson, who both declined.<sup>77</sup> Celina Wieniewska then recommended William Weaver, whose translation of a fragment from Sanguineti's *Capriccio italiano* in *Art and Literature* had impressed her greatly.<sup>78</sup> Interestingly, for the same journal, Weaver had translated a short story by Carlo Emilio Gadda, but it was instead the translation of a piece by one of Pasolini's polemical adversaries that brought Weaver back into the fray.<sup>79</sup>

### 'Natural speech': William Weaver's *A Violent Life*

Endorsed since its dissemination by many corpora-assisted studies, Gideon Toury's law of growing standardisation maintains that translated language tends to accommodate habitual TL options to the point that SL textemes are converted into TL repertoremes.<sup>80</sup> The occurrence of such a law is dependent on the sociocultural conditions influencing translators and, professionally, it is more likely to manifest itself in the publishing context. Toury's theoretical statements align with numerous empirical observations. Ria Vanderauwera noted that in the translations of novels from Dutch into English 'a tendency towards textual conventionality' was observable, with the translator actively engaged in target-accommodating strategies such as 'suppress[ing] of all kinds of irregularities, smoothen[ing] out unusual style and rhythm, and [the] remov[al of] "irrelevant" fragments'.<sup>81</sup>

So far in this translation event, publishers had rejected sample translations on the basis of an excessive localisation of the target language (a strategy employed to reflect the dialect used in the novel), which was perceived as potentially alienating to one of the two markets to which the translated novel would be directed, the English and the American, while also attenuating, if not removing altogether, the reader's linguistically mediated experience of Rome. By Brasier-Creagh's own admission, his translation, in addition to using colloquial English to translate the dialect, was notable for a range of interventions mirroring Vanderauwera's observations, while also incorporating some compensatory forms agreed with Maschler (e.g. the use of 'borgata' throughout) to retain the 'Roman' flavour. Garzanti's objections took issue with the effect of the growing standardisation that *Una vita violenta* had endured, which had failed to transmit in the Target Language the nuanced language that Pasolini had striven to create, and – paradoxically – the role that literary prose had in it.

When, in September 1965, Weaver signed the contract to translate *Una vita violenta*, he made it clear he did not wish to work on Brasier-Creagh's translation and that he would approach the work from scratch. He had been first approached in 1960 and, since then, Weaver had turned into a sought-after translator from Italian, was well-liked by Pier Paolo Pasolini,<sup>82</sup> and could count on the support of an agent: a sign both of the increasing professionalisation of the translator's role and of Weaver's growing value in

the publishing market. It must be noted that Maschler's approach dates from November 1964 and that it took several exchanges with Wieniewska and Maschler to persuade Weaver to take the job in September 1965.

The key to understanding Weaver's concerns perhaps lies in his experience of completing in 1965 the translation of *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* by Carlo Emilio Gadda, an author whose literary transit in the Anglosphere he helped shape.<sup>83</sup> One finds them articulated in distilled form in the 'Translator's Note' that accompanied his translation of 'L'incendio in via Keplero', published in *Art and Literature*. In this succinct note, after enumerating Gadda's distinctive features ('his irony, his concision, his slyness, and his abrupt shifts in language, from mock journalese, to rich, impressionistic prose-poetry, to dialect and so on'), Weaver observed that 'Gadda's language resists translation (however successfully the reader must decide)'.<sup>84</sup> In the months between February and the submission to Maschler of the first translated chapter on 26 December 1965, Weaver had matured a strategy to pierce the 'resistance' of Pasolini's novel. This made use of a generic American English variant marked chiefly by distinct phonological features reflected in graphological forms indexing the demotic, such as 'dontcha' for 'don't you', 'wanna' for 'want to', 'gonna' for 'going to', etc., to translate the dialect in the dialogue and the narrating voice.

Undeterred by Pantheon's withdrawal, Maschler had continued to support the Pasolini project and had managed to draw in New York-based publisher Holt, Rinehart and Winston to share the costs of translation. Each would use it with exclusive rights in the exclusive territories granted in their respective contracts with Garzanti. The arrangements between Cape and Holt, Rinehart and Winston included, as with Pantheon, a joint approval of the translation as agreed in the Frankfurt book fair of the same year. Working on the Pasolini translation throughout 1966, alongside other important work, Weaver had further refined his approach, outlining thus to Maschler in the October of that year his global (text-length) strategy:

after considerable reflection, I decided that [...] the best course of action was for me to make a frankly American translation. In general I dislike using too specifically 'national' slang in a translation; it seems ludicrous for Italians to speak like New Yorkers or like Dubliners. But with Pasolini natural speech is the essence of the book.<sup>85</sup>

The interpretation of 'natural speech' given by the two publishers would be one of the reasons why, after the receipt of Weaver's full translation by December 1966 (Pasolini had approved it in writing on 30 November) by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, the agreement made in the summer of 1965 was rescinded. Incensed by the fact that Pasolini and his entourage had approved the translation before their evaluation, the American firm sent a heavily redacted translation which, in the eyes of Weaver, 'seemed really bad [...]. The sentences were all straightened out, turned into conventional prose, far removed from Pasolini'.<sup>86</sup> In the correspondence that ensued with Weaver and Maschler, Holt, Rinehart and Winston's editor Thomas Wallace articulated a cultural framework that allows us to infer the kind of readership the American firm thought this novel would attract, and how they interpreted the expectancy norms for this translation of such a readership.<sup>87</sup> On the basis of a reader's report, shared only with Maschler, which stated that 'the rumble that the boys have,

the prostitutes, the pimps, the slatternly huts are nowhere as shocking as those depicted by Algren, Selby, etc, nor are they up to the standards of the best of Italian realism', Wallace, writing to Weaver on 31 March 1967, argued:

*Una vita violenta* was a real tour de force. What I question in your translation are the innumerable words and phrases that just don't ring true, and that certainly don't, for an American reader, sound either 'Italian' and, at the same time, naturalistic. What I have in mind is the constant use of words such as 'hicks', 'kids', 'snot-noses', and, particularly, 'smart-ass' [...]. I suspect these constructions and other similar ones do not bother Cape as much as they do us because in America, we have been far more exposed to the naturalistic novel. Certainly, readers of books going back to Dreiser and Farrell, and more recently, John Selby, would be disappointed by your rendition of Pasolini's Rome.<sup>88</sup>

The challenge to Weaver's translation pivoted on the publishers' perceptions of the stylistic features of a particular strand of American realism (and possibly a misunderstanding of Pasolini's aesthetic aims in *Una vita violenta*). The description of life at the edges of respectability so common in Beat fiction was further distilled in the gritty and seamy realism of Hubert Selby Jr's 1964 *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, which, for its vision of an urban hell populated by junkies and prostitutes without hope or redemption, had been subject to an obscenity trial in England and banned in Italy.<sup>89</sup>

The exchanges between Wallace and Weaver demonstrate how literary genealogies are used in professional settings not only to make sense of a foreign literary product but also to articulate expectancy norms regarding its translation and how these genealogies are likely to be employed to market any translations further down the production line. Wallace's literary genealogy finds its progenitor in Theodore Dreiser's documentary naturalism (incidentally, an explicit model for Pasolini's *Accattone*), ruled by a mechanistic view of life where the subjects are in the throes of all-too-powerful social and economic forces.<sup>90</sup> Together with the human panoplies drawn in James Thomas Farrell's hugely popular and critically acclaimed novel series revolving around the characters of Studs Lonigan and Danny O'Neill,<sup>91</sup> this strand of the American novel was characterised by a resolute interest in the immigrant communities and their fight for survival in oppressive urban surroundings. A more marked shift towards the sordid and an unflinching description of human despair was observable in the post-war novel of the 1950s, with Nelson Algren's *A Walk on the Wild Side* (1957, turned into a film in 1962) offering a gritty example of unrelenting hopelessness. For Selby Jr, however, such a landscape of human dejection was the result of his traumatic personal experience and told as the dark side, possibly the real face, of the American dream. Wallace and his colleagues measured the efficacy of Weaver's translation against this literary landscape: the translation had to be not only 'letter perfect, smooth, incisive, readable and true' but also subjected to 'necessary cuts'.<sup>92</sup> These requests were predicated on a perception of precise genre-specific expectations in the American buyers' market that, since late 1959, when Cape started the negotiations for the translation, had changed to be more receptive of the particular milieu that Pasolini strove to advocate, and grown to accommodate a level of slippage from the standard linguistic norm for the sake of effective representation. When *A Violent Life* came out in 1968, several commentators noted the linguistic affinity with Selby's work, a testament to the lasting impression made by the first novel of the author of *Requiem for a Dream*. The publication delay of the English translation did eventually lead the book to be received by a readership increasingly desensitised to linguistic shock

and accustomed to acrid depictions of slum life, thus confirming that '[r]eadability in translation need not to be tied to the current standard dialect of the translating language'.<sup>93</sup> As a reviewer of the time explains:

This delay, more than the heavy-handedness of the translation, robs the novel of much of its original power – Pasolini's theme of the squalor and violence and low-horizoned futility of slum life has become the preoccupation of many emergent novelists in the last decade, at least one of whom, Hubert Selby Jr., in his profound and shocking *Last Exit to Brooklyn* has treated it with more brio and success.<sup>94</sup>

Holt, Rinehart and Winston's exit in June 1967 paradoxically strengthened Weaver's position. When Maschler approached Grove Press for the partnership, he informed Richard Seaver that 'no editing of the translation should be undertaken without the approval of William Weaver (this arises from contractual obligations to Pasolini himself)', with Weaver commanding a translator's fee in addition to a charge of fifteen dollars per thousand words and two per cent royalties on the global sales of the translation for which Cape, lacking a US partner, acquired the world copyright.<sup>95</sup>

Published in 1968, the same year as Grove Press's English translation of *Ragazzi di vita*, with a dust jacket designed by Jan Parker, the 320-page-long book did not include the glossary featuring in the Italian original, and was printed in 3000 copies.<sup>96</sup> Banned in South Africa in 1969, the title would be reissued by Panther (St Albans, by then a Granada imprint) in paperback in 1973 and then by Garland (New York and London) in 1978. *A Violent Life* was distributed in the US by Pantheon in 1992 and given a new lease of life when Manchester-based firm Carcanet acquired the translation and distributed it in the UK in 1985 and again in 2007.

## Conclusions

The English translation of *Una vita violenta* is a fine articulation of what Johan Heilbron has defined as the 'cultural world-system' of book translations. For this instance, the system mobilised its agents (publishers; literary agents; scouts; informal mediators; translators; in-house readers) across several institutions and multiple geographies, reacted to global regulations (copyright law), and established agreements (contracts),<sup>97</sup> thus showing that the translation event 'may indeed be the product of a fractured and multiple type of human agency'.<sup>98</sup>

Archival papers are often preserved in chronologically ordered and subject-related folders, giving the researcher a telescopic impression leading to a teleologically predicted outcome. However, every single agent involved in this translation event, including the bit players, were busy professionals, working on multiple and simultaneous projects. By the time *A Violent Life* came out, and during his contract with Cape, William Weaver had translated a number of books including Goffredo Parise's *The Boss* (Jonathan Cape, 1966), Giuseppe Berto's *Incubus* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), and Italo Calvino's *Cosmicomics* (Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), for which he received the National Book Award. Many translators, while declining the offer of translating Pasolini's novel, mentioned translations they had been working on and took the opportunity to pitch equally worthy translation projects from Italian. In the ten years that it took to convert *Una vita violenta* into *A Violent Life*, the team of readers,

translators, and series editors working for Jonathan Cape and led by Maschler brought to the British public important foreign titles, including Alba de Céspedes's *Between There and Now* (1959, translated by Isabel Quigby), Leonardo Sciascia's *Mafia Vendetta* (1963, translated by Archibald Colquhoun and Arthur Oliver), Roland Barthes's *Writing Degree Zero* (1967, translated by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith), and Nazim Hikmet's *Selected Poems* (1967, translated by Taner Baybars), to cite just a few.

The hiatus between the publication of *Una vita violenta* and that of *A Violent Life* coincides with the last phase of a publishing system that was on the brink of a global structural change characterised by a surge of large international publishing conglomerates. Aggressive and defensive mergers and takeovers changed the face of publishing, putting at its core an even more strenuous pursuit of profitability, which made it more difficult to pursue projects such as the Pasolini translation with the same visionary persistence. In 1969, Jonathan Cape merged with Chatto & Windus, before being absorbed by Random House in 1987. The year 1969 is indeed the watershed for the rapid transition away from a business model that 'looked for an overall return rate between 1 and 4 per cent' to one instead 'based on the idea that every title should yield returns in the short run, but it also prescribed levels of profitability that were about four times higher than those generally met in the book trade'.<sup>99</sup>

Undoubtedly, this translation event is characterised by occurrences that are infrequent but by all means not unique: the rejections of full book-length versions, and the subsequent collapse of publishing alliances. However, a common denominator with other translation projects is the role played by the publishing firm as a translating institution with its standardised workflow protocols, concept of readability, expectancy norms, and financial framework. To be clear, the translators tasked with the samples were not paid for their effort, but the surviving correspondence does provide insight into the negotiation strategies. As we have seen, the unexpected turns of this translation project led to the emergence of a series of discourses on the aims and challenges of translation practice. Over the years, the archival documentation under scrutiny tells a story of a progressive accommodation of difference. The translators summoned to tackle the 'Pasolini translation problem' reacted differently to the intralingual variations in *Una vita violenta*.<sup>100</sup> Some translators claimed that the text was untranslatable, others advocated for the use of colloquial or plain English, paraphrases, and cuts to reduce the linguistic multiplicity, while finally some employed a language variation that, with a degree of structural adjustment, represented – with some inevitable attenuation – the novel's language complexity. The language spoken by Tommaso Pizzilli and the other *pischelli*, characterised by specific geocentric localisation, seems to endorse the translators' decision to use a specific language variety with an equally geographically and socially contained reach in an attempt to replicate, through what Philip Lewis has called 'abusive fidelity', Pasolini's dissident linguistic plurivocities.<sup>101</sup> In the case of Weaver, the 'translation mimesis' created to reflect the 'polylingual reality' of the text involved a particular variation of American English used globally in the text, in turn punctuated by very sparse untranslated Romanesco words highlighting what has been called 'the metonymic gap'. His fluent translation achieved the illusion of transparency by adopting a nonstandard variant of American English to mimic what Weaver had called the 'natural speech' of the original,

and nevertheless enacting ‘its own ethnocentric violence on the foreign text’.<sup>102</sup> In an interview with Lawrence Venuti, Weaver commented:

I must confess I could not think of any other solution for these kids who appear in [...] *A Violent Life*. [...] What I decided is that since the book is set in the late forties where blue jeans and everything were just arriving in Rome from America, and all these Italian kids were going to see westerns and gangsters movies and so on, the thing to do was to have them talk American.<sup>103</sup>

The paradox of this translation lies in the fact that Pasolini was not a ‘natural’ speaker of any of the dialects he employed in this work. As Contini noted in 1943, in Pasolini the illusion of untranslatability was always predicated on a resolvable ‘tension between “intraducibilità” and “traducibilità”’.<sup>104</sup> From the many possibilities Pasolini’s work could inspire, Weaver adopted a strategy that reflected his interpretation not only of Pasolini’s own linguistic construct, but also – crucially – of a specific historical period in Italy, on the brink of what Pasolini would term ‘cataclisma antropologico’, itself also propelled by a progressive Americanisation of Italian youth culture.<sup>105</sup> By paraphrasing and adapting what Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin describe in the context of biculturalism occurring in colonial language, Weaver used the rarely occurring Romanesco words in his translation to ‘stand for’ the *borgata* demotic in a metonymic way, their very resistance to translation highlighting a ‘gap’ between the translator’s culture and the polylingual reality of the original text.<sup>106</sup> While Weaver’s complex experiment in ‘vehicular matching’ was considered largely successful, it was not as daring as other proposals on the table advocating a dialect-for-dialect approach instead. It is therefore not surprising that in his 2002 interview with Willard Spiegelman, Weaver defined his Pasolini translation as ‘one of the most difficult translations and the one I am least happy with. [...] Certain books – and Pasolini’s amongst them – just resist translation’.<sup>107</sup>

## Notes

1. Martin Seymour-Smith, ‘Where Life Is Raw in Rome’, *Scotsman*, 3 February 1968, p. 26.
2. Montague Haltrecht, ‘Frozen Images in the Snow’, *The Sunday Times*, 28 January 1968, p. 30.
3. ‘If only Weaver had cleaned up the language and had subdued the more nauseating passages he would have done the author a great service’, lamented FGC in ‘Victorian Figures Seen in a New Perspective’, *Evening Standard*, 3 February 1968.
4. Originally translated into French by Michel Breitman (1929–2009), the novel was retranslated by Jean-Paul Manganaro and reissued by the same publisher in 2019. For the reception of Pasolini in France, see at least René Ceccaty, *Sur Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005).
5. Established in 1963, since 1980 the prize has been awarded biennially. In 1969, William Weaver shared the prize with Sascha Rabinovitz, who won for his translation of Paolo Rossi’s *Francesco Bacone: Dalla magia alla scienza* (Bari: Laterza, 1957).
6. Stephen Wall, ‘Lower Depths of Rome’, *Observer*, 25 January 1968.
7. Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1995), p. 249.
8. Jeremy Munday, ‘Using Primary Sources to Produce a Microhistory of Translation and Translators: Theoretical and Methodological Concerns’, *The Translator*, 20.1 (2014), 64–80 (p. 64).
9. Ricardo Muñoz Martín, ‘On Paradigms and Cognitive Translatology’, in *Translation and Cognition*, ed. by Gregory M. Shreve and Erik Angelone (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010), pp. 169–87 (p. 179).



10. See *Translating Dialects and Minority Languages: Challenges and Solutions*, ed. by Federico Federici (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011); for Italian dialect literature see Gigliola Sulis, 'Tradurre i testi plurilingui: Sulle traduzioni francesi di *Sempre caro* di Marcello Fois', *InVerbis*, 1 (2014), 189–200.
11. Anthony Pym, 'Translating Linguistic Variation: Parody and the Creation of Authenticity' (2001), 69–73 (p. 71), available at: <[https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/iulmyt/pdf/traduccion\\_metropoli\\_diaspora/08\\_pym.pdf](https://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/iulmyt/pdf/traduccion_metropoli_diaspora/08_pym.pdf)> [accessed 31 March 2021].
12. Brian Mossop, 'Translating Institutions: A Missing Factor in Translation Theory', *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction*, 1.2 (1988), 65–71.
13. See Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Tutte le poesie*, 2 vols, ed. by Walter Siti (Milan: Mondadori, 2003), II, 1327–1505.
14. Gianfranco Contini, 'Al limite della poesia dialettale', *Corriere del Ticino*, 24 April 1943, p. 17. This was a review of Pasolini's *Poesie a Casarsa* (Bologna: Libreria Antiquaria Mario Landi, 1942).
15. Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Un dialettale senza dialetto', *Il Mattino del Popolo*, 8 January 1948; now in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e l'arte*, 2 vols, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), I, 286–89.
16. Claudio Costa, 'Ancora sui glossari romaneschi dei romanzi di P. P. Pasolini', in *Pasolini tra friuliano e Romanesco*, ed. by Marcello Teodonio (Rome: Colombo Editore, 1997), pp. 145–94 (p. 193).
17. Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'I parlanti', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Romanzi e racconti 1962–1975*, ed. by Walter Siti and Silvia De Laude (Milan: Mondadori, 1998), pp. 163–97 (p. 164). Originally published in *Botteghe oscure*, 8 (1951); in the 1998 Mondadori edition the text appears in the 'Appendice a *Il Sogno di una cosa*'.
18. Pasolini's ethnographic methods are discussed in Donatella Maraschin's *Pasolini: Cinema e antropologia* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014).
19. Rino dal Sasso, 'Un anno di letteratura', *Rinascita*, August–July 1955, 512–13.
20. Adriano Seroni, 'Lecture: *Ragazzi di vita*', *Vie nuove*, 24 July 1955, 48–50.
21. Guido Santato, *Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Rome: Carocci, 2012), p. 59.
22. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *I dialoghi*, ed. by Giovanni Falaschi (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1993), p. 69.
23. See Monique Jacqmain, 'Appunti sui glossari pasoliniani', *Linguistica Antverpiana*, 4 (1970), 109–54 (p. 153); Renzo Bruschi, 'Intorno al Romanesco di P. P. Pasolini', monographic issue of *Contributi di dialettologia umbra*, 1.5 (1981), p. 58. See also Costa; Paolo D'Achille, 'Lessico romanesco pasoliniano e linguaggio giovanile (a proposito di *paraculo*)', *Contributi di filologia dell'Italia mediana*, 13 (1999), 183–202.
24. Claudio Giovanardi, 'Il romanesco di Pasolini fra tradizione e innovazione', in '*L'ora è confusa e noi come perduti la viviamo*': *Leggere Pier Paolo Pasolini quarant'anni dopo*, ed. by Francesca Tomassini and Monica Venturini (Rome: Tre-Press, 2017), pp. 73–86 (p. 76).
25. Luca Serianni, 'Appunti sulla lingua di Pasolini prosatore', *Contributi di filologia dell'Italia mediana*, 10 (1996), 197–229 (p. 203).
26. Costa, p. 192.
27. Pasolini, *I dialoghi*, p. 9.
28. Serianni, pp. 229 and 217.
29. Giovan Battista Pellegrini produced the first, substantial, articulation of the varieties of contemporary Italian in his 'Tra lingua e dialetto in Italia', *Studi mediolatini e volgari*, 8 (1960), 137–53. The notion of 'italiano dell'uso medio' was formally theorised by Francesco Sabatini in his "'L'italiano dell'uso medio": Una realtà tra le varietà linguistiche italiane', in *Gesprochenes Italienisch in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. by G. Holtus and E. Radke (Tübingen: Narr, 1985), pp. 155–84. For an accurate systematisation of the variants in scope, see at least Gaetano Berruto, *Sociolinguistica dell'italiano contemporaneo* (Rome: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1997).
30. The notion of regional Italian was being introduced by Giovan Battista Pellegrini in those years. See Pellegrini.
31. See Giovanardi.



32. Archibald Colquhoun (1912–1964) is known for his translation of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's works and of several novels by Italo Calvino. His 1951 translation of Alessandro Manzoni's *I promessi sposi* was a bestseller for Penguin. He received the PEN translation award for his translation of Federico De Roberto's *I viceré* in 1963. *The Leopard* was published in 1960 by Collins in the UK and distributed in the US by Pantheon.
33. Letter from Robert Knittel to Archibald Colquhoun, dated 23 October 1959, in University of Reading's Special Collections (henceforth UoR), JC 100/3, folder 1.
34. Clark was enlisted in this effort, possibly thanks to her knowledge of Rome and Romanesco poetry as shown in her celebrated travelogue *Rome and a Villa* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1952) and in her prose translation of Belli's poetry: Eleanor Clark, 'G. G. Belli: Roman Poet', *Kenyon Review*, 14.1 (1952), 21–39.
35. Knittel to Wolff, 20 November 1959, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
36. Wolff to Knittel, 11 November 1959, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
37. Knittel to Wieniewska, 18 January 1960, p. 2, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
38. Dante Della Terza (1924–2021) taught at UCLA from 1959 to 1963, when he moved to Harvard. He discussed his American experience and the European intellectuals he met in US academia, including his UCLA departmental colleague Pier Maria Pasinetti, in *Da Vienna a Baltimore: La diaspora degli intellettuali europei negli Stati Uniti d'America* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1987). See also Lino Pertile, 'Dante Della Terza (1924–2021)', *Forum Italicum*, 55.3 (2021), 934–38.
39. Knittel to Gross, 7 March 1960, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
40. The events leading to this change are detailed in Michael S. Howard, *Jonathan Cape, Publisher* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 264–68; and in Tom Maschler, *Publisher* (London: Picador, 2005), pp. 46–54.
41. *Declaration*, ed. by Tom Maschler (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1957).
42. Maschler, 'Introduction', in *Declaration*, pp. 7–9 (p. 7).
43. On boundary spanning see P. M. Hirsch, 'Processing Fads and Fashions: An Organization-Set Analysis of Cultural Industry Systems', *American Journal of Sociology*, 77 (1972), 639–59; and Albert Greco, *The Book Publishing Industry* (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005).
44. Lawner published these translations in the New-York-based literary quarterly *Chelsea*, 11 (1962).
45. Weaver had published his English translation of Pasolini's poem 'Appennino (1951)' in *Folder*, 3 (1954). At the time, Weaver was in Rome and was an acquaintance of Pasolini. Weaver would then publish 'The Marvelous Attic: A Report on Rome's Minor Museums', *The Transatlantic Review*, 8 (1961), 24–32.
46. Weaver to Maschler, 4 September 1960, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
47. Raymond Rosenthal (1914–1995) was an American translator from Italian and French, primarily known for his translation of Primo Levi's work. His translation of Levi's *Periodic Table* was nominated for the National Book Award in 1984.
48. Thomas Franssen and Giselde Kuipers, 'Coping with Uncertainty, Abundance and Strife: Decision-Making Processes of Dutch Acquisition Editors in the Global Market for Translation', *Poetics*, 41 (2013), 48–74 (p. 50).
49. Lawner to Maschler, 22 September 1960, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
50. Richard Kamm (1925–2019) received his BA in fine arts and English at Dartmouth College in 1949. He resided in Rome from 1955 where he developed his profile as a sculptor. He worked as translator for the RAI and the Istituto Italiano per il Medio e Estremo Oriente.
51. Maschler to Kamm, 27 September 1960, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
52. Mary McCarthy had published numerous articles for the *New Yorker* covering the history and life of post-war Italy and documenting the country's fascination for the American tourist. Revised versions of these articles were published in two volumes: *Venice Observed* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1956) and *The Stones of Florence* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1959).
53. Lo Proto to Maschler, 18 February 1961, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1. Lo Proto submitted the translation of the first twenty-five pages of *Una vita violenta*'s second chapter.

54. Angus Davidson (1898–1980) and James Cleugh (1924–1968) are listed in Robin Healey's *Italian Literature since 1900 in English Translation* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2019) as amongst the ten most prolific translators from Italian. Davidson translated Alberto Moravia's novels, receiving the 1964 Florio Prize for his translation of *More Roman Tales*. His translation of Mario Praz's *On Neoclassicism* was also awarded the Florio Prize in 1970. James Cleugh was a translator from Italian, French, and German. The only entry regarding Diana Barran in Healey's annotated bibliography concerns her translation of Umberto Simonetta's 1961 *Lo sbarbato*, published as *The Shrimp* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962).
55. Cleugh to Maschler, 16 August 1961, and Cleugh to Rina Slater (Maschler's Personal Assistant), 30 January 1962, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
56. Barran to Maschler, 2 November 1961, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
57. According to the Jonathan Cape reader, DG, 'from the crude Americanisms the scene might be Brooklyn rather than Rome'. DG to Maschler, 23 April 1961, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
58. Robert-Alain de Beaugrande and Wolfgang Ulrich Dressler, *Textual Linguistics* (London: Longman 1980), pp. 20–31.
59. Lo Proto to Maschler, 4 April 1961, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
60. Frank Norman, *Stand on Me: A History of Soho* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1960).
61. Roman Jakobson, 'On the Linguistic Aspects of Translation', in *On Translation*, ed. by Reuben Brower (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 232–39 (p. 233).
62. J.C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 93.
63. John Thompson, *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p. 100.
64. Clayton Childress, 'Evolutions in Literary Field: The Co-Constitutive Forces of Institutions, Cognitions, and Networks', *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 36.3 (2011), 115–35 (p. 126).
65. John Patrick Brasier-Creagh (1930–2012) published *Row of Pharoes* with Heinemann in 1962. His first book-length translation from Italian was Gianni Rodari's *Telephone Tales* (London: Harrap, 1965). He won the John Florio Prize three times. For a profile see Lucia Re, 'Translator Patrick Creagh and the Sound of Italy', *California Italian Studies*, 4.1 (2013) <<https://doi.org/10.5070/C341021262>>.
66. Maschler to Brasier-Creagh, 12 April 1962, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
67. Brasier-Creagh to Maschler, letter without date, presumably late February 1964, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
68. Brasier-Creagh to Maschler, letter without a date, presumably early March 1964, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1. In this period, Pasolini was working on the AV synchronisation of *Comizi d'amore*. A letter dated December 1963 addressed to Francesco Leonetti adds to the context: 'ho qui da qualche giorno la traduzione inglese della *Vita violenta*: ma che me ne faccio. L'inglese lo so troppo male (da quel che so mi pare un po' piatta). Non ho tempo di cercare referti competenti [...]. Non so che fare. Fatela leggere voi a qualche componente', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Lettere 1955–1975*, ed. by Nico Naldini (Turin: Einaudi, 1988), p. 528. Naldini erroneously attributed the translation to William Weaver.
69. In a letter dated 17 April 1962 (UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1), Brasier-Creagh had clearly stated his translation approach, consisting of short paraphrases for specific and recurrent dialectal nouns or words. With regard to the use of dialect, he wrote: 'I toyed with the idea of doing the whole thing in Cockney, but it was soon obvious that translating into a corresponding English-speaking dialect would create a second atmosphere that could only conflict with the very Roman setting. [...] Of the book in general, I think it should succeed there. It could be sensational.'
70. Rosemary Edmund's translation of *War and Peace* was published by Penguin in 1957. In the same letter, Brasier-Creagh also noted that the subtitles of *Accattone* (1961) followed Edmund's strategy with mixed results. *Accattone* was nominated for a 1963 BAFTA award and first subtitled in English for this occasion.
71. Maschler to Paola Dalai, 16 June 1964, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
72. Dalai to Maschler, 22 June 1964, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.

73. Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Nuove questioni linguistiche', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, I, 1245–70 (p. 1247).
74. *Ibid.*, p. 1250.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 1254.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 1257. On Pasolini's notions of standard Italian and Italiano dell'uso medio, see Paolo D'Achille, *L'Italiano per Pasolini, Pasolini per l'Italiano* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2019).
77. Ivy Marion Rawson (née Enthoven, 1920–1968) was an anti-Fascist activist and translator. Amongst her works are the translations of Emilio Lussu's main books (*Enter Mussolini*, London: Methuen, 1936; and *Sardinian Brigade*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1939) and Ottiero Ottieri's *Donnarumma all'assalto* (*Men at the Gate*, London: Gollancz, 1962).
78. Wieniewska to Maschler, 13 November 1964, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.
79. Weaver translated Carlo Emilio Gadda, 'The Fire in Via Keplero', *Art and Literature*, 1 (1964), 19–30; and Edoardo Sanguineti, 'From *Capriccio italiano*', *Art and Literature*, 2 (1964), 88–97 (chapters L–LVIII).
80. Toury, pp. 268–75.
81. Ria Vanderauwera, *Dutch Novels into English: The Transformations of a Minority Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1985), pp. 93, 76 and 72.
82. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Vita attraverso le lettere*, ed. by Nico Naldini (Turin: Einaudi, 1994), p. 185.
83. Carlo Emilio Gadda, *That Awful Mess in Via Merulana: A Novel*, trans. by William Weaver (New York: George Braziller, 1965).
84. William Weaver, 'Translator's Note', *Art and Literature*, 1 (1964), 29–30 (p. 30). 'L'incendio di Via Keplero' was first published in the Milanese journal *Il tesoretto* in 1940. The story was then included in the 1953 collection *Novelle del ducato in fiamme* and then again in *Accoppiamenti giudiziosi* (Milan: Garzanti, 1963).
85. Weaver to Maschler, 9 October 1966, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 2.
86. Weaver to Maschler, 20 May 1967, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 2.
87. Andrew Chesterman, *Memes of Translation: The Spread of Ideas in Translation Theory* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1997), p. 64.
88. Weaver to Maschler, 31 March 1967, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 2.
89. James R. Giles, *Understanding Hubert Selby, Jr.* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997).
90. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Le belle bandiere: Dialoghi 1960–1965*, ed. by Gian Carlo Ferretti (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1996), p. 56.
91. Farrell's first series of novels about life among the Irish Catholic population of Chicago's South Side was the Studs Lonigan trilogy: *Young Lonigan* (1932), *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan* (1934), and *Judgment Day* (1935). Another of his series was the Danny O'Neill pentalogy: *A World I Never Made* (1936), *No Star Is Lost* (1938), *Father and Son* (1940), *My Days of Anger* (1943), and *The Face of Time* (1953).
92. Wallace to Maschler, 13 March 1967, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 2.
93. Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 121.
94. Anthony Glavin, 'Slum Life, Italian Style', *The Irish Times*, 10 February 1968.
95. Maschler to Seaver, 13 November 1968, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 2.
96. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *The Ragazzi*, trans. by Emile Capouya (New York: Grove Press, 1968).
97. Johan Heilbron, 'Towards a Sociology of Translation: Book Translations as a Cultural World-System', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2.4 (1999), 429–44.
98. Keith Harvey, "'Events" and "Horizons": Reading Ideology in the "Bindings" of Translations', in *Apropos of Ideology: Translation Studies on Ideology, Ideologies in Translation Studies*, ed. by María Calzada Pérez (Manchester: St Jerome, 2003), pp. 43–69.
99. Sanaa Benmessaoud and Hélène Buzelin, 'Publishing Houses and Translation Projects', in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Culture*, ed. by Sue-Ann Harding and Ovidi Carbonell Cortés (London: Taylor and Francis, 2018), pp. 154–76 (p. 159).
100. The expression is used by Pantheon's Kyrill Shabert in a letter to Maschler, 11 July 1960, UoR, JC 100/3, folder 1.

101. Philip Lewis, 'The Measures of Translation Effects', in *Difference in Translation*, ed. by Joseph Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 31–62 (p. 56).
102. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. 18.
103. Lawrence Venuti, 'The Art of Literary Translation: An Interview with William Weaver', *Denver Quarterly*, 17 (1982), 16–26 (p. 20).
104. Contini. See also John P. Welle, 'Pasolini traduttore: Translation, Tradition and Rewriting', in *Pasolini Old and New*, ed. by Zygmunt Barański (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), pp. 91–130 (p. 98).
105. Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'Sacer', in Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Scritti corsari* (Milan: Garzanti, 1990), pp. 105–09 (p. 107).
106. Meir Sternberg, 'Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis', *Poetics Today*, 2.4 (1981), 221–39. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Strikes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, [1989] 2002), p. 137.
107. Willard Spiegelman, 'William Weaver: The Art of Translation III', *The Paris Review*, 161 (2002), 45–75 (p. 63).

## Acknowledgements

This research was financially supported by the University of Reading's Research Endowment Trust Fund scheme 'Open Fund' for the project *Mapping the Translation of European Fiction in the Records of British Publishing and Printing* (2019–2022), and it has benefited from the generous assistance and solicitous advice of the personnel of the Special Collections at the University of Reading. My gratitude goes to the Penguin Random House Library and Archive, Penguin Random House's Permissions departments and its Jonathan Cape division, to Garzanti Editore, and to Graziella Chiarocci for allowing me access to the relevant files of the Jonathan Cape archive and permission to quote from the business correspondence therein preserved. I also thank Lynne Lawner, Thomas Wallace, and the estates of William Weaver, James Cleugh, and Patrick Brasier-Creagh both for their support and for allowing me to quote from the correspondence in the Jonathan Cape archive. Finally I acknowledge the advice received from Sara Sullam, Gigliola Sulis, Federico Faloppa, Sophie Heywood, and Charles Leavitt during the writing stages of this work.

## ORCID

Daniela La Penna  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4197-0041>