Michele K. Troy

Star-Crossed Partners
How the Albatross Press and Mondadori Reimagined the Market for Translations in 1930s Europe

Where historical actors and institutions reach across borders, we find translation everywhere. The story of the Albatross Press's partnership with Italian publishing great, Mondadori, is no exception. On the surface, Albatross had nothing to do with translation. It sold paperbacks in English, both middlebrow fiction and works by edgier modernist authors such as D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and Ernest Hemingway, to eager continental readers across the 1930s. Yet Albatross was also a boundary-crosser: a multinational firm funded by British-Jewish interests, which, astoundingly, printed and sold its Anglophone books from the heart of Nazi Germany, with support by the Scottish firm, Collins, and none other than Mondadori. As the threat of fascism spiked, Albatross wooed Mondadori into a partnership replete with tensions and triumphs. Little known, however, is that the firms' two directors had ambitions, not just to expand the continental market for English-language books, but also to invade the market for translations in 1930s Europe.
Keywords*: Albatross, Mondadori, Translation, Literary agents, Fascism*.

Dove individui e istituzioni valicano confini, la traduzione è ovunque. La vicenda della partnership tra la Albatross Press e il più grande editore italiano, Mondadori, non fa eccezione. Apparentemente la Albatross non aveva nulla a che vedere con la traduzione: negli anni Trenta, vendeva sul mercato europeo edizioni economiche in lingua inglese di narrativa middlebrow *così come di autori di punta del modernismo, come D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Ernest Hemingway. Eppure, la Albatross varcava anche confini: era un'impresa multinazionale, finanziata da interessi ebraico-britannici, che, paradossalmente, stampava e vendeva libri in inglese dal cuore della Germania nazista con il sostegno della scozzese Collins e di Mondadori. Sotto la crescente minaccia del fascismo, Albatross convinse Mondadori a entrare in una partnership mai esente da tensioni ma anche foriera di grandi successi. Meno nota, tuttavia, è l'ambizione di entrambi i soci, che non solo miravano all'espansione del mercato europeo per libri in lingua inglese, ma anche alla conquista del mercato delle traduzioni negli anni Trenta.*
Parole chiave*: Albatross, Mondadori, traduzioni, agenti letterari, fascismo*.

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Where historical actors and institutions reach across borders, we find translation everywhere. The story of the Albatross Press and its partnership with the Italian publishing house Mondadori in the 1930s and 1940s is no exception. And one has to look no further than their book covers to spy the evidence. Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* appeared as Volume 7 of the ALBATROSS MODERN CONTINENTAL LIBRARY, a strikingly colorful series of English-language paperbacks that hit the continental market in March 1932. *Orlando*, similarly, was featured in the first year of Mondadori's MEDUSA series, launched just one year later, in 1933. The visual overlap is striking. Both covers, while differently saturated with color – the white center of the MEDUSA covers marking a key design shift – were brought into being by master typographer Hans "Giovanni" Mardersteig, in dimensions that approximated the Golden Mean, with graphics pleasing to the eye: rectangles, one inside the other, tracing the periphery of the volume, with the author and title in block letters, and the icon of the series – a bird in flight, a Medusa head – positioned in the innermost quadrant.[1] Literary siblings, to be sure.

In fact, the ties between these series and their progenitors run far deeper than they might appear. The kinship between covers points to a little-researched partnership between Albatross director, John Holroyd-Reece, and Arnoldo Mondadori. The most direct way to define their connection is this: without Mondadori, who printed the first eighteen titles of the MODERN CONTINENTAL LIBRARY, there would have been no "Milano" in the "Hamburg-Paris-Milano" list of locations parading across the bottom of *To the Lighthouse*. Yet one could equally as well say that without Holroyd-Reece, there might have been no MEDUSA, or at least not the MEDUSA which came to be, namely that which secured Mondadori's reputation as a publisher of translations of books by the most sought-after authors of the international modern.

Theirs is a tale of two publishers: both innovative thinkers and swashbuckling types, ready to use their connections and to seize on new trends in publishing, both wanting to make a name, to make a

[1] Medusa head by Bruno Angoletta, illustrator and cartoonist.

buck (more Mondadori than Holroyd-Reece, it must be said), to tease out ways to publish literature that, in the political climate of the early Thirties, might not otherwise have had a market. Yet theirs is also a tale of networks, the transnational networks through which literary modernism travelled across national borders. Both directors reached across those borders, developing the publishing channels that had sprung up since the First World War, after the influx of British and American soldiers provoked curiosity on the continent about Anglo-American culture, from jazz to film to Coca-Cola, detective fiction and other literature in translation, and the English language itself. Their partnership, born in 1930-1931, in the midst of a worldwide economic crisis caused by the ripple effects of the American stock market crash, and against the backdrop of fascism in Italy, and its precipitous rise in Germany, ended up replete with tensions and triumphs: broken promises, recriminations, yet pay-offs, too.

Perhaps their biggest success lay in their joint effort to use the networks at their disposal to create publishing loopholes that allowed contemporary, international literature to have a voice even under fascism's yoke. Albatross, funded by British-Jewish interests, nestled its main office into Hamburg in 1931, a provocative time to sell modern English-language titles from Nazi Germany across the continent, which the firm did with its MODERN CONTINENTAL LIBRARY until 1939, and even into the war. After some wooing by Holroyd-Reece in 1930-1931, Arnoldo Mondadori not only printed Albatross's first 18 titles, but substantially financed the venture, and thereafter translated many of Albatross's biggest authors into Italian, catapulting his own firm to the top of the Italian sales charts in the process (Troy 2017, 31, 48-49).

Albatross's brightly hued paperbacks in English – red, blue, kelly green, acid yellow, orange, fuchsia, one color per genre – remain the most visible legacy of the Albatross-Mondadori partnership. Yet at the heart of Albatross's philosophy and Holroyd-Reece's partnership with Mondadori was another impulse entirely: the possibility and desirability of translation. Brilliant directors, both, they understood that between them, they could work national borders in more than one direction. If one had rights to a title in English, why not, while one

had the author and the agent in the room, seek translation rights? And why not extend this idea by translating from continental languages into English, as well? Much as two horses pull exponentially more weight together than each one alone, Holroyd-Reece and Mondadori teamed up not just to produce modern Anglo-American authors for the continent, but to upend the entire model for translations in Europe.

Origins: The Albatross-Mondadori Partnership

Albatross was, from its inception, a boundary-crosser, much like modernism itself – a multinational cosmopolitan publisher when nationalism was on the rise. Throughout the Thirties, it won rights to print and sell nearly 500 titles in English across continental Europe, and did so in style, landing the literary luminaries of the day: Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, Katherine Mansfield, and Sinclair Lewis, to name a few. Its leaders sought to rival the distinguished German publisher, Bernhard Tauchnitz, which had created the continental market for English-language paperbacks in 1841 and had controlled it from Leipzig for the nine decades since. In 1931, for a British-Jewish funded enterprise to try to seize back this market from a cornerstone of German publishing spoke political volumes. Little more than a year before Hitler's rise to power, Albatross chose Hamburg as its operational base, established its editorial office in Paris, and secured partnerships with William Collins in Edinburgh and Mondadori in Milan. By 1934, with the help of clever branding and robust international connections – including the loyalties of the biggest literary agents in London – Albatross broke the nearly ninety-year monopoly of the Tauchnitz COLLECTION OF BRITISH AND AMERICAN AUTHORS (Pressler 1985, McCleery, 2006, Troy 2017). As Holroyd-Reece crowed, Albatross had "brought the hundred-year-old rival, founded by Baron Bernhard Tauchnitz, under British control" ("Modern Baron Tauchnitz").

One might wonder why Mondadori would get involved with this English-language firm at all. Two clues can be found in Albatross's business proposal. One is Albatross's aggressive plan to increase sales

beyond Tauchnitz's market of Anglo-American tourists to reach European readers who did not have English as their mother tongue, and specifically to increase sales in Italy. At the time Italy was worth only 8% of the continental market, in comparison with Germany, the largest sector at 35%, and France, in second place at 20%. "It is desirable to have somebody with close contact with Hachette, the French trade and the corresponding Italian trade – possessed in an unusual degree by J.H.R.," notes the proposal, endorsing Holroyd-Reece as director, "because…a higher percentage of books of this kind [in English] could be sold, notably in France and in Italy."[2] The still more important clue, however, is the strategic idea that Albatross use translations to outpace its German rival. "After the initial start [in English-language books] is made," explained the proposal, "the Series will be extended to include translations into English from the French, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, etc. – which Tauchnitz has never done" ("The Modern Continental Library", 1-3). The vision is already embedded here, before the first Albatross titles in English began streaming into particular national markets, to imagine their transit in the opposite direction: from the languages of Europe back into English. In this simple sentence lies the seed of the idea that would bind Mondadori to Holroyd-Reece, for richer or for poorer, for better or for worse.

Mondadori, it must be said, got into the business of translations on his own. He published his first two translations in 1920, with one title each following in 1923 and 1924, preceding a leap to 5 in 1925,

[2] European sales figures for Tauchnitz: Germany, 35%; France, 20%; Switzerland, 12%; Austria, 10%; Italy, 8%; Czechoslovakia, 4%; Holland 3%; Egypt and other countries, 8% ("Modern Continental Library", Annexe I). To get to a new body of readers, the Albatross leaders sought to sway the booksellers who advised these readers, and this required translation; as Holroyd-Reece later articulated (likely overstating the case) "98% of the Continental booksellers to whom we sell Albatross and Tauchnitz books cannot read English" (Holroyd-Reece, 14 September 1937). To facilitate sales, each volume contained on the inside front cover summaries of the novel in question, in English, French, and German. Each volume was dressed in its own saturated hue to make it easier for readers and booksellers not yet fluent in English to identify their preferred genre. And the inner back cover included explanations of the color code in English, German, French, and Italian.

11 in 1926, 6 in 1927, 10 in 1928, and 11 in 1929 (Rundle 2010, 225). In September 1929, he launched his crime series, I LIBRI GIALLI, with four titles, to astonishing results: 50,000 copies sold the first month (ivi, 78). Mondadori scholar, Christopher Rundle, marks this moment as the beginning of a "translation boom," which spurred Italian publishers to produce mass-market translations, landing cheap rights to foreign books that were easy reads and, therefore, hot sellers: crime fiction, pulp novels, romance (ivi, 41). Fascinating in Mondadori's case is less his auspicious break into the world of translations, which other Italian publishers imitated, but his conspicuous escalation of translations in the Thirties. The spike is evident: 19 titles in 1930, 52 in 1931, 55 in 1932, and suddenly, 98 in 1933, to the point where, from 1935-1939, translations hovered around 50% of Mondadori's production (ivi, 225). Or, to pull back to the bird's eye view, on average, translations constituted 10.5% of his production in the 1920s, and 41.1% overall in the 1930s (ivi, 224). 1933 stands out as a watershed year, the year that he launched MEDUSA with 26 titles, translated from English, French, and German into Italian.

That Mondadori so radically ratcheted up translations is all the more surprising because Thirties Italy was neither the time, nor the place, for this little translation revival, as he himself well knew. As Rundle documents, when the National Library of Florence, the copyright deposit library, compiled figures revealing that Italy produced more translations into its own language than any other European country, the government reared its head in disapproval. Fascist Italy, steeped in the "myth that [fascism] had brought with it a period of cultural and intellectual fertility and dominance," sought to expand the reach of Italian culture abroad, not to surrender in weakness, as it were, becoming a "receptive culture" for the culture of other foreign nations (ivi, 5, 45). From the late 1920s on, there was talk in intellectual and publishing circles of an "invasion of translations," and a "translation deficit" in the trade balance which publishers were urged to redress (ivi, 5, 36). A spirited debate ensued in the Federation of Publishers and a spate of trade and local newspapers. Mondadori remained strategic. In 1930, he played along with government expectations, claiming in one letter, "our House has translated such a small

number of books that it hasn't felt it worthwhile to even take part in the debate on this issue" (qtd. Rundle 2010, 78).[3] Yet within a year, he defended his firm's interest in translations into Italian, while also showcasing his efforts to make Italian literature more visible abroad. "The best outrider for an Italian book abroad is certainly the translation of that same book," he claimed in 1931, remarking that he expected to have garnered fifty translation contracts abroad by the end of the year – a claim he certainly made so confidently because he had Holroyd-Reece as his liaison abroad (qtd. Rundle 2010, 86).[4] As Rundle concludes, Mondadori "sought to defend his profitable business in translations by periodically announcing to the Ministry a new contract with a foreign publishing house for the rights to an Italian work in translation, thereby covering his back should anyone accuse him of unpatriotic practices" (ivi 59).

This debate set the stage for the Albatross-Mondadori partnership. Enter Holroyd-Reece, in 1929, with exactly the kind of proposal that would put Mondadori in good stead with government officials who might look askance at his copious translations into Italian: an autobiography by Italian war hero Gabriele D'Annunzio, which Holroyd-Reece proposed to publish (Decleva 1993, 186-187). Holroyd-Reece was well-qualified and well-connected. He had worked with the Medici Press in London from 1919 to 1922, whose publications disseminated Italian literature and culture (Wolff 1930-1931). And broadly construed, Holroyd-Reece put the "Continental" into the Modern Continental Library. He was, as his Tauchnitz competitors deemed him, a "cosmopolitan in the truest sense of the word," someone who passed easily across national and cultural boundaries (Otto 1931).[5]

[3] The full quote in Italian is: "Quanto alla pubblicazione di traduzioni di libri stranieri, la nostra Casa ha tradotto talmente pochi libri che non ha neanche creduto opportuno di partecipare alle polemiche che si sono svolte su questo argomento" (Mondadori 1930).

[4] The full quote in Italian is: "È certo che il miglior battistrada del libro italiano all'estero è la traduzione del libro stesso" (Mondadori 1931).

[5] Holroyd-Reece passed on a saying to his daughter, Fiona, shortly after the Second World War when she was ten: "When in the mosque, take your shoes off." At the time, he wanted his French-born daughter to take Anglican religious

Holroyd-Reece encouraged the foreign to take root in new soil. He immersed himself in the language of others, speaking fluent German, English, and French – and then, after meeting Mondadori, assiduously ramping up his Italian with the help of a private teacher – which allowed him to maneuver deftly through many national markets. This attitude made him a natural, in spirit, as a continental publisher who built his reputation on pushing books from diverse national markets onto an international stage. In the mid-1920s, Holroyd-Reece partnered with Mardersteig and German publisher Kurt Wolff and his Pantheon Casa Editrice in Florence to produce the PANTHEON SERIES, conceived of as a series of two hundred volumes tracking the development of European culture. Each volume was to be vetted by a committee, written by a connoisseur, and translated into three to five languages. From the rarified sphere of his Pegasus Press in Paris, he sold to an international elite these exquisitely crafted art books, printed on thick paper, with hundreds of photographic plates, bound in half-leather. A translator, himself, Holroyd-Reece had won accolades for rendering an eclectic array of titles into English, among them ground-breaking works by German Jewish art scholar Julius Meier-Graefe, whose biographies of van Gogh, Degas, and Cézanne positioned these artists at the vanguard of early twentieth-century movements (Troy 2017, 22-23).

As Mondadori was soon to find out, however, Holroyd-Reece also had a penchant for exaggeration. To one reviewer, for example, he claimed of his translation of Van Gogh's biography that he "committed the free-styled book to memory, made some notes, and wrote his translation with the book closed" (Van Gelder 1933, 11). This anecdote captures his manner of doing business: to so internalize another's perspective that he could translate the person's values, as it were, "with the book closed," to sway his target to do what he wanted. Literary agent, Graham Watson called him "one of the most engaging talkers I have ever listened to" (Watson 1977, 2559) and Holroyd-Reece's

lessons, to prepare for a British boarding school. Though it was not her tradition, he said to her, "You will learn something that is valid" (qtd. Troy 2017, 22).

daughter used the French word, "embobiner" to describe his way with people: the act of winding the thread around the spool, or as one would say in English, of winding someone around your finger (Brewster 2013). Mardersteig, who had met Holroyd-Reece in December 1926, described him as "Intelligentissimo, pieno di fantasia, molto colto, di grande sensibilità," and able to "incantare tutti e far sì che si entusiasmassero per I suoi progetti grandiosi" (qtd. Decleva 1993, 186).[6] He was, in truth, a mysterious figure with a secret past: contrary to the impression that his highly anglicized name delivered, he was born Johann Hermann Riess to a British mother and German Jewish father near Munich. After his father's death in 1909, his mother had sent him to England to study at Repton. He remained in England up through the First World War, his English flawless enough that he fought for the British, without his superior officer knowing that he was a German national; rumors circled in Tauchnitz publishing circles that he had been a spy for the British. All the more intriguing, when the French secret services got suspicious of him in the late 1930s, worried that he might be reporting to the Germans, Holroyd-Reece claimed that he was working for British intelligence (Troy 2017, 38-39, 178).

Even had he wanted to resist Holroyd-Reece's considerable conversational prowess, Mondadori would have had good reason – with the government looking to promote all things Italian – to be lured by

[6] Mardersteig's original quote taken from Mardersteig 1980, 33. One pertinent example of how Holroyd-Reece used his charms: shortly after his demobilization from the military in February 1919, he met the director of the Medici Press in London, which published translations of Italian classics into English. In her report "J.H.R. Sein Leben in der Wirklichkeit," which summarized the findings of a detective inquiry into Holroyd-Reece's circumstances, Helen Wolff quoted "a reliable source," noting that "the then Managing director [of the Medici Press] took a great fancy to Mr. Reece and engaged him at a salary of . . . £500.– per annum. This salary was out of all proportion to the value of Mr. Reece's services, but this Director seems to have had a penchant for paying salaries to employees to whom he took a fancy, irrespective of their real merits." In March 1922, Holroyd-Reece left this position, but maintained his connections to the Italian trade.

a D'Annunzio autobiography. Holroyd-Reece then drew Mondadori in as an investor for Pantheon, which served as the stepping stone to Albatross. The short version of the story is this: Wolff was on the verge of insolvency; high-end art books were the last items in demand in the economic depression plaguing Europe. Holroyd-Reece, already the managing director, purchased Pantheon, orchestrating a reorganization to render it once more financially viable. Yet in June 1930, Pantheon was forced to halve its capital. Holroyd-Reece requested a sudden meeting with Mondadori and Mardersteig, hinting at a proposal: "Lei comprenderà di que io non mi permetterei questa proposta senza un forte motive che la mia conoscenza dell'italiano non permiettre di esplicare" (Holroyd-Reece, n.d.).[7] On 1 September, Holroyd-Reece and Mondadori signed an agreement confirming that "AM spera di partecipare quale azionista nella Casa Editrice Pantheon dopo la riorganizzione di questa," and that "Resta pure inteso che AM è d'accordo che a richiesta della Pantheon tutte le tratte potranno essere prolungate oltre il termine previsto dagli accordi precedenti, sempreché il fido totale non sia superiore a Lire 300.000" ("Memo: Incontro AM-JHR").

By August 1931, Holroyd-Reece had convinced Mondadori to become part of another reshuffling, claiming that the surest way to get back the monies he had invested in Pantheon was to invest in Albatross. "I also appreciate very much the patience with which you followed my hopeless Italian," wrote Holroyd-Reece:

> and what I appreciated perhaps most was the large manner and gentlemanly spirit in which you have dealt and accepted the proposals concerning the Pantheon and the Albatross, that I placed before you. Though neither proposal involves a very great proportion of the large turnover you do, they are nevertheless important from your point of view and naturally, most important from mine. I should like you to know that I enter upon this new

[7] This letter is likely from summer 1930 because Holroyd-Reece references that he is just starting to learn Italian and that his teacher has assured him that he will speak much more fluently in the fall. Any grammatical or spelling mistakes in all communications in Italian by Holroyd-Reece in this article reflect his existing level of Italian.

> and close association between us, with a feeling of gratitude and the hope and sincere belief that our association will be increasingly close, successful, and mutually profitable.
> You may rely on my loyal cooperation in the first place to use every endeavor to secure for you, in case, the money involved in the Pantheon, and to bring you profits in case, and I venture to think that I will succeed in adding to your great reputation by making your name and that of your house, even better known, at any rate outside of Italy (Holroyd-Reece, 28 August 1931).

Holroyd-Reece's gracious assurances aside, within weeks, Mondadori withdrew his backing for Pegasus, Pantheon, and Albatross.[8] Holroyd-Reece knew that he stood to lose everything. "Hans, my dear…," he admitted to Mardersteig in late September 1931, "Taking all the cash at the various bank accounts together… we have not got one thousand francs. In order to live until today – the business and ourselves – I have had to make private debts… I have no money to pay the salaries at the end of the month unless Arnoldo Mondadori, who said that he would advance 50,000 Lira, will send telegraphically the 20,000 Lira I have asked for." Without Mondadori's support, Pantheon and Pegasus would be liquidated, along with Albatross, which seemed to sting the most. "Now if A.M. leaves us in the lurch," wrote Holroyd-Reece, "it will also be impossible for me to go on with the Albatross for which everything is going so splendidly (the contracts of most of the best authors are already signed now)." For Mondadori, too, however, the consequences were extremely harsh: that he would be contractually responsible to pay, in cash, 400.000 lira of bills – roughly £5000 – almost immediately, for which he would receive little but printers' proofs. Holroyd-Reece laid out the dire reality:

> a) If AM does not keep his promise he will lose without hope of recovery all that we owe him now.

[8] The correspondence between the publishers offers no indication why Mondadori pulled out. A strong possibility is that Mondadori had caught wind of the fragility of Holroyd-Reece's ostensible publishing empire. In summer 1930, Kurt Wolff had hired a detective to get to the bottom of Holroyd-Reece's finances. That Wolff would have shared information with Mardersteig, his former business partner, who shared it with Mondadori, stands to logic.

b) If AM does keep his promise and business is very bad – he will at the end of the two years certainly be better off than he is now and he will have the stock as well. Also, he will have the valuable asset of the Albatross, and if business returns to anything like normal he will be entirely repaid. In the mean time [sic] he has to run a certain risk – or lose heavily himself at once and smash me (Holroyd-Reece, 27 September 1931).[9]

In short, from D'Annunzio to Pantheon to Albatross, Holroyd-Reece's best leverage over Mondadori was that he was in for a penny, in for a pound, and could not afford to say no.

And thus, Holroyd-Reece convinced Mondadori to stay his course. To sweeten the deal, he proposed that Mondadori serve as President of the Board, presumably to reassure him that he would henceforth be well-poised to defend his own financial interests. More importantly, he granted Mondadori the exclusive sales and printing contracts, a double victory: both a lucrative proposition if Albatross titles sold well, since the firm was aggressively going after new sales, and a means to get in the good stead of the Italian government. Both the paper and printing were the work of Italian hands, as the colophon of the first eighteen volumes confirmed: "The paper is made by the Cartiera Italiana. The printing and the binding are the work of the Stabilimenti A. Mondadori, Verona, Italy." Beyond the immediate economic boon, there was another bonus for the Italian government: each Albatross title sold abroad would pad Italian trade balance to offset that "translation deficit" to which Mondadori's translations into Italian contributed and over which officials had been wringing their hands.

The halcyon days were few, it must be said. In the first week of March 1932, only five days into Albatross's first week of sales, Holroyd-Reece broke the news to Mondadori that German government regulations had forced Albatross to move printing from Italy to

[9] That Mardersteig acted as a bridge between Holroyd-Reece and Mondadori is evidenced by the fact that this letter to Mardersteig ended up in the file at the Mondadori archive – so that Mardersteig had passed it on to Mondadori. 400.000 lira was nearly £5,000, and as such, roughly half of the base capital for Albatross, at the time.

Germany (Bricaire 1932). At the end of 1931, the German government had imposed a 10% price reduction for books produced in Germany, hoping that lower prices would jump-start domestic sales and exports alike; increasing exports was Germany's best hope of offsetting its dwindling foreign currency reserves, paid out in the millions to cover its foreign debts. To cut costs by 10%, Albatross managing director, Max Christian Wegner, took bids from printers in Leipzig, the German book trade capital, which could ship books more quickly to their destinations in Albatross's largest market than Mondadori. Seeing the problem as uniquely financial, Mondadori fought back, offering to match the lowest bid. It is highly likely, however, that the decision was also politically motivated, especially if one considers Holroyd-Reece's possible connections to British information services, for which there is intriguing circumstantial evidence.[10] In this context, shifting printing to Germany – where fascism suddenly loomed far

[10] In 1937, the French Secret Service (Deuxième Bureau) started tracking Holroyd-Reece because of his myriad international contacts and business dealings, worried that he might be a German agent. However, when the French investigated this matter, a source they deemed to be "certain" told them the contrary: "Reece declares himself to be an agent for British intelligence." One could take Holroyd-Reece's assertion as exaggeration, yet evidence makes this theory at least plausible. The detective hired by Kurt Wolff similarly concluded that Holroyd-Reece's pattern of military service suggested that he had worked for British Intelligence in World War I. Holroyd-Reece's publishing work gave him perfect cover to travel across borders, and he had a knack of being in the right place at the right time, politically speaking; he took a rare trip to Germany on 11 January 1933, 20 days before Hitler was granted power; he fled Paris for London on 31 August 1939, the very eve of the German invasion of Poland; and he returned to France in the first year of the war to settle business matters, although the French file on his comings and goings had no record of his entering the country on those particular dates. It is also at least interesting that one of Holroyd-Reece's German publishing associates, who turned himself to the British in Paris in August 1944, dropped Holroyd-Reece's name and connections to try to get in good with the British, mentioning Holroyd-Reece's connection to Selfton Delmer, responsible for propaganda radio broadcasts to Germany, but also to Brendon Bracken, the British minister of information, whom he named a "personal friend" of Holroyd-Reece's. (Troy 2017, 177-178, 185-188, 279-284)

more threateningly in 1932 in 1931, after the general election in 1932 pushed the Nazi party into the lead – automatically gave Albatross a perch in what was on its way to becoming the biggest political hot zone in Europe. Holroyd-Reece evaded the issue altogether in March 1932, playing the "good cop" to Wegner's "bad cop," and acting as though he had no choice in the matter. "In view of the remarkable quality of the book production that your firm has given us and for other reasons well known to you," he wrote, "I should be particularly happy if it is possible for you to agree [on] a printing price with Mr. Wegner which will enable the Albatross to continue the printing of the books with your firm" (Holroyd-Reece, 30 March 1932). In the end, Wegner declined, leaving Mondadori, who had seen Albatross through the difficult fall of 1931, nursing ill-will. "Nonostante nostra accettazione prezzi offerti da ditte tedesche per stampa Albatross nonostante aver offerto che pagamenti venissero fatti nell'interno della Germania a società consociate Wegner ritiene impossibile accordo stop," he declared, ending with a cold note: "Giudico questa risposta come prova della mancanza di volontà di favorirci" (Arnoldo Mondadori, 28 May 1932).[11]

The Turn Towards Translations

If ever there was a time for Mondadori to leave this partnership, this was it. Yet he did not break ties with Holroyd-Reece, even though Albatross had scrapped the printing contract that was the mainstay of their partnership and of Mondadori's earning potential and the goodwill chip he could proffer the Italian government. Instead, Mondadori poured his efforts into a more auspicious potential that this partnership had always held: that Holroyd-Reece had offered to help him

[11] Holroyd-Reece also later vociferously fought to keep Albatross headquarters in Germany, though he himself was half-Jewish, and politically anti-Nazi. As long as Albatross volumes were produced in Germany, the firm could automatically reach the German market, which constituted just over one third of continental sales, thus keeping Anglo-American literature alive in Nazi Germany despite the regime's antipathy for the cosmopolitan literature that Albatross produced.

become the Italian publisher of choice for the international giants of modern literature – or as Holroyd-Reece had put it, "I will succeed in adding to your great reputation by making your name and that of your house, even better known, at any rate outside of Italy" (Holroyd-Reece, 28 August 1931). What Holroyd-Reece still offered Mondadori – despite all of the unfulfilled promises – was one promise on which he could deliver: the enormous prize of access to the biggest agents in London, J.B. Pinker and Curtis Brown, who funneled Albatross its biggest authors, enabling Mondadori to snap them up, one by one.

For Mondadori, it is as if a switch went off. Overnight, his office madly pursued translation contracts with famous Anglo-American authors. The results were sometimes humorous, as in the firm's pursuit of Sinclair Lewis – a hot ticket after winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1930, and a hot-headed personality, to boot. Top Mondadori editor Luigi Rusca tracked Lewis down during his Italian travels in November 1932, sending an optimistic telegram to William Bradley, Lewis's European agent: "Avons eu long amical entretien avec Sinclair Lewis qui approuva notre proposition publication toutes ses oeuvres…" (Mondadori, 29 November 1932). Rusca confirmed that Lewis had agreed to become part of Mondadori's new series – what was to become MEDUSA – a forum reserved for "des traductions des ouvrages des meilleurs écrivains étrangers contemporains (de André Maurois à Heinrich Mann, de Galsworthy à François Mauriac, un ensemble de 30 grands auteurs à peu près)…" According to Rusca, Lewis had granted Mondadori rights to both his published work, and his next two novels. As part of his hard sell, Rusca had shown Lewis a similar contract with John Galsworthy, a fellow Nobel-Prize-winner; where one Nobel-Prize winner could be at home, another could, too, he implied (Rusca, 28 November 1932).

Lewis's response to Bradley in early December described a completely different state of affairs. "Now, as to Mondadori," he began, "They are certainly hustlers…I'm beginning to wonder if they aren't a little too hustling. Why there should be all this hell of a hurry about a contract regarding two books of which not a word has been written, unless they are afraid someone will get in ahead of them with a better

offer, I can't quite see." Mondadori and Rusca had actually presented to Lewis a contract with Heath of London, on behalf of Harcourt, his American publisher, for all of his titles not yet translated into Italian – all except for *Dodsworth*, already published by Treves – and all of his future work, as well. "This I refused absolutely," Lewis remarked with irritation. "I don't believe in such contracts especially in the case of a writer like myself who is young enough that if he is lucky, he ought to be writing novels for another twenty years, during which time the firm may have failed, or changed its character several times over." Lewis admitted that "they were exceedingly cordial and enterprising and likable" and was "impressed by the energy of all members of the firm whom I met, especially Dr. Rusca the editor and Mondadori himself." Yet he would sign no contract under pressure, "and in this, I don't intend to let them hustle us, not even by the allegedly 'American' method of long-distance phoning" (Lewis 1932).[12]

This "hustle" was, in fact, as much driven by Holroyd-Reece as by Mondadori, though Bradley and Lewis could not see behind the scenes to discern Holroyd-Reece's hand in the mix. Their exchange illustrates how, nearly overnight, the partnership with Holroyd-Reece had swayed Mondadori's strategy. "Yes, the Mondadori people are indeed hustlers, or have become so, for, until now, I have never observed such symptoms of haste on their part," Bradley remarked, bemused at Mondadori's turn towards translations. "However, they are an excellent house – one of the very best in Italy. So far, having a large and distinguished group of Italian writers, they have declared themselves uninterested in the translations of foreign fiction, and their activity in this later field is extremely recent" (Bradley 1932).

That Mondadori should show sudden interest in foreign fiction, in general, and in Lewis, in particular, had much to do with how Holroyd-Reece wielded his connections to pass Albatross authors on to Mondadori. Harcourt, Lewis's American publisher, was not just any publisher; it was the American distributor for Pantheon. In one fell swoop, Harcourt had released all of Lewis's published titles for the MODERN CONTINENTAL LIBRARY, with *Mantrap* as Volume #3,

[12] Ellipses are Lewis's own.

setting the tone for the distinction of the series; other titles followed, roughly one per year, until the Albatross collected edition of ten titles in 1937. The lock-stock-and-barrel contract for all of an author's work, published or unpublished, bore the mark of Albatross, as did the strategy of sweeping in and presenting the contract as a near *fait accompli*.[13] As author Hans Henny Jahnn remarked in 1937, when Holroyd-Reece approached him to join in a German Albatross series, "They do not just want to acquire an individual work, but rather the entire body of work. They also want the personality here as a whole" (Jahnn 1994, 1079). Mondadori followed suit, using Holroyd-Reece's business model of locking down all rights outright, which made Lewis and his agent ill at ease. "It will make a nice lot," noted Bradley, "but, since the advance [sic] are to be paid on publication only, when will the last returns be in? At 18 months interval between books, if they keep to that schedule, I figure, roughly, that it will take between 10 and 15 years!" (Bradley 1932).

And that, for Holroyd-Reece, was exactly the point: to bind prominent authors to the Albatross cause, and in so doing, to create a monopoly, over years, in the continental market for both books in English and in translation. Albatross's strategy of cementing the publisher-author-agent triad had advantages for Mondadori, too. In November 1932 Rusca confirmed that Curtis Brown had been instrumental in reeling in authors for Medusa. "Si vous désirez des garanties sur la nouvelle collection," he noted to Lewis's agent, "veuillez en demander non seulement à M. Lewis, qui a admiré notre récente activité, mais aussi à l'Agence de Paris de la Curtis Brown, qui nous a vaillamment aide [sic] dans les pourparlers pour l'achat des droits d'auteurs anglais, français et allemands" (Rusca, 28 November 1932). The overlap between the two series is undeniable. Aldous Huxley's *The Gioconda Smile* was #2 in the Albatross series in 1932, and #5 in MEDUSA one year later; *Brave New World* appeared in Al-

[13] Similarly, Holroyd-Reece purchased continental rights in English for all unpublished D.H. Lawrence manuscripts, and Albatross published twenty Lawrence volumes between 1932 and 1939, including *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in its offshoot, the Odyssey Press.

batross in 1933 (#47) and MEDUSA (#18) later that same year. And there are multiple other echoes between the Albatross and Tauchnitz series – editorially controlled by Albatross after it took over Tauchnitz management in 1934 – and MEDUSA, all prominent authors of the day, including: Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, Pearl Buck, Charles Morgan, John Galsworthy, Margaret Kennedy, Richard Aldington, Margaret Kennedy, Rosamund Lehman, Somerset Maugham, and Vita Sackville-West. Not for nothing did the Curtis Brown Agency claim in its brochure on "Translation Sales" to exercise a "near monopoly for English-language authors seeking representation in continental Europe" ("Translation Sales"). So closely, indeed, did Curtis Brown and Albatross work together, that they shared office space in Paris, first at Albatross's charming office at Rue Boulard in the artsy 14th arrondissement near the Cimitière Montparnasse, and later at the more elegant quarters at 12 rue Chanoinesse on the Ile de la Cité.[14]

[14] Curtis Brown considered himself the "godfather" of Albatross because he had introduced Holroyd-Reece and Wegner, who'd both come to his office seeking to create a rival to Tauchnitz. So deeply was his office involved with Albatross that Margareta Scialtiel, who headed Brown's Parisian office, introduced Wegner and Holroyd-Reece to Sir Edmund Davis, Albatross's main investor apart from Mondadori, earning an Albatross directorship for her efforts. See Brown 1935, 209-210 and Pressler, A4. One sees in this anecdote and in the cases of Brown and of James B. Pinker, the two biggest London agents for Anglo-American authors in Europe, how they relied on local European agents to develop their business. For instance, files from the Stanford University Department of Special Collections document how Pinker relied on translator Herberth Herlitschka (who worked with Albatross during and after the war), to find German publishers for Pinker's authors, including Katherine Mansfield, Aldous Huxley, and Charles Morgan. Similarly, Berg Collection documents at the New York Public Library show that the Agenzia Letteraria Internazionale, which worked closely with Mondadori, corresponded with Pinker to seek rights for Huxley, Mansfield, and James Joyce, and to negotiate with Mondadori, in the latter case, when Joyce and Mondadori could not come to an agreement (Agenzia Letteraria Internazionale [1934]; on the role of the Agenzia Letteraria Internazionale and literary agents in the Italian context see Ferrando 2019).

What other Italian publishing house stood a chance of winning translation contracts for the literary greats of the day when the interests of Curtis Brown and Albatross and Mondadori were so intertwined? Through this *de facto* "near monopoly," the success of the Albatross-to-Mondadori exchange, whereby Holroyd-Reece parlayed a contract for an English-language edition into a translation contract, took on grander scope as the Thirties continued. In essence, Holroyd-Reece aspired to reposition Albatross as a talent scout, an agent's agent for translation. From the early Thirties, Albatross leaders had pursued German-speaking authors, including Joseph Roth and Stephan Zweig, for a "German Albatross" series translated from German to English.[15] Similarly, midway through 1937, Holroyd-Reece founded Les Editions Albatros, which he called "the French Albatross." These German and French series never materialized, apart from a flurry of activity to secure contracts. Yet the vision behind them – and Mondadori's key role within this monopoly scheme – is apparent in Holroyd-Reece's proud announcement of his new French Albatross venture to the French trade in September 1937:

> We are now going to have a series called the French Albatross, which will contain translations into French of the best English and American literature. We also plan early next year to start a German Albatross, and it should therefore be possible on frequent occasions to buy the Continental rights, the French rights and the German rights of an author. When this happens we can sell almost automatically for the author or agent the Italian translation rights, because Messrs. Mondadori, for their collection of translated books, want to buy – subject to seeing the volumes – everything that we publish in the Continental, the German and the French Albatross (Holroyd-Reece, 14 September 1937).

With this vision of one-stop shopping for authors, agents, and publishers – a radical innovation to which war put a halt – Holroyd-Reece sought to expand Albatross's reach across national borders and languages, even as these grew politically harder to cross.

[15] Zweig, living in exile, was sympathetic to the plan, and found much to admire in Albatross's proposal, but, among other obstacles, his work was already under contract in English translation (Buchinger 1998).

The vastness of this vision is all the more bewildering – or impressive, depending on one's point of view – given that Mondadori and Holroyd-Reece had to navigate censorship in regimes that inherently treated foreign literature as intruders to the national body. They managed to publish works not normally condoned by German and Italian authorities, because they knew how to maneuver through what translation scholar Guido Bonsaver terms the "so-called grey zone occupying the vast space between full opposition and full collaboration" (Bonsaver 2007, 3) – a zone rife with infighting and confusion, and thus, also, with loopholes. In Germany, Holroyd-Reece nestled Albatross into the largest loophole of all: the English language. Authorities saw the series as less accessible (read: less dangerous) to the broader reading public than translations. Albatross also won the benediction of the financial and literary authorities because its books were printed in Germany, but intended to be sold abroad, bringing in much-needed foreign currency to the Reich. In short, Holroyd-Reece made Albatross less culturally troublesome than it was economically useful. This meant that seemingly controversial works were sold in and from Nazi Germany, including Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (printed in 1933, 1935, and 1938) and a collected edition of Sinclair Lewis, printed in 1937, even after the German translation of his wildly anti-fascist tome, *It Can't Happen Here*, landed on Joseph Goebbel's black list. Albatross editors still nonetheless wielded what Germans called "the scissors in one's head" to excise troublesome passages from controversial texts – yet they also at times left other passages intact that challenged nationalist dictates (Troy 2017, 90-102). For Mondadori, similarly, "such self-censorship was common practice" (Fabre 2007, 42). He was also a master at the "consensual collaboration through which publishers and authors acquired credit with the regime, which could then be invested in requests for adjustments and exceptions" (Bonsaver 2007, 10). Partly because Mondadori declared his sympathies to the fascist regime early, more out of self-interest than political passion, and partly because Mussolini ultimately wanted Italian publishers to be successful, Mondadori ended up being able to publish even books whose "content was to some degree at loggerheads with the directives of the

regime" (Ivi, 43). One anti-militaristic book by Arnold Zweig offers an interesting case in point. Mondadori was allowed to print it in 1930 and 1933, but when the regime tightened restrictions around translations in 1938, authorities seized the book, only to then allow the book to be published again after a series of informal negotiations (Fabre 2007, 48-49).[16]

It remains striking, despite the threat of censorship and the consistent suspicion of translations, how much Holroyd-Reece and Mondadori succeeded in working across borders to one another's mutual benefit and political ends. The German Albatross series had the goal, for instance, of offering German authors who had been banned within German borders a means to circulate their work on the continent, if not in their own language, at least in English. The series ended up plagued with copyright conflicts – too many titles already under contract, as with Zweig – and likely also hesitation due to political pressure, that is, not wanting to jeopardize Albatross's head office and operations in Hamburg should Nazi officials seek recriminations for a German Albatross series that ran counter to Nazi policy (Buchinger 1998). Enter Mondadori, with a solution. Can it be an accident – keeping in mind Rusca's acknowledgment that Brown's agency had passed on German titles to Mondadori for Medusa – that the Italian series contained, in its first three years, a *Who's*

[16] Both Italy and Germany publicly downplayed the reality of censorship, which, in both regimes, "had many faces and … went through different phases" (Bonsaver 2007, 5). After the book burnings in Germany, competing censorship lists generated by competing authorities proliferated, until, in 1935 Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels created the *Index of Damaging and Undesirable Literature*, with 3,601 individual titles and 524 bans on the entire corpus of particular authors, all while propagating an enormous lie in public: that Germany did not need censorship to police the book trade, because it had weeded out the influence of all "unreliable" – that is, Jewish – publishers and booksellers (Barbian 2010, 81-83, 250-54, 317; Adam 2010, 33-36). In Italy, censorship was generally handled on a case by case basis until 26 March 1938, when the Minister of Culture imposed stricter regulations on the process for approvals of translations, largely with the intent of banishing foreign Jewish authors from circulation as the regime upped its own aggressions against Jews (Fabre 2007, 27-33).

Who of German authors whose names had appeared on the 1933 list of books that were recommended to be thrown on the flames in the book burning of May 1933?: Lion Feuchtwanger, Arnold Zweig, Heinrich Mann, Jakob Wassermann, Alfred Döblin, Joseph Roth, Leonhard Frank, and Franz Werfel.

Similarly, it seems highly likely that Holroyd-Reece played a role in Mondadori's efforts, in 1937-1938, to seek translations of Italian books in the U.S. and U.K. markets. Walter Toscanini, the son of the great conductor Arturo Toscanini advocated for Italian books in New York, where Holroyd-Reece was well-connected, while Rusca engaged Mardersteig to approach Albatross's partner, William Collins, in London, about the "nuova iniziativa della nostra Casa per la traduzione delle più notevoli opera di letteratura italiana moderna all'estero" (Toscanini 1938; Rusca, 17 June 1938). Further, Rusca confirmed with Lorenzo Montano, Mondadori's London contact, that he had enlisted Richard Aldington, an Albatross author and personal friend of Holroyd-Reece's, for the cause of Italian literature. "It would give me great pleasure to collaborate with Mr. Rusca in the attempt to publish modern Italian authors in England and in the United States," confirmed Aldington. "I have read the memoir you sent me, and gather that the idea is to publish Italian authors of merit, in works of non-political kind. I will have nothing to do with political propaganda of any sort. But if it is a question of making known the works of Italian literary artists, I shall only be too glad to give any help I can" (Rusca, 27 October 1938, quoting Richard Aldington).[17]

Even more concrete, and equally as fascinating, is the translation project which Holroyd-Reece and Mondadori tried and failed to launch in the first months of the war: a Mondadori-led project, which would have boosted the "translation trade balance" by translating Italian works into French and English. Italy having maintained its neutrality in the fall of 1939, Holroyd-Reece expressed his willingness to support Mondadori's brainchild:

[17] Many thanks to Andrea Palermitano for the Toscanini and Rusca references.

> Non vi sarà incognito che la linea politica seguita dall'Agosto in poi dal Governo Italiano, guidato con tanta saggezza dal vostro Duce, è stata seguita in questo paese con simpatia e rispetto crescenti. Nessun Inglese dubita che l'Italia avrà una funzione essenziale nella ricostruzione dell'ordine e della stabilità in Europa […]. Il momento mi sembra dunque assai indicato per studiare l'esecuzione del progetto che voi caldeggiate da tempo, d'un gruppo di libri italiani da tradursi in Inglese, sul genere della Collana d'autori italiani tradotti in francese che la Mondadori e l'Albatross hanno iniziato.
> Ho esaminato più volte la cosa con il vostro Ufficio di Londra [Montano?] in questi ultimi tempi, e la conclusione cui siamo venuti è che una replica esatta di quanto stiamo facendo in Francia non sarebbe consigliabile per l'Inghilterra. Il pubblico inglese ha poca simpatia per le collezioni ed in genere per tutto ciò che si presenta con apparenza troppo programmatica. La miglior probabilità di riuscita si avrebbe con un certo numero di Libri italiani scelti rigorosamente, ma senza uno schema preliminare eccessivamente rigido, e in veste individuale (Arnoldo Mondadori, 9 December 1939, quoting Holroyd-Reece).[18]

War dealt a death blow to these plans. For as soon as Italy sided with the Germans in June 1940, the Albatross-Mondadori partnership went dark. Throughout the war, however, Holroyd-Reece plotted the next steps. After the war, he revived Albatross for a new Europe, claiming "the support of the most eminent publishers in many of the countries on the Continent of Europe." Indeed, Albatross's promotional brochure of 1947 suggested that it had friends everywhere [Fig. 1]: an Albatross with more international ties than ever – a partnership with a publisher in each market – to liberate a continent held captive by nationalism. "Milan" figured once again here on the cover, with Mondadori winning back the printing contract that had been yanked out from under him so unexpectedly in 1932. As Harold Raymond, Aldous Huxley's publisher-turned-agent confirmed in June 1947: "I returned on Sunday night from a few weeks stay in Italy, part holiday and part business. While there I discovered that Albatross had re-commenced their activities and had issued thirty titles of well-known English novels, of which I enclose a list. The shops

[18] The location of Holroyd-Reece's original letter to Mondadori is unknown. Again, thanks to Andrea Palermitano for this reference.

in Milan, Verona and Venice were full of them. I gather from Mondadori, whose acquaintance I made and who is printing these books at his works in Verona, that 15,000 copies are printed of each, 1,500 of which are for the Italian market and the rest for other countries in Europe" (Raymond, 4 June 1947).

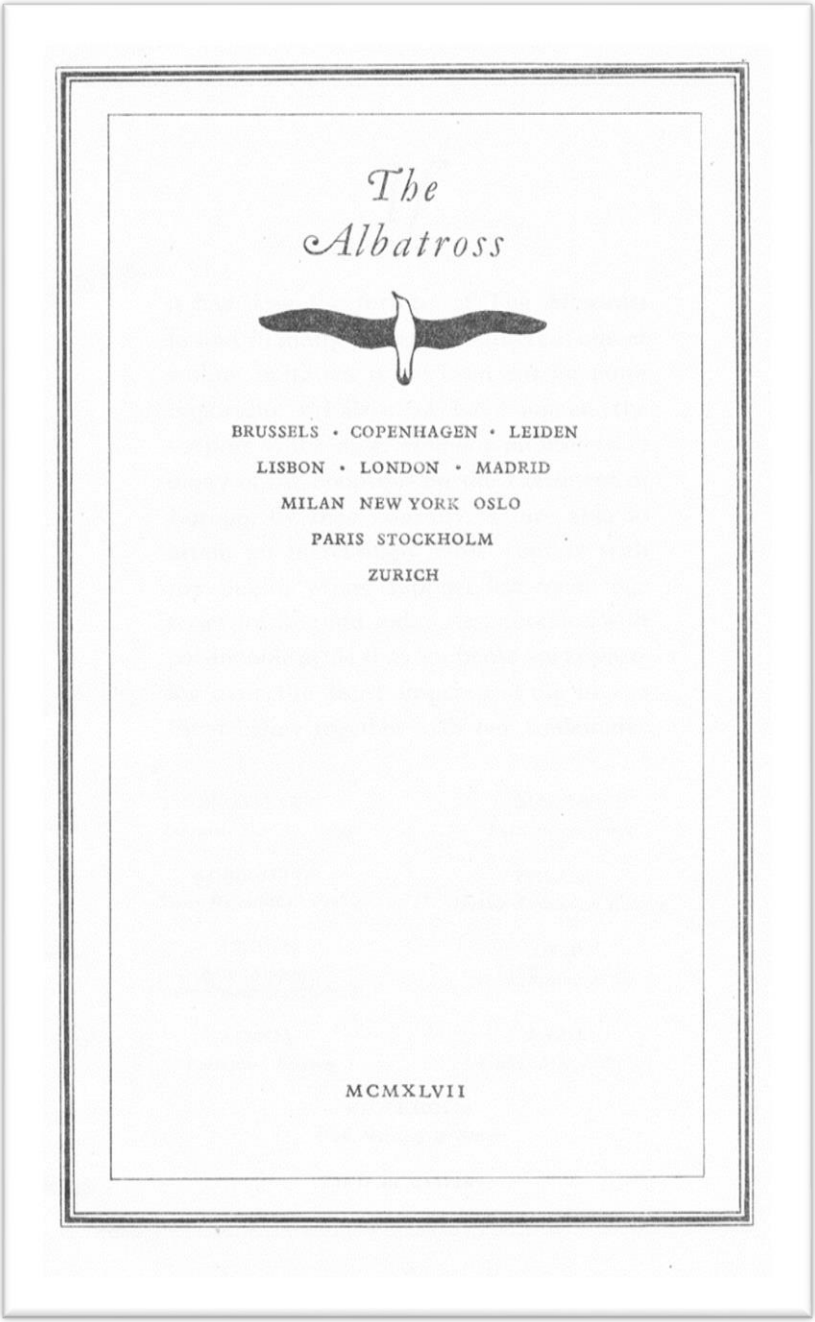

Figure 1: Albatross Promotional Brochure for 1947.

Holroyd-Reece also returned to his pursuit of a continental monopoly over the most esteemed authors in English and in translation. What he had presented as German and French and English Albatross series before the war, he rechristened as the ALBATROSS INTERNATIONAL SERIES, a curated selection of the top Albatross authors in English, also to be translated into German, French, Spanish, and Italian. As Albatross's Italian partner, Mondadori would also have stood to profit, yet this grand plan never took off. Albatross author Aldous Huxley offered one moral to the story in August 1945 when he turned down an all-encompassing contract, which would have given him an unprecedented 50% royalty had he granted the firm rights to his works in English and in translation in one fell swoop. "A scheme such as Reece's looks all right on paper, but the question is: can it work in existing European circumstances?. . . ." mused Huxley to his publisher-cum-agent, Raymond. "[M]essy conditions are precisely those in which one does not want to launch an ambitious, all-inclusive, cartel-like business scheme" (Huxley 1945). Raymond agreed. Yet as a publisher, himself, he also commented on the implications of such a monopoly-based scheme on continental publishing as a whole. "I must admit that I find Holroyd-Reece's project altogether too Germanic for my taste," he averred. "Though I don't dispute the influence of Albatross on the continent before the war or criticize their excellent choice of titles, I think that several years might elapse before any such organization could be created. Moreover, I can't help feeling uneasy at the thought of any one organization gaining the dominance which he envisages – the combined control both of English continental editions and of the translation rights in several countries" (Raymond, 3 July 1945).

Huxley and Raymond got it right. The new Albatross foundered, along with Holroyd-Reece and Mondadori's partnership, on a host of "messy conditions": lack of raw materials, lack of foreign currency, import restrictions, fights over copyright, and competition from American and British publishers who had taken the lessons of the paperback revolution to heart and were flooding the European market with cheap paperbacks of their own. Albatross's pre-war German ties also tainted the firm in the eyes of European readers all-too-eager to

cast off Nazi oppression. Holroyd-Reece, the "Lord High Romantick," and his powers of persuasion had finally come up against the realities of market change, in which no manner of restructuring could save Albatross from demise. After repeated and failed attempts to sell Albatross, Collins, the main post-war investor, dealt the firm its death blow in 1955. (Troy 2017, 292-293, 307-308, 318-321, McLeery 2006, 314-315)

Paperbacks for a Hopeful World

Book historian Sydney Shep traces the meanings that books take on as they travel from one global context to another, and writes eloquently about the "protean nature of the book," or, as she calls it, "the restless book." "Books as texts can be translated, repurposed, remediated, their intellectual content appropriated, adapted, and transformed over time and space," she notes. "Books as transactions chart complex and often fluid networks between authors and readers, producers and consumers" (Shep 2015, 53-55). If we read the Albatross MODERN CONTINENTAL LIBRARY and Mondadori's MEDUSA series as themselves transnational texts – "restless books" writ large – there is much to learn. In particular, they plunge us back into the publishing ecosystem of Thirties Europe to show us how, and through exactly which networks, modern Anglo-American books found their way into the continental mass market, or how authors banned in Germany landed in the hands of Italian readers – all despite conditions that strongly mitigated against their migration.

Together, Holroyd-Reece and Mondadori developed new channels for disseminating the literature of the international modern, despite censorship and fascism, and, through their plot summaries on the book flaps in French, German and English – or the color code for their series, also explained in Italian – slowly taught this continental audience to be more open to its innovations. In so doing, they transmuted the meaning of modernism, transforming it from a literary trope into a set of political ideals. Holroyd-Reece's boast that Albatross had wrested Anglo-American books from German control for British benefit, reminds us that as these books travelled across borders in Thirties Europe, where

books doubled as "nations speaking out loud" – whether in the original English or in Italian, translated from English, German, French – they took on a cultural-political resonance beyond themselves. In terms of how Holroyd-Reece justified Albatross production in British circles or Mondadori most of his books in Italian circles, books were "of" the nation, looking to make their own nation proud through the products they published. However, *de facto*, if one considers *Brave New World* circulating freely in English in Nazi Germany in 1938 or banned German authors from Roth to Werfel to Mann published in the MEDUSA series in the mid-1930s, print simultaneously breaks away from or past the idea of nation to enable the creation of some other community, more transnational than national. As translation historian Kate Sturge beautifully acknowledges, "Reading remained a private activity in a society which had refused the possibility of privacy; and in that private space foreign literature surely had at least the potential to move its readers beyond the narcissistic mirror of translation, to take on a momentum of its own and begin to offer a window on the outside world" (Sturge 2010, 80). Instead of belonging to a nation, whose parades and violence and intolerance they might or might not accept, individuals could choose to belong to a fellowship of readers, imagining other communities more hospitable to their own. Even the series of international locations – Hamburg, Paris, Milan – that stretched across the bottom of the first eighteen bright, Mondadori-printed, Albatross book covers served as an invitation to espouse a set of cosmopolitan ideals rather than one national identity.[19]

Some kind of success, that Mondadori brought banned German authors to Italian readers, or that the largest market for Albatross books was Nazi Germany. Keeping democratic ideals in circulation despite the authoritarian stance that would shut them down.

[19] Trish Loughran's critique, in her article "Books of the Nation," of the way that book history links print and nation stands behind my analysis in this paragraph. She decouples the strong link between print and nation, for instance, in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983), citing the work of multiple scholars whose work suggests that "print does not necessarily generate a sense of national identity in the materialist ways that someone like Anderson describes, if at all" (2015, 44).

From our vantage, Mondadori has obviously survived the historical bargain far better than Albatross. Still, the successes of the Albatross-Mondadori partnership at the time were many, enviable, and politically important. In effect, they changed the face of paperback publishing on the continent during the 1930s. Their business model for both the MODERN CONTINENTAL LIBRARY and MEDUSA was based on the same timely insight that had once won Holroyd-Reece multiple investors, Mondadori included, for the exorbitant art books of Pantheon across the late Twenties: that certain well-selected books could reach a multinational readership, and indeed, that European publishing as a whole was ready to push past its national boundaries towards a pan-European market. With the financial crisis, it made sense to turn to cheaper books. Holroyd-Reece and Mondadori pivoted to bring readers the beautiful paperbacks of Mardersteig's design, signaling to readers that quality had many forms, and did not require a high price tag.

As Holroyd-Reece saw it, this kind of idealism was both good business and good politics; selling the best books for the cheapest prices to the most people was the whole point, financially, culturally, and politically, in the Europe in which the MODERN CONTINENTAL LIBRARY and MEDUSA were born. In fact, he related with great pride to Chatto and Windus publisher, Harold Raymond, who acted as Aldous Huxley's agent after the war, how Albatross had been a champion for the good. "The fact moreover that we sold in many countries with the permission (however unwilling) of the local authorities books and authors which were in translation forbidden, strengthened our reputation – sometimes into what became almost a legend," recounted Holroyd-Reece. "We have on record 'blanket orders' for large quantities of unspecified titles, on the sole condition that any book by that particular author was forbidden in the particular market" (Holroyd-Reece, 30 April 1945). Even if one knocks such commentary down a notch or two, taking into account Holroyd-Reece's bountiful exaggerations, there is truth here, too: that both the MODERN CONTINENTAL LIBRARY and MEDUSA served as beacons for precisely many of the authors and ideas that fascism and national socialism wanted to keep in the dark. In this sense, all of those brightly bound books, so enticingly

packaged, did heavier lifting than their delightful rainbow array suggested. Who wouldn't have wanted to purchase them? And wasn't that the point? To buy one encouraged having another, until, perhaps, one had a whole shelf of colors, ideas and scenes and questions to keep thinking people thinking, despite the political pressure to just conform, lock-step. That Nazi Germany was Albatross's largest market, worth one third of total sales, and nearly one half after the Anschluss of Austria in March 1938, remains shocking.

If the twinned book designs of Albatross and MEDUSA stand as the best testaments to the audacity and genius of the Holroyd-Reece-Mondadori partnership, one sad image represents its failure after the war: crates of beautifully Italian-printed Albatross volumes designed for export languishing at the Italian border in 1947, because no country – not just Italy, any more – wanted to endanger its own trade balance by importing more than it exported, and certainly not for some impractical piles of foreign fiction, whatever insight or wisdom they might contain. The scene brings to mind the comment of the printer Stanley Morison, an early business associate of Holroyd-Reece, who reflected, "I think that Reece's mind is so saturated with Romance that he often fails to realize that for the execution of his plans a prosperous world is a necessary condition" (Morison to Jan van Krimpen, 20 February 1931, qtd. in Barker 1972, 319). Whatever one might say about Holroyd-Reece's grandiosity, his was a bold and ingenious plan, brilliant, in its own way: if one had access to authors, why not convince them to sign multiple contracts at once, partnering across national lines, in original languages, and in translation, simultaneously? Why not spread the word, when one had the chance? Even Huxley, so skeptical of the plan, felt at least a little torn. "If Europe were perfectly stable, the Holroyd-Reece scheme might be admirable," he acknowledged to Raymond in August 1945, "though even then I don't know that a continent-wide publishing trust is altogether desirable…" (Huxley 1945). It is on this last note that the Albatross-Mondadori partnership was too ambitious, in the end. Yet this fascinating collaboration nonetheless helped Albatross become the largest purveyor of English-language paperbacks in 1930s Europe and made Mondadori the leading publisher of translations of Anglo-

American fiction in 1930s Italy, all while preserving some piece of a hopeful world for wartime readers whose circumstances otherwise offered little hope.

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