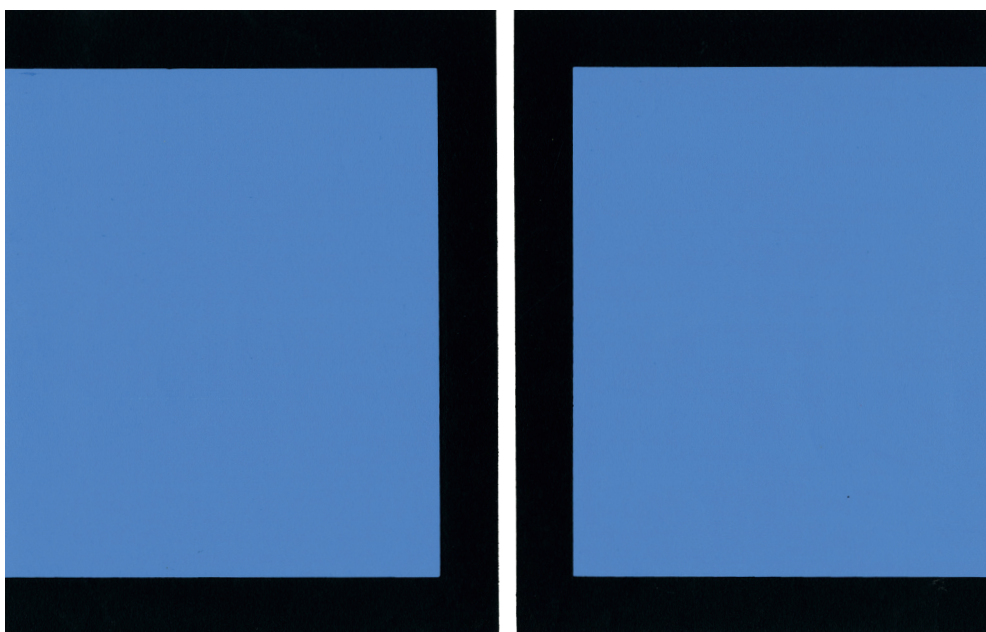


TRANSLATING SCANDINAVIA

Scandinavian Literature
in Italian and German Translation, 1918-1945

EDITED BY

BRUNO BERNI & ANNA WEGENER



Edizioni Quasar

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The Finder of Hidden Treasures: Giacomo Prampolini as a Mediator of Scandinavian Literature and His Translations of Pär Lagerkvist

by SARA CULEDDU

Abstract

Giacomo Prampolini was one of the most productive translators in Italy in the period 1921-1939 and was active as a mediator of foreign literature until his death in 1975. He was one of the major translators of Scandinavian literature in particular and, at a time when indirect translation was the norm, he understood the importance of translating from the original language and engaging directly with the cultures from which he translated. His work of mediation involved writing literary reviews as well as working in the publishing industry (as a translator, professional reader, selector, and editor); finally, he was the sole author of a colossal history of world literature entitled *Storia universale della letteratura* (1933-1938). Here, his interest in marginal and peripheral literatures seems to have defined his specific mode of mediation: that of finder of hidden treasures. He performed this role by exploring “minor” Scandinavian literatures such as Icelandic, Finno-Swedish and New Norwegian literature, and was instrumental in discovering prominent writers such as Knut Hamsun, Olav Duun and Pär Lagerkvist and introducing them to Italy, and indeed the second part of this article focuses on Prampolini’s mediation of the latter author’s work.

1. Introduction

One of the major Italian translators and mediators, Giacomo Prampolini, is often encountered by scholars in reception and translation studies, although his activity has not yet been adequately studied. His fame usually stops at his enormous productivity and talent as a polyglot: this article, aiming to analyse his figure by building on bibliographical information, archive- and fieldwork and the consultation of unpublished material, focuses primarily on Prampolini’s work as a translator and a mediator of Scandinavian literature between 1921 and 1938, the years in which he was most prolific. Tables of data, with comments and a partial analysis will be provided in an attempt to outline the unique professional figure of Prampolini, his philosophy of translation and his idea of literature, both in light of his collaboration with literary reviews and the publishing industry, and of his major lifework, the *Storia universale della letteratura* (1933-1938, History of World Literature). Finally, the information and reflection will contribute in framing and shedding light on his extraordinary work of mediation with the Swedish writer Pär Lagerkvist.

2. A Biographical Portrait¹

Giacomo Prampolini was born in 1898 in Milan, where he studied humanities and ancient languages. Already as a young student, he developed a personal interest in learning modern languages as

1. All information about G. Prampolini’s life and work has been collected over multiple interviews with his son Gaetano Prampolini, a now retired professor of American Literature. I would like to sincerely thank him for his

kindness and readiness to help, especially as there are currently no publications about his father’s life and work (with the only exception of a collection of essays: Pavese 1997).

well and he started attending some extracurricular courses at the Circolo Filologico Milanese: here, he learned Russian, Japanese and Arabic, in addition to English, French, German and Spanish, which he was studying both at school and as a self-taught student. By 1917, when he enlisted in the army and fought in World War I, he already mastered the major European and non-European languages. At the time, he was studying Law at the University of Pavia and planning to start a diplomatic career, but after returning from the front, he hastily graduated and chose to follow the literary path. In the early Twenties, Giacomo Prampolini made his *début* as a translator: already in 1921 he had translated both the first Italian version of *Frühlings Erwachen* (*Spring Awakening*) by Frank Wedekind (Table 1), a selection of Dutch poems² and a Norwegian short story by Alexander Kielland, “La torbiera” (Table 1).³

This first production is to be intended as having been commissioned (or at least encouraged) by the literary review *Il Convegno*,⁴ one of the reviews Prampolini was collaborating with most regularly, in addition to *Circoli*, *La fiera letteraria* and *L'Italia letteraria*, especially during the Twenties and Thirties. In these publications, Prampolini's translations, articles, pieces of critique and reviews about German, English, Russian, Spanish, Dutch, Scandinavian, Czech, Slovakian, Hungarian, Romanian and American literature were printed. In addition to collaborating with literary reviews, in the Twenties Prampolini also started a strong and durable professional relationship with the publishing industry, for which he translated, wrote reader's reports and participated in the process of selecting foreign books for publication. In relation to his role as a professional reader and selector, his most important collaboration was the one with Mondadori, especially for the book series “I romanzi della Palma” and “Medusa”.⁵ There were, however, many other publishers that he worked with (here a short list in alphabetical order: Agnelli, Alpes, Bompiani, Carabba, Corticelli, Formiggini, Hoepli, Modernissima, Morreale, Scheiwiller, Sperling & Kupfer, Treves, UTET); his enormous production of translations (around fifty titles before 1939, from ten different languages) was mostly concentrated between 1921 and 1939, the years that he spent in Milan.

The year 1938 was a crucial one in Prampolini's life: as the fifth and last volume of his *Storia universale della letteratura* was being published, he moved with his family from Milan to Spello, a small town in Umbria. It was a life-changing turn which happened to coincide both with the increasing tensions that would lead to the upcoming war and with a gradual shift in the laws of the publishing industry. After what Christopher Rundle calls the “Translation Invasion”⁶ between 1929-1934, the political establishment became more and more hostile to foreign, translated literature (while encouraging instead the publication of Italian literature), and in 1938 the restrictive measures on translation reached their apex.⁷ Prampolini's life after 1938 became less dynamic, his position more “peripheral” in relation to Milan – the “centre” of the book industry – and his collaboration with literary reviews decreased; his work as a translator, a mediator, a poet, a researcher and a disseminator, however, did not. Already in the late Twenties and during the Thirties, in addition to his many translations, Prampolini had published studies, anthologies (*La letteratura olandese e fiamminga* in 1927, *Il tesoro nascosto. Trecento favole e storie, facezie e leggende di ogni Paese* in 1934 and *La mitologia nella vita dei popoli* in 1937)⁸ and his first works as a poet (*Dall'alto silenzio* in 1928 and *Segni* in 1931),⁹ after 1938, he continued and expanded this work from a new (geographical) position, but also slipped into a new and more suit-

2. “Versioni di poeti olandesi” (Roland Henriette Holst van der Schalk; Carel Steven Adama van Scheltema; Hélène Swarth), *Il Convegno*, II, 8-9, August-September 1921, 401-402.
3. This was not the first Italian translation of the short story, which had been translated by Giulia Peyretti and included in her 1909 anthology *Anime nordiche*, but it may have been the first direct translation from Norwegian.
4. A possible link between Prampolini and *Il Convegno* was Eugenio Levi, the co-founder of the literary review with Enzo Ferrieri and a teacher of Arabic at the Circolo Filologico Milanese. See: AA.VV. 1991, Angelini 1990 and Modena 2010.

5. See Anna Wegener's contribution to this volume.

6. Rundle 2010, 67.

7. *Ibid.*, 165-182.

8. They were all published by Hoepli. A section of *Il tesoro nascosto* is dedicated to fairy tales from Iceland (Una, la silfide; La pelle di foca; Lini, il figlio del re), the Faroe Islands (Il cormorano e lo eider), Norway (Il marito bisbetico, La moglie bisbetica), Sweden (Il gigante Fnn, Stompe Pilt) and Denmark (La birra dei troll). Prampolini 1934, 278-296.

9. Published by Giovanni Scheiwiller and Artigianelli, respectively.

able “habitus”: in his position as a polyglot, erudite, solitary intellectual and translator he was never involved either in the academic milieu or in the mainstream intellectual milieu. Instead, he dedicated himself to popularising literature both through new and updated editions of the *Storia universale della letteratura* (1948-53; 1959-61), other literary studies (such as *Letterature del mondo*, 1956 and *Letteratura universale. Antologia di testi*, 1974, printed by UTET), and translations. Finally, a biographical note which may appear marginal in relation to his work as a literary translator but is crucial to his personal trajectory: during his military service in World War Two, Prampolini was ordered to stay in Rome with the assignment of compiling dictionaries for the troops at the front, but while he was serving his country with his translation abilities, his regiment was destroyed in Greece. Languages thus literally saved his life and after the war he made a serious commitment to the cause of peace until his death in 1975 (source: Gaetano Prampolini).

1921	
<i>Risveglio di primavera: tragedia di bambini in 3 atti</i> , F. Wedekind, Il convegno editoriale	GERMAN
1923	
<i>Offerta al sole; Notti chiare; Al mare: o Epipsychidion</i> , S. Przybyszewski, Modernissima	GERMAN
1925	
<i>Ernesto De Fiori</i> , E. Szitty, Hoepli	GERMAN
<i>Lettere a Fanny Browne</i> , J. Keats, Formiggini	ENGLISH
<i>Victoria</i> , K. Hamsun, Morreale [NORWEGIAN]	NORDIC
1926	
<i>L'androgine</i> , S. Przybyszewski, Carabba	GERMAN
<i>L'Alcalde di Zalamea: dramma in tre giornate</i> , Calderon de la Barca, Alpes [SPANISH]	OTHER
1927	
<i>Ernesto De Fiori</i> , E. Szitty, Scheiwiller	GERMAN
<i>Angiolino e la primavera</i> , A. van Schendel, Alpes	DUTCH
1928	
<i>Capitani coraggiosi</i> , R. Kipling, Corticelli	ENGLISH
<i>Novissime avventure di Sherlock Holmes</i> , A. C. Doyle, Mondadori	
<i>Tamalone: Un vagabondo innamorato. Un vagabondo smarrito.</i> , A.F.E. Schendel, Agnelli	DUTCH
1929	
<i>Carlo e Anna</i> , L. Frank, Sperling & Kupfer	GERMAN
<i>Sua maestà nera</i> , J.W.Vandercook, Modernissima	ENGLISH
1930	
<i>Bambi. La vita di un capriolo</i> , F. Salten, Treves	GERMAN
<i>I cacciatori di lupi</i> , J.O. Curwood, Agnelli	ENGLISH
<i>Con l'Aquila verso il polo [...]</i> , N. Strindberg e K. Fraenkel, Mondadori [SWEDISH]	NORDIC
<i>Il parroco della vigna fiorita</i> , F. Timmermans, Sperling & Kupfer [FLEMISH]	OTHER
1931	
<i>L'altra diplomazia</i> , H. R. Berndorff, Agnelli	GERMAN
<i>Perché questa crisi mondiale?</i> , H. Ford, S. Crowther, Bompiani	
<i>Il volto del bolscevismo</i> , R. Fülöp-Miller, Bompiani	
<i>Caesar</i> , M. Jelusich, Bompiani	
<i>L'Antartide esplorata. Quindici mesi fra i ghiacci</i> , B. Richard, Mondadori	ENGLISH
<i>Racconti</i> , O. Henry, Treves	

<i>Le talpe della lotta dei popoli: agenti segreti e spie</i> , E. Seeliger, Agnelli <i>I fiori dell'amore</i> , A. van Schendel, Treves	DUTCH
<i>Odin</i> , O. Duun, Sperling & Kupfer [NEW NORWEGIAN]	NORDIC
1932	
<i>La polizia indaga</i> , C. Elwenspoek, Agnelli <i>Lettere a Matilde Maier</i> , R. Wagner, Treves	GERMAN
1933	
<i>Il medico Gion</i> , H. Carossa, Sperling & Kupfer	GERMAN
<i>L'anima nera</i> , L. O'Flaherty, Mondadori	ENGLISH
<i>Cameriera per scommessa</i> , S. Boo, Mondadori [NORWEGIAN] <i>Il vicolo dei sandalai</i> , N. Petersen, Mondadori [DANISH] <i>Ed ora aspettiamo la nave</i> , M. Lauesen, Mondadori [DANISH]	NORDIC
1934	
<i>Cosecha. Antologia della lirica castellana</i> , Scheiwiller [SPANISH]	OTHER
<i>Silja</i> , F.E. Sillanpää, Mondadori [FINNISH]	OTHER
1935	
<i>Il mattino della vita</i> , K. Guðmundsson, Mondadori [NORWEGIAN]	NORDIC
<i>Axelle</i> , B. Pierre, Mondadori [FRENCH] <i>La colpa del prete amaro</i> , J.M. Queiròs, Mondadori [SPANISH] <i>Gelosia e medicina</i> , M. Choromanski, Mondadori [POLISH]	OTHER
1936	
<i>L'uccello nero</i> , G. Gunnarsson, Mondadori [DANISH]	NORDIC
<i>Nikola Sciuhaj il masnadiero</i> , I. Olbracht, Mondadori [CZECH]	OTHER
1937	
<i>Pablo Picasso</i> , C. Zervos, Hoepli [FRENCH]	OTHER
1938	
<i>Tormentosa inchiesta</i> , O. Duun, Sperling & Kupfer [NEW NORWEGIAN]	NORDIC
1939	
<i>L'amore di Sigmar</i> , K. Guðmundsson, Mondadori [NORWEGIAN] <i>Il sorriso eterno</i> , P. Lagerkvist, Mondadori [SWEDISH] <i>Il pino</i> , P. Lagerkvist, Scheiwiller [SWEDISH]	NORDIC

Table 1. Prampolini's Translations for the Publishing Industry between 1921 and 1939

3. Giacomo Prampolini as a Translator and Mediator of Scandinavian Literature

Even though the material taken into account here does not include Prampolini's reader's reports,¹⁰ a close examination of his articles, reviews, translations for literary reviews and publishing houses and of the Scandinavian section of the *Storia universale*, combined with a focused scrutiny of his personal library,¹¹ provides insight into his role as a mediator of Scandinavian literature. The Twenties represented a starting point for his experience with Scandinavian culture and literature, yet it was only in 1925 that his Italian translation of *Victoria. En Kærligheds Historie* (*Victoria. A Love*

10. Some of his reader's reports are available at the Fondazione Arnaldo e Alberto Mondadori in Milan and can be viewed on <www.fondazionemondadori.it>; they are yet to be analysed. Anna Wegener provides an overview of

his reports from the 1930s and 1940s in her contribution to this volume.

11. My examination of his library has however been subject to time constraints.

Story; Table 1 and 2) by Knut Hamsun was published: this was the very first translation of the novel in Italian (a text that was to have a long and successful editorial history)¹² and it was a pivotal one, as the translation was one of the first to introduce Knut Hamsun's work in Italy.¹³ In the late Twenties, Prampolini also wrote presentations of Scandinavian writers (Sigrid Undset and Emil Benedict Zilliacus) and the Modern Norwegian novel (Table 2), but my impression – looking at the increasing number of his Scandinavian translations in the course of the two decades covered here – is that during the Thirties he fully proved himself as a trusted expert in Scandinavian literature and languages. As he became an eminent translator of Scandinavian literature, he began to be consulted on the matter, and he increasingly abandoned the translation of German, English and Dutch texts in favour of Danish, Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish ones (Table 1). In my opinion, a major landmark in this path was the 1930 special issue of *Il Convegno*, which was entirely dedicated to Icelandic literature, in order to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of the establishment of Iceland's Parliament (930-1930) – it was conceived, edited and developed by Prampolini (Table 2).¹⁴ A detailed study of Prampolini's work in and around translation is not possible here, and is yet to be carried out: what I intend to present in the following paragraphs is rather an annotated (diachronic) overview of his production related to Scandinavian literature until 1939, aiming to highlight his role as a professional translator, his selection criteria and his network of collaboration, which partially overlap with those that characterize his own literary production.

3.1 Translating Scandinavian Texts for Literary Reviews and Publishing Houses (1921-1939)

1921	Alexander Kielland, "Torbjerg", <i>Il Convegno</i> II, 20, 16/5, 5 [translation] ("Torvmyr", 1880)
1922	Karl Larsen, "Vita del cavaliere Tristano e di donna Isolda", <i>Il Convegno</i> III, 1-2, 34-45 [translation] ("Ridder Tristan og Fru Isoldes Liv og Død", 1891)
1925	Knut Hamsun, <i>Victoria: Storia di un amore</i> , Giuseppe Morreale [Book] (<i>Victoria. En Kærligheds Historie</i> , 1898)
1926	Pär Lagerkvist, "L'ascensore dell'inferno", <i>La fiera letteraria</i> , II, 24, 13/6 [translation] ("Hissen som gick ner i helvete", 1924) Hans Ernst Kinck, "Il nuovo cappellano" and "Piccola guida di H.E. Kinck", <i>La fiera letteraria</i> , II, 20, 16/5 [translation and presentation] ("Den nye Kapellanen", 1895) J.P. Jacobsen, "Uno sparò nella nebbia" and "Piccola guida di J.P. Jacobsen", <i>La fiera letteraria</i> , 25/04 [translation and presentation] ("Et Skud i Taagen", 1875) "Il numero de <i>Il Convegno</i> su J.P. Jacobsen", <i>La fiera letteraria</i> , 4/7, 8 [review]
1928	"Il moderno romanzo norvegese", <i>La fiera letteraria</i> , IV, 40, 30/9, 4 [presentation] "Undset", <i>La fiera letteraria</i> , IV, 48, 25/11, 3 [presentation] "Emil Zilliacus", <i>La fiera letteraria</i> , IV, 49, 2/12, 7 [presentation]
1930	Andrée Salomon August, Nils Strindberg & Knut Fraenkel, <i>Il libro di Andrée</i> , Mondadori [Book] (<i>Med örnen mot polen</i> , 1930) J.P. Jacobsen, <i>Niels Lyhne</i> , F.lli Treves, <i>L'Italia letteraria</i> , II, 14, 6/4, 8 [book review] "La letteratura islandese moderna", Special issue to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of Iceland's Parliament, <i>Il Convegno</i> , XI, 5-6, 25/6
1931	Olav Duun, <i>Odin</i> , Sperling & Kupfer [Book] (<i>Juvikfolke</i> , 1918-23) "Tre poeti svedesi" [Pär Lagerkvist, Dan Andersson, Erik Blomberg], <i>Circoli</i> , I, 6, 51-56 "E.A. Karlfeldt Premio Nobel per il 1931", <i>L'Italia letteraria</i> , III, 42, 18/10, 1-2 [presentation]

12. Corbaccio published a new edition in 1938, then again in 1995 with an introduction by Claudio Magris; in 1997 a new edition was published by TEA with the same introduction. However, versions by other translators have also been published.

13. For the first Italian reception of Knut Hamsun and the

role of Prampolini, see: Culeddu 2017.

14. This issue contains a long historical and literary introduction, followed by the translation of three folktales and excerpts of poetry and prose by fourteen ancient and modern Icelandic writers.

1933	Sigrìd Boo, <i>Cameriera per scommessa</i> , Mondadori [Book] (<i>Vi som går kjøkkenveien</i> , 1930) Nis Petersen, <i>Il vicolo dei sandalai</i> , Mondadori [Book] (<i>Sandalmagernes Gade</i> , 1931) Marcus Lauesen, <i>Ed ora aspettiamo la nave</i> , Mondadori [Book] (<i>Og nu venter vi paa Skib</i> , 1931)
1934	Marcus Lauesen, "Vania", <i>Almanacco della 'Medusa'</i> , 310-319 ("Vanja") <i>Il tesoro nascosto: trecento favole e storie, facezie e leggende di ogni paese, raccolte per la prima volta</i> , Hoepli [contains Scandinavian folktales]
1935	Kristmann Guðmundsson, <i>Il mattino della vita</i> , Mondadori [Book] (<i>Livets morgen</i> , 1934)
1936	Gunnar Gunnarsson, <i>L'uccello nero</i> , Mondadori [Book] (<i>Svartfugl</i> , 1929)
1938	Olav Duun, <i>Tormentosa inchiesta</i> , Sperling & Kupfer [Book] (<i>Ettermælet</i> , 1932)
1939	Kristmann Guðmundsson, <i>L'amore di Sigmar</i> , Mondadori [Book] (<i>Sigmar</i> , 1930) Pär Lagerkvist, <i>Il sorriso eterno – Ospite della realtà – Mascherata degli spiriti</i> , Mondadori [Book] (<i>Det eviga leende</i> , 1920; <i>Gäst hos verkligheten</i> , 1925; <i>Själarnas maskerad</i> , 1930) Pär Lagerkvist, <i>Il pino</i> , Scheiwiller [Book] (selected poems)

Table 2. Scandinavian Translations for Literary Reviews and Publishing Houses

The list of Prampolini’s Scandinavian translations in Table 2 constitutes a stepping stone to a revelatory analysis of his work as a mediator: this catalogue allows identification of a trend, as well as of the roles and positions that he embodies, and thus the deduction of a specific “mode” of mediation. The tendency I want to point out is the clear increase of his interest for and productivity in the field of Scandinavian literature, which – especially starting in 1930 – led to the publication of several titles per year (in addition to translations from many other languages). This ample production is, however, varied: along with translated texts and presentations of the writers that he discovered, was passionate about and wanted to introduce and disseminate, we also find novels of average quality which he translated for economic reasons (source: Gaetano Prampolini). Prampolini thus seems to embody and unite two different roles: on the one hand he was – like many other intellectuals – a critic and a reviewer who also practiced translation; on the other hand, though, he was one of the first professional translators in Italy who made a living from this activity and this activity only. He can be considered a true “worker” in the publishing industry, and therefore an extremely modern figure at that time. He was of course an intellectual worker, with his own philosophy of translation and a mission. Prampolini’s early intuition was indeed about the importance of translating literature from the original language and consequently of learning the languages he wanted to work with, not only in order to render the language and literary style as accurately as possible, but also to gain for himself (and – indirectly – his readers) better access to the original culture and with it deeper comprehension.

As is commonly known in the field of Scandinavian literature reception studies,¹⁵ at the beginning of the Twenties, Nordic literature was not widely translated in Italy (with the prominent exceptions of Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, Søren Kierkegaard, H. C. Andersen and few others) and in fact the Scandinavian countries and cultures were almost unknown and generally filtered by the interpretations (and translations) of other, closer countries and cultures, primarily Germany and France.

What is extraordinary in Prampolini’s case, is that he felt the need to remove those filters and establish a direct contact with cultures that were considered marginal at the time, and he did so by learning a large number of minor languages.¹⁶ When he encountered Scandinavian literature in the early Twenties – surely encouraged both by the propitious time, which was so open to

15. This, however, is a relatively new field of research, counting a few monographic works and articles, focused especially on the reception of specific authors. Among the available publications, we can mention: Berni 2014; Ciaravolo 2013; Culeddu 2016 and 2017; D’Amico 2008 and 2013; Ferrari 2007; Nergaard 2004; Perrelli 2015; Wegener 2016.

16. The “myths” about Prampolini suggest that he knew about 50 languages, which I have come to consider ex-

tremely close to the truth after having had the chance to explore his production and his library. There are hundreds of Scandinavian titles on the shelves (as of now, I have filed only 133 of them and viewed twice as many, and most of them are full of handwritten notes, often about translation issues); and there are also many dictionaries and language handbooks that testify to his efforts as a self-taught learner of Nordic languages.

foreign literatures, and by the lively milieu of *Il Convegno* –, he built for himself the chance to study it in the original, and he literally found a treasure he wanted to share. The specific mode of mediation which was established and developed during the years 1921-1939 is exactly that of the “finder of hidden treasures”: he looked more and more to the peripheries of the world as his elective object of mediation, devoted himself to learning minor languages and gave “minor and peripheral” cultures an unprecedented role in his major life’s work, the *Storia universale della letteratura*.

3.2 *The Section on Modern Scandinavian Literature in the First Edition of the Storia universale della letteratura (1938)*

DANISH LITERATURE	<p>H.C. Andersen: from <i>Billedbog uden Billeder</i> Søren Kierkegaard: fragments and aphorisms Herman Bang: “Der gives Dage ...” Sophus Claussen: “Mod Solnedgangs-Blaaet højne...” Johannes Jørgensen: “Gennem Julinattens Stille...” Helge Rode: from <i>Ariel</i> Jeppe Aakjær: “Emerge dalla bruma la mia terra...” Ludvig Holstein: from “Bygen flygter” Valdemar Rørdam: from “Mørkning” Thøger Larsen: from <i>Udvalgte Digte</i> Kai Hoffmann: from “Nu kommer Mørket”</p>
ICELANDIC LITERATURE	<p>Bjarni Thorarensen: “Íslands minni” Jónas Hallgrímsson: “Sólin heim úr suðri snýr” Sigurður Breiðfjörð: from <i>Núma Rímur</i> Bólu Hjálmar: from “Viða til Þess vott eg fann” Steingrímur Thorsteinsson: from <i>Ljóðmæli</i> Páll Ólafsson: from “Eg vildi eg fengi að vera strá” Stephan G. Stephansson: from <i>Andvökur</i></p>
NORWEGIAN LITERATURE	<p>Ivar Aasen: from <i>Synra</i> Henrik Ibsen: from <i>Peer Gynt</i>, <i>Brændte skibe</i> and <i>Gengangere</i> Sigbjørn Obstfelder: from “Møllens vinger stanser sin susen...”, “Al skabningen sukker...”, “Når den første tåre smelter” and “Jeg ser” Olav Duun: from <i>I blinda</i> Olav Bull: from “Almægtige dyp i mig!” Arnulf Øverland: “Aftenstjernen” Tore Ørjasæter: from “Ættetreet” Olav Aukrust: from “Himmelvarden”</p>
SWEDISH LITERATURE	<p>Carl Michaël Bellman: “Fredmans Epistel n. 71” Daniel Amadeus Atterbom: from “Lycksalighetens ö” Gustaf Geijer: from “Natthimmelen” and “Höstsädet” Esaías Tegnér: from <i>Frithiofs saga</i> Erik Johan Stagnelius: “Näcken” Carl Jonas Love Almqvist: “Lifvets visa” Johan Gustav Snoilsky: “Svarta svanor” Victor Rydberg: from “Tomte” Verner von Heidenstam: “Hur lätt bli människornas kinder heta!” Gustav Fröding: “Säf, säf, susa” Erik Axel Karlfeldt: “Månhyrn vid Lambertsmässan”; from <i>Dalmålningar på rim</i> and “Eden” Bo Bergman: “Presto sei finita, mia giornata” Dan Andersson: “Fången” and “Epilog” Pär Lagerkvist: from <i>Ångest</i> and <i>Hjärtats sånger</i> Erik Blomberg: from “Människans hem” Erik Lindorm: from “Sångmön” and “En eftermiddag”</p>

FINNO-SWEDISH LITERATURE	Mikael Lybeck: "Klockbojen" Arvid Mörne: "Julinatt på ön" Ragnar Ekelund: "Vårregn" Jarl Hemmer: "Tutte le poesie stanno scritte ..." Edith Södergran: from "Stjärnorna" and "Sången på berget" Henry Parland: "C'era qualcosa ..."
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Table 3. Translated Scandinavian Texts in the *Storia universale* (1938; in order of appearance)

3.2.1 The *Storia universale*: Authorship and Voices

The Scandinavian section of the *Storia universale* is linked to Prampolini's previous work for the publishing industry and reviews, because the authors and texts he discovered in that phase, such as H.E. Kinck, Olav Duun, Icelandic writers and Swedish romantic and modern poets are included in his lifelong project. In a work of this kind though, he obviously had the chance to describe and discuss authors and literary events extensively, in-depth and systematically. The *Storia universale* is a history of world literature, it is chronologically and geographically organised and embraces all known time periods and cultures. It was commissioned by the publishing house UTET¹⁷ and succeeded in becoming very popular, especially among the middle-class.¹⁸

The first edition of the *Storia universale* spans about 5000 pages divided into five volumes; two new updated editions followed the first one, which had received very favourable reviews across Italy¹⁹ and was also translated into Spanish. The modern Scandinavian section of the first edition appeared in 1938,²⁰ and includes the translated Nordic texts listed in Table 3. The ambitious project became reality when its promoters met the only person having the necessary linguistic, critical and authorial abilities – as he was already recognised at that time; on the other hand, this work offered Prampolini the chance of expressing, in a publication of great distinction and diffusion, his own personal ideas of literature and his understanding of world literature, which surfaces throughout both explicitly, in his critique, and implicitly, in the selection of the authors and the works to be included.²¹

Prampolini's *Storia universale* differs from other similar works especially in two aspects: first, the author had direct access to the sources he wrote about, be they ancient literatures, modern European literatures or minor literatures (besides the Nordic languages – including Old Norse – he also read Slavic, Baltic, Arabic, Yiddish, Dutch, Flemish and Frisian texts in the original, and he studied several African languages as well). For each of these cultural areas he read histories of literature, he gathered as many original texts as he could and built up the knowledge required to comment and interpret them also from a linguistic perspective. The other original aspect of the *Storia universale* is that – as it is written by one person only – it becomes the expression of a unitary and uniform literary vision. Unlike most histories of world literature, which are composed as collections of essays by several specialised scholars, this one shows its peculiarity by uniting under one perspective – as in a bird's-eye view – time periods and places which are usually distant from each other: a perspective that enables new, original connections and comparisons. And yet, the unity of this work is still polyphonic: in addition to Prampolini's authorial voice (which emerges both through his telling of the history and through his selection of the texts), we also hear the voices of the chosen authors (which emerge both directly, through the original texts, and indirectly, through the translations). Further

17. At the time, UTET was already a prestigious publishing house with a long history and with a vocation for large, encyclopaedic, disseminative works. See: Tranfaglia & Vittoria 2000, 99-101.

18. Source: Gaetano Prampolini. See also: Bottasso 1991, 208; Cavallotti 1941.

19. Cavallotti 1941, 135-138.

20. Medieval Icelandic literature is discussed in Volume II (1934), 759-852; Scandinavian literature until the Reformation in Volume III, Part 1 (1935), 253-317; modern Scandinavian literature in Volume III, Part 3 (1938), 52-203.

21. About authorship and authorship in translation, see: Jansen & Wegener 2013, 1-35; Love 2000; Stillingner 1991; Zeller 2000.

voices (that we may call “intertextual”), those belonging to the authors of the secondary sources Prampolini quotes both in the text and footnotes, also participate in the polyphonic harmony of the work.²²

3.2.2 *Paratextual Elements and Contacts*

Both the peritextual elements, such as footnotes, and the epitextual elements, such as correspondence, journals and other books in his library, contribute to the reconstruction of the history of the relationship between Prampolini and Scandinavia. In the footnotes, the author informs the reader about Italian translations available for the texts he mentions, he quotes the critical works and histories of literature that he consulted and that I found in his library, in addition to original novels, collections of poems and so on. In order to understand the context of Prampolini’s work of mediation and his role, it is relevant to investigate his network of collaboration. Many of the Nordic volumes in his library are labelled with a Hoepli-sticker. Hoepli was the publishing house which usually ordered foreign books for him and occasionally gave him books as payment for his work (source: Gaetano Prampolini). Beyond this direct channel for collecting books, different sources and connections must be mentioned. Among the sources Prampolini got informed and inspired by are surely the Nordic literary reviews and catalogues that he received in the mail;²³ it is also essential to mention two important personal connections that he had in Scandinavia and who provided him not only with books but also suggestions and above all an insider’s point of view on the subject: Lorentz Eckhoff (1884-1974) and Antonio Nadiani (1906-1986). Lorentz Eckhoff, who became a close friend of Prampolini, was a literature professor at the University of Oslo, a scholar in English and French literature and in the history of European culture as well. He published several nationally prominent research projects in Norway and was very active as a disseminator and a translator.²⁴ He personally mailed many Nordic works to Prampolini, as we can infer by the signed dedications on the inside. Antonio Nadiani, on the other hand, was an Italian painter but also a writer, essayist and translator who, after being ostracized by the Fascist regime, moved to Oslo in the Thirties, where he lived – working and showing his paintings all over northern Europe – until the Sixties.²⁵

3.2.3 *Literary Vision and Selection Criteria*

The fact that Prampolini had direct access to literary works in their original language constitutes not only an exception in a historical period in which indirect translation was still quite common in Italy, but it is also closely related to his idea of literature. Moved by a deeply romantic vision, not only does he establish a tight connection between each language and its literature, but he also thinks of both as the purest form of expression of the people. Prampolini became a passionate scholar of folk, oral and anonymous literature; he delved into myths, devoted himself to folklore and anthropology and showed an avid interest in fairy tales, proverbs and sayings. This “mission” of his, this devotion to the introduction of peripheral, minor and marginal cultures into central ones, has no “ethnological” aim; avoiding cheap exoticism, Prampolini wants to include them to highlight what he defined as the “human foundation of literature” (“il fondo umano della letteratura”), which crosses both geographical and historical borders.²⁶

22. For a more detailed analysis about voices in translation, see: Taivalkoski-Shilov 2013, 1-9; Jansen & Wegener 2013, 1-35.

23. Up to now, for example, I have found several issues of the Swedish magazine *Ord och Bild* in his house. They are yet to be catalogued.

24. See: <nbl.snl.no/Lorentz_Eckhoff>. Website consulted 13 May 2017.

25. See: <www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-nadiani/>. Website consulted 13 May 2017.

26. Prampolini 1956, 10-15.

Literature has many faces and just one substance: man. [...] a clearly recognizable thread links the most remote pagan hymn to the most modern film script: it is the continuity of human races through times, and it will go on as long as men will know death through life, as long as they will be able to suffer and rejoice, to procreate and work.²⁷

Accordingly, in the Scandinavian section of the *Storia universale* a large space is reserved to Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Swedish-speaking Finland, and New Norwegian (on the birth of which Prampolini lingers for some pages).²⁸ Besides for all expressions of anonymous and folk poetry, he shows particular sympathy for those writers who could serve a collective cause as they have chosen to commit to political or civil goals without empty intellectualism (N. F. S. Grundtvig, Georg Brandes, many proletarian writers); for those who celebrate the people, their places and their traditions (Andersen, St. St. Blicher, Bellman, the Swedish neo-romantics – especially Gustaf Fröding and Selma Lagerlöf –, Johan Ludvig Runeberg, Zacharias Topelius, Ivar Aasen and above all Olav Duun). Although he acknowledged their genius, he did not devote excessive praise to the art of Strindberg and Hamsun, as he believed that their neurotic individualism imposed a severe limitation. He favoured Kinck over Hamsun, while among the vast work of Strindberg he appreciated the less “polemical” writings (especially the works on the archipelago and the post-inferno theatre); he also valued the artistic stature of Ibsen and Bjørnson, although he found it to be confined to their own time.²⁹

Then there are some authors he loved beyond any categorization, like Edith Södergran and Pär Lagerkvist. Selecting and judging contemporary writers (of which he often gave long and not overly elaborated lists) is of course hard, but the accuracy of both historical and literary reports is surprising, as well as his ability to identify crucial turning points; besides, as we have come to expect in relation to his ideas and interests – but in complete opposition to the trend of the time –, he was particularly careful in distinguishing the single Nordic countries, he focused on their peculiarities and sometimes commented on the “Latin” reception of each of these literatures.³⁰ Finally, Prampolini’s style in the *Storia universale* deserves a remark. Not only is the flow of his writing enjoyable even today, despite its complexity, but the translations included in the *Storia universale*, although they must be considered texts that are functional to the overall narration rather than autonomous publications, often reveal a level of care and aesthetic value that must stem from Prampolini the poet and the professional poetic translator.

4. Giacomo Prampolini and Pär Lagerkvist

One of the great Scandinavian writers who Prampolini was the first to translate into Italian was Pär Lagerkvist: the relevance of this work of mediation lies in the Italian intellectual’s ability to recognise and give value to the Swedish writer’s work, as is exemplified by the fact that Prampolini discovered and disseminated a large number of poems and novels by Lagerkvist long before he was systematically translated all over the world after being awarded the Nobel prize for literature (1951) and by the high quality of the translations. The first editions of Prampolini’s translations of Lagerkvist’s works were published between 1926 and 1939: after 1939 the same works have been regularly reprinted in new editions, while other translators have taken on the rest of Lagerkvist’s opus.³¹

Over the course of these thirteen years, Prampolini translated a short story, many chosen and collected poems and three novels by the Swedish author, allowing him to appear on prominent Italian literary reviews, and directly participated in the creation of interesting editorial projects, as I will illustrate below. I believe that a significant token of recognition of Prampolini’s role as Lagerkvist’s

27. *Ibid.*, 15. “La letteratura ha molti volti e una sola sostanza: l’uomo. [...] un filo ben discernibile collega il più remoto inno pagano al più moderno scenario per film: esso corrisponde alla continuità delle razze umane nel tempo, e durerà finché gli uomini conosceranno con la vita la morte, saranno capaci di gioire e soffrire, di procreare e lavorare.”

All translations unless otherwise indicated are my own.

28. Prampolini 1938, 145-147.

29. *Ibid.*, 149-160.

30. *Ibid.*, 193.

31. See: <www.letteraturenordiche.it/svezia.htm>. Website consulted 13 May 2017.

Italian translator is the copy of *Genius* that the writer himself sent to him in 1937 with the inscription: “Till dr. Giacomo Prampolini. Med tack och hälsning. Pär Lagerkvist” (To dr. Giacomo Prampolini. With thanks and greetings. Pär Lagerkvist).³² In addition to this supporting material, which reveals a personal contact between the two, the translator’s library in Spello contains many texts by Lagerkvist in their original language, again proving the direct relationship between Prampolini and the works he translated. Apart from *Genius*, he came into possession of a collection of novels by the Swedish writer published in 1931,³³ the complete works in three volumes published by Bonniers in 1932³⁴ and a first edition of *Bödeln* (1933, *Il boia*; *The Hangman*), which however he may not have read, as the pages are folded together).³⁵ The rest of the material, on the contrary, is visibly used: many pages are underlined and marked.

4.1 Lagerkvist by Prampolini: On Literary Reviews (*La fiera letteraria* and *Circoli*) and in the *Storia universale*

On 13 June 1926, only one month after Prampolini’s first article and translation of the Norwegian author H.E. Kinck appeared on *La fiera letteraria*, the humorous and disturbing short story by Pär Lagerkvist “Hissen som gick ner i helvete” (1924, “The Lift That Went Down into Hell”; translated with the title “L’ascensore dell’inferno”; Table 2) was published in the same review. It appeared, with no preface, in the page reserved to contemporary international literature, which was usually occupied by presentations of authors, book reviews and short translated texts.³⁶ The lack of an introduction to the writer (as was usually present elsewhere) suggests that the translator was not yet very confident with Lagerkvist and his work in 1926. The translation of “Hissen som gick ner i helvete”, which today is one of Lagerkvist’s most widely known short stories and had been recently published in Sweden, may be considered a first and fortunate encounter which inspired Prampolini to research him and read more.

In 1931, indeed, he presented Lagerkvist to the Italian audience as a poet: a section of the November-December issue of the literary review *Circoli* is dedicated to “Three Swedish Poets”, whose poems (two by Lagerkvist, one by Dan Andersson and one by Erik Blomberg) are selected and translated by Prampolini (Table 2). The poems are prefaced by a brief text where the translator introduces the three poets, writing that Lagerkvist “is the most clearly defined figure [of the three], also thanks to his works in prose” (“è la figura che meglio si precisa, grazie anche alle sue opere in prosa”). At this point, Prampolini had obviously started his exploration of Lagerkvist’s work and had already discovered his very meaningful poetry, and decided to present it to the Italian audience with two poems from *Kaos* (1919, *Caos*), namely “Det är vackrast när det skymmer” (It is Fairest in The Gloaming Air) and “Jag skall dö och du skall leva” (I Will Die and You Will Live), which perfectly exemplify the existential precariousness, the mysterious spirituality and the intimacy with nature that typify Lagerkvist’s writing.

The reference to the works in prose, though, indicates a knowledge of the writer’s novels and short stories which would soon find space for expression in the *Storia universale*. In it, two whole pages are dedicated to Lagerkvist, who is considered by Prampolini as the major representative of the anguished generation forced to witness and process World War I: his “complex spiritual and aesthetic anguish” (“complesso travaglio spirituale ed estetico”) is interpreted as being emblematic of a personal and collective “path of searching” for “truth”.³⁷ The author of the *Storia universale*

32. The circumstances of how they came to know each other are yet to be clarified.

33. Lagerkvist 1931.

34. Lagerkvist 1932.

35. Lagerkvist 1933.

36. Here, Prampolini introduced many other writers, such as J.P. Jacobsen and Josep Maria Lopez-Pico, and he is

in good company, considering that, over the course of the same year, this section is occupied by Gian Dauli’s introduction of William Butler Yeats, Rosina Pisaneschi’s August Strindberg, Alberto Spainì’s Klaus Mann and Stefan Zweig, Mario Praz’s Aldous Huxley, etc.

37. Prampolini 1938, 112-113.

proved his deep knowledge of Lagerkvist's work and poetics here: not only did he list and comment on the Swede's literary production up to the early Thirties, including dramatic and narrative works, but he also offered an interpretation of his art by reading many of his poems, citing and translating verses and strophes excerpted from all his poetry collections.³⁸ Lagerkvist's words (which appear in quotation marks directly in their Italian translation) are naturally intertwined with Prampolini's discourse, along with direct quotes and summarizing paraphrases, alternating to create a functional balance. Titles of collections are given in their original language (followed by the Italian translation in parenthesis),³⁹ and the long first strophe from the poem "Torso" is inserted in original language with parallel translation. As for Prampolini's selection of the poems, he chose not to cite poems that he had already translated and to offer the reader new examples. What emerges is, in my opinion, a density of images and a concatenation of meanings which express a profound fascination for the Swedish writer, maybe even an affinity, along with the sincere desire of providing the reader access to the original source and, finally, a palpable delight in translating.

4.2 Lagerkvist by Prampolini: *In the Publishing Industry* (Il Pino for Scheiwiller, and Il sorriso eterno, Ospite della realtà, Mascherata degli spiriti for Mondadori, 1939)

A new selection of still unpublished poems was proposed by Prampolini in 1939, the same year in which his most important translations of Lagerkvist's works were published, following from two different projects – one with the publishing house Scheiwiller and the other with Mondadori – in which it is easy to hypothesize that he took on a major role, not only as a translator but also as a promoter. The relationship of collaboration and trust with Giovanni Scheiwiller dated back to 1928 at least (when he published Prampolini's debut poetry collection *Dall'alto silenzio*) and lasted until 1959, when Giovanni's son Vanni (who had succeeded to his father in 1951) edited and printed Prampolini's anthology *Porticello* for the publishing house All'insegna del pesce d'oro, with an introduction by Eugenio Montale.

Giovanni Scheiwiller, who had also worked for many decades at the Libreria Hoepli as its executive director, in 1936 founded All'insegna del pesce d'oro, a publishing house devoted to elegant art and poetry books in a small format and limited edition intended for bibliophiles and enthusiasts.⁴⁰ Simultaneously, he published similar books under the publishing house's name Scheiwiller and later (in the Fifties and Sixties) in the book series "Oltremare", a collection of mini-books of proverbs (Chinese, Korean, Kurdish, Japanese and African-American) and poems (Dutch, Frisian, Afrikaans, African-American, Native American, Icelandic, Ladin, Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan, Vietnamese, and Indonesian) directed by Prampolini.⁴¹ In short: starting in the early Twenties, Prampolini collected most of his foreign books through the Libreria Hoepli (directed by Giovanni Scheiwiller) and he published all his critical studies, anthologies and a grammar of the Dutch language with Hoepli; three of his own poetry collections were published by Scheiwiller and All'insegna del pesce d'oro (the first of which in 1928); finally, starting in the early Fifties, together with Giovanni and Vanni Scheiwiller, he was the editor and the translator of almost the entire book series "Oltremare", which closely reflected his mission, interests and expertise.

This digression, the purpose of which is to contextualize Prampolini's relationship with the publisher Scheiwiller, shows how autonomous and prominent his role may have been when he, in 1939, translated and edited a collection of poems by Lagerkvist entitled *Il pino* (The Pine Tree). The mini-book, which is numbered and published in limited edition, is a small square with a

38. *Ibid.*, 112.

39. A misunderstanding can be pointed out: Prampolini translated *Han som fick leva om sitt liv* (1928, The man who lived his life over) with "Colui che riuscì a vivere della propria vita" (the man who managed to live off his

own life). Prampolini 1938, 112.

40. AA.VV. 1996; Tranfaglia & Vittoria 2000, 360.

41. For Prampolini and the book series "Oltremare", see: Novati 2013, 442-447.

blue-green cover: it contains eighteen translated poems from *Ångest* (1916, Anguish), *Kaos* (1919, Chaos), *Den lyckliges väg* (1921, The Way of The Happy Man) and *Hjärtats sånger* (1926, Songs of The Heart), and the original texts are not included. The selection was made by the editor (no correspondent publication is available in Sweden), as well as the choice of the title, which refers to the last chosen poem “Mitt träd är pinjen” (My Tree is The Stone Pine): by highlighting the image of the pine tree and stressing its meaning as a portrait of the author and not just as a metaphor of the existential condition of modern man on earth, Prampolini performed a highly interpretative operation, namely a mediation in its full potential. He mediated and interpreted by selecting, taking editorial decisions and, of course, translating: all of these operations reveal his understanding of Lagerkvist’s modernistic expressionism and visionary primitivism, and his attempt to disseminate it by “composing” free verses which, although they renounce the original metrics, try to preserve images, assonances and especially rhythm to offer the reader an atmosphere that is as close as possible to the original.

The autobiographical hint contained in the poem “Mitt träd är pinjen”, which allows its use as a “portrait-poem”, was surely picked up by Prampolini, who at the same time was also translating three novels by the Swedish writer, *Det eviga leende* (1920, *The Eternal Smile*), *Gäst hos verkligheten* (1925, *Guest of Reality*) and *Själarnas maskerad* (1930, *The Masquerade of Souls*): the second of these novels is indeed an autobiographical work (as it was already presented in the *Storia universale*),⁴² and its title recalls the final verses of the pine tree poem: “Är blott en gäst, är som en handfull mull, / men synes evig för sitt väsens skull” (Is a mere guest, a handful of dust, / but by its being seems made to last). The Mondadori edition from 1939 entitled *Il sorriso eterno* (*The Eternal Smile*) actually contains all the three novels and opens precisely with *Ospite della realtà* (*Guest of Reality*). This volume is number 101 of the book series “Medusa”, which was published by Mondadori from 1933 to 1969 and made intense use of Prampolini’s collaboration.

During the Thirties, the so-called “decade of translations”, he worked stably as a publishing consultant for Mondadori, read a large number of foreign books (especially Scandinavian ones, but also French, English, etc.) and wrote reader’s reports for the selection of the novels to be included in the book series “I romanzi della Palma” and “Medusa”, as mentioned above. Against this backdrop, my conjecture, although the correspondence between Prampolini and the publishers has not yet been found and his reader’s reports about these specific books by Lagerkvist have not been traced, is that the Italian mediator was given broad autonomy in the choice of the authors to be translated and in the selection of the novels to be included. Prampolini opted then in favour of three novels which, although very different in style and atmosphere, are all focused on spirituality and crises of faith: this choice meant that Prampolini could deepen and expand the conception of Lagerkvist’s work that he was mediating, making its intrinsic tension between the everlasting longing for God and a constant spiritual and existential doubt even clearer. Prampolini’s translations of these novels are so well written, accurate and beautiful that they have been republished many times and never retranslated, not even when the publishing of Lagerkvist’s opus reached its peak after the Nobel prize and when specialised publishing houses such as Iperborea decided to re-introduce the Swedish author to the Italian audience in a new context:⁴³ all new publishing projects⁴⁴ have used Prampolini’s translation, which, although it is today characterized by slightly old-fashioned language, is still highly enjoyable.

5. Conclusion

I wish to conclude this overview of Prampolini’s role and figure by proposing some perspectives of further research, both of specific and of more general, theoretical and cultural interest. On the one

42. Prampolini 1938, 113.

43. Nergaard 2004, 76-90.

44. Lagerkvist 1968; Lagerkvist 1991; Lagerkvist 1992.

hand, and from the perspective of a scholar in Scandinavian literature, I hope that collecting and sharing this information about his life, ideas and work may be the first step in researching Prampolini's translation and mediation of many Scandinavian authors, also from a textual point of view and in the wider context of the reception of Scandinavian literature in Italy (I am referring especially to his discovery of Icelandic, Finno-Swedish and New Norwegian writers, which has not yet been examined). On the other, I hope this article has made clear another extraordinary feature in relation to Prampolini, namely that he can be truly considered as the emblem of a publishing (and a translation) world that was rapidly transforming and flowing into modernity. Furthermore, he is an important actor of the transition into a modern publishing industry in spite of his outmoded "habitus": his being a solitary scholar with extraordinary knowledge is definitely linked to his personality and talent, but it also recalls an approach to culture, the encyclopaedic one, which was already fading and surrendering to the high specialization of knowledge and professions. Prampolini united the encyclopaedic intellectual and the specialized professional, thus representing a bridge between two time periods, and, I would say, embodying the two sides of an ideal translator. Also, he was a poet: do the three roles (scholar, translator and poet) interfere with each other? Certainly, as do his personality and biography. Therefore, I think further research into how Prampolini's own poetry, his idea of literature and his translations (in the wider sense of his editorial and textual choices) intertwine could not only prove very interesting but also shed further light on the complex and many-levelled relationship between authorship and translatorship.

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