

Negotiating Film Culture: at the Origins of Einaudi's Publications on Cinema (1948–1952)

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Abstract

This article examines the early development of Einaudi's cinematic publishing (1948–1952) by tracing editorial negotiations, intellectual exchanges, and institutional constraints that shaped the selection and rejection of books on cinema. Through an extensive analysis of archival correspondence, editorial minutes, and publication catalogs, the study reconstructs the network of translators, consultants, and critics who contributed to establishing a dedicated space for cinema within Einaudi's catalog. The investigation focuses on figures such as Bruno Fonzi, Antonio Giolitti, Antonio Pietrangeli, Umberto Barbaro, Carlo Ludovico Raghianti, and Guido Aristarco, as well as key foreign authors whose works defined the publisher's editorial approach to cinema. The research highlights the ideological, aesthetic, and commercial factors that influenced Einaudi's choices, revealing tensions between its pedagogical mission and the emerging industrial dynamics of film publishing. By addressing the conflicts between different conceptions of film criticism — ranging from historical-theoretical studies to collections of screenplays — the article sheds light on how Einaudi positioned itself as a platform for intellectual debate on cinema. Ultimately, this study contributes to broader discussions on the intersection between publishing and cinema, demonstrating how the Turin-based house played a crucial role in shaping Italian film culture in the postwar period.

Keywords: History of Publishing; Einaudi; Translation Studies; Film Criticism; Intellectual Networks.

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1 Introduction

In May 1948, Bruno Fonzi (1914–1976), a translator at Einaudi, wrote a letter to Cesare Pavese, editorial director of the publishing house, proposing his idea of creating a book on cinema (Fonzi 1948). Fonzi presented a well-defined and detailed plan for the work: in his intentions, the book was meant to serve as a true history of cinema, structured around a format that emphasized phototexts. Narrative and image would be designed to complement each other, offering the most accurate representation of the film – not only its plot but also its cinematography, set design, and technical aspects essential for interpretation. Each film would be followed by a brief critical note and preceded by the usual details about the director, actors, and composer (Fonzi 1948).

The young consultant also had a clear vision for the typographical composition, a luxurious, large-format volume, and he was confident about the organization of the work and his reliability: “I know where to find the films and have sufficient connections to obtain them. In short, I feel I can provide the best guarantees for serious and well-executed work, fully worthy of being included among Einaudi’s publications” (Fonzi 1948).¹ Fonzi concluded the letter with a reference to the target audience, which he envisioned as truly broad. It included critics and cinephiles, but also cinema enthusiasts with no real expertise in the field and, given the extensive space dedicated to illustrations, “the mass of illiterate individuals”. Despite recognizing that the proposed volume might not fully align with Einaudi’s editorial vision, Fonzi remained convinced of its viability, particularly from a commercial perspective, and urged the publisher to give it due consideration.

Pavese’s response was prompt but tempered Fonzi’s enthusiasm. The editorial director acknowledged that Einaudi was developing a series of publications dedicated to cinema, including a forthcoming volume by Eisenstein and another on German cinema. However, he pointed out that responsibility for this section of the catalog had been entrusted to Antonio Pietrangeli, who did not seem inclined to support Fonzi’s proposal. Furthermore, Pavese explicitly reiterated Einaudi’s editorial priorities: “We publish books of critics, not anthologies” (Pavese 1948).

He concluded by advising the young translator to discuss the project with Pietrangeli to explore potential common ground and reformulate a proposal that aligned with the publishing house’s editorial framework. The exchange between Fonzi and Pavese provides an opportunity for some fundamental preliminary reflections on the relationship between publishing and cinema in the postwar period.

First and foremost, while the interplay between literature and cinema in the first half of the twentieth century was fraught with controversy – often pitting representatives of the two fields against each other² – after the war, cinema became an undeniable point of reference for many Italian writers (Simonetti 2018: 296). Nevertheless, its artistic status remained the subject of considerable debate.³ This shift in the balance of influence between literature and cinema had a significant impact on the publishing industry, leading to a growing interest among publishing houses in works specifically dedicated to cinematic art.

A second aspect, closely related to the first one, concerns the figures entrusted with writing books on cinema and, more broadly, discussing the subject. Fonzi was indeed familiar with cinema, having passed the entrance exam for the directing class at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in 1942 (Fonzi 1949b). However, he did not pursue these studies, and his primary occupation remained the translation of literary works.⁴ His proposal thus reflected, on the one hand, the absence of an institutionalized framework for film criticism in postwar Italian publishing. On the other hand, it demonstrated the possibility of contributing to the cultural discourse on cinema even without specialized training. Since no stable and officially recognized university

1. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

2. The ways in which writers engaged with cinema, as well as the aesthetic, sociological, and ideological perspectives that emerged from the intellectual debate on cinematic art in the first half of the twentieth century, have been extensively explored in numerous studies. Here, we simply highlight a few key references in this field: Ivaldi (2001), Brunetta (2004), Andreazza (2008), and Simonetti (2018).

3. For the historical, cultural, political, and ideological debate within Italian film criticism regarding the concept of cinema as an art form, see Bioni (2006), Pezzotta (2018), Menarini (2018), Noto et al. (2020).

4. For more on Bruno Fonzi’s translation work, see: Lagorio (1997), and De Santi (1990).

courses existed at the national level (Bruni et al. 2016), the lack of specialized training did not preclude the possibility of engaging with cinema within the publishing field.

In contrast to this perspective, Pavese's response highlighted the specificity of the Einaudi case. He emphasized that the cinematic section of Einaudi's catalog had been entrusted to Antonio Pietrangeli. By that time, Pietrangeli was already an established film critic, contributing to various newspapers and magazines. The editorial director suggested that if books on cinema were to be included in the catalog, they could not be assigned to Fonzi – a translator seeking financial stability – but had to be overseen by a recognized critic like Pietrangeli.⁵ The *austere* Turin-based publishing house had to maintain its civilizing mission even in a field with more popular inclinations, such as cinema.⁶

This approach was reaffirmed by Pavese's fundamental clarification: "We publish books of critics, not anthologies". At a time when the artistic status of cinema was being asserted and the cultural discourse on authorship expanded – both in cinema and literature – Einaudi aimed to position itself as a guiding platform for engaging in this highly topical debate. The only way to achieve this goal was by publishing theoretical and critical works rather than fragmented anthologies. The latter would inevitably remain marginal due to their incompleteness. This aspect was confirmed by the books referenced by Pavese. He quoted a volume by Sergej Eisenstein (1898-1948) – a Soviet director, writer, and critic – who was already regarded as one of the most authoritative voices of cinema. In his work *Storia delle teorie del film*, published by Einaudi in 1951, Guido Aristarco placed Eisenstein among the key figures who had systematized film criticism, alongside another Soviet filmmaker, Vsevolod Pudovkin, the German Rudolf Arnheim, and the Hungarian Béla Balázs (Aristarco 1951). On the other hand, Pavese referred to German film production, which at the time was widely recognized for its pivotal role in advancing cinema as an art form.

The final noteworthy aspect of the exchange between Fonzi and Pavese concerns the composition of the readership. Fonzi referred to a highly diverse audience, reflecting the varied and growing interest in cinema in Italy (Treveri Gennari et al. 2020). The diversity of viewer-readers to whom his project could appeal underscored the lack of specialization in the field. Moreover, it highlighted the publishing industry's intention to fill a cultural void that specialized criticism had struggled to fill and that academic institutions had largely overlooked.

However, while the general audience could not be ignored in the publishing sphere, the distinct identity of the Einaudi brand had to be preserved. Pavese, therefore, argued that, rather than adapting to popular tastes, it was preferable to educate the preferences of an expanding readership.

Certainly, from the late 1940s onward, Einaudi developed a distinct and well-established line of publications on cinema. It featured some of the most renowned foreign filmmakers, screenwriters, and critics, such as Eisenstein, Jacobs, Sadoul, and Balázs. It involved its most authoritative in-house consultants, including Pavese, Fonzi, and Antonio Giolitti. It required the participation of leading Italian film critics and external collaborators, such as Umberto Barbaro, Antonio Pietrangeli, and Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti.

Given the prominence of the figures involved, and as indicated by the initial exchange between Pavese and Fonzi, the origin of publications concerning cinema within the Einaudi catalog did not follow a smooth or unanimous course. On the contrary, it emerged as the outcome of complex and often contentious negotiations, shaped by political-ideological, sociological, aesthetic, and material considerations. Precisely due to this complexity, the Einaudi case serves as a valuable interpretive prism for materially reconstructing the relationships between intellectuals from two distinct fields – publishing and cinema – to assess which ideas about film gained prominence in Italy through the Turin-based publishing house.

This study aims to analyze the editorial processes that led to the publication or rejection of Einaudi's earliest works on cinema. In particular, we will focus on volumes discussed between the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s. The research seeks to highlight, on the one hand, the principles that the house sought to uphold through a publishing strategy specifically dedicated to cinema and, on the other, the structural limitations that shaped the relationship between the Italian film critics and the publishing sector. Starting from

5. For an overview of Antonio Pietrangeli's career trajectory, see: Carpicci (2015).

6. For more on the history of Einaudi during those years, see: Mangoni (1999), and Munari (2016).

the methodological guidelines on the use of correspondence for examining criticism as a mediating activity between the public and private spheres (Mariani and Venturini 2017; Guerra and Martin 2019; Noto 2019; Rigola 2021; Noto, Malvezzi, and Mariani 2020), we conducted a detailed analysis of the archival material on cinema preserved at the historical archive of the Einaudi publishing house. In the absence of a dedicated series, we carried out a preliminary search in the publication catalog to identify the initial key figures involved as translators. By analyzing the correspondence between translators and the publishing house, we identified additional agents involved, particularly internal and external consultants. We also examined their letters with the publisher to gain further insights into their roles. Alongside correspondence, following the approach identified by Tommaso Munari (2011; 2013), we examined Einaudi's editorial meeting minutes, where books were proposed and discussed by the entire editorial committee. These meetings determined the acceptance, rejection, or postponement of each volume, shaping a dynamic internal field of forces (Munari 2016, 122). The richness of the consulted materials, along with the complexity and variety of figures involved, highlights the significance of studying Einaudi as a site of intellectual exchange in the cultural discourse on cinema.

Investigating not only published perspectives but also the network of personal and institutional contacts, negotiations, and compromises that underpinned the dialogue among some of the most prominent personalities in film criticism of the postwar period seems to unveil important avenues for exploring the Italian intellectual field. Within this framework, the present study on the origins of Einaudi's cinema publishing offers potential research perspectives.

2 Cinema as a Global Phenomenon: the boom of Einaudi's Translations of Cinematic Publications

The introduction of a cinematic section in Einaudi's catalog reflected broader developments in film publishing at the European level. As noted by Laurent Husson, the postwar period saw an exponential increase in such initiatives. More significantly, in the aftermath of the war, volumes were published that would become essential reference points for discussions on cinema in the decades to follow (Husson 2022: 60).

The growth of film publishing in Europe drew the attention of Einaudi. What immediately emerges is Einaudi's international ambition. Among the projects considered between 1948 and 1950, there was a relevant presence of translations of foreign film criticism, while relatively little space was allocated to Italian critics.

In this context, Fonzi arose as a key intermediary. His dual expertise – linguistic as a translator and thematic as a cinephile – made him an ideal figure to spearhead Einaudi's cinematic literature. He effectively bridged practical linguistic and organizational needs, political considerations within and beyond the publishing house, and broader cultural objectives. Alongside Fonzi, other consultants played a role in the early development of Einaudi's film-related publications. It is therefore particularly significant to examine who they were and which authors and texts they suggested.

In March 1949, Antonio Giolitti wrote to Fonzi with updates on the cinematic sector. A member of the Italian Communist Party and secretary of the parliamentary group in the Chamber of Deputies from 1948, Giolitti had established contact with Einaudi in the early 1940s (Mangoni 2012: 45).⁷ Giolitti's actions are particularly significant because they do not follow a linear path based on specialized training. On the contrary, they stem from personal interests and belonging to a specific network of intellectual relationships. As Mangoni and Munari observe, Giolitti's areas of activity at Einaudi were primarily political, economic, and historical. Moreover, Mangoni emphasizes that Giolitti "was one of the few Einaudi collaborators who strictly adhered to his areas of expertise, without frequent forays into other fields" (Mangoni 2012: 48). Besides, "according to the organizational chart outlined during the editorial meeting of January 12–13, 1949, Giolitti was an 'internal consultant' for four series: the 'Biblioteca di cultura economica,' the 'Biblioteca di cultura politica e giuridica,' the 'Biblioteca di cultura storica,' and the 'Problemi italiani' collection" (Munari 2012, 60). None of the four had any connection to cinema. Nevertheless, he was one of the first consultants to submit concrete proposals for books on cinema to the editorial board. One is therefore prompted to ask what motivated Giolitti's rec-

7. Giolitti's relationship with Einaudi has been thoroughly examined by Mangoni (1999; 2012) and Munari (2012).

ommendations for cinematic volumes and, more importantly, which texts on cinema the Roman consultant proposed: were they published or rejected? Did they achieve widespread circulation and influence?

Giolitti's editorial interest in the film industry is evident by 1953, when the consultant wrote a letter to Einaudi, proposing the publication of the dialogues from Charlie Chaplin's *Limelight* (1952) in the "Saggi" series (Munari 2012: 61). At that stage, he displayed a keen awareness of the challenges posed by such publications, noting that publishing the entire screenplay would be unfeasible due to its length. However, offering the public only the dialogues could result in a volume of great interest and potential success.

The project would not come to fruition, but four years earlier, in March 1949, Giolitti had already proposed a book on cinema to Fonzi. The Roman consultant had managed to obtain a copy of Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Film e fonofilm*. The latter had been translated into Italian for the first time by Umberto Barbaro and published in 1935 by Edizioni d'Italia. As the director of Einaudi's Rome office, Giolitti was responsible for negotiating an agreement with the translator. At the same time, he took on the task of recovering Sergei Eisenstein's *The Film Sense*, which was under review by Antonio Pietrangeli (Giolitti 1949a). The latter was likely taking too long either in forming his assessment or in completing the translation, making it necessary to reassign both tasks.

The year 1949 was a significant milestone in Einaudi's history and in Giolitti's relationship with the publisher (Munari 2012: 56; Mangoni 1999: 434–71). In 1947, after an internal debate on its cultural direction, the publishing house established the "limits of anti-communism" ["limiti dell'anticomunismo"] as its programmatic line (Mangoni 1999, 335–373): it aimed to avoid publishing books that were explicitly and openly anti-communist.

On the other hand, at the end of the 1940s, Giolitti was one of the key figures in Einaudi's Rome editorial office while also being a prominent member of the Italian Communist Party. The publisher entrusted him with the delicate task of managing relations between the party and the house. This was particularly crucial in sensitive cases, such as the decision on Lysenko's biological research and the edition of *Fiore del verso russo*, edited by Renato Poggioli in 1949.⁸ Besides, Giolitti played a key mediating role at the Soviet embassy in Rome (Munari 2012: 62). Finally, his cultural background and family environment allowed him to build a vast network of connections in the entertainment industry, making him the ideal agent for establishing and maintaining contacts with prominent figures in cinema and theater (Munari 2012: 62). The Roman consultant and politician was, in other words, an essential and ideal connecting node for a range of political, cultural, and economic interests that revolved around the publishing house between the 1940s and 1950s. At that time, Giolitti defined Einaudi's cultural orientation as "a Marxist cultural position understood in a Gramscian sense" and he identified a fundamental principle in the exclusion of ideologically anti-communist books (Munari 2011: 245–246). In practical terms, this approach had to be translated into serious initiatives, demonstrating the concrete possibility of a more efficient and coherent cultural line:

every opportunity should be seized to correct, rectify, or complete positions that were mistaken or susceptible to misinterpretation. One of the few – perhaps the only one, for now – tools capable of producing those results is your publishing house (Mangoni 2012: 52).

If the publishing house and its books were the instruments, there were two ultimate goals to pursue: fostering an internal reflection within the Communist Party on its cultural aspirations and engaging in educational efforts toward the public.

All these aspects also took shape in the proposals for books on cinema that Giolitti presented to Fonzi at the end of the 1940s. The Roman consultant pushed for the publication of works by specific authors, particularly Pudovkin, Eisenstein, and Jacobs. Through these three personalities, Giolitti pursued his goal of educating and fostering a sense of responsibility in the readers. He looked to Pudovkin and Eisenstein for their ability to systematize film techniques, whereas he sought to provide a historical overview of specific national cinemas through Jacobs's book *The Rise of the American Film*. These initiatives aligned with Giolitti's ambition to move from mere "information" to "education," specifically targeting an audience of viewer-readers. The pedagogical intent of Einaudi, expressed by one of its most influential consultants, aimed to equip the Italian public with the necessary tools to interpret cinematic images.

8. For the "Poggioli case," see: Mangoni (1999, 562–574).

The choice of the book series was also intentional. Instead of being published in a separate, specialized collection, books on cinema were included in the “Saggi” series. This series shaped the publishing house’s distinctive identity, making it increasingly recognizable, first to potential collaborators and later to a readership known for its strong loyalty and identification with the brand (Mangoni 1999: 22).

Cinema thus became not only a ground for internal debate on the publishing house’s political positioning toward the Communist Party and its relations with the Soviet Union but also a space for competition with other publishers. Einaudi’s cinematic authors had to align with the publisher’s Enlightenment-driven ambitions. They were expected to foster a conscious engagement with cinematic products and prevent passive consumption.

Hence, Giolitti’s proposed critical volumes were favored over Fonzi’s anthology. The Roman consultant took advantage of his position and leveraged his strong relationships with Antonio Pietrangeli and Umberto Barbaro. Like Pietrangeli, Barbaro was already an established film critic at the time.⁹ The first documented contact between Barbaro and Einaudi dates back to 1945, when the critic and professor at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia wrote a letter to Gastone Manacorda, asking him to act as an intermediary with the Turin-based publishing house for the publication of some of his translations (Barbaro 1945). On that occasion, Barbaro proposed his translation of Eisenstein’s writings on film aesthetics. The critic demonstrated a keen awareness of the publishing market and an understanding of the potential synergy between the film industry and the book world. Indeed, he emphasized the urgency of publication, as a new Eisenstein film (*Ivan the Terrible, Part One*) was scheduled for release in Italy in 1946. He wanted the book to be published simultaneously with the film to maximize its impact. The professor was also convinced of the wide audience such a publication could attract, noting that similar books published by the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia had sold out quickly (Barbaro 1945).

This initial proposal did not seem to gain traction within Einaudi, but four years later, the critic would resume his relationship with the Turin-based publishing house.

In March 1949, writing from Łódź in Poland, Barbaro responded to a letter from Giolitti, who was interested in his translation of Pudovkin’s essays under the title *Film e Fonofilm*. Barbaro was enthusiastic about the Einaudi consultant’s proposal but raised some concerns regarding the Russian filmmaker’s ideas and the practical aspects of publication (Barbaro 1949).

First, he pointed out that Pudovkin had further developed some of the reflections collected in the book, published in 1926. Therefore, he suggested including a preface to clarify the historical context in which the work originated. However, the main obstacle was the reprint rights. Barbaro had already transferred them to Edizioni dell’Ateneo, which was publishing a cinema series curated by the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia. He asked Giolitti to explore the possibility of negotiating with the publisher (Barbaro 1949).

In the same letter, Barbaro also took the opportunity to present an additional project to Giolitti. At the time, he was director of the cinema section of the Italy-USSR Association, and he was working as a consultant at the Scuola di Cinematografia in Łódź, where he was teaching a course on Marxist aesthetics (Barbaro 1949). He described the course as a pressing necessity, noting that a similar chair had also been established in Moscow. He proposed compiling his lectures into a book, intending to have them reviewed by Soviet authorities and then published simultaneously in the USSR and Italy. This proposal, however, did not receive immediate consideration.

The first concrete opportunity for collaboration between Barbaro and Einaudi that seemed promising involved the publication of a volume featuring writings by Soviet critics on the work and personality of Charlie Chaplin.¹⁰ The book, published in Italian in 1949 under the title *La figura e l’arte di Charlie Chaplin*, was initially supposed to include a preface by Barbaro himself (Fonzi 1949a). Bruno Fonzi was once again the Einaudi editor overseeing the project. In the correspondence between the two, editorial concerns intertwined with personal experiences, as Fonzi recalled his entrance exam for the directing course at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, where Barbaro had been a member of the admissions committee (Fonzi 1949b).

9. For Barbaro’s biographical trajectory, see Aristarco (1964) and Bruno (2003).

10. For the reception of Soviet criticism regarding Chaplin’s work in Italy, see Zilioli (2018) and the bibliography contained therein.

Barbaro wrote the preface for the volume, but the text did not appear in the final edition due to material constraints related to printing deadlines and certain bureaucratic misunderstandings (Fonzi 1949c). Einaudi's response, however, demonstrated the publisher's professionalism, as the house decided to compensate Barbaro for his work despite the preface not being included in the final volume. Having lost the opportunity to publish the text as a preface, Barbaro requested the return of his manuscript, as he intended to publish it in a journal. However, according to Fonzi, the document had unfortunately been lost (Fonzi 1949d).

Nevertheless, we can reconstruct the perspective that Barbaro intended to convey to Einaudi's edition of the Soviet texts on Chaplin's art. In 1955, in an essay titled *L'arte di Charlie Chaplin*, Barbaro wrote:

Chaplin's films are regarded as great works of art by those who aspire to a better and happier world. [...] No greater optimism can be asked of or attributed to Chaplin's work except that which arises, as a reaction, from his truthful portrayal of the ruthlessness of the capitalist world (Barbaro 1955: 112-16).

Barbaro's vision, in other words, emphasized criticism of the capitalist degenerations truthfully portrayed by Chaplin. This vision was largely aligned with Einaudi's strategy on cinema.

In the same weeks that the book on Chaplin was going to print, Giolitti was closely overseeing several other initiatives. In 1949, he vouched for the reliability of Guidarino Guidi as the translator of two key works: *The Film Sense* by Eisenstein and *The Rise of the American Film* by Jacobs.

At that time, Guidarino Guidi was just in his early twenties and seeking financial stability. However, Antonio Giolitti had great confidence in his abilities, describing him as a strong English speaker and a cinema specialist. The director of Einaudi's Rome editorial office recommended terminating the contract with Pietrangeli for the translation of Eisenstein's text due to significant delays. Instead, he proposed signing an agreement with Guidi. However, since Guidi was also responsible for translating Jacobs's work, he had to manage both projects simultaneously, leading to considerable delays in their publication (Giolitti 1949b). The young translator encountered significant linguistic difficulties in the texts. The numerous technical terms, the specificity of the subject, and the research required to adapt certain references led him to submit an incomplete and unreliable version. As a result, Bruno Fonzi had to intervene to revise and finalize the work (Fonzi 1950b).

It is clear, however, from these early and challenging attempts at translating and publishing volumes on cinema – as well as from the interests of its initial advocates, such as Fonzi, Giolitti, Guidi, Pietrangeli, and Barbaro – the guiding principle behind Einaudi's investment in cinema. This was a formative purpose that aligned with the publisher's ambition to establish itself as a key platform for discussion and critical reflection. It aimed at fostering a broader debate on cinema and its recognition as an art form.

The pedagogical intent of Eisenstein's book, *Tecnica del cinema* (1952), was evident in the bibliographic note included in the second edition of 1955: Eisenstein's thought was described as a field still largely unexplored, and the publication of his critical work was intended not only for professional filmmakers – primarily his students at the State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow – but also “for the ‘non-specialized’ reader who wishes to deepen their understanding of film-related issues and who will find the book highly engaging due to its varied and unconventional information, rich in suggestions and intriguing curiosities” (Scheda bibliografica Einaudi 1955).¹¹

The theoretical aspects of Eisenstein's work were also reflected in the material composition of the volume. The Soviet critic presented a progressive explanation, relying on numerous examples and drawing comparisons between the literary, theatrical, and cinematic worlds. Scene construction and editing were analyzed in detail, while the specificity of the subject was made accessible through precise lexical explanations and tables. Finally, an iconographic apparatus, drawing from both cinema and art, completed the volume. This formative objective thus extended to a broad and diverse audience, providing them with precise tools for interpreting the cinematic universe.

11. Scheda bibliografica Einaudi, n. 67, Agosto 1955. Included as a publisher's note in the 1955 edition of Eisenstein's book: *Tecnica del cinema*.

Eisenstein's volume served as a model and a guiding criterion for selecting books to be included in the series of technical writings on cinema. The work by the Soviet filmmaker achieved great success, receiving reviews in specialized cultural journals as well as in nationally circulated newspapers. The first print run quickly sold out, leading to a second edition published in 1955.

Another Einaudi book on cinema followed the pedagogical path established by Eisenstein's volume: *Il film. Evoluzione ed essenza di un'arte nuova* by Béla Balázs, translated by Fernaldo and Grazia Di Giammatteo, and published in 1952. Here, the educational approach sought by Fonzi, Giolitti, and Barbaro – fully realized in *Tecnica del film* by Eisenstein – found its most explicit expression.

The book began with an appreciation of aesthetic theory. The scholar then examined how the public interacts with different art forms. While schools and educational programs that enable a conscious interpretation of artistic and literary works were widespread on a global scale, little space was devoted to the teaching of cinematic art:

In middle school textbooks, where all the arts are discussed, not a single chapter is dedicated to cinema. Millions of people study the aesthetics of literature and painting without ever expecting to apply what they have learned or even to read a book or contemplate a painting. And yet, these same individuals go to the cinema every evening: their ignorance passively absorbs whatever is presented to them. No one has taught them how to watch or critically evaluate a film (Balázs 1952: 20).

Like Eisenstein's work, Balázs's volume also fell into the category that Husson defines as "recherche graphique et cinématographique" (Husson 2022: 16). Teaching how to watch a film consciously became a foundational goal for Einaudi and its consultants, expressed through this specific strand of its catalog. Alongside theoretical studies, the second subject explored by Einaudi's editors was the historical-analytical approach, which would find its main reference in Georges Sadoul and his *Storia del cinema* (1951). The latter founded a specific editorial section in the catalog, developing only partially with Jacobs's book.

The moment, moreover, seemed increasingly favorable for expansion, particularly toward foreign film criticism. Guidarino Guidi sensed this possibility and was highly proactive in proposing new titles to Giolitti, his point of contact at Einaudi. Among the books proposed by Guidi and, in principle, supported by Giolitti were *The Art of the Film* by Ernest Lindgren, *Soviet Cinema* by Catherine de la Roche and Thorold Dickinson, *Film Technique and Film Acting* by Vsevolod Pudovkin, *Experiment in the Film*, edited by Roger Manvell, and *Usine de Rêves* by Ilya Ehrenburg.

None of these titles was published under the Einaudi imprint. Nonetheless, it is significant that the type of cinema book associated with the publishing house was already well-defined and recognizable. These works shared specific characteristics: they were critical and historical studies aimed at conveying general knowledge about a national cinema or providing tools for interpreting films, always with a distinctly pedagogical and normative intent. For now, there was no room for anthologies, monographs on a single film or author, screenplay collections, or, ultimately, popular cinema works.

3 The Foundation of Italian Film Criticism under the Einaudi Imprint

In the catalog of the Turin-based publisher, foreign authors would soon be joined by Italian film critics who, until then, had primarily played roles as consultants and mediators.

In line with a pedagogical-theoretical project, Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti was one of the first Italians to publish a book on cinema with Einaudi. Having studied at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa, where he encountered key figures in his intellectual development such as Aldo Capitini and Delio Cantimori, and having specialized in art history, Ragghianti progressively focused on film criticism during the 1930s, beginning to collaborate with various journals.¹² His cooperation with Einaudi began in the early 1940s when he was entrusted with leading the "Biblioteca d'Arte" collection. After a few years, the publishing house resumed its relationship

12. For a biographical trajectory of Ragghianti, see Pellegrini (2016).

with him in the postwar period, entrusting him with reestablishing contact with the contributors to his series (Munari 2011: 20). While maintaining his position as a reference figure in the field of art, in November 1948, Ragghianti submitted a proposal to Giulio Einaudi: a small volume of about a hundred pages, with or without illustrations, titled *Cinema arte figurativa*. The book would consist of essays dating back to 1933-34, more recent ones, and some entirely new and unpublished texts (Ragghianti 1948). His idea somewhat mirrored the one that Fonzi had suggested to Pavese a few months earlier: a collection of theoretical studies discussing “many theories and even more nonsense that has been said or is usually said about cinema” (Ragghianti 1948). The author presented the idea as a general and illustrative clarification of cinema as a figurative art, approached from a modern and rigorous aesthetic perspective. Ragghianti also anticipated broad and timely appreciation from a wide audience. For this reason, he urgently inquired whether the publisher was interested in the project and what the expected publication timeline would be (Ragghianti 1948). However, Ragghianti’s work did not receive immediate and unconditional acceptance. At that time, indeed, Pavese’s approach still seemed to influence the selection of cinema books at Einaudi. The reader’s report on Ragghianti’s proposal was not particularly favorable. The assigned reviewer noted that the articles in the collection had a journalistic tone and were somewhat disjointed. Even Ragghianti’s recognition as a film critic known to a broad audience was called into question. While the approach to cinematic aesthetics in relation to the figurative arts was considered interesting, it was deemed necessary to develop it in a more organic manner rather than through a collection of loosely connected texts. Additionally, references to past critics, such as Anton Giulio Bragaglia and Gordon Craig, were seen as lacking impact. The reader’s report stated that the quoted theories were considered highly relevant, despite being linked to debates that had long since disappeared from intellectual discourse. However, the most significant criticism was the inconsistency of the discussion itself and its evident origin in occasional, day-to-day commentary (Reader’s Report s.d.). The structure of the texts was not the only factor complicating the publication of the volume. The selection of images for the iconographic section also proved to be an obstacle to the book’s swift organization. In June 1949, Ragghianti reached out to Einaudi again, describing his search for illustrations that were both closely aligned with the text and “intrinsically beautiful” (Ragghianti 1949). Ragghianti’s background as an art historian and the influence of *photogénie* theories are reflected in the reasoning behind his illustrative choices, shaping the typographic composition of the volume.

The publication of the text was thus significantly delayed, finally seeing the light only four years later, in 1952. As previously noted, after 1949, Einaudi’s approach to cinema had undergone significant changes, allowing Ragghianti’s volume to be included in a dedicated section of the catalog. Its educational intent was evident from the title itself, *Cinema arte figurativa* (Ragghianti 1948) and it could contribute, through the perspective of an Italian critic and a prominent figure in Einaudi’s artistic sphere, to the debate on cinema as an art form.

While foreign authors had established the foundation for Einaudi’s cinematic publishing and Italian critics had initially focused on editorial consultancy, the publication of Ragghianti’s volume – following the early efforts of Fonzi and Barbaro – marked a pivotal step in the development of cinema studies within Einaudi and, more broadly, in the publishing industry.

The definitive acknowledgment of cinema as a subject of great interest for the publishing house was marked by the beginning of the collaboration with an external consultant who helped rebalance the relationship between foreign and Italian publications: Guido Aristarco.¹³ The first contact between Aristarco and Einaudi dates back to the end of 1950, when Bruno Fonzi expressed great interest in the typescript that would later become *Storia delle teorie del film* and proposed a publishing contract to the author (Fonzi 1950).

Aristarco accepted the conditions set by the publisher and, by the beginning of the following year, had already submitted the complete manuscript. Fonzi, however, proposed structural modifications to the volume. In particular, Einaudi’s editor suggested substantial revisions to the first eighty pages. According to him, most of these pages should have been moved to the end of the volume, as they discussed the contemporary state of film criticism and addressed a context that resulted from the book’s overall discussion. If placed at the beginning, the subsequent chapters would merely revisit a discourse already concluded in the opening section (Fonzi 1951a). Simultaneously, Fonzi asked Aristarco to revise the first four pages, transforming them into a concise introduction that would seamlessly transition into the volume’s first main chapter, *The Precursors (I precursori)*. Aristarco accepted Fonzi’s suggestions and revised the introduction and the overall structure of

13. For a foundational study on the analysis of correspondence as a tool for investigating Aristarco’s critical work, see Noto (2019).

the volume accordingly. Most of the pages originally intended for the opening of the volume were relocated by the author to the final chapter, titled *Crisis of a Theory and the Need for Revision* (*Crisi di una teoria e urgenza della revisione*). The sense of urgency was conveyed through the call for a contemporary commitment to film literature, which had become stagnant, relying on theories no longer perceived as avant-garde. Fonzi's intervention, therefore, held significant value, engaging with the broader field of film criticism and Einaudi's intellectual role within the Italian cultural landscape.

The typographical layout also underwent significant changes during the book's composition. Initially, the author sent the publisher fifteen photographs. However, in a letter dated June 1, 1951, the Einaudi editor requested more photographs, aiming to significantly expand the visual section of the book. The editorial team believed that a richer visual component would help attract a broader audience beyond just specialists (Fonzi 1951b). Once again, the intervention substantially altered the way the volume was presented to the public.

A final crucial change in the book's composition concerned a significant paratextual element: the title. Aristarco had originally proposed the title *Film: evoluzione di una cultura*, but during the editorial meeting on May 30, 1951, the title became the subject of a lengthy discussion. Several alternatives were proposed: Giulio Bollati suggested *Storia della cultura cinematografica*, while Norberto Bobbio advocated for *Storia dell'estetica cinematografica*. In the end, the Einaudi editorial board opted for *Storia delle teorie del film* (Munari 2011, 273).

The title was deliberately chosen to reference the book's historical and theoretical approach, suggesting a perspective in line with the works of foreign authors previously published by Einaudi.

Fonzi himself explained the choice to Aristarco:

'history' here must be understood in its modern sense, which implies the author's perspective on the issue – rather than a mere description of facts and ideas with a more or less explicit claim to objectivity – thus justifying and shaping the final refinement of the work (Fonzi 1951b).

In its final form, the volume reflected a collaborative composition in which various figures, alongside the author, had played a significant role. One of the most influential film criticism titles in Italy in the early 1950s thus emerged as the result of a series of negotiations shaped by the internal dynamics at Einaudi. Precisely for this reason, it marked the opening of a new pathway for cinematic literature.

The significance of this operation was confirmed by the meticulous attention given to the final material aspects of the volume. The design of a suitable dust jacket, featuring an image from Laurence Olivier's film *Henry V* (1944), caused yet another delay in publication (Fonzi 1951c). Once again, the driving force behind Einaudi's editorial strategy was the desire to create a book with a strong appeal and a recognizable identity for its audience.

Everything contributed to a pivotal initiative within Einaudi's publishing policy in the early 1950s, not only in the field of cinema. Fonzi confided to the author that the publishing house intended to give the book a "special launch". He asked the critic to provide the addresses of Italian and major foreign film periodicals, as well as those of the most relevant critics, to complement the already extensive press service. Additionally, he requested the addresses of several filmmakers mentioned in the book so that a circular letter could be sent, including a description of the book and a note indicating where and why each recipient had been cited. The promotional campaign also aimed to send an illustrated circular to members of Cine-Clubs in major Italian cities – the book's most natural audience (Fonzi 1951c). This was a broad, diversified, and nationally scaled approach, reflecting the transformation of the publishing market, which was increasingly oriented toward an industrial model that placed great value on distribution and promotional systems (Piazzoni 2021: 187-258).

The investment was significant precisely because it concerned a book on cinema. As a result, film literature and its network of connections became a central and strategic area within the catalog of a publisher that held a key position in the Italian editorial landscape. In other words, cinema played a decisive role in shaping Einaudi's *habitus*. By extension, film-related publishing gained its institutional status: reading about cinema became just as important as watching it.

4 Conclusions

Starting from the late 1940s, almost everyone at Einaudi began talking about cinema. No specific training was required, but a natural stratification emerged based on demonstrated expertise. A translator like Fonzi took on the task – although he had once aspired to be a director in his career, he had not pursued formal film studies, except as a self-taught enthusiast. A consultant like Giolitti also engaged with cinema, drawn to the entertainment industry through his connections, though his primary focus remained politics and economics. Pavese also took an interest, albeit superficially.

It was only over time that professional film critics such as Barbaro, Pietrangeli, Ragghianti, and Aristarco gradually took on a more prominent role. Einaudi saw in them an opportunity to enhance the recognizability of its brand. They ensured its reputation as a culturally reliable publisher, capable of publishing the most authoritative figures in this specialized field of knowledge.

The success of these early publications flourished due to the exponential growth of the film publishing market and the dedicated space that Einaudi chose to allocate to it. The internal interest within the editorial board is evidenced by the willingness to expand the publishing perspectives. During the editorial meeting on October 17, 1951, Bruno Fonzi expressed his strongly favorable opinion regarding the publication of *Hollywood Scapegoat* by Peter Noble (1950), a critical biography of Erich von Stroheim. Fonzi described the book as a thorough study of Stroheim's often unsuccessful struggle against the industrial organization of Hollywood in his attempt to create films that tackled some of the most pressing issues of contemporary life. The subject fully aligned with Einaudi's cultural positioning, which aimed to highlight the degeneration of a capitalist and industrial system in the artistic sphere. However, a final decision on the publication was postponed due to the number of cinema-related works already in progress. At the same time, a broader concern emerged within the editorial board: the need to expand the cinema book domain beyond general works by introducing titles that would delve deeper into specific issues within the field (Munari 2011: 318).

The need to broaden the scope of cinema publications became more evident just a month later. During the editorial meeting on December 5, 1951, the board discussed the possibility of translating a book of film screenplays proposed by Carlo Muscetta: *Three British Screen Plays. Brief Encounter, Odd Man Out, Scott of the Antarctic* (1950). In this case, Fonzi noted that the captions required to describe the cinematic action made the reading experience considerably heavier. According to him, books of this kind would likely appeal only to a small group of specialists. Einaudi and Bollati did not entirely agree with Fonzi's assessment. They argued that volumes of this kind would attract interest not only from cine-club enthusiasts but also from a wider, intellectually engaged audience. Additionally, they suggested that the cultural significance of the project could be enhanced by dedicating individual volumes to the works of renowned screenwriters – such as Chaplin, Prévert, and Spaak – with each book containing three or four of their most important screenplays. This proposal received unanimous approval, and as a result, Fonzi was entrusted with drafting a plan following these criteria (Munari 2011: 336–37). Several years before Cappelli launched the “Dal Soggetto al Film” series under Renzo Renzi's direction, Einaudi was already considering the possibility of dedicating a substantial and specialized section of its catalog to screenplays as a distinct editorial product. The latter could appeal not only to the most passionate cinephiles but also to educated readers with less expertise in the field.

The two directions outlined in the editorial meetings between October and December 1951 – books dedicated to specific case studies and volumes compiling film screenplays – would, in the following years, complement Einaudi's main strand of general cinema research. This approach allowed film-related publications to gain an increasingly significant place within the publisher's catalog. Times had changed since Pavese had expressed doubts about Fonzi's proposal for an anthology, noting that Einaudi only published books by critics. By now, the scope for selecting cinema volumes had expanded considerably.

Thanks to the rich archival material, we have attempted to trace the origins of Einaudi's film books, examining the roles, *habitus*, and objectives of a diverse range of figures, as well as the publication process of these texts. This approach could unveil a distinctive avenue in the study of film criticism.

The impact of these early titles on the publisher's subsequent editorial choices confirms their significance for both the history of film criticism and publishing history. Building on this research, we intend to further explore

Einaudi's later cinematic publications, which could offer new and valuable insights into the concrete formation of a true intellectual community. Within this social framework, cinema was not only a point of convergence but, more importantly, a catalyst for cultural debate.

Archival abbreviations

AE cart. 9 fasc. 127: Archivio di Stato di Torino, Archivio Storico Casa Editrice Einaudi, Corrispondenza con autori e collaboratori italiani, Aristarco Guido, cartella 9 fascicolo 127.

AE cart. 13 fasc. 187: Archivio di Stato di Torino, Archivio Storico Casa Editrice Einaudi, Corrispondenza con autori e collaboratori italiani, Barbaro Umberto, cartella 13 fascicolo 187.

AE cart. 82 fasc. 1255: Archivio di Stato di Torino, Archivio Storico Casa Editrice Einaudi, Corrispondenza con autori e collaboratori italiani, Fonzi Bruno, cartella 82 fascicolo 1255.

AE cart. 104 fasc. 1572: Archivio di Stato di Torino, Archivio Storico Casa Editrice Einaudi, Corrispondenza con autori e collaboratori italiani, Guidi Guidarino, cartella 104 fascicolo 1572.

AE cart. 169 fasc. 2524: Archivio di Stato di Torino, Archivio Storico Casa Editrice Einaudi, Corrispondenza con autori e collaboratori italiani, Ragghianti Carlo Ludovico e Licia, cartella 169 fasc. 2524.

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