

Image and imagination in education. *Visual narrative* through children's literature

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Abstract

When we talk about *picturebooks*, by now we refer to *visual narrative*, i.e. to that publishing production of books made up of text and pictures or just pictures – *silent books* or *wordless books*. The research, through a short historic excursus, ranges between the literary field – the stories – and the iconographic field – illustrations – in which epic tales, myths, traditional and folk tales, figures of the imagination and “fictions” originate. Therefore, we will analyse mostly literary works that include written tales and printed illustrations, critical references and compendia on pedagogical studies. In particular, we will privilege picturebooks for children that have been published both on a national and on an international level.

Quando si parla di “albi illustrati”, si fa ormai riferimento alla *visual narrative*, ovvero a quella produzione editoriale di libri composti da testo e illustrazioni o da sole immagini: i picturebooks che, rappresentando personaggi, oggetti e ambienti, raccontano una storia o espongono concetti. La ricerca si muove, attraverso un breve excursus storico, tra il campo letterario, ovvero le storie, e quello iconografico, le illustrazioni, ambiti da cui si originano i racconti epici, i miti, le fiabe tradizionali e popolari, le figure dell'immaginario, le “finzioni”. Verranno perciò analizzati principalmente repertori letterari comprendenti racconti scritti e illustrazioni stampate, riferimenti critici e compendi di studi pedagogici. In particolare verranno privilegiati gli albi illustrati per l'infanzia, pubblicati a livello nazionale ed internazionale.

Keywords: children's literature, picturebooks, illustration, visual storytelling, history of education

Parole chiave: letteratura per l'infanzia, illustrazione, visual storytelling, storia dell'educazione

Educating in “knowing how to look”

In the past, the publishing production in this field was addressed mostly to pre-school children or children attending primary school, but today – thanks to a higher graphic-pictorial attention and an increasingly particular narrative-metaphorical complexity – it comprises books addressed to children, young adults and adults (Ewers, 2000; Beckett, 2012; Nikolajeva, 1997). Today's crossover readers are mostly multimedia and audio-visual readers, but they can find or rediscover the pleasure of reading (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) and “looking at the pictures” (Faeti, 2011), which isn't a form of privilege anymore, but rather a pleasure for all ages.

Picturebooks (Halbey, 1997) are part of that visual panorama that belongs to readers since when they were little children, but, paradoxically, in everyday routine, we sometimes acquire a flat vision of these books, which doesn't do justice to the potential material that we handle. It is a “chest of drawers” full of treasures, and we're happy when we open just one drawer. But we need critical-metaphorical keys which will help us open the other drawers and reveal their secret content. It is necessary to develop and expand the terms of theoretical and practical consideration on picturebooks (Farnè, 2002; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006), and to open new windows of confrontation in order to

observe and deepen the relationship that the reader has with words and images (Arizpe & Styles, 2016) – with books as well as in everyday life – in the reality of doing things, in the relationship with the childhood, in the way of thinking about education, and in the importance of *knowing how to look* (Hamelin, 2012).

Picturebooks are important objects of culture (Campagnaro & Dallari, 2013) that are irreplaceable in the development of practices and fundamental habits of every individual. The attention span and reading skills, the symbolic competence, and the constant habit to elaborate thoughts (Blezza Picherle, 2002, 2004) are crucial instruments for the quality of the future of those who are growing up today, learning how to read and how to look, to know and to think, and therefore to live.

Wordless books or *Silent books* are gaining more and more attention, since they are increasingly spreading and migrating through the international publishing frontiers (Hamelin, 2012; Arizpe, Colomer & Martinez-Roldan, 2014; Barsotti, 2015; Terrusi, 2017; Trisciuzzi, 2017).

Picturebooks: textual storytelling meets iconic storytelling

In order to understand what picturebooks are today, we need to take a step back in time, to some centuries ago, dating back to the first illustrations and the first illustrated books dedicated to children or young adults. We will then travel on a path which will allow us to “look at the pictures” (Faeti, 2011) and understand the art of today’s picturebooks. This initial short historic excursus doesn’t aim to offer a thorough reconstruction of the history of illustrations – we don’t want to draw the complete genealogy of the field literature –, but we need this to understand the overall picture through selected pages of *illustrated children’s literature*. Indeed, Martino Negri maintains: “the history of children’s literature is the history of the meeting between words and pictures in the space of a page” (Negri, 2012, p. 49); it is the place of possibility and change, which is always capable of surprising and amazing the reader.

The research ranges between the literary field (i.e. the stories), and the iconographic field (Salisbury & Styles, 2012), (i.e. illustrations), in which epic tales, myths, traditional and folk tales, figures of the imagination and “fictions” originate. Therefore, we will analyse mostly literary works that include written tales and printed illustrations (Kurt & Günter, 2005), critical references and compendia on pedagogical studies (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2014). In particular, we will privilege picturebooks for children that have been published both on a national and on an international level.

For a historic and pedagogical reconstruction (Ewers, 2000) of what a picturebook is (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006), of how illustrations for children were born (Farnè, 2002; Terrusi, 2012) of the current correlation between picturebooks, childhood and educational relationship, the research was based on studies and pieces of scientific research (Faeti, 2011; Trisciuzzi, 2017).

Picturebooks (Evans, 2015) can be considered a form of specific narrative, in which images interact with each other, thus contributing to the creation of a story; they involve peritextual elements – such as the cover and the back cover, the flyleaves and the title page – and material elements – such as the size and the type of edition (hard cover or paperback), the format, the layout and the binding – in an original narrative representation.

Given its morphologic structure and the aesthetic features that characterize its fascinating narrative universe, a quality picturebook encourages the child to relate the narrative elements of the story to each other, according to a cause-effect relationship, and this happens through a consequential logic and an evaluation of the protagonist’s choices, which, through personification, will increase the awareness of the judgement with respect to the events and behaviours recounted (Eco, 1979).

When the textual storytelling and the iconic storytelling meet, as it happens mostly in picturebooks, the dialogue between the two parties brings the story to a higher level and allows the child to open up to the imaginative desire, as it prompts the child to ask themselves questions and look for specific interpretations. Yet, we will see that this does not happen all the time, but only in particular cases in which the meeting between words and pictures has its own balance. In fact, Faeti

reminds us that: “the presence of the picture is not always desirable and acceptable: there must be a critical and cognitive equipment in the educators that allows them to choose among the huge and various production currently on the market and find the figures that are most dialectically permeated by creative modalities, in a stark and happy contrast with the stereotypical and reiterative load that is often found in the media responsible for broadcasting iconographic messages” (Faeti, 2001, pp. 81-82).

The introduction of illustration, which has been often accused of harming the development of the cognitive processes of the child, doesn't make the narration easier, but rather it makes it more problematic and more complex. The picturebook and its reading bring the reader to ask themselves questions, to widen their visual and imaginative horizons, and to relate to the world through the written and illustrated page of the book in the first place.

A historic excursus on illustrations for children

Assuming that human beings have always told stories about themselves and what surrounded them, about what they saw or what was difficult to see – that could only be revealed through imagination and then be passed down and shared –, stories that have been bequeathed for millennia appeared at first as images on the walls of caves and then on tablets or steles and scrolls. Papyrus, defined *volumen* in Latin, *Byblos* – from which comes *biblion* – i.e. book in Greek, have been used by mankind as places of expression and possibility.

Between the 2nd and 4th century, we witness to the transition from *volumen* to *codex*, and, in contrast with the scroll of pages that was difficult to handle, the *codex* was made of quires or booklets that were sewn together. It was easier to handle and less cumbersome and allowed to write on both sides of the page. The art of illustration finds its ideal support in the *codex* by setting up an ideal space in which verbal and non-verbal signs play a meaningful role. The discovery of this new format, the *codex*, and, mostly, its practical use led to the birth and establishment of the miniature technique, which, jointly with frescoes, represent the privileged source for painting during the Early Middle Ages. Ancient books and didactic works were historically used to tell religious stories from the Bible and the lives of the Saints. In ancient Greece and in Rome, the lives of the Gods were narrated in the famous illustrated works by Homer and Virgil. On the British islands, stories, poems and tales of the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic traditions were spread through the use of writing.

Between 1454 and 1455, starting from Gutenberg's invention of printing (Barbier, 2004), didactic-educational texts were spread little by little. The revolutionary technique of the movable types opened Europe's doors to the spreading of books, such as *The Book of courtesye* (1447), which included poems for children's education (Farné, 2002; Pallottino, 2010; Terrusi, 2012).

Even if the idea of illustrated art purposely intended for children is relatively recent, some researchers (Salisbury, 2004) suggest a few important milestones in the history of illustrated books. The first European prototype of illustrated book for children is considered to be *Das Kunst- und Lehrbüchlein*¹. The work by the German author Jost Amman (1539-1591) was published in Frankfurt am Main in 1578 and was intended as “the first European prototype of the illustrated children's books [...], a book of art and instruction for young people, wherein may be discovered all manner of merry and agreeable drawings” (Salisbury, 2004, p. 8).

As many researchers suggest, illustration for children was born in 1658, when *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (*Visible world in pictures*), written and illustrated by the Bohemian master Jan Amos Komensky (Figure 1), was published in Nuremberg.

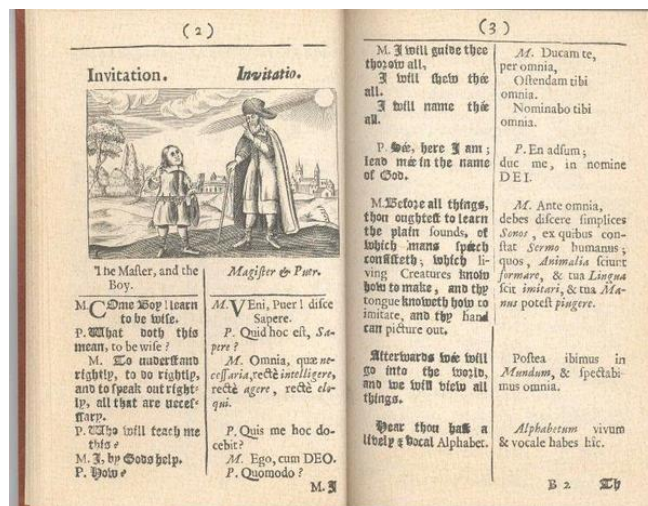


Figure 1 – “Invitation. The Master and the Boy”; *Orbis Pictus*

Comenius’ work’s subtitle is *Omnium fundamentalium in mundo rerum et in vita actionum, Pictura et Nomenclatura* and it offers to tell and explain the world to children (Farnè, 2002). The volume is divided into 150 topics which are matched by just as many copperplate prints. With this work, Comenius created the first primer intended for the basic education of children. It was published in the mother language of the author with Latin parallel text in order to match the iconographic representations.

Comenius introduces his work by inviting the child – the scholar – to venture into the pages in order to get to know the world that he describes and illustrates. In the book, there are various topics, ranging from religion to human virtues, from crafts to recreational activities, from writing to reading, from seasons to the events that characterise them. Furthermore, there are some pages dedicated to the representation of people, plants and real or fantastic animals.

Later, as centuries passed by, we can find works of paramount importance which, through the development of the pedagogical thought, lead to the evolution of illustrated books for children.

After the appearance in 1770 of the *Elementarbuch*, the illustrated primer for children by Johann Bernhard Basedow (1724-1790), it seems particularly meaningful to mention Alois Senefelder, who, at the end of the 18th century, invented the lithography technique, thus creating black and white images in a more inexpensive way with respect to other techniques of the time.

Thomas Bewick is the artist who gave birth to the process that today is known as “lithographic printing” (or *relief printing*), or rather the “wood engraving” (Salisbury, 2004, p. 9), which is still recognised and used because of its importance in the branch of illustration. The English artist Bewick introduced the art of the black line on a white background – a process that is indeed today known as *wood engraving* – by using the method of engraving the wood when it came to illustrating fables; as an example of his work, we can mention the 186 xylography woodcuts he dedicated to Aesop’s fables in 1818.

Bewick’s work appeared in the second half of the 18th century; at the same time, we can find another key figure in the English panorama: William Blake (1757-1827). Blake is considered to be the first real artist who explored the integration between text and images on the page. He became renowned as a great poet and artist thanks to the works he wrote and illustrated, such as the *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience: Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul* and the illustrations that go along the English author John Milton’s epic poem *Paradise Lost*, published in 1667.

The flourishing of picturebooks in Europe

Picturebooks started to flourish towards the end of the 19th century. Lithography was a form of printing that initially appeared in France at the beginning of the century.

The sales of these quality books for children were spreading and these works – which were also called “toy books” at the time – were increasing. While black and white illustrations were still prevailing on the pages, some artists, like H. K. Brown (also known as Phizz) and George Cruikshank were highly recognised and appreciated, mostly because of their illustrations of Charles Dickens’ stories.

Towards the middle of the century, two important artists emerged, who were pivotal figures for the evolution of the field literature: Edward Lear, whose *Book of Nonsense* was published in 1846, and John Tenniel, whose drawings will always be remembered through Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, which was published in 1865, thus inaugurating the well-known *Golden Age* of picturebooks in Great Britain and in the United States.

We would like to mention Edmund Evans, Thomas Bewick’s pupil, an educated English craftsman known for having dedicated his life to children’s literature; he spread it and became a publisher and printer of artists such as Walter Crane (1846-1886), Kate Greenway and Randolph Caldecott. Through the synergy between text and image that he impressed in his works, Randolph Caldecott highly influenced the development of illustration in children’s literature. Thanks to his more sophisticated approach to the composition of the relationship between image and text, Caldecott is one of the English artists of the Victorian Age that is often mentioned and considered as the father of modern picturebooks. Before Caldecott, an illustration usually matched the relative part of the story next to the text, putting into image the words that were used to tell the story. Conversely, the artist tried and merged texts and images together, so that the story became a complete work thanks to the combination and the interrelation between the two.

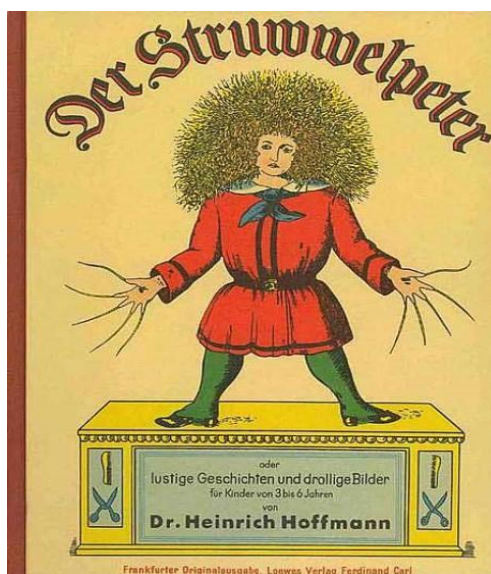


Figure 2 – *Shockheaded Peter*, Cover

At the same time, in Germany, Heinrich Hoffmann prepared to create his well-known stories about *Struwwelpeter* (Hirlinger-Fuchs, 2001)(Figure 2), *Pierino Porcospino* in Italian, *Shockheaded Peter* in English (1845):

Just look at him! There he stands,
With his nasty hair and hands,

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See! His nails are never cut;
they are grim'd as black as soot;
And the sloven, I declare,
never once has comb'd his hair;
Anything to me is sweeter
Than to see Shock-headed Peter² (Hoffmann, 1995).

Hoffmann (1809-1894) was a very famous eclectic intellectual, psychiatrist, composer, author and illustrator of children's books. His work was published in Frankfurt in 1845 and it contains the story of *Shockheaded Peter* and many other stories, such as *Paulinchen*, or *Die gar traurige Geschichte mit dem Feuerzeug*: "The story tells the tragic end of little Paula. The girl is left alone at home and begins to play with a match, regardless of the continuous warnings of the two cats Minz and Maunz. Little Paula finally burns all over everywhere, and becomes a pile of ashes from which only her little scarlet shoes remain"³. The story arose from Hoffmann's creativity on a winter day when his son was sick. The writer decided to give his son a book as a present, but noticed that, on the market, there were only righteous unentertaining books, which didn't strike children's curiosity. Nor his own. So he decided to buy a blank notebook and write and illustrate a story himself then give it to his son. This book was published in Italy in 1882 and is constantly reprinted, even if it is very different from those stories, to which today's young readers are used to.

The stories included in the *Strummelpeter* volume and all those which derived from it – the so-called *Strummelpeteriaden*, such as *Strumwellise* – are characterised by an unsettling aura and attract children who are curious to see the reality expressed in a gory, sometimes almost unlikely, way:

Look, here she is
Pooh! The Shock-headed Liese!
Unwashed, unkempt,
with the torn shirt,
with holes in socks and shoes,
her doll is terribly dirty, poof!
Pooh! It's a louse,
She's really ugly dirty Shock-headed Liese!⁴.

The gloomy tone that characterises all stories in Hoffmann's work, and all those that derived from it – the *Strummelpeteriaden* such as *Strumwellise* – attract children and engage them in a game that bounces them between desire and fear.



Figure 3 – "Max and Moritz", *Max und Moritz*, *Eine Bubengeschichte in sieben Streichen*

Another story coming from Germany is the one about the disrespectful rascals *Max und Moritz*, *Eine Bubengeschichte in sieben Streichen* (Figure 3), created by Wilhelm Busch's pen – and pencil – in 1856. In the same year, as we have seen, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, with Sir John Tenniel's

illustrations, was published in England. Beside Tenniel, another great illustrator who gave a face and a body to Alice, thus impressing her in the collective imagination was the skilful and well-known Arthur Rackham (Figure 4). In addition to Lewis Carroll's *Adventures* (1865), he skilfully illustrated many other works. His unmistakable stroke decorates the pages of numerous children's books that have by now become classical books in the field of children's literature. Among them, there are James Matthew Barrie's novel *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906) (Figure 5), Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) and many more.



Figures 4 – “At this the whole pack rose up into the air, and came flying down upon her”, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*



Figure 5 “Peter with Fairies”, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*.

The new picturebooks

The 20th century opens up with some child icons that are indelibly impressed in the collective imagination, such as the previously mentioned *Peter Pan* by James Matthew Barrie, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1901) by the artist Beatrix Potter and *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (1905) by Windsor McCay.

In France, we find the stories by Jean de Brunhoff, who published the *Histoire de Babar le petit elephant (The story of Babar)* in 1931, in which words and images meet and give birth to a classical book with light and dark themes that are both beloved and disputed (Lurie, 1997).

In Germany, we find Tomi Ungerer, who won many prizes: he received the Hans Christian Andersen Medal for Best Illustrator in 1998 and, in Italy, the Andersen Prize for Best Author in 2002. Moreover, in 2000, the European Council chose him as Ambassador for Childhood and Education (L'École des loisirs, 2008, p. 14) and his hometown, Strasbourg, dedicated him a whole museum. Among his publications, which include more than 140 works, we would like to mention *The adventures of the Mellops Family*, which have been published by Harper and Brothers in New York between 1957 and 1960, and, in Germany in 1978 for the first time, with the title *Die Abenteuer der Familie Mellops*. In Italy, they have been published by Mondadori in 2000 for the first time, and by Donzelli Editore in 2011.

In 1963, Ungerer published the Bilderbuch – picturebook – *Die drei Räuber* in Germany, which was first published in Italy in 1998 by Mondadori in a paperback pocket edition and then by Nord-Sud Edizioni in a bigger hardcover version. This is the story of an orphan girl, Tiffany, who, during her journey, meets three gloomy and dangerous robbers all dressed in black; she later finds out that they are not bad at all, because, even if they appear to be cruel, their heart is in the right place. The story prompts the reader not to judge by appearances, but to look beyond stereotypes and prejudices, which can cloud the judgement of those who observe the world.

The three robbers discover and accept a new side of life when they become something like the child's new fathers: they protect her and take care of her. They are new father figures that are no longer dangerous and cruel, but rather affectionate and loving; the new fathers/robbers decide to change their lives and take care of many other children who don't have a family, just like Tiffany.

In 2007, the album *The three robbers* was adapted as an animated film with the title *Tiffany e I tre briganti (Die Drei Räuber – The Three Robbers)* directed by Hayo Freitag. For the German production of the movie, the narrator was dubbed by Ungerer himself.

In Italy, during the 20th century, next to traditional publishing productions, we start to glimpse new experimental forms that confer an unprecedented dignity and importance to pictures (Boero & De Luca, 1995; Faeti, 2011). This leads to the birth of magazines, such as the “Giornalino della Domenica” or “Il Corriere dei Piccoli”, and also some historic book series dedicated to children and young adults, such as “La Biblioteca dei Ragazzi” or “La Bibliotheca de *La Lampada*”.

Thanks to brave and brilliant persons like Antonio Rubino, the father of Italian comic strips and one of the founders of the “Corriere dei Piccoli” in 1908, “we started to reassess the role and the expressive possibilities of the visual language by travelling on original paths concerning the meeting and interacting processes of the languages in the space of a page”, as Martino Negri maintains (Negri 2012, p. 54). These paths would have led to the birth of new story-telling forms, such as *picturebooks* or *graphic novels*, that aren't easy to ascribe to a pre-existing model, such as Bruno Munari's *Nella notte buia (In the Darkness of the Night)*, Leo Lionni's *Piccolo blu e piccolo giallo (Little Blue and Little Yellow)* (Rauch 2012; Negri & Cappa, 2014), and Shaun Tan's *L'approdo (The Arrival)* and *Little Tree (Petit Arbre)* by the Japanese author Katsumi Komagata.

We have to underline that *picturebook* have a specific language with their own mechanisms and narrative and expressive resources. *Picturebooks* are enhanced through figures and mustn't be considered like all other books (Nikolajeva, 1997): they are a particular kind of books, whose literature requires a specific grammar that doesn't involve only the visual knowledge, but also the ability of letting images create a dialogue with the text, the graphic that has been used and in the object of the book.

As Umberto Eco maintains, illustration “is a system of signs that interprets other systems of signs”, therefore “illustrating means visually commenting on the products of other systems of signs, [thus] establishing an intertextual relationship that shouldn’t be reduced to the parasitic service, but can result in co-inventions” (Eco, 1979, p. 9).

New signs and bizarre stories

Those picturebooks which describe the world with a modern and open perspective get published. They are “bizarre stories” that are able to embrace concerns, conflicts, fears and worries by giving them a voice through the pages. They are illustrated narrations that overturn the idea that children stories must tell stories about good children, moralizing the plots and contents through admonishments, or tell stories about perfect happy families. Great illustrators gave this a huge contribution; we will mention just a few, such as Maurice Sendak, the famous author of many illustrated stories – *Where the Wild Things Are* (Figure 6), *In the Night Kitchen* – David McKee, author of the picturebooks *Not now, Bernard*, *Two Monsters* and *Tusk Tusk*; Anthony Brown, who published many stories, among which we would like to mention *Into the Forest* and *Piggybook*.

In Italy, the crucial moment in which we start a reflection on *picturebooks*, illustrated books dedicated to children, is the birth of Emme Edizioni, a renowned publishing company founded in Milan in 1966 by Rosellina Archinto. In Italy, we can’t talk about publishing industry for children without thinking of her, since she brought here illustrious voices who were already spreading abroad a special culture for children and their publishing industry; back then, they were still absent from the shelves of Italian bookstores and libraries.

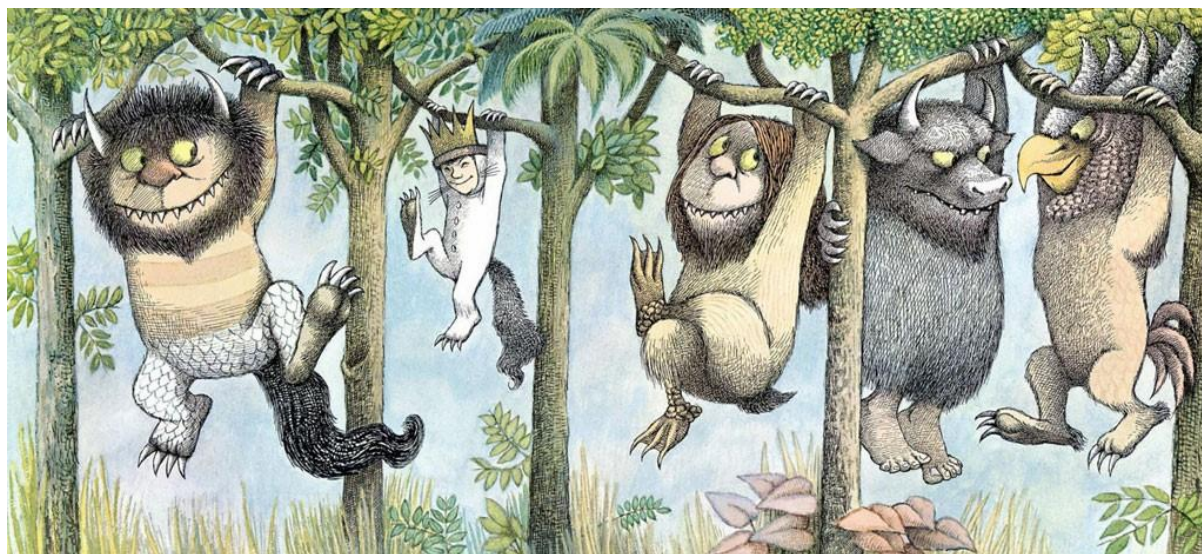


Figure 6 – “The rumpus”; *Where the Wild Things Are*

Ms. Archinto confronted with the world through an international perspective – a special inclination acquired during the time she had spent abroad, when she finished her studies, which she began in Milan, at the Columbia University in New York – and published books addressed mainly to early childhood. She devoted herself to spreading children’s books, which were almost works of art and reached a high artistic and literary level, on the Italian market. The first picturebooks published by Emme Edizioni were daring choices, since this innovation had created enthusiasm and appreciation on one side and controversies and some refusals by the foreign public on the other side. The first books she published were Leo Lionni’s *Little Blue and Little Yellow* (published in 1959 in the

USA and in 1967 Italy) and Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* (published in 1963 the USA and in 1967 in Italy).

But what was new about them? Ms. Archinto summed up the answer in four words: “New signs and bizarre stories” (Giannino Stoppani, 2005), or rather the innovation of the concept of the image on white paper and the diversity of the subjects, of the language and of the plots of the stories.

Subsequently, Emme Edizioni put the stories by extremely talented Italian authors and illustrators on the market, among which we would like to mention (Hamelin, 2010) Iela and Enzo Mari's *Il palloncino rosso*, *La mela e la farfalla* and *L'uovo e la gallina*. In 1968, Bruno Munari published his fascinating story *Nella nebbia di Milano* (*The circus in the mist*), in which he experimented with a new kind of literature, which involves not only vision but also all other senses of the reader. With the help of transparent and opaque paper, he recreated the visual feeling of the mist that envelops and clouds over everything in the city of Milan. This is a new perspective that introduces unique and innovative features on the market of children's book publishing in the Italian publishing industry, all under the name of Emme Edizioni. Antonio Faeti maintains that: “When Rosellina Archinto started to create a turning point in our children's literature, our books were then on the same level of the best foreign publications. Today, I miss Rosellina's courage a lot. Since when she declared that her innovative experience as a risk-taking experimenter had reached an end, ten years ago, I don't know whom I can entrust the (in my opinion) most attractive notes on my notebook” (Faeti, 1993).

In 1977, Loredana Farina (2004), jointly with Giorgio Vanetti, founded the publishing company La Coccinella Editrice, thus giving birth to stories and albums with an unmistakable structure (Hamelin 2011). We would like to remind Giorgio Vanetti's publishing sensation *Brucoverde* (*Un Petite Trou dans une Pomme*), that is still highly appreciated by the Italian public after forty years. The main feature of these albums, the trait that makes them so unique, is that they are “game-books”, or rather books with which the reader, even if very young, can play thanks to a particular element: holes. Curiosity, exploration and discovery can be stimulated page after page, which makes this particular book the ground for further versions that have been subsequently published. The copyrights of La Coccinella were immediately bought by foreign publishing companies, which published these highly appreciated illustrated game-books, for example, in Germany and in France, thus bringing Italy around the world.

In 1985, Rosellina Archinto decided to close Emme Edizioni and, in the following years, she dedicated herself to publishing books for adults; but children's literature kept fascinating her, so, in 1999, jointly with her daughter Francesca and in partnership with the French publishing company Ecole des Loisirs, she founded Babalibri. The new publishing company reiterated her passion and innovation in the field of children and young adult book publishing, and she decided to reissue the first books she chose to publish during the first years at Emme Edizioni.

Since 1999, Babalibri publishing company can be considered as one of the best and most prestigious Italian companies in the field of children and young adult book publishing; it still brings picturebooks with “new signs and bizarre stories” to our bookstores and libraries.

Words can be an authentic “poetic toy” (Rodari, 2014); and images are just as important as words; or better still, they allow to wander through imagination in possible *elsesheres*. As writers use words, choosing, matching and arranging them, great illustrators carry out the same procedure but using brushes and pencils, watercolours and collage. The designing of the album, with its size and types of layout (think of how the Korean illustrator Suzy Lee uses the limits and borders of the page), the chromatic combinations and many other aspects are the choices on which everyone who wants to publish an picturebook must think about.

In conclusion, if we want to learn the pleasure of reading a book since our early childhood, first of all we must learn how to read emotions through quality books: today, it is more and more necessary to talk about both *textual quality* and *iconographic quality*. The literary and artistic quality of picturebooks amazes and enchants, and enables the growth and the maturation of younger readers, by acting on a deeper level and leaving a mark: the quality picturebook educates by planting questions that stimulate the critical thinking.

Notes

¹ Retrieved December 12, 2017, from <http://www.virtuelles-kupferstichkabinett.de/>

² “Sieh einmal, hier steht er,/Pfui! Der Struwwelpeter!/An den Händen beiden/Ließ er sich nicht schneiden/Seine Nägel fast ein Jahr;/Kämmen ließ er nicht sein Haar./“Pfui!”, ruft da ein jeder,/“Garst’ger Struwwelpeter!” (Hoffmann, 2005).

³ “Die Geschichte erzählt das tragische Ende von Paulinchen. Das Mädchen ist zu Hause allein geblieben und beginnt mit einem Streichholz zu spielen, ohne Rücksicht auf die kontinuierliche Warnungen der zwei Katzen Minz und Maunz. Paulinchen fängt schließlich Feuer und wird ein Haufen Asche von dem nur seine roten Schuhe bleiben” (Hoffmann, 2005) (Author’s Translation).

⁴ “Sieh einamal, hier diese,/Pfui! Die Struwwelliese!/Ungewaschen, ungekämmt,/Rock zerrissen bis aufs Hemd,/Lochi m Strumpf und Lochi m Schuh,/Püppchen scheußlich schmutzig, puh!/Pfui! Ist eine Miese,/Garst’ge Struwwelliese!” (Lütje & Maddalena, 2004) (Author’s Translation).

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