

Prispevek je nastal v okviru izmenjave člankov med revijo *Otrok in knjiga* in italijansko revijo *Andersen*. V času 61. mednarodnega sejma otroških knjig v Bologni, kjer je bila Slovenija častna gostja, je revija *Andersen* objavila prispevek o slovenski otroški in mladinski književnosti z naslovom *Sei fatti e una mezza verità sulla letteratura slovena per bambini e ragazzi* (Šest dejstev in ena polresnica o slovenski mladinski in otroški književnosti). Članek je pripravila dr. Barbara Zorman, članica uredniškega odbora revije *Otrok in knjiga*. Prispevek o sodobni italijanski otroški književnosti in založništvu pa objavljamo ob priložnosti mednarodnega knjižnega sejma v Frankfurtu, na katerem se je Italija predstavila kot častna gostja.

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ANSELMO ROVEDA AND MARTINA RUSSO

## Italian voices

### The current landscape of the Italian children's literature and publishing industry

Italy's participation as the Guest of Honour at the Frankfurter Buchmesse 2024 highlights the vibrant and diverse sector of children's and young adult literature in the country. Here's an overview of the current landscape of children's publishing in Italy, characterized by greater diversity and specialization in audiences, languages, themes, and formats, which range from picture books to novels, non-fiction, and comic books. This evolution is supported by increased professionalism and international engagement, thanks to the works by artists who have transcended borders in both artistic and geographic sense. *Andersen*, the Italian magazine and award for children's books, plays a vital role in documenting this rich landscape, offering journalistic insights that resonate with a broad audience.

#### 1. Introduction

Italy's presence at the Frankfurter Buchmesse 2024 as the Guest of Honour represents a good opportunity to take stock of the cultural proposal and the publishing production of books for children and young adults. It is a dynamic and lively sector, diverse and multifaceted; capable of being, in terms of international projection, a driving force for the entire Italian publishing industry.

More than one hundred sixty years have passed since the birth of Italy as a unified state (1861), and just slightly less since the publication of two books that mark the beginning of the modern Italian canon of children's literature: *The Adventures of Pinocchio: Story of a Puppet* (1883) by Carlo Collodi and *Cuore* (1886) by Edmondo De Amicis. These narratives have had varying fortunes: the first is globally known and still popular, at least as a source material for rewritings and adaptations; the second is almost relegated to literature history courses in the sector. Yet, in their distance and variety, they still ideally represent the dominant tension in the Italian

literature for children, and not only that. This tension is played out between the use of the counterfactual (fantastical and impossible worlds, magical intervention, indebted to fairy tales) and social narration (the description of society and its relationships, individual and collective feelings of the historical time represented).

Many things have happened in the meantime. Italy went through two decades of fascist dictatorship (1922-1943); it endured two tragic World Wars alongside Europe; it rose again as a republic (1946), embarking on democracy and contributing, from the very beginning, to the construction of the European Union. At the cultural level and in terms of policies for children, the Italy of Collodi and De Amicis is, by necessity, very far away. It is therefore normal that Italian literature for children -though indebted to early contributors like Emma Perodi, Ida Baccini, Luigi Capuana, Carolina Invernizio, Emilio Salgari, and Lina Schwarz - can be considered to have truly emerged with the establishment of the Italian Republic and its democratic institutions in the mid-20th century.

## 2. The Second Half of the 20th Century:

### The Birth of Modern Italian Children's Literature

Today, literature, illustration and publishing for young readers represent the evolution of a dynamic that has engaged childhood culture in Italy since the post-World War II period, which has clearly developed qualitatively since the 1970s (with the granting of the H.C. Andersen IBBY Award to writer Gianni Rodari in 1970) and quantitatively since the 1990s and 2000s.

**2.1. A New Beginning (1958–1981)** - We could symbolically set 1972, fifty-two years ago, as the watershed date that defines the season of conscious renewal in the sector, although we could already note significant clues from the preceding years about what was soon to come. In 1958, the series "Il Martin Pescatore", directed by Donatella Ziliotto, was launched by the Vallecchi publisher, bringing to Italy contemporary international classics such as *Pippi Longstocking* by Astrid Lindgren; in 1964, the first edition of what would soon become the most important International Children's Book Fair was held in Bologna; during the 1960s, canonical Italian writers and illustrators such as Beatrice Solinas Donghi, Pinin Carpi, Mino Milani, Lucia Tumiati, Emanuele Luzzati and Grazia Nidasio were active; in 1966, Emme Edizioni was founded by Rosellina Archinto, which would later introduce, among others, the works of Leo Lionni, Iela Mari, Bruno Munari, Tomi Ungerer, Eric Carle, Mitsumasa Anno ... In 1970, as mentioned, Gianni Rodari, in recognition of his decades-long work, received the IBBY Hans Christian Andersen Award; also in 1970, Bianca Pitzorno debuted with *Il grande raduno dei cow boys* (Edizioni Svizzere per la Gioventù). However, in 1972, as Roberto Denti (the founder, together with Gianna Vitali, of the first specialized bookstore in Italy that same year) loved to remember, several events occurred that would profoundly influence the landscape of Italian culture for children in the years to come: Antonio Faeti's essay *Guardare le figure. Gli illustratori italiani dei libri per l'infanzia* was published by Einaudi, a foundational text in illustration studies; the publication of the "Tantibambini" series by Einaudi, directed by Bruno Munari, also began, and, indeed, the Libreria dei ragazzi in Milan was born, which soon became a meeting place for those working with children's books at that time. In

1972, the volumes *Il teatro dei ragazzi* by Giuseppe Bertolucci, the first survey of the sector, and *La stampa periodica per ragazzi* by Giovanni Genovesi, a documented essay, were also published; furthermore, from March 6 to 10, Gianni Rodari participated in *Incontri con la Fantastica* in Reggio Emilia, from which *Grammatica della fantasia* (1973) would emerge the following year.

This marks the beginning of a season that, in a crescendo of cultural and entrepreneurial initiatives, would see the birth of seminal editorial projects in the following decade - the children's line of Editoriale Libraria, later Edizioni EL (1974), La Coccinella (1977), Nuove Edizioni Romane (1977), Fatarac (1979) ... - and the debut of writers such as Roberto Piumini (*Il giovane che entrava nel palazzo*, Nuove Edizioni Romane, 1978) and Giusi Quarenghi (*Ahi, che male*, Edizioni EL, 1982), as well as illustrators like Roberto Innocenti (active since 1973), Altan (who created La Pimpa for *Corriere dei Piccoli* in 1975), and Nicoletta Costa (debuting with *La Maestra Dormigliona*, Chiandetti Editore, 1980). From the 1970s onward, editorial designers sensitive to the needs of the youngest, such as Loredana Farina, one of the souls of La Coccinella, and Emanuela Bussolati, were also active,



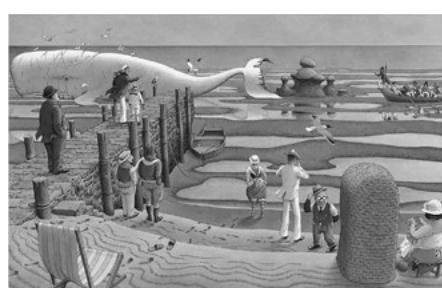
Roberto Innocenti: *Canto di Natale*  
(La Margherita, 2007)



Roberto Innocenti: *Pinocchio* (La Margherita, 2015)



Roberto Innocenti: *Casa del tempo*  
(La Margherita, 2010)



Roberto Innocenti: *L'Ultima spiaggia*  
(La Margherita, 2020)

while towards the end of the decade, studies by Pino Boero on children's literature and Paola Pallottino on illustration began. In 1981, those who would soon become Edizioni EL began publishing the "Le Letture" series, the first paperback series dedicated to Italian authors, an opportunity to foster local professionals.

**2.2. The season of growth (1982–2000)** - The ferment of that decade does not go unnoticed by two cultural and communication figures like Gualtiero Schiaffino and Ferruccio Giromini, who in 1982 created, in collaboration with Denti and Vitali as jurors, the Premio Andersen and, at the same time, the zero issue of the magazine *Andersen*, which would become a monthly publication, capable of giving voice to an expanding publishing sector in the following years. Over the years, other activities of information and militant criticism have joined the prize and the monthly magazine, with interventions in various media (radio, TV, internet), and, in the last two decades, with training on issues of childhood culture and reading education. A series of actions, in constant dialogue with each other, have been carried out with such continuity that they collectively configure as a permanent observatory on children's publishing.

Italian publishing for children in the 1980s and early 1990s has experienced further significant developments with the debut of authors such as Angela Nanetti (*Le memorie di Adalberto*, E. Elle Editions, 1984), Guido Quarzo (*Seconda storia del principe Faccia da Maiale e altri racconti*, Edizioni EL, 1990), Silvana Gandolfi (*La scimmia nella biglia*, Salani, 1992), and Bruno Tognolini (*Angeli, lucertole, bambini dappertutto*, Fatastrac, 1992). This period also saw the entry of major national publishers into the sector, as well as the birth of dedicated series, such as "Gl'Istrici" (1987) by Salani, "Junior" (1988) by Mondadori, and "Il battello a vapore" (1992) by Piemme. Additionally, the 1980s and 1990s marked the beginning of Munari's editorial production for Corraini, which has been active since 1973 as an art gallery, along with the birth of small but determined independent publishing houses like Carthusia (1987) and Sinnos (1990).

The establishment of the discipline within the university can also be witnessed; in 1990, Antonio Faeti became the first full professor of children's literature history, while in 1995, Pino Boero and Carmine De Luca published the first edition of the fundamental essay *Letteratura per l'infanzia* (Laterza). On the cultural front, there have been the birth, continuation, or renewal of magazines; this was the golden age of paper periodicals related to the field. Alongside the monthly *Andersen* (1982), other magazines usually published quarterly or triannually were active: *Schedario* (1953–1998), *Pagine Giovani* (1976), *LG Argomenti* (1977–2017, originally *Il Minuzzolo* in 1965), *Sfoglialibro* (1988–2012), *LiBeR* (1988). In the following years *Il Pepe Verde* (1999) and *Hamelin* (2001) also joined.

The decade that closed the 20th century also represented the moment of consolidation and quantitative stabilization of children's publishing production, which reached over two thousand new annual proposals; the major publishers with their series were the main protagonists. By the end of the decade, a new centrality of the children's publishing sector was also established within the overall dynamics of publishing, also thanks to commercially successful phenomena like the arrival in Italy in 1998 of the first volume of J.K. Rowling's saga, featuring Harry Potter.

### 3. The 2000s: Affirmation and Current Status of Italian Children's Literature

The new millennium opened on a high note, with stable figures for the sector that continue to this day, despite the significant international changes and crises, first economic and then health-related, that have affected the planet in the last fifteen years. The statistics, consistently recorded by AIE, the Italian Publishers Association, indicate positive signs regarding the central role of the children's sector within the overall national publishing industry, and even more with regard to export capabilities or translations abroad.

The magazine *Andersen* has been accompanying the development of Italian children's literature since 1982; not only with its monthly publication, but also with the already mentioned award and various information and training initiatives. In recent years, the Andersen Observatory, alongside the objective quantitative growth, with the increase in the number of published titles, specialized publishers, and authors, has been able to register some trends. Some indicate continuity, especially illustrated books; others, such as new languages, themes, and forms of literature for children and young adults, are emerging. Let us explore the current landscape in the light of some recent editorial novelties and the recent Premio Andersen shortlisted.

**3.1. The Languages of Illustration** - The historic figurative tradition in Italy has found a vibrant expression in illustration for publishing in recent decades. Among the names, recently awarded as the best illustrator of the year, are: Isabella Labate, an artist known for intense black-and-white representations, with works such as *Il bambino del tram* (Orecchio Acerbo) and *Il vecchio e il mare* (Kite); Claudia



Beatrice Alemagna: *Al parco*  
(Topipittori, 2022)



Beatrice Alemagna: *Le cose che passano*  
(Topipittori, 2019)



Beatrice Alemagna: *I cinque malfatti*  
(Topipittori, 2014)

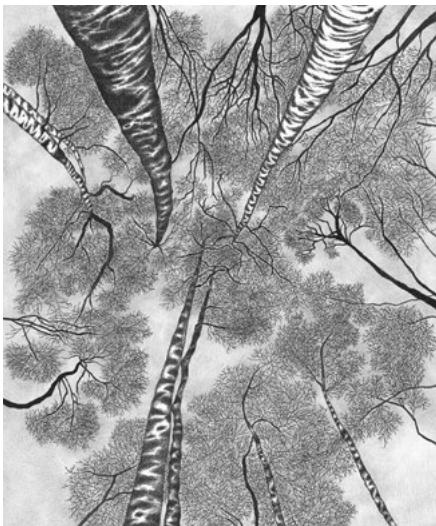


Beatrice Alemagna: *Un Leone a Parigi*  
(Donzelli, 2009)

Palmarucci with *L'incanto del buio* (text by Francesca Scotti; Orecchio Acerbo) or early in her career, the classic fairy tale *I musicanti di Brema* (Orecchio Acerbo); Mariachiara Di Giorgio with elegant works based on other texts such as the recent *Al canto del gallo* (by Fabian Negrin; Corsare), *Il furto di Natale* (by Anselmo Roveda; Interlinea), *La zuppa Lepron* (by Giovanna Zoboli; Topipittori) and *Uno come Antonio* (by Susanna Mattiangeli; Il Castoro); Daniela Iride Murgia with *Se ti sbrighi trovi ancora il mondo* (Carthusia) or *La bambina di ghiaccio* (by Mila Pavicević; Camelozampa); Felicita Sala with *Un anno a Fleurville* (Rizzoli) or *Il posto segreto* (by Susanna Mattiangeli; LupoGuido); and Marco Somà with *Chi sa che cosa sia la felicità, lo dica* (by Luca Tortolini; Emme Edizioni) or refined adaptations of the classics of Italian literature, such as *L'infinito* (Einaudi Ragazzi) by Giacomo Leopardi or *La Divina Commedia* (inspired by Dante's work; Einaudi Ragazzi). Or, talents like Andrea Antinori, a total author, for instance in *Sulla vita dei lemuri* (Corraini), or an illustrator of other texts, such as *La zuppa dell'orco* (by Vincent Cuvellier; Biancoenero), *Il paese degli elenchi* (by Cristina Bellemo, Topipittori), and *A cosa servono i gatti* (by Paolo Nori; Terre di Mezzo); Marco Paci, illustrator of the series "Atlanti dell'immaginario" (EDT Giralangolo); Giulia Pastorino with *Quando sarò grande and Ehi laggù, basta così* (both based on texts by Davide Cali and published by Clichy); or Olimpia Zagnoli, also a respected creator of covers even abroad (The New Yorker, The New York Times). The illustrators, who join the already internationally known and appreciated Beatrice Alemagna, are Lorenzo Mattotti, Pia Valentinis, Alessandro Sanna, Chiara Carrer, and Roberto Innocenti (H.C. Andersen IBBY Award 2008). The production of illustrated books is certainly the most characteristic aspect of the Italian publishing sector in terms of quantity. Moreover, the age group generally associated with this form of art, is the one targeted by almost 70% of the titles published for children and young adults.

**3.2. The Languages of Writing** - above you may have noticed the names of authors of texts; those who, in recent years, have skillfully worked on illustrated books. The common thread uniting today's writing for picture books in Italy is a constant commitment - drawing from the great masters, especially Rodari - to be "*on the side of children*," the ability to represent and give shape to their emotions and feelings, even when the stories unfold in the realm of fantasy. Among these authors are several Premio Andersen winners: Luca Tortolini, who is also active internationally; Sabrina Giarratana, who feels at home in both poetic texts and nursery rhymes, as evident in *Amica Terra* (illustrated by Arianna Papini; Fatatrac), *Filastrocche in valigia* (illustrated by Pia Valentinis; Parapiglia), or *Poesie di luce* (illustrated by Sonia M.L. Possentini; Giunti); Cristina Bellemo, also previously mentioned; or Susanna Mattiangeli, the Italian Children's Laureate for the 2022/2024 term. Also added should be the names of Giovanna Zoboli, the author of texts for many picture books published by Topipittori, and an international master like Davide Cali.

On the narrative front, capable of offering both - light stories and those useful for navigating the world of preadolescent and adolescent emotions - several authors are outstanding (many of whom have also been awarded the Premio Andersen): the multifaceted Beatrice Masini, with books such as *Bambini nel bosco* (Fanucci) or *Storia di May, piccola donna* (Mondadori); Francesco D'Adamo, author of



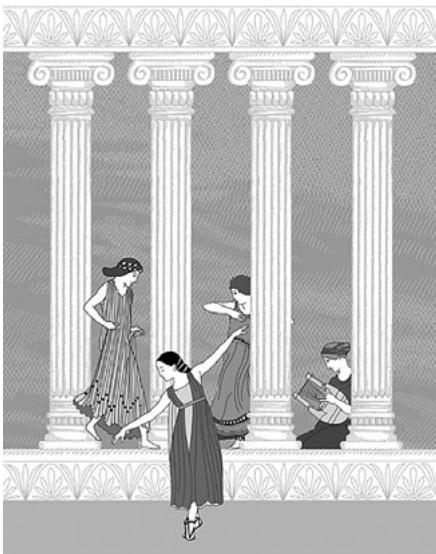
Pia Valentinis: *Raccontare gli alberi* (Rizzoli, 2021)



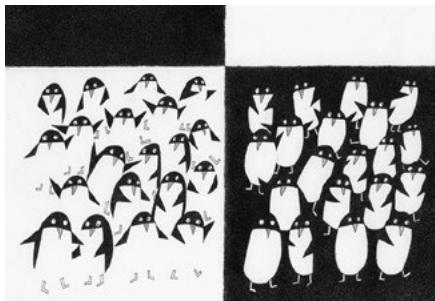
Pia Valentinis: *Che paesaggio* (Topipittori, 2017)



Pia Valentinis: *Le quattro stagioni* (Fabbri, 2005)



Pia Valentinis: *Saffo* (RueBallu, 2021)



Pia Valentinis: *Rime chiaroscure* (Rizzoli, 2012)

novels with a strong social commitment, such as *Il sentiero degli orsi* (Mondadori) and *Storia di Iqbal* (Giunti); Chiara Carminati, author, among other works, of the historical novel *Fuori fuoco* (Bompiani) and the poetry collection for adolescents *Viaggia verso* (Bompiani); Guido Sgardoli, master of adventure and mystery, with *Siberia* (San Paolo), *Tiziano e il bosco delle ombre* (Emons), or *L'isola del muto* (San Paolo); Davide Morosinotto, an internationally appreciated adventure writer, with the recent *La notte dei biplani* (Il Castoro) and *Il grande colpo di Crimson City* (Salani); Luisa Mattia, a prolific storyteller, author of the dystopia *Quello che è tuo*

è mio (San Paolo), or the historical novel *Tempesta Matteotti* (Lapis), dedicated to the antifascist Giacomo Matteotti; Nicola Cinquetti, a thoughtful author, also due to his profession as a teacher, attentive to themes dear to young readers, with *Ultimo venne il verme* (Bompiani) or *Quando la sera la luna ci parla* (Lapis); Marta Palazzi with the praised debut *Nebbia* (Il Castoro); Francesca Bonafini with *La strada ti chiama* (Sinnos), winner of the Premio Andersen 2023 in the category of Best Book for over 12; and Patrizia Rinaldi, an author of novels for adults, capable of creating intense works for children (*Federico il pazzo*, Sinnos), for adolescents (*Hai la mia parola*, Sinnos), or graphic novels (*La compagnia dei soli* and *Il regno dei disertori*, both illustrated by Marco Paci and published by Sinnos).

Moreover, when discussing Italian authors, we must remember some cornerstones of the written language; established authors with wide acclaim like Bianca Pitzorno, Roberto Piumini, Angela Nanetti, Giusi Quarenghi, Guido Quarzo, Silvana Gandolfi, and the master of nursery rhymes Bruno Tognolini. We should not forget some bestselling authors, who will appear at the Frankfurt Book Fair, such as Elisabetta Dami, creator of the investigative mouse Geronimo Stilton (Piemme), published in over 50 languages; Pierdomenico Baccalario, author of many novels and successful series such as "Ulysses Moore" and "Maghi raminghi" (both for Piemme); and Elisabetta Gnone, co-author of the comic series "W.I.T.C.H." (Disney Italia) and later the successful narrative series "Fairy Oak" (De Agostini, Salani). Or the authors creating literature for all and for young readers like Licia Troisi with fantasy sagas like "Mondo Emerso" (Mondadori) or the recent "Le guerre del multiverso" (Rizzoli); also Nadia Terranova. Finally, among the many narrative series, we highlight one awarded the Premio Andersen 2024: "Occhiaperti" from the publisher Pelledoca, focusing on mystery and suspense.

**3.3. The Specificity of Italian Young Adult Literature** - Italian literature for adolescents and young adults represents a relatively recent segment and is certainly subject to different editorial and commercial dynamics, compared to the rest of the production. Over the past ten years, the landscape has changed so much that the Premio Andersen Jury felt the need to create a category that considered the titles aimed at »older« readers, those to whom one would once recommend literature »tout court.« While the debate over the label attributed to these books (for commercial, philological reasons, or simply for cataloging purposes) is quite lively, the subject matter of these stories is still evolving, especially when considering national production. Finding a common thread or a pattern among what is being offered to contemporary readers is not straightforward. There is certainly notable attention to romance and fantasy, as seen in the publishing case of *Il fabbricante di lacrime* by Erin Doom or in the previously mentioned series by Licia Troisi. There is also a desire to explore the everyday, seen from the perspective of those, who feel constrained by conformity, as is the case with the protagonists of the interesting »Weird Young« series by Fandango, which gathers works by various Italian authors such as Manuela Salvi (Cris), Andrea Garello (*Battle zone*), Federica Tuzi (*Non ci lasceremo mai*), Flavio Nuccitelli (*Frenesia*), Elisa Amoruso (*Sirley*), and Michele Cocci (*Us*).

Narrowing the field and considering the recent years of the Premio Andersen, it is clear that since the creation of the category »Best Book for over 15« several works by Italian authors have been awarded. Focusing on the last ten years, the first is

*Una sottile linea rosa* (Giunti) by Annalisa Strada, a novel awarded in 2014, which delicately and incisively recounts Perla's discovery of an unexpected pregnancy. A balanced story that manages to avoid being didactic, despite centering a well-defined dynamic in the narrative. Annalisa Strada is, after all, a long-established author and certainly one of the most frequently encountered names in the catalogs of San Paolo, Il Castoro, Giunti, and Piemme, for which she has written titles closely related to the history of our country, as well as for a readership even broader than the age group this reflection addresses, ranging from early readers to middle grade.

More intimate and dreamlike is *Se tu fossi qui* (San Paolo) by Davide Rondoni, awarded in 2015: a journey through the marshland for a boy seeking to know his father, who ultimately discovers himself. Rondoni has primarily written for an adult audience, and his incursions into children's literature, if a boundary is to be drawn, have been few. The same goes for Alberto Vignati, whose novel *Alle periferie dell'impero* was shortlisted in 2019.

A flight is also recounted by Gabriele Clima in *Il sole fra le dita* (San Paolo), awarded in 2017 “*for the desire not to linger on sentimentalism, but to pursue the concreteness of relationships.*” A coming-of-age novel that traverses the Italian province, recounting the story of the friendship that develops between Dario, an irresponsible daredevil, and Andy, hindered by disability. This is not Clima's only novel (he has also written *La stanza del lupo* for San Paolo and *Continua a camminare*, published by Feltrinelli), but he has dedicated much of his work to early childhood literature.

While a strong individual component is central to many of these narratives, the case is different for the already mentioned *L'isola del muto* (San Paolo) by Guido Sgardoli, awarded in 2018: an open window onto the history of a Scandinavian lighthouse, around which the events of multiple generations unfold. A plurality of voices can also be found, in a completely different context, in *Eravamo il suono* (Lapis) by Matteo Corradini, which, awarded this year with a Special Jury Prize, retraces the history of the female orchestra in Auschwitz.

The voices, deliberately confused and almost deceptive, alternate in *Senza una buona ragione* by Benedetta Bonfiglioli, published by Pellegrina. The book, awarded in 2021, recounts an adolescent everyday life, undermined by a toxic friendship. Bonfiglioli is also present in the catalogue of Giralangolo, which, in the »Dinamo« series, collects some interesting voices from the contemporary Italian scene, such as Simone Saccucci (*La nota che mancava*, *La seconda avventura*, *L'ultima ferita*) and Giuliana Facchini (*Bar Einstein*). Facchini has also published with Einaudi Ragazzi, Feltrinelli, Giunti, and the two-volume dystopia *Borders* and *No Borders* with Sinnos.

**3.4. Other Languages and Design for Early Childhood** - Italian publishing for children and adolescents has always experimented with languages and solutions, revolutionizing both the book form and narrative grammars. A historical example is the work of the publishing house like La Coccinella, known for its “books with holes,” featuring a bestseller like *Brucoverde* (first edition 1977!) by Giovanna Mantegazza and Giorgio Vanetti or the work of editorial designers like Loredana Farina and Emanuela Bussolati. Italy also boasts various initiatives in the realm of »wordless books« (De Conno Silent Book Contest, an international award organized by Carthusia; and IBBY Silent Books. Final Destination Lampedusa, international selections created in refugee reception contexts), along with some authors who

are happily active in classic picture books and other forms of illustration, such as Gek Tessaro with the magnificent *Riflettiamoci* (Carthusia); Angelo Ruta with the delicate *Ho bisogno di te* (Carthusia); or Mariachiara Di Giorgio with the surprising *Professione coccodrillo* (with Giovanna Zoboli; Topipittori).

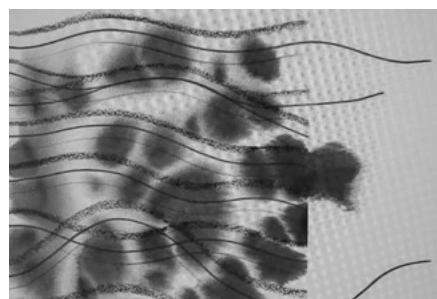
Finally, we should not forget some successful experiments that intertwine photography and illustration, like the work of photographer Massimiliano Tappari, who co-authored *Teresa* (Lapis) with Gek Tessaro and *Miramuri* (Terre di mezzo) with Alessandro Sanna or the illustrators Ninamasina with *Questa notte ha nevicato* (Topipittori), and Marianna Balducci with *Il viaggio di Piedino* (with Elisa Mazzoli; Bacchilega) and *Io sono foglia* (with Angelo Mozzillo; Bacchilega).

We should also remember some characters that originated in Italy and have had significant impact and diffusion; in addition to the previously mentioned Geronimo Stilton, Pimpa (Franco Cosimo Panini), the red-spotted dog drawn by Altan, or Giulio Coniglio (Franco Cosimo Panini) and Nuvola Olga (Emme), created for the youngest children by Nicoletta Costa, should be mentioned.

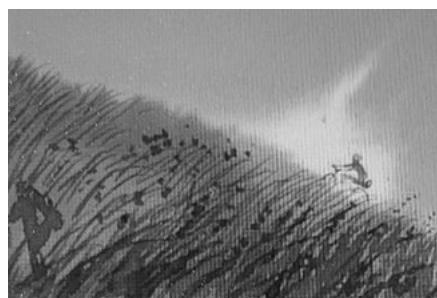
There is also noteworthy work in popular science, carried out in Italy by, among others, Editoriale Scienza, with new releases like *La mamma di Neandertal* by Irene Biemmi and Sandro Natalini; Quinto Quarto, which recently won the Premio Andersen for *La camera buissima* by Elisa Lauzana and Irene Lazzarini, focused on photographic art; or Nomos, with the well-documented *Tentacoli*, a catalogue of octopuses, cuttlefish, and squids, by Marco Colombo, Francesco Tomasinelli and Giulia De Amicis.



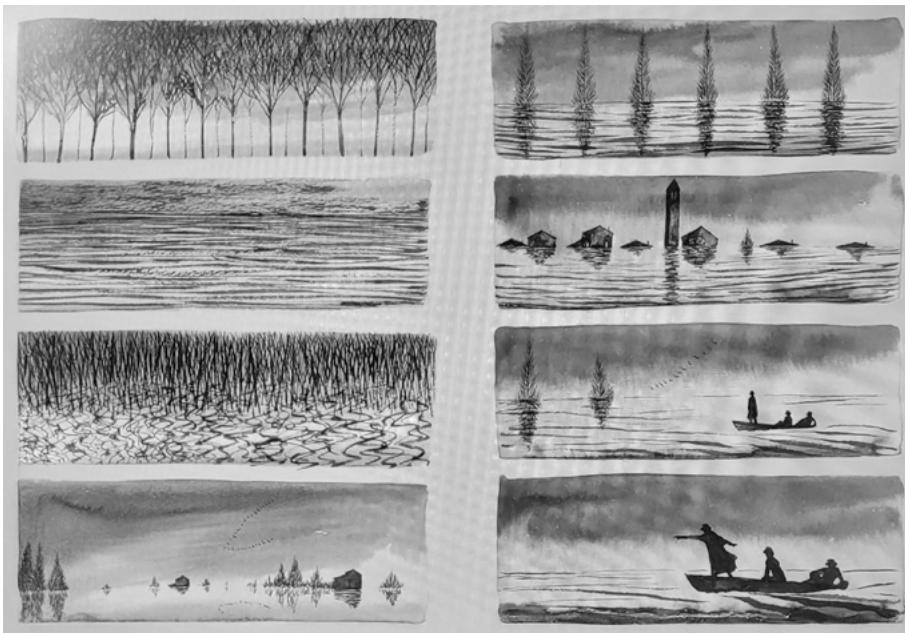
Alessandro Sanna: *Moby Dick* (Rizzoli, 2021)



Alessandro Sanna: *Mano Felice disegna l'acqua* (Franco Cosimo Panini, 2012)



Alessandro Sanna: *Saltafossi* (Gallucci, 2024)



Alessandro Sanna: *Fiume lento. Un viaggio lungo il Po* (Rizzoli, 2013)

**3.5. The Comics Phenomenon** - The comics sector has experienced notable growth in recent years, with interesting intersections with youth literature. According to the AIE Report on Publishing (2023) Italian publishers released 3,496 titles of comic books (with ISBN) in 2022, including those aimed at children and young adults (196 aimed at 6–13-year-olds). This marks a growth of almost 7% in production compared to 2021. This count does not include titles with ISSN distributed primarily in newsstands, which are estimated to comprise at least another 3,606 titles. The newsstand does not yet contribute to the overall market definition, nor do the sales that take place during events and fairs such as Lucca Comics & Games or Romics. It is mainly manga that drives the growth of the supply and market: in 2019, they represented just under 35% of the editorial output in the sector. Four years later, they are approaching 50%, with a growth of +58.2%.

Among the dedicated publishers - one above all Bao Publishing, a careful and prolific publishing house that also includes the beloved author Zerocalcare - we are witnessing an increase and differentiation in production, including for different age groups. In recent years, *Andersen* has highlighted from its columns or among the shortlisted of the prize: *Caterina e i capellosi* (Canicola), a fun work by Alessandro Tota; *Girotondo* (Il Castoro) by Sergio Rossi and Agnese Innocente, a modern young adult adaptation of the classic play *Reigen* by Austrian Arthur Schnitzler; *Pistillo* (Diabolo) by Marco Paschetta, a successful blend of comic and illustration aimed at younger readers; *Fiatosospeso* (Tunué) by the close-knit duo Silvia Vecchini and Sualzo; as well as the experimental *Nuno salva la luna* (Canicola) by Marino Neri and *La mela mascherata* (Canicola) by Martoz.

#### 4. The Contribution of Foreign Literatures to the Italian Landscape

As highlighted in the AIE Report on Publishing (2023), “*Italian publishing is structurally indebted - also due to its extensive and articulated network of small and medium-sized publishing houses with specialized catalogues and projects - to the purchase of publishing rights from foreign publishers. The data quantify a little over 9,000 titles published in 2022 as the result of translations from a foreign language [...]. Growth occurs in parallel with the increased capacity of Italian publishers to operate in international markets and the authorial transformations that currently mainly affect the children and young adult segment, but also fiction.*” The Anglophone area is certainly the most frequented by Italian publishers, but many books are also translated from French, German, and Spanish.

Thanks to the increasingly significant contributions from agents and translators (often one person fulfilling both roles), and independent publishing houses, recent years have seen titles from diverse linguistic areas, both within and beyond Europe, make their way to Italy. In this regard, the specialization of some publishers (notably Iperborea, which has long been a vehicle for Scandinavian literature) has contributed to a greater variety, along with some European funding programs, aimed at the translation of non-dominant languages.

#### 5. Conclusions

The real novelty in defining the current landscape of children’s publishing in Italy - alongside the emergence of new publishing houses, authors, and key players - lies, perhaps, in the multiplicity and better specification of the audiences, languages, themes and forms, through which literature and illustration are presented in the publishing production aimed at young readers.

Until the end of the last millennium and the first decade of the current one, children’s publishing was essentially defined by three major poles, represented by dissemination, narrative, and, generically, illustrated works. Today, the overall offering - and the actors involved in its creation, production, and promotion - has diversified and specialized, better specifying age groups or types of readers, focusing on languages, themes, and forms that, while not entirely absent from the landscape before, now claim their own spaces and legitimacy. In Italy, this phenomenon has been made possible thanks to a growing general interest in cultural production for children, as well as to increased professionalism, also engaging in dialogue with an immediately international dimension.

Month by month, *Rivista Andersen* seeks to narrate - through journalistic insights that invite reflection and in-depth exploration - this wide and varied offering to an audience of readers that has gradually transformed: alongside educators, librarians, and teachers, who have always been filling the ranks of subscribers, independent bookstores and professionals in sectors that intersect with childhood dynamics have also joined. Last but not least, parents and grandparents are becoming increasingly attentive to what they present to children, in a country where reading is generally low, despite recent AIE data reporting a growth of about 3% compared to 2019.