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CHILD PORTRAITS. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CHILD BODY
IN CHILDREN'S ILLUSTRATION AND LITERATURE:
SOME INTERPRETATIVE CATEGORIES

RITRATTI DI BAMBINO. RAPPRESENTAZIONI DEL CORPO INFANTILE
NELLE ILLUSTRAZIONI E NELLA LETTERATURA PER BAMBINI:
ALCUNE CATEGORIE INTERPRETATIVE

A critical path in the history of children's illustration and literature, discovering the portraits and metaphors of childhood that attract the scholar's attention to pedagogical thought on the imagination, and some ideas for interpreting representations of the child body.

Un percorso critico nella storia della letteratura e delle illustrazioni per bambini, alla scoperta dei ritratti e delle metafore di infanzia che hanno attratto l'attenzione degli studiosi per un pensiero pedagogico sull'immaginazione e di alcune idee per interpretare le rappresentazioni dei corpi infantili.

Key words: history of children's literature, history of illustration, metaphors of childhood, collective imagination, body.

Parole chiave: storia della letteratura dell'infanzia, storia delle illustrazioni, metafore dell'infanzia, immaginazione collettiva, corpo.

The history of children's illustration and literature has always offered images of childhood in which different children's figures emerge from the folds of the story with the strength of a visual representation that gives scholars different eyes for interpreting the underlying symbolic universe. The rich heritage found in the best works of children's illustrated literature offers an ideal opportunity for deciphering the depth of childhood metaphors. Children's literature, or *invisible literature* (Beseghi e Grilli 2011) while increasingly less invisible as new contributions enrich its critical study, invites us to observe the children's world in all its intricate details, in the figures that render its fundamental "otherness" (Bernardi 2016) compared to the adult world, in all its complexity and wealth.

Antonio Faeti's 1972 essay *Guardare le figure* (Looking at Figures) marked the start of a new hermeneutic season for the history of children's illustration (Faeti 2011). History of children's illustration and literature presents some portraits of childhood which carry not only the mark of the artist's vision of childhood and education, but also its imagined version of the child body (Contini e Demozzi 2016), the freedom of expression, its communicative and expressive statute. As this essay sets out to do, an illustrated children's portrait gallery can thus offer a possible reconnaissance of ways of looking at child figures, children's bodies, their relationship with space, movement, clothing, self-awareness and other narrative and pedagogical elements (Farnè 2016).

Filtered through some critical proposals, the iconography of the child body becomes an opportunity to rethink the tale of childhood in books and its position in the collective imagination: a tangible, visible, bodily position, which often plays on the opposites of idealisation and monstrification, with all their infinite intermediate shades. In this sense the constellation of classics also shows us constants, recurrences and relationships between children illustrated in different periods, as if, in the discourses on the form of children, there were as many lines of thinking on their existential possibilities.

As we know, the illustrated representation of children's bodies is a relatively recent phenomenon in the visual arts, a phenomenon that enjoyed an initial season of extraordinary ferment in the Victorian era when, as one might say in a clichéd yet not totally false manner, the bourgeoisie invented childhood, and above all, this is certain, invented children's books and stories, illustrated right from the start by artists.

Children's illustration in the 19th century invented *picturebooks* for children books created and printed to be purchased by adults, but designed and illustrated with the main purpose of entertaining and enthralling children with short stories, illustrated with rich pictures and often with stories in rhyme. The outcome of the new-founded children's publishing of the time, the work of printers and artists of the calibre of Randolph Caldecott, Kate Greenaway, Walter Crane, Edward Lear, differed in the proposed styles, forms and narrations; perhaps we can also state that if Victorian children's illustrated literature shares a common trait, this is indeed its intrinsic contradiction and the often paradoxical timbre that marks the variegated set of narrative and figurative inventions of the time (Meyer 1983). Often this literature brought a new sensitivity and truth, anticipating the many subversive elements of the history of childhood that was to come. In the study of these works, critical attention and the production of systematic specific research is rather recent, in any case in the past four decades. In Italy, the milestones of this study are certainly Paola Pallottino's *Storia dell'illustrazione italiana* (A history of Italian illustration), the aforementioned essay by Faeti, reprinted in 2011, and other contributions which from 2012 on specifically focused on the unique form and perspectives of picturebooks (Terrusi 2012; Hamelin 2012; Campagnaro e Dallari 2013). In the years between these dates, some important international contributions to the study of illustrated books were published in both the English and French speaking worlds which constitute the main bibliographical references for the historical and pedagogical study of children's illustrated literature, which in the meantime has been further enriched by other works that increasingly capture and explain pedagogical complexity through the language of pictures and *iconotext*, considered in the counterpoint of "the relationship between image and text" (Nikolajeva e Scott, 29). This figurative and narrative production on one hand finds its inspiration in the collective imagination and its icons, while on the other demonstrates the educational projections which correspond to specific historical moments – as it refers to the childhood universe, it underlines its own constituent otherness.

Ideal, reality and expression are woven together in the children's portraits of illustrated literature. Different graphic styles build historically traceable plots, relating to a

way of looking at and thinking of the child body, its reality, its expression, ideals and qualities. From the first works of the mid-19th century to contemporary books, the history of illustration offers an opportunity to hypothesise some interpretations, linking the physiognomies, graphics and narrative choices of the portrayed children, tracing some of the many possible pathways.

This essay thus offers some of the classic icons of children's illustration. It is perhaps not entirely pointless to state that they escape simple classifications and therefore can be placed transversally in one or other category. Here though, we set out to suggest some of the possible interpretative categories and perspectives for strolling through the rich and mysterious narrative forests of children's illustrated literature, meeting slovenly children, graceful children, thinking children, fairy-tale children, different and cosmic children of contemporary picturebooks and wordless books (Terrusi 2017).

Shockheaded children, or the expressions of the slovenly body

Grotesque, rebellious, deformed, funny or monstrous, these characters are represented in eternal conflict with the manifestations of their own body. They are comic rebels. They are sulky, dreamy and resistant. *Shockheaded* girls and boys can also be ironic, lunar and melancholic (Grilli 2011), and almost always live in exaggerated and *nonsensical* situations. Their forefather is the German classic *Der Struwwelpeter*, born in 1845 in Germany from the pen of Dr Heinrich Hoffman, who travelling on business was looking for a book that was neither boring nor moralist to take back to his three-year-old son; not finding one, in Frankfurt he bought a notebook and invented ten of his own. These ten short illustrated stories, now famous and continuously reprinted, put to paper the retaliations of children's disobedience with hyperbolic inventions and somewhat sadistic comedy, destined to conquer the hearts and minds of readers across the world. The style of the figures is cartoon-like, the text in rhyme is so musical and brilliant that Mark Twain was chosen to translate it into English, with the title *Slovenly Peter* or *Shockheaded Peter* (Cotton 2000, 11). The main character of the story that gives the work its title is characterised by an ungainly body, wild hair and incredibly long fingernails. This is how he is presented to the reader.

See this frowsy "cratur"
 Pah! it's Struwwelpeter
 On his fingers rusty,
 On his two-head musty,
 Scissors seldom come;
 Lets his talons grow a year
 Do any loathe him? Some!
 They hail him "Modern satyr -
 Disgusting Struwwelpeter."

(Mark Twain)

The body, with its manifestations and torments, is the absolute star of the story of Peter and other children, such as “The story of Bad Frederick” or the poor “Story of the Thumb-Sucker”. Hoffmann describes the characters but never allows them to speak in the first person (McCourt 2016). There is a *perverse delight*, as Jack Zipes writes (Zipes 2000), underlying the great fortune of this series of stories: the child reader is on one hand openly invited by the narrator to distance himself from Peter and his wretched physical slovenliness, and on the other hand, necessarily, identifies himself with him, returning to feeling safe outside of the book. Peter’s is a “gothic” body, which attracts and disgusts, putting on stage that monstrosity as a perceptive possibility for knowledge and mirroring, with the extraordinary narrative strength that relates Peter to Dracula and other horrific creatures (Hurley 2004). The graphic frame for the figures and their grotesque deformation is indispensable here for making the horrific component more bearable: the adventures of Peter and other children share elements of adult cruelty and the assumption by which childhood is a time of slovenly bodies destined for a terrible fate, if they do not strictly obey the orders of the adult authority. The body changes, its maintenance is complex and unpleasant, children ask: why do I have to wash? Why can’t I suck my thumb? In Italy we had to wait until the late 19th century, at the dawn of puericulture to hear instructions on physical care, such as a warm bath for newborns, before that time everything was different (Pancino 2015). In Hoffmann’s pages, the child body falls completely under the control of adults: don’t suck your finger, or we’ll cut it off. Hoffmann uses the graphic disproportion of the body as a narrative and expressive element of a world of strong emotional contrasts: exasperated gestures, caricatures (even animals have to deal with the imperfections and nervous ticks of human bodiliness).

Nonsense, aesthetic and narrative quality close to children’s sensitivity and always bordering on horror and the comic, is characteristic of the work of another portrait artist of “shockheaded” characters: the English and very Victorian Edward Lear (1812-1888), author of illustrated stories such as the famous *A book of nonsense* (1846). Lear writes in limerick, short poetic compositions that Gianni Rodari recalls in his fundamental *Grammar of fantasy* (Rodari, 1973 e 1996). Through his drawings, Lear amplifies a textual happiness that plays with the English language, stretching it to create almost a new poetical language.

The body of Lear’s characters is always a dilated, imperfect, asymmetric body, and the child imagination is thus populated by ungainly creatures who, like childhood itself, inhabit and pass through the world, step by step. In terms of characteristics and poetics, Lear is very close to the much later American author Edward Gorey (Harvey 1971) who, in the 20th century, created short storyboards telling macabre children’s stories: using Lear’s nonsense and traits, Gorey pitted children against ferocious beasts, against death, always showing childhood in its thanatological component, tiny childhood just a step away from the precipice of death. This poetic line also belongs to the characters created by film director and author Tim Burton, also in a collection of illustrated poems devoted to a melancholic “oyster boy” and other perfectly *shock-headed* children (Burton, 2006).

Other creations from Germany are the terrible *Max und Moritz*, created by Wilhelm Busch in 1865 in an all-illustrated “Story of Seven Boyish Pranks” (AA.VV. 2006). The pranks these two rascals, who became worldwide cartoon icons, get up to are somewhat terrible: they risk ending up in the oven, they get up to all kinds of mischief, they are ugly, ungainly, and always survive by a miracle. A mix of the comic and nonsense, they are certainly children with a slovenly body.

In England the Victorian era, which saw the birth of children’s literature in its modern form, a publishing and graphic industry destined for the first time to the child-consumer, was an exceptionally fertile season for the birth of child icons destined to become classics. John Tenniel was the hand behind the unforgettable portrait that brought the immortal character of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* to life for readers, so much that indeed today his illustrations are inseparable from the novel (which went on to have innumerable illustrated versions, corresponding to the many souls of the literary child/girl) written by Lewis Carroll and printed for the first time in 1863. And yet at the time Lewis Carroll, the Reverend and Professor Dodgson, did not at all like the physiognomy given to his heroine by the illustrator Tenniel. Tenniel’s Alice, however famous, clearly struggles with her body, a perturbing and metamorphic body which has all the right to be included in our gallery of shockheaded children: never at ease, crushed between the two opposites of Victorian constrictions of customs and habits and the fantastic and paradoxical metamorphoses fifty years ahead of psychedelia, and expresses her contrition with an adult scowl that makes her perturbing and at times even monstrous.

Looking further at illustrated children, moving again from novels to comic strips, we come across the famous Yellow Kid (Del Buono 1969), to whom a famous international comics award is entitled. Born in the pages of Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World* in 1895 and drawn by Richard Felton Outcault, the character was inspired by the semi-illiterate orphans of the Lower Manhattan slums: his appearance is somewhat disorienting, he seems a freak; he looks crazy, he cannot speak, he is bald, he wears a nightshirt with writing on it, full of syntax errors and spelling mistakes.

The desire to represent an authentic child, unthinkable prior to that time, made Yellow Kid all too plausible: always in danger, awkward, lurching, he gets dirty and gets into all sorts of difficult situations. Afterwards, Outcault was explicitly asked to invent a character with a more reassuring, more “normal” character – i.e. more conventional, more similar to what the Americans dreamed for themselves, because at some point the readers stopped wanting to be “drawn that way”. In reply Outcault drew in 1902 *Buster Brown*, a perfect little anti-rascal (certainly less popular than the disgraceful, inimitable Yellow Kid). This shows how far child illustrations invite the readers to look in the mirror; showing off the children’s photo album (Schérer e Hocquenghem 1982) of a society means showing and declaring something very profound about that culture, its hopes and dreams, the idea of the self they wish to develop, their censures and fears.

But Alice is not alone in the less-crowded gallery of “shockheaded girls”. In 1919 Italian illustrator Antonio Rubino (Alligo 2008; Negri 2012) created *Viperetta*, an en-

fant terrible and the daughter of a horrible couple who argued all the time. Viperetta, the star of a classic that was much loved by Italo Calvino, is so capricious that her caprices, personified by small, contorted devils, pull her up into the sky by her hair, very visible in the Rubino's extraordinary and skilful, typically Liberty style drawing. It is a body tormented by these worries of the character and the soul (Schenetti e Guerra 2015), a body that does not need to be accepted or sweetened, as happened to girls' bodies up to that point. In this Viperetta is modern, her scowl and contrite frown are the comical gains of expressive freedom.

Monstrous in the original and etymological meaning of the Latin word (*monstrum*, "prodigy, portent"), extraordinary, is Pippi Longstocking, the main character of the novel by Astrid Lindgren in 1945, who can pick up a horse and whose body has qualities that break all traditional moulds, both for her skills and the way she dresses. An orphan, financially independent, irreverent and able to be happy on her own, Pippi's physical appearance tells of this break with the past: her unconventional clothes are asymmetrical, she is exceptionally strong, she doesn't need looking after, hers is a paradoxical body, she is both child and hero, a body that triumphantly emancipates itself from the finite condition of girlhood. "Shockheaded" children have sharp edges, frowning expressions, a new specific graphic dynamism that brings them alive. "The characters leap across the page, loudly proclaiming their personal independence of the paper" as the American master of the modern picture book Maurice Sendak said about the undisputed English master of illustration Randolph Caldecott" (Sendak 1988, 21).

Ideal, gracious and light children

Returning to the original season of great English illustrators of the Victorian era we meet the illustrative archetypes of ideal children. In the pages of children's books, the pre-Raphaelite pictorial style of the great Kate Greenaway created children who appear not only at peace with their own bodies but almost ethereal, celestial, angelical: gracious girls dressed in lace and trimmings, staging idyllic dances as the breeze teases their silky locks. Civilised children in the countryside: a typically Anglo-Saxon oxymoron creating bucolic ideals and icons building an immensely strong portrait of the bourgeois child drawn in books that were destined for continuous success right up to modern times.

The survival of these "Botticellian" bow-adorned, well-behaved, perfect, gracious and highly idealised girls in uniform is still strong today. With Holly Hobbie, the ubiquitous figurettes of the Seventies, the almost literal citation of this model was brought to life with the introduction of the cat figure, portraying an instinctive and wild element that was completely missing from that dancing and ethereal childhood.

In the same years, Arthur Rackham drew Pan-like children, melted into everything, related to the fairies and the invisible; a nude, suspended and disturbing childhood. An idealised childhood that however recovered a strong myth-inspired contact with

nature. His unforgettable Peter Pan is entomological, metaphysical, light. Here the mystery of childhood is intact and wonderfully visible in the plates in which the artist portrays a baby, a figure that was not frequent in illustration until then, a nude and suspended infant. The anxiety of the urban bourgeoisie recognises a perturbing, spiritual power in childhood, which cannot be controlled even by the rigorous Victorian educational model. Right from the paintings close to Walter Crane's Art and Craft, recovering the pictorial models of the bucolic baby Jesus, nature is allied with childhood, it is the *anima mundi* to which childhood usually belongs, it is the matter children are made of, the Neverland where they can run free, between archetypal contrasts, the eternally unresolved conflict between the cheerfulness of the child – Peter Pan, a perfect *Puer Aeternus* (Hilman 1999), has no memory, and thus no heart – and the saturnine essence of the Senex (Terrusi 2012) – the grim Capitan Hook was educated in the best schools in the Kingdom and is obsessed by time.

In this sense, an authentic revolution was marked by the birth of the child drawn in the early 20th century, a classic today, marked by the three features of childhood, the unconscious and the dream: *Little Nemo in Slumberland* is the dreaming child who sets off on visionary adventures in the pages of the Sunday edition of the New York Herald Tribune from 15 October 1905. As Maurice Sendak writes: "Little Nemo is a comic strip – but much more than a comic strip, especially in comparison with the databased examples of the form popular in America since late thirties. It is an elaborate and audacious fantasy that suffers only slightly from the cramped space imposed by its form. It is, in effect, a giant children's book, though no more limited to children than *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* or the Grimm tales." (Sendak 1988, 77).

From 1905 onwards, Little Nemo represented the contradictions of the imagination of American society which, on one hand discovered the possibilities of a dreamlike life revealing the never-before-seen landscapes of the unconscious (Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* was published in 1900) and on the other, in the last panel of each adventure, a grown-up's voice offered wholly physiological explanations for the child's visions, at times even scolding him.

The amazing visions with which Windsor McCay fills the page of the newspaper are equidistant from the modern conquest of a vision of the complex and ambivalent interior world of childhood and the idea on the other hand that nightmares are caused by digestive troubles brought on by too much apple pie. Every comic strip drawn starts with Little Nemo sleeping, and strange characters (always the same) who call him to take him to the land of dreams where he can fly and move around freely in incoherent universes where the coordinates are inverted, then returning, usually falling back into his bed in a restless awakening. The child body is freed from gravity, it flies, it is free, before falling back into its art deco bed. At the same time as Little Nemo came Peter Pan and the prose of Pascoli's *Fanciullino* (Garboli 2002): born with wings, light and sensitive, a fantastic dreamer, both perturbing and gracious: this is the new 20th century child represented in literary pictures and illustrations.

Thinking children

An all-20th century graphic idea far removed from the previous ones, which however knows and contains them, is, from mid-century onwards, that of thinking children: with their round heads, outlines clearly defined by ink and thought, these are urban children. We could offer a provoking hypothesis that they are the heirs of Humpty Dumpty (the monstrous character with the egg-shaped head of English nursery rhymes, indeed the only character drawn by Tenniel that Lewis Carroll liked, and who made him meet his Alice in the novel). They are no longer Pan-like or instinctive but cerebral, intelligent, dialectic. They are mentalised children with highly developed cognitive abilities and a small body, they tell of a separation of mind and body that pedagogist often finds in the children of today (Contini, Fabbri e Manuzzi 2006), children who know many things but are unable to tie their shoelaces. Even Little Nemo, in Windsor McCay's delightful Deco style, had a perfectly round head full of dreams, an interior creativity that made him a hero of vision and thought above all. Another example of this is Tin Tin, the Belgian cartoon boy: graphically, he stands out from the context, he is civilised, dressed like a man, with a sure foot, he moves around the city, deduces and understands, he practices circumstantial thought. Then, of course, *Peanuts* in 1950: Schultz invents a narration on the child's level, cartoon strips that create an intellectual and coherent universe built entirely by young philosophers, with the exception of the thinking dog, Snoopy (Bassano di Tuffillo 2010).

Again in the United States, in the late Fifties, Crockett Johnson's *Harold* (1955) is a toddler, as you can tell by his round body and babygro, and he is the creator of his own world (Bader 1978; Nel 2012). A child who thinks in figures, his magic thought literally gives shape to what he imagines; his magic purple crayon wishes and shapes right away his own roads. He is the modern icon of a young thinking maker.

On this path we also meet Quino's *Mafalda* (1964), a thinking, political and feminine heroine. Her head is large, her appearance is neither peaceful nor gracious. She is not blonde or ethereal, on the contrary, she is heavy and thinking. Or again in the cartoon *Calvin and Hobbes* by Bill Watterson (1985), the tiger who comes alive when the child is alone, but is a soft toy when adults are around. And the animal returns, in this case the tiger, the image of a wild animal but which in the presence of adults is sweetened and controlled. In the concept of "educate", to bring out, to be custodians (Marcus, 2008) of children's imaginations, what is implicit is the idea of bringing out what is inside their head, making their fantasies visible, and there is also an attribution of pedagogical responsibility for those who make this imagination accessible. In the pages of books, children can come to terms with the turbulent aspects that inhabit their bodies.

Another comic strip, Vanna Vinci's *La bambina filosofica* (The Philosophy Kid, 2004), is related to *Mafalda*, and may also resemble Wave, the girl in Suzy Lee's *silent book* (Terrusi 2017) who alone faces the unfathomable aspect of wildness: and so after a short digression we return to the realm of the most classic form of cartoons, picture books: Ole Konnecke's character *Camillo* (2005), not by chance the hero of

a number of books, is again a toddler tackling his first experiences of social life in a sand pit at the park (Farnè 2007 e 2015). The previous digression may be confirmed by the fact that, in 2002, Konnecke won the prestigious cartoon prize named after the “monstrous” pair Max and Moritz. Naturally, the game of acknowledgements can thus lead to a horde of thinking boys and girls, the iconography of which underlines their interior wealth, their intellectual strength, their independence. The girl star of *Sunshine*, a wordless picture book by Jan Ormerod (first ed. 1981; 2005), is observed with almost scientific interest, the sequence recalls Muybridge’s chronophotography, and yet is represented in an everyday moment, the morning routine: hers is an autonomous body, a body that has crossed the Montessorian revolution (Pironi 2014; Trabalzini 2011; Regni 2007), it knows time, it gets dressed and undressed, it kisses, it is an affective body.

The truth is that this critical game is merely a filter for exploring the great and increasing variety of portraits of childhood that artists offer in children’s picture books, a huge and precious repertory for historians of childhood and pedagogical thought.

Fairy-tale children and real children with tummy ache, different abilities, rights to be outdoor through stories, through history

Taking the example of fairy-tale children, and following them through the many versions that have embodied them, in and out of history, we would have an infinite catalogue of pedagogical thought on the child body, fashion and identity. A quick run-through of examples can but start with Gustave Dorè’s engravings: his famous *Little Red Riding Hood* (*Le petit chaperon rouge*, 1862) is both gracious and erotic, she is a child-woman, an Oedipal and seductive child, who lies in the bed with the wild figure of the wolf. Walter Crane on the other hand offers a civilised representation of Little Red Riding Hood, she is almost a young woman, all composed and well dressed, an English preadolescent; more than one hundred years later, the Austrian Lisbeth Zwirger represents another, an Austrian girl with rosy cheeks (1988), while Chiara Carer portrays her in a stylised manner, without a round, physical body, pure narrative essence, and yet we recognise her (*La bambina e il lupo*, 2005). For Mario Ramos she is a thinking girl (*Sono io il più forte*, 2011), while for Kveta Pacovska, who dissolves the figurative needs into the abstract language of the pictorial art, she is an emblem, a synecdoche, a part for all, a stylised emblem of the fairy-tale figure (*Cenerentola*, 2010). Similar comments can be made about a whole gallery of Cinderellas: from Arthur Rackham, who draws her as a languid, ethereal girl, to Fifties Disney that portrays a reassuring, tidy and well-fed Cinderella-housewife, who we can imagine cooking a steak for her husband to forget the food scarcities of the post-war period. These are the years in which women’s magazines responded to the need to portray perfect wives, and the fairy-tale icons adapted to this. Roberto Innocenti on the other hand draws a Cinderella who is perfectly made up and fashionably coiffured as she washes the floor, an elegant young girl dressed in Charleston style.

Steven Guarnaccia on the other hand slims her down, in drawing her he takes his inspiration from the model Twiggy, and in this case transfigures her into the history of fashion, adding a key to the picture book for readers to recognise every object according to its design date and the name of its stylist. Steven Guarnaccia transposed three fairy tales into contemporary design history: *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (Guarnaccia 2002) into interior design, then *The Three Little Pigs* (Guarnaccia 2009) into the history of architecture and *Cinderella* (2013) into the history of fashion design. If then we look at Pinocchio, with his damned and shockheaded body par excellence, he too changes physiognomy according to the times and the pencils that drew him. To sum up, we can take a picture by Roberto Innocenti (Collodi e Innocenti 2006), emblematic because it confirms a relationship between various bodies, the body of the boy, that of the puppet, the shape of the shadow. The body is not transformed but the wooden body remains, it is the drama of the body that changes. Child psychiatrist Manuela Trinci reminds us that shadow is everything in us that is not *domestic*, and here shadow is the idea of Jungian shadow (Sarti e Trinci 2014). Indeed the boy does not seem so happy. It seems that the wild parts of Pinocchio remain outside. The shadow is the tiger, the cat, the animal, if we don't deal with the issue it may re-emerge as a symptomatic disorder, turbulence, it is only by taking into account our own shadow that we can integrate all the parts.

We can say that in contemporary picture books, whether rewritten fairy tales or original stories, the child body is split into the widest range of iconographic statements: we are faced with the right to be represented and narrated, as well as that of "seeking to receive and disclose information and ideas of all kinds, independently of the barriers, in oral, written, printed or artistic form, or by any other means chosen by the child." and to have access to the widest variety of artistic and cultural productions, as confirmed in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in articles 13 and 31¹.

Thus we find Stian Hole's real children: children portrayed in their pants, with bags under their eyes or with plasters, children with tummy ache before their first day at school, children painted in a style that winks an eye at Hopper's realism. We find children with Down's syndrome, wearing glasses, a typical physiognomy that is part of their overall portrait: from *Eddie Lee* by Fleming and Cooper (2001) to Gusti's *Mallko y papá* (2017) it appears that, at last, all children are earning the right to be drawn how they really are. Even the girls in Heidelbach's *Cosa fanno le bambine?* (Where the girls are, 2010) have bodies in danger, they are both slovenly and thinking bodies; the girls are ugly, yet each one is different, fat or thin, just how they are. The German author's books return to the thanatological and horrific element, they feel the black and non-sense vein of Edward Lear, the knowledge of the history of German and international illustration. In Beatrice Alemagna's *Che cos'è un bambino* (What is a child?, 2008), an Italian picture book that has been incredibly successful since it was first published,

¹ The Convention on the Rights of the Child approved by the UNI on 20 November 1989, can be downloaded from the website of the Italian Ombudsman for Children and Adolescence: www.garanteinfanzia.org.

the portrait gallery shows boys and girls struggling with their own identity and physicality: they are bodies that measure themselves, they dream of being different, faces with bandages, glasses, crazed expressions.

In the book *Regalami le ali* (Give me wings), written by Heinz Janish, illustrated by Selda Marlin Soganci and published in 2011, there is an interesting female body that recalls the representation of the great mother: a fat body, heavy, chubby, and yet light, civilised and dancing, who knows the dialogue between the ethereal angelic essence and the possibility of dance, integrating the different elements of the body, a new way of communicating that escapes the pathology of the mundane. In contemporary picture books, from the wordless *Flora and the Flamingo* (2011) by Molly Idle to *Wild* by Emily Hughes (2013), we can capture a firm pedagogical proposal responding to one of the clearest educational emergencies of the past decades: the recovery of the cosmic child, the central focus of an education that is attentive to his relations with the world and the environment (Terrusi 2014). He is not a dissolved, Pan-like child, lost in Neverland, bodiless, he is on the contrary a child who is helped to develop his own autonomy through the gradual granting of independence by the parental figures. He is a child postulated by the Montessorian experience, contributing to his recognition and foundation: a child restored to time and nature, open space, movement, risk and adventure; the child who is the central focus of modern thought on Outdoor Education (Guerra 2015). A historical and pedagogical reflection on the contributions to children's literature and illustration can also help to reason on what Roberto Farné defines as "the heavy condition of children who spend much of their day under "house arrest" (Agostini e Farné 2014, 10) and the study of the imagination is also configured as a place where antibodies are produced and given back to childhood, allowing children to get down from the sedan chairs that have forced them not to touch the ground, like the Nepalese goddess Kumari, suspended in pushchairs, lifts and cars, and to reconquer the freedom to explore history and space. Here we think of a child who has recovered all the natural rights defined by Zavalloni in his *The Pedagogy of the Snail* (Zavalloni, 2009) and which can tackle the risk of exploring the world, the body, the collective imagination without falling into the hysteria of hygiene and censure. While the pedagogical study of the practice, and the theory, of the many subjects falling under the umbrella of reflection on outdoor education restore the child body to the physical space of the outside environment, an ecological study of the collective imagination finds crucial spaces for new reflections on childhood in the resources of children's literature and illustration.

Relating to the world and the sky, cosmic children inhabit a guide to nature written by two Portuguese environmental educators and illustrated by illustrator Bernardo Carvalho, but also in an extract of Charles Darwin offered to children in figures by Fabian Negrin: the child body is intelligent, it looks beyond itself, as it grows it exercises wonder and knowledge, it is the protagonist of the story. In a picture book we also find the contemporary child portrait by Jane Goodall, ethnologist and anthropologist who, reading books as a child, fell in love with Africa and went on to devote her whole life to the communication between humans and chimpanzees, which we

take as an emblem of the contemporary illustrated child: both physical and thinking, light and poetic, contemplative and scientific, male and female, historically placed and archetypical. The history of children's literature, and its highly poetic and narrative figurative apparatus, tells us that childhood and its representation are universes in movement, in which we can immerse ourselves in order to closely observe our own change and our future in the folds of a story.

To conclude: reading of bodies and childish representations in children's picture books means querying the thoughts on childhood that the authors have assigned to readers and future generations, having the possibility to discuss educational models and stereotypes and explore cultural and pedagogical changes acting on children's bodies, whether narrated or drawn, real or imaginary, liberated or constrained, through icons and revolutions acting profoundly and silently through time. Through children's publishing, the collective imagination offers precious paths to be followed, with the most interdisciplinary baggage possible, to cross that infinite gallery of representations that, through history and stories, seeks to fix that elusive dynamism of childhood, with words, images, filiations, relationships, echoes and new visions.

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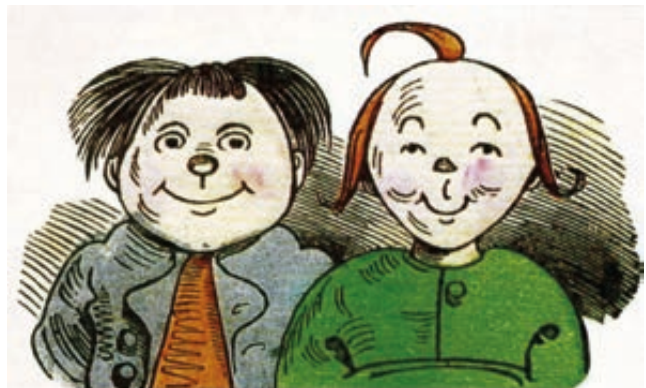
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1. *Slovenly Peter*, Fritz Kredel



2. *Max und Moritz*,
Wilhelm Busch



3. *Alice in Wonderland*, Lord Tenniel



4. *Yellow Kid*, Richard F. Outcault



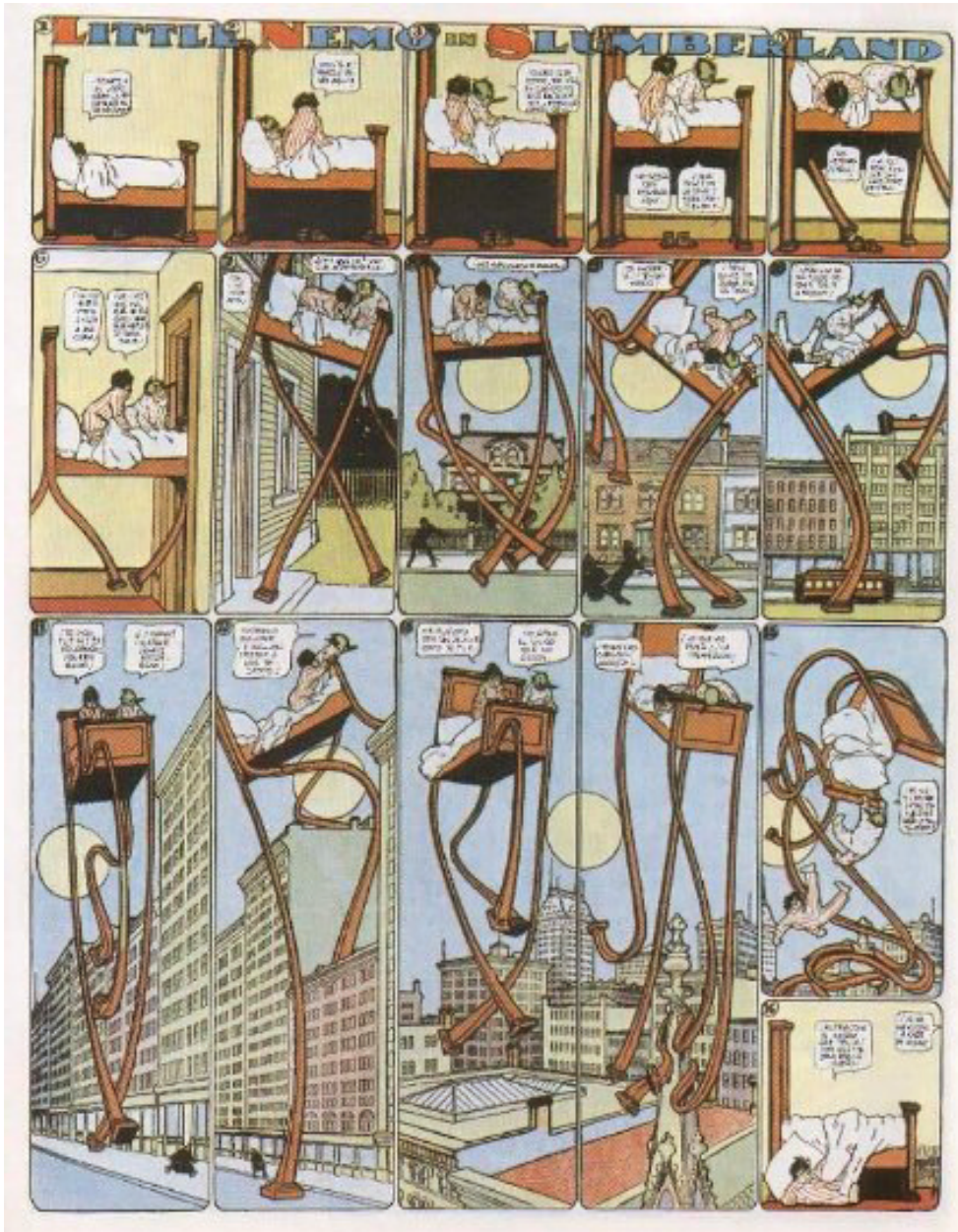
5. *Viperetta*, Antonio Rubino



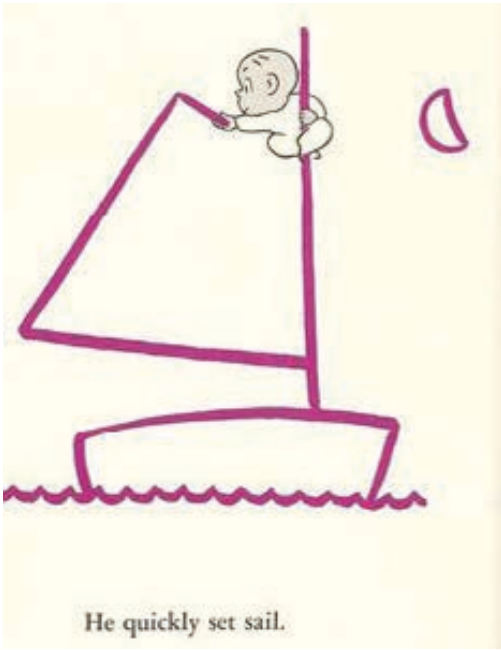
6. *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*,
Kate Greenaway



7. *Peter Pan*, Arthur Rackham



8. *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, Windsor McCay

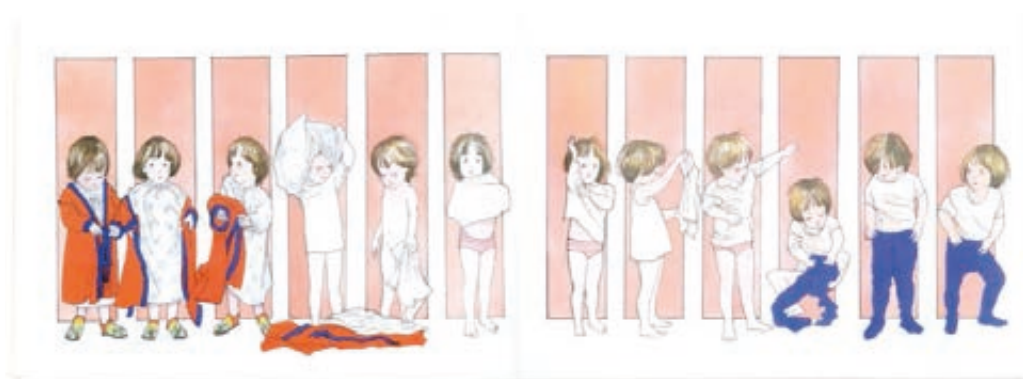


9. *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, Crockett Johnson

He quickly set sail.

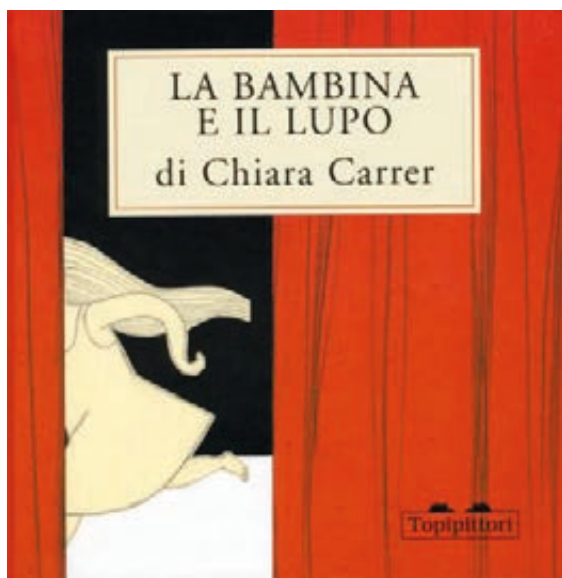


10. *Mafalda*, Quino

11. *La Bambina Filosofica*, Vanna Vinci12. *Sunshine*, Jan Ormero13. *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*,
Gustave Doré



14. *Cappuccetto rosso*, Lisbeth Zwerger



15. *La bambina e il lupo*,
Chiara Carrer

16. *Le avventure di Pinocchio*,
Roberto Innocenti



17. *L'estate di Garmann*, Stian Hole



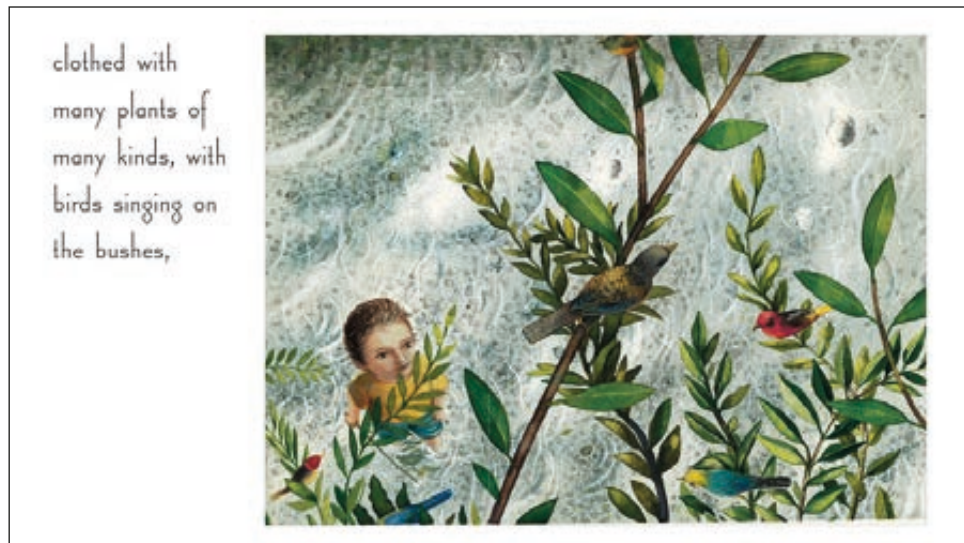
18. *Mallko y papá*, Gusti



19. *Sii amorevole con Eddie Lee*,
Fleming Cooper



20. *Che cos'è un bambino*, Beatrice Alemagna



21. *The riverbank*, Fabian Negrin



22. Io... Jane, Patrick McDonnell