

Beatrice Masini

FOR HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN AWARD



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1. / 2. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON THE CANDIDATE AND A PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPH OF THE CANDIDATE



Beatrice Masini at Festivaletteratura (Mantua, Italy, 2022)

*Writing for children is writing, full stop. Since I am interested in childhood (I do not like children; they interest me) and I have a good memory of my own childhood, I have always weaved these two elements into stories relating both to children and to adults invested in childhood (we all are - in part or wholly - the children we have been). This is my main starting point, this and what happens out there - spreading my attention in concentric circles, starting from self and looking out - that somehow involves the inner doings of imagination in children and from the perspective of an adult observing and remembering childhood. My poetic is reflected in the picture book *Of Children and Gardens*, which in fact is not a story but somehow a meditation on childhood.*

Beatrice Masini

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Biography

Beatrice Masini was born in Milan on 1 April 1962. She graduated in Classics with a specialisation in Greek philology in 1985. Following her studies, she embarked on a ten-year career in journalism (1985–1995).

In 1996, she transitioned to the publishing industry. In 2005, she was appointed editor-in-chief of Fabbri-Rizzoli's children's and young adult books division. From 2014 to 2016, she worked as an editor for children's books and translated fiction at Bompiani (RCS Libri). In 2017, she became editor-in-chief of Bompiani, a position she continues to hold to this day.

In her career as an editor and editor-in-chief she has scouted many authors, both Italian and from the rest of the world, both in youth and adults' literature. Just to mention some: John Green, John Boyne, Christopher Paolini, Natalie Babbitt, Aidan Chambers, Chiara Carminati, Luigi Garlando, Nicola Cinquetti, Antonia Murgò, Albertine and Germano Zullo, Gael Fayë, Olga Tokarczuk, Laszlo Krasznahorkai, Elspeth Barker, Josephine Johnson, Lauren Groff, Vivian Gornick, Annie Dillard, Andrew O'Hagan, Leo Vardiashvili, Malachy Tallack, Alan Parks, Colin Barrett, Claire-Louise Bennett, Gwendolyne Riley.

Beatrice Masini has always been immersed in the world of words, where language becomes the very fabric of her existence. For her, words are not just tools but the foundation upon which her life is built. Her professional journey is a tapestry woven with stories: journalist, editor, she writes stories for children, young adults, and adults, and is also a translator. In her career, she has published over 100 books for children and young adults.

She is also an accomplished translator: her work includes a wide range of genres and audiences. Among her most notable achievements is the translation of five instalments of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series (from the third to the final book).

Her contributions to classic literature translations are equally significant, having translated literary masterpieces such as: F.H. Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, L.M. Alcott's *Little Women*, M.M. Dodge's *The Silver Skates*, L.F. Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince* from French.

3. A STATEMENT DESCRIBING THE CANDIDATE'S CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Beatrice Masini's candidacy stems primarily from her multifaceted and authoritative presence in children's publishing. An author for young readers as well as adults, a journalist, editor, and translator – among her most notable works is the translation of five novels in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series – since 2015, she has also been the editorial director of Bompiani, one of Italy's most prestigious publishing houses.

This nomination is above all a recognition of her ability to chart a path of quality and attentiveness towards readers, an endeavour that is reflected first and foremost in her meticulous care for writing and language. Masini skilfully ensures that the written word remains accessible to young readers without sacrificing richness, sophistication, and clarity in both structure and vocabulary. Her prose is always exquisitely lucid, never straying from a distinctly literary realm.

Her work spans a wide range of genres: from mythology to retellings of biblical stories, from everyday narratives to fantasy, from stories set in the past to those that step into the future, from tales inspired by real-life biographies to those that create fictional yet unforgettable characters. This variety is not merely a testament to her versatility but a true act of literary promotion, offering readers of all kinds the opportunity to find themselves in different narratives and to build a well-rounded and profound literary identity.

Regardless of the genre she engages with, Masini demonstrates an extraordinary depth of exploration: she delves into emotions, examines the world in its social, political, and relational complexities, and constantly weaves together the inner dimension with the external reality.

Her works serve as a gateway to great literature—literature that, through its aesthetic nature, avoids didacticism and overt intentions, becoming a genuine instrument for understanding the world.

4. ONE OR TWO APPRECIATIVE ESSAYS, INTERVIEWS OR ARTICLES

1. "Beatrice Masini. The time of dystopias", in *Liber* n.90, 2011
2. "Profession? Writer. All the pages on the floor", Giulia Caminito and Beatrice Masini, *Il Foglio Review*, 2022

"Beatrice Masini. The time of dystopias", in *LiBeR* n.90, 2011

This is the time of dystopias. Apocalyptic scenarios resurface in contemporary fiction, provoked by climatic catastrophes, environmental disasters or 'after-bombs' that bring humanity back to the extreme struggle for survival. Why this renewed insistence of writers on the strongest fears of our collective unconscious; are we once again in reality facing an end/early millennium syndrome?

It seems to me that dystopia is being used in the same way as fantasy was used some years ago: it provides a good generic framework where to unravel a story and make happen whatever one wants to happen, with all the risks involved. As for *Children in the Woods*, I was the first to be surprised that I went down this road: dystopia is not a genre I especially favor. But it is also true that as a young girl I read Asimov, Orwell, Bradbury with passion: and if we are the books we read, then perhaps it was fateful that at some point I had to go back to science fiction.

*Children play a primary role in dystopia: see Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, or Paolo Zanotti's *Bonsai Children*. Will it really be the children to save the world once again? And what role will adults play? In your novel *the adult Jonas*, who checks on the children with a remote control system, actually plans an escape...*

The good adults in my novel are observers at first and then accomplices. Possibly I wanted to say that before entering the world of children one must know them, observe them, learn from them. And only after an apprenticeship of silent engagement one can begin building a respectful and meaningful bond, a common project. This applies in a broad sense: for those who want to deal with children's books, but also for those who want to deal with children, their own, I mean.

As for children as capable to save the world, they own the ability to reduce matters to the essential: they need love, nature, animals, play, healthy food, stories, school, a future. Only in books they can take it all on themselves, get the control of it. But in real life they need us and constantly remind us of our duties.

Tom is one of the Leftovers abandoned by his parents. He is a strong reader and a natural leader also. When the kids leave for the woods he brings a book with him and reads stories aloud to them. And stories, namely fairy tales, help the lonely children find themselves again, own their history, make peace with emotions and loss. How do stories work in the construction of our identity?

For me they have had and still have an enormous weight. We can live without books, but not without stories; without books or stories we condemn ourselves to a life that is shallow and poor in terms of perspectives. Whereas books and stories provide us the food we crave through paper and words.

From the first children's books you wrote to short stories and novels you have tried your hand at various narrative genres, aimed at different age groups, without allowing yourself to be trapped in a single form. How do you explain this writing ability of yours? Is there any age group you feel most attuned with today?

I so do not want to write always the same novel. I like to change registers, points of view, style and language. Writing for a young child implies a more vigilant attitude, a control that still has the intensity of a challenge: saying what you want to say without compromising and without losing clarity. There is no age group I prefer, because I do not think in terms of age groups: each story starts with its own vocabulary, and so everything holds together.

In many of your works there is a focus on the feminine. A Greek Chorus (Pippi Prize) and The Sword and the Heart, Women of the Bible (Elsa Morante Prize) or the series Belle astute e coraggiose, Scarpette rosa... How do you work around this, since the cultural industry seems so keen to offer a much too rich production dominated by stereotypes - books for girls and such?

Stereotypes are always painfully with us, every day, in the news, in advertising, on television. Imagining non-aligned characters means subtly resist these models. Turning the question around, there is nothing wrong with wanting to be a fairy or a princess, but fairies and princesses must use their brains and not just trust their charms or a bit of magic powder, because that is not enough and does not solve problems. The investigation of the Greek and biblical worlds is freer and more explicit: those women are our mothers and progenitors, and we look up to them because they can answer the questions we have been asking - about them and about us - for as long as we can remember.

Your experience in publishing goes beyond your work as a writer: translator and 'rewriter' of classic texts (Salgari, Stevenson, Kipling, Twain...) and contemporary authors (from Anne Fine to Natalie

Babbitt, from Clive Barker to J.K. Rowling); editorial manager for Rizzoli. You have thus travelled and experienced the complex world of children's books in depth, acquiring a unique experience of this world that makes you a privileged observer of its trends. LiBeR has been studying this reality for many years, photographing the growth that started in the second half of the 1980s and its contradictions, up to the current phase, which sees a 'critical balance' between commitment, entertainment and seriality. What is your point of view about this?

I see entertainment dominating, and that means everything, anything: good, well-made, well-written, imaginatively constructed books, which may not get to become classics but provide a happy escape today; but also trivial, derivative, ramshackle books, which grab at the most popular trends. There are also more complex and rich books, of course, but they need mediators to reach children and young people, and here the greatest work is that of teachers and librarians who have to explain, to suggest, to narrate, to read aloud. Seriality runs the risk of locking the not too well-equipped reader into a vicious circle. I see a publishing industry that stands at the window, looking out for signs: what are the other publishers doing? Then I'll try that too. It is riskier but much more interesting to say: what are the others not doing? Then I'll go down that path.

“Profession? Writer. All the pages on the floor”, by Giulia Caminito and Beatrice Masini, *Il Foglio Review*, 2022

Mestiere? Scrittrice. Tutti i fogli sul pavimento

Le donne che cucivano pagine e vendevano storie (anche) per guadagnare e mantenere la famiglia. Giulia Caminito e Beatrice Masini pensano a loro e a sé stesse, oggi: l'impazienza, la cura e il disordine nella mappa del tesoro delle parole

di Giulia Caminito e di Beatrice Masini



Cara Beatrice,

ricordo un giorno di aver detto a Viola Di Grado, in una conversazione, che a mio parere lei il suo lavoro lo aveva fatto al meglio, e Viola si era indispettita facendomi notare che non considerava la scrittura un lavoro, ma una esistenza. Io provai a spiegarle cosa intendessi, pensavo infatti al lavoro come produzione di energia o come applicazione concreta, palpabile e quasi artigianale, quell'elemento fisico ma anche immateriale insieme che può connotare la scrittura. Eppure, in effetti, pensandoci anche per me dichiarare che scrivere è il mio lavoro mi spaventa, vorrebbe dire pubblicamente e a me stessa che la scrittura è qualcosa di

The women who sewed pages and sold stories (also) to earn a living and support their families. Giulia Caminito and Beatrice Masini think of them and of themselves today: impatience, care, and disorder in the treasure map of words.

Dear Beatrice,

I remember once telling Viola Di Grado, in a conversation, that in my opinion, she had done her job in the best possible way. Viola got annoyed and pointed out that she didn't consider writing a job but an existence. I tried to explain what I meant—I thought of work as the production of energy, as a concrete, tangible, almost artisanal application, that physical yet also immaterial element that can define writing.

And yet, in reality, even for me, declaring that writing is my job is frightening. It would mean acknowledging, both publicly and to myself, that writing is something recognized by society, my means of sustenance, my official badge, the box I check at the tax office. Profession? Writer. That way, everything else would be left out: freedom, the abyss, silence, creation. It would seem reduced to a label, a way to declare oneself active and productive through something that, to me, has a deeper, older, more rooted value that cannot be expressed in the world of economy, savings, mortgages, rents, and meal vouchers.

But then I think of the English word "labour," which for women means both work and childbirth, and perhaps that changes things. Writing is labour, it is generation, something that is nurtured, kept warm, brought into the world.

Dear Giulia,

Labour in English, *travail* in French. Writing is something that demands to be brought into the world, yes. And it is also work.

But what if, instead of "work," we called it a "craft"? It has something less painful about it, more artisanal, as you said—it carries dust, hands at work, movement. The effort is there, always, as it must be, but it is dissolved into a skill that refines over time, that continuously takes new forms. It is the commitment of daily work, something routine yet carrying the thrill of a blind date—you never know what will happen when you sit in front of the page. You thought you knew what you had done, and yet everything is new. Sometimes you like it, sometimes you don't, but you keep going, toward the unexpected or the not-yet-seen.

But this surprise in the making must be rooted in the craft, which demands blind perseverance, almost for its own sake—the weaving and unweaving of Penelope. It inevitably

resembles the making and unmaking of daily life, even the domestic tasks that no longer touch us, that we no longer choose, or that still affect us but that we have learned, for better or worse, to lock away somewhere. The issue is, as always, how much we ask of ourselves: too much, I believe, in a striving for completeness that—here we are again—costs a great deal of effort.

Dear Beatrice,

It comforts me to think of writing—the only activity I actually do—as a craft. I have always envied those who know how to build, fasten, tighten, sculpt, polish, cut, and carry out workshop tasks. Those who receive an object, know how to handle it, understand its value, and place it accordingly—who have a craft, exactly.

But what does writing give back? Can writing chisel, shred, and embellish? It's true that one works with their hands, that one strikes and re-strikes the keys. Yet, when I think of a writer like Elsa Morante and her notebooks filled with handwritten drafts, crossed-out lines, torn pages, smudges, and shifting words, I see those movements, that room where cats come in, and I see that craft.

When I think of myself, sitting in front of my computer with my poorly organized, tiny yellow folders, it's as if the magic disappears. I feel like a poor imitation of something that once existed and is now lost. Are we idealizing the craft of writers from a hundred years ago? Are we being too harsh on today's methods and tools?

You mentioned Penelope and her weaving, and it immediately brought to my mind Maria Lai, showcasing all those threads, warps, and long stitches sewn onto pages. Thick pages, of paper and fabric, and oral stories turned into ties. I believe that in women writers and their craft, there is an ancestral imprint of weaving, of having dedicated centuries of life and effort to spinning inside their homes, listening to stories of an unreachable outside world, imagining that world.

I've always hoped to learn how to sew, but my hands are weak—I only use my middle and index fingers, shifting them over the keys as needed. Even in this, I economize movements and materiality.

Dear Giulia,

Sewing, embroidering, working with one's hands. Maybe that's why I still can't resist the call of blank paper—I always have more notebooks than I'll ever manage to fill, just as I have

more books than I can read. There's this urgency to immediately put words on paper, before even typing them onto a glowing screen, so as not to lose them.

Small notebooks with curled edges, elegant and inelegant, bought everywhere when not needed, then filled with messy writing, notes taken in the dark of a theater, at night without turning on the light, or on a tram. They might be beginnings, or maybe not. Then they pile up, slip between books, doze off in bags that in turn sleep in closets. And maybe—who knows?—the perfect sentence is the one you captured and forgot.

One day, I will do a grand purge of notebooks. Or maybe I won't.

At the heart of it all is this idea of postponing, letting seemingly important things take precedence—things that probably aren't actually important, that seem useful but probably aren't. The everyday surpassing and suffocating the possible.

(Giulia, learn to sew now. It's beautiful, ancient, precise, not lost. I had furious bouts of feminine crafts around thirty, the age you are now. And, well, if I wanted to, I could embroider. I don't—but I could.)

I think of Louisa May Alcott, chained to her sense of duty, renouncing—with a thorn in her heart—her beloved, odd gothic tales, like the ones Jo writes in *Little Women*. Maybe they weren't the best, but they gave her immense joy. But no, of course not—she couldn't have fun. She had to earn money, and quickly.

Dear Beatrice,

Unfortunately, the highest level of manual skill I have achieved over the years is a miserable ability to mend things. If holes appear or buttons fall off, I can do an in-and-out and out-and-in stitch, crooked and imprecise, just enough to avoid throwing away a T-shirt or leaving a buttonhole without a button. But it's more about making do than creating.

I promise that one day, when I take a moment to pause, I will try to truly learn how to sew, to transform fabric into a finished garment. Speaking of Louisa May Alcott, whom you know and love, and of many other female writers—what was writing like for them? Is it us, today, who seek purity, who stubbornly insist that writing is something sacred, something that becomes tainted the closer it gets to money? Or were these women also considered mere scribblers rather than authoritative authors simply because they wrote so much and did it for money?

I often imagine them hunched over their papers, hopeful of selling stories and articles to magazines, searching for a publisher who would allow them to survive another year, to support their families for another season. I also think of Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, a contemporary of Alcott but less well-known, who began selling her work as a young girl due to her family's financial difficulties. Mary wrote tirelessly, working on her texts for up to ten hours a day while living with her friend of the same name, Mary Wales. Then, at nearly fifty, she decided to marry—a terrible marriage that drained her inspiration, slowed her relentless labor, and forced her to support her husband's alcoholism with the little she could still write.

I wonder if writing as continuous productivity becomes an unsustainable sacrifice of intellect, but at the same time, I see in these women and their writing a possible opening to the world—for those like them, who had so few opportunities to truly live. I can't help but feel moved at the thought that an entire family depended on a twenty-year-old writing fantastical stories, fixed at her desk, sharp in both her finances and her plots.

Dear Giulia,

Yes, there were many women—diligent, clear-minded, energetic—willing to fold away artistic aspirations to let more practical avenues flow. Perhaps they instinctively felt that having a profession at all (there it is again), being independent, able to support extended families, affording the luxury of generosity, was already such a privilege. Or perhaps it was the good old-fashioned spirit of sacrifice that pushed them toward the choice of earning money and sacrificing art without too much hesitation.

I think of Frances Hodgson Burnett, the woman behind *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *A Little Princess*, and *The Secret Garden*, who saw herself as a writing machine. But thanks to her fast and adaptable pen, she moved seamlessly between theater and novels, achieving success—and with success, she earned all the money she needed to support, one after the other, two husbands (a doctor and an actor, each with their own ambitions), her children, of course, and an entire entourage of broke relatives and needy old ladies.

All of this took a tremendous toll on her—at one point, she asked herself: *But does anyone ever think of me, of how much effort I put in? Why does no one care how I'm doing? Why does no one ask if I'm happy?* They just wanted her to write, all of them. And we can imagine this greedy crowd—curly-haired children in blue velvet, frantic publishers, actresses searching for a good script—all hungry for her pages.

And there she was, writing, writing, writing. Delivering manuscripts, sending them to print, negotiating deals, boarding a transatlantic ship to London and then back again—never

stopping. I can only see her at peace and serene when she has her hands deep in the earth, cutting roses, pulling weeds, planting bulbs—disheveled, a little dirty, a little wild.

Dear Beatrice,

I keep thinking about those notebooks, about the pages forgotten in bags at the back of closets. I think of yours, already curious about the covers, the handwriting, the way words are scattered—neatly or chaotically—across the lines. How many are there, and where do they live? Are they within reach? Surely, they contain small, colorful, glimmering gemstones, all cut by pen strokes.

Handwriting—something I rarely use except for notes, conferences, or seminars, to track lists, quotes, events—but never for writing stories. I am so used to erasing words quickly, to repositioning and extracting them effortlessly and neatly on a computer, that I can't imagine myself at a desk with a quill, like these writers, having to write and rewrite, transcribe, rearrange—fingers stained with ink (Jo is always recognized for this), clothes inevitably doomed to stains and ruin. It seems absurd and almost painful to me, something that would break me in half, that would make me give up.

(Not to mention impatience—I am always impatient to write, to see the pages take shape, to exist.)

But in that, I also see the craft, the tracing and retracing, shifting pages, stacking them, discarding and selecting them. I see the hours passing, the floors filling with sheets to be corrected, to be considered one after the other, like treasure maps, like pieces of a composition to be perfected.

Maybe that's why writers' homes and rooms have always fascinated me, compelling me to observe, to try to understand—because all that shuffling of papers and pens, those nights spent by candlelight finishing manuscripts, delivering them on time to the publisher—it's so far from me and, at the same time, deeply familiar, understandable, mine.

Dear Giulia,

Olga Tokarczuk once said that the structure of *Flights* was born by contemplating a sea of stories spread out on the floor around her, searching for a possible order. Is it true? I'm not doubting her—I'm doubting my own memory. I believe she said it. And if I believe it, then somewhere, it must be true.

Maybe I just like the image of the writer standing above the world—no, not *the* writer, but *her*—wrapped in one of those timeless dresses, standing on a table, moving her fingers, sending an imperceptible vibration through the air, making the papers on the floor rise, shift, swirl. And that’s how a book could have been another book, but instead, it becomes the only book possible, with the only right order.

And every time, starting over again—this making order out of disorder, searching for the path, or at least the map.

It’s always interesting to listen to writers explain how they work, even if it ultimately reveals nothing essential about them. They are quirks, habits, little obsessions—but everyone has their own, and they are all special.

It’s the matter of bread and the baker (Singer, maybe—but it could also be one of those false attributions, who knows?): *the bread is good and we need it, the story of the baker is not important.*

But.

Once, at a talk, you said something small but crucial—that we must take care not to grow too fond of certain archaic words, because they are such powerful presences. If you use them once, they illuminate the sentence; if they appear two or three times, they lose their glow, fade, become ordinary.

How many things are discarded in the process of writing and rewriting—what a beautiful waste.

And to come full circle, it seems to me that in this endless crafting with words, in never being satisfied with how we use them, we are, in a way, sewing buttons back on and mending torn sleeves.

I don't think I could go much further than that, but in the movements I know how to do—or, if you will, the ones I attempt—the thread passes through the needle’s eye, the needle goes in and out of the fabric, tracing its line of repair, stitching, fixing, bringing together distant edges.

(Isn’t that what words do, too?)

And, all things considered, it works.

5. LIST OF AWARDS AND OTHER DISTINCTIONS

2021 - Premio Internazionale Ceppo “for her honest, sensitive way to look at the world of children and teenagers”, Pistoia, Italy

2021 - Premio Gianni Rodari, Best Illustrated Book Premio Bancarellino for *L'anno che non ho compiuto gli anni* (The year I did not have a birthday)

2019 - Premio Andersen - Il mondo dell'infanzia, special jury prize for *Le amiche che vorresti e dove trovarle* (Girlfriends you wish for and where to find them)

2018 - Superpremio Andersen - Il mondo dell'infanzia for *Il buon viaggio* (The good trip)

2018 - Premio La Baccante “for her contribution to women’s literature”, Matera, Italy

2016 - Premio Leggimi Forte 2016 for *Siate gentili con le mucche: la storia di Temple Grandin* (Be kind with Cows: the story of Temple Grandin)

2013 - Premio Selezione Campiello for *Tentativi di botanica degli affetti* (The Watercolorist)

2013 - Premio Alessandro Manzoni for *Tentativi di botanica degli affetti* (The Watercolorist)

2013 - Premio Viadana for *Tentativi di botanica degli affetti* (The Watercolorist)

2011 - Premio Liber, best book of the year 10-13 for *Bambini nel bosco* (Children in the woods)

2010 - *Bambini nel bosco* (Children in the woods) was the first children’s book ever (and the only one to date) to be included in the shortlist of the Premio Strega, the main literary Italian prize for fiction

The presentation of the book at the Premio Strega 2010, by Roberto Barbolini, Romano Montroni:

This is a book that delivers more than it promises. It presents itself as a novel for young readers and indeed has all the qualities one might expect from such a work: the clarity of the writing and the richness of its fantastical dimension. Yet the tone of the fairy tale—albeit a dark, apocalyptic

one—naturally blends with a science-fiction allegory in the Orwellian style. It tells the story of a group of children, survivors of an unspecified catastrophe, escaping into the forest of adventure under the gaze of a Big Brother figure who begins as neutral but gradually becomes a complicit and empathetic observer. The reader is subtly drawn to identify with this figure. The plot is well-constructed, the characters are lovingly crafted, and the prose is agile, handled with masterful precision.

Roberto Barbolini

In the beginning was the Word: with the rediscovery of language, Beatrice Masini creates a poetic and original allegory, where there is room for both wonder and the profound sorrow of death. The children's language, suspended between realism and fantasy, reflects their gradual discovery of themselves and the world, aided by the chance of finding a book of fairy tales. Yet, as the bleak Base where they live is controlled by a handful of "adults," it is only by fleeing and taking the path into the forest that the children reach self-awareness and the ability to express their emotions and inner turmoil. Through a moving and poetic narrative, Beatrice Masini presents a story that is both a traditional and a universal fairy tale, in which words finally find their rightful place.

Romano Montroni

2006 - Premio Elsa Morante Ragazzi for *La spada e il cuore. Donne della Bibbia* (The sword and the heart. Women of the Bible)

2004 - Premio Andersen - Il mondo dell'infanzia, best author

2004 - Premio Pippi for *Signore e signorine. Corale greca* (Ladies and misses. A Greek Chorus)

2003 - Premio Andersen - Il mondo dell'infanzia, best book 0/6 for *Una sposa buffa, buffissima, bellissima* (The funny bride)

2002 - Premio Andersen - Il mondo dell'infanzia, best translator

1999 - Premio Martinsicuro for *La casa delle bambole non si tocca!* (Don't touch the doll's house!)

6. / 7. COMPLETE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE BY THE CANDIDATE AND THE LIST OF TRANSLATED EDITIONS AND THEIR RESPECTIVE LANGUAGES

Un enfant comme un jardin (Of Children and Gardens), La Joie de Lire, Lausanne, 2024

Timpetill, Italy 2024

Fika, Korean (to be published)

Nino Editor, South America (Spanish, to be published)

Una casa fuori dal tempo (A House out of Time), Mondadori, Milano, 2024

Prendi una lacrima (Go fetch a tear), Carthusia, Milano, 2022

Io sono la mela. Una storia di Saffo (I am an apple. A story of Sappho), RueBallu Edizioni, Palermo, 2021

L'anno che non ho compiuto gli anni (The year I did not have a birthday), Carthusia, Milano, 2021

La canzone di Elena (Elena's Song), Carthusia, Milano, 2021

Storia di May. Piccola Donna (Story of May, Little Woman), Mondadori, Milano, 2019

Samokat, Russian

Le amiche che vorresti e dove trovarle (Girlfriends you wish for and where to find them) Giunti Editore, Firenze, 2019

Gingko Books, Chinese

Woorischool, Korean

Koolibri, Estonian

Vellant, Romanian

Laberinto, Spanish

La trilogia delle ragazze (Girls Trilogy), comprising *Bottoni*, *L'estate gigante*, *Giù la zip*

Rizzoli Ragazzi, Milano, 2019

L'unicorno (The Unicorn), Carthusia, Milano, 2019

Orme nella neve (Footprints in the snow), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2018

Le piante senza nome (The Plants with No Name), Carthusia, Milano, 2017

Blu. Un'altra storia di Barbablù (Blu. Another story of Bluebeard), Pelledoca, Milano, 2017

Quello che ci muove. Una storia di Pina Bausch (What moves us. A story of Pina Bausch)
RueBallu Edizioni, Palermo, 2017

Il buon viaggio (The Good Trip), Carthusia, Milano, 2017

Chinese

Croatian

Oetinger, German

Yapi Kredi Yayinlari, Turkish

Il posto giusto (The Right Place), Carthusia, Milano, 2017

Amico d'estate (My Summer Friend), Edizioni El, Trieste, 2016

La fine del cerchio (The End of the Circle), Fanucci Editore, Roma, 2015

Siate gentili con le mucche: la storia di Temple Grandin (Be kind with Cows: the story of Temple Grandin), Editoriale Scienza, Trieste, 2015

La cena del cuore (The Supper of the Heart. Thirteen words for Emily Dickinson)
RueBallu Edizioni, Palermo, 2015

Solo con un cane (Alone with a dog), Fanucci Editore, Roma, 2014

La Joie de Lire, French

Bambine! (Girls!), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2014

Vic e Vento: la serie (Vic and Wind: the series. Eight titles), Emme Edizioni, Trieste, 2012

Storie dopo le storie (Tales after the tales), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2012

Mia sorella è un quadrifoglio (My sister is a clover, Carthusia, Milano, 2012

Paure di mamma (Mommy Fears), Arka, 2011

Livros, Portuguese

Pulo do gato, Portuguese (Brazil)

Aga World, Korean

Belle, astute e coraggiose (Fair, clever and bold), 12 titles, Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2010-2011

Storie dell'uomo verde (Stories of the Green Man), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2010

Bambini nel bosco (Children in the Woods), Fanucci Editore, Roma, 2010

Aurora Publishing, Chinese

Samokat, Russian

Alma Littera, Lithuanian

La Joie de Lire, French

Io e gli invisibili (The Invisibles and Io), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2009

Amici per sempre (Forever friends), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2009

Che fata che sei (What a Fairy you are), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2009

Il libro dell'attesa (The Book of Waiting), Arka, Milano, 2009

Chang-Tang, Chinese

Grasset, French

Gio Ponti Milano e i ragazzi (Gio Ponti. A biography), Carthusia, Milano, 2009

Sono tossica di te (Addicted to you), Fanucci Editore, Roma, 2008

Samokat, Russian

Vita segreta delle mamme (Secret Life of Mommies), Arka, Milano, 2008

Aga World, Korean

Guangzou Haihou, simplified Chinese

Koolibri, Estonian

Laberinto, Catalan

Bibo nel paese degli specchi (Bibo in the Land of Mirrors), Carthusia, Milano, 2007

Una sera prima della prima (One night before the première), Fabbri Editori, Milano, 2007

La bambina di burro e altre storie di bambini strani (The Butter Girl and other stories of weird children), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2006

Il casello della buonanotte (The Goodnight Toolbooth), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2006

L'estate gigante (The Giant Summer), Fabbri Editori, Milano, 2005

Per amore delle parole. Vita e passioni di Virginia Woolf (For the Love of Words. Life and Passions of Virginia Woolf), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2005

Korean

Polish

Greek

Scarpette rosa (Pink Shoes), EL, Trieste, 2005-2011 (15 titles)

Re Artù, Ginevra e Lancillotto (King Arthur, Guinevere and Lancelot), Arka, Milano, 2005

Grasset, French

Livros, Portuguese

La notte della cometa sbagliata (The Night of the Wrong Comet), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2004

Reissued as *Il viaggio dei Tre Re* (The Travels of the Three Kings), Edizioni San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo, 2022

Fili (Threads), Edizioni Arka, Milano, 2004

Diario di una casa vuota (Diary of an empty house), EL, Trieste, 2004

Thai

Greek

German

Anna ritrova i suoi sogni (Anna gets back her dreams), Carthusia, Milano, 2004

La spada e il cuore. Donne della Bibbia (The Sword and the Heart. Women of the Bible), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2003

La casa con tante finestre (The House with many Windows), Carthusia, Milano, 2003

A pescare pensieri (Fishing Thoughts), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2003

Olga in punta di piedi (Olga en pointe), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2003

C'è un ippopotamo nel lettino (There is a Hippo in my Cot), Arka, Milano, 2003

Chang-Tang, Chinese

Ennsthaler, German

Guangzhou Haihu, Chinese

Lasten, Finnish

Livros, Portuguese

Signore e Signorine. Corale greca (Ladies and misses. A Greek Chorus), Einaudi Ragazzi, Trieste, 2002.

To be reissued by Mondadori Ragazzi, Milano, 2025

Econom, Spanish and Catalan

Flammarion, French

Patakis, Greek

Korean

Russian

Una sposa buffa, buffissima, bellissima (The Funny Bride), Arka, Milano, 2002

Atica, Portuguese (Brazil)

Chang-Tang, Chinese

Koolibri, Estonian

Laberinto, Catalan

Livros, Portuguese

Sarbacane, French

Thorup, Danish

Tundra, English (North America)

Tuscania, Spanish

Watson, English (North America)

Una vicemamma per la principessa Martina (A Vicemother for princess Martina), Carthusia, Milano, 2002

Buonanotte, Piccolo Sonno (Goodnight, Tiny Slumber), Fabbri Editori, Milano, 2002

Nella tana del bambino (Into the Child's Lair), Arka, Milano, 2001

Casapelledoca (Goosebump House), EMP, Padova, 2001

Reissued by Pelledoca, Milano, 2019

Ciro in cerca d'amore (Ciro seeking for love), Arka, Milano, 2000

Fango su e fango giù (Mud everywhere), Salani, Milano, 2000

Giù la zip (Down the zip), Fabbri Editori, Milano, 2000

L'uomo della luna (The Man in the Moon), Arka, Milano, 1999

Aga World, Korean

Cas Autrey, Spanish

Valbert, French

L'afano nello zaino (The Thing in the Backpack), Fabbri Editori, Milano, 1999

Chi ha paura del varvarel? (Who fears the varvarel?) Bruno Mondadori, Milano, 1998.
Reissued as *Lo spirito del bosco* (The Woods Ghost) by Pelledoca, Milano, 2022

La casa delle bambole non si tocca! (Don't touch the doll's house!), Salani, Milano, 1998

101 buoni motivi per essere un bambino (101 good reasons to be a child), Bompiani, Milano, 1998

Ciao, tu (Hey, you), with Roberto Piumin, Bompiani, Milano, 1998.
Reissued by BUR Ragazzi, Milano, 2015

Se è una bambina (If she is a girl), Bompiani, Milano, 1998.
Reissued by BUR Ragazzi, Milano, 2015

Una principessa piccola così ma... (A Brave Little Princess), Milano, Arka, 1998
Aga World, Korean

Aquariana, Portuguese (Brazil)

Barefoot Books, English

Casa Autrey, Spanish

De Eenhoorn, Dutch

Lasten, Finnish

Livros, Portuguese

Valbert, French

Vado e non torno (Not coming back), EMP, Padova, 1998

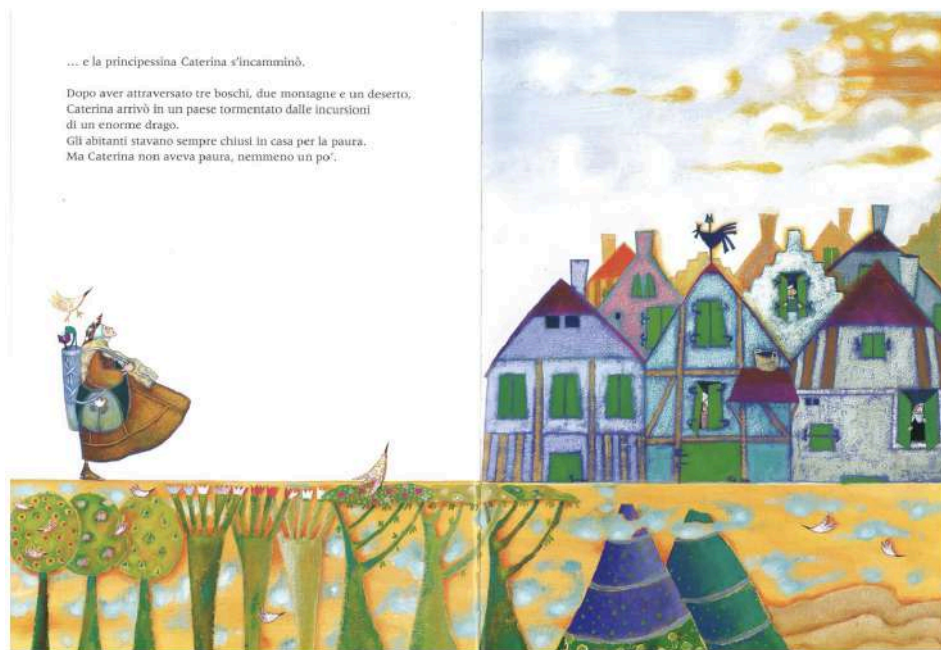
Gli animali non erano colorati (When animals were white), EMP, Padova, 1998

Bimbo d'ombra (Shadow Kid), Arka,
Milano, 1997

Emma dell'ermellino (Emma of the Ermine),
Arka, Milano, 1996

8. TEN OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TITLES BY THE CANDIDATE

Beatrice Masini
UNA PRINCIPESSA PICCOLA COSÌ MA...
(A Brave Little Princess)



Italian edition by Arka, 1998

Korean by Aga World

Portuguese by Aquariana (Brazil)

English by Barefoot Books

Spanish by Casa Autrey

Dutch by De Eenhoorn

Finnish by Lasten

Portuguese by Livros

French by Valbert

Little Princess Catherine is far too small to be a real princess, or so many people say. But when she learns that her grandfather, though he was also small, achieved great things, Catherine decides to follow his example. Because if you are brave, even if you're small, you can be stronger than a hundred knights and face even a huge dragon!

Beatrice Masini
UNA SPOSA BUFFA, BUFFISSIMA, BELLISSIMA
(The Funny Bride)



- Italian edition by Arka, 2011
- Portuguese by Atica (Brazil)
- Chinese by Chang-Tang
- Estonian by Koolibri
- Catalan by Laberinto
- Portuguese by Livros
- French by Sarbacane
- Danish by Thorup
- English by Tundra (North America)
- Spanish by Tuscania
- English by Watson (North America)

It's not true that all brides are beautiful. Some can be quite funny. Like Filomena, the seamstress, who carefully prepares her wedding dress and has so many ideas in her head. Perhaps a few too many..."

Beatrice Masini
LE AMICHE CHE VORRESTI E DOVE TROVARLE
(Girlfriends you wish for and where to find them)



Italian edition by Giunti Editore, 2019

Chinese by Gingko Books

Korean by Woorischool

Estonian by Koolibri

Romanian by Vellant

Spanish by Laberinto

Heroines of literature and ideal friends: irreverent, fascinating, brilliant. Twenty-two portraits of literary heroines – from Emma Bovary to Jane Eyre, from Lady Chatterley to Anna Karenina, from Jo to Pippi Longstocking, and even to the modern Matilda by Roald Dahl or Mina by David Almond – who all share the trait of breaking free from the conventions of their own societies. Each heroine is accompanied by an evocative passage through which the author shares with young readers the emotions and themes the character embodies, like a doorway opening onto ever-new worlds and dreams.

Beatrice Masini
UNA CASA FUORI DAL TEMPO
(A House Out of Time)



Italian edition by Mondadori, 2024

Pompeii is emerging from the past in all its splendour and mystery: it is the 19th century, and what had been a buried city for centuries is coming back to life under the careful and curious hands of archaeologists. It is in the company of one of them, her brother Caspian, that Vera arrives in Pompeii from England. Her unhappy childhood, spent between austere boarding schools and the cold house of an even colder aunt, is giving way to a season of travels and new possibilities. Vera is sensitive, independent, and solitary. Perhaps that is why Ginestra chooses her. She speaks in a peculiar way, appears when Vera least expects her, and seems to know every corner of the city. Where does she come from, and why is it

instinctively clear to Vera that the friendship that immediately binds them must be kept as a secret?

With her style brimming with charm and intensity, Beatrice Masini takes her readers to an unknown time, suspended between eras, where what is eternal resides: friendship, the thirst for knowledge, and the longing for those who are no longer with us.

Beatrice Masini - Roberto Piumini

CIAO, TU

(Hey, you)



Zaino di Michele

OTTOBRE			
L	5	12	19 26
M	6	13	20 27
M	7	14	21 28
G	1	8	15 22 29
V	2	9	16 23 30
S	3	10	17 24 31
D	4	11	18 25

Indovinami. Scoprimi. Sappimi. Sono quella con due centimetri di capelli o quella un po' bambina con la treccia dietro? Quella alta, misure d'armadio, o quella bionda, faccia buona, aria un po' da topo? E credi che faccia qualche differenza, il muso che ho, il colore degli occhi, la taglia, il girovita girotette? Ti amo alla stessa maniera da un metrocinquanta a un metrottanta, la concentrazione di ormoni adrenalina bacibacibaci è la stessa, credo. E non mi sai. Il bello di cominciare una scuola è solo questo: dietro non c'è niente, nessuno sa chi sei. Puoi buttarti alle spalle un passato di smorfiosa, un bollo di secchia: cambiare, una volta almeno. Nessuno ti conosce, puoi essere quello che vuoi. Hai questa possibilità. Bisogna spenderla bene.

5

Italian edition by Rizzoli, 2018

What would you do if one day you found a little note in your backpack from someone who wants to be discovered? In class, you start looking around, trying to figure out who is watching and studying you during lessons. And you start to imagine: could it be her? Could it be him? That's exactly what happens to Viola and Michele. She starts it, and Michele plays along—at first a little distant, but gradually more involved. A hunt for clues begins, the notes pile up, growing longer and more frequent, and the impatience to finally meet face-to-face builds.

The love story of Viola and Michele in a special edition, featuring two previously unpublished letters, twenty years later.

Beatrice Masini
LA TRILOGIA DELLE RAGAZZE
(Girls Trilogy)

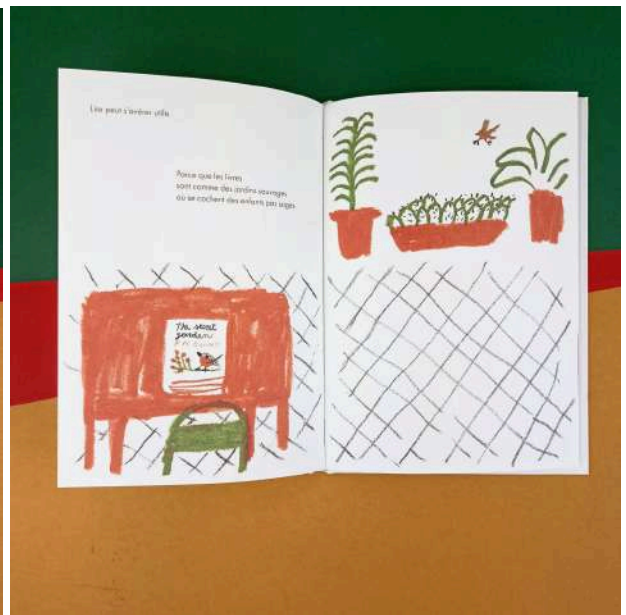
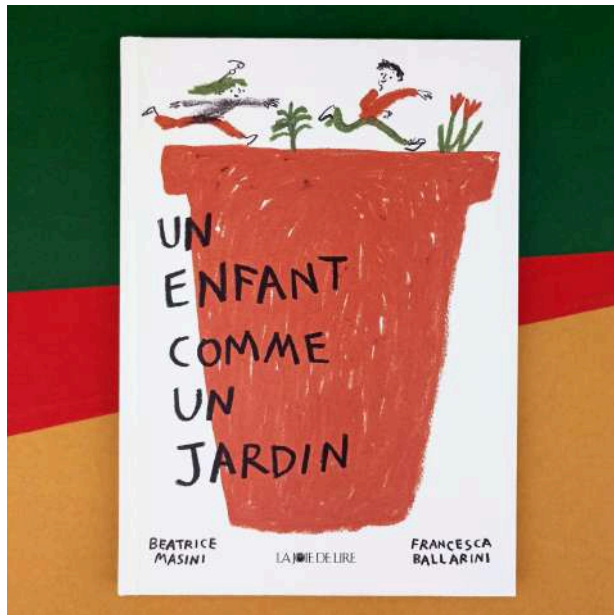


Italian edition by Rizzoli, 2021

A handful of days in the mountains in the heart of winter, and the surprise of realizing that love doesn't need many words to blossom. A summer of endless hours, sand and wind, and a girl who doesn't know whether she wants to grow up—or perhaps wants it too much; the kind of summer every child remembers when they are no longer a child. A school year in an all-girls' secondary school at the end of the 1970s: true friendships and false ones, pranks, envy, laughter, and the desire to change themselves and the world around them.

Three stories of today and yesterday, of memories, of timid determination and unexpected boldness—three stories of girls standing at the threshold of life, unaware that their prickly, complicated age is—and will always be—unforgettable.

Beatrice Masini
UN ENFANT COMME UN JARDIN
(Of Children and Gardens)



French edition by La Joie de Lire, 2024
Italian by Timpetill Edizioni
Kore by Fika
Spanish by Nino Editor (South America)

The Importance of Not Growing Up Too Quickly and, Above All, Continuing to Think for Yourself

Children, like gardens, are untamed spaces that need to be nurtured properly in a calm and orderly environment. At least, that's what adults imagine... as they talk to them, feed them, and care for them. But the fear that children and gardens might remain in a primitive, even wild, state is never far away. What if giving them a bit more freedom was just as beneficial to their development?

With *Of Children and Gardens*, Beatrice Masini and Francesca Ballarini combine their talents to gently and humorously challenge preconceived notions about education, reminding us that children need space to grow by engaging with nature—and, most importantly, with themselves.

Beatrice Masini
STORIA DI MAY PICCOLA DONNA
(Story of May, Little Woman)



Italian edition by Mondadori, 2019

Do you ever think about it, Martha—all our possible lives? About how little it would have taken, or would take, to change them? I think about it all the time. And I like to chase, in my mind, those other versions of myself who roam the world, travel by train, carriage, and ship, ride on the backs of elephants, and stroll among the ruins of cities like Athens and Rome. It all feels a bit distant, but not impossible, I think.

May is still a child, yet she has already learned what it means to change her life. When her parents move the entire family from Concord, their hometown, to Paradise—the place where they hope to create an ideal community—nothing is the same anymore. At Paradise, no one eats meat, no animals are exploited, and only simple linen garments are worn.

Sure, now May can dive into the shimmering waters of Walden Pond whenever she likes, lulled by the flute of the Handsome Lord. And not everyone has the chance to live next door to a tribe of Native Americans or to learn how to climb trees under the guidance of

one of them, *Two Moons*. But this new life, deep down, wasn't May's choice, and the only way for her to accept a reality that feels too restrictive is to reinvent it in letters to Martha, her friend who stayed behind in the town: all she needs is a sheet of paper and a pen.

Set in 19th-century America and inspired by Louisa May Alcott, the author of *Little Women*, this is a profound and strikingly relevant story about the multifaceted allure of utopias.

Beatrice Masini
BAMBINI NEL BOSCO
(Children in the Woods)



Italian edition by Fanucci, 2010

There is a place, the Base, where children grow up without memories or recollections of the past. Among them is a livelier group: Hana, the leader of the Shell, tough and methodical; Dudu, always alert and watchful; Glor, big and clumsy; Cranach, the slowest of them all; Orla, the smallest; and finally ZeroSeven, the newest arrival. Then there's Tom, but he seems different: he often loses himself in countless thoughts, and sometimes he feels a Shard—a fragment of a past life—resurface.

One day, Tom convinces the group to venture into the forest to explore the world beyond. He brings with him a recently discovered book of fairy tales, which he begins to read aloud, sparking emotions and curiosity among the others. But before long, the group will experience rivalries and jealousies, discoveries and loves—all closely observed from afar by Jonas, the Base's control system operator, who has secretly planned an escape.

Almost like magic, that book and those stories will give each of them a thread of hope and joy.

A tale suspended in a spatial and temporal limbo, poetic and poignant, that delves into the souls of the children, exploring their emotions and inner worlds.

9. LIST OF THE FIVE REPRESENTATIVE BOOKS SENT TO THE JURORS

1. *Una casa fuori dal tempo* (A House Out of Time), Italy, Mondadori
2. *Ciao, tu* (Hey, you), Italy, Rizzoli
3. *La Trilogia delle Ragazze* (Girls Trilogy), Italy, Rizzoli
4. *Un enfant comme un jardin* (Of Childrens and Gardens), France, La Joie de Lire
5. *Storia di May. Piccola Donna* (Story of May, Little Woman), Italy, Mondadori

10. PUBLISHED REVIEWS OF THE BOOKS SUBMITTED TO THE JURY

Una casa fuori dal tempo (A House Out of Time)

A review by Igiaba Scego, *Internazionale*, 2024

Cultura

Libri

Ragazzi

Amicizia
illuminante

Beatrice Masini
Una casa fuori dal tempo
Mondadori, 240 pagine,
16,50 euro
Ci sono libri teneri come
boccioli di rosa, ma al pari
delle rose anche tenaci e for-
ti. È il caso di *Una casa fuori
dal tempo* di Beatrice Masini,
che fa sognare e sa anche in-
segnare. Masini ci catapulta
dentro un'atmosfera otto-
centesca, dove però la prota-
gonista non somiglia (per
fortunata) a nessuna eroina
romantica da dramma in co-
stume. Si chiama Vera. In
compagnia del fratello Cas-
pian arriva a Pompei, nel
momento in cui la città se-
polta viene alla luce per ma-
no degli archeologi. Vera,
che ha avuto un'infanzia av-
velenata da una zia arcigna,
pagina dopo pagina, come
Pompei, ritorna alla luce. E a
illuminarla sarà l'incontro
con una sconosciuta, Gine-
stra. La ragazza viene dal
passato e appare a Vera
"con sandali piatti, di cuoio
rosso un po' sbucciato, che le
lasciano libere e visibili le di-
ta dei piedi, dita scure, sottili".
Ginestra conosce la città
e la mostra a Vera, segreti
compresi. E Vera, persona
dall'indole solitaria e guar-
dinga, con Ginestra si apre
come forse non le è mai suc-
cesso. Masini con questo ro-
manzo fuori dal tempo ci re-
gala non solo Pompei, ma
anche la storia di un'amicizia
che come tutte le amicizie
sincere nasce da una difficol-
tà. E con uno stile sobrio, mai
urlato, dona a chi legge una
possibilità.
Igiaba Scego

There are books as tender as rosebuds, yet just as roses can be, they are also tenacious and strong. This is the case with *A House Out of Time* by Beatrice Masini, a book that makes you dream while also teaching you something. Masini transports us into a 19th-century atmosphere, but the protagonist is refreshingly unlike any romantic heroine from a period drama. Her name is Vera. Together with her brother Caspian, she arrives in Pompeii just as the buried city is being brought back to light by archaeologists.

Vera, whose childhood was poisoned by a stern and bitter aunt, gradually re-emerges, page by page, much like Pompeii itself. Her transformation is illuminated by her encounter with a mysterious girl, Ginestra. The girl seems to come from the past and appears to Vera "wearing flat sandals of slightly scuffed red leather, leaving her toes free and visible—dark, slender toes." Ginestra knows the city intimately, secrets and all, and she shows it to Vera.

Vera, a solitary and guarded person by nature, finds herself opening up to Ginestra in a way she perhaps never has before. With this timeless novel, Masini offers us not just Pompeii, but also the story of a friendship that, like all genuine friendships, is born out of difficulty. Through her understated and never overwrought style, she gives readers a gift: a possibility.

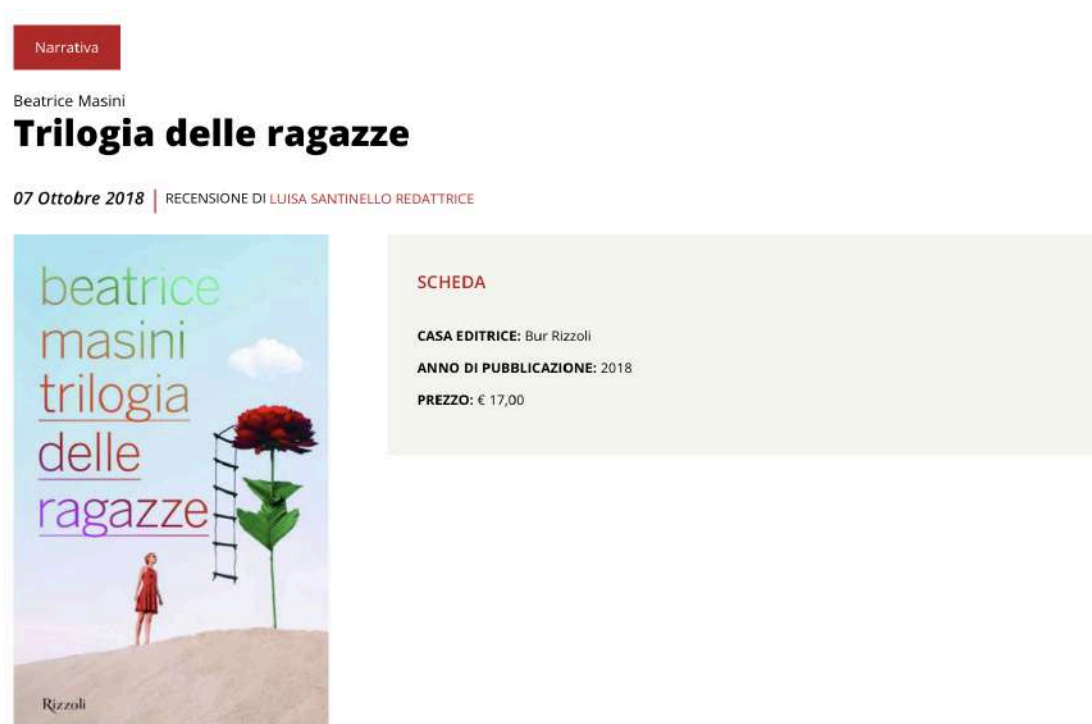
Ciao, tu
(Hey, you)

A review by Federica Iacobelli, *Orizzonti*, 1998

Ciao, tu is a small masterpiece, written by Roberto Piumini with Beatrice Masini, who is the translator of Harry Potter but also a sophisticated writer totally capable to confront the scandal of death (*Se è una bambina*) as well as the Bildung of Olga, the Greek world (*Signore e signorine*) as well as the mothers of the Bible.

La Trilogia delle Ragazze **(Girls Trilogy)**

<https://messaggerosantantonio.it/content/trilogia-delle-ragazze>



How complicated it is to leave the nest, take flight, and find one's place in the world! The protagonists of these three stories, filled with humour and nostalgia, know this all too well. Three girls, separated by miles and years, each preparing—each in her own way—to enter the most thorny yet exhilarating stage of life: adolescence.

There is Margherita who, in the previously unpublished story *The Buttons*, follows her grandparents to the mountains for the winter holidays, only to end up spending most of her time with Luigi, the hoteliers' son, sharing nature outings, secrets, and stolen kisses. Then there is the slightly bewildered girl in *The Giant Summer* (originally published in 2005), who spends the last golden summer of her childhood on the Adriatic coast, between swimming and games, leading a small gang of children, with an intriguing lifeguard complicating matters.

Finally, there is the student from *Down with the Zip* (first edition: 2000), attending an all-girls high school in the late 1970s, navigating friendships and rivalries, pranks and a longing for change. "This is a story of rebellion and reflection," warns the author in the prologue to the final tale. "It is also a story of mascara and strawberry lip gloss, clogs and floral skirts..."

After all, who says that depth and lightness cannot coexist on the same page? Fully aware of this, Beatrice Masini skilfully weaves together different threads, creating a collection of stories to be devoured in one breath. Sweet and bitter, just like adolescence itself. Page after page, readers—whether teenagers, young adults, or beyond—immerse themselves in the adventures of the three protagonists. With them, they grow, transform, and journey to the roots of their own identity, certain that there is no future without a past and no coming of age without transformation.

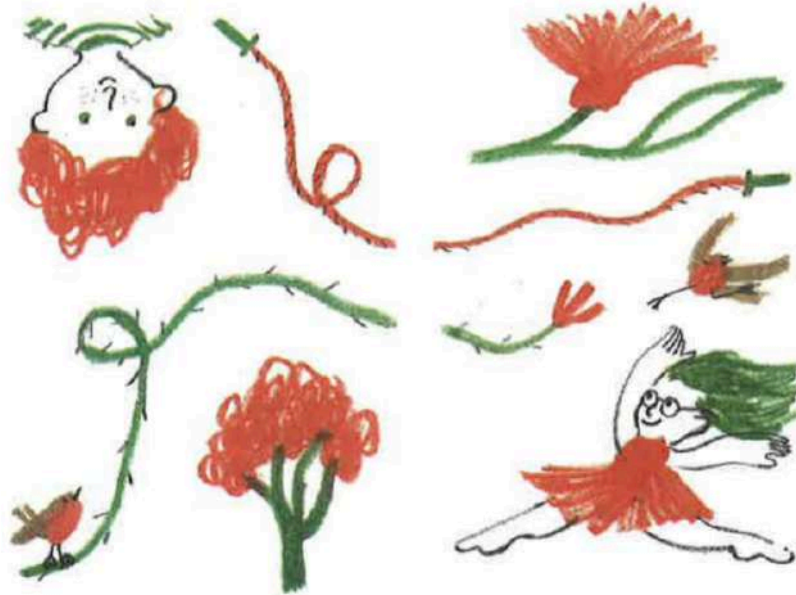
A review by Giordana Piccinini, *LiBeR*, 2018

No doubt Masini is among the best writers for children in Italy today, capable of distinguishing herself for refinement of style and her boldness. In times when we tend to merely observe current affairs and comment on them by seeking the easy refuge of slogans, her novels insist on representing the past and problematising the vision of reality with a plurality of viewpoints.

This was already shown in the two-voice game of *Hey, yuu* or the even more difficult and delicate game of *If she is a girl* and is now confirmed by the choral register of *Down with the Zip*. (...) The feminine school setting and the representation of a classroom recall cumbersome precedents, but Masini brilliantly overcomes any comparison thanks to her precious style that skilfully blends the spoken word with outdated expressions, managing to bring characters to life thanks to the liveliness of their words but also to descriptive touches, both incisive and delicate at the same time, that mix a fresh take with an ever-present irony.

Un enfant comme un jardin (Of Children and Gardens)

La revue des livres pour enfants n. 336, July 2024



This picture book draws a parallel between the child and the garden: both are wild and ever-changing. The adult cares for them in the same way, nurturing and protecting them. A child in a garden is free and discovers real little worlds. But there is one difference: the garden, even as it changes, will always remain a garden!

The author then suggests reading as a tool to remember and reconnect with the child within.

Visually stunning, the illustrations, created with wax pencil in shades of orange and green, feature a wild stroke that aligns with the book's theme. The dynamic page composition plays with the white background, making this picture book a captivating graphic work that exudes poetry and sensitivity.

Storia di May. Piccola Donna
(Story of May, Little Woman)

A review by Arianna Di Genova, *Il Manifesto*, 2019

Among the classical influences, we also find the presence of May: she is no ordinary child in Beatrice Masini's novel *Storia di May. Piccola Donna* (Mondadori, 180 pages, €16). In the letters (written as a diary-confession) that the protagonist writes to her friend Martha, the personality of Louisa May Alcott emerges—the author who gifted generations the beloved *Little Women*, first published in 1868 and forever present on the shelves of bookstores worldwide.

The summer days unfold as May takes her first steps in life, perhaps losing herself in a mirror from Venice, wondering who might have gazed into it across many seas: perhaps the glazier's daughter, a princess, or a fisherwoman. The story begins with the family's move to the agricultural community of Paradiso (after the failure of the rural Utopian Fruitlands), where existence takes a different turn, and nothing will ever be the same: no lace-trimmed dresses, only long swims in Walden Pond.

Masini's writing brings joy to the narrative (as an editor and translator, her pen is also behind the Italian editions of the Harry Potter series), complemented by the illustrations of Mariachiara Di Giorgio, whose poetic, somewhat retro style immerses the reader in the vast American landscape.

A review by Germana Paraboschi, Andersen, 2019



A Wonderful Anomaly

Fortunately, there is the pen, the paper, and the ink. (...) And so she writes, writes. By writing, she can correct reality, make it more beautiful. It's like when she reads, but even better: because the stories you read are already there. The ones you write, however, are made by you.

In the year marking the 150th anniversary of the first publication of *Little Women*, this book presents itself as a wonderful anomaly. It is not merely a reissue with a new cover of the first novel in the tetralogy, nor a biography of the author Louisa May Alcott, but rather a fictional reconstruction of her extraordinary childhood.

Beatrice Masini weaves, alternating an epistolary style—often mystifying or concealing aspects of the actual

lived reality—and a third-person narrative, the story of May Robinson, a young girl whose family leaves Concord, a town in Massachusetts, to found a small vegetarian community devoted to agricultural work, in an attempt to live with only the essentials, free from the trappings of civilisation. This community believes in the freedom of choice, alongside intellectual work and meditation, and seeks to rediscover manual labour and the dignity of earning a living.

Alongside May's family lives the Bel Lord, under whose romantic guise is revealed Henry David Thoreau, author of *Walden, or Life in the Woods*.

May writes to Martha, her friend who has stayed in the city, telling her about the manual work, the encounter with an Indian girl, Two Moons, with whom she befriends, her reliance

on Abigail, the herb lady, the work on building the Bel Lord's cabin, and her conversations with this wise man. However, she hides from Martha the harshness of winter, spent in nothing but linen clothes (as the community's rules prohibit the use of wool), the exhaustion of her mother, and the growing sense of isolation.

The philosophical orientation of Amos Bronson Alcott is reflected in the characters of *Little Women*, particularly in the figure of Jo, who has a parallel in this novel in the character of May. Masini enriches the volume with *The Story of Louise* and *The Story of May*, as well as several reflections on writing in general, on the preservation and transformation of memories and lived experiences, as well as on epistolary and diary writing. The final explanatory note restores the essence of Masini's tale: to give back to an author like Alcott all the richness and complexity that characterised her, and not to reduce her simply to the figure of the creator of a girls' novel.

11. APPENDIX: ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF NON-ENGLISH CHAPTERS OR EXCERPTS

UNA CASA FUORI DAL TEMPO (A House Out of Time)

Vera as she was

Dear Nellie,

I write these lines from the top of the world, hoping they will roll backward and reach you. The mail is a wonder—the farther we are, the closer it keeps us—but it seems impossible to think that once I finish this letter I will fold it, write your address on it, hand it to the red-cheeked boy tidying the tables down there, and he will slip it into a satchel, put on his skis, and glide down in a white cloud to a village whose name I can't even pronounce. Then he will give it to someone who will stuff it into a sack along with other letters, and a stagecoach will head north with that sack, and one day, not too far from now, someone will ring your doorbell and hand it to you, cold from the journey. And you will open it without even sitting down and read me, and know that I am well.

That I was well—because by then who knows where I'll be, and I will have already written to you again. But perhaps it won't be so cold anymore, and I'll be far down, down in the land where the lemon trees bloom. And if the lemon trees bloom, there can be no snow. Instead there will be so much sun, and warmth, and the sea before me.

Traveling is the miracle. A letter on its way to you, a girl who has never seen the world—what difference does it make? Only, the letter is already written, and I am not. I am a letter that has yet to be written.

Yes, Nellie, I will stop now. You know how I tend to get carried away when I have a pen in my hand. The red-cheeked boy, by the way, is not an invention of mine—he exists. His name is Hubert, a solemn yet lovely name, and this morning, with my breakfast, he brought me a flower—a helleborus. The winter rose, they call it here. When I thanked him in my hesitant German, he turned even redder. The flower however is white.

We leave tomorrow. The border is near. I have pressed the flower inside my Goethe. If I look out the window, I see the mountains tinged pink by the sunset. The valley below is already a dark line. But down there, at the bottom, there is Italy. We are almost there.

Yours,
Vera

Dear Aunt Eunice,

Caspian asked me to write to you to say that we are well. So I am writing: we are well. Tomorrow we will be in Italy. We will try and avoid bandits and murderers, don't worry. Caspian takes care of everything. I, on the other hand, think of nothing—but you already know my head is full of air. Don't worry about me. I know you won't.

Yours,
Vera

She re-reads, folds the letter, seals it using the signet Caspian gave her along with the writing kit—a mere fraction of the intricate arsenal of things-needed-if-you-are-a-young-lady. What a joy sincerity is: to be able to tell everything to someone who has always understood you, and nothing to those who never have. It will be enough for Aunt Eunice to know that everything is going according to plan—even if it wasn't her plan—for her to return to her meetings with the milliner and the other meaningless rituals that shape her days. A girl has never been part of her landscape, and a traveling girl (such an insolent thing, too) might be a vague annoyance—but mostly a great relief.

Just to play her part, Aunt Eunice had initially objected.

"But Caspian, really, what an idea. A girl in an archaeological site. The dust, the mess, the sun. And all those men." (Said as if it were a bad word.)

"In Italy." (Same tone.)

"In the South." (Again.)

"And besides, Vera's education is not yet complete. Right now, according to Miss Warwick, she's making progress—she even has friends. Isn't that so, Vera?"

Friends. Vera had looked at her feet—two strangers—sitting on the piano stool she had cranked up as high as it would go, not how a young lady should sit. Friends, sure. The cold little smiles of Bella, Alice, and Eliza as they whispered behind her back. Yes, it was going a little better. It could hardly have been worse, considering that before, at Pembroke School, none of the girls spoke to her, while at Miss Warwick's at least they did; but only because they were old enough to know she was rich.

"An heiress," they whispered.

"Be nice to her, she's an heiress."

What an ugly word—like the name of some newly discovered insect, the kind Caspian liked to show her in his books. A little creature with too many legs and marble eyes.

"Vera? Vera? Where have you gone? Always lost in her own world. Come back..."

Caspian, sitting in an armchair with his legs crossed and his fingers touching at the tips, had smiled, recognizing in that silence a form of escape. His beautiful brother, who had arrived at last to sweep her away.

That was how it had begun, like in a novel for girls where everything eventually falls into place: her new life. Doubts always linger after the final word, but since the ending of her former life was more of a beginning, she had asked Caspian right away, as soon as they were alone in the carriage on their way to his house—which was also their parents' house, and therefore hers as well, except that she remembered neither the house nor the parents.

She had asked him: "Why do you want me to travel with you? Wouldn't you be better off alone?"

Caspian had laughed. "And you're supposed to be the shy little girl? Possibly, Doodle, it would be much easier without you. But I could never forgive myself for it. And stop speaking so formally to me. This isn't a drawing room, and as far as I'm concerned, we won't be seeing one for quite some time. You look so much like Mother, you know." And he had given her a gaze so tender and blue that it was almost unbearable.

Vera had hidden behind another question. "Why do you call me... why do you call me Doodle?"

"It's the nickname Father gave you. Doodle, like a scribble. You were so little, and instead of playing with dolls you would write, write. You imitated me while I did my homework. You made us laugh. We were..." A pause. "Happy, I think. It was just before I left for school. A little before..." Silence. No need to explain.

Then, gathering courage, Vera had finally managed to say what she had never told him before: "You could have visited me more often, Caspian. I was so alone."

"I know." A sigh. "But you reminded me too much of both of them. Not them them, but the time we had together. The before. It hurt to see you. And besides, you needed a female guide. That's what everyone said."

"And now?"

Caspian had laughed again. "I like you, sister. You don't beat around the bush. Now it will do you good to be away from that unbearable woman, to see a bit of the world, to finish growing up."

"And after that?" Vera had asked, with a note of apprehension in her voice.

Like in a novel for young ladies, for Aunt Eunice anything unpredictable was a nuisance. She was perfect for the role. She certainly couldn't have predicted that she would lose her brother and sister-in-law in one terrible shipwreck—we always say that, as if there were shipwrecks that weren't terrible—and that she would have to take their child with her. Luckily Caspian was already grown; he had been away at school in the North when it happened, and they hadn't even called him back for the double funeral.

But that's life; you have to accept what it brings and move forward. Aunt Eunice has said it so many times that to Vera's ears it has become a meaningless phrase. And maybe it really is. Caspian now wants his sister with him instead of leaving her to her orphan's life: and this is something that in the end makes everyone happy enough.

And just on the eve of his Grand Voyage—the Grand Tour, as they say in French—the journey that young rich men take to see the world that was, the remnants of ancient civilizations. A way to spend some entertaining time before starting real life, becoming lawyers, merchants, or simply staying rich. Except for Caspian real life is something different: his project is investigating the past. And Vera, who has little past and knows little of it, has set out with him.

Aunt Eunice did what she had to, perhaps not so well as she could have, but never mind. And now she will slip into the shadows. She stayed in London. She is gone.

"And after that?"

They are standing on the crest of a small hill; peering out the window, they see a line of carriages waiting their turn to cross a bridge; the river is a gray ribbon because there is no sun, and this is the land of lemons, but they haven't seen a single one yet. But there is a fair light emanating from everything—the dust, the roads, the woods: a light they have never seen before. Or maybe it's just the idea of light.

The journey began fifteen days ago, but Vera already feels she could live like this, among inns and new landscapes and bursts of strange voices that she understands—not all, not always, but enough. And the thought of having to go back—to the darkness of England, to London, to Miss Warwick's boarding school, to the boredom of visits with Aunt Eunice to other perfect strangers' aunt—grips her stomach like an illness.

"After, after. What does it matter? Let's live in the moment, and make it last as long as we can. Do you want an apple?"

The carriage starts moving again with a jolt. Vera takes the apple Caspian offers her—it is red, crisp, beautiful—and bites into it.

CIAO, TU
(Hey, you)

MICHELE'S BACKPACK

October 2nd

Guess me. Discover me. Know me. Am I the short-haired one or the childish one with the long pigtail? The tall, big one, or the blonde one, goody face, a slightly mousy expression? Do you think it makes a difference, my snout, the color of my eyes, my size, my measures? I love you the same from 1 m 50 or from 1 m 80, the concentration of hormones adrenaline kisskisskiss is identical. And you don't know me. The nice thing about starting a new school is that you don't have anything to lose, nobody knows who you are. You can throw away your legendary past as a painful bore or a bookworm: you can finally change. Nobody knows you, you can be whatever you like. You have got this chance. Spend it well.

This is the reason I enjoy loving you. Because you don't know me. You can't recognize me from my writing; in a couple of months you will but now you can't. You don't know if I am beautiful, if I am a monster, if I have zits or a clear skin, if I wash my hair once a day or once a week. You don't know whether I write poems, climb mountains or do both (at a time). You don't know if I put this message in your backpack at recess or when you went to pee during the Greek class or later, when you went into the hall to say hi to that very short guy who seems to be an old friend of yours. You do not know.

On the other hand, I do know these things about you:

- your nose is slightly crooked (you slammed into it as a kid? a frightful row? a brutal fall?);
- you eyes are the exact hue of grapes;
- you are too thin;
- you are very, very cute.

This is all.

Of course I love you is a little bit too much. Let's say I you.

And now do guess me.

MESSAGE WRITTEN ON THE BLACKBOARD
IN CAPITAL LETTERS

October 3rd

If Miss Guess me Discover me Know me wants an answer, please tell me how.

The very very cute one.

LA TRILOGIA DELLE RAGAZZE

(Girls Trilogy)

I was the first to arrive, but after a while, we were all there—everyone, plus a few others. It hadn't rained in weeks. We felt good. So I decided that this summer, of all summers, had to be unforgettable. The trophy of memory. The seashell in the drawer, ready to connect with the past in a telephonic murmur. The summer that every child remembers when they are no longer a child, yet their memory remains nailed there—partial, unfinished, fragmented, mocking: you won't have me back, you won't have me back. I won't have you back, I told myself. But for now, I haven't created you yet. So you're mine.

"What is the giant doing today?"

We're sitting in a circle, Guido and I—or rather, we would be if everyone were here. We will be, when everyone arrives. For now, we form just a sliver, just him and me.

Guido is always the first to arrive in the morning. His grandmother is one of those old ladies who tuck their skirts into their underwear—like a floating device, a makeshift bottom—pacing back and forth ten meters from shore, the water up to mid-thigh because it's good for circulation. There she is: wearing a straw hat with a frayed brim, a blue polka-dot dress bunched up at the hips, bobbing like a duck. From here, I can't see, but I know the cleavage between the conical cups of her padded swimsuit is filled with neatly folded wrinkles of sun-scorched skin. And between one fold and another, hidden away, dangle the pendants of a gold chain—medals or tiny charms I've never been able to see properly, so deep they sink into her dry flesh.

Guido's grandmother is kind. She lets him be, buys him pastries and candied fruit, gives him a ton of money for the arcade.

"They don't make grandmothers like that anymore, Guido," I say absentmindedly, turning back to look at him. He stares at me, puzzled, not understanding. Then, impatient:

"Alright, but what is the giant doing?"

I haven't decided yet. Maybe today the giant does nothing. It happens. For now, we sit here, the two of us, in our spot behind the beach cabins, solemn as two Indian chiefs immersed in mystic silence, savoring our solitude as the beach slowly fills and slowly comes to life with color.

Guido is silent, shaping a mound of sand with his hands. Then he destroys it. Then he builds it again. He waits.

Luciano walks by, looks at us, smiles, stops.

"What are you guys up to today?"

I smile back, looking up at him.

Luciano is beautiful. His teeth are very white against his very dark skin, slightly Native-looking, with high cheekbones. Cheekbones, cheekbones—a word I've just learned, and I love how it sounds. His hair is jet black. He's tall, muscular but not too much. That stomach, so flat, marked by scars. He says he had surgery as a child, but I prefer to imagine shadowy vendettas, blades flashing under lamplight, muffled groans, black blood on his hands. I'm sure he always wins, and the fact that he's here proves it.

His legs are lean, his body hair curling slightly, not too much. His feet are slender, nails like mother-of-pearl. So close to my hands right now.

"We're waiting for the others," Guido says.

"And then you'll go cause trouble as usual?"

Luciano teases us. For a gang, we're very orderly, never a nuisance. Otherwise, he wouldn't be so nice. Out of all the lifeguards, he's the one who treats us best. To the others, we're invisible. But not to him—he always greets us. We exist. Sometimes, he even buys popsicles for everyone.

I adore him.

There he goes, flashing one last smile, carrying two wooden sunbeds—one under each arm—effortlessly. Before heading out on the lifeguard boat, he sometimes helps with regular chores, even though he's not one of those lifeguards who sweep the sand, arrange umbrellas, and hose down the bathrooms. He's a higher being, a sea deity who occasionally deigns to descend to land and walk among us.

I watch the soft bulge of his biceps, the curve of his shoulders dissolving into his waist.

"Luciano is strong, huh?"

Guido is small—but not that small. Our eyes meet, his gaze flickering with a brief glimmer of mockery, extinguished immediately, on command.

We wait.

Nina arrives, running. She always runs—it's her way of keeping up with us, with those tiny legs, that elfin appearance. Filippo calls her Legolas because she has incredibly long blond hair—the kind that never tangles when it moves. The kind of hair I wish I had.

I remember a fairy tale, though not the title. There was a prince who wanted to marry the most beautiful princess. So, with a wizard's help, he took a piece of each: the golden hair of the English princess, the coal-black eyes of the Portuguese princess, the amber skin of the African princess, the rosebud lips of the Spanish princess. But when he put it all together, the result was a true horror. The golden hair didn't match the black eyes, the amber skin clashed terribly, and the rosebud lips didn't fit at all. So, in the end, he asked the wizard to put everything back as it was and married the Spanish princess, who was kind and cheerful, even though she had one leg shorter than the other.

What the fairy tale never says is what happened to the other princesses when the wizard took their best features—whether their eyes and lips were replaced by empty voids or mismatched parts: a nose too big, eyes too close together, coarse hair. There's always something fairy tales don't tell.

Anyway, I wish I had Nina's hair. But if I did, I'd be different. I wouldn't be me. Maybe under different hair, I'd even have different thoughts. So in the end, I don't know if I'd really go through with the change. And Nina is so lovely as she is—it would be a shame to take her apart like an old doll.

She arrives and, without even having to bend down, gives me a kiss on the cheek. Then she drops to the ground beside me—too close, given all the space around us. The skin of her leg presses against mine.

She seeks contact. I allow it.

Sometimes, at night, when we're still together, sitting somewhere, exchanging the last words of the day, she curls up in my lap. She always smells nice—like clean hair and baby skin. Like milk and tears, I imagine. A scent like that—they could turn it into a perfume, and I'd buy it immediately. Not to wear, no—just to breathe in from the bottle and try to remember what I used to be like.

At Nina's age, I was already coming here on vacation, but I had to stay within the shade of the umbrella, like a puppy on a leash. If I strayed too far, the tether yanked me back.

Now, it's different.

"What are we doing?" she asks, trusting.

"Waiting for the others," Guido answers for me.

And here they come.

I stand up. Guido and Nina rise with me.

"Today, we're walking to the pier and back."

"But that's so far," Asia whines.

"Did the giant say so?" Roberto asks.

I don't say yes. I don't say no. I just look at them, one by one—tall among the small ones, except for Filippo and Roberto.

"If we walk slowly, we won't get tired. Right?" Nina says, slipping her hand into mine.

No one chooses to stay behind.

We go.

BAMBINI E GIARDINI
(Of Children and Gardens)

Full translation into English:

Children and gardens look alike.

A garden as of today never is the same as of yesterday.

Nor a child.

One moment, and they have changed

A garden when left to itself is wild.

Sun, water, air do wonders.

But then it gets pruned, tamed, cut.

It becomes neat and orderly.

It is beautiful nonetheless.

Similar, but a bit different.

Something stays the same as before.

A child when left to themselves is wild also.

(Especially a child in a garden.)

But then they get cleaned up, educated, raised.

They are beautiful nonetheless.

Similar, but a bit different.

Something stays the same as before.

Adults do to children the same things they do to gardens.

They talk to them, they nourish them, they take care of them.

In the garden one can shout, because one is outdoors.

One can get dirty (a little bit).

One can roll in the grass,

Which is less smooth but much softer than a floor.

In the garden there are flowers, plants, pebbles, sticks.

One can spot small worlds.

One can build some.

Even the neatest garden

Keeps wild at heart.
Even the wildest child
Keeps a quiet heart.

Children and gardens tend to change over time.
But there is a difference here.
A garden can morph,
But it stays a garden.

Whereas when time passes
a child is not a child anymore.
Children get to be something else.

They have no choice.
It's like that.
They have to grow.
The best they can
Is there a way out?

No.

Reading can be useful, though.

As some books are stories
Of untamed gardens
And of untamed children.

And to read these stories means to recognize them,
And remember.

STORIA DI MAY, PICCOLA DONNA

(Story of May, Little Woman)

Dear Martha,

today I picked the flowers from the pumpkins and they were very offended. By the time I put them in the bucket, they had all curled up closed in on themselves. Maybe it's just that they are afraid of being eaten, which is precisely what will happen. There are lots of pumpkins in the garden, but they are still puppy pumpkins, you must leave them there even if you are hungry. I plucked two by accident or perhaps on purpose and Mater without saying anything to anyone and without getting angry with me cut them up, chopped them up and made them into pies. They were quite good, a bit greenish but good. With an egg hidden inside they would have been even better. But we don't eat eggs here. We let them become, and we are happy with that.

Tabby and Ginger, by the way, have become little cougars. They prowl the trees in the orchard, ready to pounce on the lizards. I have explained to them that it is not Christian to break lizards' tails - that's all they can do for now, but I am afraid that when they are really wild they will do even worse, if I don't convert them first. Mater says Nature is not good: it is what it is. Pater says all beings can be taught. I believe him and think I can teach two cats to be kind. After all, they don't need lizards to fill their bellies.

I think I'll adopt a bat. They are ugly but also beautiful, they look like mice with wings: and do you remember how much we envied Sam Bottom for his white mouse? When I get one of my own I'll teach it to nest among the fake strawberries in my hat and the ladies in the church will all want to have one too and won't look at us funny like they do now. It's just that people around here hate new things, and we are so new.

Mater promised me a dress for my birthday. Pater won't agree, he'll say I don't need it, that I'm pretty anyway, but she'll sew it for me as a secret mission and it'll be beautiful, pink and white striped like a candy cane, and then I'll go out on the porch and everyone will hold their breath in wonderment, even the Fair Lord, and then Pater won't have the heart to send me upstairs to change. It will be a beautiful birthday, I know.

April sends her greetings and the dried-up dragonfly I stuffed in the envelope. Don't be afraid, don't be a city girl. It's just a little being that doesn't fly anymore. She was so beautiful before. But if you look at her against the light she still has a thousand colours on her.

June has just learned to walk by herself. She's so cute, all curls, holes and dimples: they still give her milk, I pick it up at the neighbour's farm and I taste just a little bit on the way back. I'm fine without it. I don't even like it any more. Pater says water is healthier and is a gift from heaven we must appreciate. I praise water, but I also praise our dear Ross. Having to part with her was a heartbreak. She could be as sensitive as a dog.

I miss you so much, Martha! I wish we could see each other again soon. Maybe I'll come back to town for the Festival and we'll hug again and go and buy a candied apple at the fairground stalls and be two happy friends again.

Please don't replace me with any other girl.

Yours truly,

May

She has learned to lie so well that she no longer even notices where the truth ends and the rest begins. Every now and then a little truth escapes her, like that line about Ross: Martha won't understand, she can't even conceive that one could get attached to a cow, she would find it dirty and scary, that smell, those eyes. But lies give more satisfaction, because while you are inventing them for a moment you believe them, and everything seems different, everything is possible. She rereads a passage, undecided whether to erase it, but it would be a mess, it is too long to draw a line or bury it in an ink pond: pink and white stripes like a candy cane... Imagine. It is a dream, to think back to when they lived in Boston and she owned a pair of green boots. Green! She wore them as long as she could, curling her grown toes to keep them a little longer, and then when they were about to explode, and as there were no little girls to pass them on to in the family at the time, they gave them to some of the poor people that Mater tends to. But that was in the past, when Pater had his school. There will be no new clothes now. When she walks through the village the children laugh at her, they call her name. Little Burlap, Little Sack, Pilgrim. She will never ever get used to it. Perhaps it is best for Martha not to see her now.

But then there is the pen, and the paper, and the ink. Pater can give up a lot of things, but the tools of his trade, the weapons of his thought, he just can't. It is the only luxury he allows himself and others. And so she writes, two letters a week, sometimes three. Because by writing she can correct reality, make it more beautiful. It is like when you read, but even better: because if you read the story it is already there. The one you write, on the other hand, you make it.

'May! May!' Mater's voice, a little tired, ascends to her room under the roof. Sighing, May closes the inkwell, cleans the nib, places the pen in the groove of the small desk so it doesn't

roll away, and after waving the paper in the air slides it under a pile of books. She would like to draw a funny picture at the end, June taking her first steps, or the kittens lurking in the trees. She is not good at drawing, but whatever. When she has finished the letter she will find a way to take it all the way to the village post office and get the coin she needs to post it. The bushes along the river are full of gooseberries, and the ladies like to make jam without the trouble of getting their hands dirty and scratching to pick the fruit. She fills baskets of it and makes the exchange, like an Indian. One basket, one penny. In secret, as usual. And maybe she'll save some money to buy two red sugar candies, one for her, one for April, to suck on until they turn glassy.