

A catalogue – and “everything comes to life” A descriptive bibliography of Ulrico Hoepli’s movable books

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ABSTRACT

The paper revisits and partly re-elaborates — supplementing it with further insights — the section concerning the “Hoepli case” from the essay authored by the present writer, *Between Illustrated Albums and Movable Books: The Publishing Adventures of Lothar Meggendorfer in Italy and the Role of Ulrico Hoepli*, published on the occasion of the opening of the first section of the Pop-App Museum and the centenary of the death of Lothar Meggendorfer. The results of the first-hand research conducted on that occasion are presented here in order to reach a broader international audience and to offer a renewed, more systematic and comprehensive perspective on the publisher’s production of movable books (and beyond). At the heart of the article is a repertory of movable books published by Ulrico Hoepli (1879–1940), reconstructed with particular attention to titles, chronology, and sources.

KEYWORDS

Italian movable books; publishing catalogues; Ulrico Hoepli publisher.

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1. A submerged heritage*

In the Italian panorama, the arrival of movable books for children was marked by a general delay in comparison with the contemporary international context, although sporadic attestations can be found as early as the first half of the Nineteenth century.¹ From the 1870s onwards, interest intensified among Milanese publishers most attentive to illustrated books, such as Hoepli, Vallardi, and, to a lesser extent, Treves, while the early Twentieth century saw a strong presence of Turin publishing houses, such as Paravia, Lattes, and Rosenberg e Sellier, which showed particular attention to technical-scientific and educational works, without, however, neglecting those intended for leisure reading. Up to this point, however, publishers largely confined themselves to importing movable books from abroad, adapting them for the domestic market.²

Moreover, between the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries, movable books also record strong commercial success and, at least in some markets of Mitteleuropa and the United States, print runs reached very high levels even for technically complex and generally expensive publications. This led to diversified strategies of marketing and market penetration, with publishers more open to innovation and attentive to the field establishing branches and networks of international contacts, and optimising production costs through the use of specialised suppliers equipped with modern printing and illustration facilities, especially following the development and consolidation of chromolithography.

New specialized figures emerged in the field of children's publishing, became key actors both in terms of the quantity and quality of production and in their aggressive commercial strategies. A true globalization of markets and models took place, along with a standardization that still

* The translation of this contribution, originally written in Italian, was produced in order to provide wider dissemination of the content to an international audience; it was carried out by the editorial team of "JIB" in collaboration with Samanta Gianino. The contribution reworks and in part re-proposes, integrating it with some further developments, the section relating to the "caso Hoepli" of the essay, authored by the writer of this text, *Tra album illustrati e libri animati: le avventure editoriali di Lothar Meggendorfer in Italia e il ruolo di Ulrico Hoepli*, published in *Lothar Meggendorfer e il contesto editoriale italiano tra Otto e Novecento. Percorsi di ricerca e di valorizzazione di un patrimonio sommerso*, edited by Pompeo Vagliani, Torino, Fondazione Tancredi di Barolo, 2025, pp. 6–143 (the volume was issued on the occasion of the opening of the first section of the Pop-App Museum and of the centenary of the death of Lothar Meggendorfer – celebrated with the exhibition *Sempre allegri, Bambini! Lothar Meggendorfer e il libro animato in Italia tra Otto e Novecento*, MUSLI, Pop-App Museum, 12 December 2025–28 June 2026, cf. the *Editorial* introducing this issue). It is considered worthwhile to make the results of this first-hand research available through "JIB. Journal of Interactive Books" – free of charge and reaching, thanks to our journal, a broader international audience than the book itself – thus offering a new, more systematic and comprehensive perspective on the movable production (and beyond) of the great Italian publisher. We are further encouraged by the particular appreciation that, within the exhibition *Sempre allegri, Bambini!*, the section dedicated to Hoepli is arousing, as testified by visitors' comments and by the press review, within which at least the report curated by Claudio Moschin, broadcast last 23 February on the Telegiornale of Radiotelevisione Svizzera – RSI (<https://tinyurl.com/fzffauhu>), should be noted. Unless otherwise indicated, the images accompanying the present contribution all relate to materials preserved in the collections of the Fondazione Tancredi di Barolo of Torino. The websites were verified on 03/04/2026. All URLs exceeding thirty characters have been shortened with the TinyURL service.

1 Vagliani 2019, 202.

2 This was the case even though some of these publishers, such as Vallardi and Paravia, boasted a substantial production of games and educational materials (puzzles, card games, Froebelian materials, etc.) and had workshops technically capable of producing movable books in-house. On the overall situation, see *Ibidem*; on the Turin-based production in technical and scientific field with movable parts, see Pollone 2023, 16–35.

represents, at least in part, an underexplored area of publishing history, while in different countries the same movable images were accompanied by texts in different languages, often not translations of the originals but genuine rewritings.

Today in Italy, the limited presence of movable books in public libraries and the restricted accessibility of copies held in private collections make a non-random knowledge of primary sources difficult. Nor are publishing archives usually of much help, as for the period in question they have too often been destroyed, dispersed, dismembered, left fragmentary, or made inaccessible.³ These artefacts are moreover little considered in manuals of children's literature and in specialised studies – although interest has been growing in recent years – and systematic investigations into their relationships with the contemporary international publishing scene are still lacking. Such studies are essential for identifying the sources used, the transmission pathways, the adaptations, and the phenomenon of pirated editions.⁴

Since, at the time, a precise and coherent system of copyright regulation did not yet exist, the attributions appearing on the covers and title pages of books translated or adapted from foreign sources are often missing or rather casual, also giving rise a frequent confusion between the author of the original texts, the translator, the illustrator, and the designer of the interactive system.⁵ Nor is the picture simple from the point of view of the precise dating of these books, which in many cases is not indicated on the volumes and can only be reconstructed through patient research and comparison, made more difficult by the already mentioned scarcity of retrievable archival documentation.

In the absence of other sources, publishers' catalogues play a fundamental role in reconstructing this elusive history in its bibliographical aspects. They are also useful in attempting to answer a question that often arises for those who deal with movable books: given the presumably high production costs, were these publications reserved only for the wealthiest families, for children of the socio-economic elite? In reality, a survey of these materials shows that in Italy the prices of movable books varied, mainly depending on the publisher and on the mechanisms employed, but generally did not differ significantly from those of 'ordinary' illustrated books, which in many cases were even more expensive – especially when they contained a high number of colour illustrations or texts signed by well-known Italian authors (both categories were in any case far from inexpensive...)⁶

3 Pollone 2025 b, 5–6.

4 An emblematic case is that of the brilliant German illustrator Lothar Megendorfer, who penetrates Italy – above all thanks to the publishing house Hoepli – without his name nor the editorial source ever being explicitly stated. Abroad, the opposite phenomenon sometimes occurs, making him the protagonist of clearly false attributions (Pollone e Vagliani 2025, 20–21).

5 From the point of view of intellectual responsibility, images and the graphic component as a whole are normally perceived as ancillary to the verbal text, resulting in the predominance of the author of the Italian texts.

6 For example, according to the *Catalogo completo delle edizioni Hoepli. 1871-1914*, the illustrated albums *I giorni più belli*, “with 33 magnificent chromolithographic illustrations”, and *La vita dei bambini buoni e savi*, “with 106 black-and-bistre illustrations and 56 chromolithographic illustrations and vignettes”, both featuring texts by the popular writer Ida Baccini, were priced at 8.50 and 9.50 lire respectively, whereas the movable books *Bestie vive e burlone*, “six large movable coloured plates with cheerful and amusing stories”, and *Pupazzi vivi e allegri*, “eight movable colour plates with stories in verse”, had a cover price of 4.50 and 6.50 lire (*Catalogo completo* 1914, 14, 23 and 173).

2. “Revelations from a catalogue”: the historical Hoepli catalogues

Seen superficially, a catalogue of books is a dead thing, a litany of names, as little interesting, for those who do not deal especially with book-related matters, as the list of objects contained in a wardrobe for those who are not its owner. But, if we reflect on the work of which a book catalogue is the final expression, then everything comes to life. Every book that is indicated there takes life from the study it has required, from the intentions that inspired it, from the thought that produced it, and, little by little, the object that seemed dead gives us the representation of a fragment of human activity, and becomes interesting because it reveals to us the movement of the hidden sap from which come the flowers and the fruits that we gather with an inattentive hand.⁷

These words by Gaetano Negri,⁸ which introduce the *Catalogo cronologico, alfabetico-critico sistematico e per soggetti delle edizioni Hoepli 1872-1896* (Fig. 1), constitute a genuine ‘praise of the catalogue’ and leave little to be added. They demonstrate a far-sighted and rather unusual awareness of the invaluable role of publishers’ catalogues in providing a clear, lively, and irreplaceable picture of a publisher’s book production. It is precisely this awareness that seems to be at the basis of the meritorious undertaking by the Hoepli publishing house to publish two important historical catalogues on the occasion of two significant anniversaries. The first is the already mentioned 1896 catalogue, featuring the elegant introduction by Gaetano Negri, published to mark the publisher’s first twenty-five years of activity. The second, which appeared in January 1922 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary, is entitled *Mezzo secolo di vita editoriale. Catalogo cronologico e alfabetico, per autori e materie, delle edizioni Hoepli (1872-1922)* (Fig. 2). It contains two brief introductory texts, one by Ulrico Hoepli himself and the other by Michele Scherillo, who – drawing extensively and explicitly on Negri’s earlier presentation, while lamenting his passing – presents the catalogue as a way of looking back and “take satisfaction in the magnificent work accomplished”:

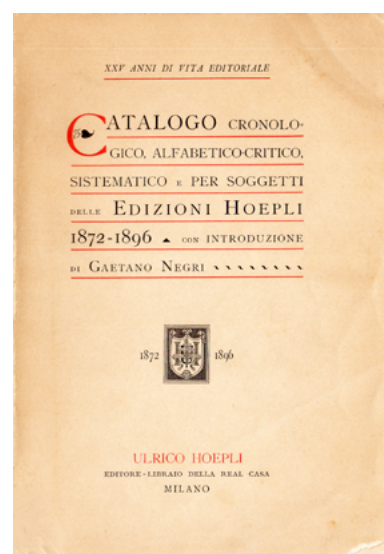


Fig. 1. || Cover of the 1896 historical catalogue.

Today, as a second quarter-century has elapsed since the day when ULRICO HOEPLI – a twenty-four-year-old young man full of confidence and determination – after an intense apprenticeship in his native Switzerland, in Zurich, and equally rigorous training in the great book centres of “learned Germany” and Austria, in Mainz,

⁷ “Guardato superficialmente, un catalogo di libri è una cosa morta, una litania di nomi, tanto poco interessante, per chi non si occupa specialmente di cose librerie, quanto l’elenco degli oggetti contenuti in un armadio per chi non ne è il proprietario. Ma, se noi riflettiamo al lavoro di cui un catalogo librario è l’ultima espressione, ecco tutto si anima. Ogni libro che vi è indicato prende vita dallo studio che ha richiesto, dalle intenzioni che lo hanno ispirato, dal pensiero che lo ha prodotto, e, a poco a poco, l’oggetto che pareva morto ci dà la rappresentazione di un frammento dell’umana attività, e diventa interessante perché ci rivela il movimento dei succhi nascosti da cui vengono i fiori e i frutti che noi raccogliamo con mano disattenta”, Negri G. 1896, IX–X. Not by chance, the title of Negri’s introductory contribution is *Le rivelazioni di un catalogo* (*Revelations from a catalogue*).

⁸ A regular collaborator of Ulrico Hoepli, “Gaetano Negri fu letterato di vasti interessi umanistici e scientifici, nonché patriota e uomo politico di fermi ideali, prima deputato, poi sindaco di Milano [...] e infine senatore del Regno” (“Gaetano Negri was a man of letters with broad humanistic and scientific interests, as well as a patriot and a political figure of firm ideals, first a deputy, then mayor of Milan [...] and finally senator of the Kingdom”, Negri M. 2025, 168, n. 2).

Leipzig, and Breslau, as well as a period spent in Trieste, arrived in industrious Milan, destined to become his beloved adopted homeland, and there founded his successful publishing house; today [...] GAETANO NEGRI would indeed have had reason to rejoice at the unceasing and steady growth that the indefatigable publisher [...] bestowed upon his firm, broadening the scope of its production, multiplying its publications, and venturing onto – only to master immediately – new paths.⁹

And again:

From the summit of the first fifty years of his worthy House, ULRICO HOEPLI, looking back upon the path he had travelled, could take satisfaction in the magnificent work accomplished. No success was more deserved than his. *In labore virtus et vita* – was the motto he adopted when setting out, mindful of Horace's teaching, that "life has never granted anything to mortals without great effort": and he has nobly and constantly remained faithful to his programme.

This volume, even in its form of a schematic account of an indefatigable and uninterrupted activity of half a century, is in itself truly worthy of being considered a monument.¹⁰

In the absence of archival documentation,¹¹ the two "monuments" still constitute, by virtue of their richness and systematic organization, an invaluable and irreplaceable resource for scholars, offering a reliable, comprehensive, and orderly overview of the publisher's output. In addition to them, we were able to consult a number of contemporary publishers' catalogues, thereby examining also the intermediate and later stages of this editorial production. Particularly useful among these were the *Catalogo completo delle edizioni Hoepli elencate in un solo alfabeto per autori e per soggetti preceduti [!] dall'indice cronologico delle singole pubblicazioni dal 1871 al 1907* (issued in August 1907), the *Catalogo completo delle edizioni Hoepli. 1871-1914* (May 1914), and *Libri di cultura generale nelle edizioni Hoepli*, issued in November 1940 as an "extract from the general catalogue". Thanks to the catalogues, it has been possible to reconstruct a detailed and, with regard to titles, plausibly exhaustive picture of Hoepli's production of movable books, situating it within the



Fig. 2. | Cover of the 1922 historical catalogue.

9 "Oggi che un secondo quarto di secolo si compie dal giorno che ULRICO HOEPLI, giovane ventiquattrenne pieno di fede e di ardore, dopo un fervido noviziato nella Svizzera nativa, a Zurigo, e un alunnato non meno fervido nei maggiori centri librarii della "dotta Germania" e dell'Austria, a Magonza, a Lipsia, a Breslavia, e dopo una sosta a Trieste, mise piede in questa Milano operosa, che doveva diventare la sua diletta patria di adozione, e vi fondò la fortunata sua Casa editrice; – oggi [...] GAETANO NEGRI avrebbe ben avuto motivo di rallegrarsi dell'incessante e costante incremento che l'infaticabile editore [...] ha dato alla sua Casa, ampliando il campo della sua produzione, moltiplicando le sue pubblicazioni, tentando, e subito percorrendole da signore, nuove vie", Scherillo 1922, [VII–VIII]. Here and elsewhere, words in capital letters are taken from the source.
10 "Dalla vetta del primo cinquantesimo della sua benemerita Casa, ULRICO HOEPLI, riguardando il cammino percorso, può compiacersi della magnifica opera compiuta. Nessuna fortuna più meritata della sua. *In labore virtus et vita* – fu il motto ch'egli assunse, mettendosi in via, memore dell'insegnamento oraziano, che "nulla ha mai concesso ai mortali la vita senza grande fatica": e ha tenuto nobilmente e costantemente fede al suo programma. Questo volume, pur nella sua forma di resoconto schematico d'una indefessa e ininterrotta operosità semisecolare, val bene un monumento", *Ivi*, [XV].

11 No documents relating to the production of movable books for the period under consideration are preserved among the papers of the Hoepli archive held at the Apice Centre of the Università degli Studi di Milano.

more general framework of the illustrated publications issued by the publisher for children.¹² Another key outcome of this research has been the possibility of proposing a coherent and sustainable dating for all Hoepli publications up to at least 1922. Existing bibliographies often date these works only approximately or incorrectly, owing to the absence of unequivocal information. In this respect, the catalogues – official records of the publisher’s activity – are of crucial importance, since up to that year they always provide both an alphabetical list of individual books at the moment of publication of the catalogue, often accompanied by a date, and a detailed chronological list of all works issued over time, arranged year by year and month by month. In principle, it should therefore be automatic to date the first publication of any title by transcribing the year indicated by the *Indice cronologico* – not by the *Catalogo alfabetico*, which for out-of-print works often does not report it and which for others does not necessarily indicate that of the first edition, but rather that of the edition in circulation at the time of printing of the catalogue. However, comparison of the two lists for those titles that permit it reveals a discrepancy: in many cases – especially among the works examined here – the dates do not coincide.

A closer examination, however, quickly resolves the apparent inconsistency: what might at first seem an error or inaccuracy in fact displays a clear systematic pattern, since the discrepancy is invariably of one year, with the date given in the alphabetical lists of books in circulation always being the more recent one – for example, *Bestie mobili, domestiche e feroci* is dated 1889 in the *Catalogo alfabetico*, while in the *Indice cronologico* it appears among the titles published in November 1888. It is precisely the indication of the month that clarifies the rationale behind the discrepancy. These titles were in fact generally announced towards the end of the year, in November or December, with a view to the Christmas gift season;¹³ however, in the alphabetical lists—which, unlike the *Indice cronologico*, reflect not a projected or abstract bibliographical record but the actual state of the books available for sale, also clearly identifying those already out of print—the publisher almost invariably assigned them the following year as their date of publication, either in order to avoid their appearing prematurely “dated” or because they only entered the market in the new year.

Whether this practice should be understood as reflecting the “publisher’s intention” or simple commercial pragmatism, it has been considered preferable here to follow the publisher’s own policy consistently, adopting it uniformly in dating all the titles examined. Accordingly, in cases of discrepancy, preference has always been given to the date of the first edition recorded in the *Catalogo alfabetico* or, where this is lacking, to a corrected version of the date provided in the *Indice cronologico*, shifted to the following year when associated with the final months of the calendar year (in the example, for *Bestie mobili, domestiche e feroci*, 1889 is thus confirmed).

¹² It would have been both interesting and desirable to undertake a similar investigation for other Italian publishing houses of the period, and especially for Antonio Vallardi, the other major publisher that, at the turn of the Twentieth century, issued a substantial number of movable books for children in Italy. At present, however, the necessary tools for such a systematic study are lacking. In Vallardi’s case, not only was the relevant archival documentation lost during the bombings of the Second World War, and a considerable proportion of the known titles can no longer be traced – partly because of their structural fragility – but no catalogues comparable to Hoepli’s, either in accuracy or in systematic organization, were ever compiled. Moreover, the publisher’s sales catalogues are now particularly rare (the Fondazione Tancredi di Barolo preserves twenty-four examples dating from 1886 to 1956) and leave many uncertainties concerning the overall extent of the firm’s production, not least because of their lack of consistency. Nevertheless, they attest to a range of “libri meccanici”, “a sorpresa”, “indistruttibili”, and other publications unusual in typology or format that was far broader and more coherent than surviving copies alone might suggest. In some cases, thanks to their small illustrations, they also constitute a genuine visual repertory of materials that are now largely dispersed and unknown to scholars.

¹³ On this practice cf. for example Vagliani 2019, 203.

3. Ulrico Hoepli and the publishing policy for children

Prudently avoiding direct competition with other enterprises already well established on the market,¹⁴ Hoepli diversified its publishing offer, focusing, alongside other sectors, on women's magazines and children's books, which he also organized into series such as the *Libri indistruttibili* and the *Biblioteca per la gioventù italiana*.¹⁵ These volumes were for the most part imported editions, produced with great care and positioned at the high end of the market in terms of printing and image quality. Enriched with fine chromolithographic plates, they were initially conceived as prize books for the most deserving pupils, intended to support children's education by conveying both useful knowledge and a set of values aimed at shaping good and honest citizen. Since illustrated albums for early childhood and interactive books did not yet constitute a well-established publishing sector in Italy during the second half of the Nineteenth century, Hoepli's strategy was at least partly to create a new readership, identified primarily with families. In this way, the emphasis shifted from 'prize books' to 'gift books', especially promoted during the Christmas season as *strenne*, often combining movable elements with illustrated content inspired by the principles of *insegnamento oggettivo*.¹⁶

Presumably for this reason as well, Hoepli did not propose specific catalogues for this type of publication, instead incorporating books for children and young readers into appropriate sections of the general catalogues. Indeed, it would have been difficult – or at least somewhat forced – to channel this kind of books through strictly educational or didactic circuits, such as the specialised catalogues of school materials used, for example, by Vallardi. Moreover, the catalogue prefaces contain no explicit reference to publications for younger readers. Although Hoepli's interest and attention in this field was neither accidental nor sporadic, and although prominent figures – first and foremost Pasquale Fornari –¹⁷ guided and supported the publisher's choices, the principal *focus* is clearly on scientific, technical, and artistic publications, as well as on literary and historical studies, on the *Manuali Hoepli*, and on higher education.

A close look at the illustrated books issued by the publishing house reveals that many of them were unusual for the period, 'books that are not books', such as the "indistruttibili" (indestructible) cloth books,¹⁸ "a paravento" (screen-like ones) printed on stiff cardboard, "sagomati" with cut-out figures, leporellos (called in the catalogues as "a doppia apertura"), or even books without written text, such as *Tante teste tanti cervelli* (1898).¹⁹ In short, 'borderline publications', closely connected to playful materials such as games and paper toys, with which they formed a *continuum*. The fluidity of this boundary can be observed particularly clearly in *La mia bambola* (1891), a die-cut book and a toy at the same time, plausibly an Italian adaptation of *Das Wickelkind. Ein Bilderbuch für kleine Kinder* by Thekla Brauer (Schreiber, around 1890). This charming little volume, approximately the size of a doll, features a die-cut cover depicting a newborn baby in relief, ready

14 For a concise overview of contemporary Milanese publishing, see at least Braida 2001.

15 For the second series cf. Marazzi 2025, 159-161.

16 Cf. Decleva 2001, 43-44. For further insight into the history and production of the publishing house, reference is also made to Decleva's contribution.

17 Pasquale Fornari (1837–1923) played a leading role in all Hoepli initiatives intended for early childhood education and grounded in the principles of *insegnamento oggettivo*, while also contributing to the adaptation of movable books and other forms of light reading. On Fornari and on his collaboration with Ulrico Hoepli, see Marazzi 2025.

18 The Hoepli catalogue lists four small volumes of this kind, bearing the self-explanatory title *Primo [– Quarto] libro indistruttibile di figure per bambini* (1881–1887). The Foundation preserves a copy of the first title – heavily 'used' and clearly tested by children's hands – consisting of four oleographs of exotic animals applied on cloth; the corresponding captions appear on the front pastedown.

19 Cfr. *infra*, p. 112.

to be “ninnata” (rocked), as also suggested by an internal illustration showing a little girl cradling a doll very similar to the book itself (Fig. 3 a, b).²⁰



Fig. 3 a, b. || *Das Wickelkind*, cover and interior illustration.

The volumes linked to the method of *insegnamento oggettivo* are strongly represented and reveal a particularly significant dependence on publishing from across the Alps.²¹ Hoepli's first attempt is, as is well known, *Il mondo dipinto. Quadri cromolitografici al naturale per l'insegnamento oggettivo ai bambini nelle scuole, nelle famiglie e negli asili d'infanzia*, a collection of plates intended for very young

²⁰ The little volume, no surviving copies of which have so far been traced, was reviewed as follow in the journal “Cuore e critica”: “Infine, un altro libro, dalla foggia bizzarra, è *La mia bambola*. Essa ‘fu ninnata dal prof. Pasquale Fornari e vezzeggiata dall’editore Ulrico Hoepli, come appunto dice il frontespizio. È una bella sorpresa per i bambini e per le mamme! Poiché non è un libro – e proprio una bambola che si sfoglia, e reca delle affettuose canzoncine, che i bambini amano tanto sentirsi cantare sulle ginocchia delle loro mamme. | Ogni pagina ha numerose incisioni a colori; la copertina poi è originale, e mette subito il buon umore. Chi non vorrà prendere *La mia bambola*?” (*Bollettino bibliografico* 1890; “Finally, another book of a bizarre shape is *La mia bambola*. It ‘was rocked by Professor Pasquale Fornari and fondled by the publisher Ulrico Hoepli, the title page itself declares. It is a lovely surprise for both children and mothers! For it is not truly a book, but rather a doll that can be leafed through, containing affectionate little songs that children so love to hear sung while seated on their mothers’ knees. | Each page contains numerous colour engravings; the cover, moreover, is original, and immediately puts one in a cheerful mood. Who would not wish to own *La mia bambola*?”). Dolls that come to life and toys endowed with vitality appear in many children’s books between the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries, cf. at least Vagliani 2024.

²¹ As Elisa Marazzi points out: “resta ancora da comprendere quali fossero gli accordi tra editori per lo sfruttamento di materiali iconografici e il rispetto della proprietà letteraria. Il dubbio che simili accordi non sussistessero, oltre a essere alimentato dalla confusa legislazione in materia di diritti esteri soprattutto prima della convenzione di Berna del 1886, sorge osservando la pratica diffusa di illustrare i volumi con litografie o tavole topografiche estere. Esistono anche casi di riutilizzo degli stessi modelli” (Marazzi 2018, 129; “it still remains to be understood what kinds of agreements existed between publishers regarding the use of iconographic materials and the observance of literary property rights. The suspicion that such agreements may in fact not have existed is reinforced not only by the confused legislation governing foreign copyright – especially before the Berne Convention of 1886 – but also by the widespread practice of illustrating volumes with foreign lithographs or topographical plates. There are also cases in which the same models were reused”). For further discussion of the topic, see Marazzi’s contribution in its entirety, especially pp. 126-128.

children, divided into four volumes that could be sold separately and that were immediately very successful: the first edition can be dated to 1878, the second to the following year, the third to 1882, and the fourth, “migliorata” (improved), to 1885. The reference source is *Bilderwerk zum Anschauungsunterricht für jüngere Kinder. Ein Buch für Haus und Schule* by Johannes Staub, published in Zurich by Thellung & Stauffacher,²² while the author of the Italian texts is – not surprisingly – Pasquale Fornari, who had already published in 1875, with the Milanese publishing house of Paolo Carrara, *Il Piccolo Carena. Nomenclatura italiana spiegata e illustrata colle parole corrispondenti dei dialetti: milanese, piemontese, veneto, genovese, napoletano, siciliano e sardo*, accompanied by about two hundred illustrations depicting the named objects, and who now lent his pen to “esempio di quell’attenzione didattica-educativa sempre presente anche negli albi di lusso”.²³ It should be noted that the second edition of *Il mondo dipinto* is characterized by a new cover, bearing the portraits of King Umberto I and Queen Margherita of Savoy, of their only son, the little prince Vittorio Emanuele, of Pope Leo XIII, and of other political figures (Fig. 4), as well as by the inclusion of a dedication: “A sua Altezza Reale Vittorio Emanuele Principe di Napoli questo tenue lavoro quale aggradevole passatempo e più quale attestato di riverente ossequio”. These elements, which were to disappear in subsequent editions, firmly situate the book within its contemporary context, while also confirming the dating suggested by the publishers’ catalogues.²⁴

Shortly after the publication of *Il mondo dipinto*, whose success these works appear to have capitalized on, several titles dedicated to *insegnamento oggettivo* are published – as already mentioned. These include: *Vedere e imparare. Primo insegnamento oggettivo di lingua, di conteggio e di morale ai bambini per uso delle famiglie, degli asili e delle Scuole dei Sordomuti* (1879; issued in second edition in



Fig. 4. | *Il mondo dipinto*, cover of the second edition.

22 Johannes Staub (1813–1880), a Swiss teacher and writer, published in 1875 the first volume of his work, followed the year after by the second, the third, and the fourth; in 1908 the series was expanded to five volumes and in 1923 to six. The work was repeatedly reprinted until 1949, by different publishers and under different titles (Weilenmann 1993, nn. 3362–3366).

23 Marazzi 2018, 129 (“an example of that didactic-educational attention always present also in luxury albums”). Fornari’s suitability for the undertaking is emphasized by Ulrico Hoepli himself in the preface to *Il mondo dipinto*: “il testo, fatto per gli Italiani, che si trova sotto ciascuna tavola e l’appendice di aneddoti, poesie, favole, ed anche brevi letture che sono in fine d’ogni volume, sono opera del Prof. Fornari, ben noto agli Educatori italiani per la sua vita tutta dedicata all’educazione infantile, e cui la lunga pratica dava più che ad altri diritto di compiere sì paziente lavoro dedicato alla puerizia italiana” (Hoepli 1885, [1]; “the text, made for Italians, which is found under each plate and the appendix of anecdotes, poems, fables, and also short readings that are at the end of each volume, are the work of Prof. Fornari, well known to Italian educators for his life entirely devoted to childhood education, and to whom long practice gave more than others the right to carry out such a patient work dedicated to Italian childhood”).

24 “To His Royal Highness Vittorio Emanuele Prince of Naples this modest work as a pleasant pastime and, even more, as a token of reverent homage”. Umberto I became King of Italy in 1878 upon the death of his father Vittorio Emanuele II in January of that year, thereby making the very young Prince of Naples, the future King Vittorio Emanuele III, heir to the throne. The accession of Leo XIII to the papal throne took place on 3 March 1878.

1882), again with Italian text by Fornari;²⁵ the pre-reading book *Il mondo figurato pei bambini* (1891; reissued in a rebound second edition in 1910);²⁶ the two-volume atlas *Storia naturale per la gioventù italiana*, devoted respectively to the *Regno vegetale e minerale* (1893), with text by Giacinto Martorelli, and to the *Regno animale* (1894), with text once again by Pasquale Fornari;²⁷ *Buoni e attenti. Libro di figure dipinte per l'insegnamento oggettivo ai bambini* (1895), a work that reuses part of the chromolithographic illustrations already found in *Il mondo figurato pei bambini*. This latter was issued simultaneously both in a standard cardboard-bound album format, with the 24 pages conventionally bound, and in a leporello version, in which one side presents a selection of animals and mostly everyday domestic objects, while the other features a gallery of animals depicted in their natural environment (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. || *Il mondo figurato pei bambini*, leporello edition. Side with cover and images of animals and everyday life objects.

Special mention should be made of the *Grande alfabeto italiano* (1886; reissued in an inexpensive second edition in 1889), a spectacular illustrated abecedary of large dimensions, conceived, designed, and entirely produced in Italy.²⁸ The beautiful cover (Fig. 6 a), whose central strip shows children playing with the letters of the alphabet, is rich in symbolism: the wide lower band evokes the glories of the past and the national unity achieved thanks to the House of Savoy, while the upper band alludes to the irreplaceable role of education and science in the Country's development, under the aegis of the 'Stella d'Italia' (that is, the young Prince Vittorio Emanuele) and of a futuristic flying balloon marked with the publisher's name. It is one of the few children's publications of the period to bear the date on the volume itself (both on the title page and on the cover), as well as the names and responsibilities of all those involved in its production: Fornari (creator of the work and author of the texts), Tensi (printer), Tornaghi (author of the drawings), and Hoepli (publisher). But that is not all: for the letter 'H', the publisher's surname



Fig. 6 a. || *Grande alfabeto italiano*, cover.

25 The source is *Neues Bilderbuch*, an object-lesson picture book by Niklaus Bohny, a Basel-based pedagogist, first issued in German by Schreiber around 1848.

26 Italian version of *Bilderwelt* (1890), published in Stuttgart by Gustav Weise.

27 The source is *Naturgeschichte in Bildern* (ca. 1890), again from the Weise catalogue.

28 The volume likely played a role in the conception of the similar publication issued shortly thereafter by the rival publisher Treves, *Il nuovo alfabeto italiano illustrato con disegni a colori* (ca. 1887).

is proudly featured, preceded by his first name (**Fig. 6 b**), while for the letter ‘L’ is accompanied by an illustration of a lectern on which appear again, written on small cards, the names of “Prof. P. Fornari”, of “Ulrico Hoepli, Milano”, of the *Stabilimento Litografico Fratelli Tensi*, and of the illustrator, Emilio Tornaghi.²⁹



Fig. 6 b. | Grande alfabeto italiano, interior illustration. ‘H’ as in ‘Hoepli Ulrico’.

From the 1890s onwards, Hoepli published a number of illustrated albums intended as light reading, often adapted from works by the publisher Nister, with whom he would also collaborate – as we shall see – on a couple of movable books. In order to enhance their commercial appeal, the Italian texts were entrusted to well-known authors, as in *I giorni più belli* (1892) and *La vita dei bambini buoni e savi* (1895), both by Ida Baccini, and *Anime liete. Album per bambini* (1893), with text by Memini, pen name of Ines Castellani Fantoni Benaglio.

Nor were highly interactive publications lacking: genuine toy-books, complete with instructions for use, which encouraged children to arm themselves with scissors and glue and to intervene on the albums themselves, dismantling and reassembling them into new forms, in order to spend hours of instructive amusement:

Il bambino deve ritagliare con le forbici gli oggetti ritagliati sul foglio eppoi collarli, ad uno ad uno, sul quadro in modo che la stanza risulti ammobiliata o la veduta completa se si tratta di un paesaggio. Questo libro-giocattolo è divertente e, al contempo, istruttivo perché il bambino, ritagliando i vari oggetti, ne impara i nomi e ne ritiene le forme; collocandoli ciascuno al suo posto nella stanza o sulla veduta, abitua i propri occhi alle giuste proporzioni e s'avvezza all'ordine.³⁰

This is the case of *Una casa di cartone. Libro giocattolo da ritagliare con figure e cose trasportabili* and of *Vita all'aperto. Libro giocattolo da ritagliare con figure e cose trasportabili* (**Fig. 7 a, b**), both

²⁹ Emilio Tornaghi is best known for the illustrations, co-signed with Lazzaro Pasini, for *L'arte culinaria in Italia* by Alberto Cougnet (Milano, Società tipografica Successori Wilmant, 1910): they present a recognizable style compared to the Hoepli abecedary, plausibly a work from his youth. In the 1920s he also decorated with frescoes the Chapel of the Madonna di Caravaggio in the church of S. Maria Assunta di Turro (Milano).

³⁰ *Vita all'aperto* 1914, [1] (“The child must cut out with scissors the objects printed on the sheet and then paste them, one by one, onto the picture so that the room becomes furnished or, in the case of a landscape, the scene is completed. This toy-book is both entertaining and instructive, since by cutting out the various objects the child learns their names and becomes familiar with their shapes; by placing each of them in its proper position within the room or the scene, the child trains the eye to recognize correct proportions and becomes accustomed to order”).

published before 1914.³¹ The original source for both works is to be found in *The Glue series*, a successful collection of seventeen interactive titles featuring texts by Clara Andrews Williams and illustrations by George Alfred Williams, published in New York by the publisher Frederick A. Stokes.³² More specifically, the Italian volumes derive from the albums *The House That Glue Built* (1905) and *The Fun That Glue Made* (1907).



Fig. 7
a, b.

Vita all'aperto, cover and plate [2] (*Nella Neve*). The small box at the bottom right indicates where to glue the cut-out figures onto the background plate on the following page.



Interest in this kind of publication persisted over time and led, in 1945, to the appearance of a highly successful work, entirely Italian in conception and notably original: *Il libro Giocattoli*. Large in format, signed by “Pic e Gic” and based on drawings by Edina Altara,³³ it was presented in the publisher’s advertisements as

una creazione originale, brevettata, intesa a permettere ad ogni bambino di costruire da sé (col solo aiuto di un po’ di colla, di una forbice e di un pezzo di spago), otto giocattoli inediti, animati, di moderna ideazione ed esecuzione: una multicolore giostra; 4 ballerinette dalle gambe vive; 9 soldatini animati che ubbidiscono agli ordini di un severo capitano; un conventino con 5 suore; l’automa TON, pure animato;

³¹ As with other publications lacking a substantial textual component (cf. the already cited case of *Tante teste tanti cervelli*, *infra*, p. 112), the catalogues consulted neither list the two volumes in the *Indice cronologico* nor provide publication dates. Absent in the publisher’s catalogue of 1907, they appear instead in that of 1914, which thus provides the *terminus ante quem* of publication, compatible with the dating of the American sources (1905 and 1907), cf. *Catalogo completo* 1907; *Catalogo completo* 1914, 208 and 217.

³² On this collection of albums and in particular on its inaugural title, *The House That Glue Built* (1905), reference is made to Jackson 2010.

³³ Edina Altara (1898–1983) was already known for her “paper toys” from the late 1910s, also thanks to her collaboration with Paola Lombroso Carrara, who nicknamed her ‘Edina Forbicicchia’ and for whose “Bibliotechine scolastiche” she produced a number of postcards. For further discussion of this collaboration, see Vagliani 2021; for an overview of Edina Altara’s multifaceted artistic production, see the entire volume *Vittorio Accornero* 2021.

4. Ulrico Hoepli as a publisher of books with movable parts

Ulrico Hoepli, who in his catalogues was careful to specify that editions in the original language were also available in his bookshop, could rely from the very beginning of his career – as has partly been seen – on solid commercial contacts with publishers in the German-speaking area and, above all, in Switzerland.³⁵

For its movable books, one observes a fairly broad and progressive diversification of sources of supply, driven by the search for novelty and greater economic sustainability, with the establishment of relations with a range of publishers, some of them new compared to the usual and well-established network. In particular, it drew on the catalogues of the German publishers Löwensohn of Fürth, Braun & Schneider of Munich, Schreiber of Esslingen am Neckar and Weise of Stuttgart, as well as of Ernest Nister, based in Nuremberg and London, who was especially active in producing books for the Anglo-Saxon market.

The publisher's output of volumes with movable parts amounts to nineteen titles, issued between 1879 and 1940, and is notable for its precocity: it seems, in fact, to be responsible for the first title for children published in Italy during the so-called 'golden age' of the bibliographical typology, *Il libro del bene e del male* (1879).³⁶

During the first phase, which ends in 1911 with *Pupazzi vivi e allegri* and includes as many as sixteen of the nineteen titles, the works were – as was customary for the period – all imported. These publications were reprinted very infrequently, rarely reached more than a single edition, and went out of print relatively quickly: by 1907, the only out-of-print title among the eight published up to that point, was *Il libro magico del bene e del male*, but seven years later, in the 1914 catalogue, all the titles with movable parts were already no longer available on the market, except for *Grande serraglio della celebre domatrice Miss Aïssa*, *Bestie vive e burlone*, and a recent Meggendorfer title, *Pupazzi vivi e allegri*. It therefore seems plausible that, also for this reason, these volumes are now rather rare – if not practically untraceable – sparsely represented in public collections and, in many cases, very difficult to locate even on the antiquarian market.

After a thirty-year period without books with movable parts, in 1940 Hoepli catalogue features the three famous and highly original *Libri-teatro*, high-quality technically produced 'carousel books' entirely Italian in creation, each devoted to the world of a fairy tale. The three volumes (*Ali Babà e i 40 ladroni*, *La bella addormentata nel bosco*, and *Cenerentola*) were immediately successful, to the extent that they went through several editions and were also published in Germany in the *Krenn Theater Album* series (Rome-Leipzig, Casa Editrice Mediterranea-Wilhelm Krenn, 1943), thus reversing the trajectory followed by the titles produced at the turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries.

Compared with contemporary Italian publishing output, Hoepli's production also stands out for its more 'experimental' and varied character. In the late Nineteenth-century Italian panorama, movable books featuring lever- or pull-tab-operated figures clearly predominated, Ulrico Hoepli offered works employing a wider range of mechanisms: from levers (the most represented typology) to circular dissolves (*Gira, gira...*, 1899), from shutter dissolves (precisely *Il libro del bene e del male*) to scenic books (for example, *Bambini in teatro*, 1883), up to the carousel books of the 1940s.³⁷

³⁵ "Del resto la storiografia su Hoepli ha già messo in luce quanto le conoscenze ed esperienze internazionali, insieme alla rete professionale anch'essa cosmopolita, furono tra le chiavi dell'affermazione di Hoepli sul mercato editoriale della Penisola" (Marazzi 2025, 151; "Moreover, the historiography on Hoepli has already highlighted how international knowledge and experience, together with the likewise cosmopolitan professional network, were among the keys to Hoepli's success on the publishing market of the Peninsula").

³⁶ Pollone 2025 b, 318.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

Another significant achievement of the publisher was the introduction to Italy, for the first time and on an unprecedented scale in terms of both quantity and quality, of the interactive books of Lothar Meggendorfer (although, as was customary, the author's name and the editorial source never appear either on the publications or in the publisher's sales catalogues). The first of the seven Hoepli titles associated with the brilliant German artist, *Storielline buffe*, appeared as early as 1884, the same year in which the first foreign translations of his works are recorded in bibliographical sources.³⁸ It was followed by *Sempre allegri, Bambini!* (1886) and *Bestie mobili domestiche e feroci* (1889): the three books combine plates drawn from several original German publications issued by Braun & Schneider. After some years – during which numerous editions of Meggendorfer's works appeared on the international market, particularly in French and English –³⁹ *Ridete con me* was published in 1894. Once again, it was a volume assembled *ad hoc* for the Italian market by combining plates from different sources, in this case from two books issued that same year by Schreiber.

The transformation toy-book *Tante teste tanti cervelli* (ca. 1898) represents a unique example within Hoepli's output, standing apart from the Meggendorfer titles published up to that point, all of which were based on lever-operated mechanisms.⁴⁰ Hoepli immediately returned to this format for the final two titles derived from the artist, two Italian versions of German originals by the publisher Weise: *Pierino Porcospino vivente* (1899) and, more than a decade later, *Pupazzi vivi e allegri* (1911).

To examine Hoepli's movable-book production in greater detail, it now remains only to present the publisher's *corpus*, reconstructed in its consistency with regard to titles, dates of publication, and source editions.

5. Repertory of Hoepli movable books (1879–1940)⁴¹

[1879] *Il libro magico del bene e del male in 12 quadri dipinti che si trasformano a vista*

A second edition exists, issued in 1882 (Fig. 9 a).

The Libro magico contains six plates with pull-tab mechanism, for a total of twelve chromolithographic images paired to create a dichotomy good/evil, made explicit by the contrasting 'right' or 'wrong' behaviours of the child protagonists of the individual plates. Thus we find *La golosità* and *La sobrietà* (plate 1); *Il buon cuore* and *L'avventatezza* (plate 2); *Il lavoro* and *La superbia* (plate 3); *Il dovere* and *Le monellerie* (plate 4); *La negligenza* and *La diligenza* (plate 5); *L'attività* and *Loziosità* (plate 6).



Fig. 9 a. || *Il libro magico*, cover of the second edition.

38 Friedrich e von Katzenheim 2012, 370. The research conducted on the occasion of the exhibition *Sempre allegri, Bambini!* has made it possible to date Meggendorfer's reception in Italy back to at least July 1882, through a series of humorous plates published in "Il Giornale per i Bambini" in the section *Favole moderne*, originally drawn for the Munich periodical "Münchener Bilderbogen" (Pollone e Vagliani 2025, 69-77).

39 Friedrich e von Katzenheim 2012, 370-371.

40 It is significant that Meggendorfer's most spectacular works – namely his large three-dimensional leporello books – did not reach the Italian market. This was the case, for example, with *Internationaler Circus* (whose French edition, *Grand Cirque International*, appeared as early as 1887) and *Das Puppenhaus*. This absence is all the more noteworthy given that the format was not unknown in Italy, having been introduced through other publishing channels and even appearing within Hoepli's own production. The most plausible explanation for this omission appears to be economic in nature.

41 For further discussion and detailed data on retail prices and publication dates, cf. Pollone e Vagliani 2025, 48-62 and 79-135. For the general dating criteria cf. also *supra*, pp. 92-93.

The author of the illustrations – the painter Carl von Häberlin (1832-1911) – is not identified in the Italian version, but is explicitly credited in other foreign editions⁴² starting from the German source, *Nehmt's zu Herzen! Ein Ziehbilderbuch mit Verwandlungen für die liebe Jugend* (Schreiber, 1865). This latter enjoyed considerable success abroad, particularly in its second edition (ca. 1870), characterized by a new cover (Fig. 10, 11) and by partially redrawn plates; it is from this edition that the Hoepli volume likewise derives.

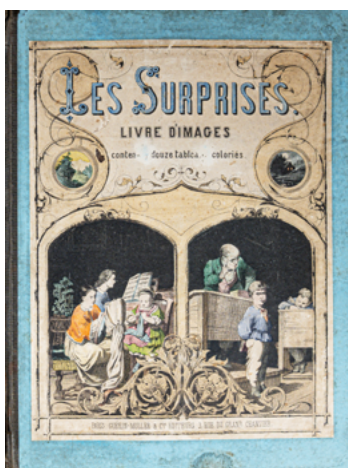


Fig. 10, | *Nehmt's zu Herzen!*, cover of the second edition.
11. | *Les surprises ou Le Bien et le Mal*, cover from the first German edition.

Fig. 9 | *Il libro magico*, second edition, plate 6.
b.

The Italian text accompanying the illustrations was written by the educator Pasquale Fornari, here in his first known attempt at ‘giving words’ to a movable book.⁴³ Unlike the original edition, Fornari leaves to the young readers the task of completing the key term linked to each scene, always inferable from the corresponding title, and introduces one or more direct questions for each pair of illustrations, as can be seen, for example, in *L'attività* and *L'oziosità* (Fig. 9 b):

L'attività

La Lena lavora sempre: spazza la casa, rifa i letti, governa i piatti, prepara il becchime ai polli, li manda al pollajo, cuoce i cibi, fa tutto e lo fa volentieri. La Lena è molto att..... Perché?

L'oziosità

Paolo non vuol mai lavorare. Sta sempre sdrajato. Appena alza la testa per vedere passare il treno del vapore. Paolo è un oz..... Paolo diventerà povero. Perché è ozioso? Perché diventerà povero?⁴⁴

42 One may consider the various French editions published by Guérin-Müller from the 1860s onward under the title *Les surprises ou Le Bien et le Mal. Livre d'images*. It is noteworthy that adaptations in different countries sometimes also affect the illustrations. Symptomatic in this sense is the “scene” in which the “ozioso” (the “idle” child) – clearly marked as Italian in his clothing, drawing on a transparent stereotype reflecting contemporary prejudices about national character – wastes his time watching passing trains. In the image, the station sign is clearly visible: “Paris” in the source, “Paris” or “Epernal” in Guérin-Müller’s French editions, “Milano” in the Hoepli edition. The sign is instead removed in the edition of the Nouvelle Librairie de la Jeunesse issued in the final years of the Nineteenth century (for further discussion, cf. Pollone e Vagliani 2025, 49-50).

43 On Fornari and on his collaboration with Hoepli cf. *supra*, p. 93 and note 17.

44 Fornari 1882, plate 6 (“*Activity*. Lena always works: she sweeps the house, makes the beds again, washes the dishes, prepares feed for the chickens, sends them to the henhouse, cooks the food, does everything and does it gladly. Lena is very act..... Why? || *Idleness*. Paolo never wants to work. He is always lying down. He only raises his head to watch the steam train pass by. Paolo is an idl..... Paolo will become poor. Why is he lazy? Why will he become poor?”). The transcriptions, here and throughout the contribution, are carried out according to conservative criteria, without adaptation to modern spelling (e.g. “pollajo”, as in the source, and not “pollaio”).

These are devices useful for guiding the understanding of the text in an educational sense and for stimulating children's attention, helping them to internalize behaviours considered morally and socially correct, leading young readers to question which actions are praiseworthy and which worthy of blame ("Perché?" [Why?] is the most recurrent question).⁴⁵

[1883] *I bambini in teatro* (Fig. 12 a)

The volume is in leporello format and contains four chromolithographic illustrations (Fig. 12 b), each of which, when lifted, reveals a three-dimensional little theatre complete with wings, backdrop, and die-cut characters, thus offering four different "performances": 1. *Robinson Crusuè*; 2. *Il gatto stivalato*; 3. *Berrettinarossa*; 4. *Fior dell'Aurora* (Fig. 12 c).

The author of the text is not indicated, which is interesting in relation to the original German source, *Theater-Bilderbuch* (Löwensohn, ca. 1880).⁴⁶ The source in fact offers only a brief prose summary of the plot, whereas the Hoepli version provides both a prose narrative and a dramatized dialogue-based version, arranged over four pages as a potential 'script' to allow the child to stage each story using the corresponding toy theatre.



Fig. 12 a. || *I bambini in teatro*, cover.



Fig. 12 b, c. || *I bambini in teatro*, the four chromolithographic illustrations and the corresponding "performances".

⁴⁵ Pollone 2025 b, 106.

⁴⁶ In the German source, the performances are entitled: 1. *Der arme Robinson*; 2. *Der gestiefelte Kater*; 3. *Rothkäppchen*; 4. *Dornröschen*. The Foundation also possesses the French edition published by Capendu, *Grande Theatre en Actions* (ca. 1880), where the theatres are entitled: 1. *Pauvre Robinson*; 2. *Un Chat comme on en voit peu*; 3. *Trop parler nuit*; 4. *Réveillez-vous belle endormie*. The same titles appear, faithfully translated, in the English version, *Theatrical Picture-Book* (ca. 1883), "published anonymously and without any bibliographical dates", except for the indication "Printed in Germany": 1. *Poor Robinson*; 2. *A Rare Cat*; 3. *Too Much Talking is Hurtful*; 4. *Awake, Sleeping Beauty* (Gielen 2007).

[1884] *Grande serraglio della celebre domatrice Miss Aïssa, o Grande esposizione bestiale delle belve più feroci e molte altre ancora* (Fig. 13 a)

The original source is *Grosse Menagerie. Heute und jeden Tag, so oft man's sehen mag, Grosse Vorstellung von Tieren auf zwei Beinen und auf Vierenu* (Schreiber, 1882), of which there also exists a leporello version (Schreiber, ca. 1887).⁴⁷

The volume contains six chromolithographic scenes which, when lifted, reveal as many three-dimensional “real cages”, each accompanied by a short text in verse and in prose:⁴⁸ 1. *Il lupo e il leone*; 2. *L'aquario* [!]; 3. *I serpenti*; 4. *Scimia* [!], jena, tigre (Fig. 13 b, c).

The ‘visit’ to the “serraglio” is preceded by the *Discorso preliminare di Miss Aïssa*, in which the “celebrated tamer” invites the spectators to enter and presents herself, recounting in verse an early vocation and an adventurous life as a traveller always in search of new animals:

Ho viaggiato tutto il mondo,
 So per prova che è rotondo;
 Fra le bestie son vissuta,
 Dalle bestie son temuta;
 Miss Aïssa son chiamata,
 Nell'America son nata.
 Bambinella ancor da latte
 Litigai con cani e gatte;
 Ero ancora fanciullina,
 Quando uccisi una faina.
 Alla caccia delle belve
 Pei deserti e per le selve,
 Per le immense praterie
 Senza case e senza vie,
 Lungo il gran Mississipi,
 Vissi i miei giovani di.⁴⁹



Fig. 13 a. || *Grande serraglio*, cover.



Fig. 13 b, c. || *Grande serraglio*, plate and “cage” of the *Serpenti*.

⁴⁷ Cf. the sales catalogue *Bilderbücher* 2014, nn. 60 and 61 (the entire catalogue is available online at the address <https://tinyurl.com/4vtzu4md>).

⁴⁸ *Catalogo cronologico* 1896, 213.

⁴⁹ *Grande serraglio* 1884, [2] (“I have travelled all over the world, / I know by experience that it is round; / Among beasts I have lived, / By beasts I am feared; / Miss Aïssa I am called, / In America I was born. / A little baby still at the breast / I quarrelled with dogs and cats; / I was still a little girl, / When I killed a marten. / Hunting wild beasts / Through deserts and through forests, / Across immense prairies / Without houses and without roads, / Along the great Mississippi, / I lived my youthful days”).

[1884] *Quattro grandi teatri*

No copies of this title have been found, but the publishers' catalogues have made it possible to identify its source of origin and to imagine with a certain precision the corresponding Hoepli volume. In describing it, they in fact report: "Programme of the performances: I. *Excelsior*; II. *Pulcinella*; III. *Aida*; IV. *Circo Renz*".⁵⁰ From the titles of the four "theatres", so unusual, we can say with good certainty that the original work is *Neues Kinder-Theater* (Löwensohn, around 1880), containing the performances: 1. *Das Königreich der Blumen*; 2. *Die Rache für Pussy*; 3. *Aïda und Rhadamis*; 4. *Bravo Glorioso*. Of this title there also exists a French version, now available in the Foundation's collection of movable books: *Grand theatre féerique* (Capendu, around 1885) (Fig. 14 a), which, at the bottom of the sheet, reveals its German origin ("G. Löwensohn Imp. Fürth") and reproduces the same cover as the source edition.



Fig. 14 a. || *Grand theatre féerique*, cover.

Grand theatre féerique appears as a leporello volume consisting of four chromolithographic illustrations (Fig. 14 b), each of which, when lifted, reveals a three-dimensional little theatre dedicated to a different form of spectacle: the first "tableau" is entitled *Le ballet. Fête au royaume des Fleurs*; the second *Guignol. Pussy vengé par Jeannot*; the third, decisive for identification and centred on opera, *Aïda. La pièce! demandez la pièce!*; the fourth *Le Cirque. Cheval dressé en liberté* (Fig. 14 c).

The operation carried out by Hoepli appears to consist in 'Italianising' – or more precisely "Milanising" – the four scenes, so as to make them immediately recognisable and meaningful to its readers, to the extent that some publishers' advertisements explicitly mention the names of the Milanese theatres that were the real venues of the first three performances cited: "*Quattro grandi Teatri* with movable actors and text. Programme of the performances: I. (Scala) *Excelsior*; II. (Gerolamo) *Pulcinella*; III. (Scala) *Aida*; IV. *Circo Renz*".⁵¹ Titles such as *Pulcinella* and *Aida*⁵² remain self-explanatory for the average reader even today, without necessarily being linked to the specific Milanese performances; the other two references, however, may be less immediately clear, whereas they were transparent to contemporary audiences. The *Circo Renz*, which took its name from the Berlin impresario Franz Renz, "represented one of the highest expressions of circus art in Europe" and in 1881 arrived in Italy on the occasion of the National Industrial and Artistic Exhibition of Milan, where it performed in Piazza Castello from May to November.⁵³ Perhaps even more interesting is the reference to the first scene, which is also the least characterized among the four and therefore the most open to interpretation across the various versions. The

50 Cf., for example, *Catalogo cronologico* 1896, 323.

51 See, for example, the third edition back cover of Hoepli *Pierino Porcospino*, preserved at the Foundation.

52 As is well known, the famous opera was commissioned from Giuseppe Verdi to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal (1869). Its world premiere took place in Cairo on 24 December 1871, while its Italian premiere was held at La Scala in Milan on 8 February 1872. In the following years, it was staged in the major Italian theatres and gained widespread international acclaim, with productions also mounted in Lisbon (1878), Paris (1880), New York (1886), and Rio de Janeiro (1886).

53 For further discussion, cf. Giarola 2011, 26.

title of the source, *Das Königreich der Blumen*, is taken up in France as *Fête au royaume des Fleurs*, while in the English edition it becomes *The Queen's birthday*,⁵⁴ and in the Hoepli edition *Excelsior*, as previously mentioned, alluding to the *Ballo Excelsior*, a grand mime ballet by Luigi Manzotti with music by Romualdo Marengo. The performance was first staged on January 11 1881 at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, with scenery and costumes by Alfredo Edel, and achieved immediate and lasting success. The allegorical choreographic work, divided into six parts and eleven tableaux, proved highly effective due to its use of spectacular stage effects and large-scale choreography (the corps de ballet numbered 450 performers), as well as for its positivist theme, deeply felt by contemporaries and particularly appreciated by Ulrico Hoepli. After a dramatic struggle between Light and the Genius of Darkness, the final apotheosis thus presents the triumph of Civilization and Science, preceded by the celebration of major contemporary achievements and inventions, including the steamship, Alessandro Volta's battery, the telegraph, Thomas Edison's light bulb, the Mont Cenis Tunnel, and the Suez Canal.



Fig. 14 b. || *Grand theatre féérique*, the four chromolithographic illustrations.



Fig. 14 c. || *Grand theatre féérique*, the four "tableaux".

⁵⁴ *A New Children's Theatre*, London, Birn Brothers, ca. 1880. In this version, the other 'performances' are entitled: *Punch & Bunny*, *Thanksgiving in Memphis*, and *The Grand Circus*.

[1884] *Storielline buffe*⁵⁵

This is the first of the seven movable books derived from the work of Lothar Meggendorfer published – without ever declaring his authorship – by Ulrico Hoepli, largely through the recombination of plates taken from different sources.⁵⁶ Although no surviving copy has yet been located, publisher catalogues make it possible to reconstruct the volume's contents. The book appears to have consisted of six movable lever-operated plates entitled: 1. *Ponissa e Coccorito*; 2. *Il cacciatore supplichevole*; 3. *Barba Toni*; 4. *Il gran Pascià le Bracherosse*; 5. *Il gran mago*; 6. *Il saltatore*.

On the basis of this information, it has been possible to hypothesize the source of two of the plates: *Fritzchen und der Kakadu*, taken from *Lebende Bilder* (Munich, Braun & Schneider, 1879), for plate 1, *Ponissa e Coccorito* (Fig. 15); *Der Sonntagsreiter* from *Aus dem Leben* (Munich, Braun & Schneider, 1882) for plate 6, *Il saltatore* (Fig. 16).

The 2012 bibliography of Meggendorfer's works also proposes plate 4 of *Immer Lustig!* (Munich, Braun & Schneider, 1886), *Der gefoppte Jäger* (*Il cacciatore ingannato*, Fig. 17),⁵⁷ as a possible source for plate 2, *Il cacciatore supplichevole*. Although the image corresponds closely to the title, the chronology is problematic, since *Immer Lustig!* was published two years after *Storielline buffe*. No convincing source has yet been identified for the remaining three plates, nor is it currently possible to formulate any hypothesis regarding the design of the volume's cover.



Fig. 15. || *Fritzchen und der Kakadu*, plate 7 in *Lebende Bilder*.



Fig. 16. || *Der Sonntagsreiter*, plate 4 left in *Aus dem Leben*.

Fig. 17. || *Der gefoppte Jäger*, plate 4 right in *Immer Lustig!*.

55 From at least 1914 onwards, in Hoepli's publishing catalogues erroneously record the title as *Storielle buffe*, whereas it had previously always appeared as *Storielline buffe* (cf. *Catalogo cronologico* 1896, 10 and 363; *Catalogo completo* 1907, XIV and 322; *Catalogo completo* 1914, XIX and 199 and Part II, 79, where, however, in the *Indice cronologico* and in the *Divisione sistematica* the correct title still appears; *Mezzo secolo* 1922, XII and 253). In the absence of available copies, this error was subsequently repeated in the bibliographical literature (cf. Franchi 1998, 79, n. 30; Friedrich and von Katzenheim 2012, 292–293).

56 For a more detailed analysis of this title and of the subsequent movable books derived from Lothar Meggendorfer, including reproductions of all the lever-operated plates together with their corresponding source illustrations, see Pollone and Vagliani 2025, 79–135.

57 Friedrich and von Katzenheim 2012, 292–293.

[1886] *Sempre allegri, Bambini! 8 quadri mobili tutti da ridere* (Fig. 18 a)

The original volumes from which the illustrations of the second book based on the work of Lothar Meggendorfer were taken can in fact be identified as five different publications, all issued in Munich by Braun & Schneider: *Immer Lustig!* (1886) for the cover – partially redrawn by the illustrator Georg Meisenbach, in order to harmonize the depiction of the characters on the cover with those appearing in the movable plates (Fig. 19 a) –⁵⁸ and two plates (the 6 and the 7, Fig. 19 b); *Neue Thierbilder* (1883) and *Zum Zeitvertreib für brave Knaben und Mädchen* (1885), both for two movable figures (respectively 2 and 8; 1 and 3); *Lebende Bilder* (1879) and *Neue Lebende Bilder* (1880) for one plate each, namely the 5 and the 4.

Sempre allegri, Bambini! consists of eight lever-operated plates: 1. *Il Giorno Onomastico*; 2. *Il Pittore*; 3. *Il Giocatore di Bigliardo*; 4. *Il Contrabbassista*; 5. *Il Pianista*; 6. *Il Cattivello*; 7. *La Pesca* (Fig. 18 b); 8. *La Stia*.

The rhymed texts alongside each image are once again authored by Pasquale Fornari and are preceded by a *Preludio* that invites young readers to enjoy observing the figures, whose movement is emphasized:

Venite qua tutti, bambini e bambine,
 tacete ed udite: – Qui son figurine
 di genere novo [...]
 vedrete figure – che muovono gli occhi,
 la testa, la lingua, – le braccia, i ginocchi:
 chi canta, chi suona, – chi giuoca, chi dona
 chi batte la solfa – sul cuccurucù.....
 Bambini vedrete: – non dico di più.⁵⁹



Fig. 18 a. || *Sempre allegri, Bambini!*, cover.



Fig. 19 a. || *Immer Lustig!*, cover.



Fig. 18 b. || *Sempre allegri, Bambini!*, plate 7.

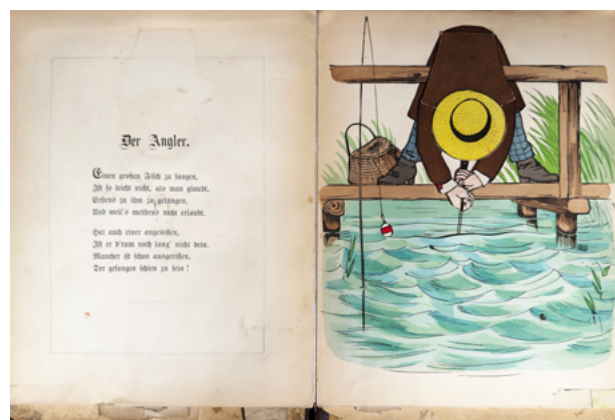


Fig. 19 b. || *Immer Lustig!*, plate 7 (Der Angler).

⁵⁸ Meisenbach's signature appears on various covers of Meggendorfer's books, both translated into Italian (*Bestie mobili e feroci*) and in the original German editions, such as *Für brave Kinder* (1884) or *Nah und Fern* (1887); here it appears at the bottom right, beneath the chicken coop, whereas it is not present in the original version.

⁵⁹ Fornari 1886, [1] ("Come here, all you boys and girls, / be silent and listen: – here are little pictures / of a new kind [...] // You will see figures – that move their eyes, / their heads, their tongues, – their arms, their knees: / some sing, some play music, – some play games, some give gifts / some beat the rhythm – to the cock-a-doodle-doo..... / Children, you will see: – I shall say no more").

[1889] *Bestie mobili domestiche e feroci. 8 quadri con testo poetico* (Fig. 20 a)

This title is also based on eight lever-operated plates by Lothar Meggendorfer, here dedicated to as many animals: 1. *Il Can da guardia*; 2. *Il Pappagallo*; 3. *L'alocco*; 4. *L'asino*; 5. *L'elefante*; 6. *Il Leone*; 7. *La Giraffa* (Fig. 20 b); 8. *Il cammello*.



Fig. 20 a. || *Bestie mobili domestiche e feroci*, cover.

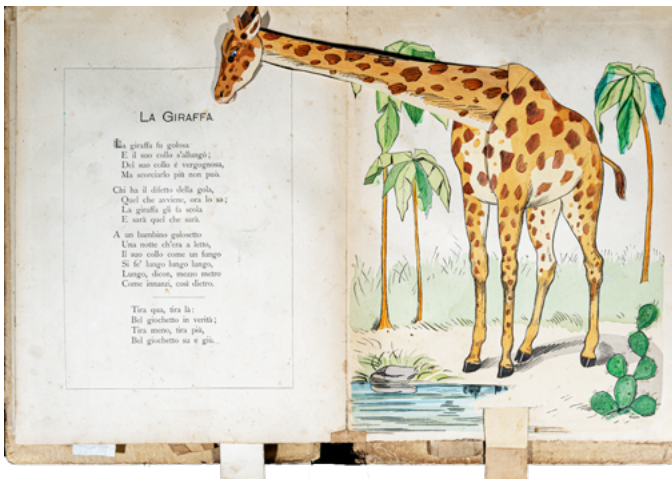


Fig. 20 b. || *Bestie mobili domestiche e feroci*, plate 7.

The *Prologo* that precedes the plates – anonymous and written entirely in verse, like the accompanying texts – presents these “bestie” as more ‘manageable’ than their real-life counterparts (“Queste almen non dan molestie...”) and introduces them in the following terms:

Bestie son bene educate;
 Bestie sono molto rare,
 Che si lasciano tirare;
 Bestie sono vive e vere:
 Si vuol creder per vedere.
 Mi credete? Ebben guardate,
 Ammirate, – strabiliate.⁶⁰

The cover – on which, in both the German and the Italian versions, Georg Meisenbach’s signature reappears – and the movable illustrations are partially redrawn, in several cases with chromatic variations compared to the originals (Fig. 20 c; Fig. 21). They derive from three volumes, once

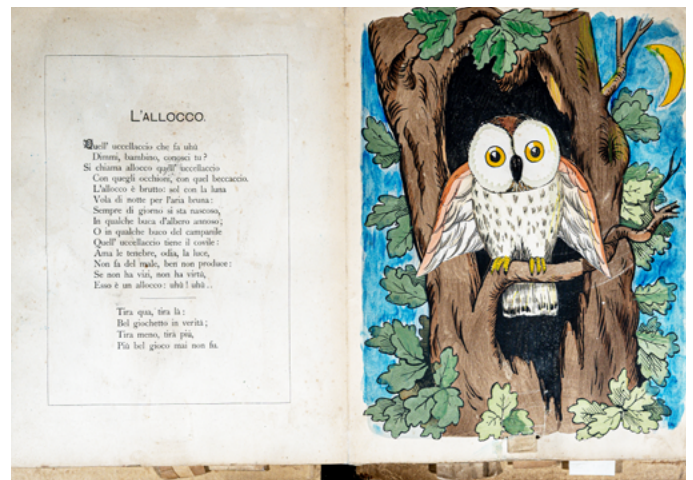


Fig. 20 c. || *Bestie mobili domestiche e feroci*, plate 3 (*L'alocco*).

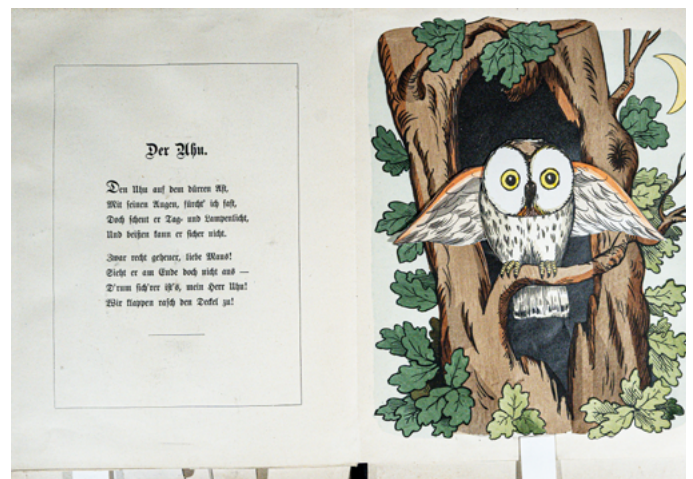


Fig. 21. || *Lebende Thierbilder*, plate 8 (*Der Uhu*).

⁶⁰ *Bestie mobili* 1889, [1] (“These animals are well trained; / These animals are very rare, / For they allow themselves to be pulled; / These animals are alive and real: / one must see in order to believe. / Do you believe me? Well then, look, / admire them – be astonished”).

again published by Braun & Schneider: the cover and as many as five plates (n. 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8) are taken from *Nah und Fern* (1887), two others (n. 1 and 3) from *Lebende Thierbilder* (1881), and one (n. 4) from *Neue Thierbilder* (1883).

[1894] *Ridete con me! Sei quadri mobili* (Fig. 22 a)

The fourth title attributable to Lothar Meggendorfer, in an unusual oblong format derived from its sources, results from the combination of two titles published in Germany in that same year, in Esslingen am Neckar by J. F. Schreiber, the historic publishing house responsible for the most spectacular and celebrated paper-engineered works of the artist, such as *Internationaler Circus* (1887) and *Das Puppenhaus. Eine Festgabe für brave Mädchen* (1891). These are *Lach mit mir!* (1894) – from which derive the title, the cover (Fig. 23), and plates 3, 5 and 6 – and *Verschiedene Leute* (1894, Fig. 24) – source for plates 1, 2 and 4.



Fig. 23. left || *Lach mit mir!*, cover.

Fig. 24. right || *Verschiedene Leute*, cover. Staatbibliothek zu Berlin, <https://tinyurl.com/43s3arxp>.



Fig. 22 a. || *Ridete con me!*, cover.

In the Hoepli version, the six lever-operated images are entitled: 1. *I ginnasti* (Fig. 22 b); 2. *La Musica*; 3. *Le oche della massaia*; 4. *La Giapponese*; 5. *Baricuta*; 6. *Brindisi*.

The text, written entirely in verse, is by Adolfo Padovan,⁶¹ and – like the others – includes a *Preambolo* and a short illustrative story for each plate.

The Italian adaptation, while making the narratives more closely aligned with the reality of local readers,

61 Adolfo Padovan (1869–1930), originally from Luino, moved to Milan after completing secondary school to study astronomy, but soon abandoned this path in order to devote himself to literary and philosophical essays, as well as to children's books in both prose and verse. He collaborated with Hoepli for more than two decades, and also contributed to newspapers and journals.



Fig. 22 b. || *Ridete con me!*, plate 1.

also introduces more ‘crude’ elements than the original versions. This is the case of plate 5, *Baricuta* (Fig. 22 c), which takes its title from the name of the protagonist (*Kula*, in the source). In this scene, a woman of color is depicted carrying a large basket on her back, from which, by pulling the tab, two little goats emerge. Their fate is not specified in the German text, which merely states that it cannot be discovered without asking the carrier directly, who, however, “speaks a different language”.⁶² By contrast, Adolfo Padovan leaves no room for doubt in his verses regarding the fate of the two small animals carried by the woman, who is – not by chance – “Abyssinian” (we are on the eve of the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1895-1896), as she makes her way to meet the butcher Marco:

Su la porta del macello
Marco aspetta Baricuta;
Stringe in pugno il suo coltello
Dalla lunga lama acuta.
Le due povere bestiole
Moriran sgozzate allor?
Sì, bambini, così vuole
Della Pasqua il rito ancor.⁶³



Fig. 22 | Ridete con me!,
c. | plate 5.

The copy owned by the Fondazione preserves the original paper dust jacket, which on the front shows the bibliographical data and on the back carries publishing advertisements and the price (4 lire).

[1895] *Giardino zoologico*

Breaking the sequence of publications derived from Lothar Meggendorfer, Ulrico Hoepli once again proposes a leporello volume featuring multi-layered three-dimensional illustrations which, by lifting the illustration that both announces and conceals them, bring to life “quattro grandi gabbie con ogni sorta di animali feroci e testo: I. Le scimmie. II. Le Belve. III. Nel mare. IV. Gli uccelli”⁶⁴

As in the previous cases, the original edition, illustrated by J. Kocher, was published by Löwensohn of Fürth, under the title *Zoologischer Garten* (circa 1890).⁶⁵ The Fondazione Tancredi di Barolo holds a copy of the French edition, *Le Jardin d'Acclimatation* (Capendu, circa 1890; Fig. 25 a), whose cages contain, in order: 1. *Les Lions*; 2. *Les Singes*; 3. *L'Aquarium*; 4. *La Volière* (Fig. 25 b, c).



Fig. 25 a. | *Le Jardin d'Acclimatation*,
cover.

⁶² “Da sie andre Sprache spricht” (Meggendorfer 1894, [4]).

⁶³ Padovan 1894, [10] (“At the door of the slaughterhouse / Marco awaits Baricuta; / he grips in his hand his knife / with the long, sharp blade. / The two poor little animals / will then be slaughtered? / Yes, children, thus still wills / the rite of Easter”).

⁶⁴ *Catalogo cronologico* 1896, 203 (“four large cages with every sort of ferocious animals and text: I. The monkeys. II. The beasts. III. In the sea. IV. The birds”).

⁶⁵ In the original edition, the order of the plates is: 1. *Der grosse Vogelkäfig*; 2. *Die Löwen*; 3. *Die Affen*; 4. *Das Aquarium*.



Fig. 25 b. || *Le Jardin d'Acclimatation*, three-dimensional scene *La Volière*.



Fig. 25 c. || *Le Jardin d'Acclimatation*, the four chromolithographic illustrations corresponding to the three-dimensional scenes.

[ca. 1898]⁶⁶ *Tante teste tanti cervelli. Lanterna magica delle Faccie [!] Umane. Album umoristico di 1536 trasformazioni* (Fig. 26 a)

This paperbound edition, without text, faithfully reproduces the German source, *Viel Köpfe viel Sinn* (Schreiber, 1898), a work by Lothar Meggendorfer. It contains sixteen plates divided into three sections (headgear and upper part of the head / central facial area, including the eyes and nose / mouth area and bust), allowing the recombination of up to one thousand five hundred and thirty-six different human figures, in accordance with the principle underlying transformation books (Fig. 26 b).

66 In this case, the catalogues consulted provide no publication date for the book; it does not even appear in the *Indice cronologico*, perhaps because of its unusual nature as a textless book/game. The year 1898 provides a *terminus post quem*, corresponding to the publication date of the German original. The publisher's catalogues nevertheless suggest that *Tante teste tanti cervelli* appeared on the Italian market relatively early: it is already listed as available in the 1907 catalogue, whereas by 1914 it is recorded as out of print; as expected, it does not appear in the 1896 catalogue (*Catalogo completo* 1907, 328; *Catalogo completo* 1914, 203).



Fig. 26 a. || *Tante teste tanti cervelli*, cover.

It should be noted that, precisely in 1898, Antonio Vallardi, the only other publisher to issue interactive books by Lothar Meggendorfer in Italy, published two further transformation game books by the artist, conceived as a pair, one featuring female figures and the other male figures: *La Zia allegra* (*Die lustige Tante. Ein Verwandlungsbilderbuch*, Schreiber, 1891) and *Lo Zio burlone* (*Der fidele Onkel. Ein komisches Verwandlungsbilderbuch*, Schreiber, 1891).⁶⁷



Fig. 26 b. || *Tante teste tanti cervelli*, example of a mix-and-match interior illustration.

[1899] *Gira, gira... Novellette pei bambini* (Fig. 27 a)

The “7 quadri movibili”⁶⁸ on which the book is based constitute the only example in Hoepli’s catalogue of animated illustrations employing circular dissolve effects, as well as the only one currently known of a mechanism of this kind published in Italy before 1950.⁶⁹ This innovation was probably encouraged by the commercial relations between Ulrico Hoepli and the English publisher Ernest Nister in connection with several illustrated albums, such as the previously mentioned *I giorni più belli* (1892). The source publication was in fact *Hide and Seek Pictures. A novelty for the Little Ones*, with rhymed texts by Clifton Bingham and line illustrations by Evelyn Stewart Hardy (Nister/Dutton, ca. 1891, Fig. 28).

Unlike in *Il libro magico del bene e del male*, where the dissolving mechanism is used to create a binary opposition, and in the English source, where it depicts two successive moments in the same narrative, here the two images that appear in sequence – and the corresponding “novellette” printed on the facing page, which



Fig. 27 a. || *Gira, gira...*, cover.



Fig. 28. || *Hide and Seek Pictures*, cover.

⁶⁷ The UCLA archive preserves, within the Meggendorfer Collection, the cover proofs of the two small volumes, currently untraceable (University of California, UCLA Library Department of Special Collections, Collection 1539 – Meggendorfer, Lothar – Papers – Box 5 – F. 4 [*Lo Zio burlone*] and 21 [*La Zia allegra*]). For a reproduction of these, see Pollone and Vagliani 2025, 64.

⁶⁸ *Catalogo completo* 1907, 161.

⁶⁹ Pollone 2025 a, 9, note 26.

are in fact guided descriptions of the illustrations themselves – bear no narrative relationship to one another. The only connection between them lies in their sharing the same page space and in a few verses printed beneath the movable picture. This occurs, for example, with *Un viaggio in carriola* and *Il granchio di mare* (Fig. 27 b), ‘summarized’ beneath plate 4 by the following verses:

Op là! op là! la carretta
 Sul pendio vieppiù s’affretta.
 Se dei granchi vuoi pescare
 Tuffa le mani in mare.⁷⁰

In *Hide and Seek Pictures*, by contrast, the pair of images is integrated into a single narrative in verse under the title *The Way to the Sea*. Here, the wheelbarrow serves as the means by which the children reach the beach and its amusements; by the end of the story, however, it has disappeared, forcing them to return home by train. Consequently, the caption beneath the plate accompanies not two unrelated images but the gradual transformation of the scene over time: “Here they are-off to the see, I suppose; | And what they found there, the next picture shows”⁷¹



Fig. 27 b. || *Gira, gira...*, plate 4.

[1899] *Pierino Porcospino vivente* (Fig. 29 a)

This is an adaptation of *Gustav Weises lebendiger Struwwelpeter*, published in Stuttgart by the publisher Weise in 1895 without naming its author, who was once again Lothar Meggendorfer.⁷² The volume contains eight lever-operated plates,

in linea col modello del *Pierino* originario e, più in generale, delle ‘Pierinate’, presentando una successione di storie che hanno per protagonisti bambini e bambine disubbidienti che patiscono le conseguenze delle proprie scriteriate azioni, secondo la più classica struttura narrativa delle storie esemplari.⁷³



Fig. 29 a. || *Pierino Porcospino vivente*, cover.

⁷⁰ *Gira, gira* 1899, [10] (Hop there! Hop there! The wheelbarrow / Hurries ever faster down the slope. // If you want to catch crabs, / Dip your hands into the sea).

⁷¹ Bingham 1891, [10].

⁷² For the full digitization of the German source, see the copy held in the Universitätsbibliothek “Johann Christian Senckenberg”, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main (<https://tinyurl.com/3bum6ku6>).

⁷³ Negri M. 2025, 169-170 (“in line with the model of the original *Pierino* and, more generally, of the ‘Pierinate’, presenting a succession of stories featuring disobedient boys and girls who suffer the consequences of their reckless actions, according to the most classical narrative structure of exemplary tales”).

Turning the pages, one thus witnesses the punishment inflicted upon the ‘naughty children’ of the eight stories: 1. *Il Porcospino* (Fig. 29 b); 2. *Il ladruncolo*; 3. *Il pigrone*; 4. *La golosa*; 5. *Malattia grave*; 6. *La scimmia incollerita*; 7. *Curiosità punita*; 8. *Il pesce miracoloso*.

Although his name does not appear anywhere in the book, the Italian text, “non molto originale sul piano dei contenuti né su quello della scrittura”, is by Gaetano Negri, as attested by Hoepli catalogues and publishing correspondence.⁷⁴



Fig. 29 b. || *Pierino Porcospino vivente*, plate 1.

It should be noted, in passing, that it is precisely to the verses of Gaetano Negri and to the editorial care of Ulrico Hoepli that we owe the successful translation through which *Pierino Porcospino* became known in Italy,⁷⁵ originally created by Heinrich Hoffmann in 1844 and extremely popular among children in German-speaking areas, the quintessential ‘naughty child’ due to his idiosyncratic attitude toward personal hygiene, so much so “che da ognuno è conosciuto / pel più lurido bambino / che mai possa esser veduto”.⁷⁶

[1905] *Bestie in gabbia*

This is a “libro mobile con vere gabbie, descrizione delle belve, della loro vita e delle caccie [!]”,⁷⁷ which has not yet been identified with certainty. After examining the catalogues of Hoepli’s potential suppliers available at the time, it seems plausible to hypothesize as its source – also in

74 *Ivi*, 168-169 (“not very original either in terms of content or style”). On Gaetano Negri, see *supra*, p. 91, n. 8. On the contents of *Pierino Porcospino vivente* and its publishing history, see Negri M. 2025; for the catalogues, see for example *Catalogo completo* 1907, XXXVIII and 270.

75 The translation by Gaetano Negri, published in 1891 and based on the 170th German edition of the work, is in fact the second proposed by the publisher: the first Italian version, advertised by Ulrico Hoepli in December 1882 (and therefore likely dating from early 1883), differs significantly and is generically attributed in the sources “to a woman” without a name. The identity of the translator – who may tentatively be identified as Elisa Häberlin Hoepli – appears to have been deliberately withheld in the publishing catalogues (cf. Pollone and Vagliani 2025, 43-47).

76 Negri G. 1899, [2] (“who is known to everyone / as the dirtiest child / that has ever been seen”). The publishing house’s catalogue also includes *I dodici figliuoli di Pierino Porcospino*, a shaped book whose source is a work by Johannes Trojan with fine illustrations by Fedor Flinzer, *Struwelpeter der Jüngere* (Weise, 1891). In this “pierinata” Ulrico Hoepli himself appears as a character, highlighting the publisher’s emotional connection with the ‘world’ of *Pierino Porcospino*, perhaps a legacy of his childhood reading in Switzerland (Pollone and Vagliani 2025, 46-47).

77 *Catalogo completo* 1907, 38 (“movable book with real cages, descriptions of the beasts, of their lives and of the hunts”).

light of previous commercial contacts with Ernest Nister – *The Model Menagerie with natural history stories*, by Lucy Lydia Weedon, Evelyn Fletcher “and others” (Nister/Dutton, ca. 1895, **Fig. 30 a**). Compatible in terms of both typology and chronology, *The Model Menagerie* presents a series of illustrations of animals (lions, deer, tigers, monkeys, the bear and the elephant) which, when the pages are turned, become three-dimensional together with their cages (**Fig. 30 b**). Above all – uniquely among the ‘candidates’ – it contains extensive descriptions of their characteristics and habits in the wild, as well as accounts of the events (often linked to hunting expeditions) that led each of them into the *menagerie*, all attributed to an exceptional narrator: Uncle Bob, a much-loved and unconventional uncle, organizer of a visit to the zoo for his six nephews. About whom the introduction specifies: “we was generally hunting ‘big game’ in the Rocky Mountains, the dense Indian jungles, or the vast, tropical forest of Africa; and he could tell wonderful stories of his adventures in these far-away regions, and of the wild animals that inhabit them”.



Fig. 30 a. || *The Model Menagerie*, cover.



Fig. 30 b. || *The Model Menagerie*, the monkeys' three-dimensional illustration.

[1907] *Bestie mobili e parlanti* (**Fig. 31 a**)

The volume, “movibile, umoristico, con testo in versi e in prosa”, contains “sei grandi tavole meccaniche”,⁷⁸ that is, lever-operated, depicting anthropomorphized animals as protagonists of as many stories, narrated on the facing page: 1. *Il gatto pittore*; 2. *La scimmia bambinaia*; 3. *Un atto di coraggio* (in which a dog saves the “gatto pittore” from drowning, **Fig. 31 b**); 4. *La volpe e il cacciatore*; 5. *Una madre amorosa* (**Fig. 31 c**); 6. *La vendetta dei due leprotti*. Beneath each plate, a few verses can also be read summarizing the depicted story – for *Un atto di coraggio*, for example:

Un cane generoso – nel fiume si gittò
 E il micio che annegava – a riva si portò
 Al salvatore ardito – riconoscente il gatto
 Ad olio sulla tela – dipinse un bel ritratto.⁷⁹



Fig. 31 a. || *Bestie mobili e parlanti*, cover.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem* (“movable, humorous, with text in verse and in prose”; “six large mechanical plates”).

⁷⁹ *Bestie mobili* 1907, [6] (“A generous dog – threw himself into the river / And the drowning kitty – he brought to the bank / To the brave saviour – the grateful cat / In oil on canvas – painted a fine portrait”).

The book bears no authorial attribution, unlike the preceding English and French editions, which capitalized on the success of Lothar Meggendorfer by attributing authorship to him, even though it is quite evident that “illustrations and colouring are unsimilar to the Meggendorfer style”.⁸⁰ *Artistic Pussy and her studio. Moving pictures with other tales* (London, Grevel & Co.), “a moveable toybook from Lothar Meggendorfer”, and *Histoires pour rire*, with texts by Adeline Reynaud and “dessins par L. Meggendorfer” (Paris, Capendu), both published around 1890.⁸¹



Fig. 31 b. || *Bestie mobili e parlanti*, plate 3.



Fig. 31 c. || *Bestie mobili e parlanti*, plate 5.

[1909] *Bestie vive e burlone. Sei grandi quadri mobili e colorati con storielle gaie e ridevoli* (Fig. 32 a)

The title can be associated with the previous one for several reasons. First of all, it is likewise constructed around six lever-operated plates dedicated to anthropomorphized animals, accompanied by “storielle”: 1. *La scommessa dell'elefante*; 2. *Gli scolaretti negligenti* (referring to a class of cats, taught by the teacher Miagolone, Fig. 32 b); 3. *Un pittore meraviglioso* (the artist is a donkey); 4. *Una partita disgraziata* (in which various animals play billiards); 5. *Un cantante che non sa cantare* (that is, the very out-of-tune Mr. Caprone); 6. *Il dentista distratto* (a horse who practices his profession in the worst possible way). In this case, however, the captions beneath the illustrations consist of very brief prose summaries – for example, “Un pittore celebre e la sua burla all'amico” for *Un pittore meraviglioso*, and “Una partita al biliardo che finisce assai male” for *Una partita disgraziata*. Both volumes are also devoid of any attribution of responsibility and have foreign precedents



Fig. 32 b. || *Bestie vive e burlone*, plate 2.



Fig. 32 a. || *Bestie vive e burlone*, cover.

80 Friedrich e von Katzenheim 2012, 36 e 169.

81 For the dating of the foreign versions, cf. *Ibidem*. On a discussion of the phenomenon, cf. Pollone and Vagliani 2025, 20-21.

issued by the same publishers; the French version – *Allô, Allô! Bostock. Grand Album d'Animaux savants* (Capendu, ca. 1900), with texts by Adeline Reynaud – presents the plates in the same order under the following titles: 1. *Allô, Allô!*; 2. *La leçon de lecture*; 3. *Un artiste original*; 4. *La partie de billard*; 5. *La leçon de chant*; 6. *Le dentiste*.

It is also not clear what the original source of either title is, nor whether the two Hoepli volumes derive directly from it or from an intermediate version. What is certain is that both were sold at a lower price than the publisher's other movable books, thus likely indicating lower production costs.⁸²

[1911] *Pupazzi vivi e allegri. Otto quadri movibili con storielle in versi* (Fig. 33 a)

More than twenty years after *Pierino Porcospino vivente*, a final title derived from Lothar Meggendorfer appears in the Hoepli catalogue. It is the Italian version of *Lustiges Ziehbilderbuch* (Weise, 1910; Fig. 34) and presents eight plates with accompanying verses but without titles, of which n. 2, 3 and 4 are respectively inspired by plates 1, 2 and 3 of *Gustav Weises lebendiger Struwwelpeter*, completely redrawn: 1. [*Il nonno*]; 2. [*Pierino Porcospino*] (Fig. 33 b); 1. [*Le mele*]; 4. [*Lo scolaro*]; 5. [*Il violinista*]; 6. [*L'indigestione*]; 7. [*Il telefono*]; 8. [*L'addio agli sposi*].⁸³

The cover boards are larger than the plates, so as to leave space at the bottom to protect the pull-tabs, keeping them enclosed within the binding.



Fig. 33 a. || *Pupazzi vivi e allegri*, cover.



Fig. 34. || *Lustiges Ziehbilderbuch*, cover. Private collection (courtesy of Larry Seidman).



Fig. 33 b. || *Pupazzi vivi e allegri*, plate 2.

⁸² Both were priced at 4.50 lire, compared – for example – with the 7.50 lire of *Gira, gira...* or of *Pierino Porcospino vivente* in the same years (cf. Pollone and Vagliani 2025, 59, 61-62 and 115).

⁸³ The reconstructed titles are reproduced in *Ivi*, 127. On *Gustav Weises lebendiger Struwwelpeter*, cf. *supra*, p. 114.

[1940] I tre Libriteatro

In 1940 – in a world profoundly different from that in which the earlier titles had been published – Ulrico Hoepli’s publishing house, after almost thirty years of absence from the field of movable publications, issued for the first time three entirely Italian-made productions, wholly original and of high technical quality, protected by patents n. 358427 and n. 359252 for “montaggio, nome e marchio”. These are the three famous carousel books *Libriteatro*, each of which represents a “regno incantato delle fiabe reso plastico” and, “aprendosi forma sei teatrini con personaggi, scene, quinte e fondali, il tutto a vivaci colori”; thus displaying “gli episodi più importanti” of the respective fairy tale, also narrated in the accompanying “libretto”.⁸⁴ The “libretto” further includes instructions for the optimal use of the *Libriteatro*, including its assembly as a carousel on a manually rotating support and its appropriate lighting (Fig. 35).

The three volumes are:

Ali Babà e i 40 ladroni (Fig. 36 a, b), with drawings by the set designer and illustrator Mario Zampini,⁸⁵ coloured by Raimondo Centurione.⁸⁶ Beneath each scenic plate there is a brief sentence commenting on the image and linking it to be narrative progression in the accompanying booklet, where it is printed in bold type for emphasis: 1. ...«*Sesamo apriti!*» | *Ed ecco alla sua voce la roccia ubbidire ed aprirsi una spaccatura...*; 2. *Ma quelli, estratti le loro lunghe sciabole...*; 3. ...*infatti il capobandito trovò sette case con la croce, anziché una sola, come si aspettava...*; 4. ...*così che i masnadieri che vi erano nascosti dovettero soccombere tutti*; 5. ...*per toglierne una grossa moneta, quando Morgantina...*; 6. ...*e pochi giorni dopo si celebrarono con gran pompa le nozze di Tabit e di Morgantina...*

Fig. 36 a, b. || *Ali Babà e i 40 ladroni*, cover and open carousel.

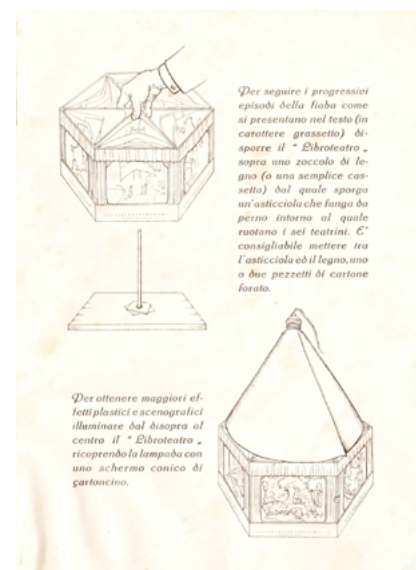


Fig. 35. || Instructions contained in the “libretto” of *Cenerentola*.



⁸⁴ *Libri di cultura* 1940, 166-167 (“enchanted realm of fairy tales made three-dimensional”; when opened, forms six little theatres with characters, scenes, wings and backdrops, all in vivid colours”; “the key episodes”).

⁸⁵ Mario Zampini (Florence, 1905-1963) was a painter, illustrator, set designer, and cartoonist. He illustrated numerous books, especially for children (among them, several titles in the popular *La scala d'oro* series published by UTET, such as Cesare Giardini, *I più celebri drammi moderni: storie di re e di guerrieri*, 1935, and Maria Chiesa Tibaldi, *Costumi dei popoli antichi*, 1936). He collaborated with magazines such as “La lettura”, “Il Corriere dei Piccoli”, and “Il balilla”. From 1932 he worked as a set designer at the Teatro alla Scala, where his productions of Francesco Cilea’s *L’Arlesiana*, Ottorino Respighi’s *Gli uccelli*, Arrigo Boito’s *Mefistofele*, and Engelbert Humperdinck’s *Hänsel und Gretel* are remembered.

⁸⁶ Raimondo Centurione (active from the late 1930s to the 1950s). In addition to two of the Hoepli *Libriteatro*, he illustrated at least one other children’s publication of a very different nature, published by Garzanti: Gian Battista Bianchi, *Le muse. Antologia italiana per la scuola media* (1953).

La Bella addormentata nel bosco (Fig. 37 a, b), with drawings by Mario Zampini, coloured by Felice de' Cavero.⁸⁷ The caption-phrases are in this case: 1. ... *Figuratevi le feste! Per il battesimo invitarono tutti i principi e i gran signori del vicinato, e siccome a quei tempi c'erano le fate...*; 2. ...- *O dove menerà questa scala? La scala era fatta a chiocciola, e attraverso intricati corridoi metteva in un abbaino e nell'abbaino c'era una vecchia incartapecorita che filava...*; 3. ...*si arrestò il pendolo dell'orologio, si addormentarono nella sala dei banchetti gli invitati... e una mosca sul naso del Ciambellano...*; 4. ... *sin che un giorno un Reuccio, andando a caccia da quelle parti col suo seguito, domandò ad un vecchio contadino...*; 5. ... *sotto un'alcova giaceva la principessa bella come un raggio di sole, immersa nel magico sonno...*; 6. ...*E poi la Principessa Rosaspina andò sposa al Reuccio...*



Fig. 37 a, b. | *La Bella addormentata nel bosco*, cover and open carousel.

Cenerentola (Fig. 38 a, b) with drawings by Mario Zampini, coloured by Raimondo Centurione. Here the caption-phrases are: 1. ...*La fata vuotò la zucca con un coltellino e batté la bacchetta magica...*; 2. ...*ed eccola vestita del più ricco broccato bianco col fondo intessuto d'argento...*; 3. ...*Il Reuccio le andò incontro...*; 4. ...*Sugl'ultimi gradini perdetta una delle scarpine di vetro...*; 5. ...*Un banditore, preceduto da sei trombettieri, annunciava: - Parola di Re: Coi che potrà calzare una scarpina di vetro...*; 6. ...*Furono celebrate le nozze con grande pompa e con grande allegria...*



Fig. 38 a, b. | *Cenerentola*, cover and open carousel.

The *Libroteatro* enjoyed immediate success, to the point of going through several editions within a few years (four are documented: in addition to the first, in 1942, 1943, and 1946).⁸⁸ Simultaneously with the third of these editions, in 1943 they were also issued in Germany in a German-language version within the series *Krenn Theater Album* (Rome-Leipzig, Casa Editrice Mediterranea-Wilhelm

⁸⁷ Felice de' Cavero (or Felix de' Cavero; Diano Marina, 1908-Turin, 1994). After graduating from the Accademia Ligustica di Belle Arti in Genoa (1930), he approached Futurism and the avant-garde and devoted himself to artistic research, moving between Genoa, Milan, Turin, and other Italian cities. In 1936 he was employed by the Istituto Biochimico Italiano in Milan in the creative and advertising sector, without however abandoning his artistic activity, which he pursued in parallel through painting, illustration, and photography. From the outset opposed to Fascism, in 1943 he joined the Resistance, documenting this experience through a large number of photographs, exhibited in successful exhibitions starting as early as 1945. For further information, cf. at least the MuseoTorino website, <https://tinyurl.com/4y7tun32>.

⁸⁸ Cf. *supra*, p. 98, n. 34; Pollone 2025 b, 322, 327 and 334.

Krenn),⁸⁹ under the corresponding titles *Ali Baba und die 40 Räuber*, *Dornröschen*, and *Aschenbrodel*. While for the Italian volumes typographical work was entrusted over time, or in collaboration, to three different Milanese workshops – Allegretti, Grafitalia (formerly Pizzi e Pizio), and, above all, the Officine Grafiche e Legatoria Sagdos – Krenn relied on the Istituto Geografico De Agostini of Novara for printing. Returning to 1940, at the time of first release of the three *Libroteatro*, the Hoepli publishing catalogue *Libri di cultura generale*, issued in November of that year, lists all three titles as already available for the Christmas season and presents them as “una grande assoluta novità che delizierà bimbi e genitori” (“a great absolute novelty that will delight children and parents”; **Fig. 39**), also noting that, as a “primo tentativo del genere” (“first attempt of its kind”),

di ciascun “libroteatro” è stata allestita una edizione speciale luminescente in un numero limitato di esemplari: con l’applicazione di vernici speciali che risplendono nell’oscurità si ottengono effetti luminosi fantasmagorici ed irreali, quali si addicono alle scene fiabesche.⁹⁰

These “fantasmagorical” “special editions”, however, are unfortunately no longer traceable today.



Fig. 39 || Publishing advertisement for the *Libroteatro*, november 1940.

⁸⁹ The Casa Editrice Mediterranea was founded in 1925 in Rome, at via Flaminia 158, by Wilhelm Krenn. Although Austrian by birth, he had by then become a naturalized Italian citizen: he studied at the University of Padua, where he graduated in Political Science, and owned several bookshops in Northern Italy. Initially specializing in the arts, within a few years the new publishing house expanded its catalogue to include children’s books, legal texts, and works on esotericism, developing and consolidating strong commercial channels with the German-speaking area, both in terms of imports and exports, also thanks to the opening of a branch in Leipzig. In 1953, Krenn retired for health reasons, and his role was taken over by Giovanni Canonico, who, under the name ‘Edizioni Mediterranee’, abandoned legal, artistic, and children’s publishing in favour of esotericism, natural medicine, and sport (cf. *Ivi*, 436).

⁹⁰ *Libri di cultura* 1940, 166-167 (“for each “libroteatro” a special luminous edition was produced in a limited number of copies: by applying special varnishes that shine in the dark, fantasmagoric and unreal luminous effects are obtained, such as are suited to fairy-tale scenes”). The “luminous” editions were sold at 60 lire each, while the ‘standard’ ones at 40 lire.

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