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# RE-FRAMING LIVES

Historical, Literary and Interdisciplinary  
Approaches to Biography


BLENDED CONFERENCE

7-8 and 9 April, 2022

un'iniziativa nell'ambito di

con la partecipazione di





7<sup>th</sup> International Conference  
New Directions in Children's Literature Research

# RE-FRAMING LIVES

## Historical, Literary and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Biography

Reading biographies, autobiographies, memoirs and diaries teaches people one of life's most valuable lessons. Writers who share their autobiographies usually have interesting stories to tell about their lives' trials and tribulations. Every life has a beginning, a middle and an end, and how one has lived should greatly interest readers who are still at the beginning of their own lives.

Exploring biographies through children's literature offers an enriching experience that motivates children and adolescents to learn and critically reflect in new ways. Reading biographies not only provides them with valuable new perspectives but also encourages their own self-discovery. In learning about other people's lives, young readers make comparisons and consider differences, and they come to understand the lives of not only famous scientists or artists but also ordinary people through their failures, successes, challenges, feelings and emotions.

Children have been less and less exposed to biographies in many ways. However, contemporary research emphasises a shift in children's books towards a more innovative, historical, literary and interdisciplinary approach, which also offers meaningful messages about environmental and social activism.

This conference aims to investigate this shift in children's fiction and non-fiction. It also seeks to explore some interdisciplinary research opportunities through which scholars and authors can help expand children's literary horizons through biographical studies.



7 APRIL, 2022

9:15

### Welcome address

**Daniela Mapelli**, Rector Magnificus of University of Padova, Italy

**Egidio Robusto**, Dean of Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology (FISPPA), University of Padova, Italy

**Chair: Marnie Campagnaro**, University of Padova, Italy

**9.30**

### Visual and Anecdotal Representations in New Norwegian Biographies for Children and Young Adults

**Inger-Kristin Larsen Vie**, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway

This presentation will discuss how biographies motivate readers to become engaged, critical readers. Participants will examine how recent Norwegian biographies for children and young people challenge readers to reflect on a biography subject's textual and visual representations, rather than a simplified image of that person. We will take a closer look at different Norwegian biographies' uses of portraits and anecdotes, examining how they help create a complex image of a biography subject. This presentation will draw on a framework which includes theoretical perspectives from picturebook theory and anecdotal theory to shed light on genre features.

**10.00**

### How does It Feel to Grow Up in a Dictatorship? The Role of Autobiography and Fiction in *El Diario de Noelia*

**Bernardita Muñoz Chereau**, UCL Institute of Education, United Kingdom

This presentation will discuss *El Diario de Noelia* (Noelia's diary), Muñoz Chereau's semi-autobiographical account of a 10-year-old girl growing up in Chile during the country's dictatorship era. *El Diario de Noelia* blurs the conventional boundaries between autobiography and fiction, children's and adult literature, the private and public spheres, and the personal and collective domains to tell a story that can engage young audiences with Chile's recent troubled past. Muñoz Chereau argues for the need to combine such tools as the imagination, memory, archives, humour, dreams and poetry in a quest to construct a narrative that faithfully conveys the political aspects of personal experiences.

**10.30**

### Reshaping Frida Kahlo's Life and Art in Picturebooks: An Intermedial Approach to Biographies

**Berit Westergaard Bjørlo**, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway

Traditionally, the biography genre has been considered as a predominantly textual genre. However, the increasing range of picturebook biographies aimed at child audiences calls for an intermedial approach to biography studies. This talk will investigate how selected picturebooks describe the life and art of Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. It will highlight the question: In what ways do these books balance and blend facts and fiction in their visual and verbal portrayals? Westergaard Bjørlo's analyses are mainly based on intermedial theory, adaptation theory and biography studies.

**11.00**

Discussion

**11.15**

Break

Session 2: Master Class  
In-person and online (Italian)

11.40–12.40

The Lives of Others.

Illustrating Biographies about Women

*Le vite delle altre. Illustrazioni per biografie al femminile*

**Pia Valentinis**, Author and illustrator, Italy

Pina Bausch, Maria Zambrano, Emily Dickinson, Antonia Pozzi and Simone Weil present striking examples of Valentinis's collaboration with the Italian publishing house rueBallu (Palermo). Valentinis reflects on the following questions in her visual research: What does she look for when studying the lives of women she doesn't know directly? Must she empathise with them? What strikes her about them? How can she address their dark sides, and how can she remain true to herself without betraying a text's meaning?



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Session 3: Workshops

WORKSHOP 1: In-person (Italian)

14.00 - 16.30 (2.5 hours long; max. 30 attendees)

A Tale about Yourself: Cutting for Telling

*Un racconto di sé. Ritagliare per raccontare*

**Pia Valentinis**, Author and illustrator, Italy

During this workshop, participants will experiment with simple autobiographical collage games, discussing and reflecting on the concept of illustrations as representations of reality and self-expression. Starting from concrete issues, we will realise pictures focussed on our memories, underlining their narrative power. This workshop does not require any specific ability or technical competence – just the desire to participate.

It is primarily reserved for students attending the postgraduate course Children's Literature (0–18 Years) at the University of Padova.

WORKSHOP 2: Online (English)

14.00 - 15.00 (1 hour long; max. 20 attendees)

Are They Really Rebel, Clever and Brave?  
Collective Biographies of Women in  
Children's Literature

**Chiara Malpezzi**, University of Padova, Italy

Contemporary children's literature includes collective biographies of women that describe heroines as subverting stereotypes historically attributed to women and girls. Nevertheless, portraying these figures as rebellious, clever or brave to young readers risks imposing fixed paradigms. By analysing award-winning picturebooks and graphic novels, this workshop aims to investigate how these works are structured and thematically organised, as well as which selection criteria they consider. It will ask: What 'types' of women are portrayed? Participants will be invited to create their own digital collection of women's biographies and reflect on their choices to ask: Which female role models do we prefer?



8 APRIL, 2022

Session 4: Plenary Session  
In-person and online (Italian)

**Chair: Marnie Campagnaro**, University of Padova, Italy

9.30

### **Women Scientists' Biographies. The Toolbox of a Writer**

*Biografie di scienziate: la cassetta degli attrezzi di una scrittrice*

**Vichi De Marchi**, Journalist and children writer, Italy

How should women scientists be written about for children and young readers? What are the best tools and most appropriate approaches? How can the right blend of non-fiction and fiction be achieved? Why is writing about childhood and adolescence so important to trace the origins of a subject's strong will to pursue a scientific career despite many obstacles? This session will analyse these and other issues from a writer's perspective to identify the many challenges facing scientific biographies. We will focus on a young public readership, especially girls who might be inspired by such role models.

10.00

### **Illustrated Biographies for Children: The Case of Maria Montessori**

*Biografie illustrate per ragazzi e ragazze: il caso di Maria Montessori*

**Fabrizio Bertolino & Manuela Filippa**, University of Valle d'Aosta, Italy

The recent celebrations of Maria Montessori (an Italian educator who renewed education by developing a particular method known as the Montessori Method), the 150th anniversary of her birth (in 2020) and the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death (in 2022) have encouraged examinations of this historical figure, thanks to the analysis of iconographic material (figurines, coins, stamps etc.) and 'virtual' memories (doodles, logos). Similarly, the pedagogist continues to be celebrated through the publication of stories about her life. Gradually, traditional biographies comprising narratives which are sometimes supplemented with drawings or photos have been joined by alternative forms of narration (comic strips and children's books) using a new, visual, synthetic and immediate language focussed on illustration.

10.30

### **Collective Biographies of Women Written for Children**

*Biografie collettive di donne scritte per bambini e bambine*

**Monica Martinelli**, Editor of Settenove, Italy

As with all children's literature, the proper selection and evaluation of collective biographies about women are essential. However, children deserve accurate collective biographies; they must understand that controversial information and personal fallacies have been neither omitted nor glossed over. First, readers see women as human beings with both strengths and weaknesses, and readers can understand and – at least sometimes – relate to women's feelings of frustration and happiness. Second, past women undoubtedly received second-class treatment for many decades, and this treatment should be accurately portrayed when including women's history in general history and elucidating the distinctly feminine perspective within a patriarchal framework.



WORKSHOP 3: In-person (Italian)

**11.30 & 14.30**

(2 sessions; 1.20 hours long; max. 30 attendees in each session)

**I Am Who I Am,**

*Io sono chi sono*

**Monica Martinelli**, Editor of Settenove, Italy

According to the historian Francesco Pitocco, history can be compared to an open window: the landscape is always the same, but the view changes depending on the perspective, and previously hidden details can emerge from different vantages. Even if the scene remains the same, the view always changes when adopting a new perspective. The same is true of life. Through this writing workshop, participants will learn how the same story can include as many plot lines as possible points of view. They will also learn how every life story can be told in different ways, starting from the narrator's perspective.

These sessions are primarily reserved for students attending the children's literature course (EAS – Rovigo) in education sciences and the postgraduate course Children's Literature (0–18 Years) at the University of Padova.

WORKSHOP 4: In-person (Italian)

**11.30 & 14.30**

(2 sessions; - 1.20 hours long; max. 30 attendees in each session)

**Are They Really Rebel, Clever and Brave? Collective Biographies of Women in Children's Literature**

*Ribelli, astute e coraggiose: per davvero? Le biografie collettive femminili nella letteratura per l'infanzia*

**Chiara Malpezzi**, University of Padova, Italy

Contemporary children's literature includes collective biographies of women that describe heroines as subverting stereotypes historically attributed to women and girls. Nevertheless, portraying these figures as rebellious, clever or brave to young readers risks imposing fixed paradigms. By analysing award-winning picturebooks and graphic novels, this workshop aims to investigate how these works are structured and thematically organised, as well as which selection criteria they consider. It will ask: What 'types' of women are portrayed? Participants will be invited to create their own digital collection of women's biographies and reflect on their choices to ask: Which female role models do we prefer?

Other attendees may be admitted to these workshops, capacity permitting. For more information, see the 'Further Information' section at the end of this programme.

9 APRIL, 2022

Session 6: SPECIAL EVENT

Children's Biographies in the 800-Year History of the University of Padova



9.15

Welcome address

Chair: **Giuseppe Zago**, University of Padova, Italy

9.30

From Biography to Biofiction: The Contemporary Editorial Landscape of Picturebooks, Short Stories and Graphic Novels

*Dalle biografie alla biofiction: l'attuale panorama editoriale fra albi, racconti e graphic novel*

**Marnie Campagnaro**, University of Padova, Italy

In the last twenty years, biographies and collective biographies have attracted significant attention from the Italian publishing market for children and young adults. Novels, short stories, graphic novels, picturebooks and other forms of hybrid narrations have truly flourished, including fiction and nonfiction, focussing on the singularity and uniqueness of individual existence. Through narration, these books not only describe the personalities of people who have made human history but also portray lesser-known figures who have suffered because of history.

10.00

Looking for Freedom and Knowledge. *Storie Libere*, Biographies for Children by the University of Padova

*Storie di sapere libero: biografie di donne e uomini nella collana Storie libere dell'Università di Padova*

**Chiara Malpezzi**, University of Padova, Italy

*Storie Libere*, published by Carthusia in partnership with the University of Padova, aims to tell young readers about the lives of the great figures who have made the University's history, celebrating its eight centuries of operation (1222–2022). From the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, biographies have given voice to people who embody the values of research: independent thinking, freedom from prejudice, courage in overcoming obstacles and solidarity in promoting an alliance between different fields of knowledge. This presentation will introduce the *Storie Libere* book series, starting from three key questions: How do biographies recount an identity? What messages do they convey? And how do they show the past to today's young readers?

10.20

Discussion

**WORKSHOP 5: In-person (Italian)**

**10.30 & 12.00**

(2 sessions; 1 hour long; max. 20 attendees in each session)

**Who Is It? Strategies, Narratives and Metaphors to Recount an Identity**

*Chi è? Strategie, narrazioni e metafore per raccontare l'identità*

By the research group on Children's Literature, University of Padova, Italy

This workshop will address the question that biographies pose about identity – who is it? – analysing the strategies developed in the *Storie Libere* book series. These approaches are both fictional and narrative (assuming other people's points of view in describing the main character or using letters and symbols) and historical and scientific (fact sheets and paratextual elements). Participants will be invited to choose one of these strategies in order to recount the biography of a person of their choice, asking: How do we shape a life story?

**WORKSHOP 6: In-person (Italian)**

**10.30 & 12.00**

(2 sessions; 1 hour long; max. 20 attendees in each session)

**The Telescope and the Shell: Divergence and Wonder in the World of Science**

*Il cannocchiale e la conchiglia: divergenza e meraviglia nel mondo della scienza*

By the research group on Children's Literature, University of Padova, Italy

This workshop will focus on two metaphors, the telescope and the fossil shell, representing the protagonists of two biographies in the *Storie Libere* series: the scientist Galileo Galilei and the naturalist Antonio Vallisneri. Participants will be invited to explore these objects and reflect on the meanings associated with scientific research from both a practical and material perspective (asking, can we do science with the five senses?) and an abstract and theoretical perspective (which temporal directions are involved in research, and what values should a scientist adopt?).

**Visit@Beato:** guided tours into the historical Beato Pellegrino Complex.

h. 10.30 - 1<sup>st</sup> tour

h. 11.00 - 2<sup>nd</sup> tour

The Beato Pellegrino Library organises an exhibition in the library, where it displays children's biographies from 1960s to the present day.

**Plan your workshop and visit: <https://biografie-infanzia.eventbrite.it>**







## SPEAKERS

**Fabrizio Bertolino** earned a degree in natural sciences. Since then, he has devoted his studies to human sciences, and in 2003, he became a researcher in general and social pedagogy at the University of Valle d'Aosta, where he trains future teachers and educators. Over the years, he has focussed his scientific interest on areas that connect two cultures by building specific skills in the fields of environmental education and science education.

**Marnie Campagnaro** is an assistant professor in the FISPPA Department at the University of Padova and the didactic coordinator of a postgraduate course in children's literature. Her main research fields include picturebooks, objects, design and architecture, sustainability, fairy tales and Italian children's writers and artists. In 2017, she hosted the 6<sup>th</sup> International European Network of Picturebook Research Conference, and in 2020, she hosted the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference Fostering Dialogue on Teaching Children's Literature at University. Her most recent works are 'Green Dialogues and Digital Collaboration on Nonfiction Children's Literature' (2021, co-written with Nina Goga), 'Picturebooks and Aesthetic Literacy in Early Childhood Education' (Ommundsen, Haaland & Kümmerling-Meibauer [Eds.], 2021).

**Vichi De Marchi** is a journalist, children's writer and author of fiction books and many women scientists' biographies published by Editoriale Scienza. Some of her books have also been translated abroad. She has won numerous awards (including Premio Verghereto, Premio Procida la Città dei bambini Elsa Morante and Premio Castello di Sanguinetto). She has also been a writer for the children's television programme *RaiSat Ragazzi* for many years. As a journalist, she has worked for print media and for the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP). Currently, she is a member of the Save the Children (Italy) Advisory Board and a director of the committee WE (Women Empower the World).

**Manuela Filippa** holds a PhD from the University of Paris Ouest Nanterre. She studies the protective effects of early interventions on premature infants. Today, she is a scientific collaborator at the University of Geneva. A former postdoctoral fellow and adjunct professor at the University of Valle d'Aosta, she is now working on a national research project about Maria Montessori. Her research has received international awards and been published in *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *National Geographic*.

**Inger-Kristin Larsen Vie** (PhD) is an associate professor in Nordic Literature in the Faculty of Education at Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences. Her research concerns picturebooks and non-fiction for children and young adults, particularly biographies.

**Chiara Malpezzi** is a PhD student and member of the research group on Children's Literature at the University of Padova (FISPPA Department). Her main interests are ecocriticism, biographies and gender studies. Her dissertation, *The Little Girl Writer in Children's Literature*, was nominated for the Poesio Award (Bologna Children's Book Fair, 2020). Her most recent publications are 'What Food Do We Feed Girls as Artists Upon? Food, Artistic and Gender Equality in Children's Literature' (2020) and 'La statuina. Piccolo repertorio di "fantastica casalinga"' (Todarò [Ed.], 2020).

**Monica Martinelli** is an editor, educator and feminist activist. In 2013, she founded the publishing house Settenove, an editorial project entirely dedicated to the prevention of gender discrimination and violence. She collaborates with institutions, schools, universities, and national and international anti-violence centres through training and counselling projects. She also volunteers at the anti-violence centre Parla con Noi (Pesaro), and she is part of the Percorso Donna association's training committee.

**Bernardita Muñoz Chereau** is a Chilean-British writer, psychologist and academic. She is a principal research fellow at the Institute of Education, UCL. She has published 30 books of children's literature in Latin America. Although *Noelia's Diary* (*El Diario de Noelia*) was published in 2016 – three decades after the end of the Chilean dictatorship – it was censored. Later, it obtained an honourable mention by the Colibri Medal 2017 committee from IBBY-Chile and was distributed to all public-school libraries. In 2019, it became part of the Chilean Archive of the Museum of Memory and Human Rights, and it was translated into Italian by Benedetta Sandroni.

**Pia Valentinis** is an Italian author and illustrator whose works have been published in many countries, like Japan, Taiwan, France, South Korea, Switzerland, Finland, Greece, Mexico, Denmark, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. She was awarded the XXI Italian Andersen Prize for Best Illustrator, and her book *Ferriera* won Best Graphic Novel in 2015. In the same year, she started a collaboration with Giancarlo Ascari, with whom she has overseen, written and illustrated nonfiction books for children and adults, as well as graphic novels.

**Berit Westergaard Bjørlo** is an associate professor at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. She holds a PhD in picturebook studies and teaches children's literature and literature didactics in several university programmes, including master's studies. Among her recent works are 'Marine Animals in Ted Hughes's Poetry for Children: Ecocritical Readings of Four Illustrated Poems' (2018, Goga et al. [Eds.], *Ecocritical Perspectives on Children's Texts and Cultures: Nordic Dialogues*), 'Frida Kahlo Picturebook Biographies: Facts and Fiction in Words and Images' (2021, Goga et al. [Eds.], *Verbal and Visual Strategies in Nonfiction Picturebooks: Theoretical and Analytical Approaches*) and 'Making Tutorial Films on Picturebooks in Teacher Education' (2021, with Ellen Birgitte Johnsrud, *Journal of Literary Education*).



## Scientific Committee

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Marnie Campagnaro (lead convenor), University of Padova  
Fabrizio Bertolino, University of Valle d'Aosta  
Manuela Filippa, University of Valle d'Aosta  
Inger-Kristin Larsen Vié, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences  
Bernardita Muñoz Chereau, Institute of Education, UCL  
Berit Westergaard Bjørlo, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences  
Giuseppe Zago, University of Padova

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## Local Organising Committee

Marnie Campagnaro, University of Padova  
Beatrice Corbini, ChLit research group, University of Padova  
Alice Galletti, ChLit research group, University of Padova  
Corina Laasch, ChLit research group, University of Padova  
Piera Lombardo, ChLit research group, University of Padova  
Chiara Malpezzi, ChLit research group, University of Padova  
Martina Monetti, ChLit research group, University of Padova  
Grazia Ragusa, ChLit research group, University of Padova  
Viviana Urban, ChLit research group, University of Padova

Laura Cominato, University of Padova  
Silea Masiero, University of Padova  
Raffaele Lusiani, Rovigo University Consortium  
Mirko Masin, Rovigo University Consortium

## FUTHER INFORMATION

7-8 April 2022

**IN-PERSON VENUE:** Aula Magna, Rovigo, CUR  
University of Padova

**VIRTUAL VENUE: ZOOM**

**Registration:** <https://forms.gle/FKvr2BGVXToCccEk9>

9 April 2022 – SPECIAL EVENT

**IN-PERSON VENUE:** Aula 1, Padova

Complesso Beato Pellegrino University of Padova

**Registration:** <https://biografie-infanzia.eventbrite.it>

Access to University spaces will be subject to current regulations.

According to the programme, participants can join the conference in-person or online.

The conference's plenary sessions will be hosted virtually by the University of Padova in Rovigo and powered by the Zoom video conferencing service. The conference will follow Central European summer time (Rome time).

A primary virtual room will be made available for live talks.

The workshop sessions are primarily reserved for students attending the Children's Literature course (second year EAS/EPI) in education sciences or the postgraduate course Children's Literature and Reading (0–18 Years) at the University of Padova.

Other attendees will be admitted to the workshops, capacity permitting.

### Contacts:

University of Padova

Department of Philosophy, Sociology,

Education and Applied Psychology FISPPA

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[www.childrensliterature-unipd.it](http://www.childrensliterature-unipd.it)

