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“Russian Children’s Literature in Italy between the Two World Wars”

“Defining “politics” as the power of effecting change, Mickenberg and Nel insist that it is impossible to keep politics out of children’s literature: there is always a power of effecting change in children’s literature (...) There is always a reliance on the child as future agent. This is a maximal definition of “commitment” ...” / “Politically committed literature” (Beauvais 2015)

“[Adventure story for boys] was always part of an exploratory and colonialist venture which assumed that ... seeing the world was the same thing as controlling it” (Rose 1984)

In the ‘20s and ‘30s publishing greatly developed throughout Italy. Children's literature under Fascism has been thoroughly explored in Italy (Castoldi, M., *Piccoli eroi*, Milano: 2016), but a specific study on Russian literature in Italian translations for children is still not available. During the years of the fascist regime's assertion in Italy, the government and censorship imposed values such as patriotism, colonialism, and nationalism to the extent of prohibiting the publication of translations; indeed, the entire discipline and practice of translation quickly became an object of controversy. The regime’s attention was focused on the new generations and the values it had planned to offer them, as it was under all the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century (i.e. the USSR and Nazi Germany). Children’s literature became an "imperialist" activity (Nodelman 1992), and school curricula and children's literature were viewed as an instrument of propaganda. Nevertheless, Italian publishers continued to release works that didn’t conform with the criteria imposed by the regime, among which there are significant examples of more than 40 publications of translations or adaptations from Russian works—including fairy tales, adventure stories for boys, and adaptations of classical and contemporary authors—of which some prominent examples will be presented in the paper being put forward.

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