

# Beatrix Potter's Contribution to Children's Literature between Reality and Narrative Representation

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**Abstract.** The paper intends to deepen the artistic and authorial contribution of the British illustrator Beatrix Potter not only to works, poetics and stylistic elements, but also, in parallel, to the existential level since, over the years and in the socio-cultural context in which she lived, she embodied a model of an independent woman, able to emerge from the conflict between social norms and aspirations and to become an emblem of a culture of resistance and otherness that finds its natural and happy expression and continuation in the wide and varied sphere of children's literature. Therefore, in conclusion, the key elements are enucleated, which are open and can be deepened, aimed at underlining, in the author's human and literary testimony, the character of originality and the innovative scope of the work.

**Keywords.** Beatrix Potter - Children's literature - Illustration - Female emancipation

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## 1. The Woman and the Cultural Context

Alison Lurie, one of the best-known scholars of children's literature on the international scene, writes that in the early Twentieth century “a woman escaped from prison with the help of a rabbit. It was not a modern prison, with facilities for education and recreation and a chance for parole, but a tall, dark, stuffy Victorian house; and the prisoner, who had been confined there for most of her thirty-six years, was under sentence for life”<sup>1</sup>.

The reference is to today's famous British illustrator and writer Beatrix Potter, whose life choices were distinguished in times when a woman who belonged to good English society was asked only to be a wife and mother or to quell her own artistic ambitions in the private sector and that, on the other hand, for a long time she firmly refused to adhere to this *cliché* to dedicate herself primarily to her passions; Peter is the rabbit, the light-hearted rodent in a jacket and shoes, an icon of the small anthropomorphic animal that still has so much attraction on children.

Lurie's *incipit* is acute, because talking about Beatrix Potter as an author for children does not only require a critical and comparative work on her artistic and literary work, nowadays recognized as a classic of literature for children, but also an unavoidable mass exercise focused on the existence of a woman whose testimony of life and whose writings (both public and private) let emerge “the conflict between binding social expectations,

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<sup>1</sup> A. Lurie, *Non ditelo ai grandi*, Milano, Mondadori, 1989, p. 43.

full of prescriptive codes of conduct, and aspirations” which, to use the Carmela Covato’s words, “give voice to the contrast between feelings, emotions and rules, telling training stories not traceable in official treaties”<sup>2</sup>. Particularly in this case, therefore, the investigation of literary testimony requires a reflection that also considers the personal history of the author who becomes the model of an emancipatory path undertaken and conducted consistently throughout the course of her life, in the name of realization of a lifestyle, in a balance (precarious, not simple, not taken for granted: think of her poor health during childhood and youth and the conflicts with her parents) between instinctual instances, representations, social practices and desire for affirmation in a field closed to women.

The result is a work that for these reasons also becomes an emblem of another culture, open to difference, custodian of a different, multiple and hybridized knowledge<sup>3</sup> which finds its natural and happy expression in children’s literature.

Beatrix Potter was born in July in, at 2, Bolton Gardens, in the south of London borough Kensington. Except for her 6 year old younger brother Bertram’s company, Beatrix had a lonely childhood: she was not allowed to interact with her peers for fear of exposure to bacteria, her only activities consisted in long walks around the Kensington gardens<sup>4</sup> and the readings promoted by the peculiar nanny Mackenzie, which certainly enriched her imagination: “the books she read at Beatrix contained a great deal of popular culture, poetry and adventure [...]. Together with Old Testament stories, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, by John Bunyan and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Beatrix remembers how she’d prefer Aesop fables, the old Grimm Brothers tales, the more recent ones of Hans Christian Andersen and particularly Walter Scott’s *Waverley*. She also loved Charles Kingsley’s *Water Babies*, a fantasy story written in reaction to those who insisted that children’s stories should teach moral values”<sup>5</sup>. As we read in the author’s biographies<sup>6</sup>, her father, a lawyer, cared more for his two children than her mother ever did: he indulged their artistic talents and encouraged them to cultivate their interests towards nature and the animals they brought home (they owned rabbits, frogs, lizards, tritons, salamanders, different species of mice, bats, birds, a hedgehog...) and they studied, portraying them with extreme precision. Soon the rooms on the third floor of Bolton Gardens became a wonderful area, halfway between the *atelier* and the botanical laboratory, where together with watercolors and brushes there were collected live and dead animals that were dissected. Beatrix was also allowed to visit art shows

<sup>2</sup> C. Covato, Introduzione a Ead. (ed.), *Metamorfosi dell’identità. Per una pedagogia delle storie narrate*, Milano, Guerini e Associati, 2006, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> In line with these reflections, see F. Marone, *Narrare la differenza. Generi, saperi e processi formativi nel Novecento*, Milano, Unicopli, 2003, p. 240.

<sup>4</sup> See L. Lear, *Beatrix Potter: a Life in Nature*, London, Penguin Books, 2008 and M. McDowell, *Beatrix Potter’s Gardening Life: the plants and places that inspired the classic children’s tales*, Portland, Timber Press, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> L. Lear, *Beatrix Potter: a Life in Nature*, cit., p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> See M. Lane, *The Tale of Beatrix Potter: a Biography*, London-New York, Frederick Warne & Co., 1968; E. Buchan, *Beatrix Potter*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1987; M. Dennison, *Over the Hills and Far Away. The life of Beatrix Potter*, London, Head of Zeus Ltd., 2016; S. Gristwood, *The Story of Beatrix Potter*, London, Pavilion Books, 2016. In 2016, we saw an increase in Beatrix Potter’s publications, especially biographical, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of her birth. In 2008, however, the novel by the French writer Marie-Aude Murail, *Miss Charity*, was released: it is a tribute to the British author who rebelled against the dictates and precepts of the time narrated here with delicacy and irony (see M.A. Murail, *Miss Charity*, Firenze, Giunti, 2014).

and the near-by Natural History Museum. Next to these exploring activities, during her teenage years she kept, as it was common amongst young girls, a secret diary for which the author invented a code that remained undeciphered for over eighty years, until Leslie Linder, a scholar of the Potterian work, published a translation in 1958<sup>7</sup>.

Her literary career began when Beatrix wanted to publish her drawings on the advice of an old teacher, to whose children she sent letters, postcards and stories illustrated by herself, but only in 1902 the publisher Frederick Warne printed in color *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* in a small quadrangular booklet that constituted an editorial innovation in the field of literature for the little ones: for the first time a child-friendly format was conceived and at the affordable price of a shilling; but that was not all: as for the author's choice, the narrative text alongside the illustrations avoided a simplistic, poor and dollish language in favor of a textual research capable of stimulating and enriching the children's lexicon. From there, and from all the experiences with the animals they had bred at home, numerous other stories sprang up, such as *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* (1903), *The Tailor of Gloucester* (1903), *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny* (1904), *The Tale of Two Bad Mice* (1904), *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle* (1905) etc. until 1930, many of which with intertextual references and set in the same bucolic microcosm thoughtfully designed as a map, where it is possible to find places and characters. Her family begun to diverge in 1905, when Beatrix agreed to marry the publisher Norman Warne against the wishes of the parents; not even the sudden death of the man prevented her from finally moving to the Lake District, in Hill Top, where she chose to lead the rest of her life immersed in nature and dedicating herself to the cultivation and breeding of animals together with William Heelis, who became her husband in 1912.

On a cultural level, Beatrix Potter was formed in that Victorian period which is traditionally considered the *Golden Age* of children's literature, that is, an extraordinarily rich and prolific season.

It is sufficient to think that in those years the great classics of English literature saw the light of day Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886), Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894), James Matthew Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington's Gardens* (1906) and many more famous works<sup>8</sup>. In this context, it is not entirely out of place to include Beatrix Potter's work along that trajectory traced by the primacy of the fantastic which, like Learian nonsense, probably originated from the "social and moral rigorism that characterized the long reign of the famous queen, almost a safety valve, through which literature would have given voice and that proud sense of individual freedom that the British know so well to reconcile with respect for the rules that I cannot help regulating a well-ordered collective coexistence"<sup>9</sup>.

Surely, the adventures of anthropomorphic Potterian animals have little to do with the dream-surreal traits of an *underground* Alice, but the scenarios of invention in which

<sup>7</sup> See L. Linder, *The Journal of Beatrix Potter from 1881 to 1897*, London-New York, Frederick Warne & Co., 1966.

<sup>8</sup> See L. Tosi, *Mondi incantati e critica sociale: la fiaba dell'Ottocento*, L. Tosi, A. Petrina (ed.), *Dall'ABC a Harry Potter. Storia della letteratura inglese per l'infanzia e la gioventù*, Bologna, Bononia University Press, 2011, p. 164.

<sup>9</sup> C. Izzo, *Storia della letteratura inglese*, Milano, Sansoni, 1968, pp. 1148-1149.

the small characters of Beatrix Potter move fully adhere to a playful trend that indulges in idle fantasies investing them – if we think of the educational value of children’s literature – of light irony and utopian impulses in the dream of an idyllic elsewhere: Lindsay Myers spoke, in this regard, of a domestic fantasy that situates unreal or fantastic events within familiar scenarios<sup>10</sup>.

But the Victorian era also saw the advance of scientific thought culminating in the publication, in 1859, of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, which had a large influence on the literature of the time permeating its languages and philosophical cornerstones: “one of the results of Darwin’s penetration in the field of literature will be the aesthetics of Naturalism”<sup>11</sup> as Carlo Pagetti wrote. Beatrix Potter was a careful observer of nature, both in her small garden, and her yearly summer vacations in Scotland and in the Lake District. It is there that the author lived days away from the smoky city admirably portrayed by Gustave Doré<sup>12</sup>, immersed in the greenery of that real scenography that has always nourished her curiosity: each element, a flower, a hedge, a path examined here has contributed to enriching her imagination, first fixing itself on a notebook, then modeling itself and taking on narrative depth in her stories. The work of accurate reproduction and the scientific approach seemed to exert a great charm on her, only to cloak up a dimension of wonder: in addition to the influence derived from the consultation of the botanical manuals it is in fact easy to detect it, in the Potterian iconography, the suggestions of the Pre-Raphaelite painting that developed in Victorian England with the celebration of natural landscapes and fairytale magic. Thus, having abandoned the mycological researches little appreciated by the circles of scholars<sup>13</sup> and moving with ease between reality and fiction, in the works of Beatrix Potter we see hedgehogs with aprons and mice in overcoats between geraniums, water lilies, lilies, violets and snapdragons meticulously reproduced: each fantastic element is placed in an extraordinarily authentic setting in which nothing is left to chance but gives an account of a rigorous and systematic investigation.

## 2. Originality of the Model and the Work

So in the meeting of cultural and social issues we can delineate the stratified and complex authorial identity of Beatrix Potter, which today needs a critical rereading for

<sup>10</sup> L. Myers, *Un fantasy tutto italiano. Le declinazioni del fantastico nella letteratura italiana per l’infanzia dall’Unità al XXI secolo*, Pisa, Edizioni ETS, 2016, p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> C. Pagetti, *L’impero di carta. La letteratura inglese del secondo Ottocento*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1994, p. 83.

<sup>12</sup> Referring to the work of Doré, *London: A Pilgrimage*, 1872.

<sup>13</sup> Beatrix Potter, starting from the mycological observation, developed an original theory on the propagation of lichens, which she believed to be an association of fungi and algae. For years she tried to persuade scientists to examine her findings without ever succeeding. Only in 1896, through her uncle’s intercession, did she finally manage to access Kew Gardens and to show her sketches to the Linnean Society, open to men only. It was not considered, but many years later her sketches were used to illustrate a manual on British mushrooms (W.P.K. Findlay’s *Wayside and Woodland Fungi* (Warne, 1967). See *The art of Beatrix Potter, with an Appreciation by Anne Carroll Moore*, London-New York, Frederick Warne & Co., 1955; C. Golden, *Beatrix Potter. Naturalist Artist*, in “Woman’s Art Journal”, vol. 11, n. 1, 1990, pp. 16-20; L. Lear, *A Scientist’s Eye*, in “Nature”, vol. 508, 24 april 2014, pp. 454-455; M.E. Goldschmidt, *Beatrix Potter: an Early Mycologist*, in R. Whitaker, H. Barton (ed.), *Women in Microbiology*, Washington, ASM Press, 2018, pp. 237-242.

the effects it has produced in the long run not only in illustration and in children's literature at an international level, but also, more generally, in the collective imagination, as demonstrated by the numerous *mass media* 'extensions' of her work<sup>14</sup>. What are the significant and innovative elements of the contribution in cultural, literary and educational terms, since we are in the context of a production that is aimed at readers of the developmental age? Some of them are indicated here starting from five nodal points, all open and which can be studied in depth.

### 2.1 Freedom and Transgression

Beatrix Potter fits fully within a precise historical-cultural climate, however the existential and artistic path testifies, in those years, atypical traits: the author embodies, in fact, the model of a free and independent woman and the stories themselves seem to consolidate a more 'subversive' image than it may appear at a first superficial reading: already in her first and most famous story, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, much like Little Red Riding Hood the main character transgresses the instructions given by his mother and to escape the terrible Mr. Mc Gregor, who has already cooked his father, and put him in a pie, he loses his clothings switching from the 'domestic' state, civilized and anthropomorphized to the wild one: "Peter is no longer simple metaphor of the disobedient child of the cautionary tales but, as has been observed<sup>15</sup>, recalls the fall in the garden of Eden and the all-human desire for knowledge to be able to overcome the boundaries of one's home space. Clothing, in this sense, can represent, as well, the parental control on children, social constraints, or in any case a rational attitude that requires decent behavior. Freed from these constrictions, Peter Rabbit can return to the stealthy behavior, which is typical of his species, to the daring escapes", moreover, continues Laura Tosi, "in the rural world of Beatrix Potter [...] men and animals cannot simply be friends [...]. If the untold moral is to disobey one's parents, it is true that Peter adventurous transgression is much more fun than his sisters' passivity"<sup>16</sup>. Alison Lurie also supports this thesis: "knowingly or not, the children are aware that the author's interest and sympathy goes to Peter, Tom Kitten and Two Bad Mice, to the impertinent, imprudent Squirrel Nutkin, not to the others shy, good squirrels or to obedient, bland Flopsy, Mopsy and Cottontail. A further proof is that, even though Peter loses his jacket and shoes in Mr Mcg Gregor's garden, a few books later he comes back, not at all repentant, looking for lattices with his cousin, Benjamin Bunny"<sup>17</sup>. The success of Beatrix Potter's stories, confirmed to date by a very large audience among children, also lies in the author's ability to intercept the most profound children's *animus* in the representation of an archetypal childhood characterized by vital impulses and anarchist drives and yet destined to bow to educational needs.

<sup>14</sup> Think not only of the merchandising linked to the character of Peter Rabbit, but above all of the television and film productions, of which we remember the biopic *Miss Potter* by Chris Noonan (2006) and the movie *Peter Rabbit* by Will Gluck (2018), which uses live footage and computer graphics, and whose sequel is expected in 2020.

<sup>15</sup> See R. MacDonald, *Why This is Still 1893: The Tale of Peter Rabbit and Beatrix Potter's Manipulations of Time into Timelessness*, in "Children's Literature Association Quarterly", n. X, 1986, pp. 185-187.

<sup>16</sup> L. Tosi, *Dalla favola antica a Madagascar: storie di animali*, in L. Tosi, A. Petrina (ed.), *Dall'ABC a Harry Potter*, cit., p. 302.

<sup>17</sup> A. Lurie, *Non ditelo ai grandi*, cit., p. 47.

## 2.2 A Female Literature

In line with a non-compliant interpretation of the Potterian work, two Brazilian scholars recently read in the representation of the English Victorian family emerging from the works of the English author a “*luta de representações*” in the sense that Roger Chartier gives it: if in the stories the female characters adhere to traditional stereotypes since they are strictly relegated to a domestic enclosure, this representation of genre can be seen as an implicit criticism of British society “mainly through the punishments inflicted on male characters who disobey women [...]. The author as well challenged them throughout her life, reaching financial independence and marrying later compared to the standards of her time”; moreover “mothers and elderly characters end up reaffirming their importance in the education and direction of male characters. The possibility that the author identifies with these male characters can be read as a recognition of her alleged superiority, but it is more likely to mean her aspiration for equality between men and women and the desire for them to get the same consideration”<sup>18</sup>, Polidori Zechlinski and Oliveira Verona write, proposing a suggestive interpretative hypothesis that certainly needs to be explored.

## 2.3 Animism, Play and Irony

Beatrix Potter certainly draws inspiration from traditional fairy tales that make animal anthropomorphism and its allegorical value a distinctive element. After all, children’s literature seems to establish in the wake of this trend a privileged expressive channel that manifests itself with extraordinary variety and richness of meanings, intercepting an entirely childish prerogative of perceiving the world and the natural environment as animated. As Bruno Bettelheim observes, the child expects the animal “to talk about the things that are really important to him like animals do in fairy tales, and as the child himself does with his real animals or toy animals. Children are sure that animals understand and feel with them”<sup>19</sup>, therefore, the *speaking animal* embodies the realization on a fantastic level of the desire to communicate with the animal kingdom. But if the ancient fable communicates an experiential background to be transmitted to the little ones, the authorial (and artistic) sophistication produces a plurality of *exempla* whose readings offer multiple interpretative paths: Beatrix Potter, in this regard, breaks with the traditional form of the fairy tales freeing his characters of conventional moralism and pushing them towards the exploratory journey. Graphic representation in human clothing, which calls to Grandville’s zoomorphic creatures, also gives a chance to strip animal figures of metaphorical meanings to primarily celebrate their playful dimension in a reading through images that enchants and satisfies feeding the imaginary linked to the wonderful. Moreover, it is worth noticing that we are facing an all-round author, she is both the storyteller and the illustrator: although illustration for children’s books is historically configured as a language on the margins and far from pictorial officiality, the critical

<sup>18</sup> B. Polidori Zechlinski, S. Oliveira Verona, *Do coelho esperto à ratinha corajosa: representações de gênero nas histórias infantis de Beatrix Potter*, in “História: Questões & Debates”, vol. 67, n. 1, 2019, pp. 191-192.

<sup>19</sup> B. Bettelheim, *Il mondo incantato. Uso, importanza e significati psicoanalitici delle fiabe*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 2000, p. 48.

studies here in Italy linked to the Bolognese school of Antonio Faeti<sup>20</sup> and a renewed conception of quality literature aimed at children are what allows us to recognize in the illustrator's artistic work a figure of undoubted value: he (or she, as in this case) proceeds narrating in a two-dimensional way and becomes the author of an original textuality; he or she is an architect, graphic designer, director and works by opening passages for the development and transit of new figurations, scenarios and meanings<sup>21</sup>. In Beatrix Potter's tales verbal and visual texts are complementary: each sequence is accompanied by an illustration that represents it and it describes the action; the illustrations are particularly expressive, very rich in details and are functional to the global understanding of the story, as well as in modern picturebooks, in which form and content coincide in a direction of sense giving rise to a refined synthesis.

#### 2.4 An Ante Litteram Ecologist

In Beatrix Potter's testimony of life as well as in her artistic production it is possible to recognize an explicit environmental sensitivity: it is to be thought that in the last thirty years of life and until her death in 1943, the author devoted herself to agriculture lovingly caring for her lands and avoiding the landscape upheaval that mass tourism would have caused in the lake region if she had not donated her extensions to the Natural Trust, the body that defends Britain's natural and cultural heritage. After all, respect for the environment and nature, childhood and its dedicated literature do seem to establish an indispensable and virtuous correspondence between them, as evidenced by Giorgia Grilli's convincing reflection: "childhood and nature ended up coinciding (and representing a regressive utopia) in the eyes of those who at the time of Darwin felt intimately contrasting with their own time, a time projected triumphantly towards the future, towards 'progress', towards an inexorable process of modernization of the world that wanted to make the latter something totally artificial, exclusively dedicated to the interests and advantages of man, rather than a place full of a profound and mysterious meaning"<sup>22</sup>. It was no coincidence, then, that the figurative and narrative art of authors such as Alan Alexander Milne with Winnie Pooh or authors like Beatrix Potter "was imbued with figures and allusions to nature as an almost sacred, divine place, a place with power to inspire, surprise, frighten, cure, make live 'true' experiences, of growth,

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<sup>20</sup> See A. Faeti, *Guardare le figure: gli illustratori italiani dei libri per l'infanzia*, Torino, Einaudi, 1972 and to the numerous studies that have followed on the theme of illustration by Faeti and the scholars of the University of Bologna. See also M. Terrusi, *Albi illustrati. Leggere, guardare, nominare il mondo nei libri per l'infanzia*, Roma, Carocci, 2012; Hamelin (ed.), *Ad occhi aperti. Leggere l'albo illustrato*, Roma, Donzelli, 2012, and M. Campagnaro, *Narrare per immagini. Uno strumento per l'indagine critica*, Lecce, PensaMultimedia, 2012. More recent contributions from the same scholars are now contained in S. Barsotti, L. Cantatore (ed.), *Letteratura per l'infanzia. Forme e simboli del contemporaneo*, Roma, Carocci, 2019. On the international front, see the studies of P. Nodelman, *Words about Pictures. The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1988 e M. Nikolajeva, C. Scott, *How Picturebooks Works*, New York-London, Routledge, 2001.

<sup>21</sup> On the artistic contribution of the illustrator, see C. Lepri, *Aedi per l'infanzia. Poeti e illustratori di oggi*, Pisa, Pacini, 2015, *passim*.

<sup>22</sup> G. Grilli, *Bambini, insetti, fate e Charles Darwin*, in E. Beseghi, G. Grilli (ed.), *La letteratura invisibile. Infanzia e libri per bambini*, Roma, Carocci, 2011, p. 42.

of initiation, of discovery and of finding oneself<sup>23</sup>, placing the center of gravity in the heart of the wild world. And it was no coincidence that children's literature was the voice of these instances as an expressive and artistic form through which "man has been able to try to preserve and cultivate sensitivity at risk in the external world" while preserving "contact with the soul of the world, and with an essential part of oneself"<sup>24</sup>.

### 2.5 Dignity of Artistic Expression for Children

Barbara De Serio notes: "that of Women writing for children is the story of a double marginalization since it recalls, on the one hand, the devaluation of the early age, which has always been little considered because it represents a 'not yet adult' age and therefore lacks a social identity, and on the other hand the socio-cultural isolation of women, who have always been relegated to the private sector, excluded from the public sphere and forced into silence and oblivion of their identities and biographies"<sup>25</sup>. Beatrix Potter lands on children's literature after being pushed away from the adult world: a man's world; it seems, then, that her choice has been induced, forced by adverse conditions. In reality, the author, in cultivating her scientific and artistic interests, had spontaneously managed a dialogue with her friends 'and acquaintances' children through illustrated letters and stories, assigning exclusive attention to the communication with the little ones that greatly gratified her: "*it is much more satisfactory to address a real live child*"<sup>26</sup>, she wrote in a letter. Noel Moore, a four year old child, was the first recipient of The tale of *Peter Rabbit; The tale of a naughty little rabbit*, was a Christmas present for Harold Warne's daughter: Margaret Lane wrote that this instinctive disposition to weave a privileged relationship with her from an enthusiasm that the author had maintained for children as for observing nature: "Miss Potter knew exactly what interested children, she was able to represent magical things with pencil and brush. Without showing any trace of sentimental indulgence or regression at the infantile level. [...] The child inside her head had not been replaced, nor had it grown too much, and the luminous space of the first experiences and discoveries was still alive and real inside her"<sup>27</sup>. Beatrix Potter's commitment in children's literature is authentic and takes the form of a production devoid of educational intent, resulting from the pleasure of narrating through an expressive richness capable of giving voice and figuration to the ineffable and masterfully grasping a vision of the world 'from below', pure and uncontaminated. This is an aspect that makes her stories universal and current, capable of arousing a timeless charm and which makes, together with the ethical and aesthetic quality of the work, the artistic production of Beatrix Potter a classic of literature to read and reread today as yesterday<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>23</sup>Ivi, p. 43.

<sup>24</sup>Ivi, p. 44.

<sup>25</sup>B. De Serio, *Perché le scritture femminili sono profonde? Chiediamolo ai bambini*, in Ead. (ed.), *Scrittrici d'infanzia*, Bari, Progedit, 2015, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>B. Potter, *Beatrix Potter's letters*, Middlesex, Frederick Warne, 1989, p. 132.

<sup>27</sup>M. Lane, *The Tale of Beatrix Potter*, cit., p. 59.

<sup>28</sup>In Italy the stories of Beatrix Potter saw the light in the early eighties of the twentieth century by the forward-looking Emme Edizioni of Rosellina Archinto, who entrusted the translation from English to Giulia Niccolai, poet of the Group 63. Since 1989 the rights have passed to Sperling & Kupfer and finally, in 2016, to Mondadori. Currently the Berti publisher is proposing a version very similar to the first English editions.

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For further information, see C. Mutti, *Nei racconti di Beatrix*, in <https://www.topipittori.it/it/topipittori/nei-racconti-di-beatrix>, latest viewed 11 february 2020.

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