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**Electronic version**

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/interfaces/3405>

DOI: 10.4000/interfaces.3405

ISSN: 2647-6754

Publisher:

Université de Bourgogne, Université de Paris, College of the Holy Cross

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**Electronic reference**

Eva Van de Wiele, "Domesticating and Glocalising the Dreamy: McCay's *Little Nemo* and Its Sequels in Early Italian *Corriere dei Piccoli* (1909-1914)", *Interfaces* [Online], 46 | 2021, Online since 15 December 2021, connection on 07 February 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/interfaces/3405> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/interfaces.3405>

This text was automatically generated on 23 January 2022.



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Domesticating and Glocalising the Dreamy: McCay's *Little Nemo* and Its Sequels in Early Italian *Corriere dei Piccoli* (1909-1914)

Eva Van de Wiele

This article has been made possible thanks to the COMICS project funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant agreement No. [758502]).

Introduction

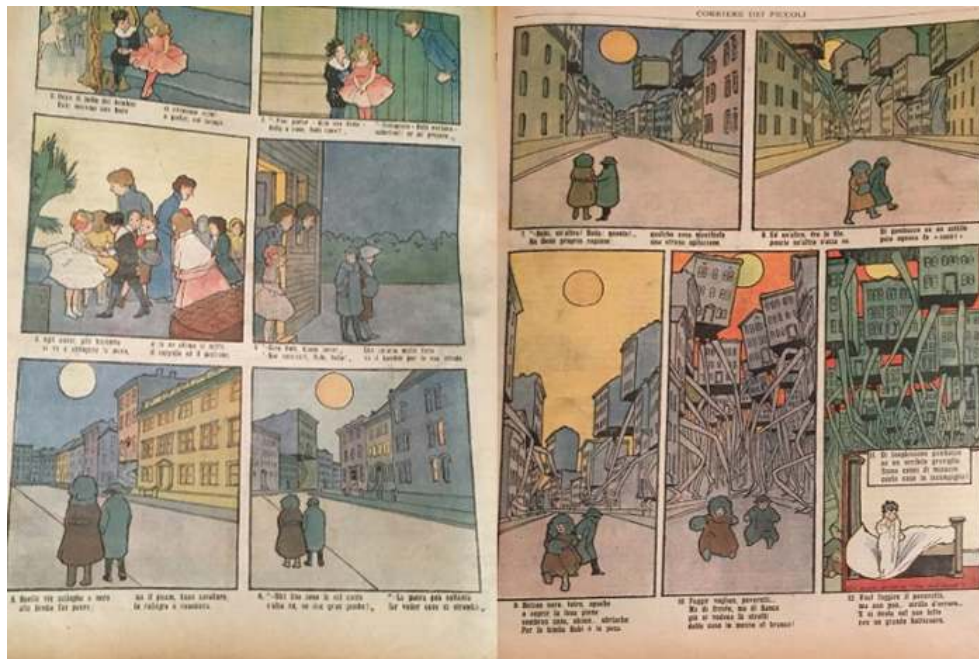
- 1 In December 1908 Italy's biggest newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, launched a truly innovative magazine for children. The innovation stemmed from the full-colour quality printing for 10 cents, the prominence given to advertising, and, most importantly, the presence of comics on half of its eight pages. While starring some Italian characters, the comics introduced Italian readers to various American serial figures. The directors of the newspaper and its supplement followed the *New York Herald's* every step in envisioning the creation of a children's supplement. Clearly, they understood the enthrallment and economic potential of the Sunday pages with their recurring characters and were willing to pay for them.¹ Among *Corriere dei Piccoli's* (CdP) glocal versions of American serial figures, Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo* was the most heavily reformatted when it started appearing on the Italian magazine's centre pages in 1913. The drastic flattening of McCay's vertical appeal to a double page of a much smaller format took CdP's graphic designers to the limits of their possibilities. The first part of this article will study *Little Nemo's* domestication through focussing on the micro-labour practices of that process² (i.e., an enormous endeavour consisting of translating, editing, lettering, etc.). Further, making *Little Nemo* Italian meant adapting it to

pedagogical ideas and moralistic intentions behind the bourgeois magazine, to Italian style, and to the preferences of its ideal readership. Despite (or maybe because of) this work-intensive domestication of the original format, *Little Nemo* inspired Italian authors to create their own versions, producing prequels and sequels of McCay's serial format (more than did any other American Sunday page³). This article will study how and why three Italian comics artists moulded their own version out of McCay's serial figure, unveiling the many propagandistic incarnations of *Little Nemo* without ignoring the formal creativity. They took American material into their own hands to create prequels and sequels adapted to their local context (1910s Italy). This article both uncovers *Little Nemo*'s domestication in CdP and studies its glocalised⁴ sequels claiming that the Italian comics artists became co-authors of *Little Nemo*.

Little Nemo*⁵ in *Corriere dei Piccoli

- 2 McCay's *Little Nemo* first featured in the *New York Herald* on 15 October 1905 (and it ran weekly until 23 April 1911). When, on 30 April 1911, the serial figure⁶ crossed over to Hearst's *NYAmerican*, its title changed to *In the Land of Wonderful Dreams*. Although the "somatic experience" is forever connected to McCay, he did not invent it. The American *Little Nemo* was itself inspired by the 1880s *Images Enfantines* by Maison Quantin (Smolderen 2014 157) and French artists such as Rip and Émile Vavas seur (Smolderen 2009 136–137).⁷ Importantly though, McCay turned the comic into a phenomenon that could spread internationally, thanks to the effect of the recurring boy. Within a year of its debut, *Little Nemo* sprawled globally and was translated into seven foreign languages (Canemaker 105). When, in 1913, the slumberry character appeared in the Milanese children's supplement of *Corriere della Sera*, it became part of the innovative editorial strategy of appropriating American recurring characters with which *Corrierino* tried to position itself above more traditional (and expensive) children's magazines such as *Giornalino della Domenica*. Tradition, however, was not completely ignored, especially where traditions did not coincide: the Italian format was considerably smaller, aimed at a different age group, a much smaller audience, and was sold separately on Sundays. Adapting a "formal escapade" (Braun 67) like *Little Nemo*, was therefore a difficult undertaking as in the process the spectacular broadsheet⁸ was reformed and reshaped to fit a less appropriate shape of publication half its size. At the same time, such reworking provides comics scholars with an intriguing case study. This article starts by showing how the extreme reformatting or "domestication" (Brienza; Rota) shaped and was shaped by Italian culture; it then relates form to the sprawl of the serial figure *Little Nemo* himself and the inspirational value of its format and form in glocalised versions from Italy.

Little Nemo*'s domestication in *Corriere dei Piccoli

Figure 1. *Corriere dei Piccoli*, year 5, no. 5, 31 August 1913, pp. 8-9.

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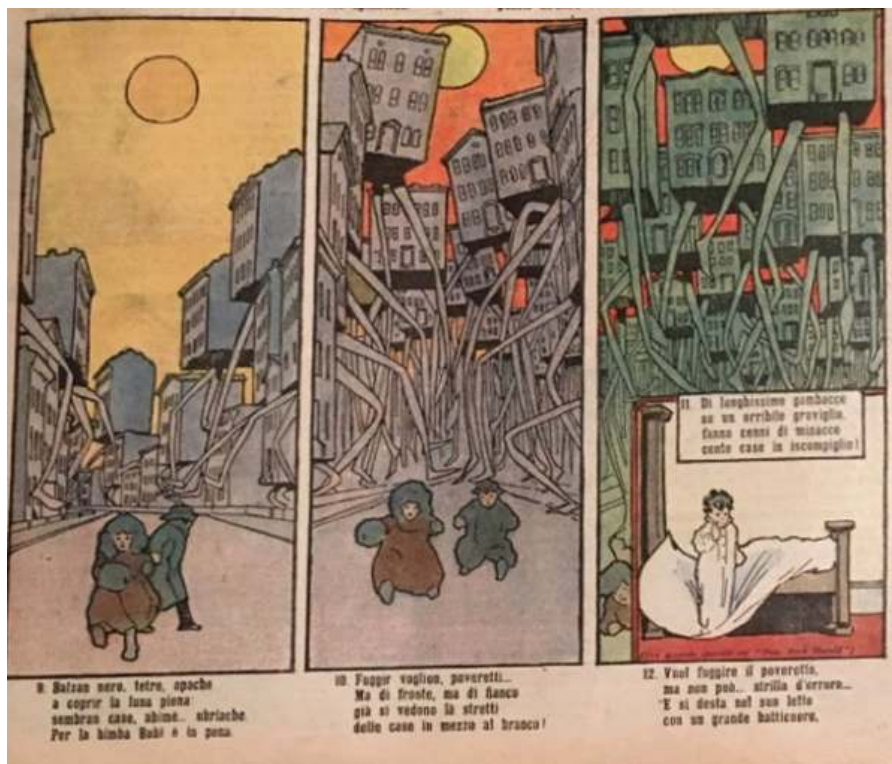
- 3 The first *Little Nemo* was introduced in *Corrierino* on 13 August 1913 and appeared side by side with other American comics like *Foxy Grandpa*, *Newlyweds*, *Buster Brown*, and *Her Name was Maud*. CdP published these American Sunday pages in a local format, largely neglecting the characteristics of the original. The aim in this part is to map the domestication, i.e., the changes applied to McCay's original content and form and discuss the consequences of these changes to the medium and to the reader's experience. The corpus consists of all *Little Nemo*'s published from 31 August 1913 until 14 June 1914. The comic appeared 7 times in 1913 (in issues 35, 36, 40, 43, 45, 47, 50) and 10 times in 1914 (in issues 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 11, 14, 15, 20, 24). *Corrierino* changed the rhythm of the page and with it, the spatiotemporal effect on the reader. McCay's page was adapted to the different format by being cut in half to fit a double page spread format. Certain panels and all the balloons were eliminated in favour of the strict gridded pattern of 6 or 8 panels with poetic, rhymed captions. This different artistic outcome was the result of both practical and technical reasons and a consequence of ideological ideas behind the bourgeois magazine that were simultaneously induced by and shaped its child readers (Ginex 44).

Redrawing and recolouring

- 4 *Corriere dei Piccoli* tried to compete with the *Herald's* superior colour palette, with its perfect application of the Ben Day process (Canemaker 109) and the technical expertise of its collaborators such as Alfred Benjamin Hunt.⁹ "On the original *Nemo* drawings, inked in black on quality white bristol board, McCay would write notes to Hunt in nonphotographing blue pencil, [...] requesting specific colors for backgrounds, props, and characters." (115) *Corrierino* lacked these elaborate colour-technical skills. The dimming of McCay's rich colour schemes, and the sketchier drawing, are evident from

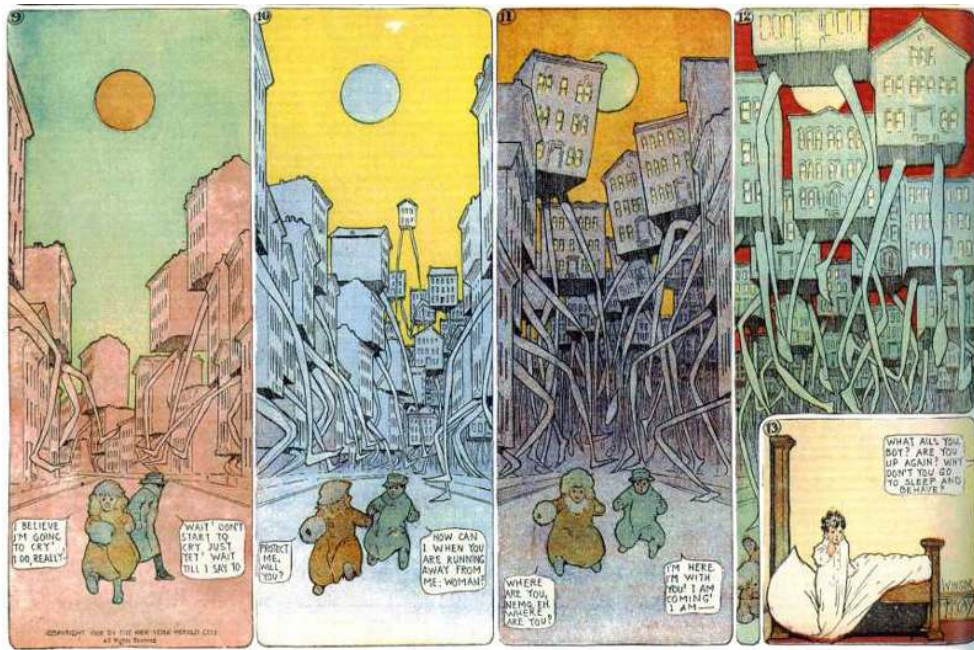
the first Italian version of *Little Nemo* (fig. 2). The contrast between the moon or sun and the background is absent, as is the contrast between orange and red on the horizon. The characters' colours are bleak (e.g., the girl's hair). Notwithstanding these reduced colour contrasts, the adaptation of this newspaper strip to a children's magazine also demanded work from the Italian editor. The strips had to be retraced and some panels had to be condensed (in this case: the third last panel in the Italian version figure 2 condenses the 9th and 10th original panels figure 3). The heavy reformatting did not, however, overrule the will to preserve some of the evidently important features such as the play with panel layout or the rhetoric of the first and last panels. The extensive redrawing sometimes even included merging the two final panels, or stretching them vertically. Although those panels worked against the rule of uniform panels guiding CdP's authors, their conservation underscores that the Italian artist was more than just a copyist and that the act of domesticating American material would lead them to produce glocalisations, and become co-authors.

Figure 2. *Corriere dei Piccoli*, year 5, no. 5, 31 August 1913, p. 9.



Public Domain, Fondazione Tancredi di Barolo, Turin.

Figure 3. Detail of original Sunday Page, published on 21 March 1909.



Public Domain, comicstriplib.org.

- 5 One co-author in this sense was Antonio Rubino. In 1909, some four years before the actual series was transposed to the Milanese children's magazine, Antonio Rubino's *Pierino* formed a prequel to *Little Nemo*. Just as the theme of dreams and awakenings allowed McCay to unleash his creative freedom (Trabado Cabado 19), it also encouraged Rubino to use the famous waking-up panel. In opposition to *Little Nemo*'s slender forms and anatomical realism, *Pierino* had a schematic burlesque style, with stocky geometric shapes. The enthrallingly obsessive basic figures (Faeti 219) were closer to toys and ideograms (Carabba 30) than to real girls or boys. Rubino's tracing was thicker, reminiscent of popular woodcuts. His bourgeois boy, *Pierino*, with a bush of black hair, wore strong-coloured, bizarre clothes and looked strikingly like the sardonic puppet whom he hated and tried to get rid of. The rather dark, unsettling, gothic aspect of Rubino's work (Ginex 48) might go back to trickster legacy of mid-19th century French literature or to *Struwwelpeter*. The boy, as did *Buster Brown*, represents the incorrigible bourgeois child, who is fed up with and tries to dispose of his doll¹⁰ that always ends up in the boy's house again in the fifth or sixth panel. The captions talk about "horrible dreams of puppets and clowns". Creating this site-specific place, Rubino draws a repeated and frustrated loop that at times ends in the boy's bedroom. His panels reveal the primary colour spectacle that *Corriere dei Piccoli* was capable of producing.

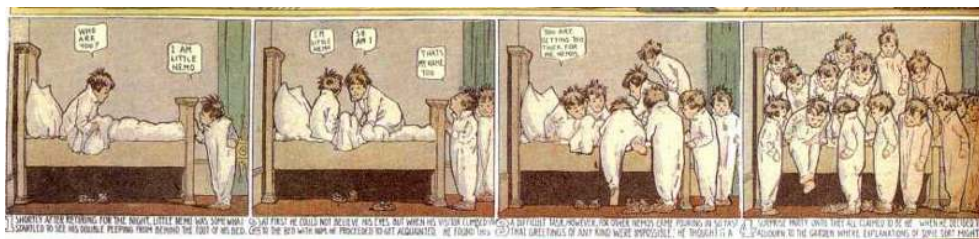
Figure 4. Detail of last panel, *Corriere dei Piccoli*, year 1, no. 5, 24 January 1909, p. 1.



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- 6 Gradually, Pierino's smile in the first few panels transforms into an open-mouthed fearful cry, while the puppet grins. The boy and his puppet mirror each other. As in Goya's *The Sleep of Reason*, the diabolically grinning puppet (*burattino*) haunts the boy's thoughts and dreams at night. Rubino doubtlessly imitates McCay's bed scenes (not only *Little Nemo's* but also of those of *The Dreams of the Rarebit Fiend*) and final panels as his proliferation of the toy in the last panel is reminiscent of *Little Nemo's* clones of 14 Jan 1906. (Braun 83)

Figure 5. Original McCay, *Little Nemo*, published on 14 January 1906.

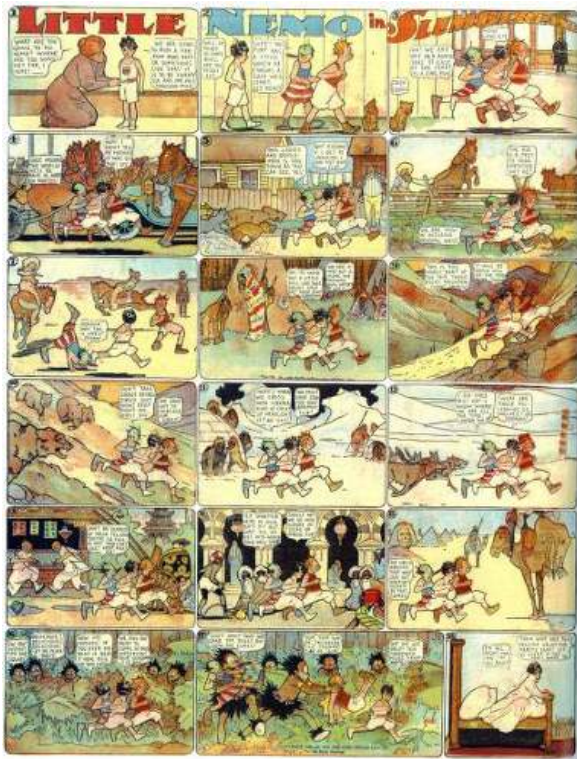


Public Domain, comicstriplibrary.org.¹¹

- 7 Antonio Rubino turned the failure-loop of the pandemonium caused by *Little Sammy's* sneeze and *Little Nemo's* attempts to reach Slumberland into a series. *Pierino* is an "optical toy playing in an endless loop" which contrasts with the "open-ended variety of everyday life" (Smolderen 151). *Pierino* eternally concocts intricate plans to dispose of his *burattino*. In sum, Rubino glocalised McCay's *Little Nemo* by inheriting the motifs of the dreamy to exploit its nightmarish aspects in the tale of a troubled bourgeois boy.

Transposing genre

- 8 Those dreamy motifs are probably one of the reasons why the 'original' was domesticated in *CdP*. *CdP* removed the title because its (American or Italian) comics never used titles forfeiting the intertextual reference. The tale itself kept its genre (fantastic) and its theme (dreamy), which McCay borrowed from Lewis Carroll and L. Frank Baum, being the "creative equal" of "those classic works of fantasy" (Canemaker 105). Moreover, one might think the allusion to *Alice in Wonderland* would have been lost anyway on the Italian child or adult reader but the literary sections of *CdP* published major international children's literature such as Anatole France or Barrie in translation. From the generic aspect, in fact, *Little Nemo* is in line with those fantasy texts published in instalments on *CdP*'s pages as it juxtaposes "the safe, but staid domesticity of home with chaotic adventure found in an intriguing secondary world." (Tarbox 144) I argue this to be one of the key interests of the editors as they made a generic choice to propagate to the Italian child reader fantasy and fairy tale in comic form.
- 9 The Italian version also failed to mention the American comics artist McCay or the name of his serial figure in a general attempt (and as part of their marketing strategy) to insist on the heroes and the artists being Italian. The magazine domesticated characters' names to avoid miscommunication. As a consequence the Italian name Bubì, avoids miscommunication but lacks the allusion to Nemo as a "nobody" or a "juvenile Everyman" (Canemaker 105). Whereas the English version used capital letters to change a descriptive denomination into a proper name like White Rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland*, Bubì is a nickname nowadays used for pets or partners. Still, by substituting American for Italian names, and thus "setting the story in the receiver's own cultural world" there is room for identification, and as a consequence pedagogic messages to be better transferred, as Christiane Nord has shown (Nord). Still, building a strong empathic relationship with this domesticated version of *Little Nemo* was problematic, as the series appeared randomly and only for one year. More probably, readers could recognize themselves in the motif of the dreaminess of the tale itself and in the glocalised, Italian versions of *Little Nemo* that appeared a lot more frequently.
- 10 What altered *Little Nemo* in *CdP* most significantly though, was not the loss of title or names or the dimmed colour spectacle but the inevitable adaptation of the size. Reducing a broadsheet to less than half of the original and cutting up the panoptic to fit the two double pages in the centre of the supplement implied reassembling, shrinking, magnifying, omitting panels and pages to adapt them to *Corrierino*'s format. The smaller format had another disadvantage: the panels of the original tabloid became minuscule and shrinking meant cutting panels. The ellipsis of panels, also due to the fixed number of rectangular panels per page (6 or 8 mostly), meant changing the narrative sequences and thus omitting some characters or the "stroboscopic effect of cutting from image to image by discrete, instantaneous jumps." (Smolderen 2014 158)

Figure 6. Original McCay, *Little Nemo*, published on 21 February 1909.

Public Domain, comicstriplibrary.org.

Figure 7. *Corriere dei Piccoli*, year 5, no. 40, 5 October 1909, pp. 8-9.

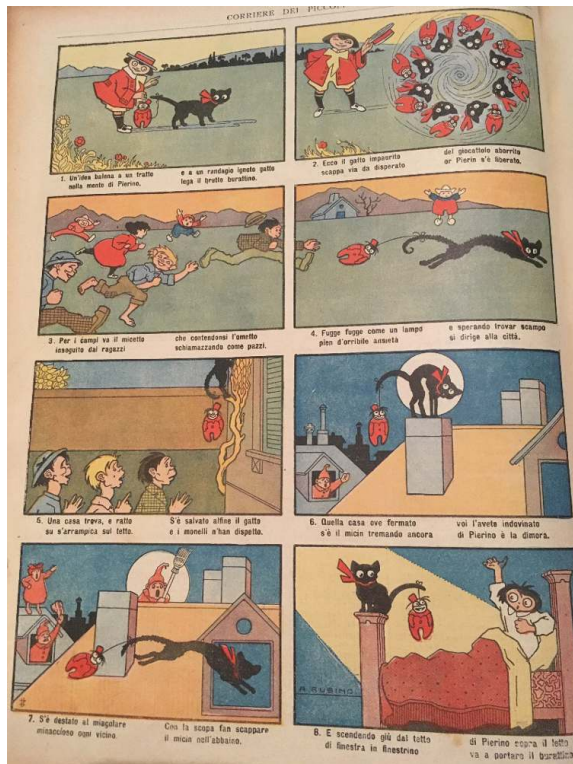
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- 11 Although less obvious because the original panels are quite homomorphic even in page composition, the brutal, surgical elimination of McCay's transformative panels caused *Little Nemo* to look more like *Sammy Sneeze* but with little of the sneezy funniness

attached to it. In many ways, unifying the panels meant no longer adapting them to the represented action or respecting McCay's authentic dimensions of height or width. As a consequence, no significant alteration of perspectives was possible with these uniform panels. (Canemaker 115) Moreover, rigid caging of the panels also interrupted the narrative rhythm of the story. (Ginex 44) Because the pace was flattened, time and meaning were lost in *CdP*'s adaptation. The horizontal tendency, i.e., regular configuration in *CdP*, cancelled out the "rhetorical investment" and the "domino-effect" of those panels. (Pintor Iranzo 144) As in domino where the weight of and the distance between the pieces has an effect on the speed with which the pieces fall, McCay's original differently-sized panels resulted in rhythmically distributed intervals, a "double manoeuvre of progression/retention." (Groensteen 45) The adapted Italian panels, on the contrary, were monotonously paced which altered the reading experience considerably.

- 12 Two more prototypical McCay details were changed: the *reticolo* effect (Barbieri 152) between the panels was lost, as the distance between them grew bigger and the rounded grids were cut. McCay's rounded grids, in an imitation of *art nouveau*¹² or the medieval *viñeta* and which call to mind lantern slides or pictures in family albums,¹³ were literally vertically cut, into a standard shape of pictures and pellicles of the film. The only time when this cutter-effect was avoided was when the specific *cadrage* of the waking-up panel was (partially) maintained.
- 13 Interestingly, domestication in *CdP* should not be understood as a loss of meaning and did not exclude artists adapting the comic to take advantage of the comic's innovative nature. The Italian artists seemed to understand the importance of McCay's formal spectacle and not only by maintaining the *cadrage* of the *excipit*, as "an activated and over-determined site." (Groensteen 178) Not without reason defined by Spiegelman as "architect of comics," McCay accentuated perspective and light, changed panel size or experimented with depth of field or with cutting up the same space over two or more panels, as did Töpffer (Bartual 93). Rubino shared McCay's ability to use sequential images for dramatic effect as this division of space over several panels shows.

Figure 8. *Corriere dei Piccoli*, year 1, no. 22, 23 May 1909, p. 16.



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- 14 As is clear from figure 8, Rubino's third and fourth panels cut up the same wide landscape in which the characters run. The continuity of the image is clear from one of the boys' hands and foot being cut off. This effect stands out even more for being a rarity in rigidly gridded and panelled pages such as *Corrierino*'s. Rubino can thus be termed a co-author, using McCay's attraction-park effects (Smolderen 2014 157) on the page, drawing from the American's formal experiments but in a new series with an Italian serial character.
- 15 In short, domesticating *Little Nemo* meant reformatting McCay's "most striking alternative imaginable to the simple formulas adopted by his peers" which seems a debasement as the Sunday page lost its characteristic of being an attraction park. But domestication ultimately was deemed necessary because the comic's very essence had to be changed. The editors turned the Sunday page into a children's version of the Milanese newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, adapting the global innovation to a 'local' model. That local model demanded abandoning the medium-specific novelty of the balloon that made American comics speak out to a mass audience. To domesticate therefore also meant to translate.

Domestication demanded translation

- 16 Recontextualising American material to the Italian market also entailed cutting original text balloons and translating the verbal information to standard Italian. This translation could be termed either a considerable loss or a change of information which certainly altered the comic. The captions flattened the pace, as the more archaic

rhymed verses were “words about the story” that prolonged the reading time but not the time of the action told (Barbieri 254–255). The visual narrative pace remained the same as the original but this did not harmonise with the retarded pace of the rhymed captions. Furthermore, losing McCay’s nice lettering caused a loss of pictorial beauty and implied a form of cultural or political censorship (Rota 86–90; Gutjahr and Benton 166). Apparently, the swaying of the typed, rhyming couplets of eight verses¹⁴ appeared to *CdP*’s editors more appropriate for a child reader. This was a largely pedagogic choice stemming from ideas on childishness and readership. Removing the balloons, and with them true dialogue, resulted in the elimination of the child characters’ voices in favour of an adult narrator who controlled the tale. The text had the childish sense of a nursery rhyme but with none of Busch’s sarcasm, rather the rhymes were linked to an element of repetitiveness both comics artists like Rubino and *Corrierino*’s director Silvio Spaventa Filippi appreciated (Brancato & Abruzzese 62). Ligurian painter graphic father of *CdP*, Antonio Rubino, claimed balloons to be “instruments of bad taste.” (Lollo X)¹⁵ The “biggest advocate” of these captions, Rubino, actually turned them into verses himself (Faeti 214), applying the same technique to his own material.¹⁶ Spaventa Filippi was a huge promotor of children’s literature in *CdP* (Barbieri 255–256) and his “politics of literacy” (Renonciat 46) should be understood in the light of Italy’s recently obligatory elementary education and high illiteracy rates.¹⁷ Hence, captioning *Little Nemo* was done to suit/ appeal to a different type of implied reader, a child for whom the authors and editor thought rhymed captions fitted more as the repetition was considered key to children’s comfort and appreciation. (Mackey and Lunenfeld in Tarbox 116) Adding verses actually strengthened the formal link of these comics with picture books. To apply Tarbox’s summary of Philip Nel’s and Perry Nodelman’s insights: the proportion of text and image varied less than in picture books but the reading process could be more easily chaperoned by the adult who recently bought the supplement for his/her child. (Tarbox 80)

- 17 In other words, *CdP*’s desired effect on the reader and marketing strategy was to draw attention not primarily to the panels, nor to the meta-discourse and self-reflexive perspective of the original. What interested the Milanese magazine was the serial figure itself and the medium it was using to appeal to children and make their parents buy this children’s commodity. All of this encouraged different Italian illustrators to create their own versions of the dreamy boy and in many ways these glocalisations reveal a deep understanding of McCay’s Sunday pages and turned Mussino, Rubino and Salvadori into co-authors of the series itself.

Glocalising the oneiric

- 18 It was not only in Italy that the timeless character of the dreaming boy had transcultural significance. The dream trope proliferated (Kelleter 18–20) and McCay set the trend for many sleepyheads such as *Polly Sleepyhead*, *Danny Dreamer*, *Horace* and *Bobby Make-Believe* (Roeder 46–49) or *Petit Fred*¹⁸ and *Ninette Patapon*¹⁹ in France. McCay’s adventures projected both characters and readers into a collective dream while the dream trope allowed the artist to exploit formal experimentation with the medium. (Bartual 93) McCay always linked dream to reality since the end revealed the key stimulus or specific situation that conditioned the dream. (Braun 75) As true co-authors, *Corrierino*’s artists engaged with the serial figure *Little Nemo* in different ways

and for different ideological reasons. While this formal experimentation inspired some to be creative with the panoptics of their pages (Antonio Rubino for one), the bridge built between fantasy and reality in the *excipit* was probably what caused Attilio Mussino and Riccardo Salvadori to heavily adapt the slumber dreams to *Corrierino's* take on the Italian socio-political situation.

- 19 McCay's legacy was creatively iterated what I term glocalised in pre- and sequels to *Little Nemo* by three Italian comic artists. I have already discussed the ironic take on scary dreams in Rubino's *Quadrato* (1909) and the formal experiments inspired by McCay that Rubino tried out. Other artists transposed the important sites of the initial and final bed scene to specific traumatic events Italy was facing in the 1910s.
- 20 The first one, a much lesser known Italian comic artist, was Riccardo Salvadori. He used McCay's oneiric theme for pedagogic purposes. Salvadori turned *Little Nemo* into a bourgeois boy, lending money to his poor brothers, who were left orphans after the earthquake in Southern Italy. On the cover of the fourth issue of *CdP*, Salvadori tells the moral tale of a bourgeois boy who decides to donate his savings to his poor 'brothers' of Reggio (Calabria) and Messina (Sicily). Those regions had suffered an earthquake which had been a frequently covered item in *La Domenica*, the adult supplement of *Corriere della Sera*, showing, "destructured buildings, not without pathetic visions of lines of orphans in search of a home." (Carabba 11) The inducement of empathy with the 1909 disaster in the Southern part of Italy, is transposed to the level of children's comics.

Figure 9. *Corriere dei Piccoli*, year 1, no. 4, 17 January 1909, p. 1.



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- 21 The five-panel story opens with a boy in his nice and comfortable bed, dreaming of poor homeless and unclothed children. The second panel, in which the mother is observing the boy who takes his savings from a drawer, imitates McCay's last panel.

The difference between the oneiric Nemo and this boy is, however, significant: the Italian boy acts while the befuddled Nemo wakes up to feel devastated by reality. Therefore, Salvadori clearly chooses to restrict the oneiric, nightly part to the first panel, while the rest of the cover is about the daytime and life of a bourgeois child living up to the social ideal of sharing what he possesses. The boy puts on his sailor's suit and takes his money to give it away, aware of the fact that he is, as the captions state, 'renouncing a toy or a plaything.' The moral message is spelled out in the final panel, both visually and textually. The true reward for a child is to be surrounded by loving parents, which is completely in line with the middle-class model of the family centred on the single child. As families counted fewer children, childcare improved and children grew better educated, becoming "objects of intense emotional investment because, in the end, it was through them that the whole family would achieve its social advance." (Burguière 400) This contextual emotionality and parental warmth contrasted with the solitude of the orphans of Messina in the first panel. The boy, as the captions state, supposedly gets kisses from mom and dad. However, gender roles are stressed by the difference between the motherly warmth and the father who keeps a distance from the boy. This appropriation of McCay, this co-authored glocalisation is not so much about entertaining as it is about inculcating certain ideas and behaviour that fit 'local' politics. (Ginex 49)

- 22 Still, Salvadori was cautiously experimenting with form. Notwithstanding the strict gridding typical of *Corrierino*, these panels' size and composition are more rhetorical. The fourth panel is vertically stretched and centrally highlighted (also thanks to the use of colour) to mark the narrative importance of the act of donating the savings. The child figure stands central and is spied upon by his parents, until the final panel ties all of them together in a warm embrace. The faithful representation of the boy and his parents is close to McCay's slender, anatomical realism. The reason for this seems evident: this boy needs to look real because he is performing a tangible act for the child reader to imitate. The moralistic idea of economic or educational elevation of the lower classes is poignantly bourgeois. As stated above, the dream trope in this glocalised version of Nemo relates to a specific reality, namely the *questione meridionale*,²⁰ i.e., the idea of 'two Italies' (one industrialised north and one agricultural and thus economically underdeveloped south for whom the government had to take special legal measures). The same protectionist idea is mirrored in this cover of *Corrierino* where prudent formal experiments, *jeux de formats*, are combined with a glocalised, pedagogic version of *Nemo*.
- 23 Glocalisation, in this case co-authoring a newspaper comic in a version for an Italian children's magazine of the 1910s, meant adding in moralism. Salvadori was not alone in this endeavour. Against the background of the approaching first World War, child readers were warned against the lack of courage in the figure of the fearful boy *Tremarello*. Artist Attilio Mussino appropriated *Little Nemo's* dream trope for moralistic reasons. His character *Tremarello* warns against cowardice, a vice, especially in war times. The trembling boy is afraid of almost everything, especially when he dreams during day- and night-time. In the comic below, he imagines seeing a monster where it is really only a pile of clothes lying by his bed. His night-time dreaming is also induced by his fearful nature. The adults in the final panel mock the boy for this anxious behaviour. Attilio Mussino drew many boy characters embodying vices, of which *Tremarello* is but one. The comics artist and illustrator exposed them for their

imperfections. His attitude reflects what remained in Italian children's literature of eighteenth and nineteenth-century moralistic approaches and tones inherited from the Enlightenment and religious discourse. (Colin 2005, 1–76)

Figure 10. *Corriere dei Piccoli*, year 3, no. 44, 29 October 1911, p. 1.



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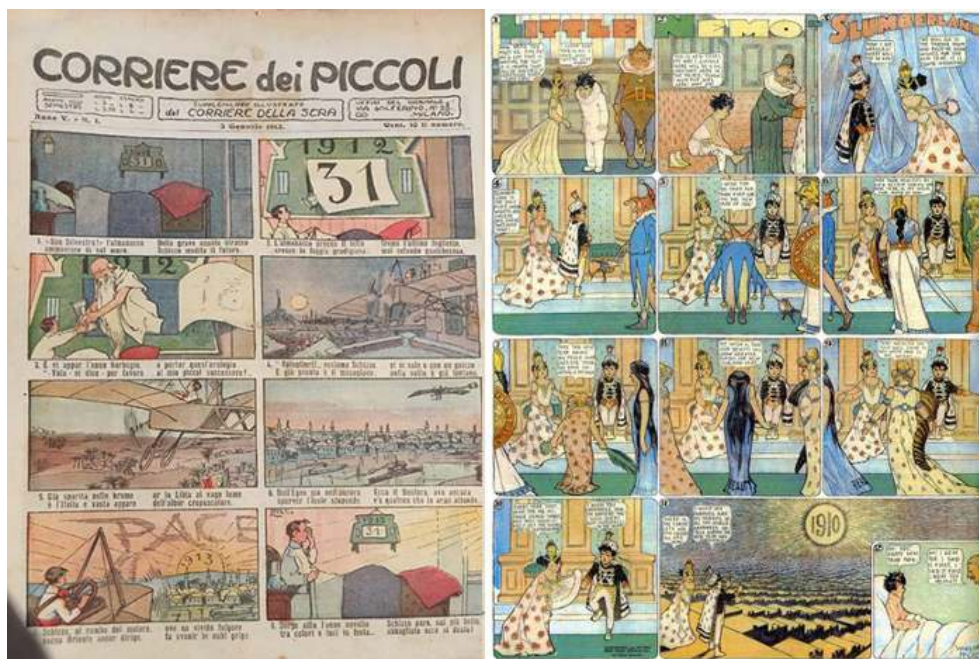
From moralism to propaganda

- 24 Apart from important moralistic characters, such as *Tremarella*, specific historic events, the war in Libya (1911-1912) in the Balkans (1912-1913) and the first World War, demanded more precise characters (Carabba 26). As *Corriere* (quite passively) united itself to the consensus that the war in Tripoli could be the first manifestation of Italian imperialism, (36–37; Colin 2012, 25) its comics pages discussed the war from the child's perspective for propagandistic purposes. (Ginex 89) As a result, Mussino drew a propagandistic version of *Little Nemo* related to war, named *Schizzo*.²¹ Dubious at first, the series alternated between *Schizzo* proclaiming peace with declarations of the necessity to intervene. When Italy decided to wage the Libyan war, which would last a year (from September 1911 until October 1912), *Schizzo* became a hero at the service of his nation. After the peace treaty with Libya was signed in Switzerland, *Schizzo* would impersonate Italy's involvement in the Balkan wars until 23 August 1914. The sequel featured contemporaneously with the original *Little Nemo* series on CdP's pages. This shows that indeed juxtaposition was, as Mayer has indicated, one of the early- to mid-twentieth-century serial strategies used by journals and publishing houses. (Mayer 156)
- 25 Mussino globalised *Little Nemo*, adding the generic (fantastic) elements and the “somatosensory system” of McCay's work (Smolderen 2014 150), to filter true war facts.

Although war is present as *Schizzo* accompanies his older brother who is called to arms to the station the conflict is embellished by the marvellous: “Schizzo, a boy who, after accompanying his big brother called to arms, to the station, starts to dream of combat: during daytime he follows the news and the conversations between adults, at night, he finds himself on the battlefield. In his dreams of warmongering, there are no casualties nor wounded, there is no fear nor pain: Italian soldiers conquer the enemy with snowballs and grenades explode as gigantic Easter eggs”²² (Colin, 2012, 25).

- 26 As is evident from figure 11, the first and last panel simply copy *Nemo*’s bed scenes. The story reflects the gloomy side of *Little Nemo in Slumberland* as *Schizzo*, like *Nemo*, is not the typical boy hero. His is not a tale of victory. *Schizzo*’s dreams frequently have a nightmarish character as the boy ends up deluded, advocating a peace that seems forever lost. Although there is a repetitive loop and no real ongoing narrative,²³ there is narrative progression that works toward the nightmare’s end, when, as in the strip from November 3, Italy wins the war and *Schizzo* waves the Italian flag. *Schizzo* thus symbolizes *Corrierino*’s civilizing, political glocalisation of McCay’s slumbery character. The character and his surroundings are close to McCay’s realistic style. But his propagandistic program causes the strips to be differently reformatted and visualised, especially with respect to colour. Mussino’s panels are darker than McCay’s, as the use of the dark-hued tones and lack of luminosity served to highlight the three national colours (white, red, green), stressing ‘Italianness.’ (Peruch and Santin 24) Moreover, the dreams of *Schizzo* have a bitter taste, and although the stratagem is the same as McCay’s, *Schizzo* is a lot less fantastic, less dreamlike, because of the patriotic aims of his series.

Figure 11. *Corriere dei Piccoli*, anno 5, no. 1, 3 January 1913, p. 1 and original McCay, *Little Nemo*, published on 26 December 1909.



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- 27 As in Salvadori’s case, Mussino’s glocalisation also demonstrated the formal copying of McCay, albeit to a different degree. McCay’s influence on co-author Mussino stands out

from the motifs, tropes and references copied from *Little Nemo*, such as the visualisations of the change of year (above) or the use of metamorphosis. In addition, Mussino played with the page format as he disrupted the strict division into 8 panels, uniting panels when more space was needed. Mussino might have even read the balloons in the original, as it is Nemo's wish to grant his enemies and friends happiness, which is also *Schizzo's* key peaceful message at the end.

Conclusion

- 28 This article argued that domesticating *Little Nemo* both demanded a great deal of work from the Italian magazine and its collaborators and inspired some of its contributors to draw from *Little Nemo's* oneiric material, designing sequels to the original. The transnational spread of comics and their serial figures had consequences that have rarely been discussed with respect to early 20th-century comics. The first consequence is that the transnational spread of comics demanded a domestication that was heavily influenced by local editorial ideologies and format. Translating and adapting McCay's original comics to the material and rhetoric context of *Corriere dei Piccoli* reflected the socio-political context and the pedagogic and moralistic aspirations of the Milanese children's weekly. The importance of adventure, motion and imaginative freedom in the original was instrumentalised by *Corrierino* for the child reader's edutainment. Keeping the ideal Italian reader in mind, the editors boxed the original, elastic format to a fixed panel structure and a uniform captioning style. The fact that these captions were added deepens and challenges our understandings of the traditionally separate worlds of picture books and comics, against which scholars such as Hatfield have argued (378).
- 29 Further, I have argued that the domesticated versions of *Little Nemo* should be studied because the effort and input of the Italian artists and editor in the process calls for a rethinking of the notion of copyist. My second argument was, and this is my main contention, that domestication was at the origin of a successful series of sequels. I have called these glocalisations, as they play and restrict the form(at) of the serial figure and infuse it with local ideology. By taking *Little Nemo* to create glocalised versions, Attilio Mussino, Antonio Rubino and Riccardo Salvadori became co-authors of this transnational phenomenon. Their creative allusion and cross-referencing to McCay infused their complex understanding of the formal play, the visual spectacle, and the possibilities of continuity and serialisation of the comics' medium while adapting their work to their local children's magazine. Rubino did this through intertextual references to key panels in *Little Nemo*, Mussino relocated his own versions of the serial figure to contemporary Italy (i.e. the First World War) as did Salvadori for pedagogic reasons. Both the redrawn, domesticated original and its Italian glocalised siblings reveal that it is important to adopt an international perspective in order to gain deeper insight into a national phenomenon.

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NOTES

1. *Corriere dei Piccoli* had an agreement with the editorial group Hearst and the *New York Herald* to choose American characters to incorporate into their children's comics magazine. The archive of *Corriere della Sera* still contains correspondence between the Albertini brothers (directors of *Corriere della Sera*) and the *New York Herald*.

2. "Domestication" is a term coined by Lawrence Venuti to refer to an inherent part of translation strategy that involves "the inscription of cultural values that differ fundamentally from those in the foreign language." (Venuti 187) In this article, I use domestication following Casey Brienza's definition "as the sum total of those social positions and functions which reside exclusively within the transnational cultural field. Put simply, domestication is the transnational production of culture, and a transnational value chain is a domestication chain." (Brienza 37)

3. To the best of my knowledge, the only other American Sunday page that had a sequel drawn by an Italian artist was Johnny Gruelle's *Mr. Twee Deedle* adapted by Attilio Mussino: <http://web.tiscali.it/epierre/storia/stocorr2.html>.

4. I use the term "glocalisation" (Robertson 1995, 28) to refer to global products tailored to a local/particular market in this case to refer to the local versions of the serial figure *Little Nemo* in 1910s Italy.

5. <http://www.comicstriplibrary.org/browse/results?title=2>
6. I follow Ruth Mayer's definition of the serial figure: "a flat, immediately recognizable, iconic character, fated to execute stock repertoire of actions and attitudes in ever changing settings and context, against a backdrop of increasingly complex scenarios and devices [...] more than a narrative character, the serial figure extends outside the diegesis into various forms of public discourse and circulation." (Meyer, "Serial Entertainment / Serial Pleasure: The Yellow Kid" 13)
7. This adds to my general argument that (early) comics should be looked at through a transnational lens, which will be the overall argument of my doctoral thesis: "Building a Globalised Serial for Children."
8. All Sunday pages were reformatted to fit *CdP*'s size. A Sunday was 16-by-22 1/2-inch. (Canemaker 195)
9. In November 1908 the Milanese newspaper gets the exclusive rights to publishing a series of comics from the Sunday funnies "Funny Side" of *The New York World*. Consequently, it is Italy's version of Buster Brown, Mimmo, that opens on the front page of the first issue of *CdP*. When *Corriere dei Piccoli* was already running, from November 1908 till 1910 Luigi Barzini was sent as an intermediary figure between the popular daily *The World* and *Corriere della Sera*. (Ginex in Ginex 76) In 1909 and 1910 Alberto Albertini was corresponding with and investing in New York R.Hoe & Co. Printing Presses and Machines (the correspondence is available in the *Corriere della Sera* archive).
10. The doll had racially insensitive features.
11. See originals on <http://www.comicstriplibrary.org/display/130> and <https://twitter.com/LittleNemo1905/status/1270717598498304011/photo/1>
12. McCay's *Little Nemo* was actually inspired by British Christmas pantomimes and the Quantin albums *Images Enfantines* as Thierry Smolderen has discovered thanks to Gilles Ciment, Antoine Sausverd and Michel Kempeneers. (Smolderen 2014, 154–57)
13. Christina Roeder explains the origin of these rounded panels: "The rounded corners of the panels call to mind lantern slides, as well as pictures mounted with photo corners from family albums." (Roeder 31)
14. Of course the first few Sunday strips by McCay had been captioned for five months: "McCay placed dialogue in balloons within the strip's frames and added captions under the picture panels, but the latter proved superfluous and were eliminated five months later." (Canemaker 115)
15. Not only *Corriere dei Piccoli* did this, "many other magazines adopted the same format for presenting short graphical narratives, especially in children's periodicals: compare e.g. *Il Giornale per i Bambini*, and many publications by Perino." (Gadducci 9)
16. Even when children's magazines started to adopt the balloon, *CdP* resisted and Rubino personally waited until 1934 to start using balloons in Mondadori's magazine *Topolino* which he directed from 1935 until 1940 (Renonciat 44).
17. One third of the population was younger than 18, the first year 1/300 Italian children had a copy of *CdP*. (Faeti 215)
18. <http://www.topfferiana.fr/2020/12/les-mille-et-une-nuits-du-petit-fred-par-lortac/>
19. <http://www.topfferiana.fr/2015/01/ninette-patapon-un-little-nemo-a-la-francaise/>

20. http://treccani.it/enciclopedia/la-questione-meridionale_%28Dizionario-di-Storia%29/

21. The other characters' names were Nello and Gian Saetta.

22. My translation of: "Schizzo, un ragazzo che, dopo aver accompagnato alla stazione suo fratello maggiore chiamato sotto le armi, si mette a sognare di partecipare ai combattimenti; di giorno segue le notizie del fronte ascoltando le conversazioni degli adulti, e la notte si vede trasportato sui campi di battaglia. Nei suoi sogni guerreschi non vi sono mai morti né feriti, non si prova né paura né dolore; la vittoria dei soldati italiani sui nemici è riportata a palle di neve, mentre le granate fanno esplodere gigantesche uova di Pasqua."

23. As Gardner stated, *Little Nemo* marks a transition from loops of repeated fragments (Happy Hooligan is an example of this) to ongoing narrative as "Unlike Happy Hooligan, the larger story of Little Nemo moved forward in time." (Gardner 243)

ABSTRACTS

The editors of *Corriere dei Piccoli* (CdP), an Italian comics magazine for children launched in December 1908, followed the *New York Herald's* every step. In envisioning the creation of a children's supplement, Italy's biggest newspaper understood the enthrallment and economic potential of the Sunday pages and introduced its Italian readers to various American serial figures. One of those recurring characters, Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo*, was the most heavily reformatted on CdP's centre pages in 1913. The drastic flattening of McCay's vertical appeal to a double page put the graphic designer to the limits of his possibilities. This domestication of the American format is a consequence of the pedagogical ideas and moralistic intentions behind the bourgeois magazine, and Italian style and reading preferences related to readership. Still, *Little Nemo* inspired the autochthonous authors to create their own versions of McCay's serial narrative. I uncover the actualizations of the serial figure by three Italian comic artists, unveiling the many moralistic and propagandistic incarnations of *Little Nemo*. Although heavily reformatted, *Little Nemo's* legacy in CdP went further than any other Sunday page.

Les éditeurs du *Corriere dei Piccoli* (CdP), un magazine italien de bandes dessinées pour enfants lancé en décembre 1908, ont suivi le *New York Herald* dans toutes ses démarches. En envisageant la création d'un supplément pour enfants, le plus grand journal italien a compris l'attrait et le potentiel économique des *Sunday pages* et a fait découvrir à ses lecteurs divers personnages de séries américaines. Un de ces personnages récurrents, *Little Nemo* de Winsor McCay, a été reformaté dans CdP en 1913, mettant le graphiste à rude épreuve. Cette domestication du format américain est une conséquence des idées pédagogiques et des intentions moralisatrices du magazine bourgeois, ainsi que du style et des préférences de lecture italiens liées au lectorat. Pourtant, *Little Nemo* a aussi inspiré les auteurs autochtones à créer leurs propres versions du récit sériel de McCay. J'étudie ici les actualisations de la figure sérielle par trois dessinateurs italiens de BD, dévoilant les nombreuses incarnations moralistes et propagandistes de *Little Nemo*. Bien que fortement reformaté, l'héritage de *Little Nemo* dans CdP est allé plus loin que toute autre *Sunday page*.

INDEX

Mots-clés: Little Nemo, Corriere dei Piccoli, domestication, sérialité, figure sérielle, récit ouvert

Keywords: Little Nemo, Corriere dei Piccoli, domestication, seriality, serial figure, open-ended narrative

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