

# Guido Crepax and the Book Reviews in Comics Form: The case of *La Fiera Letteraria* (1967) and *Linus* (1994-95)<sup>1</sup>

DARIO BOEMIA  
*IULM University*

## Introduction

In the 1960s and 1970s, the first book reviews in comics form were published in the Italian periodical press, pioneering a new and revolutionary form of literary criticism. Marcello Piccardo on *Il Giorno* (1962-63), Guido Crepax on *La Fiera Letteraria* (1967), Tullio Pericoli and Emanuele Pirella on *Corriere della Sera* (1973-76) were the first authors to use the language of comics to describe and evaluate a book. Having fallen out of favor for a while, the genre regained strength in the 1990s with reviews by Mario Bortolato on *Millelibri* (1989-1992) and above all by Crepax, in the famous comics magazine *Linus* (1993-1994), where he reviewed novels and films through the filter of Valentina (his most famous character) (*Table 1*). The strips of these authors represent an innovative verbal-visual combination between the form of book review and the language of comics. This subject has received little attention, although it is now alive and well in literary criticism and, even more, in film criticism (Boemia 2019).

The aim of this paper is to examine how the critical speech changes in comics form. In particular, the paper starts by investigating the first series of book review in comics form and the context in which it appeared, and proceeds by analyzing Crepax's critical path and the evolution of his reviews in two distant moments of his career.

Marcello Piccardo, "Noi leggiamo"	<i>Il Giorno</i> (1962-1963)
Guido Crepax	<i>La Fiera letteraria</i> (1967)
Pericoli e Pirella	<i>Corriere della Sera</i> (1973-1978)
Mario Bortolato, "Bestseller di Bortolato"	<i>Millelibri</i> (1989-1992)
Guido Crepax, "Valentina legge"	<i>Linus</i> (1993-1994)
Marco Petrella, "Stripbook"	<i>l'Unità</i> (2001-2014)
Zerocalcare	<i>Corriere della Sera</i> (2013)

Table 1

## The First Series of Book Reviews in Comics Form

In Italy, between the late Fifties and the early Sixties, book publishing and literature went through a period of Renaissance and great dynamism. Called upon to respond to the new needs of the nascent society of well-being and consumption, literature intercepted (and shaped) the taste of an increasingly numerous readership. The so-called reformed school, which increased the number of people who enjoyed literary goods, played a central role in the genesis of these aesthetic trends. These are the years of the remarkable success of *Il Gattopardo* by Giuseppe

Tomasi di Lampedusa (1958), the first Italian best seller; the spread of the pocket-sized book market; the appearance on the newsstands of the Oscar Mondadori series. After the crisis experienced between the two World Wars and the prevalence of non-fiction in book production in the immediate post-war period, the novel was reborn, and started moving toward an undisputed hegemony in the field of literature.

As the number of readers increased, the size and composition of the potential audience of book reviews widened and changed profoundly, even though most literary reviewers seemed to be unaware of this. Critics, on the other hand, formed their judgements on behalf of the socio-cultural class to which they belonged, “[...] renouncing any effective pedagogical task towards the uncultivated or poorly educated, [...] abandoning them to a sort of unconscious spontaneity, exposed to all the bargains of the publishing industry” (Spinazzola 2007 67-68).

The debate on newspapers and periodicals, at least up to the early 1950s, was extremely vibrant, yet very unattractive for new readers who, in the cultural pages of newspapers, were looking for articles that would guide them through the chaotic multitude of volumes that crowded bookstores. The traditional and institutional literary criticism was unable to interpret the radical change that the publishing and literary world was experiencing. The mass society, on the other hand, pushed the critics towards a technical “Alexandrianism”, with increasingly sophisticated and cryptic style.

Vittorio Spinazzola stated that “critically reviewing a book means reading it in order to account for those who may be interested” (Spinazzola 2001 29-30). Literary critic Ferdinando Giannessi added that “the review is a public service for readers” (Bernardi 153). If this is true, it is difficult to believe that literary criticism in newspapers and magazines after the war was performing its duties fully. Again, according to Spinazzola, “the point of contradiction is that the impetuous development of literary criticism has tended and still tends to place itself in the perspective of an aesthetic of writing, that is, of production, rather than an aesthetic of reading, that is, of textual reception” (Spinazzola 2001 30).

A strong breaking point in the above-mentioned landscape of literary information was the appearance on newsstands, on April 21, 1956, of the daily newspaper *Il Giorno*. This was the first national newspaper to do without the “third page”, traditionally devoted to culture, which became a page like the others. Young critics, writers, and cultural journalist such as Alberto Arbasino, Pietro Citati, and Alfredo Barberis were called upon to collaborate in the cultural pages. *Il Giorno* presented itself as an innovative periodical both in the choice of emerging names and for a “desacralization” of literary matters. In the plethora of newspapers of the time, *Il Giorno* stood out for its modern layout, for its “titling and writing of Anglo-Saxon inspiration”, for the ample space given to comics, and for the “brilliant book and literary section”. Solidly implanted on a fierce array of signed reviews, photographs, as well as obituaries and anniversaries and news about awards, the literary section was “also divided into a wide range of reports from abroad, surveys and interviews [...], advice on books to take on holiday or to make a library at home, rumors and curiosities about outgoing editions or the private lives of writers, up to literary quizzes and book reviews in comics form” (Ferretti Guerriero 161).

Book reviews in comics form represent one of the most interesting ways in which *Il Giorno* rethought the traditional book review. These were the years in which comics entered and disrupted the Italian literary system. Their reception was so enthusiastic and wide-ranging that there were some who claimed (with a certain recklessness and, in hindsight, erroneously) that in the space of thirty years “the books [will] be swept away by the comics” (Listri). The invention of the book review in comics form is to be attributed to the designer and advertiser

Marcello Piccardo, a versatile figure who appeared on the pages of *Il Giorno* on March 28, 1962 (*Figure 1*).

As a sort of editorial, the first of the twenty-five cartoons created by Piccardo presents the character “NOI” (“We”), who is the protagonist of the series “Noi leggiamo” (“We read”). NOI is sitting in an armchair, intent on reading a book. On the cover of that book (where, starting from the next cartoon, the title and the author of the work in question will be shown) we read the word “Tutto”, “All”.<sup>2</sup>

In a sort of manifesto, the main character of the cartoon states that he has no prejudices, and that he is interested in the classics as well as the romantics, modern books, science fiction, and apocalyptic literature. Initially seated straight and properly, the character then moves to an armchair, approaching the pages, resting on his side, lying on his stomach, sitting sideways. He changes position, but his eyes always remain fixed on the page, at least until the situation described in the last frame: the book is on the floor, the light goes out and the character can finally sleep, satisfied with his reading.

Almost all of works reviewed are narrative works and they are both by Italian authors, especially contemporary ones, and by foreign authors, mostly classics. Without interruption, Piccardo goes from Kafka’s *The Trial* to Volponi’s *Memoriale*, from Don Quixote to Ottiero Ottieri’s *La linea gotica*. All these novels have in common is their success in sales.

The character has the appearance of a multi-headed human being with four heads and eight eyes. Its name and shape express the author’s intention to focus the cartoons on the figure of a collective character, in whom readers can identify and by whom they can feel represented. The reviews (traditionally entrusted to academics or, at least, literary critics) are now assigned to a person who has no critical skills, a “reader without a degree”. Just like most of his readers, Piccardo is not a professional critic, and the distance between the reviewer and the reader is erased. Piccardo’s book reviews in comics form are addressed to readers looking for immersive and entertaining novels; readers who, through the character Noi and the communication strategy devised by the advertiser, also become the protagonist of the cartoons.

On April 11, 1962, two weeks after the publication of this editorial, the first real book review in comics form was published, whose structure will be replicated for the entire duration of the series. The book in question was *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway, which had already reached widespread circulation in Italy by 1962. Although strictly speaking we cannot speak of a review due to the distance between the publication of the first Italian edition of the book (1952) and the publication of the cartoon in the newspaper, the flow is that of a review, and there are both descriptive components and a criticism. With a few simple sentences, Piccardo gives information about the plot and the main character of the work, and, at the same time, manages to describe the expectations of readers and give an opinion on the value of the book. Piccardo reports the reader’s thoughts and his reflections. Antonio Porta (1935-1989) states that the ultimate aim of a reviewer is to tell “how he really reacted to that reading”. This is what Piccardo does. The ability of these stories to engage the reader emerges clearly.

### **“Fiera letteraria” (1967)**

Less than four years after Piccardo’s last review, on *La fiera letteraria* appear those realized by Guido Crepax (1933-2003), already considered at the time one of the best authors in the panorama of Italian comics, thanks to the story *La curva di Lesmo*, which debuted two years earlier (1965) on the revolutionary and newly-born comics periodical *Linus*. These were years of radical change for the European comics and, in particular, for the Italian ones, after the success of *Diabolik* (1962) by the Giussani sisters (Di Paola 2019 75). The comics book

audience widened and became more varied, diversified, heterogeneous. Comics were starting to talk not only to children and young people, but also to the adult world.

In those years literary magazines faced a crisis, as evidenced by the “almost contemporary end of the *Fiera letteraria* (which was not contradicted by the subsequent survival of two series between 1971 and 1984) and of *Quindici* between 1968 and 1969”. The appearance of Crepax’s signature on the pages of *La Fiera letteraria* coincided with the arrival of Manlio Cancogni as director. He was called to resolve the difficult situation in which the magazine found itself. A deliberate and sought-after condition of separateness, isolation, in which dealing unselfishly with literature prevented the magazine from adapting to the new social and cultural processes of the second half of the Sixties. To defeat this “separateness”, the journal from 1946 to 1968 demonstrated “a certain style and tone (also in the layout and graphics) of journalism and information, not without literary-worldly concessions, with the aim to arouse the interest and almost the complicity of an audience not strictly limited to the sphere of the experts”. In this direction, Ferretti and Guerriero pointed out the weekly reports of the literary prizes and the publication, for a period, of the ranking of the best-selling books. In addition to these signs of openness toward a wider public, there was also the series of book reviews in comics form published between July 6 and September 21, 1967.

The series comprises a total of ten reviews: eight are made up of one page, while the other two are two pages, published a week apart, which take on the exciting and unprecedented aspect of “serial reviews”. The reviewed works are: *Il giuoco dell’oca* by Edoardo Sanguineti, *Tanto gentile e tanto onesta* by Gaia Servadio, *Virus* by Giorgio Soavi, *Il giovane normale* by Umberto Simonetta, *Un bellissimo novembre* by Ercole Patti, *L’equilibrio* by Tonino Guerra, *L’arrischiata* by Massimo Franciosa, *Il balordo* by Piero Chiara, *I fiori blu* by Queneau and *Orfeo in paradiso* by Luigi Santucci. Apart from the novel by Queneau - published by Einaudi in the translation by Italo Calvino in 1965 - these are Italian novels published by important publishing houses (Feltrinelli, Longanesi, Bompiani, Mondadori, Rizzoli) in 1967, at a short distance from the appearance of the literary review by Guido Crepax on *La Fiera Letteraria* (Table 2). These were complex and experimental works (in the case of Sanguineti and Queneau) or novels with a strong erotic dominance, in which the theme of love is declined in its most morbid and dramatic aspects (think of the novels by Gaia Servadio and Ercole Patti) and in which the question of identity is central (as in Tonino Guerra’s *Equilibrio*).

Edoardo Sanguineti, <i>Il giuoco dell’oca</i>	Feltrinelli 1967
Gaia Servadio, <i>Tanto gentile e tanto onesta</i>	Feltrinelli 1967
Giorgio Soavi, <i>Virus</i>	Longanesi 1967
Umberto Simonetta, <i>Il giovane normale</i>	Bompiani 1967
Ercole Patti, <i>Un bellissimo novembre</i>	Bompiani 1967
Tonino Guerra, <i>L’equilibrio</i>	Bompiani 1967
Massimo Franciosa, <i>L’arrischiata</i>	Rizzoli 1967
Piero Chiara, <i>Il balordo</i>	Mondadori 1967
Raymond Queneau, <i>I fiori blu</i>	Einaudi 1965
Luigi Santucci, <i>Orfeo in paradiso</i>	Mondadori 1967

Table 2

At a macro-textual level, the format of the reviews by Crepax is quite different from those of Piccardo. The reviews by Crepax occupy the whole page of the magazine, and have a broader scope and narrative. Their construction, homogeneous in all ten occurrences, is as follows: in the header above the main section, there is a photograph of the author of the book and, next to it, a summary of the novel. The first frame, inside the comic text, shows the title of the book, the name of the author and that of the publishing house. The following frames depict in comics style one or more significant episodes of the novel. Mostly these are glimpses of that story which has been described in the header above the board. Some turning points of the plot are presented, and the main characters are captured in the episodes that most determine their characterization.

See, by way of example, Anselmo Bordigoni, the main character of Piero Chiara's novel *Il Balordo*: a tall man of one hundred and forty kilos, elementary school teacher and musician, sent to the confinement by the fascists (*Figure 2*). Bordigoni is caught in different situations and contexts: full-length in his imposing body, on board a motorbike going to a concert with his orchestra, when he goes back to Italy with the Americans, at the head of the Allied Orchestra, and on his deathbed, now mayor by acclamation of the people. Each frame seems to belong to a different sequence, but the author does not forsake the depth of the critical and analytical investigator. Each frame is configured as a recovery from the depths of the story, and constantly filtered and reworked by Crepax's sensitive, erotic, and grotesque gaze.

Crepax's reviews therefore appear as an intersemiotic summary or re-elaboration of the narrative material offered by the novel. In this regard, it is important to remember that "the summary - whether or not it constitutes the main point of support of the reviewer for his speech - is valid, even before as an honest and scrupulous presentation of the census materials, as a re-appropriation and reorganization of meaning, in short, as a return to some order according to the democratic syntax of the criticism. This is why, in this sense, the summary becomes the first and fundamental act of critical interpretation: the quality of the review will depend on the acceleration and slowing down of the critical summary, its cuts and its delays" (Onofri 32-33). If Piccardo devoted no more than a few words to the plot, Crepax makes the summary the predominant element of his reviews.

According to the model I developed from Motta-Roth one (Boemia 2020), a review can be composed of four "movements" (*Table 3*): "Introducing the book", "Description of the book", "Analysis" and "Evaluation". Piccardo's reviews, after having provided some very general information on the plot and the subject of the book (activities enclosed in the first "step", "defining the general topic of the book", of the first movement) center on the second step of the second move, "Description of the reading experience", where the focus is not on the book itself, but on the effect of the book on the reader, reporting, sometimes chapter by chapter, the different nuances of feelings caused by the act of reading. The reviews by Crepax, on the other hand, are located between the first movement and, most of all, the first step of the second movement, as they move between the presentation of the book and the summary. As mentioned above, the more general introduction to the book (in which the reader is provided with the information necessary to understand the actual review and which we could place at the heart of the first movement) is located in a paratextual place, outside the actual text, which is the one in the form of a comic strip.

Move 1 – Introduction to the book
-----------------------------------

Step 1	Defining the general topic of the book
Step 2	Informing about potential readership
Step 3	Informing about the author
Step 4	Insert the book in the field
Move 2 – Description of the book	
Step 1	Summary
Step 2	Description of the reading experience
Move 3 – Analysis	
Step 1	Focused analysis
Step 2	Comparison of the book with other books by the same author
Step 3	Comparison of the book with other books of the field
Move 4 – Evaluation	
Step 1	Definitely recommending/disqualifying the book
Step 2	Recommending the book despite indicated shortcoming

Table 3

In the years of the crisis of the third page, of the literary supplements and of the boom of the comics, the book review in comics form, even if in clear minority regarding the traditional reviews in the landscape of literary information, represents an extremely innovative and effective way to communicate about books, and it resembles the typology of review diffused today on internet rather than to the literary reviews of the Sixties and Seventies. While national newspapers and the most widely distributed periodicals have not always been able to place themselves in the perspective of the reception Spinazzola wished, book reviews in comics form have taken the perspective of an aesthetic of reading, of textual reception since the beginning. Moreover, the use of recurring characters, the presence of a precise and recognizable graphic grid, the homogeneity of the verbal-visual construction and of the narration, have allowed this form to benefit from iterative serial storytelling, thus enjoying “the privilege that the reader already knows so many details, and begins the fruition already endowed with many expectations” (Barbieri 113). All this implies an increase of tension that is mostly absent in the traditional single-media reviews (Boemia 2019 183).

### “Linus” (1993/94)

For over twenty-five years, Crepax’s path no longer crossed the genre of the book review, even though it doesn’t abandon literature, as demonstrated by the adaptations of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1987) and *The Turn of the Screw* (1989). Then, an article published on 24 June 1993 in

the *Corriere della Sera* announced the forthcoming publication in the comics magazine *Linus* of the series “Valentina legge”, “Valentina reads” :<sup>3</sup>

Every month we will find her [Valentina] with the open page: after Tadini she will read Alessandro Baricco’s *Oceano mare* (Rizzoli). Valentina, as you know, is easy prey for her fantasies: here she is, then, to get into the character and fly for some pages through the story. In short, it is a fantastic variation on the theme, with the author’s words in speech-bubbles.<sup>4</sup>

The series is made up of a total of twelve reviews (*Table 4*). The volumes reviewed are *La tempesta* by Emilio Tadini, *Cercando Emma* by Dacia Maraini, *Oceano Mare* by Alessandro Baricco, *La variante di Lüneburg* by Paolo Maursering, *Lo strappacuore* by Boris Vian, *Il cardillo addolorato* by Anna Maria Ortese, *Prima che tu dica “pronto”* by Italo Calvino, *Veglia irlandese* by Athos Bigongiali, *Sostiene Pereira* by Antonio Tabucchi, *Fanfan* by Alexandre Jardin, *La camera chiusa* (“Cut to the Quick”) by Kate Ross and *Un dio coperto di rose* by Rossana Ombres. These are twelve books published by large or medium Italian publishers (Rizzoli, Mondadori, Einaudi, Feltrinelli, Adelphi, Sperling, Sellerio, Marcos y Marcos). Nine of these books are Italian, two are French, and one is American. They were all published shortly before the review, between 1993 and 1994.<sup>5</sup>

It is important to note the difference between the place of publication of the first reviews by Crepax (i.e., as I said, *La Fiera Letteraria*, a traditional literary magazine) and the place of publication of the reviews of the Nineties, i.e. “Linus”, the most important and widespread comics magazine. The former used to publish reviews and critical texts, addressing a medium- and high-brow readership interested in literature; the latter is dedicated mainly to comics, and addresses an audience that is first of all interested in comics, not in literature in the strict sense. The possibility of widening the users of book reviews, and then of the literary works reviewed, is crucial here.

Moreover, in 1967 Valentina was only two years old (her first appearance dates back to 1965) and was not as well-known as she was in the 1990s, when she became an icon of Italian comics. The mere fact of depicting such a character, with its charm and its eroticism, holding a certain novel in her hands and reading it, could be seen as a disruptive operation.

All these reviews appeared on *Linus*, and begin with Valentina lying on her armchair, intent on reading the book. She wears different clothes, and smokes cigarettes<sup>6</sup>. Next, the representation of the plot of the book in question takes over. Valentina, however, does not disappear from the page, but interacts with this story in different ways. The degree of inclusion of Valentina in the world of diegesis of the reviewed novel changes from review to review. She may be represented as a passionate spectator of the world of story, anxious to understand how the story ends, as is the case of the review of *Cercando Emma* by Dacia Maraini (see p. 13 and p. 18), or the review of *Sostiene Pereira* by Antonio Tabucchi. On the other hand, she may be involved in the storyworld and become a character of the story told by the reviewer, as is the case of the reviews of the novel written by Paolo Maurensig and the collected stories by Italo Calvino.

The review of Maurensig’s novel begins as usual with Valentina seating on her armchair and reading the book. The armchair, however, does not seem to be located in Via De Amicis, in Milan, where Valentina has always lived, but in a meadow with a corpse lying in the middle. The body belongs to Dr. Frisch, a rich businessman and a great chess enthusiast. In the novel, a long flashback attempts to reconstruct the cause of his death, starting with a train trip. On the

train from Munich to Vienna, Dr. Frisch plays chess as usual with one of his assistants, when suddenly a young man enters with the name Hans Mayer. Hans Mayer begins to tell his story, in which a certain Tabori played a decisive role. Then Tabori himself takes the floor himself to tell his story, which will turn out to be fundamental for the story of Hans Mayer and also for the story of Dr. Frisch. Crepax represents the plot up to the meeting between Hans Mayer and Tabori. Then Valentina decides to take the floor and continue Hans Mayer's story herself. "I will continue Hans Mayer's story...", she says. The narrating voice, which changes at least three times in the novel, in the summary is assumed by Valentina, who enters the storyworld book in hand, telling the story from within.

In the review of Calvino's book, Valentina takes the place of the protagonist. As this is a collection of short stories, the review is divided into four parts, corresponding to four short stories in the last section of the book, the one that collects the stories written in the period 1968-1984. In the case of the review of the short story "Il richiamo dell'acqua", for example, the anonymous male protagonist, who is also the narrator and only character, takes the form of Valentina, as does the protagonist of the story that gives the book its title, "Prima che tu dica pronto". In this way, Calvino's story turns into a screenplay, Valentina transforms herself into an actress who puts herself at the service of the story, which is recast through her movements. The story takes shape through the character, who is never neutral, but loads the story with everything the reader knows about Valentina's character, her figure, her eroticism, and her charm.

Emilio Tadini, <i>La tempesta</i>	Einaudi 1993
Dacia Maraini, <i>Cercando Emma</i>	Rizzoli 1993
Alessandro Baricco, <i>Oceano mare</i>	Rizzoli 1993
Paolo Maurensig, <i>La variante di Lüneburg</i>	Adelphi 1993
Boris Vian, <i>Lo strappacuore</i>	Marcos y Marcos 1993
Anna Maria Ortese, <i>Il cardillo addolorato</i>	Adelphi 1993
Italo Calvino, <i>Prima che tu dica "pronto"</i>	Mondadori 1993
Athos Bigongiali, <i>Veglia irlandese</i>	Sellerio 1993
Antonio Tabucchi, <i>Sostiene Pereira</i>	Feltrinelli 1994
Alexandre Jardin, <i>Fanfan</i>	Sperling 1993
Kate Ross, <i>La camera chiusa</i>	Mondadori 1994
Rossana Ombres, <i>Un dio coperto di rose</i>	Mondadori 1993

Table 4

If we look at the moves and steps model, we can observe that the drawings provide the reader with much of the information foreseen by the first movement, such as the general topic of the book (step 1) and the genre of the novel (step 4). Unlike the 1967 reviews, the page is not preceded by any prose information about the author and the plot. Everything is delegated



to the comic strip, including the book's general traits, which the reader of the review finds in Valentina's hands.

The rest of the review is centered on the reconstruction of the story. In some ways, the review becomes an intersemiotic transcription of the source text, which develops the review's second movement, about the description of the work. However, Valentina often reappears as a character who invades the storyworld, or as a reader who looks at the progress of story with passion. Then, what is the step in which Crepax reviews are most developed? Are we inside the first step, the one dedicated to the description of the book, as in the Crepax reviews of 1967, or are we inside the second step, the one dedicated to the description of the reading experience, as in Piccardo's reviews of 1962?

It seems to me that the beauty of Crepax's reviews consists precisely in the ability to combine these two discourses: on the one hand the narration of the reading experience, through the representation of Valentina, and on the other a comic-strip transposition of the story reviewed. In short, he reimplemented the reviews of 1967, entirely dedicated to the summary of the work reviewed, through the lesson learned from the first historical reviews in comics form, those of Marcello Piccardo, entirely dedicated to the narration of the reading experience. To complete the picture, it is essential to remember that the reader depicted is not a multi-headed anonymous human being, but a sensual and fascinating woman who has been followed by Crepax readers for decades.

## Conclusions

To conclude, I would like to analyze the figure of Valentina as a filter between the reader and the reviewed novel. To do this it is important to understand Valentina's position between the storyworld and what lies outside of it. Just take the first frame of the review of *Sostiene Pereira* by Antonio Tabucchi (Figure 3). As usual, in the speech-bubble there is a passage taken from the reviewed book: in this case it is the beginning of the novel. Valentina wears only a robe, her legs and arms are naked, a fan is pointed at her, a watch, a jug of fresh water and a pitcher of lemonade are next to the armchair. Evidently it is very hot in the room. In Italy it is very hot in summer, especially in June, July and August. We could therefore think that this cartoon is set in a summer month.

However, the review was published in November 1994. The average temperature in November 1994 in Milan, where Valentina lives, ranged from 2 to 14 degrees. Where do these high temperatures come from? Keep reading the review, we discover that the reviewed book is set in Lisbon in August, and that the protagonist makes ample use of lemonades, shades, and fans. The first sentence of the novel, moreover, speaks of a sunny summer day. Even when Valentina seems distant from the storyworld, she actually shows signs of strong involvement: the heat that permeates Tabucchi's story spills over into the world of Valentina. The character acts as a filter which brings the story closer to the reader, not at a distance where it can be examined more carefully and analytically. This is the greatest beauty of Guido Crepax's reviews.

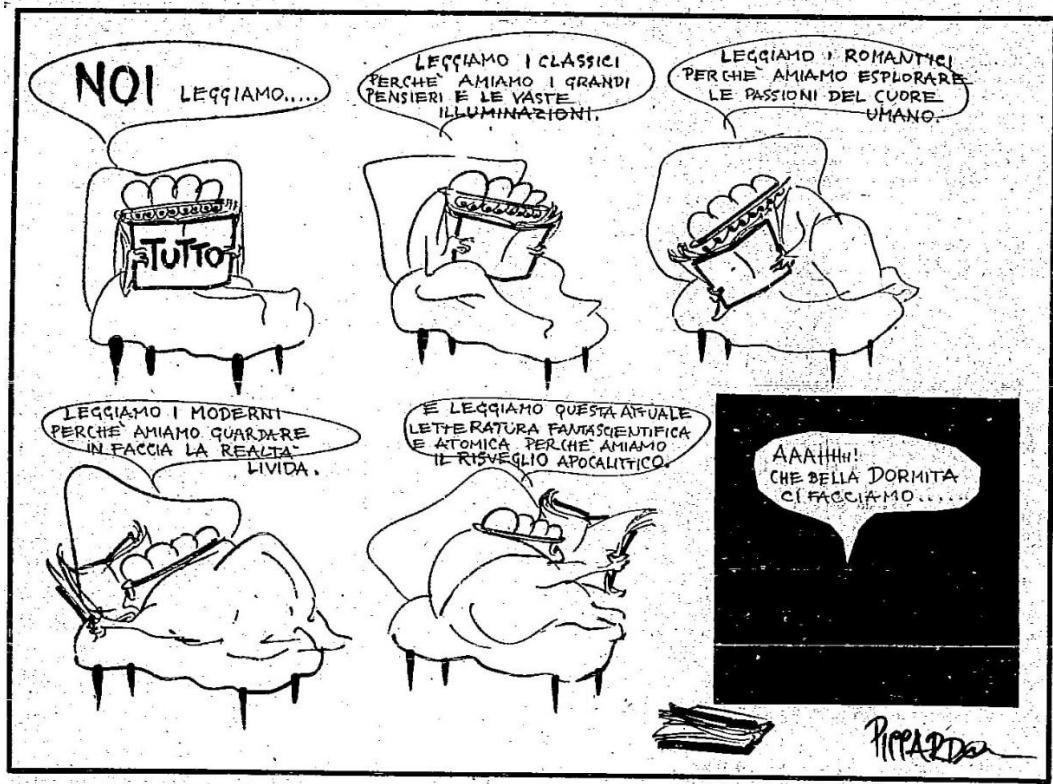


Figure 1



Anselmo Bordigoni, detto il Bordiga, centoquaranta chili, un metro e novantotto, suona in un'orchestrina di un paese della Lombardia.  
I fascisti lo spediscono al confino in un paese del Cilento.  
Viene la guerra, la Liberazione.  
Il Bordiga conosce il trionfo.  
Con gli alleati risale la penisola: dirige bande e orchestra.  
Ritorna al suo paese: lo fanno sindaco.  
Morirà di mal di fegato.

**IL BALORDO**  
ROMANZO DI  
PIERO CHIARA  
MONDADORI

IL **BORDIGA** NON ERA STATO MANDATO AL CONFINO PER RAGIONI POLITICHE

**ANSELMO BORDIGONI** COMPARVE SUL LUOGO DELLE SUE PRIME VICENDE IN QUALITÀ DI MAESTRO ELEMENTARE

SEMPRE PIÙ SPESSO L'ORCHESTRA DEL **GINETTA** S'IMPEGNAVA PER FESTE...

RICETTACOLO DI VIZI E DI SMARRIMENTI ERA LO STUDIO DEL DENTISTA **MALPIASSI**

OGNI SERA INSEGNAVA PAZIENTEMENTE IL **PELLITONE**, IL **GENIS**, LA **CORNETTA**

DELLE FIGLIE, LE DUE MAGGIORI, **AIDA** E **SEMIRAMIDE**

FU ALLORA CHE SI PENSO' DI MANDARE UNA SPEDIZIONE ALLA RICERCA DEL GROSSO MAESTRO DI **ALTAVILLA**

IL **BORDIGONI** ERA SINDACO, A FUROR DI POPOLO

SE VA AVANTI COSÌ, ROVNERÀ TUTTI I PROVERBI!

RE, PATRIA E FAMIGLIA RIDUCONO L'UOMO IN POLTIGLIA

SENTI, **ANSELMO**, QUANDO LA GUERRA SARÀ FINITA TU VERRAI IN AMERICA CON ME. SPONDEREMO AL **METROPOLITAN**!

CAPUA

U.S.

Figure 2

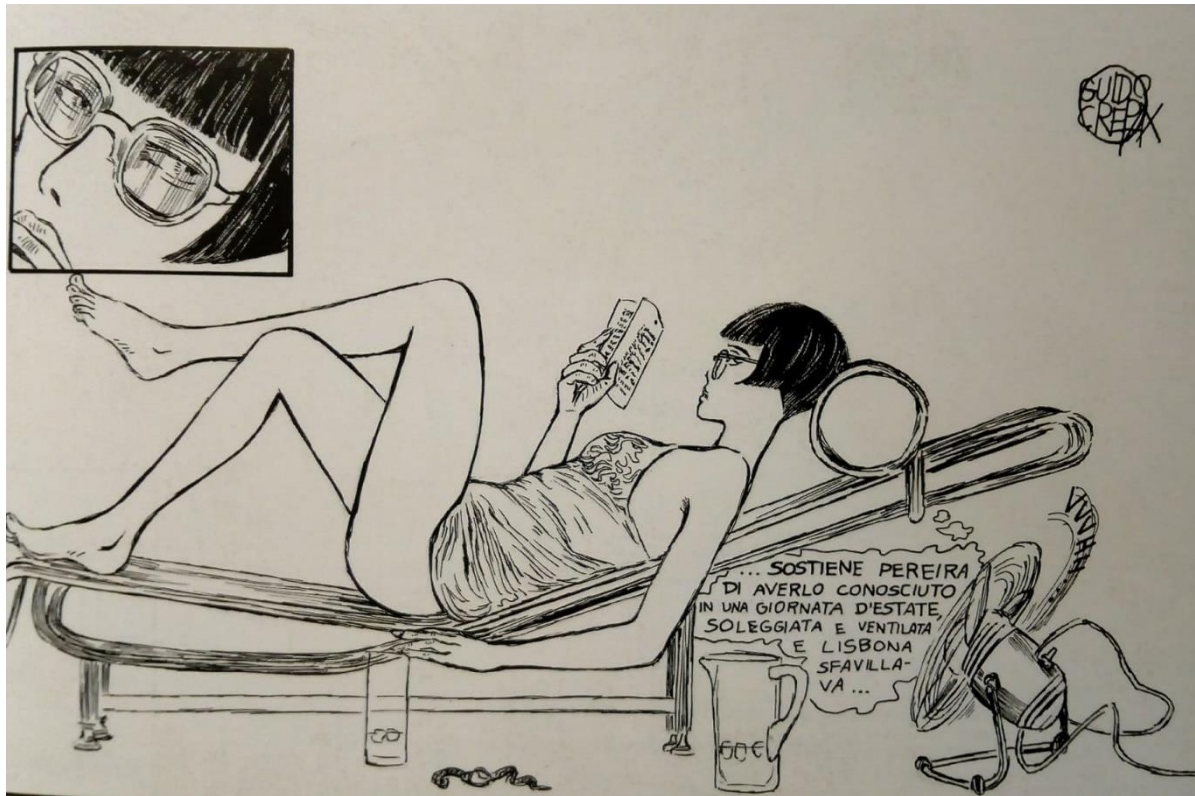


Figure 3

<sup>1</sup> Part of this essay has been published in a previous article (Boemia 2019). I would like to thank Mara Logaldo for her invaluable help with English proofreading.

<sup>2</sup> Significant is the absence of references to the publishing house, which indicates the willingness to quote a work, rather than an edition of a work, as is the practice of a traditional review.

<sup>3</sup> The article also announced the transfer of Guido Crepax from the magazine *Corto Maltese*, closing for editorial reasons, to the magazine *Linus*. Both magazines were owned by RCS (Rizzoli-Corriere della Sera) publishing house at the time.

<sup>4</sup> “Ogni mese la ritroveremo con la pagina aperta: dopo Tadini toccherà a *Oceano mare* (Rizzoli) di Alessandro Baricco. Valentina, si sa, è facile preda delle sue fantasie: eccola, dunque, calarsi nel personaggio e volare per alcune tavole attraverso il racconto. Insomma, è una variazione fantastica sul tema, con parole d’autore nella nuvoletta” (Medail). The translation is mine.

<sup>5</sup> The Italian novels, such as the American one, are all first editions, while the French novels are second editions: Boris Vian’s novel had already been published in 1965 by Rizzoli with the title *Sterpacuore* (in 1993 the Marcos y Marcos edition was published with a new translation); while Jardin’s book had been published two years earlier by Frassinelli and in 1993 it was published by Sperling directly in the economic edition.

<sup>6</sup> In the case of the reviews of the books by Calvino, Maraini and Jardin, there is the title of the series, “Valentina legge”, followed by title of the book and its author. In the case of the Tadini’s reviews, there is just the title of the series, the book informations are evident from the representation of the book. In the cases of Baricco, Maurserig, Ortese, Vian, Tabucchi, Bigongiali, there is not the title of the series: the reader finds out the title of the book reviewed looking at the volumes in Valentina’s hand.

## Works Cited

- Barbieri, Daniele. *Semiotica del fumetto*. Roma: Carocci, 2017.
- Bernardi, Ulderico. *Recensione e romanzo*. "Ricerche sulla comunicazione. Quaderni semestrali dell'Istituto A. Gemelli", vol. I, no. 1, 1980, pp. 143-181.
- Boemia, Dario. *La Recensione Letteraria a Fumetti tra gli Anni Sessanta e Settanta in Italia*. In *Intrecci Mediali: Articolazioni dell'Iconico nella Cultura Visuale Contemporanea*. Edited by Renato Boccali. Milano-Udine: Mimesis, 2019. 167-184.
- Boemia, Dario. *Di Cosa Parliamo Quando Parliamo di Recensioni: Il Caso del Giallo nei Primi Anni Settanta*. In *Leggere per Scegliere: La pratica della recensione nell'editoria moderna e contemporanea*. Edited by Andrea Chiurato. Introduction by Paolo Giovannetti. Milano-Udine: Mimesis, 2020. 123-160.
- Crepax, Guido. *La Tempesta*. *Linus*, XXIX, 8 (341), August 1993. 6-11.
- Crepax, Guido. *Cercando Emma*. *Linus*, XXX, 4 (349), April 1994. 109-114.
- Crepax, Guido. *Sostiene Pereira*. *Linus*, XXX, 11 (356), November 1994. 76-81.
- Di Paola, Lorenzo. *L'inafferrabile medium: Una cartografia delle teorie del fumetto dagli anni Venti a oggi*. Napoli: Alessandro Polidoro editore, 2019.
- Ferretti, Gian Carlo, and Stefano Guerriero. *Storia dell'Informazione Letteraria in Italia dalla Terza Pagina a Internet 1925- 2009*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 2010.
- Listri, Pierfrancesco. *Basta con gli Anatemi al Fumetto*. *La Fiera Letteraria*, 13 July 1967.
- Medail, Cesare. *Le recensioni di Valentina*. *Corriere della Sera*, 24 June 1993.
- Onofri, Massimo. *Recensire: Istruzioni per l'Uso*. Roma: Donzelli, 2008.
- Piccardo, Marcello. *Tutto*. *Il Giorno*, 28 March 1962.
- Spinazzola, Vittorio. *L'Egemonia del Romanzo: La Narrativa Italiana nel Secondo Novecento*. Milano: Il Saggiatore, 2007.
- Spinazzola, Vittorio. *La Modernità Letteraria*. Milano: Il Saggiatore, 2001.