The conference “Miei piccoli lettori. Una giornata di studio su letteratura e scienza nel libro per ragazzi tra XIX e XX secolo” took place in the Sala del Grechetto at the Sormani Library (Milan) on Friday, October 24th, 2014. The seminar was organized by the Department of Historical Studies of the Università degli Studi di Milano and the Department of Psychology of the Università degli Studi di Milano – Bicocca.

The main purpose of the event was to explore the meeting point between children's literature and science education. The participants of the conference were professors and researchers from different Italian universities and they developed several interesting ideas concerning this field. Furthermore, at the end of each presentation the major topic was discussed and examined from different perspectives.

The meeting opened with a lecture by Elisa Marazzi on didactic books in the second half of the 19th century. In particular, she highlighted how science was taught to children through entertainment, becoming in this way more and more popular. This was one of the main themes of the conference and Elisa Rabellato presented it analyzing “La Scala d’Oro”, an encyclopedia created primarily for children. This series of books dealt not just with geography, history and literature, but also with science, which was explained in a very simple and direct way. The following session was displayed by Anna Antoniazzi, who explored the influence of evolutionism in Kipling’s “Just So Stories for Little Children”. Some short stories were examined, considering the role of animals under the influence of Darwin and Lamarck’s theories. The first part of the conference was closed with Francesca Orestano’s presentation. She showed several examples of how chemistry entered in everyday life and how it was introduced to a young audience through interesting - but sometimes dangerous - games. More specifically, she emphasized the presence of science in the novel “Il giornalino di Gian Burrasca”.

After a break, Walter Fochesato started a discussion about “L’Abbicci della Fisica” by Gustavo Milani, analyzing principally its interesting pictures which could fascinate and educate the young reader. Marta Sironi too focused on some illustrations and offered an overview of the influence of Avant-gardes on them, highlighting the fact that animals were depicted in many bizarre ways in children’s books. In the following speech, Sabrina Fava considered some advertisements and magazines about medicine created specifically for young people. Finally, Alberto Carli provided a brief history of the figure of the ogre, linking it with the Victorian concept of degeneration and especially with Lombroso’s theories. At the end of the lectures a general debate was held about the topics touched during the conference.

Dalila Forni