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Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature, Volume 52,
Number 2, April 2014, p. 31 (Article)

Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: [10.1353/bkb.2014.0052](https://doi.org/10.1353/bkb.2014.0052)



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BIANCA PITZORNO

Italy ★ Author

Bianca Pitzorno was born in Sassari in 1942, but lives and works in Milan. After a degree in Classical Literature with an MA in Cinema and Television, in 1970 Pitzorno started a seven-year collaboration with the Italian state-owned broadcaster RAI as head of the production of cultural programmes for the young audience.

Pitzorno is considered to have created a new season of literature for children and young readers in Italy. The author, a left-wing feminist, is much beloved by young girls, especially because her books usually focus on female characters with complex personalities.

Pitzorno has written more than 40 books, in which she deals with many controversial and complex issues, ranging from diversity and childhood, to a multitude of environmental, social and political problems (for instance, pollution, political corruption, social class, and race). Although her works range over such a wide variety, her plots have always remained imaginative, stylish, and amusing. The fact that some of her books are illustrated by the great illustrator Quentin Blake.

Pitzorno, who strongly believes that children's authors should not tone down their writings,

has broken numerous taboos of children's literature, such in her masterpiece *L'Incredibile Storia di Lavinia* [The Incredible Story of Lavinia], where the author deals with death and excrement. The tale that recounts the misfortunes of a hungry, cold little match girl who faces death, is reminiscent of Hans Christian Andersen's tale, but Pitzorno parodies the original tale by giving Lavinia a magic ring that transforms objects into excrements.

Rather complex allusions to literary works, history, art, and international classical literary works are one of her hallmarks. She responds to criticisms that the complex allusions to classical literary works in many of texts are only accessible to middle-class, well-educated readers by claiming that young readers should be challenged to read works they find difficult. For instance, one of her latest creations, *La Bambinaia Fran-*

cese [The French Governess], contains references to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. However, it is *Ascolta il Mio Cuore* [Listen to My Heart] that is widely regarded as one of her best creations. It is a moving realistic novel that takes place in Italy after World War II.

Melissa Garavini



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