

The Trotula Project: Transmedia Narration and Artificial Intelligence for Inclusive Education and the Dissemination of Mediterranean Culture

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This study examines the educational project Trotula, which integrates transmedia storytelling and emerging technologies to promote inclusive education and the dissemination of Mediterranean culture. Inspired by the historical figure of Trotula de Ruggiero, the first female physician of the 11th century and a key figure of the Scuola Medica Salernitana, the project unfolds through both analogue and digital tools, building a bridge between past and future, tradition and innovation. A specific section of the educational initiative is devoted to Mediterranean culture, explored not merely as an object of knowledge but as a living and narratable experience: children engage with its symbols and values through immersive activities and creative restitutions. The narrative core of the project is the illustrated book Trotula and the Mediterranean Diet: Little Secrets to Grow Up Happy, which serves as a generative matrix. From its narrative structure stem further educational experiments, including the digital avatar Trotula AI Ambassador, a symbolic figure that embodies Mediterranean values in a contemporary key, and the Embassy of the Children of the Mediterranean, a physical and symbolic space where younger generations can narrate and share their cultural heritage. The project is grounded in a glocal vision of education and aims to create learning and play environments that are empathetic, sustainable, and culturally rooted.

Keywords: *Inclusive education; transmedia storytelling; artificial intelligence in education; Mediterranean cultural heritage; narrative pedagogy*

Introduction

In today's educational landscape—marked by cultural pluralism, global uncertainty, and rapid technological transformations (Banks, 2019)—there emerges an urgent need for didactic approaches that foster inclusion, understood as active participation, a strong sense of belonging, and intercultural awareness (Bruner, 1990; UNESCO, 2013). The *Trotula* project positions itself within this framework, offering a hybrid educational experience capable of blending narrative, cultural heritage, and digital innovation. It is inspired by the historical figure of Trotula de Ruggiero, both real and legendary. This is not merely a symbolic reference but a deliberate choice to transform a feminine and Mediterranean legacy into a contemporary pedagogical tool. Trotula lived in Salerno, then known as *Hippocratica Civitas*, in the 11th century. Belonging to a noble Lombard family, she played an active role in the *Scuola Medica Salernitana* (Medical School of Salerno), a pivotal hub of medieval

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European medicine, secular and open to female participation. However, her figure, is enveloped in a haze of myth and truth, between the certainty of her existence and the philological debate over the authorship, or perhaps *matronymic* authorship, of the texts attributed to her. “For women are by nature weaker than men...,” writes Trotula (Bayon, 1940) at the beginning of the *De passionibus mulierum ante, in et post partum*, immediately positioning herself as a conscious and engaged voice on the condition of women, challenging the taboos and codes imposed by her era. She was an ally to her fellow townswomen and, more broadly, to all women who sought in medicine a path to well-being and self-determination (Cavallo Boggi, 1974). She married the physician Giovanni Plateario and, according to sources, had two sons who also became doctors. Her authority was even acknowledged by ecclesiastical sources, such as the monk Orderic Vitalis, who in 1059 referred to her as *praeter quamdam sapientem matronam*. As Professor Pina Boggi Cavallo (1974) has written, Trotula embodies a form of gender medicine *ante litteram*. The *De passionibus*, described by H.P. Bayon (1940) as “the treatise that marks the birth of obstetrics and gynecology as medical sciences,” offers an early example of clinical and empathetic attention to women’s health. Whether the texts were written by her, dictated, or transcribed by students or colleagues matters little: their impact remains revolutionary. The dissemination of these manuscripts between the 13th and 14th centuries and their use in medical settings confirm their lasting influence. And even if, today as then, there are doubts about the absolute historicity of every biographical detail, the figure of Trotula continues to shine precisely because it is capable of holding within itself truth, plausibility, and myth. In 1929, the *Bibliotheca Osleriana* wrote about the *De passionibus*: “The first woman professor has been deprived of more than her chair by the unchivalrous mythoclasts [...] The Good-wife Trotula passed long ago into the fairytales as Dame Trot [...] Alas!” Today, Trotula is not merely a scholarly reference: she is a living figure, one who speaks to children, who guides them through an educational journey made of stories, symbols, nutrition, care, technology, and inclusion. The historical Trotula becomes the educational Trotula: doctor and teacher, analogue and digital, Italian and Mediterranean.

From a contemporary pedagogical perspective, Trotula embodies a profound sense of cultural exchange typical of the Mediterranean: Salernitan, yet influenced by Arab, Greek, and Latin traditions, she becomes a symbol of an open and hybrid culture. The Mediterranean diet itself testifies to this syncretism, serving as a paradigmatic vector of healthy, ritual, and social knowledge. The figure of Trotula amplifies this narrative: not only as a scientist, but as a mediator of traditional and technical knowledge, capable of uniting generations and diverse languages. It is worth pausing to consider the concept of *Mediterraneanness*, not as a simple geographical belonging, but as a cultural and anthropological category, rich with meaning and history. Following Pagano’s (2019) insight, *Mediterraneanness* can be understood as a quality of dwelling and thinking, a symbolic code shaped by the relationships among peoples, shared memory, and the ability to transform differences into connections and borders into opportunities for encounter. This vision, which might at times seem romantic or even naïve, actually aims to become an educational stance. *Mediterraneanness* is the care of plurality, it is the living memory of the

Greek, Arab, Latin, Jewish, Byzantine, Norman, and Andalusian civilisations that have looked out upon this sea. It is, at the same time, a capacity for future-making.

A Mediterranean pedagogy draws nourishment from this complexity: it embraces it as a challenge and transforms it into a formative resource, a pedagogical horizon capable of placing the human being back at the centre in all their depth and fragility. The natural multiculturalism of the Mediterranean today calls for a mature orientation toward a conscious interculturality, charged with values and capable of safeguarding the richness of differences. This interculturality does not merely record the coexistence of ethnicities, idioms, and rituals, but becomes an educational space, a place for deep interaction and mutual belonging. In this perspective, pedagogical reflection, when viewed through a Mediterranean lens, can only become an expression of encounter and dialogue. It is a culture shaped along the routes of merchants and philosophers, among port cities and monasteries, between squares, courtyards, libraries, workshops, and schools. The Mediterranean pedagogical gaze is therefore a stratified one, like the lands from which it arises. Without contradiction, in it survive the topoi of Greek antiquity, Roman rationality, Arab-Islamic wisdom, Norman pragmatism, the Federician vision, Spanish religiosity, and French lucidity. All that the long, intense, and sometimes painful dominations have left as a legacy to Southern Europe has not been dispersed, but sedimented, producing a complex identity that resists linear models. Such a multifaceted anthropology demands a pedagogy capable of holding together individuality and community, difference and belonging, the tragic and the aesthetic. A pedagogy that embraces both *arché* and *telos*, that recognises the difficulty of living and reveals its meaning. Within this horizon, words such as *paideia*, *mémoire*, *skepsis*, *tradition*, and *liminality* regain their strength and freshness. If the Mediterranean is always a space of plurality, contamination, and intersection of cultures, languages, and knowledge, then its pedagogy must inevitably be transversal, diffused, and open to multiplicity. From here, in an entirely natural way, emerges the deep connection between *Mediterraneanness* and *transmediality*: two forms of synthesizing complexity, two ways of inhabiting and criss-crossing knowledge that reject linearity and embrace hybridization as a method.

The starting point of the Trotula educational project is the fairy tale, an archaic and powerfully symbolic narrative form, which acts as a catalyst of meaning and a privileged vehicle of shared values. As Bruner (1996) reminds us, stories help us to decipher the world, to give order to experience, and to generate coherence from fragmentation. The pedagogical fairy tale, with its apparent simplicity and archetypal structure, becomes here a transversal educational device, capable of activating imagination, empathy, and critical thinking.

In the Trotula project, the fairy tale is not confined to the written page but becomes the spark that spreads across multiple media and languages. It becomes a picture book, audiobook, theatre performance, video game, podcast, social media post, urban space, and laboratory setting. It translates into various communicative codes, such as the IN-book in Augmentative and Alternative Communication, designed to ensure accessibility for students with complex communication needs (Light, 1997). It transforms into collective experiences and shared narrative environments, in line with Jenkins's (2006) vision of *convergent storytelling*, in which different media do not compete but cooperate to generate meaning. All of this

gives shape and substance to a transmedia narrative, where each medium contributes something unique to the global story. Sound-based media, like audiobooks and podcasts, enhance imagination and engage often-neglected senses (McLuhan, 1964). Theatre, in its multiple forms - from musicals to puppet shows, activates body and voice, emotion and action, as an embodied pedagogical tool (Boal, 1979; Ackroyd, 2004). Social media amplify the community resonance of the story, connecting families, schools, and local territories (Ito et al., 2013; Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). In this mediological ecosystem, each student can encounter their own entry point into the story: visual, auditory, physical, or linguistic. In this way, “affinity spaces” (Gee, 2004) are multiplied—physical and symbolic places where learning occurs through participation, creation, and sharing. Learning becomes a situated, emotional, and relational process, in which humanity is cultivated (Illeris, 2003; Boal, 2006). After all, the Mediterranean, cradle of humanity, has always worked like this: a narrative in constant becoming, shaped by arrivals and departures, by shared knowledge and reinvented forms. Transmediality (Scolari, 2009; Jenkins et al., 2013) simply renews, in contemporary terms, this same logic by traversing, contaminating, narrating, preserving, and transforming. Thus, the Trotula project adopts Mediterranean plurality as its cultural grammar, and transmediality as its educational language, in order to make that plurality come alive, accessible and generative, in today’s school systems.

Literature Review

Over the past twenty years, storytelling has been rediscovered as a central device in educational processes. Bruner (1990) emphasises the role of the narrative mode in knowledge construction, as it allows students to structure experiences and make sense of the world. In this perspective, transmedia storytelling (Jenkins, 2006; Green & Jenkins, 2014) represents a significant evolution: telling a story across multiple media makes it possible to reach heterogeneous audiences and stimulate diverse cognitive modes. Studies, such as Scolari’s (2009), highlight the educational value of transmediality, particularly in inclusive and multicultural contexts. The simultaneous presence of texts, images, sounds, and interactions fosters engagement and allows complex concepts to be explored in narrative, intuitive, and accessible ways.

At the same time, artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as an educational tool capable of personalising learning paths, supporting teaching, and amplifying access to knowledge (Holmes et al., 2022). The use of intelligent avatars, educational chatbots, or immersive environments broadens the possibilities of storytelling and fosters an affective connection with content.

In the cultural domain, the Mediterranean diet has been recognised by UNESCO (2013) as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity. It represents not just a set of dietary habits, but an educational and value-based model grounded in conviviality, seasonality, biodiversity, and family relationships. Authors such as Dernini et al. (2017) propose the Mediterranean diet as a pedagogical tool for promoting health, sustainability, and a sense of belonging.

Finally, the concept of “simplexity” (Sibilio, 2014) offers a theoretical framework for enhancing flexible, accessible educational approaches that build bridges between

different kinds of knowledge and learners. In this sense, *Trotula* can be viewed as a “simplex” approach, capable of integrating storytelling, cultural heritage, and emerging technologies in a synergistic and non-reductionist way.

Methodology

The section of the *Trotula* project dedicated to Mediterranean identity takes the form of a narrative and immersive educational journey, combining analogue and digital tools, symbolic environments, and real educational spaces. Each component is conceived as an integral part of a learning ecosystem oriented toward inclusion, sustainability, and cultural rootedness.

At the heart of this journey lies the book *Trotula and the Mediterranean Diet*, an illustrated volume divided into two sections. The first section presents the fairy tale that introduces the character and her values through accessible, evocative, and archetypal language in a narrative form. The second section takes on a more informative approach, guiding the reader through a journey between the food and environmental pyramids, addressing themes such as product seasonality, food waste, and the trade routes of Mediterranean cuisine. The text serves as a symbolic mediator between childhood and the world, between memory and transformation.

The story begins in a symbolic Mediterranean location: Cilento (province of Salerno, Italy). Here, driven by her innate curiosity and sense of wonder, Trotula arrives to witness the magical hatching of the *Caretta Caretta* sea turtles. Under a starry sky and beside the slow rhythm of the sea, an adventure unfolds. It is one of discovery and rediscovery to answer the question: what makes this place so special? Along the way, Trotula encounters unexpected and fascinating characters. Some are figures from the past, such as the philosopher Parmenides or the physician Ansel Keys, who engage her in reflections on self-care, care for others, and care for the environment. Others, like the local inhabitants, speak with vivid voices about biodiversity, seasonality, respect for natural rhythms, and the importance of conviviality as a form of emotional and cultural education. The fairy tale concludes with a forward-looking vision, in which a new generation, aware and responsible, becomes the guardian and spokesperson of the Mediterranean’s tangible and intangible heritage. It is, in every regard, a story of emotional education for sustainability, conveyed through the sweet and powerful lens of storytelling.

An *illustrated activity book* is attached to the main volume, conceived as an operational and workshop-style workbook that invites children to explore the narrative’s concepts in a creative and multisensory way. The proposed activities range from writing to dramatisation, from symbolic cooking to ecological reflection, enhancing each pupil’s expressive and narrative potential. The workbook is not merely a didactic support but a space for subjective and collective re-elaboration, where knowledge is intertwined with lived experience.

One of the most evocative expressions of the methodology is the *Trotula Playground* in Pioppi (province of Salerno, Italy), a play area inspired by the Mediterranean that spatially translates the project’s values. Here, play becomes embodied storytelling, and space itself becomes the “third teacher” (Malaguzzi,

2010): every element of the park recalls the symbols, shapes, colours, and materials typical of Mediterranean culture. It is an environment where children can explore, play, and learn with their bodies and senses, in full continuity with the pedagogy of experience and context.

The *workshop activities* complete and enrich the journey in an approach that emphasises active and environmental learning. These include identifying wild plants, creating small gardens, compiling personal herbariums, extracting natural dyes from plants, and engaging in nature-inspired artistic activities. A guided visit to the Living Museum of the Mediterranean Diet, situated in Pollica and conducted by scientific educators, offers a moment of direct connection between learning and territory, culminating in the symbolic award of the “Biodiversity Defender” certificate.

Another key element of the project is the *Children’s Embassy of the Mediterranean*, which serves a dual purpose: on the one hand, it is a physical location in Pollica where intercultural dialogue and peace are celebrated; on the other, it is a symbolic and narrative space that welcomes children’s productions, stories, and questions. Here, values such as conviviality, environmental sustainability, the defence of rights, and educational diplomacy among Mediterranean peoples are actively promoted.

From a technological standpoint, the project is enriched by the *Trotula AI Ambassador*, a digital and interactive version of the protagonist. The avatar, developed using artificial intelligence tools, accompanies students through personalised journeys: it tells stories, guides workshop activities, answers questions, and prompts reflection. Fully integrable with interactive whiteboards in classrooms, the digital Trotula becomes a narrative tutor, a content mediator, and an affective, dialogic presence within the learning process.

The *Trotula* project will be piloted in several primary schools across the province of Salerno, within educational settings interested in enhancing the value of Mediterranean heritage. The pathway is structured around four integrated experiences, each designed to stimulate children's active participation, storytelling, reflection, and emotional engagement.

1. Animated reading of the book “Trotula and the Mediterranean Diet”

The illustrated book is introduced as a narrative guide to present the characters, core themes (care, nutrition, environment, identity), and values of the project. The reading is supported by prompting questions and guided discussions.

2. Exploration of the educational workbook

After the shared reading, students engage with the illustrated workbook, designed as a workshop extension of the story. The book includes activities focused on the body, nutrition, emotions, nature, and relationships. The proposed exercises range from free drawing to creative writing, symbolic worksheets to role-playing games, aimed at enhancing multiple intelligences and expressive channels. Visually rich and narrative in tone, the pages allow children to explore concepts like well-being, seasonality, care, and sharing through their own daily experiences.

3. Interaction with the digital avatar Trotula AI Ambassador

Children interact with an educational avatar (Trotula AI Ambassador) through short videos, Q&A sessions, animated stories, and immersive digital environments. The use of artificial intelligence aims to strengthen narrative empathy, make the experience more engaging, and spark curiosity about educational technologies.

4. Educational visit to the Children's Embassy of the Mediterranean

The project concludes with a final event, a symbolic "embassy" moment, held either in person at the Living Museum of the Mediterranean Diet in Pollica or virtually. Here, students share what they have learned through exhibitions, stories, drawings, and cooperative games, symbolically joining the Mediterranean community that promotes sustainability and peace through education.

The entire program unfolds over four weeks, with a weekly schedule that allows for progressive and reflective learning, aligned with the long rhythms of experiential assimilation and re-elaboration. The methodological framework of the pilot is based on qualitative tools for observation and narrative documentation, aimed at capturing the deeper transformations in the cognitive, emotional, and relational processes of the participating children.

Specifically, the following tools will be used:

- teachers' journals to systematically record educational dynamics;
- oral and written narratives collected from the children to reflect subjective experiences;
- photographs and graphic productions, understood as visual and symbolic traces of the experience;
- narrative and creative works, serving as tools for individual and collective reflection;
- interviews and questionnaires with teachers and families, to include adults' perspectives in the formative assessment.

This structure, in line with the qualitative educational research approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), enables the development of a rich and layered interpretative framework, capable of valuing the implicit, emotional, and symbolic dimensions of the school experience. Triangulation of sources and multiplicity of viewpoints will ensure a polyphonic and contextualized reading of the project's educational impact.

To operationalise this framework within the pilot phase, the project envisages the following methodological plan.

The pilot phase of the project will involve three primary schools in the province of Salerno, selected for their willingness to experiment with innovative educational pathways centred on Mediterranean culture. Approximately 60–70 pupils, aged between 8 and 10, together with their teachers, are expected to participate. This constitutes an intentional and focused sample, appropriate to the qualitative and exploratory nature of the initiative. The educational pathway will unfold over a period of four to six weeks and will progress through a gradual sequence of activities. The initial phase, lasting about one week, will be dedicated to planning

and co-design with teachers. This stage will include an introductory training session, contextualisation of the didactic materials, and the shared definition of objectives and operational guidelines. The core phase will focus on the implementation of the educational activities in the participating classrooms. Over the course of three to four weeks, pupils will engage in a set of integrated experiences: the animated reading and guided discussion of the storybook; the exploratory and creative activities proposed in the workbook; interaction with the Trotula AI Ambassador; and a final moment hosted by the Children's Embassy of the Mediterranean, either in person or online. These activities will take place during regular school hours, with an average frequency of one or two sessions per week, allowing for a reflective and gradual learning process. The final week will be devoted to formative evaluation and collective reflection. During this phase, teachers will gather the pupils' productions, compile their observation notes, and conduct short interviews with both colleagues and a selection of families. This documentation will support a shared concluding discussion aimed at highlighting emerging insights, developments and challenges. Data collection will rely on qualitative tools designed to capture the complexity of the educational experience: teacher observations and reflective journals; children's written and visual artefacts; audio recordings of narrative moments and classroom discussions; interviews; and photographic documentation. The analysis will follow a thematic and interpretative-phenomenological approach, beginning with an exploratory reading of the materials, followed by the identification of emerging themes and their organisation into three interpretative dimensions aligned with the pedagogical aims of the project: emotional engagement; narrative and metacognitive awareness; and the development of a sense of cultural and ecological belonging. The methodological plan is conceived to provide an essential yet coherent interpretative framework, capable of accounting for the experiential, systemic and ecological nature of the Trotula project.

Expected Outcomes

In line with the theoretical and methodological framework of the Trotula project, the pilot implementation is expected to generate significant impacts in terms of motivation, intercultural awareness, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and enhancement of narrative thinking. The expected outcomes are structured along four key dimensions, integrating educational, cultural, technological, and identity-based components.

Educational and Transversal Competencies

Through a narrative and hands-on approach, the project aims to foster the development of narrative and metacognitive skills in children, encouraged by activities such as animated reading, creative writing, and symbolic representation. The cooperative nature of the proposed activities will promote intersubjective competencies, active listening, empathetic communication, and collaboration,

within the classroom environment. In parallel, nutrition education will not be presented in prescriptive terms, but as a critical reflection on lifestyle choices, inspired by the principles of the Mediterranean diet (Dernini et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2013), understood as a culture of well-being and self-care.

Cultural Awareness and Mediterranean Identity

One of the most significant anticipated results is the strengthening, among children, of a sense of belonging to a Mediterranean culture, not as a static inheritance, but as a living space for dialogue, exchange, and encounter. The Mediterranean will be presented not only as a geographic frame, but as a symbolic and relational system composed of shared languages, knowledge, gestures, foods, and stories. The internalisation of values such as conviviality, biodiversity, slowness, and seasonality, hallmarks of Mediterranean culture, represents a deep educational goal, aimed at shaping identity and building a collective imagination oriented toward sustainability and coexistence.

Development of a Critical Approach to Technology

The project does not avoid the digital dimension but repositions it as a relational educational environment. The interaction with the Trotula AI Ambassador avatar, designed to foster narrative empathy and personalization of learning, aims to promote critical digital competencies, focused on expressiveness, reflection, and autonomy. Artificial intelligence is tested here not as a mere technical automatism, but as a dialogical mediator capable of evoking emotion, curiosity, and awareness (Holmes et al., 2022).

Qualitative Observation and Narrative Evaluation

The evaluation of the entire program will be conducted using qualitative methodologies, capable of capturing the complexity of the lived educational experience. Tools to be employed include systematic observations by teachers; analysis of children's written, visual, and symbolic outputs; collection of narratives from families; documentation of workshop activities and educational visits to the Children's Embassy of the Mediterranean. The guiding principle will be that of generative evaluation, which does not merely measure but accompanies and reveals the transformative value of the educational process.

Discussion

The *Trotula* project moves gracefully within a fertile and generative frontier space, where tradition and innovation do not oppose each other but engage in

dialogue. It is in this liminal zone—between memory and possibility, between storytelling and algorithms, between the slow gesture of cooking and the interactive rapidity of the avatar—that a profoundly transformative educational proposal takes shape. The goal is not merely to update the languages of teaching, but to reimagine the very meaning of education: to educate as a narrative act, a political act, a poetic act. Recalling the thought of Jerome Bruner, who saw narrative as the privileged mode through which human beings give meaning to their experiences (Bruner, 1990), Trotula does not merely tell a story: it builds a true narrative ecosystem. The picture book, the activity workbook, the workshops, the digital avatar, the Mediterranean Children’s Embassy, the symbolic playground, each element is a tile in a pedagogical mosaic whose full meaning emerges only in its entirety. It offers students and educators a plural learning landscape to be traversed with body, voice, and imagination. The project’s transmedia dimension is not just a communication strategy but a deliberate epistemological choice. In an era where knowledge is increasingly layered and networked, Trotula embraces the plurality of languages, textual, visual, performative, digital, as essential for meaningful and lasting learning. Each medium activates a different sensory channel; each channel opens a unique form of intelligence. It is a pedagogy written with the body, coloured by gestures, heard between the lines of a tale, and touched in the fragrant silence of a freshly planted garden.

In this educational landscape, the historical figure of Trotula de Ruggiero becomes a powerful symbolic device. Not merely an icon to be reclaimed, but a living presence that travels through the centuries to act as guide, interlocutor, and witness. Woman, physician, philosopher, pedagogue *ante litteram*, Trotula becomes a narrating body, an embodiment of knowledge that is simultaneously care, wisdom, and responsibility. Her transformation into an AI avatar, a gentle voice, an interactive guide, an empathetic digital presence, does not betray but rather renews her mission. Artificial intelligence is not used here as a tool of alienation, but as a symbolic extension of the human, a new space for dialogue between experience and technology. At the heart of the project stands the Mediterranean, not as a mere backdrop, but as an active subject. The Mediterranean is envisioned as a cultural metaphor, an inner landscape, an educational grammar. A sea of voices, stories, knowledge, and flavours that teaches slowness, measure, and conviviality. Not merely a diet, but an ethical and aesthetic landscape. As Fernand Braudel wrote, the Mediterranean is “a thousand things together; not a landscape but countless landscapes; not a sea but a succession of seas.” Trotula captures this multiplicity and translates it into pedagogical competence: reading a fairy tale becomes an ecological act, building a herbarium a gesture of cultural resistance, sowing a garden a way of inhabiting the future with care. The Mediterranean education proposed by the project is neither a romantic utopia nor a nostalgic identity claim. It is a pedagogy of humanization, oriented toward *humanitas*, one that does not merely instruct, but shapes, transforms, welcomes, and awakens. It does not fear being perceived as out of step with the times, because it understands that education is by nature always a wager on the invisible. It is an education that dares to believe that beauty can be generative, that silence can teach, that memory can blossom into new forms of creative citizenship.

Ultimately, the Mediterranean that Trotula inhabits is a mental and symbolic place, a threshold between what we have been and what we can still become. A pedagogy that looks backward not to retreat into memory, but to project forward, with confidence, with competence, with gentleness. And perhaps this is its most precious hallmark: the ability to hold together the depth of time and the urgency of the present, the intelligence of the heart and the responsibility of thought. With a light step and a wide gaze, as befits those who walk along the shores of a sea that has always taught how to welcome.

Conclusions

The Trotula project presents itself as an original contribution to the discourse on inclusive and intercultural education in the 21st century, offering an experimental model that values storytelling as a pedagogical device, Mediterranean culture as an educational resource, and artificial intelligence as a relational tool. This educational proposal, though rooted in an ancient historical and cultural context, speaks with a contemporary voice to the challenges of the present. Its pedagogical threads are interwoven with history and geography, technology and affectivity, memory and innovation. In this sense, Trotula is no longer simply the name of a historical figure or a school initiative, but a potential paradigm for an education capable of integrating dimensions often kept separate: knowledge and emotion, the individual and the collective, the physical and the digital. Through the figure of Trotula de Ruggiero, woman, physician, teacher, a pedagogy emerges that boldly combines care and competence, tenderness and rigor. A pedagogy that is “feminine” in the highest sense of the term: one that values listening, mediation, and the ability to generate meaning from lived experience. The fact that this figure has also been transformed into a digital avatar capable of speaking to today’s children does not betray her essence but rather represents a natural evolution. Artificial intelligence, when guided by clear ethical and pedagogical goals, can become a powerful vehicle for relationship and learning, returning to technology its proper role as a means rather than an end, as a mediator rather than an imposition. The project’s transmedia structure further enhances its communicative and educational potential.

The synergistic use of illustrated books, workbooks, games, workshops, natural environments, museum spaces, and digital platforms enables engagement with multiple intelligences and sensitivities, allowing for true personalisation of learning. This approach fully reflects the principles of differentiated instruction, making the Trotula project a replicable model in other contexts and adaptable to a variety of school and cultural settings. The Mediterranean, with its symbolic and cultural richness, provides depth and breadth to the educational proposal. Conceived as a place of encounter, exchange, and fertile cross-pollination, it is not only a heritage to preserve but a horizon to aspire to. Mediterranean-ness thus becomes an educational stance, a meaningful perspective that privileges slowness, storytelling, conviviality, and relationship. In a time that tends to reward efficiency and conformity, rediscovering the value of slow gestures, shared words, and knowledge rooted in place becomes almost a subversive act. The project’s transformative value

is also reflected in its capacity to activate new forms of citizenship. The children who participate in the workshops, interact with the avatar, and visit the Mediterranean Children's Embassy are not merely recipients of educational content, they are protagonists in a process of identity and relational awareness. They learn to recognize themselves as part of a plural community, to develop empathy for others, and to imagine the future as a space of shared possibility. In this sense, Trotula does not merely transmit content, it shapes mindsets. It does not simply teach; it accompanies the process of becoming. The project has been designed to be implementable in real-world school contexts, using flexible resources, free tools, and a strong focus on educational accessibility. The use of the Trotula AI Ambassador avatar represents a pioneering experiment in digital educational mediation, serving as a unique opportunity to reflect on the role of artificial intelligence in stimulating empathetic, narrative, and cognitive processes.

The centrality given to the Mediterranean diet and to the *glocal* dimension of knowledge enables food to become a symbolic code, storytelling to become a map of identity, and the school to become an educational embassy, a space not limited to content delivery, but one that builds meaning, relationship, and citizenship. From a theoretical standpoint, the project rests on a solid and multidisciplinary foundation, integrating narrative pedagogy with the concept of simplicity (Sibilio, 2014), competency-based instruction with aesthetic education, and a pedagogy of care with a Mediterranean anthropology. The use of scientific literature, from Bruner to Jenkins, from Sibilio to McLuhan, is not ornamental but reinforces the epistemological grounding of a practice that is continuously evolving.

Ultimately, the Trotula project poses radical yet necessary questions: How can we educate for complexity without succumbing to chaos? How can we transmit cultural heritage without ossifying it? How can we inhabit technology without being inhabited by it? The answers are never final, but the path this project outlines is clear: to educate is to connect. To connect stories and languages, past and future, body and mind, nature and culture, humanity and algorithms. It means building bridges, just as Trotula did in her time, and as she continues to do today, symbolically, through the voices and gestures of children who encounter her in schools, museums, parks, books, and digital screens.

Perhaps this is Trotula's most precious legacy: the idea that every child can become, in their own way, a little ambassador of the Mediterranean. Not to represent a closed tradition, but to carry into the world a way of inhabiting the Earth that embodies care, beauty, slowness, and hope. A pedagogy that, like Trotula herself, is not afraid to imagine the impossible, the not-yet-realised. Because, as every fairy tale teaches us, sometimes that is exactly where the truth hides. Looking ahead, the model may be adapted and implemented in other Mediterranean regions, generating educational and cultural networks that transcend national borders to build new forms of cooperative and intergenerational learning. In a time dominated by complexity, discontinuity, and hyperconnection, *Trotula* proposes a different pedagogical path: to cultivate rootedness as a precondition for openness, to rediscover slowness as a form of cognitive resistance, and to value care: personal, collective, and environmental as the foundation of every educational process.

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