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Call for papers

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Pinocchio: the persistence of becoming

Pinocchio is a puppet, born from the hands of a poor carpenter immersed in the misery of the peasant world. He is a puppet who speaks and behaves like a child, even if he is not a "real child". Pinocchio has two eyes, two arms, two legs, a mouth, a nose, yet his is not a "real" body. Hence, Pinocchio is, above all, what he is not. His identity is constantly played on a threshold envisaged by himself and by every/anyone he meets on his way. Pinocchio is the name of a life that is inorganic, human and animal at the same time. For this reason, it is the potential name of a radical desertion: being at the same time oneself and another.

Pinocchio loves friendship, his community is always a community of friends (even an impossible community like the one he creates with the other puppets), and shows great courage during his adventures. *Pinocchio. The story of a puppet*, first conceived by Carlo Collodi as a children novel and published in episodes between 1881 and 1882, is a story disclosing and highlighting the anxieties of the world of adults. So much so that, in the very first version, the story even ended with the death of Pinocchio who, well before being transformed into a child, "stretched his legs and, after having given a great shrug, remained there as if he were numb". The book's great success pushes the publisher to ask Collodi to give a follow up to the story. The following version, *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (1883), brings the puppet back to life and takes the story of the main character to a completely different outcome by becoming a "real child". Collodi's writing, however, on several occasions questions the ascensional dynamic of the moral narrative, to the point of overturning the idea that the puppet's humanizing metamorphosis is in itself an edifying fact.

Pinocchio's double soul, puppet and child, which the two versions of the story symbolically reestablish, gives Collodi's novel the character of a mysterious, symbolic and cursed work that made it famous all over the world. It became the source of inspiration and the starting point for adaptations, rewritings ranging from theatre to cinema, some of which destined - as in the famous case of the film never made by Federico Fellini - to remain unfinished. This was perhaps due to the nature itself of the original text: an untamed and in many ways unclassifiable one, an incongruent and twofold text resembling the character who gives the story its name.

As an example of one of the best known books within Italian children literature, *The Adventures of Pinocchio* is probably related to another great novel published in 1886: *Heart* by Edmondo De Amicis.

There are two themes strictly connecting the two books: childhood and education. Childhood becomes a metaphor for the condition of a newborn nation and a people still to be imagined and forged. But what does it mean for a puppet to become a child, and again for a child to become an adult man? And to what extent can this process become a metaphor for an entire country and an unfinished "bildung" as Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg names it in her *The Pinocchio Effect on Making Italians 1860-1920* (2011)?

By almost programmatically withdrawing himself from the schooling/education process, desired for him by a very poor and uneducated father who almost Gramscianly aspires to the cultural emancipation of his son, Pinocchio is precisely a figure of disobedience. He disregards his father's advice, without any particular awareness, but almost as driven by an impulse to life, he skives off of school, that is, he refuses the idea of becoming the model citizen that the new Italian State needs. However, it is worth underlining

that in Collodi's novel the focus of the denounce is the knowledge-law (the school's, the judge's, the doctors' one) because it is alien to Pinocchio's life, candor and innocence, not the possibility of learning to live through a series of experiences not codified by social norms. So much so that in the first version of the story, Pinocchio ends up preferring even death by hanging, almost anticipating the Pasolinian Stracci's death on the cross (*La ricotta*, 1963) who had to die "to remind everyone that he was alive". Indeed, at a closer look, most of Pinocchio's adventures are a constant attempt to resist death till when, by becoming a child, Pinocchio penetrates time, because he has freed himself from the fear of death, by pushing Geppetto to leave the belly of the shark.

It is in the wake of the contradictions and conflicts that mark Collodi's story that Pinocchio becomes in the hands of Carmelo Bene the figure of childhood as an endless process, destined to remain open. Bene's dramaturgy suspends the moment of transformation and makes Pinocchio the figure itself of *child becoming* as a continuous, unlimited process. Bene focuses on the tangles of the literary text and on the character ones, interpreting the transformation of the wooden puppet into a child as a reflection of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. On the other hand, just like Giuseppe, even before discovering that he is Pinocchio's father, Geppetto is a carpenter (among other things, there are other biblical references, such as the reference to the whale's belly).

Interpreting a puppet's childhood is therefore an opportunity to enhance the rebellious aspect of this season of life, questioning and turning upside down both the normative society protocols and the theological and teleological ancestry of the narrative. In fact, the multiple acts of creation, marking Collodi's story, help first of all to disarticulate the linear story form typical of children fairy tales. As a matter of fact, Collodi creates an open universe where the threshold between truth and lie is a field that is usually indistinguishable (moreover in the entire fable the famous extension of the puppet's nose has a marginal weight). It is no coincidence that the classic theme of the lie opposed to the truth, although present in Collodi, is strongly accentuated above all in the later sweetened versions of the story – Walt Disney's version above all - in which Pinocchio is punished for the lies he says.

In light of the above, the number K wish to dedicate to the figure of Pinocchio, both as a character and as the whole literary work, should follow a series of tracks:

1. *Pinocchio* is a literary work entered into dialogue with other artistic forms: theater, cinema, music. *Pinocchio* appears as a universe of figures, symbols and allegories which, from the earliest illustrated versions of the text, have made it possible for the story to turn into images or individual acting gestures. Moreover, together with other similar cases (see Cervantes' *Don Quixote*), *Pinocchio* is, significantly, one of those novels whose cinematographic transposition has been the occasion of bad, failed, or never realized projects. In this way, Collodi's story shows, how the act of creation, never guaranteed and always free, is the place of any possible dismissal.
2. Collodi's work remains a valuable document for reading one of the most significant pages of Italian history, immediately after unification. Through this backlight, a testimony of social and economic history is to be found in *Pinocchio*, a place where the school is given the puzzling and problematic task of forming, by educating it, a nascent nation. In its complexity, *Pinocchio* is, therefore, an object through which asking oneself if it is possible to imagine a pedagogy capable of educating to disobey, recovering the exemplarity of a destituent gesture. This is possible only by keeping in mind that Pinocchio's "real" teachers are not teachers, but shepherds, puppeteers, other children.
3. *Pinocchio* is an opportunity to reflect, with the tools of psychoanalysis, on the question of identity, on the definition of man, in relation to what is not human: on the one hand the inorganic, on the other the animal. To becoming what we are through an itinerary of events, encounters, unexpected hitches that constitute us through what we are not. Moreover, as can be seen in Matteo Garrone's film dedicated to Pinocchio (2019), the composition by editing of Pinocchio's adventures, shows that Collodi owned a rigorous and calculated rejection of any elementary psychologism.
4. *Pinocchio* as bestiary: cricket, cat, fox, donkey, snail, etc. Rereading *Pinocchio* today also means assessing the value (included the political one) of animality.

5. In this sense, in the age of the so-called post-truth, it perhaps makes sense to go back to reflecting on the value of lies as *Pinocchio* proposes it to his readers: as a place of discarding and affirming one's independence, not in opposition therefore with an alleged, irrefutable truth, but as an occasion for a new truth.

Deadline for submission of abstract: 30th March 2020 (max 2500 words).

Please specify if the abstract is for the “essays” or “readings” section.

Please send abstract to: krevuecontact@gmail.com

Deadline for submission of papers: 5th September 2020.

Proposals may be submitted in English, Italian and French.