

ANGELO PATRI

Pinocchio in America

With an essay by Carmen Petruzzi
and an afterword by Maria Truglio

Original illustrations by Mary Liddell

UNIVERSITÀ

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Foreword

Given the hundreds and hundreds of editions in circulation, as well as the countless studies on the author and the protagonists of the fairy tale, it is easy to believe that the puppet Pinocchio is a classic icon in world literature. For a long time, researchers could only speculate on the number of languages into which Pinocchio had been translated (see Lorenzini 1954). However, a recent article¹ suggests that the adventures of the puppet have been read in 260 languages, so we can certainly speak of a world literary masterpiece.

The story of Pinocchio is known throughout the world: new and original ideas are always being found around the plot and the metaphorical and allegorical meanings of the characters and places that go beyond the literary sphere and childhood studies. It is a story *beyond* the literary canon, it is eternal, where the fantasy genre to which it belongs blends with the fairy-tale style and the pedagogical

1. M. Baudino, *Pinocchio record, è l'italiano più tradotto al mondo*, in «La Stampa», May 17, 2021, online resource: <https://www.lastampa.it/topnews/tempi-moderni/2021/05/18/news/pinocchio-record-e-l-italiano-piu-tradotto-al-mondo-1.40283046/#:~:text=So%20the%20exploit%3A%20the%20fairy%20tale,Indonesian%20or%20Estonian> (last accessed: April 20, 2024).

theme of child growth. The adaptability of the text and the unique characterization of Pinocchio have laid the foundations for a future for the puppet in new forms and contexts, intertwining the forms of media transmission and layering the textual levels and meanings through the senses and continuous experimentation. *The Adventures of Pinocchio* is a cultural product that has gradually become embedded in the cultural horizon of subsequent eras, each time reconstructing the networks of internal connections, the relationships between characters, the metamorphoses, the revelations, and the recognitions, as well as the frequent narrative reversals, captivating entire generations of readers. Thus, even rewritings find a receptive space that allows for a deeper exploration of less investigated historical and cultural aspects.

If reading a book is like opening a window onto the world, then writing a book is like inhabiting it, feeling deeply the creation that takes shape in the mind and on paper. For the great classics of literature, rewriting is a form of respectful homage to the author's ability to have been able to capture the tastes of readers and to have succeeded in telling a timeless story. Rewriting is a regenerative action of the story that does not end in the ways and times imagined by the author but gives it new life, respecting the original narrative elements and characters. A rewriting is the ability of another writer to make someone else's vision their own and enter a world that they did not imagine but are able to inhabit and understand deeply, whose founding ideas, governing rules, lights, and shadows they are able to conceive. In the case of Angelo Patri, we are faced with the sequel to a rewriting in which Patri is connected to both the world

created by Carlo Collodi and the extension of it generated by Eugenio Cherubini in early 20th century Italy.

In 1928, Angelo Patri, principal of Public School 4 in the Bronx, later called Paul Hoffman Junior High School published *Pinocchio in America*, in which he recounts the puppet's journey overseas, engaged in new picaresque adventures until his return to Italy. Patri was intrigued by this fantastic character and had already translated Eugenio Cherubini's book into English. However, he never thought of translating his American adventures for Italian readers, even though they conclude the literary trilogy that began with Carlo Collodi's work and continued with Eugenio Cherubini's.

The author of this study does not present herself as a specialist on *Pinocchio*, and she apologizes in advance to all the great scholars, critics, and interpreters of the most famous puppet in Italian literature if, in these pages, she has failed to pay them the homage they deserve. The intent of this work was not to add another voice to the vast critical landscape that already exists, but rather to offer a historical-educational contribution on one of the American rewritings, and it was designed for educational and workshop use.

The experience provided an opportunity to revisit Collodi and his masterpiece through the lens of education, history, and visual culture. In this sense, it was also essential to examine the film versions of the character, particularly those that have had the greatest impact on the collective imagination and which, as is well known, have progressively 'Disneyfied' the figure of Pinocchio, reducing his symbolic complexity and pedagogical potential. This is why the author makes an explicit invitation to students: before approaching *Pinocchio in America*, it is essential to read and get to know Collodi's

Pinocchio, with its narrative power, its ambiguities, and its educational message, which is still deeply relevant today.

The following chapter offers a reinterpretation of the figure of Carlo Collodi and the historical and cultural context in which *The Adventures of Pinocchio* was born, with references to the main historical, philosophical, psychological, and educational meanings that critics have identified in the work. The text *Pinocchio in America* is then introduced, offering a critical reading positioning it in the context of progressive American pedagogy in the early decades of the 20th century. The book also features Maria Truglio's discerning afterword, which, through her insightful reading, pays tribute to the nuances of Angelo Pati's text and its resonances with the phenomenon of migration.

Finally, the book is enriched by an anastatic reproduction of the 1928 edition, accompanied by Mary Liddell's precious illustrations, which help to define the visual identity of the puppet in his American journey.

In closing, the author would like to express her heartfelt thanks to the family of Mary Liddell, in particular Jonathan Wehle and Nancy Wehle Aboff, for generously granting permission to reproduce the beautiful illustrations created by their grandmother. Heartfelt thanks also go to the people who made this work possible: to Gianluca Tassone and Antonella Cagnolatti, for their constant support and encouragement during the most difficult moments of the process of the research; and to Alexandra de Luise, whom I am proud to call my friend, who patiently and expertly reviewed and corrected the English text.

Carmen Petruzzi