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# Pinocchio, a Political Puppet: the Fascist Adventures of Collodi's Novel

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This article examines four retellings of *Pinocchio* produced during the years of the Fascist regime, ranging from 1923 to 1939. The four texts will be analysed as a case of 'intra-lingual' translation, where the popularity of Collodi's puppet is re-framed and re-interpreted according to different political and educational priorities. I employ a narrative approach in order to determine how the new stories engage with Collodi's novel while also positioning themselves in relation to broader narratives circulating at the time. The diverse ideological dimensions of the re-writings, combined with their chronological breadth, make those texts particularly suitable for showing the breaks and continuity in the narratives circulated by the regime and rooted in pre-existing ideological discourses. The appropriation of the almost mythical character of children's literature will be explored in its ideological implications, and related to the priorities of Fascism at different stages of its evolution.

**KEYWORDS** Pinocchio, Fascism, intra-lingual translation, narrative theory, colonialism, children's literature

Talking about the ideological aspects of children's literature, Oittinen claims that 'Anything we create for children [...] reflects our views of childhood, of being a child'.<sup>1</sup> This is especially evident in the case of children's classics which, as part of a national heritage constructed by adults, are expected to contribute to infant spiritual development for the significance they bear within the adult community. Distance in time and culture between the original texts and the present day readers, (combined with the fact that books for children are often considered to be 'common property') make children's literary classics particularly prone to being manipulated, adapted, and

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<sup>1</sup> Riitta Oittinen, *Translating for Children* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Isabel Desmidt 'A Prototypical Approach within Descriptive Translation Studies? Colliding Norms in Translated Children's Literature', in *Children's Literature in Translation: Challenges and Strategies*, ed. by Jan Van Coillie and Walter P. Verschueren (Manchester: St Jerome, 2006), pp. 79–96.

abridged.<sup>2</sup> First translations of foreign classics are most often followed by subsequent versions, aiming to ‘bring the source text closer to the reader of the day’.<sup>3</sup> A similar phenomenon can also be observed within the same language, where intralingual and often intersemiotic adaptations of classical works are produced over time. The terms ‘intralingual’ and ‘intersemiotic’ were first used in Translation Studies by Roman Jakobson, who considered the internal re-negotiation of meaning occurring in adaptations and re-tellings as a type of translation. In his definition, intralingual translation is ‘an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language’.<sup>4</sup>

This article seeks to explore some of the intralingual adaptations of the classic book for children *Le avventure di Pinocchio* (1883) by Carlo Collodi which were produced during the Italian fascist regime. Italy, between the two wars, has been described by Mario Isnenghi as ‘lo spazio scenico di una grande e coinvolgente recitazione collettiva’,<sup>5</sup> of which, from 1922, Mussolini was the indisputable director. Throughout its course, the fascist regime developed a continuous self-narration, aimed at constructing a sense of identity and belonging to which all previous identifications and loyalties were to be subordinated. Historians have taken different positions on whether Fascism’s aestheticized and theatrical self-representation resulted in a coherent ideology; however, it cannot be denied that the drive towards self-narration was a central aspect of the regime. While Fascism initially presented itself as a revolutionary movement, marking a decisive rupture with the past, its ideological and political legitimization could not transcend the ‘necessità del passato’.<sup>6</sup> The process of ‘making of the fascist self’, in Berezin’s definition,<sup>7</sup> relied heavily on the re-framing and re-interpretation of the national tradition, where the totalitarian project of the regime aimed at a ‘riscrittura della cronologia nazionale’.<sup>8</sup>

In this context, the rewritings of a children’s classic such as *Pinocchio* are particularly revealing of an ongoing process of negotiation with the past underlying fascist ideology.<sup>9</sup> Not only did the fascist *Pinocchios* rely on Collodi’s puppet as an immediately recognizable character, but also, they exploited children’s literature as a privileged channel for propaganda and indoctrination. Looking at those texts as a case of an intralingual, as well as intertemporal, adaptation can offer insights into how the ideology of the regime was constructed and propagated through a selective appropriation of the national past.

Rather than focusing on the linguistic aspects involved in the process of rewriting, as in a more traditional translation-based analysis, I am interested in adopting a

<sup>3</sup> Šebnem Susam-Sarajeva, *Theories on the Move: Translation’s Role in the Travels of Literary Theories* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007) p. 137.

<sup>4</sup> Roman Jakobson defined three types of translation: intralingual translation or rewording; interlingual translation or translation proper; intersemiotic translation or transmutation in his influential essay ‘On Linguistic Aspects of Translation’, in *On Translation*, ed. by Reuben A. Brower (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 232–39.

<sup>5</sup> Mario Isnenghi, *L’Italia del fascio* (Florence: Giunti, 1996), p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Piergiorgio Zunino, *L’ideologia del fascismo. Miti, credenze e valori nella stabilizzazione del regime* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1985), p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> Mabel Berezin, *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Zunino, p. 64.

<sup>9</sup> From now on, I will refer to *Le avventure di Pinocchio* as *Pinocchio*.

narrative approach. Mona Baker has drawn attention to the central role played by translated works in either sustaining or neutralizing narratives across linguistic boundaries.<sup>10</sup> Baker describes narratives as being ‘elaborated by and circulating among social and institutional formations larger than the individual, such as the family, religious or educational institution, political or activist group, the media and the nation’.<sup>11</sup> The fascist Pinocchios analysed here offer an instance where a traditional character of Italian children’s literature becomes a ‘straniero interno’,<sup>12</sup> who needs to be ‘translated’ according to the regime’s ideology and political directives. Applied to an intralingual context, Baker’s model offers a useful theoretical framework to examine how the fascist rewritings of Pinocchio served broader narratives circulated by the regime. In order to do so, I will analyse how the new stories engaged with Collodi’s original, while also constructing new narratives, through textual strategies described by Baker as ‘relationality’, ‘casual emplotment’, ‘selective appropriation’, ‘temporality’ and ‘narrative accrual’.<sup>13</sup> Employed by Baker to describe how narratives are framed in translation, these terms are particularly useful for examining the narratives activated by intralingual rewritings of Pinocchio.

The Italian dictatorship attained power and consensus not only through violent coercive methods, but also — and especially — through the dissemination of powerful narratives. According to Gibelli, Fascism imposed on Italian culture ‘la propria unica, grande favola’,<sup>14</sup> by broadcasting its views through a powerful media apparatus, in the form of stories which blurred boundaries between reality and imagination, politics and narration. The four re-tellings under review, selected on the basis of their relevance to the regime’s political and educational priorities at different stages in its development, represent a useful sample to observe the functional appropriation of certain themes and patterns of Collodi’s story, as well as their evolution over time.

## Pinocchio and its rewritings

A first version of the story now known as *Pinocchio* appeared serially between July 1881 and January 1883 in the children’s magazine *Il Corriere dei Piccoli*, with the title of ‘Storia di un burattino’. In that year, Florentine publisher Felice Paggi published it as a novel with the title of *Le avventure di Pinocchio: storia di un burattino*.

<sup>10</sup> On these issues see Baker, *Translation and Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2006). The author has further explored the implications of using a narrative approach in translation in ‘Reframing Conflict in Translation’, *Social Semiotics*, 17.2 (2007), 151–69.

<sup>11</sup> Mona Baker, ‘Narratives in and of Translation’, *SKASE Journal of Translation and Interpretation*, 1.1 (2005), 4–13 (p. 5).

<sup>12</sup> This definition is used by Enrico Pozzi, who gives the following description: ‘Lo straniero interno non sta oltre il confine spaziale o esistenziale del noi, entra nella dialettica della vicinanza e della distanza, sta nel nostro spazio significativo, appartiene alla nostra comunità, ci è interno. [...] Eppure rimane straniero. Qualcosa lo separa da noi, una differenza intorno a un tratto costitutivo della nostra identità’: ‘Il traditore come straniero interno: psicanalisi di uno stato limite’, *Il Corpo*, 8/9, (1999), 60–82 (p. 70).

<sup>13</sup> The terms are borrowed from social theorists, such as Margaret R. Somers and Gloria D. Gibson and psychologists, such as Jerome Bruner. See Mona Baker, ‘Narratives in and of Translation’; ‘Reframing Conflict in Translation’; *Translation and Conflict*, and ‘Narratives of Terrorism and Security: “Accurate” Translations, Suspicious Frames’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 3.3 (2010), 347–64.

<sup>14</sup> Antonio Gibelli, *Il popolo bambino. Infanzia e nazione dalla Grande Guerra a Salò* (Turin: Einaudi, 2005), p. 246.

The author, Carlo Lorenzini, better known under the pen-name of Collodi, was a writer and social commentator. His subtle irony and ambiguous pedagogical attitude is reflected in the complex moral message of the story, which has been interpreted both as a didactic book for middle-class children,<sup>15</sup> and a denunciation of bourgeois social policies.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, if for some critics, Pinocchio represents a journey towards freedom and human self-realization,<sup>17</sup> for others the protagonist follows an opposite path, moving from the state of nature towards the subordination to capitalist rules.<sup>18</sup>

In a newspaper article, Italo Calvino described Pinocchio as ‘il primo libro che tutti incontrano dopo l’abecedario’, while also pointing out its capacity to ‘offrirsì alla perpetua collaborazione del lettore, per essere analizzato o chiosato e smontato o rimontato’.<sup>19</sup> The significance Collodi’s novel has assumed in Italian culture is emphasized here,<sup>20</sup> together with its complex and multi-dimensional quality, as a distinctive feature of the novel which made it particularly suitable for adaptations and rewritings. In fact, the first ‘Pinocchiate’ emerged less than a decade after the publication of Pinocchio. These short adventurous stories had little in common with Collodi’s book, beyond the name of the protagonist.<sup>21</sup> They often appeared anonymously and were ephemeral publications, relying solely on the popularity of the original puppet.<sup>22</sup>

Re-writings of Pinocchio during the years of Fascism do not come as a surprise: as we read in Isnenghi: ‘Nato per trasmutazione o reinterpretazione di sé [...] il fascismo sembrerebbe restare poi necessitato a una perpetua riscrittura’.<sup>23</sup> The project of re-framing and re-interpreting the national past in order to justify the fascist seizure of power was especially evident in children’s literature. The process of ‘fascitization’ of the school, launched in the mid 1920s, created the need for literature for young readers which would be able to ‘tradurre nei termini del linguaggio fascista libri che gli restano largamente estranei’.<sup>24</sup> In this context, intertemporal translation

<sup>15</sup> This opinion was expressed, among others, by Franco Cambi in *Collodi, De Amicis, Rodari: tre immagini d’infanzia* (Bari: Dedalo, 1985).

<sup>16</sup> See in particular Carl Ipsen, *Italy in the Age of Pinocchio: Children and Danger in the Liberal Era* (New York: Palgrave, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> Luigi Volpicelli, *La verità su Pinocchio* (Rome: Avio, 1954).

<sup>18</sup> Antonio Gagliardi, *Il burattino e il labirinto* (Turin: Tirrenia-Stampatori, 1980).

<sup>19</sup> Italo Calvino, ‘Ma Collodi non esiste’ in *La Repubblica*, 19–20 April 1981, reproduced in Italo Calvino, *Saggi 1945–1985* (Milan: Mondadori, 1995) vol. 1, pp. 801–07, (pp. 803, 804).

<sup>20</sup> It is important to point out that *Pinocchio*’s success was not immediate, and its author did not live to witness it. When Collodi died, the first edition of the book (3,000 copies) was still on the market. From the end of the nineteenth century, however, *Pinocchio*’s rise to success was rapid and spectacular. In 1904, the book was reprinted in 450,000 copies; see Paolo Lorenzini, quoted in Giovanni Gasperini, *La corsa di Pinocchio* (Milano: Vita e pensiero, 1997), p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> The first documented ‘Pinocchiate’ was Oreste Boni’s *Il figlio di Pinocchio*, published by Battei in 1893, closely followed by Gemma Mongiardini’s *Il segreto di Pinocchio*, published by Bemporad one year later.

<sup>22</sup> A notable exception is represented by *Il cuore di Pinocchio* (Florence: Bemporad, 1917), written by Collodi’s nephew Paolo Lorenzini, also known as Collodi Nipote. The story significantly predates the fascist ideological appropriation of the character, turning the puppet into a patriotic boy who desperately wants to volunteer in World War I.

<sup>23</sup> Isnenghi, p. 107.

<sup>24</sup> Adolfo Scotto di Luzio, ‘Letteratura per l’infanzia e storia culturale del fascismo. Il problema dell’Ottocento’, in *Editori e piccoli lettori tra Ottocento e Novecento* ed. by Luisa Finocchi and Ada G. Marchetti (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2004), pp. 185–97 (p. 191).

represented a powerful tool for manipulating the literary tradition, which could be selectively appropriated and presented in a new, fascist light.

Pinocchio, with its symbolic and iconic significance and its existing history of rewritings, was the perfect candidate for such a project of renovation through re-narration. Not only was the puppet extremely popular with children and adults alike, but he was also perceived as the national hero of Italian children's literature, as such contributing to the patriotic cause.<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, fascist rewritings were not aimed at effacing the original novel, whose status as a classic was never questioned.<sup>26</sup> Similarly to the earlier 'Pinocchiate', fascist Pinocchios relied on the celebrity of Collodi's character and the status of his novel, though this time with a more explicit ideological agenda. They addressed a mixed audience of children and adults who were expected to be already familiar with Pinocchio, as a 'fictional character created by a single author' that had 'somehow become part of the oral tradition and of the "public domain" of myth'.<sup>27</sup>

The four rewritings I consider below appeared over a period of sixteen years, between 1923 and 1939. A major consideration behind the selection of the texts was the fact that they offer insights into the different images of itself Fascism produced during its twenty years of rule. While the first two stories show how the process of socialization of the young fascist was conceived of at different stages in the development of fascist politics, the latter two deal with Italian colonialism, offering a significant example of how the image of Italy as a 'colonial power' was constructed.

## Pinocchio, or how to create a young fascist

*Avventure e spedizioni punitive di Pinocchio Fascista* was written by Giuseppe Petrai and published in 1923 by the popular children's publisher Nerbini.<sup>28</sup> The short story mirrors the core values of early Fascism, such as the cult of violence as a force for change and renovation, and the imposition of power through intimidation. The story is presented as a sequel to the original, as made clear in the opening lines: 'Era un pezzo che non vedevo quel briccone di Pinocchio . . .'.<sup>29</sup> Pinocchio's metamorphosis into a real boy, which came at the end of Collodi's novel, is here dismissed, since the protagonist is defined as 'un burattino a modo' and not as a good boy. We may

<sup>25</sup> We read in a history of children's literature of the time: '[...] nel burattino si riconosce il bambino italiano, innamorato del sole e del mare, artista più degli altri bambini'; Vincenzina Battistelli, *La letteratura infantile moderna. Guida bibliografica* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1923), p. 57.

<sup>26</sup> In *La fiera letteraria* of 5 december 1926, we read that Pinocchio was the bestseller of that year, selling 62,000 copies, followed by *I promessi sposi*. See Cristina Barbolani, 'Ancora sul Marino in Spagna: il rapimento d'Europa' in *Rassegna Europea di letteratura italiana*, 2.4 (1994), 53–72 (p. 67).

<sup>27</sup> Marco Arnaudo, 'Against Chapter XXXVI: Sequels and Remakes of Collodi's Pinocchio in Italian Literature'. *Forum Italicum* 41.2 (2007), 382–402 (p. 382).

<sup>28</sup> *Avventure e spedizioni punitive di Pinocchio fascista, Pinocchio fra i Balilla and Pinocchio istruttore del Negus* were reproduced, unabridged, and with the original illustrations, in a volume edited by Luciano Curreri, *Pinocchio in camicia nera* (Cuneo: Nerosubianco, 2008). The volume contains four 'pinocchiate fasciste', originally published between 1923 and 1944, along with a final essay where the editor comments on the documentary value of the fascist rewritings of Pinocchio. The fourth 'pinocchiata', *Il viaggio di Pinocchio* (1944) is not included in my analysis as it is not relevant to the themes discussed in the present article. The additional text I consider here is Anna Franchi, *Pinocchio tra i selvaggi*. (Firenze, Bompiani, 1930).

<sup>29</sup> Giuseppe Petrai, 'Avventure e spedizioni punitive di Pinocchio fascista' in Curreri, *Pinocchio in camicia nera*, pp. 7–23 (p.7).

wonder why, if the moral and spiritual transformation has occurred, the protagonist keeps his wooden body. The reason could be twofold. On the one hand, Pinocchio was widely popular as a puppet, therefore portraying him as such certainly exploited his iconic power. On the other, its visual representation contributed to reinforce the fascist message. Pinocchio's wooden body seems to suggest a resemblance with the fascist weapon par excellence, namely the truncheon, while with his stiff arms and nose the puppet could perfectly perform a fascist salute. His wooden nose is indeed portrayed as an intimidating weapon where Pinocchio is represented in the act of confronting his enemy (Figure 1):

The aggressive boldness of Pinocchio, which already featured in the original novel,<sup>30</sup> is therefore emphasized and re-worked within the fascist myth of virility, which exploits the iconic power of Pinocchio's nose.

The unfinished metamorphosis characterizing the protagonist, who is stuck in a liminal condition being half-puppet and half-human, also seems to mirror Fascism's selective appropriation of the past. If we look at the characterization of this fascist Pinocchio, we can see how some of the traits of Collodi's character are maintained and exaggerated (especially his impulsiveness and risk-taking), while others, such as his naiveté, moral hesitation, and regrets are completely left out. The experience of Pinocchio, as it is retold by Petrai, represents a reverse journey, culminating in the protagonist's full realization as a puppet playing the part of the resolute young Fascist. The plot-line is constituted by an arid description of the actions taken by Pinocchio against the communist puppet Nicolaccio,<sup>31</sup> portrayed as a cowardly

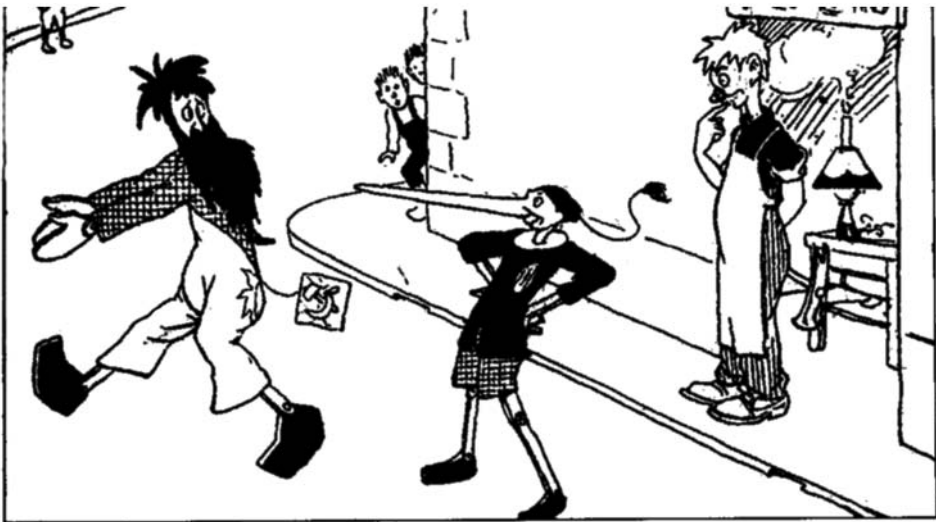


FIGURE 1 Illus. by Giove Toppi. Petrai, p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> This is argued, in particular, by Kuznets when she defines the character of Pinocchio as 'a real boy' who lives a boyish adventure, i.e. physically and violently dangerous. Lois Rostow Kuznets, 'Coming out in Flesh and Blood', in *When Toys Come Alive* (London: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 59–75 (p. 71).

<sup>31</sup> The pejorative nickname of 'Nicolaccio' most probably refers to the real historical figure of Nicola Bombacci, founder member of the Italian Communist Party who had later joined the Fascist Party. See Guglielmo Salotti, *Nicola Bombacci da Mosca a Salò* (Rome: Bonacci, 1986).

political leader, who uses empty words to express sophisticated political ideas that never result in action.

Collodi's naughty, but nonetheless good-hearted, character is replaced by a violent and resolute fascist militant. Describing Pinocchio, Geppetto says: 'Sembra di sentire Cicerone, buon'anima . . . "Siate buoni, lavorate . . . e esercitatevi al manganello!"'.<sup>32</sup> The exhortation has the typical aggressive tone of fascist slogans, where the 'manganello' becomes the symbol of a national and moral regeneration, to be achieved through violence.<sup>33</sup> The mention of Cicero represents a reference to the Roman past which, seen as a 'direct and privileged heritage of Italy',<sup>34</sup> served as a legitimization to Fascism's claims to power. In turn, the character of Geppetto is particularly revealing about Fascism's relationship with more recent Italian history and tradition. First of all, he is defined as 'il padre adottivo di Pinocchio' and, instead of a carpenter, he is now a shoemaker. The old man is therefore denied his role as creator, and his humility is significantly emphasized, as we can see from the submissive behaviour he displays throughout the story. If, on the one hand, his military prowess is celebrated, since readers are informed that 'Da giovine fece il suo dovere di patriota, battendosi nel 1886 a Custoza. Nel 1867 fu con Garibaldi a Mentana', on the other, Geppetto is portrayed as a man who does not expect anything in return for having served his country, and who is only interested in his child's future. 'Il suo orgoglio' we read in the text, 'è Pinocchio'.<sup>35</sup>

It is therefore clear how Petrai's story is informed by an early meta-narrative of Fascism,<sup>36</sup> seeking to legitimize Mussolini's rule as the solution to Italy's national ills and the natural outcome of its history. Such a narrative is activated mainly through 'relationality', described by Baker as the necessity for an event to be interpreted, 'to be conceived of, as an episode, one part of a larger configuration of events'.<sup>37</sup> The narrative activated by *Avventure e spedizioni punitive di Pinocchio Fascista* presents Fascism as a revolutionary movement which signalled discontinuity with the past, while also claiming the legacy of Roman splendour and of the Risorgimento, as a 'rivoluzione mancata' which Fascism only could accomplish.<sup>38</sup> The idea of Fascism as a force of national renovation, which also found legitimacy in the past, is mainly evident in the relationship between Geppetto and Pinocchio described above. The latter clearly serves a meta-narrative of Fascism as a revolutionary, forward-looking movement, where old people, and by extension the old liberal Italy, should transfer their ambitions to their children and make way for the young, fascist movement.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Petrai, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> As Giovanni Gentile claims in describing the violent attitude of Fascism: 'la guerra non era finita, perché sopravviveva il nemico interno, che negava la patria e disprezzava la vittoria'. In *Le origini dell'ideologia fascista (1918-1925)* (Bari: Laterza, 1975), p. 132.

<sup>34</sup> Jan Nelis, 'Constructing Fascist Identity: Benito Mussolini and the Myth of *Romanità*', *Classical World*, 100.4 (2007), 391-415 (p. 396).

<sup>35</sup> Petrai, p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Meta-narratives are defined by Baker as the broader narratives informing the social context we live in. They are characterized by 'a sense of inevitability or inescapability': 'Narratives in and of Translation', p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Baker, 'Narratives in and of Translation', p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> On how the Risorgimento has been 'appropriated' by political forces, see William A Salomone, 'The Risorgimento Between Ideology and History: The Political Myth of the 'Rivoluzione Mancata''. in *American Historical Review*, 68 (1962), 38-56.

<sup>39</sup> Public narratives are described by Baker as 'elaborated by and circulating among social and institutional formations larger than the individual'. In 'Narratives in and of Translation' p. 9.



Pinocchio, as an incarnation of the myth of Youth informing fascist ideology, resolves the tension between continuity and renewal, by presenting an image of Fascism as the 'presente ma anche promessa di un'Italia nuova'.<sup>40</sup>

Petrai's story also relies on 'temporality', according to which narratives are 'embedded in time and space and derive much of their meaning from the temporal moment and physical site of the narration'.<sup>41</sup> The author weaves a dense web of references to fascist culture, from the allusion to castor oil as a common instrument of torture, to the mention of the regime's satirical magazine *Quattrocentoventi*, details of which are given as if to advertize it.<sup>42</sup> As a consequence, from a stylistic point of view, the text is strongly localized in the fascist context, to the point of reading more as a propagandistic leaflet than as a work of literature.

Besides contributing to the public narrative of early Fascism, the dimensions of 'temporality' and 'relationality' also contribute to the way the audience is constructed and addressed. Published in a series for the young, the book is clearly targeted at children as implied readers, as we can infer from the flat, didactic tone, combined with the presence of illustrations. At the same time, the myth of Youth embodied by the figure of Pinocchio is also meant to appeal to adult readers, who are invited by the narrator to share the same admiration for the teenage protagonist.

Seeking the approval of the adult, who is presumed to control the child's reading experience, is a common strategy in children's literature. However, in the context under review, addressing an ambivalent audience can be seen as having political implications.<sup>43</sup> In Petrai's rewriting, not only are adults expected to approve of the educational contents; they are also invited to sympathize with the vitalistic virtues of the protagonist, as a symbol of lost youth. The spontaneity of the puppet, combined with the rough, untamed energy, clearly represents Fascism as a new movement, born in response to the inadequacies of liberal Italy.

The second re-writing under examination is the work of Cirillo Schizzo,<sup>44</sup> which appeared in 1927, again with the publisher Nerbini. This text is entirely different in tone from the one discussed above, and seems to relate to a later ideological evolution of Fascism, which from presenting itself as a dissident and revolutionary organization had now gone on to become the dominant actor on the Italian political scene.

The title, *Pinocchio fra i Balilla*, immediately reveals the kind of adventure Pinocchio is going to have. Schizzo's story is not presented as a sequel of Collodi's novel, but rather as a fascist alternative to it, thus appropriating elements of the original plot only to distort them according to a new system of values. Contrary to the previous

<sup>40</sup> Zunino, p. 241.

<sup>41</sup> Mona Baker, 'Reframing Conflict in Translation', p. 155.

<sup>42</sup> *Quattrocentoventi* was a weekly satirical and humour magazine founded by Mario Nerbini and first published during World War I; it progressively became closer to the regime.

<sup>43</sup> Zohar Shavit has written extensively on the 'ambivalent status' of texts for children in *Poetics of Children's Literature* (London: The University of Georgia Press, 1986).

<sup>44</sup> On the front cover, after the name of Cirillo Schizzo we read 'del 420', a name of a Fascist satirical magazine, and then, in brackets: 'ps. di Schiatti, Gino'. There are reasons to believe that Gino Schiatti, a well-known contributor of the journal *Quattrocentoventi*, is the real person behind the pseudonym of Cirillo Schizzo, a comic strip character created by cartoonist Attilio Mussino which, published in *Il giornale dei piccoli* during World War I, glorified the military actions of Italians. This hypothesis would also be supported by the fact that Gino Schiatti had published an earlier 'Pinocchiata', *Pinocchio nella luna* (Florence: Nerbini, 1911).

rewriting, Pinocchio is here depicted as a naughty and disobedient child, who is 'sopportato con paterna ed evangelica rassegnazione dal buon Mastro Geppetto suo padre'.<sup>45</sup> The son-father relationship therefore shares some similarities with the one described in Collodi's story, where the old man desperately tries to discipline his unruly puppet/son. Gagliardi has identified in the pedagogical message underlying Collodi's Pinocchio 'un capovolgimento dell'Emilio', insofar as the protagonist is eventually forced to give up his child-like spontaneity and conform to social norms.<sup>46</sup> Pinocchio Balilla seems to follow a similar path, even though, contrary to what happens to Collodi's character, his 'diversità del legno'<sup>47</sup> is not rejected but rather institutionalized when, at the end of the story, Pinocchio the trouble-maker becomes a strong leader and a perfect fascist boy. An element that this and the previous rewriting have in common is the fact that the moral aspect of the story is significantly simplified. The episodes which reveal a moral complexity in the original are, in Schizzo's version, presented in a way which suggests a clear-cut division between right and wrong, guilt and punishment. *Pinocchio fra i Balilla* opens with the puppet being first chased by a dog and then, having being mistaken for a dog himself, taken prisoner by a dog-catcher. In Collodi's story, the puppet is similarly chased by a ferocious dog, and he is later obliged to act as a guard-dog at a peasant's house. Stuck in such an absurd situation, the protagonist is confronted with a series of moral dilemmas, to which we find no reference in Schizzo's version. For instance, in the former, one night Pinocchio is awoken by four thieves who are trying to break into the house and offer him some food in return for his silence. The thieves inform him that the guard-dog who preceded him used to accept their gifts in exchange for letting them steal some animals every week. The puppet firmly refuses to be corrupted, despite the harsh conditions of his life, while also deciding not to report the previous guard-dog, who had passed away that same day.

In another episode of the original Tuscan novel, just when he starts to behave like a perfect pupil, Pinocchio is cruelly betrayed by his schoolmates and must leave school for good. However, the puppet will still complete his moral education and eventually become a real boy. Collodi's views on the public education provided in Italy remain ambiguous, and so is the author's attitude towards the public narrative of school as 'the site where geographical Italy is to be transformed into a nation'.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, in the rewriting by Schizzo, school is depicted in a strictly positive light, as the best deterrent to Pinocchio's anti-social behaviour. The process of socialization of the puppet/child is realized through his integration within the mass-organization structures provided by the regime, and presented as ensuring the harmony between the individual and the community. The school system, in particular, which was undergoing a major process of Fascistization in those years, is described by Schizzo as the central pivot of Fascist society. The combined efforts of the school teacher and the Opera Nazionale Balilla (ONB), an organization at once subordinate and parallel to the State, act as a normalizing force, and bring the puppet into line. In this regard, it is worth noticing that *Pinocchio fra i Balilla* was published in

<sup>45</sup> Cirillo Schizzo, 'Pinocchio fra i Balilla' in Luciano Currieri, *Pinocchio in camicia nera*, pp. 25–48 (p. 26).

<sup>46</sup> Gagliardi, *Il Burattino*, p. 24.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27.

<sup>48</sup> Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg. *The Pinocchio Effect. On Making the Italians (1860–1920)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 17.

the same year as Bottai's *Carta del Lavoro*, an important document regulating the relations between unions and employers on which the *Carta della Scuola* would later be modelled. In the first statement of the *Carta del Lavoro*, we read:

La Nazione Italiana è un organismo avente fini, vita, mezzi di azione superiore a quelli degli individui divisi o raggruppati che la compongono. È un'unità morale, politica ed economica, che si realizza integralmente nello Stato Fascista.<sup>49</sup>

Schizzo's rewriting reflects the regime's educational agenda, which was aimed at preparing children to become good and obedient fascist citizens, ready to subordinate their individual needs to those of the state. The central importance of school as a primary site for inculcating national values and forging a national identity, and its connection with the crucial role of the state as educator, are evident from the exclamations of Pinocchio's friends. Once the puppet has finally agreed to join the Balilla, he is celebrated by his friends, who shout: 'Bravo Pinocchio! Evviva Pinocchio Balilla! Evviva il Fascismo! Evviva l'Italia! Evviva la scuola! Evviva il Maestro!'<sup>50</sup> (my emphasis).

If we look at the way Schizzo engages with Collodi's novel, we notice how the retelling enacts a 'selective appropriation' of the original story. Such a textual strategy, described by Baker as fundamental to the construction of a coherent narrative, mainly concerns the protagonist, whose childlike traits are particularly emphasized in the first part of the story, describing all the elaborate pranks the puppet plays on his fellow countrymen. In Schizzo's rewriting, Pinocchio is portrayed as a dangerous rebel, a loose cannon who is not integrated into society. Fascism, in turn, is presented as the only force which manages to positively employ his destructive energies at the service of its political project, thus restoring social order.<sup>51</sup> As the plot unfolds, we can see how this result is obtained through a violent strategy of indoctrination, where the protagonist, defined as 'un demonio di legno', is humiliated and finally persuaded to embrace Fascism — at least in its rituals. The moral structure of the story resembles that of a cautionary tale, warning the reader about the dreadful consequences faced by those who refuse to comply. A clear example of this can be found in Figure 2, which delivers a threatening message about the danger of challenging the social order:

The situation is described as follows: 'Risa, frizzi, motti salaci, scherzi e diletteggii d'ogni genere mortificarono il ribelle burattino, il quale alla fine, non potendone più, cominciò a piangere dirottamente'.<sup>52</sup> Pinocchio eventually manages to stop the bullying, but only by promising to join the Balilla and become a good boy. The difference with Collodi's novel is striking: in the corresponding passage, when the protagonist is harassed by a group of schoolmates, he bursts out with: 'Badate ragazzi: io non sono venuto qui per essere il vostro buffone. Io rispetto gli altri e voglio essere rispettato'.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Marco Palla, *Mussolini e il Fascismo* (Bologna: Giunti, 2006), p. 54.

<sup>50</sup> Schizzo, p. 42.

<sup>51</sup> Gibelli has shown how the 'monello che diviene eroe bruciando le tappe ed entrando repentinamente nel mondo degli adulti' is a recurrent figure in Italian children's literature. From the Risorgimento onwards, such a 'potenzialità di metamorfosi dal disvalore al valore, dalla monelleria al patriottismo, dalla vita randagia di strada al gesto che risolve la dignità del popolo' (p. 25) has featured widely both in literature and in nationalist, warmongering propaganda, finding its fullest expression in fascist propaganda.

<sup>52</sup> Schizzo, p. 38.

<sup>53</sup> Carlo Collodi, *Pinocchio* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2004), p. 178.

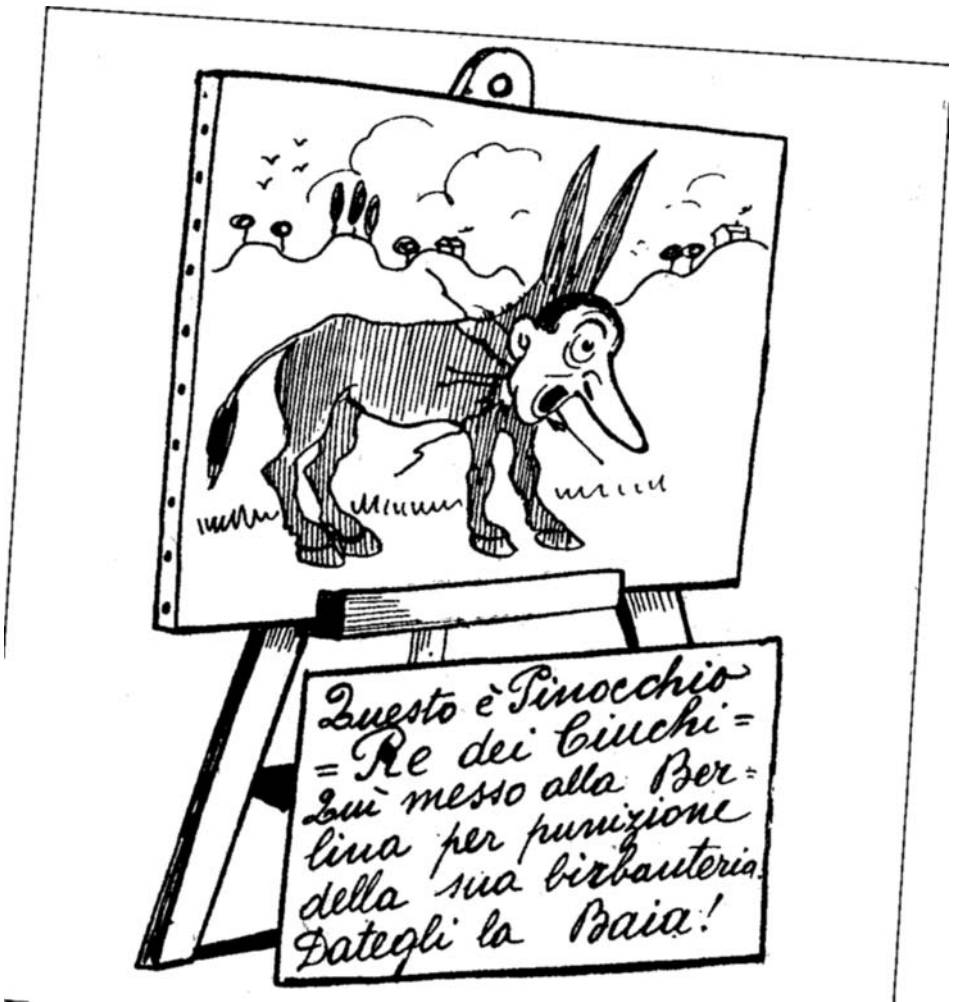


FIGURE 2 Illus. by Cirillo Schizzo. Schizzo, p. 39.

In both Petrai's and Schizzo's rewritings, the narrative reaffirms the necessity for individuals to subordinate their personal interests to the collective good, embodied by Fascism. In the later text, however, Fascism is no longer represented by its revolutionary components; instead, it expresses itself in institutional structures. The narrative of the origins, which legitimized Fascism's seizure of power, presenting it as an overwhelming force of renovation, was here substituted by an image of the regime as an established and institutionalized political entity. Nonetheless, the distinctive traits of early Fascism, such as unruliness, spontaneity, and passion, are not completely repudiated, but rather channelled into a new public narrative where the revolutionary Fascism of the origins appears to be 'Politicamente neutralizzato, e, tuttavia, sempre disponibile sul piano della mobilitazione ideologica'.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Scotto di Luzio, p.197.

## The African adventures of Pinocchio

During the fascist regime, colonialism came to acquire a key role in Mussolini's political project. Fascist Italy had inherited from the previous period colonial possessions in Libya, Somalia, and Eritrea, but the liberal State had never managed to consolidate its control or expand its authority over the indigenous populations. The myth-making surrounding colonial enterprise presented Italian aggression as a means to avenge national honour, especially after the disastrous defeat at Adwa (1896), while also restoring the prestige of the Roman Empire and establishing a direct connection with the fascist present.

The Ethiopian campaign (1935–1936), which culminated in the establishment of the Italian empire in Africa, generated a massive propaganda effort, aimed at winning the support of Italian people 'a partire dall'infanzia'.<sup>55</sup> Colonial expansion became a primary subject of interest in Italian elementary and secondary school, as we can see from textbooks as well as other publications for children devoted to the celebration of Italian colonialism.<sup>56</sup>

The last two rewritings of Pinocchio I am going to examine should be read in this context. In both stories the colonial enterprise is portrayed as an exciting adventure and the key themes underpinning fascist propaganda are integrated into the plot. However, that is where their similarities end. As I will show, the imperialist stance underlying both texts has been articulated into very different ideological positions, reflecting different (although not unrelated) attitudes towards Africa.

*Pinocchio fra i selvaggi* was published by Salani in 1930 and narrates the adventurous expedition of Pinocchio in Africa. The text significantly differs from those examined earlier, both in form and in content. *Pinocchio fra i selvaggi* presents itself as a novel rather than a short story, as signalled both by its length (more than a hundred pages) and its literary style. Moreover, the author, Anna Franchi,<sup>57</sup> was a leftist intellectual who never openly supported the regime, therefore the text cannot be assumed to be informed by an explicit purpose of ideological indoctrination. However, as the analysis will show, Franchi's novel is inscribed within the meta-narrative informing the relationship between Africa and the West.

The story begins with the protagonist who, despite now living a comfortable life as a real boy, cannot resist the urge for adventure and sets off to the most remote regions of Africa, with the declared intention of travelling among the 'selvaggi'.<sup>58</sup> From the very beginning, Pinocchio is portrayed as an explorer, rather than a conqueror,

<sup>55</sup> Paolo Boero and Carmine De Luca, *La letteratura per l'infanzia* (Rome: Laterza, 1995) p. 186.

<sup>56</sup> Most colonial short stories for children were published in the series 'Eroi d'Italia' and 'Serie Avventure' by the Milanese publishing house Carroccio. Among the many interesting examples of colonial novels produced for the young, it is worth mentioning Emitta Nobile, *Il figlio dell'impero: romanzo per i Balilla*. (Florence: Bemporad, 1938) and Arnaldo Cipolla, *Balilla regale: romanzo africano per giovinetti*. (Milan: Est, 1935) also discussed by Palumbo in her insightful essay 'Orphans for the Empire', in *A Place in the Sun*, ed. by Patrizia Palumbo (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 225–52.

<sup>57</sup> A writer and journalist, Anna Franchi supported the Socialist Party and was actively engaged in social struggles for women rights, especially the right to vote and to divorce. She mainly wrote autobiographical novels, which anticipate the works of later feminist writers, as well as some children's stories and art criticism. See Sharon Wood, 'Feminist writing in the twentieth century', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Novel*, ed. by Andrea Ciccarelli and Peter Bondanella (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 151–66.

<sup>58</sup> Pinocchio says, at the beginning of the tale: 'Andrò in Affrica, tra i selvaggi', Franchi, p. 4.

in line with a pre-colonial, pre-Fascist literary tradition of travel writing. However, even in that tradition, the relationship of power between the explorer and the native population was essentially asymmetrical and most often informed by racist assumptions.<sup>59</sup> Exploration and discovery, even when not informed by a clear colonial project, were not ideologically neutral activities, and the way the exotic is deciphered and portrayed in travel writing contributed to later imperialist discourses. As Puccini has convincingly argued with regards to Italian nineteenth-century explorers, the traveller's body represented his country, while the natives were mapped and appropriated as part of their environment.<sup>60</sup>

In Franchi's rewriting, Pinocchio is presented as a real boy but, interestingly, he lives alone with animals. Ostracized by human society, he seems to have maintained the liminal nature of the living puppet, an element of disorder which cannot be fully normalized. As Gagliardi says with regard to the original ending: 'Il burattino rimane in scena, testimone pericoloso di un altro modo di essere',<sup>61</sup> as if the irreducible diversity of Pinocchio had survived the metamorphosis. In *Pinocchio fra i selvaggi*, before setting off to Africa, the protagonist wears his wooden puppet costume, as if to restore the brave and adventurous spirit that animated the original character.<sup>62</sup> If, on the one hand, the iconic power of the well-known character is exploited, on the other the reappropriation of an old, mythical appearance also signals that we are moving beyond the threshold of reality. From that point onwards, the fairy tale-like atmosphere is infused with magic elements and the reader is made aware that s/he is entering the realm of the supernatural.<sup>63</sup>

Among the supernatural elements in the story, a central role is played by Pinocchio's relationship with animals. From the moment he wears his puppet costume, he is able to communicate with them, and throughout his journey he encounters animals which join him as travel companions. This aspect is particularly interesting if we consider that the story develops a parallel between the animals and the native Africans, whose inferiority and uncivilized manners are similarly emphasised. As we can see from Figure 3, when Pinocchio is greeted by a group of compatriots who compliment him on his heroism, the African friend who has stood by him throughout

<sup>59</sup> Loredana Polezzi points out how travel writing, which has linked Italy and Africa from the end of the nineteenth century, is, with its supposedly objective and informative nature, perhaps even more ideologically marked than fictional narratives. In 'Between the Exotic and the Heroic', *Fogli di anglistica*, 1–2 (2007), 9–24 (p. 9).

<sup>60</sup> Sandra Puccini, *Andare lontano: Viaggi ed etnografia nel secondo Ottocento* (Rome: Carocci, 1999) quoted in Loredana Polezzi, 'White, Male and Italian? Performing Masculinity in Italian Travel Writing about Africa' in *In Corpore. Bodies in Post-unification Italy*, ed. by Loredana Polezzi and Charlotte Ross (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), pp. 29–55.

<sup>61</sup> Gagliardi, *Il burattino*, p. 157.

<sup>62</sup> In this regard, Marco Arnaudo claimed that: 'By deciding to leave the body of the puppet on stage at the end of the novel [...] Collodi also opened a series of narrative options for the authors who came after him. That dead puppet lying on the chair, indeed, reminds us that the crazy, unpredictable, energetic, anarchic and jester-like puppet we loved through the novel hasn't been cancelled by or sublimated into the good boy that lives now with Geppetto'. in 'Against Chapter XXXVI', p. 383.

<sup>63</sup> We might claim that Franchi adopts a 'fairy tale approach', to quote Emer O' Sullivan's definition of one of the strategies frequently used by translators to make complex works, such as *Alice in Wonderland*, more acceptable in the target context. See 'Alice in Different Wonderlands', in *Children's Literature and National Identity*, ed. by Margaret Meek (London: Trentham, 2001), pp. 11–22 (p. 15).

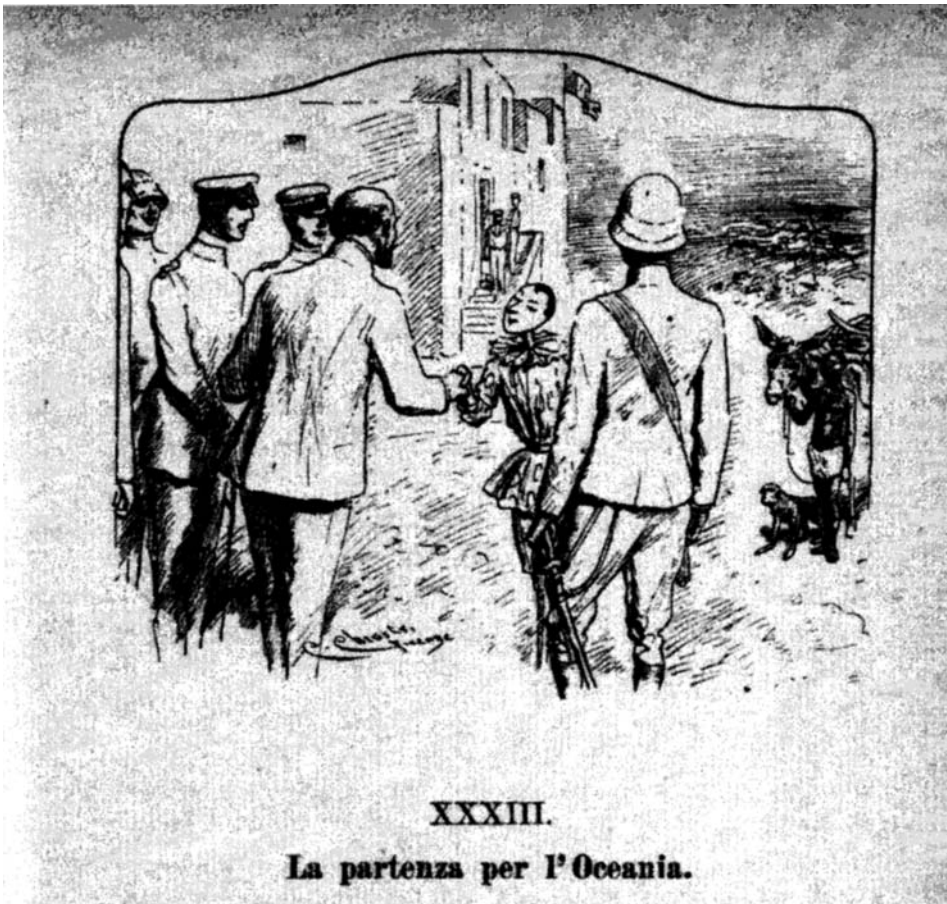


FIGURE 3 Franchi, p. 187.

his adventure, showing exceptional loyalty and bravery, is visually assimilated to the animal kingdom and remains in the background.<sup>64</sup>

The relationship between Pinocchio and the natives is informed by anthropological theories of the early nineteenth century, which were finally discarded with the Ethiopian war in 1935. These theories argued for the possibility of ‘civilizing’ the natives.<sup>65</sup> Although he displays an attitude of superiority towards local people, Pinocchio appreciates their good-hearted nature, as we can see from the following passage, where the protagonist is planning his escape from an African village: ‘ma io non ho nessuna voglia di diventare selvaggio per l’eternità!... poi rise, pensando alla grande mitezza di quei buoni africani’<sup>66</sup> (my emphasis). Pinocchio is very keen on educating

<sup>64</sup> The African boy is explicitly referred to as part of the animal world also a few pages later, when Pinocchio comes across a team of Italian explorers, who are said to be ‘sorpresi dal coraggio di quel ragazzo e dall’affiatamento che aveva col suo negro e con le sue bestie’ (my emphasis), Franchi, p. 195.

<sup>65</sup> Barbara Sòrgoni, ‘Discorsi e pratiche razziste nell’impero italiano durante il Fascismo’ in *Le politiche del riconoscimento delle differenze*, ed. by Ralph Grillo and Jeff Pratt (Rome: Guaraldi, 2006), pp. 79–100.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 84.

the native Africans on the basic notions of civilization, which set humans apart from the animal kingdom. For instance, he teaches them how to use cutlery, and he is much surprised to see that they are able to learn this skill.

Despite being presented as an adventurous tale, *Pinocchio fra i selvaggi* is situated within an ideological framework that foreshadows many of the themes touched upon and developed in later colonial propaganda supporting the Ethiopian campaign. If we consider Baker's definition of narrativity as normalizing 'the accounts it projects over a period of time, so that they come to be perceived as self-evident, benign, incontestable and non controversial',<sup>67</sup> we can observe how this novel reinforces the dominant assumptions about Africa circulating at the time. This is achieved especially through a textual strategy of 'narrative accrual', a term that Baker borrows from psychologist Jerome Bruner to describe the 'process of repeated exposure to a narrative or set of narratives, leading to the shaping of a culture, tradition or history'.<sup>68</sup> The representation of Africans as barbarians, but also as childish and naïve populations perfectly serves the imperialist rhetoric of paternalism, which will later present the colonial mission as a two-way deal, as well as reinforcing the national myth of 'Italiani brava gente'.

Moreover, the metonymic and symbolic quality of Pinocchio is exploited to serve a patriotic narrative. The puppet/boy is presented by Franchi as a symbol of Italy, through meta-literary strategies. Pinocchio describes himself as 'il figlio di un noto scrittore il quale, poveretto, non mi ha veduto crescere',<sup>69</sup> therefore building his identity on his (and Collodi's) literary status. Later on, the puppet is recognized by a Western traveller in Africa, who treats him like an international celebrity, telling him: 'Vidi il tuo ritratto l'altro giorno in una vetrina di librario, al Canada'.<sup>70</sup> In this way, not only does the character of Pinocchio represent Italian literary identity, but he also gives evidence of its recognition on the international scene, at a time when the country's prestige abroad was a primary political concern.

The socialist leanings of Franchi complicate the picture. We may hypothesize that, in writing for children, the author adheres to the dominant discourses on Africa supporting colonialism at the time, and restrains from revealing her own ideological positions. Or it might also be that her revolutionary views on women's rights did not correspond to a critical attitude towards colonialism. In this regard, it is worth considering the final scene of the novel. When Pinocchio shows off the African boy he has brought back to Italy with him as a trophy, the women of the Italian village where he is are ridiculed for their reactions, as one of them exclaims: 'Fate scappare i bambini. Giovannino! Felice! Bertò! Via, presto venite a casa: c'è un selvaggio che ci mangia'.<sup>71</sup> Racism based on ignorance is mocked and condemned, in favour of a paternalistic, imperialist attitude towards Africa. Engaging in further, detailed speculation on the author's position with regards to the fascist regime goes beyond the scope of this work. However, it is worth emphasizing how *Pinocchio fra i selvaggi* is situated within an ideological framework that foreshadows many of the themes

<sup>67</sup> Mona Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, p. 11.

<sup>68</sup> Mona Baker, 'Narratives in and of Translation', p. 6.

<sup>69</sup> Franchi, p. 90.

<sup>70</sup> Franchi, p. 191.

<sup>71</sup> Franchi, *Pinocchio*, p. 240.



touched upon and developed in later colonial propaganda supporting the Ethiopian campaign. Such themes are fully articulated in the last rewriting I will discuss, namely, a colonial Pinocchio which was published anonymously by Marzocco in 1939, a couple of years after the establishment of the Italian empire in Africa, and shortly after the promulgation of the racial laws in Italy.<sup>72</sup>

Imbued with imperialist ideology, *Pinocchio istruttore del Negus* is set in the fascist colony of Abyssinia. Pinocchio ends up there while trying to escape punishment for his mischievous conduct. In the opening scene, the puppet, completely soaked in chocolate, is being chased by a crowd of furious peasants. A British gentleman, mistaking him for an Abyssinian, rescues him and takes him to Africa to meet the Abyssinian leader, the Negus. The language used in the story is very simple, the style is humorous and playful, and Pinocchio is represented as a young puppet with boyish features, as we can see from Figure 4, which also offers an unflattering representation of the Englishman:

Compared to the first African Pinocchio analysed above, the European dimension which emerges from Franchi's re-writing is here replaced by a hostile nationalistic attitude,<sup>73</sup> clearly serving the meta-narrative of autarchy, aimed to 'valorize the nationally specific against the internationalizing tendencies of mass culture'.<sup>74</sup>

Italy's autarchic isolation was glorified in the propaganda of the time, after sanctions had been imposed on the country by the League of Nations for its unjustified aggression towards Ethiopia, and this is shown by the racist remarks the protagonist makes both against his British 'saviour' and the native population of Africa. The infantilization of the protagonist, which results in the infantilization of the implied reader, seems to allow for an unrefined humour, which strongly relies on stereotypes.

Pinocchio is presented as an outsider, feared by and alienated from his community. A puppet in a human society, he can be seen as embodying adult anxieties about childhood as a liminal and morally precarious state. Palumbo has pointed out how the peripheral position occupied by children in society raises an interesting parallel with that of the native Africans,<sup>75</sup> towards whom Fascist rhetoric showed similar feelings of fear and protectiveness. In this regard, it is important to bear in mind that the official anthropological theories had changed during the years of the Ethiopian war, in order to provide a stronger 'scientific' support to Italy's imperialist aggression. The new theories placed additional emphasis on the irreducible alterity of Africans, thus justifying the stricter segregationist policies adopted in the colonies. Significantly, as soon as Pinocchio arrives in Africa, the difference between the Italian puppet and the native people appears strikingly evident. The excitement Pinocchio

<sup>72</sup> Already in 1936, Italian citizenship had been denied to mulattoes and, one year later, a law against miscegenation had been introduced. Italian racial policy became stricter over the course of 1938: on July 14, the 'Manifesto degli scienziati razzisti' was published, followed in October and November by the approval of the 'Leggi Razziali'.

<sup>73</sup> Rosalia Franco shows how, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, colonialism was portrayed as a European movement of expansion in one of the main Italian children's journal 'La Domenica dei Fanciulli'. 'Colonialismo per ragazzi': *Studi Storici*, 35.1 (1994), 129–51.

<sup>74</sup> Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 136.

<sup>75</sup> Palumbo argues that 'Occupying a position in this evolutionary schema that equates them with the colonized, children may be seen as particularly vulnerable to the form of moral and physical degeneration that colonial discourse often ascribed to the colonizer' (p. 231).



**.... agguantò per la collottola  
l'involontario disturbatore....**

FIGURE 4 'Pinocchio istruttore del Negus', p. 53.

had experienced at the idea of visiting a 'dark' and mysterious continent, which played a key role in the Italian public imagination, immediately fades away, and attraction gives way to repulsion, in accordance with that mixture of feelings which characterized the Italian relationship with Africa.<sup>76</sup> During the brief time he spends in Africa, Pinocchio fully realizes his identity through contrast. Everyone praises him as fast, strong and witty, all attributes which clearly stand out in opposition to the African people, described as lazy and idle. 'Quel demonio sgambettava con una tale velocità che non gli si vedevano le punte dei piedi',<sup>77</sup> the author notes, where the word 'demonio', which already featured in *Pinocchio tra i Balilla*, is here used with admiration. The puppet's impudence and his aggressiveness are turned into positive qualities in the colonial context, where the 'ne'er-do-well' comes into contact with his true, Italian self.

<sup>76</sup> Loredana Polezzi speaks about Africa as playing 'un ruolo ambiguamente speculare' in the Italian imagination of the time, characterized by attraction and repulsion: 'Esotismi-Eroismi: motivi d'Africa nell'immaginario fascista' in *Immagini e retorica di regime*, ed. by Attilio Brilli (Milan: Motta, 2001), pp. 51–54.

<sup>77</sup> 'Pinocchio istruttore del Negus', in *Currieri*, pp. 50–60 (p. 59).

Whilst Pinocchio is utterly disgusted by the African way of life, especially by the eating habits and the lack of hygiene of local people, the British gentleman is completely comfortable in the Abyssinian environment. Both the Englishman and the native Africans speak a simplified form of Italian, with all verbs in the infinitive; they are also depicted as lazy, cowardly, and easily fooled by Pinocchio's wit. Language comes to constitute an important indicator of civilization, and the ridiculing of the awkward Italian spoken by the British man as well as by the Abyssinians becomes a sign of their intellectual inferiority. The British man is presented as childish, particularly when he mistakes Pinocchio for an African because of his apparently dark skin. Moreover, he seems naïve in his inability to understand figurative language; when Pinocchio refers to the British Intelligence as 'zucconi',<sup>78</sup> he takes this as a compliment.

The indisputable superiority of Pinocchio is made explicit also in relation to the irreducible difference which separates him from the Africans and from the Englishman. The Negus himself reassures Pinocchio, whose chocolate coating is being licked off by a harmless lion, saying: 'Non avere paura . . . Noi non diventiamo mai bianchi',<sup>79</sup> thus reinforcing the narrative of cultural and biological superiority.

Reconnecting with his racial superiority helps Pinocchio gain a sense of nationalistic pride, which, in turn, makes him become a 'better person'. The story is thus functional to the narrative presenting colonialism as a project of expansion and renovation,<sup>80</sup> beneficial to society as a whole. In the final scene of *Pinocchio istruttore del Negus*, after kicking the Negus in the face, Pinocchio runs away, in the hope of rejoining the Italian military forces. While waving an Italian flag, he is rescued by an Italian military helicopter whose pilot had immediately recognized him because, as the narrator rhetorically asks: 'Chi è l'italiano che non riconosce Pinocchio anche se un po' abbronzato . . . dalla cioccolata?'.<sup>81</sup> The closing line is especially revealing of how this rewriting exploits the ideological implications of the metonymic nature of translation, defined by Tymoczko as the power to cast a certain image of the source text and the source culture.<sup>82</sup> In this respect, *Pinocchio istruttore del Negus* has shown how intralingual translation can be a powerful tool, as it exploits the metonymic value of Collodi's puppet both as a character and as a literary creation which has attained the status of 'classic'. 'Relationality' and 'temporality' contribute, once again, to the construction of a narrative where the iconic value of the protagonist establishes a link with the Italian literary and cultural tradition, while his racist and imperialistic attitudes reflect the priorities of the foreign policy of the time.

## Conclusion

Burdett claims that '[t]he success of Fascism in extending the boundaries of the modern state was achieved not only through coercion but through its ability to

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p. 53.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p. 59. The anthropologist Lido Cipriani, one of the signatories of the *Manifesto della Razza* which appeared in 1938, speaks about the 'inferiorità mentale irriducibile nei sudditi di colore'. Quoted in Sòrgoni, p. 86.

<sup>80</sup> The need for conquest and expansion are defined by Mussolini as 'sintomi della forza vitale dell'uomo. Finché uno vive, è imperialista. Cessa di esserlo con la morte'. Quoted in Emilio Ludwig, *Colloqui con Mussolini* (Verona: Mondadori, 1932), p. 61.

<sup>81</sup> Franchi, p. 60.

<sup>82</sup> Maria Tymoczko, *Translation in a Postcolonial Context* (Manchester: St Jerome, 1999).

encourage mass consensus by propagating a vision of society that large sections of the public were prepared to appropriate and adapt'.<sup>83</sup> The present article has examined how intralingual, intertemporal adaptations of Pinocchio contributed to the fascist project of re-modelling and re-interpreting the past to attain national regeneration. Collodi's character was particularly suited to this function: as a puppet, Pinocchio is a protagonist without a past, while at the same time his iconic and symbolic significance make him recognizable in the most different contexts.

The first two re-writings have shown how Collodi's tale was explicitly manipulated to serve the propaganda purposes of the regime at different stages of its evolution. In particular, while the first text supports a narrative of Fascism as a revolutionary movement, the second reflects its efforts to achieve institutionalisation and political legitimacy. The latter two have exposed ideological connections and continuities between colonial and pre-colonial periods, showing how the image of Africa, constructed by European writers and ethnographers, was later appropriated by fascist imperialist discourses.

Looking at the way these texts engage with the original novel, while portraying new images of Pinocchio in line with changed political and social circumstances, has revealed the breaks and continuities both in the public narratives developed by Fascism and in the pre-existing meta-narratives informing Italian society. In particular, the analysis of how the rewritings engage with the narratives circulated by the regime has shown how the same elements can acquire diverse meanings and connotations, once inscribed in a different narrative. Intralingual and intratemporal adaptation can therefore be used as a powerful ideological weapon, which can serve different aims.

For instance, the metonymic value of Pinocchio, where the puppet-boy becomes a metaphor for Italy, is central to all re-writings but it is used to support heterogeneous narratives. In the African context, Pinocchio clearly serves a patriotic purpose, inscribed within the 'us' versus 'them' rhetoric, central to the narratives of colonial identity. On the other hand, in the earlier rewritings, the 'enemy' is represented either by the communists or by non-conformist rebels. According to the narrative different characteristics of the puppet are emphasized, through a functional appropriation of his original traits, accumulated in the public consciousness.

Pinocchio's journey from toy to boy can therefore be seen as 'la storia di una ricongiunzione, la conquista di uno statuto pieno dell'esistenza che solo il fascismo permette di realizzare'.<sup>84</sup> Even if, in the new texts, the journey is not accomplished, as the puppet does not become a real boy, the rewritings still exploit the original 'narrative of realization'. As in a palimpsest, elements of the original text remain visible under the new meanings superimposed by the fascist texts.<sup>85</sup>

However, we can also note how the richness of Collodi's novel, in which universal meanings were condensed into tangible characters and situations, is considerably jeopardized in all four rewritings, which are informed by a more clearly educational

<sup>83</sup> Charles Burdett, *Journey Through Fascism. Italian Travel Writing Between the Wars* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2010), p. 1.

<sup>84</sup> Scotto di Luzio, p. 193.

<sup>85</sup> According to Kristin Langellier and Eric E. Peterson, 'We should not assume that the process of content sedimentation fixes meaning': *Storytelling in daily life: performing narrative* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), p. 56.

stance. In particular, the way childhood is portrayed in the fascist rewritings of Pinocchio notably differs from its treatment by Collodi, as a fundamental process of moral development. While in the original novel the protagonist learns his lessons through experience, in the fascist narratives the puppet-child is never confronted with the ambiguous nature of freedom. Either inner constraints (in the case of Pinocchio as a Fascist in miniature) or exterior ones (when the protagonist is rejected by society) hold his strings, denying him true moral growth. Childhood seems to be used only as a pretext to produce ephemeral, disposable stories, meant to reach beyond their primary audience. Children's literature, in turn, is exploited as a privileged channel for the indoctrination of what Gibelli defines a 'popolo bambino',<sup>86</sup> infantilized by the modes of propaganda employed by the regime.

Significantly, we read in a magazine of the time that 'anche i più piccini oggi si interessano alla vita dei grandi . . . serve ad avvicinarli a tutto ciò che di *eroico e meraviglioso* avviene ai nostri giorni' (my emphasis).<sup>87</sup> The meta-narrative constructed through propaganda and cultural production presents Fascism as a great adventure which appeals to children and adults alike. In such an ideological and political framework, children come to represent the instrument as well as the target of fascist propaganda, both part and prototype of a nation to be educated and seduced.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Gibelli, *Il popolo bambino*.

<sup>87</sup> W. Padovano, 'Libri per ragazzi', in *Almanacco della donna italiana* (Firenze: Bemporad, 1928), 185–90 (p. 187).

<sup>88</sup> Gibelli, p. 3.