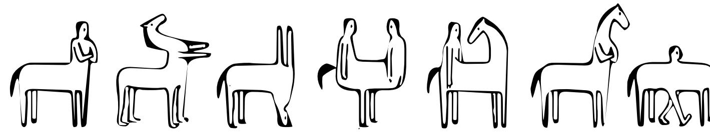
THE CRITICS



A CRITIC AT LARGE

PUPPET REGIME

The further and further and further adventures of Pinocchio.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

Of the half-dozen or so films that turned Walt Disney, in the public's mind, from the father of Mickey Mouse to the creator of the animated fairy-tale feature—thereby making his work a fixture in the imaginative life of almost every American child—"Pinocchio" (1940) feels like the odd one out. Many people say it is their least favorite. It is surely the most frightening. Go to anyone you know who was in grammar school in the nineteen-forties and fifties and ask, What was the Disney movie that scared you the most? Was it "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (1937), where the evil queen falls off a cliff to her death? (Dr. Benjamin Spock once wrote that all the seats in the vast auditorium of Radio City Music Hall had to be re-upholstered because so many children wet their pants while watching the film.) Well, what about "Dumbo" (1941), where the baby elephant has to watch as his mother is whipped and chained, howling for her child? O.K., what about "Bambi" (1942), where the fawn's mother is shot to death a few feet away from him? You can't beat that, can you?

But, for some reason, "Pinocchio" does. Perhaps the answer lies not in any one scene but in the movie's over-all bleakness. Robin Allan, in his beautiful book "Walt Disney and Europe" (1999), reproduces what he calls an "atmosphere sketch" for "Pinocchio," by the Disney artist Gustaf Tenggren, showing the puppet locked in a cage, just after he has been kidnapped by an itinerant puppeteer. Other marionettes hang from the ceiling on strings, as if they had been lynched. Pinocchio alone seems to be alive, but he stares straight ahead, expressionless. At first glance, he looks almost serene. Then you inspect the drawing more closely and realize that the reason his face is blank is that he is numb with fear, like someone in a horror movie. Danger and death surround this small creature throughout the film. As Allan points out, seventy-six of "Pinocchio"'s eighty-eight minutes—that's eighty-six per cent—take place at night or under water.

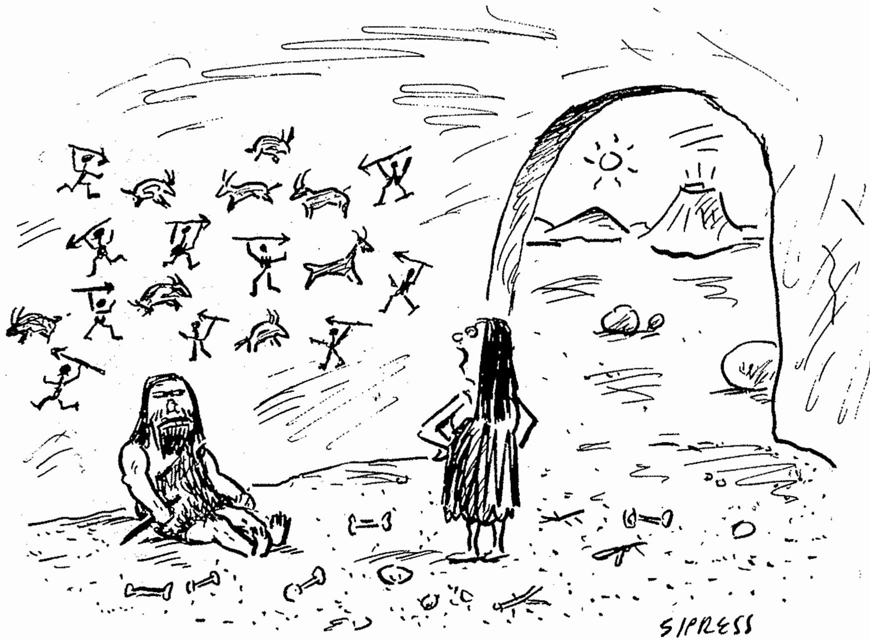
If the film is unsettling, consider the novel it was based on, Carlo Collodi's "Adventures of Pinocchio" (1883). The tale begins with a lethal weapon: under blows from an axe, the pine log that will become Pinocchio cries out, "Ouch! you've hurt me!" Soon afterward, the woodworker Geppetto starts fashioning the log into a puppet, which he calls Pinocchio: *pino*, in Italian, meaning pine, and *occhio*, meaning eye, one of the first parts of Pinocchio that Geppetto liberates from within the log. Next comes the nose, which, the moment Geppetto has finished it, starts to grow to an enormous length. Geppetto tries to prune it back, "but the more he cut and shortened it, the longer that impudent nose became." This nose will become Pinocchio's trademark feature, and the combined comedy and cruelty that attend its birth can be said to stand for Collodi's novel as a whole: Geppetto got Pinocchio by cutting, and for most of the remainder of the tale Pinocchio cuts him—mocks him, runs away from him.

It's not an even trade, though. Pinocchio, for all his naughtiness, suffers terribly. Early on, at home alone, he lies back in a chair, propping his feet against the room's brazier. He then falls asleep, and as a result his feet are burned off. When Geppetto returns home, he bursts into tears and lifts the puppet to his breast. Pinocchio hangs on for dear life. He can no longer stand up. His legs are smoking stumps. The drawing of this scene (by the excellent Enrico Mazzanti) in the novel's first edition is hard to look at.

Geppetto, in creating Pinocchio, hopes that the puppet will perform in public to support him in his old age, for he is very poor. But when Pinocchio, not long after his creation, is on his way to school, he discovers that a puppet show has come to town, which sounds like more fun. He cannot resist temptation; he lacks a conscience. As veterans of the Disney version know, his conscience is outsourced to the figure of Jiminy Cricket. But in the Collodi novel Pinocchio kills the wise Cricket—throws a mallet at him, mashing his guts against the wall—when the creature tells him that he should go to school. Pinocchio pays for his truancy. After the puppet show, he encounters two scoundrels, the Fox and the Cat, who conspire to steal his money and hang him by the neck from an oak tree.

The film's dark side reflects some of the book's outlandish cruelty, but in many other ways Disney transformed the original. For instance, Pinocchio's desire to be a "real boy," so central to the film, emerges only fitfully in the book. The same is true of his nose's habit of growing when he tells a lie, a trait so famous that it's now part of our culture's iconography. (There's a long-nosed emoji for lying, and the Washington *Post's*

ABOVE: CHRISTOPH NIEMANN



"Here's an idea—paint about gathering."

fact checker logs the mendacity of politicians' speeches on a scale of "two Pinocchios," "three Pinocchios," and so on.) Collodi's Pinocchio certainly tells a lot of lies, but his nose often grows when he hasn't lied, and he often lies without his nose growing.

"Seldom has a work of literature been so overshadowed by its celluloid adaptation," John Hooper and Anna Kraczyna write in the introduction to their new translation of "The Adventures of Pinocchio" (Penguin Classics). "This is a book with a mission: to rescue Pinocchio," they declare. They want us to see Collodi's work not just as a children's story but also, maybe primarily, as a part of "the corpus of nineteenth-century novels of social denunciation," and they urge us to recognize its puppet hero as being, for Italy, what Don Quixote is for Spain, "one of those rare fictional characters in whom an entire people seem to be able to make out their reflection." But you don't have to be an Italian to identify with Pinocchio. For many audiences worldwide, he is the spirit of disobedience. No sooner is he born than he establishes his independence from his creator, Geppetto. Not long after that, he also, in a sense, parts ways with Collodi, whose original conception was very different from the finished book. Since then, Pinocchio has continually refused to be tied down, roaming freely across the world's visual culture, always different but always recognizably himself.

Carlo Collodi (1826-90) was the eldest of ten children born to a couple—the father a cook, the mother a seamstress—working in the service of a Florentine marquess named Ginori Lisci. The growing brood was apparently too much for them, and the boy lived for a time with his mother's family in the village of Collodi, outside Florence. (It was from that town that, when he was grown, he took his pen name. His given name was Carlo Lorenzini.) His parents' employer took an interest in him, however, and arranged for him to get an education. Carlo first went to a seminary, in preparation for a career in the Church. Then, deciding that he did not have the makings of a priest, he transferred to another good school. At this time, when much of Italy was impoverished and illiterate, it was rare for someone of Collodi's social position, the child of servants, to receive a classical education, and it was this mixed background, both sophisticated and "street," that makes "Pinocchio" so piquant.

In his late teens, Collodi went to work at a respected bookstore in Florence and began to mix with the intelligentsia. In his mid-twenties, he co-founded a satirical daily. In the following decades, he reviewed books, music, and theatre, and produced a lot of political polemics. He also wrote a novel and six comic plays. In other words, he became the sort of literary Jack-of-all-trades that historians are apt to call a "journalist." He was also usually holding down a day job in the civil service. The fact that he never married or had children—he is said to have disliked children—no doubt made it easier for him to do all this.

Collodi was a committed republican. Twice, in 1848 and then in 1859, he signed up to fight for the Risorgimento, the movement that sought to liberate the Italian peninsula from the foreign powers that, for most of his lifetime, ruled it. Like many radicals, however, Collodi was not happy with the outcome of the Risorgimento: a constitutional monarchy with a weak king, Victor Emmanuel II, who cared more about the rich and the middle class than about Italy's millions of poor people. Even though the nation was now nominally ruled by a central government, its many parts did not have shared values, or even a shared language. In his forties, Collodi contributed to an important Italian dictionary, one of the many efforts to get Italians to agree on a single standard language rather than continue speaking local dialects that people fifty miles away might not understand. As reformers sized up the task of educating the populace of this new country, Collodi started writing for children. First, he did a translation of Charles Perrault's fairy tales and a number of instructional storybooks. Then, in 1880, a publisher in Rome persuaded him to contribute to a fledgling newspaper for children, *Giornale per i Bambini*, and he launched what was to be that publication's best-known serial, "La Storia di un Burattino," or "The Story of a Puppet," the puppet being Pinocchio.

It has been suggested that Pinocchio, his newly fashioned parts flapping this way and that, was Collodi's symbol of his homeland—nominally unified but in fact governed locally, not by agreed-upon, let alone just, laws. The book features not a single public official—policeman, jailer, judge—who is

not either stupid or corrupt or both. When Pinocchio complains to the authorities that the Fox and the Cat have stolen his money, the police come and arrest not the Fox and the Cat but Pinocchio. The judge (a gorilla) sends Pinocchio to prison for having been such a fool. An amnesty is later declared in the district, but Pinocchio is told that he alone will not be released, because an amnesty is only for real criminals. Tuscans have a reputation for being rough and gruff, and Collodi—habitually wry, sardonic, iconoclastic—was an excellent representative of his province. It is no surprise that he did not send his hero off into a world of kindness.

The stories appeared, off and on, during the second half of 1881. Taken together, they form less than half the book we now call "Pinocchio"—fifteen chapters out of thirty-six. This section ends when the Fox and the Cat hang Pinocchio:

> A strong north wind had come up, which, blowing and howling furiously, slammed the poor hanged puppet back and forth, causing him to swing violently like the clapper of a joyously ringing bell. And that swinging caused him the sharpest spasms while the slip noose, tightening more and more around his throat, was choking him.
>
> Little by little his eyes grew dim; and although he felt death approaching, he nonetheless still continued to hope that at any moment some compassionate soul would pass by and help him. But when, after waiting and waiting, he saw that nobody showed up, absolutely nobody, then he remembered his poor father again . . . and almost at death's door, he stuttered.
>
> "Oh, dear father! . . . if only you were here!"
>
> And he had no breath to say anything else. He closed his eyes, opened his mouth, stretched out his legs, and, after giving a great shudder, he remained there as though frozen stiff.

That, the earliest fans of the stories must have thought, was the end of Pinocchio.

It wasn't. A great deal of nineteenth-century fiction was published serially, in magazines and newspapers. This was especially common with what, today, we would call popular novels, about who would marry whom or murder whom, and also with children's literature. Such subcategories were products of the great nineteenth-century boom in literacy, and like many new things they were treated more lightly than old things were.

An interesting corollary of serial publication was that it occasionally gave readers a say in how the narrative would develop. A famous example is that of the Sherlock Holmes novels and stories, by Arthur Conan Doyle, the first of which appeared in 1887. Once the stories started running in *The Strand* magazine, in 1891, they became so popular that Conan Doyle had difficulty keeping up with the public demand. As a result, he became very rich, and very sick of Sherlock Holmes. In 1893, after six years on this project, he set out to eliminate his celebrated detective by having him fall into the thundering Reichenbach Falls, in Switzerland, in a death struggle with the criminal mastermind Professor Moriarty. This might have seemed a good ending for the series (Moriarty perished, too), but that was not the view of the English reading public. Twenty thousand people cancelled their subscriptions to *The Strand* in protest. Conan Doyle, no doubt flattered but also annoyed, resisted the pressure for a decade and then gave in. Papering over Holmes's supposed death, Conan Doyle had the detective reveal that he had hidden on a ledge in order to fake his own death and evade his enemies, thus allowing the series to resume.

Much the same thing, on a smaller scale, happened with Carlo Collodi. The Pinocchio stories were an immediate hit, but then Collodi got tired of doing them and decided to kill his hero off. In the *Giornale's* printing of the hang-

ing passage quoted above, the phrase "almost at death's door" does not appear. "Almost at death's door," which was added for the book version, means not quite yet at death's door. Clearly, Collodi, moved by the reactions of outraged readers and also, perhaps, by a need for money, decided to re-start the serial. Like Sherlock Holmes's convenient ledge, this phrase enabled the author to continue the story he thought he had got rid of. Pinocchio refused to die, and that is how we ended up with the story we have today.

Under the circumstances, it is tempting to assume that Part 2 of "Pinocchio" is a reversal, a correction, of Part 1. The ending of Part 2, which shows us Pinocchio as a well-dressed and rather arch young man—no longer a puppet—makes us even more likely to tell ourselves that that's what the book's second half is about. It's not, though, or not until close to the end. Most of Part 2, like Part 1, is a pretty rough-and-tumble affair, and that truculence is probably what children, and their parents, liked so much in "Pinocchio." It was part of their inheritance from the commedia dell'arte and from the puppet shows, descendants of the commedia, that in late-nineteenth-century Italy still travelled from town to town. It is just such a show, with puppets trading insults and clobbering one another over the head, that Pinocchio is enthralled by early on in the story.

Scenes of cheerful brutality were familiar to Collodi and his contemporaries also from other nineteenth-century children's literature: illustrated stories, sometimes newspaper cartoons, in which badly behaved children had popguns rammed down their throats (we see the blood, the broken teeth) or were thrown down the chimney into a bubbling soup pot. If they sucked their thumbs, their thumbs were cut off. (Wilhelm Busch's "Max and Moritz," first put between covers in 1865, is probably the best-known example.)

In addition to the cartoonish violence, another quality that unites the two parts of "Pinocchio" is a long vein of sheer strangeness—alluring, bizarre, and often beautiful strangeness, like something out of Surrealist art. In Chapter 15, Pinocchio meets the Blue-Haired Fairy, who will become a sort of guardian angel to him. Running away from the Fox and the Cat, he spies a little cottage in the distance. Maybe, he thinks, someone in there could save him? He runs to the cottage and bangs on the door. No answer.

> Then there came to the window a beautiful Little Girl with blue hair and a face as white as a wax image who, with eyes closed and hands

crossed over her breast, without moving her lips at all, said in a voice that seemed to come from the world beyond:

"There is nobody in this house. They are all dead."

"Well, then you at least open up for me!" cried Pinocchio, weeping and imploring.

"I am dead, too."

"Dead? But then what are you doing there at the window?"

"I am waiting for the bier to come and take me away."

As soon as she said this, the Little Girl disappeared, and the window closed again without making a sound.

After that, nothing in this book needs to go very far to seem strange, but things do go farther. The Little Girl starts to feel sorry for Pinocchio, and after seeing him hanged she dispatches her neighborhood falcon to sever the rope around his neck and bring him back to her house. There she installs him in a big fluffy bed and calls in three medical specialists: the Owl, the Raven, and the so-called Talking Cricket, who turns out to be the ghost of the cricket that Pinocchio murdered earlier. Each of them delivers a pompous speech diagnosing Pinocchio's ailment, and each diagnosis differs from the others. Having done their duty, the doctors depart, whereupon the Fairy—it is roughly at this point that the Little Girl, without explanation, turns into a full-fledged fairy—mixes a medicine for Pinocchio. When he refuses to drink it, "the door of the room opened wide and in came four rabbits as black as ink, carrying a small coffin on their shoulders." Is this the bier the Little Girl was waiting for, to remove her corpse and the other dead bodies she claimed were in her house? We never find out. All we are told is that Pinocchio, frightened out of his wits that he, too, may die and be carried off by the rabbit pallbearers, drinks down the Fairy's potion and soon feels better.

One of the main dramas that occupy the second portion of the book is a trip to the Land of Toys, a place for boys who like to play children's games—or, in the Disney movie, to smoke cigars and play pool—rather than go to school. Pinocchio is persuaded to go there with a bunch of local juvenile delinquents. He and his friend Lampwick throw themselves into the pleasures offered and, as a result, turn into donkeys. First, they feel something funny on their heads and find, with horror, that they have grown long, hairy asses' ears. They try to laugh this off, but the laughter turns to braying. They run around on all fours and sprout hooves and a tail. Like Midas or Narcissus, the two boys have been transformed into an image of their moral lives.

Unbelievably, things get worse. The donkey Pinocchio, having been purchased by a man who is apparently a leather-goods merchant, is thrown into the ocean with a stone tied to his neck, so that he will drown and his hide alone can be harvested. But, as he is dumped into the sea, a school of fish, sent by the Blue-Haired Fairy, who can't bear to see him suffer, attach themselves to his body and devour all his flesh—hide, tail, guts—slimming him down to the wooden puppet he once was. This is not the only horrible scene at the end of "Pinocchio," but, brief and blunt, it is the most appalling. They are only a donkey and a school of fish, but it somehow feels like cannibalism.

All along, the story has been devolving in another sense. That is, it has been turning into a mess. Arguably, it has been doing so from the beginning. For instance, Pinocchio started off with a completely different wood-carver, Master Cherry, who botched the job and handed the log over to Geppetto. He then disappeared from the tale, never to be seen again. Other perplexities accumulate. We start hearing about people who need to be explained and aren't. Things are supposed to happen, and then they don't. Things are deplored, and we're not told why. Pinocchio's savior, the Blue-Haired Fairy, appears first as a little girl, at a window. Within a short time, she is a beautiful grownup fairy. Sometimes she's dead, sometimes alive. At one point, she turns into a goat, but not for long.

But the most surprising inconsistency—many readers, I think, just try to forget about it—comes at the end. Here Pinocchio has at last, with the help of the Blue-Haired Fairy, become a "real boy," the thing he is said to have wished for from the beginning. (In fact, we don't hear about this wish until Chapter 25.) He looks at himself in the mirror: "He no longer saw the usual image of the wooden marionette reflected there; instead he saw the lively, intelligent image of a handsome boy with chestnut brown hair and light blue eyes, and with a festive air about him that made him seem as happy as a holiday." Really? After having, shortly before, found himself, and Geppetto, in danger of being digested by a shark, in whose cold, slimy innards they were entrapped?

Many a chapter is only a few pages long, and whatever happens in it may well be forgotten by the next chapter. In one, Pinocchio encounters a slavering mastiff; in another, he is menaced by a snake; in another, he converses with a parrot sitting in a tree. Never mind. In a few pages, he/she/it will be gone, often never to be heard from again. That, not just the tale's fidelity to national characteristics, is why "Pinocchio" is often compared to "Don Quixote." It is a picaresque. It goes from episode to episode.

The reader's problem, though, is not with the change of circumstances—this is a fairy tale, after all—but with the change of tone. Before, Pinocchio was always childlike: eager, curious, wondering, blundering. Now he is as smooth and confident, as full of fake cheer as a housewife in a floor-wax commercial. "How funny I was when I was a puppet!" he exclaims. "How glad I am now that I've become a proper boy!" We liked him better the other way, and so, I am sure, did Collodi. Nicolas J. Perella, whose 1986 translation (in a bilingual, annotated edition) remains the best, says in his introduction that Collodi told a friend that he could not remember having written this ending, even though the manuscript shows that he did. Perhaps he was ashamed? Maybe he was drunk when he wrote it?

According to Tim Parks, a longtime translator and critic of Italian literature, Collodi was an enthusiastic drinker, gambler, and womanizer. He was also legendarily lazy and hated to revise. The final trait, I think, is the most important. Many of the chapters seem as though they were written in the last half hour before they were due at the printer. At times, Collodi sounds like an oral poet, even a rapper, making it up as he goes along. You can hear his breath, feel his energy rising and falling. A shark? Bring it on! Master Cherry,

forgotten? Who cares! Jump from the luckless Pinocchio to the "real boy," happy as a holiday? Why not? The audience was a bunch of kids. Were they going to notice?

Whatever the book's carelessness, it was fantastically popular, and not just in Italy. According to the editors of the new edition, "Pinocchio" is the second most frequently translated work of fiction in the world. (The first is Saint-Exupéry's "The Little Prince.") In the United States, its popularity spawned a variety of adaptations, some more moralistic, some more sentimental, and so on. In "Pinocchio Goes Postmodern," a lively account of the puppet's fortunes in America, two "Pinocchio" savants, Richard Wunderlich and Thomas Morrissey, track these versions and show how they fed into the Disney movie and thereby ended up occluding the original. I have conducted an informal poll of Americans I know who are interested in children's literature, and none of them came to Collodi's book until they had seen the Disney movie. The same is true of me.

At Disney, the project was seen as a problem almost from the start. Walt Disney was worried that Collodi's Pinocchio was not sufficiently admirable to be the hero of a movie made by his company. Indeed, at a certain point early in production, he called a halt to work on the film, so that his writers could make changes in the story. (Many of the artists involved moved over to work on "Fantasia," which was being made at the same time.) But, once Disney felt that the film had found its feet, he proceeded confidently. Always a high roller, he filled the movie with dazzlements. Especially amazing was the work of a new, multiplane camera, developed by Disney technicians, that could shoot from three, five, twelve distances simultaneously: the village awakening, the birds circling the church tower, the chef fetching loaves of bread, the children leaving for school. Even today, when the film is more than eighty years old—and we have seen considerable cinematic wizardry in the meantime—these shots take your breath away. Anyone who wants a jolt of patriotic pride should watch "Ponyo" (2008), by Studio Ghibli, Japan's famed animation studio, and note how much its

artists, in drawing that movie's tsunami, apparently learned from the violent sea storm set in motion by the whale (Disney's upgrade of Collodi's shark) when he discovers that, contrary to his expectation, Pinocchio and Geppetto are not going to be his dinner.

At the same time, a lot of sophisticated people noticed that Disney had moved "Pinocchio" from poor, dusty old Italy to a clean, sparkling place that looks like Tyrol—Pinocchio wears a little alpine hat with a feather—and that Geppetto's workshop, a small, bare hovel in the Collodi original, had undergone a makeover. Now it was a large, prosperous studio filled with wonderful cuckoo clocks on which, every hour, cunningly carved figures—a mother, a drunk, a barnyard fowl—come out the doors and enact little dramas.

Plenty of moviegoers adored the clocks, but some people began to complain about the movie's embourgeoisement, or Disneyfication, to use a word from the following decade. Foremost on the list of grievances was a change to the hero. No longer was Pinocchio the skinny, weird-looking thing with the pointy hat whom you can see in the early illustrated editions of Collodi's text. Now he was a fat-cheeked little guy who talked like Shirley Temple and never meant to do anybody wrong. Most important, he did not turn into the self-satisfied "real boy" that Collodi produced at the end of his book. He just turned into a cute kindergartener almost identical to the cute puppet he had been before, but with flesh, rather than dowels, holding his legs together. In time, the anti-Disney chorus expanded, but more in the ranks of folklorists than among film historians. Some fairy-tale scholars still see Disney as a kind of public menace—the Marxist critic Jack Zipes has written that Disney treats fairy tales the way that the abusive parents in fairy tales treat children—but many of today's film writers seem to regard the sentimentality and relentless uplift of the Disney films as simply part of the past: dated, but not the enemy of truth.

The influence of the Disney film can be seen in the dozens of Pinocchio versions that have followed. In 1972, there was an Italian miniseries with Gina Lollobrigida as the Blue-Haired Fairy! An American TV movie from 2000 featured Julia Louis-Dreyfus as the Fairy. In 1971, there was a pornographic offering, "The Erotic Adventures of Pinocchio," reportedly a cult classic. Some people say that Steven Spielberg's "A.I.," from 2001, is effectively "Pinocchio," too. The following year saw another live-action version, this one directed by Roberto Benigni, Italy's beloved clown, who also played Pinocchio. Benigni stressed fantasy. Thanks to C.G.I., the carriage in the opening shot was drawn by what looked like five hundred white rats. That wasn't the only special effect. The film is said to have been the most expensive ever made in Italy. But the whole operation was scuttled by Benigni's near-hysterical idea of comic acting, which involves his jerking and gesticulating and hopping around as if someone had set his feet on fire. This movie received some of the worst reviews in the history of film criticism.

That doesn't seem to have discouraged anybody. In 2019, we got the "Pinocchio" of Matteo Garrone, who is known for his unflinching neo-neo-realist films—above all, "Gomorrah," about the Neapolitan Mafia—but who has also made some thrilling fairy-tale films. His live-action "Pinocchio" comes from the latter department of his brain. He told the press that he first story-boarded "Pinocchio" at age six. His film solves the problem, unavoidable in live-action versions, of how to present a hero who is half human and half fabrication. The makers of the 1931 "Frankenstein" faced the same difficulty, but they had Boris Karloff, a veteran actor, whereas Garrone, in casting his Pinocchio, chose a child, Federico Ielapi, who, though he'd had some TV experience, was only eight years old. Ielapi was professional enough, however, to endure the daily three-hour makeup sessions required to make him a cross between a boy and a piece of wood. (Again, think Surrealism.) And he mastered what presumably was Garrone's idea: a face that is normally expressionless but with semi-legible feelings just detectable under the wood. When his Pinocchio lied, his nose grew, but in a way that was visceral, physical, almost painful. And then—again, this hurt, physically—woodpeckers came and landed on his nose and pecked it back to normal length. And the whole time, the small Ielapi rode the razor's edge between human and wooden. Touchingly, Garrone cast Roberto Benigni as an age-appropriate Geppetto, and Benigni was as good as a doting father as he had been bad as a naughty puppet. Ielapi told interviewers how much he liked working with Benigni. Every day on the set, he reported, Benigni showed him tricks and dreamed up ways to keep him entertained.

Thanks to COVID-19, there is more than one new "Pinocchio" sitting on the shelf. The Disney Company has made a live-action-plus-C.G.I. version of its famous cartoon, just as it did with "Beauty and the Beast." Robert Zemeckis ("Back to the Future") directed, with a stellar cast including Keegan-Michael Key, Barack Obama's anger manager, as the Fox, and the gravel-voiced Lorraine Bracco as Sofia the Seagull, a character who isn't in the original story but has been written in apparently just so that Zemeckis could use Bracco. Speaking of which, Zemeckis's Geppetto is Tom Hanks, America's dad. Another "Pinocchio" that is finally on its way is a stop-motion animated musical by the wild-minded Mexican director Guillermo del Toro. Like Garrone, del Toro has said that the story captivated him as a child. There have been rumors of yet another version in the works, directed by Ron Howard and starring Robert Downey, Jr.

Imagine! Three more "Pinocchio"s! One wonders why a skinny, rebarbative marionette should be getting so much attention. But I have been told by film historians that the classic ending of a movie is the making or remaking of a family. Actually, it needn't be a movie. A lot of Shakespeare's plays fit that formula, as do many nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century novels. Jane Eyre, David Copperfield, Huck Finn, Ántonia Shimerda—their families start off badly broken. Dead fathers, dead mothers, no house, no dinner. Fiction, with a different kind of love story, comes in to heal life's wound, or tries. ♦