



Pinocchio's Progeny: Puppets, Marionettes, Automatons, and Robots in Modernist and Avant-Garde Drama (PAJ Books)

Harold B. Segel

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While Carlo Collodi's internationally revered *Pinocchio* may not have been the single source of the modernist fascination with puppets and marionettes, the book's appearance on the threshold of the modernist movement heralded a new artistic interest in the making of human likenesses. And the puppets, marionettes, and other forms that figure so vividly and provocatively in modernist and avant-garde drama can, according to Harold Segel, be regarded as Pinocchio's progeny.

Segel argues that the philosophical, social, and artistic proclivities of the modernist movement converged in the discovery of an exciting new relevance in the puppet and marionette. Previously viewed as entertainment for children and fairground audiences, puppets emerged as an integral component of the modernist vision. They became metaphors for human helplessness in the face of powerful forces—from Eros and the supernatural to history, industrial society, and national myth. Dramatists used them to satirize the tyranny of bourgeois custom and convention, to deflate the arrogance of the powerful, and to breathe new life into a theater that had become tradition-bound and commercialized.

Pinocchio's Progeny offers a broad overview of the uses of these figures in European drama from 1890 to 1935. It considers developments in France, Spain, Italy, Austria, Germany, Sweden, Russia, Poland and Czechoslovakia. In his introduction, Segel reviews the premodernist literary and dramatic treatment of the puppet and marionette from Cervantes' *Don Quixote* to the turn-of-the-century European cabaret. His epilogue considers the appearance of puppets and marionettes in postmodern European and American drama by examining works by such dramatists as Jean-Claude Van Itallie, Heiner Müller, and Tadeusz Kantor.

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