

DIVERGENCE AND DIVERSITY: THE CASE OF GIORGIO MANGANELLI'S REWRITTEN TEXT

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Sommario

Il concetto di diverstità nel testo manganelliano si identifica con lo scarto dalla norma letteraria sulla quale si basa il testo. Fin dai suoi primi giorni nel Gruppo '63, la visione letteraria di Manganelli continuò a basarsi principalmente sulla necessità di effettuare cambiamenti essenziali che potessero portare oltre i confini di puro metodo e dunque creare una scrittura che “tutte le volte che vuole realizzarsi deve rivoltarsi contro se stessa e rimetter [e] i limiti della coscienza estetica sempre in crisi e in discussione spingendoli fin dentro il campo del gratuito, dell'arbitrario, dell'assurdo”. Il testo, dunque, diventa una costante ricerca oltre i limiti della pagina nel quale l'estetica è sempre nell'ambito del gratuito, dell'alternativo e dell'arbitrario. In questi termini il testo manganelliano non è un prodotto unico e isolato che deriva dall'immaginazione letteraria ma piuttosto una parte essenziale di un testo infinito che è anche l'origine di un processo intrinsecamente creativo. Per queste ragioni Manganelli spesso lancia i suoi testi 'alternativi' dai confini ben definiti di libri famosi, come il Pinocchio di Collodi o l'Otello di Shakespeare.

I have chosen to use the word diversity in the Manganellian sense of break or *scarto* in which the general norm, in this case

literary, is used as a starting point for an alternative. In this sense diversity becomes the other side of the coin of what is expected and what is traditional. The case for diversity or the re-use of a single text into other alternative postulates, has assumed many forms and many solutions in Manganelli's literary *oeuvre*. His liberal borrowings from traditions supply his writings with a linked patterning of literary echoes that are used by him as launch pads for complex rewritings and narrative games. The notion of diversity in Manganelli's work leads not to the strict rewriting of the original text but rather to the elaboration of an alternative work that is a subversion but also an extension of the original text.

Manganelli, originally one of the founding members of *Gruppo 63*, maintained affiliations with the spirit of the avant-garde of the Sixties. As Umberto Eco, himself a member of the group, later said of them, *Gruppo 63* consisted primarily of a number of artists who aimed at "fare avanguardia" (Eco, 1985: 99) rather than sharing a more defined and unitary artistic view. They did however, share the desire to affect changes that could reach beyond the boundaries of method and create a literature that "tutte le volte che vuole realizzarsi deve rivoltarsi contro se stessa e rimetter[e] [i limiti della coscienza estetica] sempre in crisi e in discussione spingendoli fin dentro il campo del gratuito, dell'arbitrario, dell'assurdo".

As with most of Manganelli's writing the text becomes a testing of the limits of the linguistic page, in which the literary aesthetic is truly in the realm of the gratuitous, the arbitrary and the absurd. The ongoing process of textual repetition integral to Manganelli's writing turns his literary works into a process of re-issuing that denies the essence of textual classification. Manganelli's method of re-writing bases itself on a vast and long

tradition of referents that are as binding as they are familiar. His antecedents are too vast to mention as he is an elaborately and consciously eclectic writer whose works draw from a vast number of sources and literary traditions. Manganelli's work includes such a wide array of sources that an attempt at and classification becomes a dispersive exercise in style detection. Generalized echoes rather than direct links and the identification by *oeuvre-type* exemplifies the majority of literary references that underpin Manganelli's writing.

Manganelli also, however, takes a cross section of famous literary works as starting points for a personal process of rewriting. The original work is both emulated and subverted at its structural heart. Manganelli, who calls the author the "fool" and the "magician", undertakes a process of dismemberment where the identity of the original is only a starting point for a process that cannibalizes the text. However, subversion should be equated with both the destruction of the model as well as paying a homage to its rules. Linguistic structures and the text's place in the realm of commentary is the area in which Manganelli's texts truly live. In such a manner Manganelli's alternative work is no longer defined from within its confines but also from without; as non-novel, non-genre and non-mimesis.

The alternative book is thus always directed into the arena of meta-narrative commentary. This is to be equated with a self focusing impulse that makes plot, cohesion and format merely starting points for the alternative and the recondite and becomes a necessary pattern on which to anchor the new and alternative narrative design. The spirit of the work, its content and "message" is preserved, but it becomes a bank of raw material to be subdivided and manipulated into varying patterns of potentiality. Each narrative node is isolated and re-utilized not

as part of a whole but as a key to a secondary pattern. The implication of the rewritten text is that form luxuriates in varying possibilities and myriad manifestations of alternatives. The alternatives of the hypothetical text develop from within that text and gradually formulate as the text proceeds through the motions of rewriting.

The mode of the novel as commentary was already prefigured in Manganelli's writing in the books *Hilarotragoedia* (1969), and *Nuovo Commento* but reached its flowering in four key texts the two 1977 volumes, *Cassio governa a Cipro* and *Pinocchio: Un libro parallelo* followed later by an extensive rewriting of Dante's *Inferno* in the volume *Dall'Inferno* (1985). The first is a commentary on a non-existent book, an erudite critical comment that develops in the interstices of a hypothetical text, in which the author's prevarications are the focal point of the textual development, while in the two later volumes the reference to the model text is a divergence away from thematic and contextual correspondences.

The process of dismemberment has thus become an essential part of writing. The text, in its quality of game piece, is only concerned with the mechanism of the narrative process; the alternative readings, the divergences of form and the funneling of sonority.

In *Pinocchio: Un libro parallelo*, a re-writing of the famous Collodi tale, Manganelli utilizes the original as a field of play for the organic development of an alternative work while maintaining a strict obedience to the apparent "plot" of the original story. Manganelli's parallel "adventure" revolves around the possibilities of form, the alternations of hypotheses and the development of narrative possibilities in a space described as "luogo segregato e appartato laboratorio di magie" (*Pinocchio*:

Un libro parallelo: 25). Thus this parallel “novel” becomes both commentary on the original text and a stretching of its potentialities into some of the inherent though arbitrary possibilities of an alternative work.

Un testo è qualcosa di unico e di irripetibile, ma contiene anche infiniti altri testi. Offre una serie di tracce che possono essere sviluppate in molte direzioni. In questo senso, ogni opera letteraria è un "giallo" la cui soluzione è sempre "altrove", nella capacità di devozione del lettore investigatore. (*Pinocchio: Un libro parallelo*, Risvolto di copertina)

Unlike the traditional novel form, Manganelli's rewriting is a collation of a limited, though potentially infinite number of textual possibilities that are defined as they develop rather than having an *a priori* form. The literary product has flexible boundaries that fluctuate between plot and the ongoing critical elaboration. The omniscient narrator of the original story turns into a voice of critical commentary that moves amongst the structuring links of the narrative mode. The alternative volume is thus nothing more than a personal reading transposed into the strict discipline of an individual process of “hypothesizing”.

Controlled arbitrariness is thus the key concept on which the alternative work is based. What Manganelli calls the “cubic” structure of the book is intended as an exegetical strategy at all levels; through the linear itinerary of grammatical progression and the lateral labyrinthine mazes of references, echoes from other works as well as the original text “parole e interpunzioni, lacune e a capo”. (*Pinocchio: un libro parallelo*, risvolto di copertina). Thus the process of re-writing begins at the level of reading.

Da una sillaba all'altra procede, affranto pellegrino, il lettore; unico che tenga assieme la dispersa famiglia delle parole, che lo frastornano, lo invadono, lo occupano, e trasformano. Ma che è mai codesto "stare insieme" delle parole? (*Pinocchio: Un libro parallelo*: 10)

For the reader the book is more than the process of following a path within a rewriting of a famous book. The reader is a captive audience of an eccentric and intensely personal cerebral process. The literary product called *Pinocchio: Un libro parallelo* soon ceases to rotate around the exegesis of a famous book and becomes a mirror for the author himself. Writing is seen as a process of codification of a personally defined linguistic pattern that also tackles the general norms of literary tradition.

This volume's systematic dismemberment of the original is an attempt at defining the unity of parts that combine to make up the original literary product. But the exegesis must come from within the boundaries of the text itself and not from the imposition of a critical grid onto the *libro parallelo*.

The figure of Pinocchio is a fundamental image in Manganelli's literary cosmos. The deceitful puppet is both a metaphor for the literary process as well as the epitome of the text itself.

This process thus becomes a tightly structured disintegration of the linguistic and narrative potentialities of the text. All those important arbitrary alternations of form become the perceptual focus of what the author has called the "itinerario grafico" ("Graphic itinerary", *Cina e altri orienti*: 19).

The reader is led on a path to decipher a labyrinthine map *ab aeterno* which plots an infinite possibility of developments and alternatives to be found within the text. These will potentially be released in subsequent hypothetical rewritings. Focusing on

the first appearance of Pinocchio from within the core of the log, Manganelli equates the magic of the original with the new magic of literary choice:

Che il suo esserci sia immotivato, lo dimostrano le assai vaghe notizie che ne abbiamo: non risulta acquistato, ne trovato, ne portato da alcuno. (*Pinocchio: Un libro parallelo*: 5)

Some of the alternative possibilities for the arrival of the piece of wood into the narrative are potential outlets for secondary developments. Similarly, the character's origin is questioned and his "birth" scrutinized beyond even the text of origin. Thus the workings of the Pinocchio character stretch labyrinth like into the "befores" and "afters" of the page.

dunque il suo destino non comincia or, egli e nato nel momento in cui si staccava, erratico ramo dalla sua pianta (*Pinocchio: Un libro parallelo*: 19-20)

Thus Manganelli sees the parallel text as having the possibilities of the Ur-text. The question is not so much the writing of the alternative text but rather releasing it from the original boundaries and allowing it to take up its alternative literary space.

Un libro, rettamente inteso nella sua mappa cubica, diventa così nettamente infinito da proporsi, distrattamente, come comprensivo di tutti i possibili libri paralleli, che in conclusione finiranno con l'essere tutti i libri possibili. (*Pinocchio: Un libro parallelo*: Risvolto di copertina)

Pinocchio, Geppetto's self-willed puppet has now become Manganelli's puppet. In the hands of the alternative author, Collodi himself is turned into the puppet in the distancing process that is so much a part of the rewriting of the text. The alternative

author analyses its components as parts of a machine of correspondences. His own presence within the text is treated as a component of the great unknown:

Sotto ogni punto di vista, l'autore è una ipotesi, innecessaria, come è stato accuratamente affermato di Dio, altro grande anonimo. (*Pinocchio: Un libro parallelo*: 31)

The author, in fact, shares the qualities of a god. He is both “unnecessary” and outside of the work. A creator of “errori” (“errors”) and “spropositi” the author, like the “fool” and Pinocchio himself, is a manipulator of words.

The alternative work sticks closely to the original in its two most important narrative elements; plot and its permutations of plot and the time/space component. A parallel book makes of its parallel quality an architectural framework. Thus the beginning and end of every chapter of the alternative book follow the strict order of the original while each chapter covers the same subject matter in both.

Manganelli's version is also provided with a stringent buffering section; short theoretical excursions into the creative process itself draw the reader away from the plot and redirect him onto a path of formal correspondences that are integral to the second version but alien to the original. These critical passages are sandwiched into interstices of the original text in order to provide for the reader a clear textual framework for the exegetical process of the rewritten text. The nature of the alternative work is here put under scrutiny. Its potentially circular process of discovery of the “vagabondar labirintico ed ozioso” (*Pinocchio: Un libro parallelo*: 10) exemplifies the narrative form of the text as the meandering through an artifice made up of words and recurring structures, in what the author

calls a "pianta di un casale, un palazzo, un castello, una regione, una patria" (*Pinocchio: Un libro parallelo*: 11).

L'operazione di scoperta di una storia parallela all'interno di una storia alimentata dalla convinzione che il testo sia da considerare come un luogo fondo, penetrando nel quale noi siamo inseguiti dagli echi delle parole pronunciate all'entrata; potremmo anche meglio considerarlo come un polimorfo nel cui interno le parole possono legarsi variamente, formando tante allucinazioni quante sono le combinazioni. (*Pinocchio: Un libro parallelo*: 79)

The infinite text is a starting point from which derives a process of intrinsic creation. The organic growth of the literary work, like the lively and incongruous puppet himself, develops arbitrarily from its own internal potentialities. The log was already a pre-nascent Pinocchio, the carpenter an already ripe "babbo" and the text a preparatory sketch for the alternative work.

e cio che tanto è infinito il processo del parallelist, quanto è infinito il testo; e il testo, sia attraversato nella sua struttura di luogo degli echi, che maneggiano come labirinto di tutti i possibili itinerari, è assolutamente senza limiti. (*Pinocchio: un libro parallelo*: 79)

Un libro non si legge; vi si precipita; esso sta, in ogni momento, attorno a noi. Quando siamo non già nel centro, ma in uno degli infiniti centri del libro, ci accorgiamo che il libro non solo è illimitato, ma è unico. Non esistono altri libri; tutti gli altri libri sono nascosti e rivelanti in questo. In tutti i libri stanno tutti gli altri libri; in ogni parola tutte le parole; in ogni libro, tutte le parole; in ogni parola, tutti i libri. Dunque questo "libro parallelo" non sta ne accanto, ne in margine, ne in calce; sta "dentro", come tutti i libri, giacchè non v'è libro che non sia "parallelo". (*Pinocchio: Un libro parallelo*)

Thus Manganelli's self-identification with the text is the structuring element in the focus of the narrative framework. All books are parallel, all words coexist in a network of linked and tightly interlocked images and references that form a labyrinthine cohesion between individual textual form and all other hypothetical texts. In this way no text stands on its own or represents closure, so much so that the subversion within the structure, the labyrinth within the finite format, and the infinite flow of the hypothetical work is the one lasting element in the ever possible world of words.

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