

*Robert Coover is one of the strongest voices in contemporary American fiction: from his first books onwards, but especially since Pricksongs & Descants (1969), Coover has continued to give us highly innovative and fascinating versions of our times - whether by rewriting history, as in The Public Burning (1977) concerning the Rosenberg case, or by rewriting fairytales as in The Magic Poker or The Gingerbread House. In his Pinocchio in Venice (1991) Coover has written a devastating new version not only of the famous Collodi story, but even more of the usually re-hashed representations of Venice. Very few authors of this century, Ian McEwan among them, have managed to write such a brilliant and prophetic version of the destiny of tourist-infested Venice: at the same time, in Pinocchio, Coover also manages to save some of the city's magic, as in the scene when the lay and ribald procession of the burattini enters the Church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli, where "the sheer marble walls, pale as old bones and glistening dewily, seem to be pulsating with the strange pulsing music..."*

*It was during his year spent in Venice that I met Robert Coover: I am extremely grateful to him for allowing us to print this brand-new, in-progress work, where his prose conveys with extraordinary precision and effect the impact of a Western movie sequence. Again, Coover innovates a genre, not new to him after A Night at the Movies (1987), as our fortunate readers will see in Ghost Town.*