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## Meta-data: beyond the visible

Luís Cronopio

In the year of 2018, at a movie theatre in the city of Cologne, a page of poetry was ripped off from a book, and set on fire. Before the flame found its way onto the piece of paper, the words within, were read out and loud. The Poem, anticipating its own death, shivered, and with it, the Reader, who felt himself strangely calm in front of thirty intellectuals, saw his right hand trembling, out of his will – so he thought. Curiously, the spark was not yet enough to destroy the page, and the Poem did not burn to ashes. Therefore, the emergency services were called, and almost instantly, an ambulance arrived. First aid was provided and the Poem, still in pain, was

carried to the nearest hospital. The Reader did not go to the hospital. On the arrival at the medical facility, the pain had disappeared, and because of that, the Poem did not go to the Emergency Room and, because of that, the Poem had to wait two and half hours before being seen by a doctor. Meanwhile, at the movie theatre, the thirty-one academics drank coffee and ate cake, talked about meanings and entanglements, logic and embodiments, and all were confident that the Poem was going to survive such a tragedy. The Reader was silent. He talked and listened and sipped the hot coffee, but his mind was not actually there. He was touched by ambivalent feelings:

on the one hand, he felt guilty for what has happened: he was the one who had chosen the page and the Poem, which by that time was just another poem, and he was the one who set the page on fire; on the other hand, he sensed some sort of beauty in the performance itself, and the scars on the burned page, conveyed the poetry he had not felt, while reading it.

Until that day, the Poem had never been at a hospital. Coming from behind a small glass window, the Poem heard a voice posing a question: Name?

The Poem was confused - as if things have to have a name to exist – but utmost, the Poem felt the question to be impolite and vulgar. The voice repeated, on a higher pitch: Name?

The Poem stared around and grabbed its verses to see, if it was still a poem. The voice on the other side of the window became angry. That Registration Form had no more patience. Other patients were waiting impatiently.

We do not have here all day. – uttered the Form, one last time.

Pinocchio. My title is Pinocchio. – answered the Poem.

The Registration Form carefully wrote down everything Pinocchio could remember. The Registration Form, which was until that moment, just a piece of paper, felt something odd getting out of its being: it could not tell whether it wrote down the information of Pinocchio or it got written, as if it could only exist because of Pinocchio. The Registration Form couldn't tell if it was the subject or the object of itself. Maybe both, It thought it. Nonetheless, the Form was pleased for, finally, fulfil its dream, and that means, to become Registration. It knew, though, deep down its printing, it was going to be forgotten in some

dark room of the hospital: *the dream comes truth, and a new dream grows inside.*

After this introduction, the Poem went through the emergency lounge, and laid down on the only empty chair available in the waiting room. All sorts of things occupied the area: an oxidised coffee machine, a microphone which was nearby Pinocchio, a pair of headphones still hanging on duck-tape, a pen full of blue ink which had lost its spring, a toothbrush already two months old, an electric guitar smashed at a rock concert, and two women waiting for their X-ray results.

You are lucky, *Sie haben Glück gehabt*, your burns look like they are already cured. – voiced the microphone with envy.

Pinocchio couldn't hear what the Microphone was singing, but it smiled and shook its face as saying yes. The Toothbrush stood up and whispered to Pinocchio:

Don't mind what the Microphone talks. It has been here for two days and talks to everyone without being aware that no one listens to it. I guess its batteries are out of production, and you know, all these new technologies had ruined objects like us. You know...electric brushes...

The Poem, which was not well acquainted with small talk, shook, again, its yes-face and smiled.

You don't belong here. – outed The Toothbrush, still with a rest of lettuce on its hairs.

Pinocchio completely agreed, Pinocchio did not belong there, but it thought the Toothbrush meant something else:

What do you mean?

The Toothbrush:

You are a poem on a page, correct?

The Poem:

Yes, I am Pinocchio on a page.

The Toothbrush:

Then you should \_\_ to the Textology Ward. That is where, texts are taken care of.

Pinocchio flew right away, not before saying lots of thanks and wishes of better times. As it flew, the Poem did not know its way through, so it went around like a mosquito, here and there, here and there. On its flight, Pinocchio saw departments of smartphones. These rooms were bursting out of its space. Some were waiting for parts and some were condemned to be upgraded, but most of them had just lost their faces. There was a sign on the roof: Smartphonology. After a while of wandering around those technological noises, Pinocchio arrived at Textology. It was very quiet, there. Though not completely full, the room, was not completely empty. Pinocchio was sure it had to wait.

An essay was being called for further examination. Pinocchio noticed that the actual body of the essay ("*Pachamama* is a Spanish word": Linguistic Tension between Aymara, Quechua, and Spanish in Northern Potosí. Howard-Malverde, Rosaleen. In: *Anthropological Linguistics*, vol. 37, n. 2, 1995. Bloomington: Indiana University) was not-at-all damaged, and doubted, if itself, was at the right place. An encyclopaedia, whose cover was damaged by an unknown species of fungus, was still waiting for a decision: restauration or amputation.

Pinocchio:

I have a question: I got burnt, *burned* burnt consistency, I lost a few words,

and I am not sure if this is the place to be. I saw that essay entering the room and from its form it looks healthy. – prompted Pinocchio.

Encyclopaedia:

First, good morning, I am the Cambridge Encyclopaedia D-E-F, Revised Edition of 1983, and second, you said you had a question but you didn't ask a question. Nevertheless, I understood your doubt. A doubt is: "*(a feeling of) not being certain about something, especially about how good or true it is.*" Isn't it wonderful to quote oneself?

Pinocchio:

Good morning. With all due respect, I must say that your latter question it is also not a question either. It entails no doubt and you know already the answer. That's why they call it, rhetorical question. Therefore, I must conclude, that the fact that a sentence has an interrogation point at its end, does not, alone, makes it to be a question.

The Encyclopaedia, overwhelmed by that argument, rebounded:

You...you are very clever. Clever but not wise. Not yet.

Pinocchio:

I want to be neither, wise, nor clever. Do you know why? Because I am art. I wrote myself in the same way a photographer makes a picture. I was an invasion, I seized my Poet. Do you know what art is?

Encyclopaedia:

I know what art is, but it is difficult to explain it, just as, if you ask me what time is. I know what it is, but words are not enough to describe it. *It's half past nine. Exactly, nine hours, thirty minutes, and twelve seconds.*

Pinocchio:

Yes, exactly. So you know...

To be honest, I am also not completely sure what I am. I am not a thing of reason but I am something intellectual; I came out of chance, but also out of control. I feel closer to the beat of a song than to its lyrics. I am words but words do not matter to me.

Encyclopaedia:

Sorry, if I made you feel melancholic...

Pinocchio:

Thanks, I guess. Never mind.

Hi, I am Pinocchio, nice to meet you.

Encyclopaedia:

Nice to meet you, too.

Going back to your initial...let us call it, doubt: Textology, here, is organized... do you see there? There are three different rooms: Materiality, Content and Context. I guess you are also going to Materiality, just like me.

Pinocchio was curious to know more about, and yet, it was nervous to ask. Still, Pinocchio inquired:

Could you explain them more thoroughly?

Encyclopaedia:

Okay, that's a real question. And expensive (they smiled at each other).

Well, in Materiality, doctors are

concerned with the quality and quantity of the object, in where the text breathes: my cover, for example, had been devoured by fungae, and you, had lost part of your left side...

Pinocchio:

My right side, you mean.

Encyclopaedia:

From my point of view, you lost your left side. It is not important, though. If I may quote you: "*Never mind.*" (Pinocchio, 2019)

Your right side got burnt, *burned burnt consistency.*

Look over there, that draft of a speech was crumpled until it fitted a fist and that love letter, was torn into smaller pieces. We are all Materiality material, pleonasm aside. We are, in a way or another, the aftermath of some act of fury.

Pinocchio:

That was unexpectedly profound. It did not sound like a definition; it was definitely a verse. And I love the word "*aftermath*".

Encyclopaedia:

Thanks.

You know, I am so many definitions, so many rational words, that at some point in life, one gets a bore.

"*Aftermath*" I picked from last week's poker game, at the library of Professor Plutsch.

Pinocchio:

Wow! Are you playing at the Institute? Good player?

Encyclopaedia:

Yes, every Wednesday, at midnight.

Pinocchio:

And are you a good player?

Encyclopaedia:

Average. Sometimes I lose, sometimes I win, just like in real life.

Pinocchio:

Do you play for money?

Encyclopaedia:

No, for pages.

Pinocchio could not believe that that old Encyclopaedia hung with other books, volumes and other pages, and played poker, at the Institute. However, Pinocchio did not want to show its prejudice:

I understood what Materiality is. What about Content and Context?

Encyclopaedia:

Imagine a questionnaire. It can have opened or closed questions. Either way, the validity of its content may be strong or weak: for example, to select a suitable candidate for a teaching job of quantum mechanics, a panel of experts design several questions to which applicants must answer; the panel urges to elaborate dozens of questions about classical kinematics, general relativity and electrodynamics; after having selected the smartest candidate, they notice that the teacher, though, he was the smartest among all candidates, cannot teach. They realize, then, there must have been a problem with the content of the questionnaire. This is when the questionnaire needs to be assessed by a doctor of Content.

Pinocchio:

That's really interesting! I had never thought about it. And what about Context?

Encyclopaedia:

Take the same questionnaire, full of quantum theories, and give it to applicants for a job as prima ballerina at a Ballet Company. Wouldn't it be out of context?

Pinocchio:

But in that way, content and context are the same, I mean, the questions were not wrong themselves, they were out of context for the job description of teaching, not just out of content.

Encyclopaedia:

I see your point. It is just a matter of how you look at things. Whether you see it from the overall design of the questionnaire, or from the *missing* questions' point of view, which, by the way, cannot, ontologically, have a point of view, because they do not yet exist.

Pinocchio:

Ontological, uh? Are you trying to impress me?

I was wondering, what about texts in the digital form? How do they get cured? Aren't they numbers, de-codified into words?

Encyclopaedia:

Now that you ask...

A Medical Sheet, which could not completely understand its own writing, approached the waiting area:

Cambridge Encyclopaedia D-E-F,  
Retrieved Edition 1983, please follow me.

Pinocchio wished the Encyclopaedia good luck, and they never saw each other again. After a long hour of silence, Pinocchio got into consultation.

An old man with pink-dyed-hair, wearing a light-blue shirt covered with yellow flamingos, greeted Pinocchio:

Mr. Pinocchio...or shall I call you, Ms. Pinocchio?

Pinocchio:

Pinocchio is enough. Do we need more titles besides our titles?

The Doctor:

Well, well, a rebel, I see. So Pinocchio, what brings you here?

Pinocchio:

I got burnt, *burned burnt consistency*.

The Doctor:

Tell me more, how did it all happen?

Pinocchio:

My Poet put me in a poetry collection, and a reader bought it. I have been living on the reader's cellar, among magazines and notebooks. Two days ago, I got read, three times, or four, I guess. Then, today, I got read again, but out loud, at a stage, in a movie theatre, not so far from here. The Reader was holding a lighter, tight on his hand, and I saw what was about to happen. I trembled, that's it, this is the end, I was set on fire, and luckily, the flame stopped. That's it.

The Doctor:

Do you have any pain?

Pinocchio:

I had, but since I arrived at the hospital, no pain.

The Doctor:

Let us take first a scan, to better examine the extent of the damage.

As the scanner ran its electronics, Pinocchio felt anxious, then, suffocating, a flash walked through its body and after three seconds, Pinocchio was free.

The Doctor:

Let us see...right down corner total loss of skin, second degree burns on its periphery; left side along the edges, third degree burns without damage of text. Loss of two nouns, three articles and one adverb, namely, *sweat, stone, the, the, a, and while*. The Poem is conscious and orientated in space and time, and its essence is intact. For optimal recovery, I suggest that the Poem gets mounted in a frame and be hung on a wall.

Pinocchio:

And now?

The Doctor:

You can go home.

Pinocchio:

That's all?

The Doctor:

Yes. Don't forget the prescription.

The prescription greeted Pinocchio. Pinocchio ignored it, and left the prescription on the nearest bin. The prescription got angry, echoing disgust from inside the bin.

The Prescription:

*Ja toll...*

*Hallo...?* (it was a German prescription)

As Pinocchio roomed through the corridors of the hospital, someone, suddenly, grabbed Pinocchio on its header.

The Reader:

And? Have you already been seen by a doctor?

Pinocchio:  
Yes.

The Reader:  
What did she say?

Pinocchio:  
Why the hell do you think the doctor is a *she*?

The Reader:  
I thought...

Pinocchio:  
You know...? That is really sexist.

The Reader:  
Yes, I guess you are right. Shame on me. Anyway, what did the doctor say?

Pinocchio:  
He said I should get some rest, drink only expensive red wine, get mounted on the most beautiful frame in the world and be hung on a wall where people can read me.

The Reader doubted the part of getting some rest, because a poem exists, to be a break. Though, the Reader did as Pinocchio suggested.

The Reader:  
Okay, let's go home. I will stop first, at the wine store.

Pinocchio:  
Do that, do that. I will wait in the car.

They arrived at the apartment. The Reader had bought two bottles of The Monster Cabernet Sauvignon 2016, three bottles of Bronislaw & Reef, Barrel Aged Red Wine Blend 2014 and six of Palace of the Being Pinot Noir 2016. Besides its graphic design, labels have not so much to say, and Pinocchio, did not even bother to welcome them.

The Reader:  
What bottle should we open first?

Pinocchio:  
What is the most expensive?

The Reader:  
The Monster.

Pinocchio:  
So, cork it out!

The Reader:  
I wonder, how does a poem, get to appreciate red wine?

Pinocchio:  
Where do you think poets, get their inspiration from?

The Reader:  
From poems they had read, from words they had learnt, from places they had visited...?

Pinocchio:  
No, no, no. The correct answer is, from drugs.

If you want, I can teach you about red wine. How can one tell if a bottle of wine is good or not? The main point of decision is the price: the more expensive it is, the better it is; of course, there are plenty of exceptions; it is the exception we are looking for: it is called price-quality ratio. Another decisive point is the aesthetics of the label: this one is more a thing of intuition than it is of geometry. Other important advice is: one starts with the best bottle first, because after the first, the taste does not really matter.

The Reader:  
I am impressed!

Pinocchio:  
Yes, that's what poems do...



The next day, the Reader woke up early, around eleven in the morning, checked on Pinocchio, which was still, resting, or still resting, the Reader couldn't tell. He then went to an Art shop and bought the most beautiful mount the business had to offer.

As the Reader returned home, Pinocchio was already in the living room. They ate a porridge of oat flakes, banana, pumpkin seeds and cinnamon. Pinocchio is vegan. The Reader showed the mount to Pinocchio and it liked it. The Reader stacked the Poem over a bunch of pages of pending bureaucracy, went to the kitchen and unwrapped the new frame.

Pinocchio had a piece of paper beneath, making it uneasy.

Pinocchio:

What are you doing?

Tax Return Sheet:

Are you talking to me?

Pinocchio:

Yes, to you.

Tax Return Sheet:

What am I supposed to be doing?

Pinocchio:

So you don't know what you are supposed to be doing?

Tax Return Sheet:

I know what I am supposed to do, but I do not know what do you mean by what am I doing to you, as if I am disturbing you, in some way or another.

Pinocchio:

Yes, in some way or another...

Tax Return Sheet:

Could you please, be concrete, with your complaint?

Pinocchio:

It is not a concrete complaint. It is a general feeling. It is nothing against

you, personally. I cannot really explain it well. I just feel strong negative energy.

Tax Return Sheet:

And how do you know is coming from me? Perhaps it is coming from you?

Pinocchio:

It is coming from you. I am pretty sure.

Tax Return Sheet contained itself not to cry.

Tax Return Sheet:

I am a gift, you know?

Pinocchio:

You might be a gift, but a serious one. Not sincere.

As Pinocchio uttered the last word, it couldn't avoid feeling sorry for that sheet.

Pinocchio:

I beg your pardon, literally speaking, I mean, forgive me for being rude. Hello, I am Pinocchio.

Tax Return Sheet:

Hello, good afternoon. I am a Tax Return Sheet.

Pinocchio:

So, you are a gift?

Tax Return Sheet:

Yes, I am.

Pinocchio:

In German or in English?

Tax Return Sheet:

What do you mean?

Pinocchio:

Never mind. I am just joking.

Tax Return Sheet:

By the way, do you know what tax evasion, is?

Pinocchio:

Certainly.

Tax Return Sheet:

And has your poet paid taxes for his writings?

Pinocchio:

How can you tell my Poet is a *he*?

Tax Return Sheet:

Because most of the poets are men.

Pinocchio:

What a *jkhfghsdafguifg* are you talking about? In what world do you live?

Tax Return Sheet:

What do you mean?

Pinocchio:

I mean that you are badly informed. Poets are men and women and everything people want to be. That is the most absurd sexist thing I have ever heard in my life.

Tax Return Sheet:

Nonetheless, I am sure your poet did not pay taxes for having you.

Pinocchio:

Even if not. For what reason should he pay taxes for writing poems?

Tax Return Sheet:

So I was right, your poet is a man.

Pinocchio:

That's not the point. Can't you see it? I guess not. I am losing my Latin with you, it's worthless and exhausting.

The Tax Return Sheet kept silence, and so did Pinocchio. Pinocchio saw itself doing, what a poem does not do to itself: an analysis: Pinocchio concluded that a tax return sheet is the exact opposite of a poem: the sheet is born out of obligation, the poem out of instinct; the sheet takes, the poem gives; the sheet has no

rhythm, the poem dances all night long. And yet, a tax return sheet has the appearance of a gift. One thinks is getting a present, without being aware of having been robbed. Pinocchio was repulsed, and thought why was the Reader taking so long to return.

The Reader:

Look at your mount. Isn't it fantastic?

Pinocchio:

Yes, it is nice.

The Reader:

Only nice?

Pinocchio:

Yes, it is fantastic.

The Reader:

What has happened to you? You look so tense...

Pinocchio:

Don't tell me...

Another day I will tell you, not today. Just take me out of here, and put me on that frame.

The Reader:

You know Pinocchio, we are not going to see each other very often. This is not a goodbye; it is a see you later., Can I do something else for you, before you go into the mount?

Pinocchio:

Yes, actually you can. A massage. A footnote massage.

Then, if we hold still, long enough, we may grow roots, and become a tree.