

ANACHRONIC ANNEXATION
@xenopraxis, July 2014

All substantial signals can be regarded both as transmissions and as initial commotions. For instance, a work of art transmits a kind of behavior by the artist, and it also serves, like a relay, as the point of departure for impulses that often attain extraordinary magnitudes in later transmission.

George Kubler - [The Shape of Time](#)

The needs that these decades-old works may most helpfully address today will be very different from the problems and the conditions amid which they were originally situated. I like to think of it as a condition of excess: that there was always already, so to speak, an excess in the works that overflowed the critical contextualization of the day; and that today elements of that excess can become the serviceable margins in our effort to reexamine and use these works in ways that are relevant to us now; but that in turn other, new elements of excess will inevitably rotate out of view.

Tony Conrad, [Is This Penny Ante or a High Stakes Game?](#)

The [hyperstitional cyberneticist](#) "close(s) the circuit" of history by detecting the "convergent waves [that] register the influence of the future on its past."

Nick Land

It was Élie Ayache who first alerted me to the existence of a singular body of work dedicated to working out implications of thought experiments within the domain of literature. Ayache mentioned Pierre Bayard in his contribution ([In the Middle of the Event](#)) to the [Medium of Contingency](#) exhibition publication (which also included pieces by Reza Negarestani, Matthew Poole and Robin Mackay). Bayard's *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*—a bestseller—had already been simultaneously published in English and French in 2007, but it somehow slipped past my radar. While that tome has its particular charms well worth getting into (for a future-past post), I'd like to draw attention to a more recent (2009), as-yet-untranslated book, *le plagiat par anticipation* (plagiarism by anticipation), which offers some fairly astounding object lessons in chronoportation within the literary spectrum. As it will become clear however, Bayard's modi operandi can most certainly be extrapolated to the sonic/musical domain, work which I and other sonic occultists are currently absorbed with (the basis of another future post).

Due to normative habits in thinking the arrow of time in one direction only—forwards—Bayard contends that an entire realm of speculation has been unnecessarily occluded, which sets into motion an occult framework in which the idea of past authors literally plagiarizing from the as-yet-unborn becomes plausible. To quell an initial objection that cribbing is endemic to literature itself and therefore coincidences will almost certainly abound ("every reading produces similitude"), Bayard takes pains to distinguish his approach from a more OULIPian trajectory, in which (to generalize) the institution of more or less elaborate constraints (or algorithms) serves to liberate linguistic potential, its feverish recombination drawing attention to the arbitrary nature of literature (and self-expression) while unleashing premonitory synchronisms through the foregrounding of heretofore dormant patterns. (WSB: "When you cut into the present, the future leaks out.") Caveat apophenior. To the contrary, Bayard is adamant in establishing the author's intent to commit the crime, and proffers concrete and compelling examples to buttress his case all the more rigorously.

Bayard offers four criteria for identifying a plagiarism by anticipation (PBA henceforth): **resemblance**, **dissimulation**, **reversed temporal order** (the earlier author plagiarizing the later) and **dissonance**, which flags the transplanted character of the plagiarism. This last stipulation is most essential: as in a more conventional crib case where the later author appropriates the earlier, the pilfered words must resonate

weirdly in the context into which they have been inchronoported, making detection of the offence more readily attainable. Bayard cites a passage in Maupassant which clearly appears unstuck from its historical period, in its listing of anamnetic glitch-triggers (appropriately chronoportative, given the topic at hand), objects or situations which unlock the floodgates of reminiscence. Bayard suggests the awkwardness, incongruence of this passage within the surrounding textual flow already signals that something is up; the attempt to disguise the theft by coating this most Proustian of precognitions with Maupassant's usual dysphoric mien only further compounds this sensation. Rather than the more conventional analysis which could only sanction the vector along which Proust—high priest of literary recollection—rips off Maupassant, Bayard reverses causality, enhancing his argument by insisting on the isolation of this stylistically-singular passage, unique in the author's oeuvre, in contrast to the foundational role reminiscence plays in the later author's work. (Given that the recognition of the plagiarist act is indispensably constitutive of the latter, a necessity further compounded by clumsy execution, one might be led to wonder whether its perpetrators wanted to be found out. But to what avail? To signal that time functions in ways that defy conventional logic might have been a heretical position if stated outright; concealed within the folds of fiction it might circulate more efficiently.)

What makes the verdict of PBA stick for Bayard, beyond incongruous stylistic bifurcations and gauche incorporations (common to manifold plagiaristic occurrences), is the difficulty of explaining the robbery through conventionally linear models. It's just as unlikely that Proust cribbed his entire style from that lone Maupassant passage, than the notion that the detective novel genre (especially the subset in which the investigator is the perpetrator) stems from Sophocles' Oedipus (though the latter contention is more probable). Adopting the further stipulation that (generally speaking) minor texts pilfer from major texts (and not the other way around) reinforces the case against Maupassant. The latter is ahead of his time, not by virtue of visionary intuition, but by travelling into the future and appropriating, albeit uncomfortably, some of its relics for his own usage. Toying with a world he cannot fully apprehend, he still somehow intuitively grasps its virtuals. Bayard notes that this passage is not *proustian before Proust*, but becomes it, crystallizes, when Proust appears on the scene. This allows Bayard to later suggest that an author's historical situation is ultimately undecidable, relying on the near truism that eventually an author will kairotically manifest, fulfilling the necessary conditions to retroactively induce another PBA, in revalencing a particular element of a past author's work. Such is the perpetual revisionism suffered by Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, which despite its publication date (1759-1767), effectively constitutes a *synthèse-avant-la-lettre* of early 20th-century literary innovation, its status feverishly mutating, jumping across discontinuous hermeneutic registers with each successive "innovation" appearing on the scene: punctuational-syntactical heresy (Mallarmé/Apollinaire), neologistic constellating (Joyce) and the metatextual machinations of the *nouveau roman* (Robbe-Grillet/Kundera) (among others), thereby making hash of any coherent attempt at establishing an airtight chronology, the provenance of his plagiarized inspirations perpetually finding future sources.

Bayard's idea loses traction if one simply thinks in terms legislated by successive distributions of the sensible, which differentially foreground components of a work measuring up to a certain threshold of legibility, innovations which by their effective thrust already mandate continuance by future generations. It is the *distribution of the insensible*—those occulted, infra-legible territories out of resonant range, their feeble signals escaping punctual detection, those inscrutable excesses mentioned by Conrad at the outset—that might offer clues to an unsuspected future. (The question of how one might parse the insensible—especially that committed to remaining under the radar, hyper-camouflage-style, as a matter of necessity—is another matter). Perhaps the future-plagiarist becomes attuned to such embryonic tendencies creeping into her work, hedging her bets accordingly by trawling around for future ratification. (Bayard suggests the anachronartist might produce such a premonitory work while possessed (*saisi*) by a force which projects him out of himself—a proustian *autre moi*, this time conjured within a temporal breach, chronoportationally othered, doubled.) This might only be wishful thinking on her part, given that, as the [Cybernetic Culture Research Unit](#) has oft underlined, future authors (pseudonymously) regularly chronoportate their work into the past in order to induce bifurcations. Might Proust, arch-anamnetic circuit-tripper, have been one of these agents? [Cargo](#)

[\(oc\)cultism](#): the appearance of an alien artifactual anomaly forces, via cascading mechanisms of rational justification, a restructuring of the entire field of relations which undergirds a culture. Like black holes, only discernable by their effects on surrounding planets (yet, rigorously so), or hypersound, insensible in itself yet stealthily pressuring the perceptually available by virtue of being entangled with it (see [Eleni Ikonidou's work](#)), that which is subliminally remaindered in a work of art exerts no less of a gravitational pull.

Bayard employs Borges' *Kafka and his Precursors* as a heuristic to explicitate the potency of creeping retrospective influence. By selecting seven fragments whose filiation with Kafka is not immediately evident (and resolutely opaque in a few cases), Borges de facto requires the reader to project relations, actualizing these *aborted virtualities*, an effort which simultaneously and acutely foregrounds these machinations (which are always to some degree) in operation. The fact of Kafka's appearance in chronological history induces into adjacency previously anonymous communities of elements, irresistibly converging on his person (Borges: "each writer invents his own precursors"); a nebulous field of discrepancies punctually aligned in resonant sympathy through the magnetic pull of an alien fulcrum, a force extrinsic to the field. (Such as the historian, writing history). The potential of such revalencing operations cannot be understated—[hyperstition](#), in its function as coincidence intensifier, is just that reconfiguring spanner. (Land: "And once it's real, in a sense, it's always been.") The question then becomes tactically oriented: how to amplify, let alone identify anemic signals? One can imagine engaging in steganographically hypersensitive readings of present-day texts in order to ferret out harbingers via stylistic inconsistencies and awkward formulations. Discrepancies which force reading out of a consistent frame of reference, slowing it down, actually provide annunciatory c(l)ues, signals from the future pinging into the past, installing stealthily concealed precursors available to those attuned to technics, the minutiae of material organization and deployment. New ideas, indistinguishable from glitches in the present order (if they are even detectable), belong to the future in that their implications remain to be tested, acted upon deliberately. Can the efforts of the projective reader be outsourced into a synthetic construct which performs autonomous revalencing without the need for a bloated discursive apparatus? What lever, what dispositions, what connections? The name Kafka (and its adjective kafkaesque) already loads the bases, preemptively vectorizing any entity it comes into contact with, with no need for further specification, the hijacking complete. (To this effect, the subject of the next post will be the aptly-named **Bayard Operators**, coined by phonomagus and philosopher [Lendl Barcelos](#) specifically in relation to listening: "anethical operation(s) that can be enacted within a sonic locale in order to provoke as-yet-unheard valences or even reinforce already present vectors...thus breed(ing) novel potentialities since alternate realities (pasts, future-pasts, presents, past-futures, and so on) can force themselves out...").

Bayard invokes the appearance of Pollock's signature dripping as post-facto key to unlocking the mysteries of an anomalous non-figurative Fra Angelico painting—a PBA to be sure—by the same token suggesting that art's steady, progressive incorporation of everything into its purview (ditto for music's totalizing ambitions regarding the world of sound) leaves the door open for revalencing all non-art of the past *as* art (Louise Lawler's [institutional-critical collapsing](#) (via physical adjacency) of a typical Pollock drip-job and a filigreed (non-art) tureen coolly captures the perpetually vampiric trawling of the aesthetic imperative—one could also do worse than consult Allan Kaprow's non-exhaustive recovery of the inaesthetic in the [Education of the Un-Artist](#)).

Another version of PBA is instantiated in the bizarre relationship between Freud and his colleague, psychoanalyst Victor Tausk, whose notoriety stems in part from his "double" suicide in 1919 (by shotgun and hanging both), as well as from his compelling account of "[influencing machines](#)" among schizophrenics (more on that later). Freud adamantly kept his distance from Tausk as a matter of sheer survival. Tausk would hang around Freud to siphon the latter's half-baked speculations, developing them before the more famous psychoanalyst, prisoner of a slower temporality, had a chance to think them through. Plagiarism here constitutes the cooptation of an idea's future development; in so doing, Tausk literally cut Freud's future off at the pass, dispossessing him not only of his ideas, but of the abductions of thinking *tout court* (fomenting a malaise exhibiting definite psychotic frequencies). Productive possibilities for the contemporary interventionist (which Bayard doesn't get into) promptly ensue, involving the conjuring of reality-effects

within a current whose preemptive termination is desired, rendering it permanently uninhabitable (through overidentification, for instance), so that any future instantiation autonomically recalls the *bad psychedelic adjacency* permanently tethered to it: a *vampire effect* for the oversaturated informational age. Tausk's insertion into the slowing of Freud's thought had the effect of stretching premature articulations into legibly tractional concepts; like the alien revalencing-fulcrum mentioned above, this particular intervention instigates alternate timelines through acceleration and blockage alike.

In 1937, Paul Valéry preemptively introduced the idea of the death of the author ("coined" by Barthes some thirty years later), suggesting that language is already the greatest work of literature. He proposed to look beyond "chronological illusion" to the profit of structure, logic, combinatoriality and modes of action; in short, the virtualities of language trumping historical necessity. Literature is seen as an extension and application of the properties of language, in which time and temporal succession become irrelevant. Fast forward some 70 years later to the work of Franco Moretti ([Graphs, Maps, Trees](#)), Stephen Ramsay ([Reading Machines: Towards an Algorithmic Criticism](#)) and especially Michael Witmore and his notion of *massive addressability*: "a text might be thought of as a vector through a meta-table of all possible words...because a text can be queried at the level of single words and then related to other texts at the same level of abstraction: the table of all possible words could be defined as the aggregate of points of address at a given level (or scale) of abstraction." Chronology in this context is an antiquated ("aleatoric") fetish lazily shackled to a too-linear conception of historical influence. (Reading history as if Racine followed Hugo restores (neo/post-)classical formalisms as a necessary corrective to the excessive license of Romanticism.) The anonymous agent (in Valéry's conception of a history without authors) produces ruptures by differentially surfing combinatorial processes. While Valéry (and Bayard) still entertain the conservative impulse to restrict bifurcational initiatives to "great authors" in possession of an intensified ability to intuit possibles, the computational machinery now at our disposal renders such restrictions quaintly capricious. Intuition can be cybernetically tethered to procedures which extract dormant valences, amplifying their signals into intelligibility, without the need for a master steersman.

Influence cuts in multivalent directions. An author persists due to the efforts of his successors (however distantly projected), owing them preemptive debts, for they *invent* the futures the former could only dimly abumbrate in the prisonhouse of his murky contemporaneity. Later authors can *save* their antecedents, by resonantly amplifying some of these inscrutable contours, though this effort frequently induces a concomitant flattening out of productive incoherence into equivocation, divesting it of its glitch-coefficient. The *survenants* may be less free because of a vast array of prior determinations which they have to react to (and rupture with), but possess the magickal capacity to revalence a previous author's work in manners not originally intended, because the distribution of the sensible prevailing at the time did not permit proper valuation of these occulted vectors (Kubler's problem of contemporaneity: "we cannot clearly decry the contours of the great currents of our own time: we are too much inside the streams of contemporary happening to chart their flow and volume.") These revalencings inevitably warp the future perception of the earlier author, tant bien que mal. But rather than unduly invoke the inherently slippery nature of resonant influence ("toute lecture produit de la similitude"), Bayard insists on underlining the **direct** influence not-yet-authors have exerted on their forebears, prematurely cribbing a style-to-be-in-florescence by extracting its fragmentary characteristics, a risky venture due to the time traveller's perpetual incapacity to gain a complete picture of what he's anachronizing.

Clearly, Bayard's proposals in this volume mandate a closer investigation of time-warping techniques a contemporary agent might employ in order to restructure the past, punctually shuffle the present sensible, and thereby profitably portend. To this effect, the next post will deal with **Bayard Operators** and attempt a primitive typology of such promising entities.

Manifold thanks to [Lendl Barcelos](#) for his catalytic probes judiciously deployed over long conversations.