

Tears and Rain

Part 3: Resurrection - Phase IV

Abstract:

The idea of illustration as a traditional art or craft form is increasingly untenable when both the concept of an image and the subjectivity of the author and reader have irrevocably changed. As illustration is being embedded in online and animated environments, it is extending into the data sets used to train large language models (LLM) for AI generative art applications. This transformation fits the theoretical shift from post modernism to alter modernism and presents the role of the illustrator in a transitional stage which we appear blind to. Originality is becoming a rarity amongst seemingly ubiquitous and unique images that proliferate in the hyper mediated environment many illustrators must practice in. This third and final part of an extended paper seeks to further explore the idea of originality in reference to AI ability to generate images with little or no technical expertise under the framing of tears and rain. It shows how the very subjectivity of the partitioner, along with the materiality of the image, as an animatic object, have changed in ways that may not at first seem apparent. It indicates a new mode of illustrational research enabling new forms of authorial intent that are designed to cut through visual noise. It is incumbent then on illustration research to register this blind spot.

Introduction:

This paper follows on from the previous paper where we diagnosed a potential death of meaning due to the inability to interpret the signs around us. It identified through Fredric Jameson's 'schizophrenic' mode of perception before briefly outlining new ways of navigating and un/authoring the hyper mediated space of pure material signifiers released from meaning. The previous essay cited the meme as a potential archetype in conflation with Nicolaus Bourriaud's 'semionaut' as a new mode for this authorial mutation now intensified by AI. Here, we can now see this paper's initial claim more succinctly: To develop and identify a mode of practice that nurtures rarity over the 'ubiquitously unique' - tears amongst rain. Furthermore, it shows that this nurturing of rarity and the hidden complexity of thinking involved is more important now when anti-intellectualism is again on the rise in education and the wider world order (*Open Letter*

from CRMEP Students & n.d.). Ultimately this paper seeks to re-frame the concept of the illustrator as a generator of rare ideas rather than a stylistic mechanism in the support of text.

The previous paper ended with an outline of a richly encoded artifact designed to be read on multiple levels by multiple stakeholders simultaneously. An artifact engineered to allow for stylistic remodeling but complex enough to maintain a level of alter modernist authoring. An authoring that avoids the predictive homogenization of AI because its originality resides not in reliable stylistic technique but cerebral complexity and conceptuality that runs on varying aesthetic levels. A speculative illustration that shares sympathies with the Menippean mode of fiction that will be outlined at the end.

However, an understanding of what this new mode of Un-authoring would entail is not enough. Understanding why it has occurred is also necessary, and this seems to be the more radical blind spot in illustration. One that this final section seeks to elucidate.

The paper focusses on the theme of AI and authorship as a framework and observes authorial mutation. It naturally began its interrogation observing the continued relevance of Roland Barthes's 'Death of the Author' and noted its evolution as the reader's ascent into authorship grew through intertextual literacy provided by postmodern theory. The infamous essay ends with the rather dramatic statement '*the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author*' (Barthes 1987:148). But it is now the reader who is in critical or pathological condition, and this is a core part of the essay as we proceed. Which is to say, having seen the ascent of the reader into an authorial position, the author necessarily becomes a reader in a paradoxical or pataphysical maneuver¹. Pataphysics being 'the science of imaginary solutions' and in fact an imaginary solution may already be at play.

¹ This reference to parapsysics should not be lost if we remember the postmodern theorist Baudrillard identified himself as one.

Part 3: Phase IV

1: Change The Object Itself

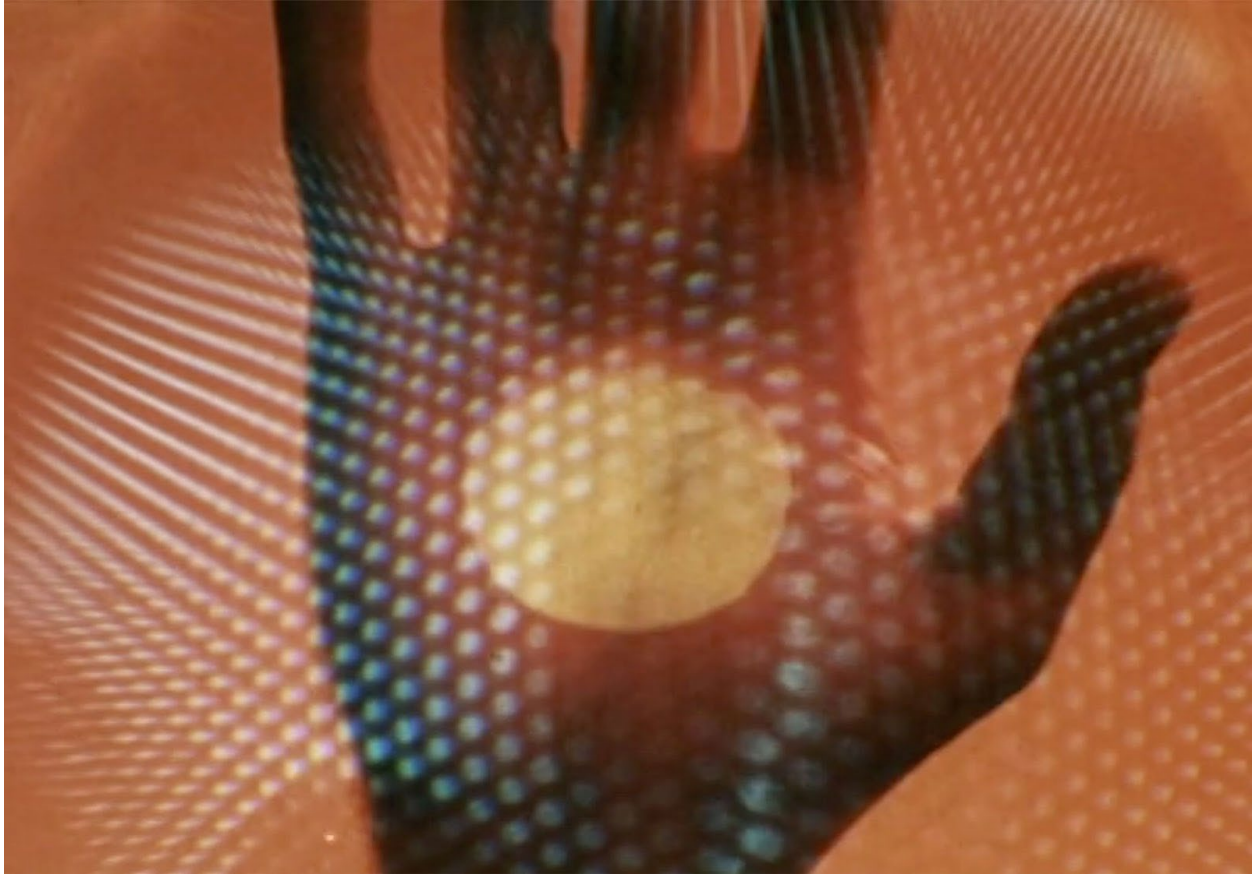


Figure 1: Phase IV, 02:15 23/11/2018, FilmFour, 105 mins.

<https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/00082719?bcast=127957414> (Accessed 02 Jun 2024)

The pioneering graphic designer Saul Bass only directed two films, both made use of innovative montage sequence effects, and both are good examples of an artist traversing medium. Recently, thanks to the archiving work of Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Science, a previously unseen alternate ending was uncovered for his full-length feature *Phase IV* (Bass. 1974). The sequence is something of a holy grail for cinephiles, and its existence has been the subject of rumor and speculation for decades. Paramount forced the director to remove the final sequence even though it was consistent with the dreamlike visual style the filmmaker applied to the rest of the film. The film itself explores the theme of alien contact and communication; a group of scientists discover a hive mind ant colony on Mars one scientists see their actions as a declaration of war the other tries to make contact. Analogous to the ongoing debate on AI and creative practice. The alternate ending contains a dizzying montage of imagery; the surviving scientists James and Kendra become an embodiment of all mankind as a new species is created. Emerging from their transformation, the pair gaze out onto a

sunset-stained landscape, realizing that humanity has reached a new level in its evolution 'We didn't know for what purpose, but we knew we would be told'. (Bass. 1974).

This idea of assimilation and development towards a new evolutionary phase is a useful way to think about the idea of original creativity regarding rarity and uniqueness. Continuing the initial hypothesis that perhaps loss of meaning or in Benjamin's terms 'the liquidation of cultural heritage' (Benjamin and Zohn, 1992) should not be mourned but in fact it is this continued reliance on necessary meaning, either embedded or dislocated, from a specific point of origin that seems to be a problem that delimits postmodern thought or critical thought in general. The insistence that there must always be a point of reference has begun to lose its legitimacy. Setting the scene for two further prescient developments that occurred in the early seventies.

In April 1971 Barthes wrote a small postscript to his infamous essay for the literary revue *Esprit* called "Change the object itself: Mythology today", here Barthes reflects on his previous theory of modern-day myth and asks what, if anything, has changed since the initial provocation. Here he notes:

'What has changed in the science of reading under whose gaze myth, like an animal long since captured and held in observation, does nevertheless become a different object. A science of the signifier (even if still in process of development), that is, has taken its place in the work of the period and its purpose is less the analysis of the sign than its dislocation.' (Barthes 1987:166)

Intuiting a maturation of his mythological framework would shift from the sign-signifier dialectic towards one of citation and reference necessarily progressing from semiology to a new idiolectology. An image often contains multiple potential readings that appeal to various kinds of knowledge (national, cultural, aesthetic) needed to read an image. These can be read by several different people in different ways but can equally coexist with anyone individual. These readings corresponded to multiple types of knowledge that make up an individual's lexicon or Idiolect (Barthes 1987: 46). This is key as Barthes has a clear inclination that perhaps the mode of critique will need to change. He makes the point that his structuralism is not without merit and stands as an important steppingstone in understating media, much like psychoanalysis developed codes of meaning then evolved from there. Take, for example, the motif of teeth falling out as a sign of anxiety.

'Thus, rather than myths, it is sociolects which must be distinguished and described; which means that mythologies would be succeeded by an ideolectology- more formal and thereby, I believe, more penetrating- whose operational concepts would no longer

be sign, signifier, signified and connotation but citation, reference, stereotype.' (Barthes 1987:168)

If we note that the number of adverts we are exposed to is now ten times that of when Barthes made his initial observation on modern mythology, there is now a contemporary ironic awareness in the mythology of images. But mythology does not just remain in simplistic examples of advertising media; the medium has changed towards the network. Far from discarding, this initiatory unveiling of culture as an arbitrary construct, this ideology is the next phase. If we consider his other essay 'The Third Meaning' we can perhaps suggest this as a fourth meaning, or 'Phase IV', of his thought. Here it is appropriate to return to the idea of the artist as a metaphoric canary. The example cited in the previous essay being Warhol's cold abstractions, distilling the purity of the flat emotionless image before society could put words to this. But this time it is the theorist that sensed a change in subjectivity through viewing mediated culture on mass and tries to formulate new ways to understand the change. This is not without relevance if we think of it as the other side of a postmodern creative subjectivity that begins with Warhol. It is also worth noting that Benjamin's essay TWOAITAOMR coincides with this as an example of theoretical intuition. But, it is Jameson who makes the most striking observation.

'Theory emerged from the aesthetic itself, from the culture of the modern, and it is only in the dreary light of the old anti-intellectual distinction between the critical and the creative that movement from Mayakovsky to Jacobson will seem a downward curve, or that from Brecht to Barthes, or from Joyce to Eco, from Proust to Deleuze.' (Jameson 1998:85)

If we accept Barthes supposition that the 'object' of critique has changed, we may have to concede a change in ourselves. What I am trying to do here is briefly align the theorist with the artist, identifying them as two modes of creative expression that cannot be dissolved once we reach the alter modern era outlined previously. Jameson himself points out in his essay 'Transformations of the Image' the blind spot in the art criticism anterior to post modernism which attempts to frame artists such as Cezanne or Baudelaire as anti-intellectuals who did not consider themselves revolutionary or theoreticians, allowing for a polemic of ascetism over theory. The term 'theory' being used to obscure the encompassing of everything from radicalism, poststructuralism, literary theory, sociology, philosophy everything in short which prevents higher education in the arts from dissolving into a sandbox operation devoted to harmless and decorative formalisms when subversion and critique accompanied modern art throughout its lifespan (Jameson 1998:117). This is to say that critical theory has always

been a part of modern artistic practice, and the mutation from Brecht to Barthes is an evolution of postmodern subjectivity. Barthes could himself be seen as an early example of an artist using the practice of citation for his own creative impulse. This can also be seen in the highly creative magnum opus that is Walter Benjmain's Arcades Project. Would illustrators be more suited to this mode of authorial mutation if they were not blind to critical theory? If this exitance is networked and global then it must be accounted for because *'In today's world, the gesture of cutting the inside of the work (the work itself) off from its outside (The environment of consumption) and carrying out a pure critique and study of the former is no longer tenable.'* (Azuma 2022).

But how? It is necessary now to define Bourriaud's 'alter-modernism' more clearly in reference to the semionaut² as it seems to be key to this evolutionary understanding of visual culture and meaning that Barthes was intuiting. Alter modernism is the ability to create work from the outside granting the artist access to objects that do not belong to their cultural mentality but to cultures other than his, her or their own. The contemporary imagination is deterritorialized in a reaction against standardization and commercialism. (Bourriaud et al. 2020: 170–1) What Bourriaud is getting at is that alter modernism allows for a disruption of the western readings, and even dominant ideas of meaning in art. By accepting globalism as the home of this phase it challenges the standardization of imaginations necessitated by economic global production. Allowing concepts to be released from their original homes and even effacing their origin in favor of a multitude of simultaneous or successive 'enrooting' for infinite combinatory play. Henceforth, what counts is the ability to acclimatize oneself to various contexts and the products (ideas, forms) that are generated by these temporary acculturations. (Bourriaud et al. 2020:52)

The metaphor he employs for this task is 'the radican', a species of plant that can move its roots. Translating itself into the terms of the space in which it moves. (Bourriaud et al. 2020: 51). The manifestation of the 'radican' in creative practice is then the 'semionaut' who invents pathways among signs. Surveying hypertext worlds nonlinear in essence infinite in time and space, carving out fragments of signification, gathering samples and creating an herbarium of forms. *'Not so much the producers of forms as the agents of their vitorization, of the regulation of their historical and geographic displacement.'*(Bourriaud et al. 2020: 184)

Bourriaud's novel use of 'vitorization' is key to understanding this further. if we expand his neologism which relates to an increased speed and ability to Criss-cross between geographical space and time location. Reminiscent of Marinetti's thoughts in the futurist

² Semionaut 'A principal method seems to be emerging: this capacity to navigate information is in the process of becoming the dominant faculty for the intellectual or artist. Linking signs, producing itineraries in sociocultural space or in the history of art, the twenty-first century artist is a semionaut.'(Bourriaud et al. 2020: 160)

manifesto 'Time and space died yesterday' we could say images have accelerated, become agile or animate. This is an attempt to find a way out of post modernism and the prefix 'post' because whatever it refers to is always a point of origin which in the schizophrenic breakdown of meaning, when space and time die, or become vertiginously intense, the referent cannot be relied upon. The semionaut needs to move beyond this dialectic through a garden of wondering. Plants need to be watered, ideally in this case with tears. The metaphor of the garden is important because without this appeal to responsibility we get pure noise. However, by developing in accordance with a variety of host soils or spaces the image necessarily changes the space too. *'Being foreign, they will also have changed the existing soil by bringing about a new ecological configuration.'* (Hui 2024:9). This back and forth between host soils and the plant entails a new ability to move beyond a fixed point of origin or retro activation and develop a proto activation that the previous paper conjured in the enhanced vision of Benjamins 'angel of history' becoming Janus headed is re-affirmed by the following quotation

The prefix "alter-" which may be regarded as pointing to the end of the culture of the "post-" is thus linked both to the notion of an alternative as well as to the notion of multiplicity. More precisely, it designates a different relationship with time: no longer the aftermath of a historical moment, but the infinite extension of the kaleidoscopic play of temporal loops in the service of a vision of history as a spiral, which advances while turning back upon itself. (Bourriaud et al. 2020:186)

It is this playful exploration of emergent properties that can be seen in artists like Jon Rafman, Trevor Paglen, Adrea Avellino and Avocado Ibuprofen. They are all responding in an erudite way. Radicant art is not medium specific and actively pushes against the exclusion of certain fields from the world of art, postmodernism relies on a game of equivalences where as radicant art or alter modernism is a game of multiplication and combination ((Bourriaud et al. 2020). It appears a combinatory authorship is in ascendance. Its origins can be found in the modernist era with Walter Benjamin who applied this very early on in 'The Arcades' and seen in his metaphor of the ragpicker a seeker of analogy.

"Through the disorderly fund which his knowledge places at his disposal, the allegorist rummages here and there for a particular piece, holds it next to some other piece, and tests to see if they fit together-that meaning with this image or this image with that meaning." (Benjamin et al. 2002: 383)

The disorderly fund of knowledge is Barthes idea of the 'idiolect' in his essay mentioned above. But, in the contemporary moment a feeling of loss is generated in the

identification of a subject who can move and assimilate, a feeling of dislocation. The semionaut does not share this feeling; They are at home navigating latent space and forging connections. This mode of un-authoring is more suited to the current moment. Benjamin was in an era preceding modernism and now we have entered a phase beyond postmodernism. As mentioned previously another early signaler of this shift was Eduardo Paolozzi who we cited as a proto radican. Let us reexamine the Paolozzi work of 1981 'Blueprints of a New Museum'. This can be seen as an artist trying to think through and intuit the poetic potential of the post-modern era as a new phase in curation which the unauthor can respond to and play with.

What we can begin to decipher in this series of prints is a provocative metaphor for this new situation in the layering up of transparent images i.e. images devoid of substance, overlaid and laminated to produce new geometric combination like Bass innovative collages of 70's. All styles can wash over each other, combine and proliferate. Paolozzi is wandering around through illustrations of science, technology, art, history and layering them up to make new complexities and patterns within a new space as the lines of each historic manifestation increasingly complexify the image. 'Imitating the voices of styles in an imaginary museum' (Jameson 1998: 7). You could say he is becoming a tourist. This is a key point to make, Paolozzi would always think of himself as an outsider of sorts which is why he became interested in the works of Wittgenstein another immigrant who had a profound influence on his works as they both looked to find a place for themselves in the world and their chosen specialism and location. Alter-modernism is the mode of the exile, immigrant and tourist, as they are the dominant figures in contemporary culture or in other words the homeless (Bourriaud et al. 2020: 51). Before returning to this idea of the tourist or exile we must return to the 1970's one more time to understand a better equip an effective critique of AI and its potential for derivative content that the Semionaut/Un-author needs to understand to be able to make themselves cry in public.

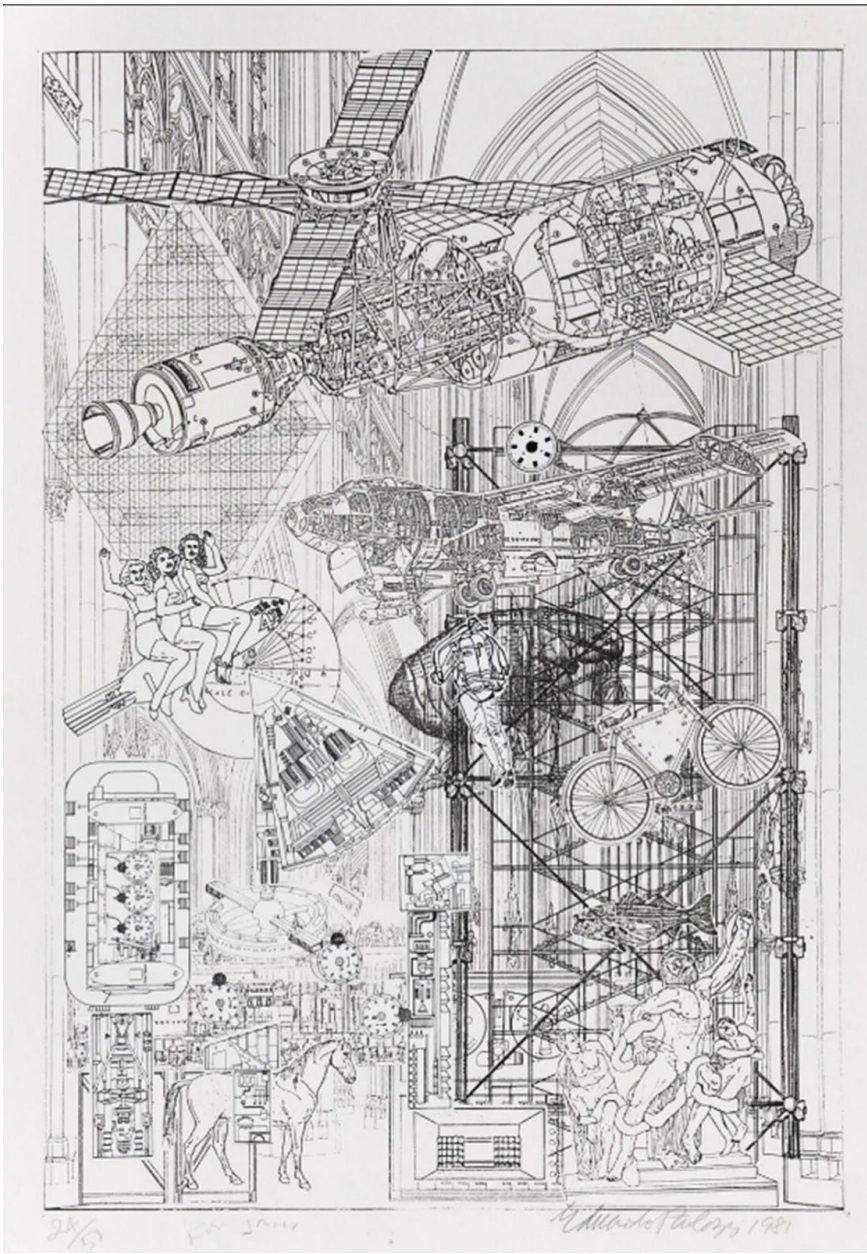


Figure 2: Eduardo Paolozzi, Blueprints for a New Museum, 1980-81. Lithograph with screenprint. 56cm x 37.7cm. UK. Courtesy of DACS.

2: Otaku Mode

In 1972 the Avant Garde electronic pioneer Karl Heinz Stockhausen delivered a series of lectures to the students at Oxford University entitled 'Four criteria of electronic music'. Within these lectures Stockhausen posited the idea '*Suppose you take a recording of a Beethoven symphony.... And you speed it up until it lasts just one second. Then you get a sound that has a particular colour or timbre...*' (Stockhausen 1991:91). This idea of

compressing a particular symphony to a one second essence seems like an apt analogy for what AI does with an artist's work. In that it can produce more of a certain style by compressing together multiple artworks to create the artists 'Timbre' - meaning the idiosyncratic character of a specific instrument or sound. Stockhausen's idea being that a Beethoven symphony would have its own idiosyncratic one second compression. But what is it that makes an artist's work identifiable? From timbre we can proceed by comparing two words that share a similar etymology: 'Gist' and 'Geist'. Gist means the most important pieces of information about something without details and Geist which translates into three meanings that of: Ghost, Spirit, Mind. In the process of compressing all the details into one second or style we end up with a sort of timbral ghost. An illustrative example of this ability to compress a style is Jon Rafman's ongoing project 'Brand New Paint Job' (Rafman, Jon 2009)

Within this Tumblr feed are a series of rooms dedicated to a particular artist or style e.g. a Basquiat classroom, a Hans Hoffman Kitchen, a Guston Kids Room the list goes on. Instantly recognizable places decorated by artists without using anyone specific piece from their oeuvre, in fact not involving the artist at all dead or alive. They have become Compressed ghosts. It is not the style of the famous paintings that serve as art, but Rafman's performed exploration of them.



Figure 3: Jon Rafman, Keith Haring Theatre, 2013, Generative Art. Online. © Jon Rafman



Figure 4: Jon Rafman, Basquiat Classroom, 2013, Generative Art. Online. © Jon Rafman

It is the performance of novel explorations that alter modernism inhabits. Untethered from the restraints of a point of origin, it realizes the 'aura' (Benjamin and Zohn 1992) of an artwork is one ephemeral aspect and seeks to move beyond it. Jon Rafman can be seen here as an artist practicing in the radigrant mode. A semionaut, reusing the timbral ghosts of an artist and applying them to a simulacrum of physical space using AI in a 'performed exploration'. It is this ascendance in performative and combinatory image production that signals a change in both the object and artist that can be observed in the feeling of dislocation that is an unavoidable product of cultural conflation.

This can be seen most vividly in Japan's unique assimilation of western media and the products of this assimilation the 'Otaku'. Otaku are described by Okada Toshio in an introduction to otaku studies as *'Those who possess and evolved vision' - 'a new type of person responsive to the cultural conditions of a highly consumerist society.'* (Azuma 2009:5)

The 'Otaku' mode is an important aspect of the 'Phase IV' meaning shift as a direct response to vast archives of information, networked society and overabundance of mediated content torn from any point of origin. It suggests that as readers and writers of culture we are beginning to use images and meaning in new ways and are blind to this change like a frog in boiling water. Hiroki Azuma's proposal of the model of database consumption in his book 'Otaku - Japan's Database animals.' (Azuma 2009) offers a compelling interrogation of these phenomena.

Azuma book discusses the rise of 'Otaku' as a disenfranchised subcultural phenomenon originating from the radical influence of mass mediated animation in the 60 that has its very origin within a cross-cultural discourse between USA economics and Japanese identity. There is no real home from the beginning.

It is noteworthy that the word Otaku means your home or your family, you develop your identity not by personal relations alone but by a relationship to the home unit and your own territory. This territory whereby we form our identity has necessarily changed through the postmodern shift. After the patriarchal or national authority has diminished, Otaku must search for a group to belong to (Azuma 2009:27). What specifically happens with Otakus is the acceptance of a dual reality or lack of importance between derivative and original content.

With regard to visual culture and illustration, the focus moves away from a closed narrative function. Otaku do not see narratives as discrete but look for signifiers and patterns to dissect and rebuild content based around multiple elements from a variety of sources. They then unify them or reconstruct them against a backdrop of the networked co-created databases existing through fan archives on and offline (Sutcliffe 2023: 85). Most important are his thoughts on the third generation of Otaku in the 90's having grown up in a postmodern era thoroughly devoid of any grand narrative or (this is key) a wish to create one. This third generation differs from previous generations in their lack of concern for deriving any meaning or grand message contained within a closed set narrative work. Rather, they consume fragmentary characters and settings. This occurs when a threshold is passed (like that of Hip-hop cited in the previous essay), and they begin to attach more relevance to personal empathy that develops toward these fragments. The Otakus themselves called this new behavior "Chara Moe" - the feeling of Moe towards characters and their alluring characteristics (Azuma 2009:36). This is the next phase in the cultural turn.

Moe can be translated as the vegetable verb sprouting in sympathy with the radican plant. In fact, if we push the comparison further the sprouting of Moe could be seen as a

metaphor for a radicant feeling that is looking for other host soils beyond the restrictions of a closed narrative setting.

It could be argued that the otaku mode is one closely aligned to Warhol's idea cited in the previous essay. 'The more you look at the same exact thing the more meaning goes away and the better and emptier you feel.' (Warhol and Hackett 2010: 50). However, there is a willful reversal rather than an enjoyment of emptiness. Due to the overabundance of consumer media, Otaku have adopted an ironic distancing from meaning. They know there is no meaning to be had, so this allows room for them to laminate their emotional attachment on to fragmentary parts with less friction. Because this is a phenomenon born from consumer society in the essay 'Postmodernism in Consumer Society' by Fredric Jameson's applies a prescient analogy on the schizophrenic breakdown of images to purely material signifier occurs. This can be seen in children's repetition of language. repeating a word over and over until all sense is lost and becomes a nonsensical incantation the materiality of the words becomes obsessive. (Foster and Foster 1994: 120). Which is to say that Otaku being overexposed to cultural media, repeatedly seeing similar narrative tropes and characters begin to lose sight of any meaning to be made.

Azuma goes on to note that this networked organizational structure that resides in the form of database inclines the consumer towards an extremely warped relationship between original and copy because the original simulates in advance the simulacra. The origin of this mutation in authoring is seen as early as 1990's in the hugely successful animated series Evangelion, which was '*launched not as a privileged original but as a simulacrum at the same level as the derivative works.*' (Azuma 2009:38) Proceeding to develop this understanding of a derivative market and the importance of 'Chara Moe' by examining how a character like Di Gi Charat can evolve from simple advertisement illustration with no back narrative or authoring into a multi-platform world character.



Figure 5: Haruki Azuma, Di Gi Charat Moe -elements, illustration for Otaku: Japan's Database animals (Azuma 2009: 43). Courtesy of the University of Minnesota Press.

'It does not make sense to ask what the original Di Gi Charat is, who the author is, or what kind of message is implied...the narrative is only a surplus item, added to the settings and illustrations (the non-narrative). (Azuma 2009:41)

In other words, the un authoring becomes the dominant process and this presides over the non-narrative elements. There are two issues at play here that must be grasped before proceeding. Firstly, Otaku are fully the product of postmodern values and secondly, they are more sympathetic to the idea of alter modernism because the way

Otaku interact with images and narrative is through lack of differentiation between original and copy. This is a significant change in both audience and creative roles. An audience that doesn't need an original entry point and an un-authoring that precludes derivative content from the outset moving away from an individual work to produce a setting that is ready for alternate readings and authoring ad-infinitum.

However, this mode of Unauthoring seems problematic because the database model is based on consumer market dynamics. It works as a device that sorts good from bad regulating the flow of derivative works. Any otaku work that parodies original content must adequately share a genuine knowledge of the database of elements, and a world view or knowledge of Moe elements to be considered a legitimate derivative work. Simulacra created without recognition of these elements will naturally be weeded out by the market and disappear (Azuma 2009: 60). Although these elements of database consumption are discussed by an obsessed group who are loyal to their chosen fantasy setting, they are nevertheless un-critical of the system that created them.

'Baudrillard argues that, in contemporary society, permeated by marketing and semiotic consumption, "We live less as users than readers and selectors, reading cells." His argument that differentiated goods and signs are stocked and circulated in quantity (the totality of which Baudrillard calls "hyperreality" and that consumers can express their personality or originality only as a combination of them grasps a reality that very closely resembles what I have been calling the data base model.' (Azuma 2009: 59)

Otaku are looking for the gist of a work, the timbre or vibe. Vibe 'the mood of a place. situation or person' conflates the idea of an overlying spirit with emotional resonances of a place or person. This is the new territory we as illustrators need to navigate. But more importantly, without knowing why this has happened the illustrator can do no more than add to the database. What differentiates the 'unauthor' here is the nurturing of idiolect to enable critical awareness because if the database is beholden to market dynamics this model is homogenizing from its very outset and although it may feel like an individualistic or creative expression. Or to put it in other words 'the creative mania for direct copying becomes a creative exit from reality, rather than translation of the real' (Barthes and Milutis 2023: 19).

The difference here is that Postmodernism incorporated the collapse of the grand narrative, but the theory developed before networked media fully integrated itself. From this vantage point, we can see how the otakus neurotic construction of "shells of themselves" out of materials from junk subculture differs from Benjamins Ragpicker as a behavior pattern that arose from the loss of grand narrative. Because the otaku

worldview is one that champions a fictional existence over reality. Reality, as they see it, is of less relevance to their lived experience. The otaku choose fiction over social reality not because they cannot distinguish between them but rather because of having considered which is more effective for their human relations. They shut themselves into hobby communities not because they deny sociability but rather because, as their social values and standards are already dysfunctional, they feel a pressing need to construct alternative values and standards' (Azuma 2009: 27)

The otaku mode of cultural appropriation echoes the 'radicant' artist's mode of selecting from myriad cultural choices across multiple time periods and trends. Therefore, this new unauthor needs to become a deft manipulator of multiple timelines and analogy where the sign of ingenuity is how eclectic and varied these combinations coalesce into an illustrative practice. The defter you are at drawing analogy from multiple disparate signs the more complex, unreadable and original the voice.

Can this playful self-cryptography be a mode of practice? Here we can invoke Phillip K Dicks concept of the scramble suit in his book *A Scanner Darkly* (Dick 2011: 21). In the novel the scramble suit is used to avoid identification allowing freedom of expression. Because all the elements that form the external skin are procured from a database, it is only the wearer hiding beneath that that can intervene, in other words they are hidden within the database but not made from it. An example of this can be seen in the use of illustration within Chinese activism 'In the face of stringent censorship the activists embed the activist message within the cute cat within amateur media' (Mina 2014) To avoid the possibility of being tracked, homogenized and compressed into an identifiable style or ghost, the job of the 'Unauthor' is to scramble themselves to avoid any coherent description. When it comes to image creation an AI model can only produce from a database of images and probabilities but cannot predict or accommodate large stylistic jumps that come from internal, illogical procedures of thought and concept because the emergence of AI is capitalist at its core a descendent of streamline efficacy. It relies on artists to be formulaic and rational.

Bourriaud himself admits the underlying theme of all his books is to show the artist as a figure of exception in the capitalist world, as an inventor of strategies of resistance to the productive sphere. Ultimately conflating the artists as the contemporary heirs of the magicians, alchemists and witches of the Middle Ages.' (Bourriaud and Beaulieu 2022).

It would seem then that this cryptography needs an authorial sensitivity that is not mistaken for an originality derived from a database of homogenized ideas (Otaku). This urge to cypher and encrypt may already be developing in creatives as a natural drive to regain a feeling of determinacy. An obvious and popular recognizable in the aesthetic

evolution of a music artist like Grimes³ in her approach to style which is analogous to Eduardo Paolozzi's continually playful output that switches from sculpture to print to curation and Illustrators like Avocado Ibuprofen or Jon Rafman. A willful avoidance of classification that gains authorial weight in its idiosyncratic assemblage. This is indicative of how we are all beginning to consume visual culture in the shadow of AI to cope with the overproduction of information and imagery, where we begin to authorially join contrasting narratives looking for similarities and patterns. It seems that if the mode of consumption has changed via otaku without a critical framework that understands this, there is a tendency to willfully fall back towards myth and occult ideas. Otakus naturally developed a combinatory authorship of playful citation but in this new mode of consumption it is the feeling of loss of identity that occurs to a subject via the ability to move and assimilate that appears to be of great significance. The Otaku mode offers a way to connect but recoils from responsibility the semionaut brings. This is precisely because Otaku are unaware of the structural effect of their behavior.

'The otaku are strongly attracted to the occult and mysticism. easily hooked on pseudo religions that draw on themes popular in various subcultures...after having failed to grasp the significance of a "god" or "society" by tradition, otaku try and fill the void with the subculture at their disposal.' (Azuma 2009: 28)

Flusser warns when describing the intentional retreat from conceptual thinking back into the world of magic that it will not work. He points out that the desire for a greater meaning is connected repeatedly with mysticism and reversion to old ways. A potential result of misunderstanding this new sensibility can be seen in the rise in conspiracy theories that flooded the internet post 4chan (itself a product of eastern and western synthesis). The rise in conspiracy here can be seen as the urge to form a grand narrative once we shift from narrative consumption into purely database consumption because there is no solid referent that can be clearly connected to a grand narrative it becomes a myth hidden within mass data and the only way to draw out a meaning from something so vast and unidentifiable it would seem is through divination or incantation. There are clear precedents for this most notably in William Gibson's Neuromancer trilogy or Neil Stephenson's 'Snow Crash' both science fiction authors draw upon voodoo and kabbalistic techniques respectively.

Here the search for the Higgs boson becomes an enticing metaphor on how meaning can be created in this new world of fragmented, flattened signs and signifiers of the semionaut. Because *'The Higgs boson can't be "discovered" by finding it somewhere*

³ There are multiple articles on grimes' form of anti style most recently in British vogue *'It's this ability to so deftly transform – and evade easy definition – that makes Grimes such an interesting star to watch.'* (Yotka, Steff 2024)

but has to be created in a particle collision. Once created, it transforms – or “decays” – into other particles that can be detected in particle detectors.’ (Anon 2024).

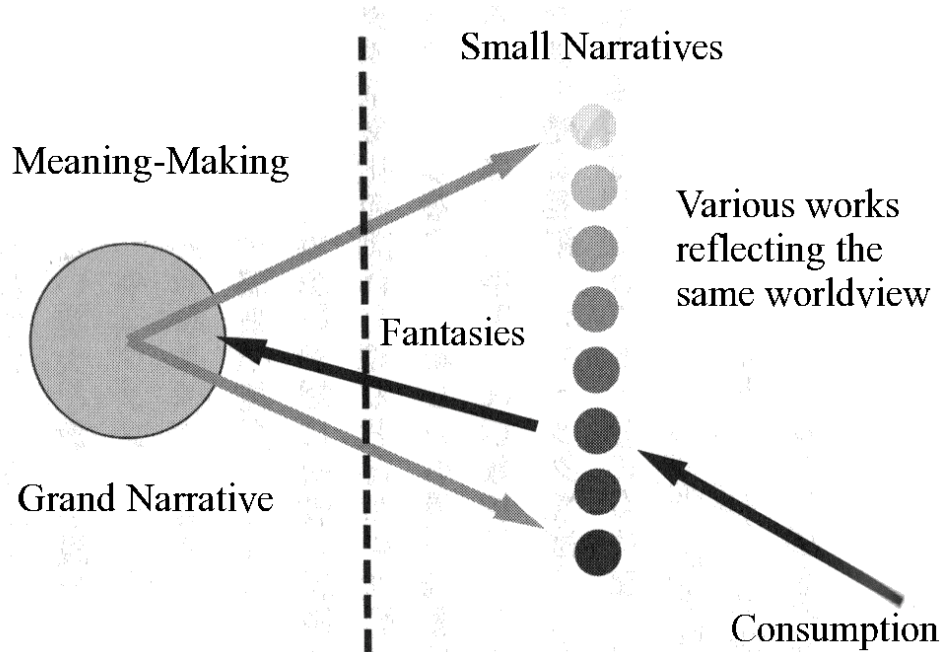


Figure 6a: Haruki Azuma, Diagram of the structure of Narrative consumption, illustration for *Otaku: Japan's Database animals* (Azuma 2009: 55). Courtesy of the University of Minnesota Press.

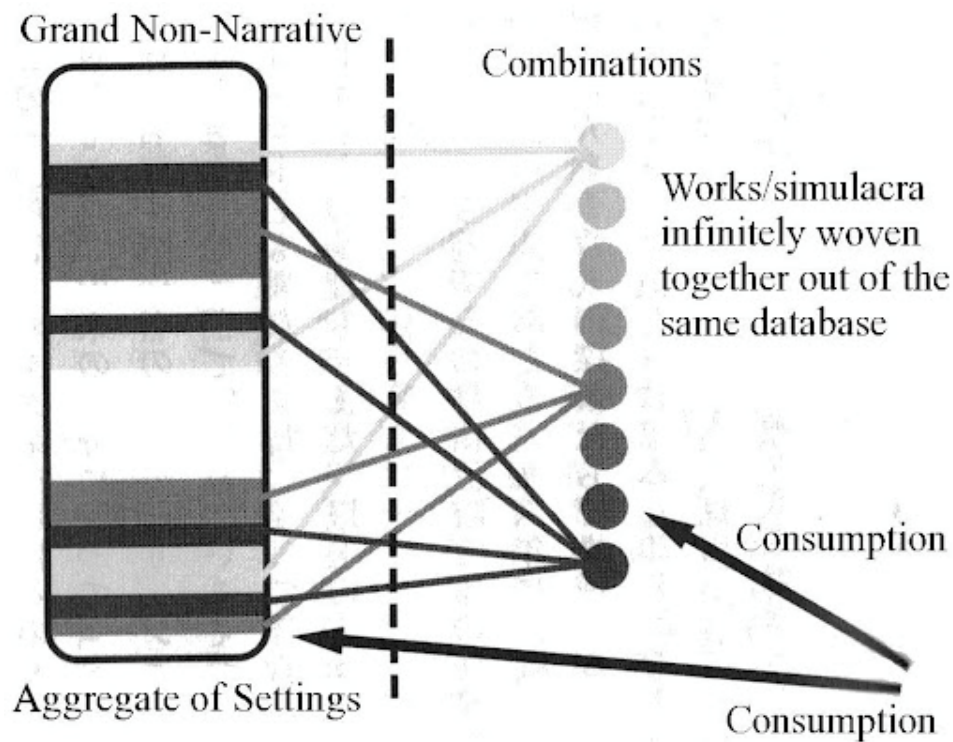


Figure 6b: Haruki Azuma, Diagram of the structure of Database consumption, illustration for *Otaku: Japan's Database animals* (Azuma 2009: 55). Courtesy of the University of Minnesota Press.

We have become literate at breaking apart and joining disparate elements together most clearly achieved through co-created fandoms and message boards that connect to database consumption. Meaning that the authorial now lies in the realms of a personified large hadron collider. Smashing together multiple fragmentary cultural particles to form co-created new combinatorial and fragmentary images that can transform or decay. This new Reanimated unauthor is a modern alchemist who needs to re-code contemporary culture, illustration, and narrative with new hybrid meanings. Which seems to echo what the late theorist Baudrillard was calling for in his final book.

'Cipher do not decipher. Work over the illusion. Create illusion to create an event. Make enigmatic what is clear, render unintelligible what is only too intelligible, make the event itself unreadable.' (Baudrillard 2007)

The unauthor must resist the urge to find meaning in esoteric exploration. Remaining responsible and erudite in their choice of concoction to deliver a rarity that is yet unidentifiable but, perhaps in realizing that there is another phase in cultural evolution understands the responsibility to water this new biome with new tears. Here we can finally evoke a new Menippean mode *'Menippean satire is of crucial importance precisely because it is formally disruptive and intrusive, a satirical solvent that acts as a catalyst for generic mixture and mutation'* (Arbiter and Petronius 1997: 20)

In Mikhail Bakhtin's exposition of the Menippean mode of literature that occurs during the tectonic shift of the reformation, that shares a striking similarity with the current cultural turn that seems to have looped back on itself. The Menippean genre being formed in an era when national legends were in decline, as ancient ideas of beauty and nobility were dismantled. A time of immense struggle among numerous philosophical and religious schools and movements. A time when disputes over ultimate question of human condition had become mass phenomena among all classes taking place wherever and whenever people came together in marketplaces, streets, taverns etc. The figure of the wise man of prophet being encountered more often than one met older hegemonic figures such as the monk. In other words, a transitional epoch in preparation for the new Christian era. The other side of this epoch being the devaluation of external positions one might hold in life and the transformation of these very roles into roles played out in mass spectacles of the theater. Leading to the dislocation of the holistic idea of human fate. It is here that the Menippean genre developed as form to pour the content of all this heterogeneity finding a way to link up all the elements. (Bakhtin 1984: 119)

The Menippean mode, being a literary genre that manipulates multiple techniques and digressions to enable the linkage of multiple elements from the widest viewpoint, could be the best place to begin this new exploration. The unauthor needs a critical idiolect to be fully complete. This idiolect needs to be expansive, and this can be augmented with AI but in the age of anxiety one dreams of teeth falling out. There is no bite, there is nothing to grip because there's no friction, there are only slippages but if they can move their roots, they can find new places to embed themselves. Because in the Phase IV shift the object and the territory have changed, but the illustrator is still needed.

'His subject matter is no longer the world of manners and ordinary appearances. He has to illuminate the real world for the ordinary person, the new world which technology and communications have created.' (Paolozzi and Spencer 2000: 205-206)

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