

“I have chosen to write notes on imaginary books”

On the Forgery of Textual Sources

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Literature has engendered various techniques to create literary fakes or forgeries. The most common methods include autograph forgeries, where a material object is produced and passed off as another object (such as a lost original, very similar to the forgery of paintings), and plagiarism, where the close relation of one text to another — its source — is hidden. The phenomenon to be described here constitutes yet another ‘literary forgery’, one that could be conceived of as the exact opposite of plagiarism: the detailed reference to a fictitious textual source, depicting it as real (existing in the reality of the reader) and prior to the manifest text.¹ This procedure could be looked at as a narrative strategy of forgery, as it produces an object — the source — and gives misleading information about its composition. Compared to other forms of forgery, this procedure enters uncharted territory, as it often deliberately scatters traces of the falsification it commits.

One of the masters of this form of literary forgery is the Argentinean author Jorge Luis Borges. In his short story *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*, the first-person narrator and his friend Bioy² search for an article about the fictitious country Uqbar that Bioy previously encountered in a book called “*Anglo-American Cyclopaedia*” (2009: 13), which is described by the text as a pirated copy of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. After they cannot find the article in the first *Anglo-American Cyclopaedia* they consult, it turns up in a second, otherwise identical copy. After a short summary of the article, we are given some of the content of its bibliography:

1 | As the aspect of the forged source being prior to the manifest text is essential to the technique of feigned intertextuality, this essay will use the term pre-text to refer to these textual sources hereafter.

2 | The name of this friend is undoubtedly inspired by the Argentinean author Adolfo Bioy Casares, a contemporary and close friend of Jorge Luis Borges.

La bibliografía enumeraba cuatro volúmenes que no hemos encontrado hasta ahora, aunque el tercero—Silas Haslam: *History of the Land Called Uqbar*, 1874—figura en los catálogos de librería de Bernard Quaritch.* El primero, *Lesbare und lesenswerthe Bemerkungen über das Land Ukkbar in Klein-Asien*, data de 1641 y es obra de Johannes Valentinus Andreä. El hecho es significativo; un par de años después, di con ese nombre en las inesperadas páginas de De Quincey (*Writings*, decimotercer volumen) [...].

* Haslam ha publicado también *A General History of Labyrinths*. (17)³

Through various markers, the text suggests that all the textual elements in italics in this section are titles of books, and that these books exist outside of *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*, although most of them are in fact fictitious: Silas Haslam, both of the texts ascribed to him and the text ascribed to Andreä do not exist in extratextual reality.⁴ Andreä himself though did exist, as did the bookseller Quaritch and his catalogs and of course De Quincey and his *Writings*. By inventing various book titles and locating the corresponding books outside of the manifest text, the short story simulates intertextual references.

Hereafter, I want to describe the simulation of intertextual references as a form of forgery, as this linkage provides a useful theoretical frame for understanding this narrative procedure. Thus, after a short overview of various forms taken by feigned intertextuality in different texts, the phenomenon commonly known as pseudocitation will be redefined along the lines of current descriptions of forgery. This will allow us to focus on the authorial act of manipulating the reader's expectations, rather than the mere object of the forgery, and lead to some insights on the aesthetic effects of feigned intertextuality.

3 | “The bibliography enumerated four volumes which we have not yet found, though the third—Silas Haslam’s *History of the Land Called Uqbar*, 1874—figures in the catalogues of Bernard Quaritch’s book shop.* The first, *Lesbare und lesenswerthe Bemerkungen über das Land Ukkbar in Klein-Asien*, dates from 1641 and is the work of Johannes Valentinus Andreä. That fact is significant: a few years later, I came upon that name in the unsuspected pages of De Quincey (*Writings*, Vol. XIII) [...].

* Haslam was also the author of *A General History of Labyrinths*” (Borges 1964: 17).

4 | The terms “exist” and “reality” will here and below be used to define a point of reference that lies outside of the manifest text, in the perceived reality of the reader.

VARIETY OF FEIGNED INTERTEXTUALITY

Contrary to the belief of some scholars, Borges wasn't the first to forge his own pre-texts.⁵ There is a broad variety of forms to this phenomenon, with different intensities as well as different functions and places within the texts.

Besides references to fictitious pre-texts, like in *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*, there are also references to a fictitious text that 're'produce part of the fictitious source. This is, for example, the case at the beginning of Herman Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel*, published in 1943. Before the story begins, the text presents a Latin quote, accompanied by detailed information about the source-text, its author and editors and the chapter it was taken from:

... non entia enim licet quodammodo levibusque hominibus facilius atque incuriosius verbis reddere quam entia, verumtamen pio diligentique rerum scriptori plane aliter res se habet: nihil tantum repugnat ne verbis illustretur, at nihil adeo necesse est ante hominum oculos proponere ut certas quasdam res, quas esse neque demonstrari neque probari potest, quae contra eo ipso, quod pii diligentesque viri illas quasi ut entia tractant, enti nascendique acultati paululum appropinquant.

Albertus Secundus

tract. de cristall. spirit.

eds. Clangor et Colof. lib. I. cap. 28.

(Hesse 1972: 14)

Despite the bibliographical details, this motto was made up by Hesse himself, who had it translated into Latin by friends whose names, Schall and Feinhals, he turned into the Latin editor's names here listed (Unseld 2012: 861; Ziolkowski 2002: ix).

Another version of this technique can be seen in the novel *Amor se escribe sin hache* by Enrique Jardiel Poncela, first published in 1928. In one of the chapters of this parodist romantic novel, the reader is given a quote seemingly taken from a poem called "El viaje en el tope", imputed to the Spanish romanticist writer José de Espronceda:

Me parece oportuno copiar un trozo de la poesía "El viaje en el tope", que tanta fama le dio a Espronceda, y que empieza así:

"Cuando los procesos, que vienen de fuera,
Y avanzan lo mismo que avanza una ola,
Nos traigan los trenes, que es moda extranjera,

5 | The statement that Borges was the one to introduce the phenomenon of the forged pre-text into fiction is for example made in Witthaus 2006: 164.

Será una delicia pasar la frontera
Sentado en un tope de furgón de cola.”
Siguen 222 versos más que no copio. (Jardiel Poncela 2011: 239)⁶

Just like Borges in *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*, Jardiel Poncela imputes his fictitious source to a real author, and just like Hesse, he not only refers to that source, but quotes from it.

Apart from those qualitative distinctions, there are also varieties in the quantity of the references to fictitious texts. Unlike *Das Glasperlenspiel* and *Amor se escribe sin hache*, which only reference a few forged sources, there are also texts mainly or entirely based on them. Roberto Bolaño's *La literatura nazi en América* from 1996 is one of the most examples of this. The text, described on the back cover as an “almost encyclopedic anthology of the pro-nazi literature” (2015, my translation), is composed of the descriptions of thirty fictitious authors, their lives, their works, literary influences and impact, complete with a thirty page long bibliographical appendix, the “epílogo para monstruos” (“Epilogue for Monsters”, 227), which lists fictitious and real books.

A DEFINITION OF FEIGNED INTERTEXTUALITY

The simulation of intertextual references hasn't yet been comprehensively treated on a theoretical level, but is mentioned in some examinations of the works of Borges and Pynchon. The terminology used therein can be roughly divided into two approaches: concept formation through the addition of adjectives oppositional to concepts of originality and authenticity, like ‘false references’, and concept formation through the use of the prefix ‘pseudo-’, like ‘pseudocitation’.⁷ However, neither terms built through the addition of adjectives like ‘false’, ‘erroneous’ or ‘apocryphal’ nor the various ‘pseudo’ derivatives offer an adequately clear terminology.

6 | The sentences before and after the poem translate to: “This seems to me like a good opportunity to copy a part of the poem ‘El viaje en el tope’, that gave so much fame to Espronceda, and that begins as follows: [...] 222 verses ensue that I don't copy” (my translation).

7 | Maya Schärer-Nussberger for example speaks of the ‘false’ reference, that—in contrast to ‘true’ references—points to ‘false’ information (2008: 161-63). Gérard Genette uses similar terminology when he talks about “apocryphal references” and “erroneous attributions” in Borges' *Historia universal de la Infamia*. Genette moreover uses the terms “pseudosummary”, “pseudoscenario” and “pseudosketch” (1997: 251-52). Peter Zima also uses the prefix ‘pseudo-’, commenting that pseudocitation is a phenomenon of postmodern literature (2000: 315).

This points to an underlying problem in terminology that complicates conceptual clarity: the recourse to concepts of originality. Basing the definition on concepts like authenticity or falseness seems inadequate, as those terms have themselves been undergoing a constant crisis of definition in recent decades.⁸

A more promising approach might be to look at theoretical conclusions on forgeries, where researchers have worked on a similar problem. In his essay *The Limits of Interpretation*, Umberto Eco writes that forgeries are mainly a pragmatic problem, because it is not the forged object itself, but the claim of identity which accompanies it that turns it into a forgery (1991: 181). Similarly, Bernhard Dotzler defines forging as a propositional act and emphasises that it is not objects that are forged, but the *information on objects* (2006: 78). In this sense, the simulation of intertextuality could even be seen as a forgery *par excellence*, being *only* a propositional act without object.

From this perspective, one could say that the simulation of references described here doesn't pertain to the inner quality of a falsified text, but rather to the attributes imputed to it. I thus propose to adapt a term that focuses on the implicit movement of referencing, and suggest the term 'feigned intertextuality' to describe the phenomenon here observed: *Feigned intertextuality is the reference to a fictitious pre-text, simulating the gesture of 'classical' intertextuality, as the text feigns a claim to immediate referability in the (perceived) reality of the recipient.*

The difference between feigned intertextuality and the citation of fictitious texts which are not presented as real (one might for example think of the magical school-books in *Harry Potter*) lies precisely in this artificial claim to referability. But how is this claim raised?

MANIPULATION OF THE READER'S EXPECTATIONS

According to Wolfgang Iser, every text creates expectations in the reader that will make him interpret the text in a certain way, until these expectations are interrupted, forcing the reader to reevaluate (1976). Philippe Lejeune develops a very similar idea in his work about autobiographies:

As opposed to all forms of fiction, biography and autobiography are *referential* texts: exactly like scientific or historical discourse, they claim to provide information about a "reality" exterior to the text [...]. All referential

8 | In his examination of forgeries, Umberto Eco notes that "the definitions of such terms as 'fake,' 'forgery,' 'pseudoepigrapha,' 'falsification,' 'facsimile,' 'counterfeiting,' 'spurious,' 'pseudo,' 'apocryphal,' and others are rather controversial. It is reasonable to suspect that many difficulties in defining these terms are due to the difficulty in defining the very notion of 'original' or of 'real object'" (1991: 74).

texts thus entail what I will call a “referential pact,” implicit or explicit, in which are included a definition of the field of the real that is involved and a statement of the modes and the degree of resemblance to which the text lays claim. (1989: 22)

Whether we call it reader expectations or referential pact, both theories state that certain structures in a text make the reader perceive it under certain assumptions (in the case of biographies, the expectation that textual references to an extratextual reality are to be trusted). The respective pact ‘valid’ for a text is conveyed to the reader by a certain repertoire of signals. Feigned intertextuality makes use of this set-up by imitating the repertoire of signals of an intertextual pact to create authentication strategies that induce the reader to locate the pre-texts in extratextual reality.

One of those ‘strategies of authentication’ logically follows from what Lejeune says about the referential pact, namely the imitation of what he calls referential texts — a group also containing texts like essays or encyclopedias (Ruthven 2001: 149). This imitation can be achieved through the use of stylistic features commonly associated with referential texts or even through explicit (but false) information in the paratext. One example of this is Bolaño’s *La literatura nazi en América*, a text that imitates an encyclopedia of literature: The reader is presented with 30 chapters on 30 authors, in chronological order and thematically bundled up, followed by a vast epilogue containing an index of people, an index of editorials, journals and places as well as a very long bibliography. Additionally, the back cover tells us that the book is, in the words of its author, an “almost encyclopedic anthology of the pro-nazi literature” (Bolaño 2015). All of these details are designed to shape the reader’s expectation that what he is reading follows the rules of a referential text and that the references point outside of the manifest text.

Another narrative strategy is the usage of detailed bibliographical information for fictitious pre-texts. In most cases of feigned intertextuality, the reference is accompanied by bibliographical details such as the publication date, the editorial that supposedly published it and the place of publication. This can be seen in the bibliography of *La literatura nazi en América*, where the strategy has reached an excessive peak. Mostly though, the invented bibliographical details are not presented in separate bibliographies, but are worked into the text, for example in *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*. The first reference to *The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia* in this short story contains information on the city and date of publication: “la enciclopedia falazmente se llama *The Anglo American Cyclopaedia* (Nueva York, 1917) y es una reimpresión literal, pero también morosa, de la *Encyclopaedia Britannica* de 1902” (Borges 2009: 13).⁹ In the information about the pre-text given to the

9 | “The encyclopedia is fallaciously called *The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia* (New York, 1917), and is a literal but delinquent reprint of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1902” (Borges 1964: 17).

reader, be it bibliographical information or details about the content of the pre-text, fictitious and real elements are often mixed, thus further locating the fictitious pre-text in extratextual reality. The most obvious example of this is the imputation of a fictitious text to a real author, as Borges does in *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*, with Johannes Valentinus Andreaë. This strategy corresponds to the adding the imitated artist's signature to a forged painting. According to Justus Fetscher, this is especially effective because the name of an author carries a certain authority that the recipient believes (2006: 316-21). But there are also various other ways to add real elements to the information about a fictitious pre-text, for example by stating that it deals with real texts, or that it is quoted in existing texts, like *Lesbare und lesenswerthe Bemerkungen über das Land Ukkbar* seemingly being mentioned in De Quincey's writings. Through this compound of extratextual and fictional elements, the fictitious pre-texts are being inscribed into the extratextual discourse of reality, likewise making the former more 'real' and the latter more 'fictitious'.

When Texts quote from fictitious works imputed to real authors, imitating the style of writing of this author can also serve to generate authenticity. This strategy is the pivot of most forgeries *ex nihilo*, as Eco and many others have retraced (Eco 1991: 186-87). *Amor se escribe sin hache* exhibits a parodic example for this strategy in its appendix: displaying "opinions that the book has earned from some famous people", this appendix ascribes fictitious citations to various famous contemporaries of Jardiel Poncela. Each citation is parodying the respective style of the writer it is imputed to (Poncela 2011: 393-96).

AESTHETIC EFFECTS OF FEIGNED INTERTEXTUALITY

This situation of reception — the play with the expectations of the reader and their deliberate manipulation through strategies of authentication¹⁰ — correlates with what is commonly described by the terms 'forgery' or 'fake'. As pointed out before, feigned intertextuality could even be seen as a forgery *par excellence*, because it illustrates the aspect of forgery as a propositional act. Thus, it proves interesting to look at this narrative phenomenon in the light of theories about forgeries. But the very aspect that makes it describable as a forgery, the lack of an object, is also the biggest contrast to common definitions of 'forgery', as the Oxford Dictionary reveals: "[Forgery is t]he making of a thing in fraudulent imitation of something" (OED 2015). While we have seen that feigned intertextuality could indeed be de-

10 | Through the manipulation of expectations, feigned intertextuality could be described — in a similar vein to Alexandre Métraux's comments on forgeries — as a double deception: The textual deception is complemented by the reader's self-deception, as he unconsciously disregards fictional markers up to a certain point (see 2006: 51).

fined as a “fraudulent imitation of something” — although the term fraudulent might be unsuitable —, the “something” that is imitated is not an object or text itself, but rather the reference, the pointing to said text. No “thing” is actually made in the process.¹¹

This lack of an actual object also leads to another difference between ‘classical’ forgeries (in the way the OED describes them) and feigned intertextuality: its purpose. While normal strategies of forging mainly serve to increase the market value of the forged object, the narrative phenomenon of ‘forging’ pre-texts carries a broad variety of aesthetic effects that range from being purely ornamental to questioning concepts such as originality.

Borges himself mentions some of the possible effects and purposes of the forging of pre-texts. In the preface to his collection of short stories *The Garden of Forking Paths*, he states:

Desvarío laborioso y empobrecedor el de componer vastos libros; el de explicar en quinientas páginas una idea cuya perfecta exposición oral cabe en pocos minutos. Mejor procedimiento es simular que esos libros ya existen y ofrecer un resumen, un comentario. [...] he preferido la escritura de notas sobre libros imaginarios. (2009: 12)¹²

While this explanation of the use of feigned metatextuality out of ‘pure laziness’ is of course a form of *captatio benevolentiae*, it also makes a point: in commenting on fictitious books, “pretending they already exist”, whole worlds of literature and genres can be condensed into a few words.¹³

But feigned intertextuality is often also part of the narrative strategy of a text, as is the case in a parody or a fantastic story, where it paradoxically reaches its full potential only when the reader realises the ‘forgery’. This realisation (or doubt) is

11 | Nabokov’s *Pale Fire* constitutes an interesting exception for this, as the fictitious text is entirely quoted in the manifest text, but will at the same time remain a fringe phenomenon, as through the primary text’s complete incorporation of the fictional text, the latter ceases to be fictitious (2011).

12 | “It is a laborious madness and an impoverishing one, the madness of composing vast books—setting out in five hundred pages an idea that can be perfectly related orally in five minutes. The better way to go about it is to pretend that those books already exist, and offer a summary, a commentary on them. [...] I have chosen to write notes on imaginary books” (Borges 1999: 67).

13 | Andreas Mahler elaborates on this in his recently published essay “Fingierte Intertextualität”, describing feigned intertextuality as an interminable process of text formation (2016).

integrated in the reception process by the text, as feigned intertextuality is usually not only surrounded by intertextual markers, but equally by subtle fictional markers that serve as hints to the fictitiousness of the sources and break the expectations of the reader regarding the pre-texts.

Thus, for example, the text of *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* various times emphasizes the fact that Uqbar is a fictitious country and that the article listing the books about Uqbar is forged, which makes the reader question the existence of the books mentioned — even if the text later reaffirms the existence of the book *Lesbare und lesenswerthe Bemerkungen über das Land Ukkbar*. In *La literatura nazi en América*, some of the dates of publication of the fictitious sources hint at their fictitiousness, as they are later than the publication of the actual text of *La literatura nazi en América*. The bibliography for example includes the title “*El Nacimiento de Nueva Ciudad-Fuerza*, de Gustavo Borda, México D.F., 2005” (Bolaño 2015: 240), although Bolaño’s book was originally published in 1996.¹⁴ Fictional markers like these, scattered in the text between the authorisation strategies of feigned intertextuality, lead to an oscillation between trust and suspicion for the observant reader.

In this process, the distribution of signals resembles the leaving of a trail that the reader follows in an increasingly investigative movement. The generation of an investigative reading in this sense reveals another characteristic of texts with feigned intertextuality: their proximity to detective novels. Through the use of criminalistic textual procedures, encouraging speculation on the part of the reader (scattering clues, hiding facts, providing conflicting information), the reader is called into the role of a detective searching for signs and inconsistencies to discover the truth of their pact with the text (Lejeune 1989: 14). This turns the reception into what Roland Barthes defines as the source of reading pleasure for the reader of modern literature: assiduous reading and rereading (1973: 22-24).

By making way for the detection of the fictitiousness of the forged sources, feigned intertextuality can be functionalised in ways normal forgeries can’t. In both *La literatura nazi en América* and *Amor se escribe sin hache*, the conflicting signals increase the parodic tenor of the text by exaggerating the traits of the imitated genres, thus leading to a parodic distortion.

Returning to the prior example of *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*, I would like to give a short sketch of the integration of feigned intertextual references into the fantastic narrative to generate a certain kind of receptional uncertainty that combines the uncertainty Tzvetan Todorov attributes to fantastic texts of the 19th century (1970: 34) and the epistemological metaphor Jaime Alazraki ascribes to the neo-fantastic texts of the 20th century as a central element (1975: 30), illustrating the subjectification of the concept of reality. This subjectification is treated by the

14 | This example of fictional markers is especially fascinating as it loses its efficiency as a marker with time — a reader in 2050 will perceive this marker as much less prominent than a reader in 1998.

plot of *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*, as the metafictional world of Tlön increasingly permeates the reality of the narrator. In the article about Uqbar, the narrator is informed that one of the main topics of the literature of Uqbar is the fictitious country Tlön, its culture and language. Later in the story, a whole encyclopedia about Tlön is discovered in the fictional world, seemingly written by a secret society of intellectuals. As more and more people read this encyclopedia, the metafictional country Tlön permeates the reality of the narrator, which itself then crumbles and reveals its constructedness.

By the use of feigned intertextuality, this wearing down of the border between fiction and reality is transposed from the boundary between metafiction and fiction, to the boundary between fiction and the reality of the reader. The constant oscillation of the references produces an uncertainty regarding the location of the reference points, blurring elements of fiction and perceived reality. If one looks at the bibliography of the article on Uqbar, it stands out how interwoven extratextual reality and fictitious elements are: for instance, although the author Silas Haslam and his book *History of the Land Called Uqbar* are fictitious, we are told that they figure in the real catalogues of the real Bernard Quaritch. Furthermore, Haslam is the name of Borges' grandmother, thus also pointing outside of the text. The footnote further intensifies the oscillation between reality and fiction: despite the fact that the book *A General History of Labyrinths* named here is also fictitious, it can be found in extratextual works, as Borges published a review of said book in an anthology about architecture under the pseudonym of Daniel Haslam. In this review, the book *A General History of Labyrinths* is imputed to Thomas Ingram, a real author who wrote the article about labyrinths in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, thus circling back to *The Anglo-American Cyclopedia* that is presented as a pirated copy of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in the beginning of the short story.¹⁵ Through this oscillation, the perceived border between fiction and reality is softened, and the subjectification of the concept of reality as a topic of the plot is made tangible in the reception. Thus, through feigned intertextuality, fantastic uncertainty infects the reader's perception of reality.

Thereby, the Borgesian "fantasia of the library" (Foucault 1977: 87) turns into a "metaphysical fantastic" (Bioy Casares 2011: 17, my translation) that attacks the

15 | Fascinatingly, this movement between intra- and extratextual reference points doesn't stop there, as *A General History of Labyrinths* is quoted in two scientific, peer-reviewed articles about architecture and physics (that probably blindly took the quotation from 'Daniel Haslam's' article on the book), adding "Wien, 1888" to the bibliographical details (see Lindgren/Moore/Nordahl 1998; Hagberg/Meron 1998). The uncertainty of the reader is also intensified by the internet and art projects in the case of Borges: Constantly, covers, summaries etc. 'from' the fictitious books Borges invented pop up on the internet. From 1997 to 2006, an art collective even produced an actual *Second Encyclopedia of Tlön*.

classical perception of reality as firm and objective. In his essay *Avatares de la tortuga*, Borges declares:

Nosotros [...] hemos soñado el mundo. Lo hemos soñado resistente, misterioso, visible, ubicuo en el espacio y firme en el tiempo; pero hemos consentido en su arquitectura tenuas y eternos intersticios de sinrazón para saber que es falso. [...] Admitamos lo que todos los idealistas admiten: el carácter alucinatorio del mundo. Hagamos lo que ningún idealista ha hecho: busquemos irrealidades que confirmen ese carácter. Las hallamos, creo, en las antinomias de Kant y en la dialéctica de Zenón. (2008a: 171)¹⁶

Just like the antinomies of Kant and the dialectics of Zeno, the feigned references in *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* serve as hidden irrealities, fantastic ruptures, that confirm the idealistic character of the world.

Such functionalisation of feigned intertextuality in the narrative strategies of texts can only be analysed on an individual basis, looking at each respective text, its genre, strategies and historical circumstances, but the example of *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* suggests that such entanglements can be observable.

In addition to being actively functionalised for the purpose of narrative strategies, feigned intertextuality, just like any forgery that has been exposed, can also serve as a means to draw conclusions about the system it derives from (Reulecke 2006: 22-23). In the case of feigned intertextuality, this system is the cultural convention of textual referencing and influence. One of the most widely debated fundamental assumptions about literature in the 20th century is the notion of originality and uniqueness. In *The Anxiety of Influence* Harold Bloom claims that every literary text is struggling to overcome the inevitable influence of its predecessors (1997), resulting in the hiding or suppression of intertextual references. The forgery of pre-texts could be understood as the strongest symptom of this anxiety: even in cases where a predecessor can't be found in reality, the author still invents one to process the insight that every idea comes from someone else. But Borges' essay *Kafka and his precursors* points to yet another interpretation of the connection between the anxiety of influence and feigned intertextuality, when he states that

16 | "We [...] have dreamt the world. We have dreamt it as firm, mysterious, visible, ubiquitous in space and durable in time; but in its architecture we have allowed tenuous and eternal crevices of unreason which tell us it is false. [...] Let us admit what all idealists admit: the hallucinatory nature of the world. Let us do what no idealist has done: seek unrealities which confirm that nature. We shall find them, I believe, in the antinomies of Kant and in the dialectic of Zeno" (Borges 1964: 183-84).

[e]n el vocabulario crítico, la palabra precursor es indispensable, pero habría que tratar de purificarla de toda connotación de polémica o rivalidad. El hecho es que cada escritor crea a sus precursores. Su labor modifica nuestra concepción del pasado, como ha de modificar el futuro. (2008b: 166)¹⁷

The use of feigned intertextuality is the culmination of this idea that every text metaphorically invents its own precursors: in effectively *inventing* the precursors, feigned intertextuality could also be seen as the overcoming of such authorial anxiety, as it frees the text from real precursors.

One way or the other, feigned intertextuality, with its strategies of authorisation and its various aesthetic effects, can be read as a symptom of the crisis of the concept of authorship and originality, and is thus, just like any forgery, a symptom of our culture.

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17 | “In the critics’ vocabulary, the word ‘precursor’ is indispensable, but it should be cleansed of all connotation of polemics or rivalry. The fact is that every writer creates his own precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future” (Borges 1964: 365).

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