EDITED BY JOHN NORTH HOPKINS & SCOTT McGILL

FORGERY BEYOND DECEIT

Fabrication, Value, & the Desire for Ancient Rome

OXFORD

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Edited by

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Acknowledgments

This volume began as a casual conversation within a big glass-walled pavilion at the heart of the Rice University campus, which serves as a kind of *κῆπος* for the forging (pun intended) of intellectual community. After much more, and much more serious, conversation with many more colleagues, six years later, we are delighted to see its publication. Our proposal for a year-long Rice Seminar on “Forgery and the Ancient” received initial support from Farès el-Dahdah, the Rice Humanities Research Center, and Dean Nicolas Shumway. Thanks to them, we were able to bring together a Core Six—Frederic Clark, Jay Ford, Christopher Hallett, Kathryn Langenfeld, Alex McAdams, and Erin Thompson—for the 2017–2018 academic year, to think and talk about forgery. The makeup of the group focused our sights on forgery as it pertained to the ancient Mediterranean, and, eventually, Rome. Together and with an exceptional set of visiting speakers, Morehshin Allahyari, Bart Ehrman, Kenneth Lapatin, Irene Peirano-Garrison, Lawrence Principe, Lydia Pyne, and Walter Stephens, we spent a truly rich year grappling with forgery in all its slipperiness and shadowiness. As the year ended, we planned a conference, held at Rice in February, 2019, which expanded our group to include contributors to this volume, Elizabeth Bartman, Jacqueline Burek, Jeffrey Collins, Sean Gurd, Joseph Howley, and Lawrence Kim, as well as Elizabeth Marlowe. Since the conference, we have continued to learn from Sascha Kansteiner, Talia di Manno, Carolyn Higbie, and others with whom we have shared our ideas and this work, including two anonymous reviewers of the volume and students in seminars at New York University and Rice University. As editors, we cannot sufficiently express our appreciation to those who have contributed directly and indirectly to this volume, and who have helped us in our attempt to be good stewards of its scholarship.

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Contents

List of Contributors ix
List of Illustrations xi

Introduction 1
John North Hopkins and Scott McGill

Prologue: Ideas of Forgery 11
Kenneth Lapatin

1. 'Corinthian Bronzes': Miniature Masterpieces—Flagrant Forgeries 44
Christopher H. Hallett

2. Reading Against the Grain: Book Forgery and Book Labor at Rome 93
Joseph A. Howley

3. Imperial Greek Atticism: A Culture of Forgery? Phrynichus and the Terminology of 'Authenticity' 121
Lawrence Kim

4. Forgery, Pseudepigrapha, and Other Typologies of Continuation in Latin Literature 145
Irene Peirano Garrison

5. The Fluidity of False Coins 166
Carolyn Higbie

6. Ancient Texts and Sibylline Truths: A Reflection on Forged Documentary Evidence and its Value in the *Historia Augusta* 181
Kathryn A. Langenfeld

7. Thinking with Antiquity's Ancient Beginnings: The "First Pagan Historian" from Isidore of Seville to Thomas Jefferson 204
Frederic Clark

8. Forgery and the Desire for the Classical Author in the Pseudo-Ovidian *De vetula* 226
Jacqueline M. Burek

9. Archaeology and the Invention of Holy Bodies in Post-Tridentine Rome 250
Talia Di Manno

10. Deceptively Authentic Additions 273
Sascha Kansteiner

11. Is Restoration Forgery? 308
Elizabeth Bartman

12. Fictional Forgeries and the Twilight of the Self: The Tablets of Armand Schwerner and Pascal Quignard 334
Sean Alexander Gurd

Epilogue: Beyond Deceit and Beyond: Situating Scholarship on Forgery 355
Jeffrey Collins

Bibliography 389
Index 433

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List of Illustrations

Prologue

0.1 The Getty Villa. Los Angeles, California, view from Large Peristyle. Photo credit: J. Paul Getty Museum 12

0.2 Cover of a brochure from the 2002 sale of casts of the head of the Virgin Mary from Michelangelo's *Pieta*. Photo by Kenneth Lapatin 15

0.3 "Snake Goddess," ivory and gold "Minoan" figurine, acquired in 1914 by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Early twentieth century. 16.1 cm. Inv. 14.863. Photo credit: Museum purchase with funds donated by Mrs. Walter Scott Fitz, Museum of Fine Arts Boston 17

0.4 "Our Lady of the Sports," ivory and gold "Minoan" figurine, acquired in 1931 by the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. Early twentieth century. 17.8 cm. Inv. 931.21.1. Photo credit: Royal Ontario Museum 17

0.5 Fragment of "Pompeiian" wall painting showing a reclining female nude surrounded by Cupids. Early nineteenth century. 12.2 × 13.5 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. MNC 879. Photo credit: RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY/Stéphane Maréchalle 19

0.6 Monumental "Etruscan" terracotta warrior, one of three acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1916, 1917, and 1921. Early twentieth century. Photo credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, after Richter and Binns 1937, pl. I 20

0.7 "The Getty Kouros," an over-life-size marble statue of a standing male youth acquired in 1985 by the J. Paul Getty Museum. 530 BC or late twentieth century AD. 206.1 × 54.6 × 51 cm. 85.AA.40. Photo credit: J. Paul Getty Museum 21

0.8 Certificate of authenticity provided to Henry Walters for "Minoan" ivory statuettes purportedly found at Knossos. Photo credit: Walters Art Museum 22

0.9 Han Van Meegeren executing a painting in the style of Johannes Vermeer, 1945. Photo credit: BNA Photographic/Alamy Stock Photo 2APTFFB 23

0.10 "Minoan" goddess figurine acquired by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, in 1926. Stone. Early twentieth century. 22.7 cm. Photo credit: Fitzwilliam Museum 26

0.11 Cuneiform tablet from Sippar, Iraq. Stone. Eighth–sixth century BC. 21.3 × 11.2 cm. British Museum BM WAA 91022. Photo credit: © Trustees of the British Museum. Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) 28

0.12 The so-called DeBry head or "Head of Achilles." Marble. Early twentieth century. 30.5 × 22 × 26 cm. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum 79.AL.7. Photo: J. Paul Getty Museum 31

0.13 Intaglio depicting Gaius Municius Scaevola. Agate. 1750–1850. 2.8 × 3.8 cm. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum 82.AK.163.45. Photo credit: J. Paul Getty Museum 32

0.14 Engraving of a gem depicting Alexander the Great inscribed with the false signature of Pyrgoteles, from Baron Philippe von Stosch, *Pierres antiques gravées, sur lesquelles les graveurs ont mis leurs noms dessinées & gravées en cuivre sur les originaux ou d'après les empreintes, par Bernard Picart* (1724). Photo credit: Kenneth Lapatin 33

0.15 Coin in ancient style produced by Giovanni da Cavino. Bronze. Early sixteenth century. London, British Museum 1919,0214.13. Photo credit: © Trustees of the British Museum. Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) 33

0.16 "The Cameo of Chartres." Sardonyx. Ancient Roman gem carved AD 41–45 in fourteenth-century gold and enamel mount. 15.2 × 8 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France camée.1/Chabouillet.4. Photo credit: Bibliothèque nationale de France 34

0.17 Roman relief in Greek style depicting the seer Calchas, excavated from a villa on the outskirts of the city of Rome in 1774. Marble. Relief AD 140–160; head AD 170–190; restored *c.*1775. 145 × 99.5 × 26.6 cm. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum 72.AA.160. Photo credit: J. Paul Getty Museum 36

0.18 Statuette of a horse said to be from Mahdia, Tunisia. Late second–first centuries BC. Bronze. H. 40.2 cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 23.69. Photo credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art 40

0.19 So-called Piombino Apollo, an archaistic statue recovered from the harbor of Piombino, Italy, in 1832. Bronze with copper and silver inlays. 120–100 BC. H. 117 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre Br 2. Photo credit: Kenneth Lapatin 41

0.20 So-called Boston Throne. Marble. Fifth century BC. 82 × 161 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 08.205. Photo credit: Henry Lillie Pierce Fund, Boston Museum of Fine Arts 42

Chapter 1

1.1 Zeus, "Florence Type." holding long scepter (now missing) in his raised left hand and thunderbolt in his right. Partly hollow cast bronze statuette, set on modern wooden base. 50 BC–50 CE. H: 29.3 cm. Florence, Museo Archeologico, inv. 2291. Photo credit: Sergey Sosnovskiy, su concessione di MAF, Museo Archeologico Nazionale/Polo Museale della Toscana 46

1.2 Zeus, "Florence Type," detail of statuette seen in Fig. 1.1: head and upper body, showing inlaid copper nipples and silvered whites of the eyes. Photo

credit: Sergey Sosnovskiy, su concessione di MAF, Museo Archeologico Nazionale/Polo Museale della Toscana 47

1.3 Zeus from Dodona. Solid cast bronze. 470–60 BCE. H: 12.7 cm. Athens, National Museum, inv. *X* 16546. *Εθνικό Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο*/National Archaeological Museum, Athens. © *Υπουργείο Πολιτισμού* & *Αθλητισμού*/ *Ταμείο Αρχαιολογικών Πόρων*/© Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Archaeological Resources Fund. *Τα δικαιώματα επί των απεικονιζόμενων μνημείων ανήκουν στο ΥπουργείοΠολιτισμού και Αθλητισμού* (*ν*. 3028/2002)/The rights on the depicted monuments belong to the Ministry of Culture and Sports (l. 3028/2002) 48

1.4 Hercules wearing lionskin and carrying his club over his shoulder. Partly hollow cast bronze, with inserted glass iris and pupil (still in place), whites of eyes silvered. First century BCE. H: 20 cm (with base). Kyoto, Miho Museum, inv. SS1689. Photo credit: Miho Museum 50

1.5 Venus from Herculaneum, bending down to remove her sandal; nude but for jewelry (armlets and anklets). Bronze, with gilded jewelry, and copper and silver inlay on the bronze base. First century CE. H: 17.5 cm (with base); H of base: 7 cm. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. 5133. Photo credit: Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, su concessione del Ministero per I Beni e le Attività Culturali e per il Turismo—Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli 51

1.6 Silver *turibulum* (incense-burner, censer) with gilding, from Tarentum. Mid-second century BCE. H: 27 cm. Collection of Edmond de Rothschild, "the Rothschild *thymiaterion*" (no inventory number). After M. Pfrommer, *Studien zu alexandrinischer und grossgriechischer Toreutik frühhellenistischer Zeit* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1987), 207, KT 52, pl. 32. 58

1.7 Silver *turibulum* (incense-burner, censer); detail of a Roman wall painting, from cubiculum (room m) of the luxury villa at Boscoreale. 50–40 BCE. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 03.14.13a–g. Photo credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1903 59

1.8 Bronze hydria, inscribed "one of the prizes from Argive Hera"; from Argos. H: (with handle) 51.4 cm. Mid-fifth century BCE. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 26.50. Photo credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1926 60

1.9 Bronze hydria, detail from a Roman wall painting, from cubiculum (room m) of the luxury villa at Boscoreale. 50–40 BCE. New York, Metropolitan Museum, 03.14.13a–g. Photo credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1903 61

1.10 Bronze tripod and cauldron, detail of a Roman wall painting from *oecus* (15) of the villa at Oplontis, Bay of Naples. mid-first century BCE. After D. Mazzolini (ed.) *Domus: wall painting in the Roman House* (Los Angeles 2004) p. 150; Photo credit: Parco Archeologico di Pompeii, su concessione del Ministero per I Beni e le Attività Culturali—Parco Archeologico di Pompei 62

1.11 Bronze *thymiaterion* (candelabrum), detail from a Roman wall painting, from Boscoreale. 50–40 BCE. Naples, Museo Archeologico, inv. S.N. 1. Photo credit: Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, su concessione del Ministero per I Beni e le Attività Culturali e per il Turismo—Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli 64

1.12 Philosopher, from the top of a bronze candelabrum fashioned in the shape of an Ionic column (only the capital is preserved); irises and pupils once inset in glass or stone (now missing). Mid-to-late first century BCE. H: 26.3 cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum, inv. 10.231.1. Photo credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1910 65

1.13 Detail of one side of the "Cup of the Ptolemies," showing a table on which there is displayed a collection of silverware and a statuette of the goddess Ceres/Demeter; kantharos carved from banded agate. 50 BCE–50 CE. H (of entire cameo cup): 8.4 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Cabinet de medailles, 368. Photo credit: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/image BnF. 67

1.14 Athlete (?) from the Antikythera shipwreck; partly hollow cast bronze, cast in several pieces; inset eyes of colored stone, alabaster for the whites of the eye, irises and pupils now missing; lips and nipples inset in copper, now also missing. The athlete probably once held a libation bowl in the right hand and a jug in the left, and was pouring a libation. 100–50 BCE. H: 53.5 cm. Athens, National Archaeological Museum inv. X 13397. *Εθνικό Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο*/National Archaeological Museum, Athens. © *Υπουργείο Πολιτισμού* & *Αθλητισμού*/*Ταμείο Αρχαιολογικών Πόρων*/© Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Archaeological Resources Fund. *Τα δικαιώματα επί των απεικονιζόμενων μνημείων ανήκουν στο Υπουργείο Πολιτισμού και Αθλητισμού* (*ν*. 3028/2002)/The rights on the depicted monuments belong to the Ministry of Culture and Sports (l. 3028/2002). This credit applies to Figures 1.14–1.17; and 1.25. 68

1.15 Warrior (?) from the Antikythera shipwreck; partly hollow cast bronze, cast in several pieces; inset irises and pupils of colored stone, now missing; nipples originally inset in copper also missing. The warrior wears a military cloak (*chlamys*) over the left shoulder, and probably once held a spear in the right hand, and perhaps a sheathed sword in the parade grip in the left. 100–50 BCE. H: 43 cm. Athens, National Archaeological Museum inv. X 13398. *Εθνικό Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο*/National Archaeological Museum, Athens. 69

1.16 Athlete or Warrior (?) from the Antikythera shipwreck, set on a cylindrical base of red Laconian stone; partly hollow cast bronze, cast in several pieces; inset irises and copper nipples now missing. 100–50 BCE. H: 24 cm. Athens, National Archaeological Museum inv. X 13399. *Εθνικό Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο*/National Archaeological Museum, Athens. 70

1.17 Ephebe leaning on a support (now missing) set on two superimposed stone bases, with rotation mechanism; from the Antikythera shipwreck; partly

hollow cast bronze, cast in several pieces. 100–50 BCE. H: 25.5 cm. Athens, National Archaeological Museum inv. X 18957. *Εθνικό Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο*/National Archaeological Museum, Athens. 71

1.18 Door inlaid with tortoiseshell, a circular stone altar decorated with reliefs, and a small column supporting a bronze statuette mounted on a red stone base; detail of a Roman wall painting from cubiculum (room m), Boscoreale. 50–40 BCE. New York, Metropolitan Museum, 03.14.13a–g. Photo credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1903 72

1.19 Hermes from the Mahdia Shipwreck; bronze statuette, partly hollow cast. 100–80 BCE. H: 32 cm (height of base, 10 cm). Tunis, Bardo Museum, inv. F 208. After Hellenkemper Salies, G. et al., *Das Wrack: Der antike Schiffsfund von Mahdia* (Cologne 1994) color pl. 13. 74

1.20 Satyr playing double flute (the pipes were probably originally added in silver and are now missing) from the atrium of the *Villa dei Papiri*, Herculaneum; bronze statuette, partly hollow cast. 50 BCE–50 CE. H: (without base) 29.5 cm. Naples, Museo Archaeologico Nazionale inv. 5296. Photo credit: Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, su concessione del Ministero per I Beni e le Attività Culturali e per il Turismo—Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli. 75

1.21 Statuette of Aphrodite standing in wooden cupboard in perfume shop; detail from a wall painting from Pompeii, House of the Vettii, showing a frieze of Erotes buying and selling luxury goods. First century CE. Photo credit: De A Picture Library, concesso in licenza ad Alinari 76

1.22 Still life composition showing large bronze platter with assorted foods, silver cup with dregs of wine still in it, head of a sheep, bronze jug, and bronze statuette in Archaic style of bearded Dionysos/Bacchus on a circular base; from the House of the Stags, Herculaneum. First century CE. Naples, National Archaeological Museum inv. 8615. Photo credit: Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, su concessione del Ministero per I Beni e le Attività Culturali e per il Turismo—Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli 78

1.23 Hermes/Mercury from Huis, near Lyon, France; bronze statuette, partly hollow cast. First century CE; H: 15.3 cm (without base). London, British Museum, inv. BR 825. Photo credit: © The Trustees of the British Museum 79

1.24 "A Roman Art Lover." Painting by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema. 1868. Dimensions (unframed): 55.9 × 84.5 cm. Yale University Art Museum, inv. 1965.25. Photo credit: Yale University Art Gallery 80

1.25 Old Shepherd with lamb and sheepdog, set on a decorated bronze base; from the sanctuary at Ampelokipi, Greece; bronze statuette, partly hollow cast. First century CE. H: 50 cm. Athens, National Museum, inv. X 16789. *Εθνικό Αρχαιολογικό Μουσείο*/National Archaeological Museum, Athens. © *Υπουργείο Πολιτισμού* & *Αθλητισμού*/*Ταμείο Αρχαιολογικών Πόρων*/ © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/Archaeological Resources Fund. *Τα δικαιώματα επί των απεικονιζόμενων μνημείων ανήκουν στο Υπουργείο*

Πολιτισμού και Αθλητισμού (*ν*. 3028/2002)/The rights on the depicted monuments belong to the Ministry of Culture and Sports (l. 3028/2002). 87

1.26 Heavily draped and veiled woman, dancing. First century BCE. H: 20.5 cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 1972.118.95. Photo credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Walter C. Baker, 1971 90

1.27 Enthroned Zeus/Jupiter, probably from Hungary. First century CE. H: 17.8 cm. London British Museum inv. 1865,0103.36. Photo credit: © The Trustees of the British Museum 91

Chapter 9

9.1 Map of Rome with sites of invenzioni, 1575 to 1634 CE. Image credit: Talia Di Manno 251

Chapter 10

10.1 Farnese Hercules. Signed by Glykon. Marble. Early third century CE, after a sculpture by Lysippos of *c.*320 BCE. 2.93 m. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, Inv. 6001. Image copyright: John North Hopkins, reproduced with permission from the Soprintendenza Archeologica della Provincia Napoli e Caserta-Napoli 275

10.2 Hercules, Farnese type. Signed "Work of Lysippos." Marble. Second century CE, after a sculpture by Lysippos of *c.*320 BCE. 2.90 m. Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Inv. OdA 1911.608. Image copyright: S. Kansteiner 276

10.3 Hercules Farnese, detail. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, Inv. 6001. Image copyright: D-DAI-ROM-80.2911 by H. Schwanke 278

10.4 Hercules, Farnese type, detail. Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Inv. OdA 1911.608. Image copyright: S. Kansteiner 278

10.5 Hercules, Farnese type, detail of pubic area. Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Inv. OdA 1911.608. Image copyright: S. Kansteiner 280

10.6 Aphrodite type Colonna-Hermitage. Marble. Second century CE, after a statue by an unknown sculptor of the second century BCE. 1.69 m. St. Petersburg, Hermitage, Inv. A 188. Image copyright: S. Kansteiner 283

10.7 Aphrodite type Colonna-Hermitage, profile view of head and neck. St. Petersburg, Hermitage, Inv. A 188. Image copyright: S. Kansteiner 283

10.8 Aphrodite type Colonna-Hermitage, frontal view of head and neck. St. Petersburg, Hermitage, Inv. A 188. Image copyright: S. Kansteiner 284

10.9 Aphrodite type Colonna-Hermitage, frontal view of head and neck. Marble. Second century CE, after a statue by an unknown sculptor of the second century BCE. 1.72 m. Rome, Palazzo Colonna. Image copyright: D-DAI-ROM-82.2522 by H. Schwanke 285

10.10 Aphrodite or a nymph with baby (restored as Eros) in her arms, profile view of head and neck. Marble. Over-life-size. Second century CE, after a statue by an unknown sculptor of the fourth century BCE. Florence, Giardino Boboli. Image copyright: S. Kansteiner 288

10.11 Medici Aphrodite, profile view of head and neck. After the plaster cast in Munich, Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke. Image copyright: S. Kansteiner 288

10.12 Drawing of the sixteenth-century head of the Aphrodite type Louvre-Naples, now in Rome, Embassy of the United States of America. Drawing by an unknown artist (about 1570/80). Image copyright: Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Fotowerkstatt 289

10.13 Eighteenth-century head of a female statue. Marble. Under-life-size. Musei Vaticani, Galleria Chiaramonti, Inv. 2058. Image copyright: D-DAI-ROM-88Vat.946 by K. Anger 290

10.14 Head of the "Antinous Belvedere." Marble. Second century CE, after a statue by Praxiteles (?) of the fourth century BCE. 1.95 m. Musei Vaticani, Inv. 907. Image copyright: S. Kansteiner 291

10.15 Imitation of the head of the "Antinous Belvedere." Marble. About 1700. 26 cm (from chin to crown). Dresden, Skulpturensammlung, Inv. H4 67/60. Image copyright: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Skulpturensammlung by H.-P. Klut/E. Estel 291

10.16 Imitation of the head of the "Antinous Belvedere." Marble. Seventeenth or eighteenth century. 31 cm. Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, Inv. 56.AA.16. Photo credit: J. Paul Getty Museum 292

10.17 Head of the "Antinous Capitolino," imprint of a drawing. Eighteenth century. Musée du Louvre, Inv. 18404. Image copyright: RMN-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre) by M. Rabeau 294

10.18 "Antinous Farnese." Marble. Second century CE. 1.94 m. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, Inv. 6030. Image copyright: H. R. Goette 297

10.19 "Antinous Farnese," detail of head and neck. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, Inv. 6030. After Maiuri 1958, fig. on p. 53 299

10.20 Maenad, detail of head. Marble. Sixteenth century. Palermo, Museo Archeologico Regionale "Antonio Salinas", Inv. 5615. Image copyright: D-DAI-ROM-96.476 by K. Anger 301

10.21 Philadelphia Dionysus, detail of head. Marble. Before 1620. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Museum, Inv. MS5483. Image copyright: D. Wittkowski 303

Chapter 11

11.1 View of Library shelf in the Arthur and Janet C. Ross Library of the American Academy in Rome. Photo copyright: Elizabeth Bartman 309

11.2 Plate 13, *Istruzione elementare per gli studiosi della scultura.* Francesco Carradori. Engraving. 1802. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (85-B9009) 318

11.3 *A Painter's Studio*. Michael Sweerts. Oil on canvas. 1646–1650. 71 × 74 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum SK-A-1957 319

11.4 *Hope Dionysos*. Marble. Roman era with eighteenth-century restorations. H: 2.102 m. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990.247. Gift of The Frederick W. Richmond Foundation, Judy and Michael Steinhardt, and Mr. and Mrs. A. Alfred Taubman, 1990 320

11.5 *Ince Diana*. Marble. Roman era with eighteenth-century restorations. H: 1.775 m. National Museums Liverpool (World Museum), Inv. 59.148.22. Image Credit: © National Museums Liverpool (World Museum) 321

11.6 "Catalogo di monumenti." Vincenzo Pacetti papers, *circa* 1783. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (880034) 323

11.7 Frontispiece, *Raccolta d'antiche statue busti bassirilievi ed altre sculture restaurate da Bartolomeo Cavaceppi scultore romano*. Engraving. 1768. Image Credit: University and Public Library of Cologne 325

11.8 *The Roman Studio of Bartolomeo Cavaceppi*. Hubert Robert. Black chalk on paper. 1765. 33 × 44 cm. Katrin Bellinger Collection, inv. no. 2013-030. Katrin Bellinger Collection 326

11.9 *Discobolus*, restored as falling warrior. Marble. Roman era with eighteen-century restorations. H. 1.48 m. Musei Capitolini 241. Image copyright: John North Hopkins 329

11.10 *Girl before a temple.* Bartolomeo Cavaceppi. Marble. *Circa* 1740s or 1750s. 73 × 68 cm. Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery 6535. Image copyright: Elizabeth Bartman 332

Chapter 12

12.1 The 15 M/T/Ds of Tablet 26. After Schwerner 1999: 78 340

12.2 Unnumbered example. After Schwerner 1999: 83 340

Introduction

John North Hopkins and Scott McGill

What do forgeries do? One answer is that they deceive audiences into mistakenly associating a work with a specific author, artist, or source. Yet in most examples, deception is a means to an end, not an end in itself, and is only one of the functions and results of a forgery. One of the most notorious forgers of the twentieth century, Han Van Meegeren, sought to deceive art historians and critics with his Vermeer forgeries. His purpose was to fool the art establishment, from which he felt the sting of exclusion; he would answer his detractors by getting them to identify his works unwittingly as those of the great Dutch master. Driven by wounded pride and resentment, Van Meegeren aimed to undercut the authority of connoisseurship and to expose scholarship for its dilettantism, if only to himself.[1] His actions became successful, even beyond his intentions, when scholars began to harness his critique-by-deception in new studies of authenticity and aesthetics, which destabilized the connoisseur's canon of taste and the formal and stylistic traditionalism of art history.[2] In the process, his forgeries did far more than achieve the malicious personal goal of deceiving an art market; they came to serve as evidence in emerging debates on what the study of art could be.

The ability of forgery to reveal artistic bona fides is also evident in the case of Michelangelo, at least in some accounts of his foray into fraud. In 1496, the young, impoverished artist produced the marble statue *Sleeping Eros*; in one version of the story, this was then passed off as a piece of ancient Roman art when Cardinal Raffaele Riario, an avid collector of Roman antiquities, bought it via the dealer Baldassare del Milanese. Yet Riario was not angry with Michelangelo's deception when he discovered the forgery, and in fact, he seems to have regarded it as proof of Michelangelo's surpassing talent: ancient art was venerated in the period, and the ability to reproduce it so well displayed the tremendous ability that he possessed. The forged sculpture thus placed Michelangelo's own craft on par with

[1] Van Meegeren's forgeries remained undetected until 1945, when he confessed to selling Hermann Göring a forged Vermeer; the forger tried to spin that sale as a moment of anti-Nazi subversion. To that point, only he (and those he had let in on his actions) would have known how his work had tricked audiences. The bibliography on Van Meegeren is compendious; see, e.g., Werness 1983, Kreuger 2007 and 2013, Lopez 2008, and Lammertse et al. 2011. See, further, Lapatin in this volume, prologue.

[2] Koestler 1964; Lessing [1965]1983; Werness 1983.

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that of ancient sculptors whose styles and techniques he recreated. The deception of forgery revealed the true artist, and the mask of antiquity allowed him to show who he really was and what he could really do.[3]

Michelangelo is, of course, a singular figure in art history. But he is just one of many who have viewed Greco-Roman antiquity as an invitation to fabrication. The centuries-long vigorous market in antiquities has much to do with this. Underlying that market is a cultural desire for the historical and aesthetic authority often ascribed to antiquity, as well as its romantic pull: forgers trade in the evocative, emotional force of the ancient by ostensibly bridging the abyss of time and making a lost piece of the past reappear. This is the sought-after antiquity that forgers, classicists, collectors, and general audiences share—a world that is both marmoreal and in ruins, present and absent, authoritative and populated by insubstantial phantoms. Scholars sift through fragments in the hope of refabricating an unrecoverable world; out of a similar desire, students, museumgoers, collectors, and others delight in fragmented bodies of literature, art, and material remains. In rebuilding ruins through anastylosis (restoration using as many original architectural elements as possible), explaining what is lost in lacunose texts and incomplete literary, historical, and philosophical traditions, or augmenting broken remains with museum labels that verbally color in what is absent, we aim to fill out and make present a missing past. Forgers seek much the same recovery; and even though in many cases what they also, or really, want is to deceive and to profit, their task can be more than a matter of mischief and venal mendacity—sometimes much more.

The purpose of this volume is to explore the aims, functions, and meanings of forgery that lie behind, and beyond, deceit. Its animating idea is that forgeries are valuable tools to think with, as historical texts and objects, as rich and complex creative works, and as meaningful products of reception and desire.[4] The book centers on ancient Rome and examines forgeries both in Roman antiquity and of Roman antiquity. Yet it is also a work of deliberate eclecticism: it stretches from the ancient world to the twentieth century and includes chapters on literary works and art objects, the two areas that predominate in forgery studies, but also on physical books, coins, and religious relics.

Such a brief recognizes that forgeries are at once integral to cultural history and deviant evidence, and hence unlike other traces of the past. We do not look at forgeries as we do other texts and objects. After discovery, an aura of falseness surrounds them and mediates the experience of them. To see them for what they are is to see them for what they are not, to register the gap between *esse* and

[3] There is speculation, too, that the young, poor Michelangelo savored his capacity to dupe powerful, wealthy connoisseurs, with whatever degree of bitterness or playfulness. For a succinct discussion of the forgery, see Charney 2015, 36–8. See also Howard 2001 and Lapatin in this volume, prologue. Cf. Catterson 2005.

[4] A strong influence on our framing of the volume is Pasztory 2002.

videri. Still, as this volume argues, forgeries reward interpretation that treats them as texts and objects in their own right, with their own places in history, their own aesthetic and thematic features, and their own authorial and historical realities and logic. The study of them can enrich the historical record by providing new ways of looking at it and thinking about it. With forgeries, historical fabrication is not necessarily antithetical to historical truth. In fact, they can expand what we know about the past and about peoples' relationships to that past.

A prevailing theme in the volume is that forgeries can index desires and nostalgia for the past: they reflect them and they generate them. We propose that there is something unique in ancientness that informs forgeries in Rome and of Rome, because antiquity (the quality of being *antiquus* and thus belonging to a distant past) invests texts and objects with a particular kind of value—not only monetary value on the antiquities market, but also symbolic and conceptual value, as material that is simultaneously of particular authority and particular fragility. Such a volume might look to any part of the world or any cultural tradition with a long history of (e)valuation. We do not maintain that Rome holds (or should hold) a privileged place in the study of forgery; but it does hold an important place, owing to the richness and significance of forged material in Roman antiquity, as well as to its seemingly eternal appeal to forgers. All of the works under consideration satisfied a perceived need or wish to connect with an authoritative former time and its authors, artists, materials, and practices; this was the case in Rome itself, and it remained so in post-antique periods with forgeries of Roman texts and objects.[5] Forgeries of ancient Roman material capture desires to (re-)make antiquity by filling in gaps or providing texts or objects that the forgers or their anticipated audiences want to have existed, but that have disappeared or never existed in the first place. In them, a potent, devious form of sympathetic magic is at work: the desired ancient past—distant, broken, and lacunose—lends itself to falsified (re)creation at the same time that its canonical referential value renders it a uniquely powerful tool in the invention of authority.

While forgeries of ancient Roman material exemplify the wider truth that people forge things of perceived value—monetary, aesthetic, symbolic, referential, or some combination of these—they also demonstrate the unstable nature of that value. A forgery, when exposed, is appraised differently as both art and commodity: the value it had possessed before discovery crashes, and it becomes something else entirely, as a faux substitute for the real thing. Yet this does not mean that discovered forgeries are valueless. A fundamental question in forgery studies has been whether and how such works hold on to value and significance after their fall from grace.[6] We believe that forgeries do retain different forms of value

[5] Cf. Wood 2008, on the desire to link works with "remote origins" in pre-modern German culture, including via forgery.

[6] See the seminal discussions of Koestler 1964 and Lessing 1983.

upon exposure; and each contribution to this volume contends with the ways in which they do so.

In some cases, forgeries maintain aesthetic value when unmasked, even when their precise aesthetic quality is complicated or transformed by the change in understood origin and authenticity. In their chapters, Kenneth Lapatin, Christopher Hallett, Lawrence Kim, Sascha Kansteiner, and Sean Gurd take up this controversial philosophical concern within the study of aesthetics.[7] A second kind of value that forgeries possess is historical value, which fundamentally shifts when a putative origin is replaced by the new creative context of the unveiled forgery. This transmuted historical value inheres in what forgeries tell us about the periods, places, and contexts in which they were crafted and in their qualities as works that influence our experiences of their periods of creation and of the ancient past that they sought to revivify. Nearly every chapter in this volume contends with these historical issues. A third way in which forgeries maintain value is by way of critical significance. As all of our contributors explore, forgeries have a distinctive ability to speak to issues in literary criticism, art criticism, historiography, and contemporary scholarly practices (and our own desires as scholars) that authentic objects do not.

The distinctive critical value of forgery emerges fundamentally from its particular modes of authorship and relations to authorial identity. On the one hand, a forgery is a work wherein an author/creator—whether of a literary text, an art object, or another historical document or object—has suppressed his or her own identity to help the work succeed through deception. This is true, as Hallett, Kathryn Langenfeld, Talia Di Manno, and Elizabeth Bartman respectively explain, of ancient sculptors who sign their works with the names of other, more famous artists; of the authors of the *Historia Augusta*; of early modern Christians who hide their role in fabricating relics; and of eighteenth-century restorers who faithfully complete works with missing parts, obscuring their own hands in the process. This means that a forgery is, on the one hand, anonymous when the forger remains unknown. On the other hand, as Hallett, Kansteiner, Joseph Howley, and Frederic Clark show, forgers typically take on the characters of identified authors (real or invented), schools, or traditions in order to give their forgeries meaning and potency, as was the case, perhaps, with the creator of a sculpture owned by Novius Vindex and signed "Lysippos"; with the forger who posed as Tiro, Cicero's scribe; with the author who claimed the name of Dares the Phrygian; and with the restorers of Medici collections who also signed with the name of Lysippos. Because the identity of the putative author is vital to what the forgeries are and do, authorship becomes an essential aspect of them: the mask of the author matters fundamentally to their messages and functions.

[7] For a thorough discussion of these and all the chapters in this volume, see Collins' epilogue.

In such works there is an authorial absence, in the form of the forger's willful anonymity, and a strong authorial presence, in the form of fictionalized authors, whether specifically named or imagined in their existence. In other forgeries, where the maker of a forged work is identified, that figure's status as both influential creative force and deceitful manipulator of traditions complicates the role of the creator even further, especially as it begins to supersede the perceived authorial power of the falsely credited maker. But whether or not forgers themselves are known, they and the authorial identities they assume combine to make forgeries (and, *mutatis mutandis*, categories related to forgery) a unique means of addressing the prevailing humanistic concern with the location of meaning and value in things.[8] Over the past few decades, scholars have highlighted the relational values and meanings of created works (rather than creators), especially among peoples and periods where individual identity and creative authority are secondary, unimportant, or antithetical to those works.[9] Such analysis has shone a spotlight on the biased orthodoxy of a humanism focused—sometimes anachronistically so—on authors and authorship.[10] But forgeries emphatically show that it is wrong to dismiss authorial significance entirely. In those cases where forgeries are uncovered but the forger remains unknown, the absence of a known creator does fundamentally destabilize the epistemological value of the author. But it does not eradicate it. Instead, these and so many instances of forgery, particularly those ascribed to well-known and canonical authors, pointedly reassert the importance of the author in textual and artistic meaning. Far from being dead, authors are reborn in mendacious or fictional guises, with their identities meaningful to a work's valuations and functions. They are not all that matters to forgeries, but their creative link to the work is essential in an acute way.

Recent work on forgeries and their close cousins—pseudepigrapha, copies, imitations, and other adjacent categories—reinforces the essential meaningfulness of authorial intention in the ability to analyze and properly understand a forgery as such. That is because a prerequisite to the study of a forgery is its exposure, which requires not only demonstrable misattribution, but also the mendacious desire for it. We and our contributors subscribe to this prevailing definition of forgery, which highlights deception and malicious intent as inherent qualities.[11] To be a forgery, it is essential that either 1) an author crafted the work and conspired to pass it off to the world as something other than what it was or 2)

[8] Hay 2008.

[9] The active, indexical, and relational qualities of things in lieu of the agency of putative genius creators is championed in Appadurai 1986; Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Gell 1998; Knappett and Malafouris 2008; and DeLanda 2016, among many others. Latour 2007 provides an assessment of scholarship since the 1980s.

[10] The canonical treatments that destabilize authors and authorship are Barthes 1977 [1967] and Foucault 1977 [1969].

[11] See the seminal works of Speyer 1971 and Grafton 1990, esp. 5–6. See also Stephens, Havens, and Gomez 2018. For a more flexible definition of forgery in ancient Greece and Rome, see Higbie 2017.

another person later combined a scrupulously presented work with a deliberately fabricated addition, accompanying work, or provenance, which altered its perceived authorial claim.[12] As Irene Peirano-Garrison and Bart Ehrman have argued, such later additions do not make the original work a forgery. Rather, they adhere to that original work and create a new, compound item that is intentionally and deceitfully passed off as something other than what it was. This constitutes a secondary forgery or forgery after the fact, i.e., a forgery overlaid onto original works, via intentional acts of deceit during their reception.[13]

While intention is fundamental to determining whether a work should be considered a forgery, it is also notoriously inaccessible, or at least uncertain; and recovering it often demands awareness of the varieties of sociocultural or religious practices and beliefs around authorship, which are subject to change. This presents real challenges to forgery studies and to several of our authors who contend with objects that lack records of purposeful mendacity, or whose deceit is only understood as mendacious in subsequent periods. As Jacqueline Burek, Kim, Peirano-Garrison, Langenfeld, and Clark all explore, a pseudepigraphon is a work whose author assumes the identity of another, like forgeries. But such authors do so with different intentions from the forger's, in that they adopt authorial masks that are designed to be recognized as such, rather than to deceive.[14] In many other examples, meanwhile, it is difficult or impossible to recover whether someone aimed for that outcome or sought a forger's deceptive disguise. What is more, as Langenfeld, Higbie, Di Manno, Burek, Bartman, and Gurd all demonstrate, at times the will to confuse or deceive is apparent, but its purpose may not be mendacious, or at least not entirely so. A work may have been transparently falsified to its intended audience, or its presentation might appear deceitful to some but be understood through a different cultural sensibility by others. This has been the case with sculptures, texts, historical documents, and religious relics. Such objects have been branded forgeries and understood as such by modern scholars, when their meaning either carried no such stain in the eyes of those who made them and of those who uncovered their deceitful origins, or operated in different ways, moving in and out of the category of forgery, because of shifting authorial strategies and shifting audience responses.

The opposite is also true; that is, often scholars do not wish to see forgery in objects that may well have been created with the most dishonest intentions. Scholars of Greek and Roman art have tended to err on the side of innocent

[12] We thus take a "universalist" stance and posit a transhistorical conception of forgery, even as we also recognize variations over time and place in its practices and reception. On the issue of historicizing forgery, see Ruthven 2001, 59–62.

[13] Peirano 2012b, 42, on forgery that is "primary and organic to the work itself" and forgery that is secondary, "the result of its reception history." Ehrman 2013, 34–5.

[14] On this topic, see Ruthven 2001, esp. 34–62; Ehrman 2013, esp. 12–67; Peirano 2012b, esp. 1–31 and 42–54; Higbie 2017.

intention. The absence of explicit mentions of artistic forgery in ancient Greece or Rome has led some to question whether the concept of *art* forgery even existed.[15] Though caution is warranted in cases where explicit evidence is lacking, wholesale dismissal of its possibility goes beyond the evidence. The premise is based on a putative absence of a cult of (or interest in) originals in antiquity.[16] But the purchase, looting, transposition, and veneration of expressly autographic, unique works and of specific instances of serially produced works, especially colossal and multi-figure bronzes by Lysippos and other signed and otherwise recognizable instances of works by other artists, is well documented.[17] Some unique and specific examples were prized. What is more, the separation of "art" from valued books, coins, sacred objects, and other items (which do have a documented ancient history of forgery) is a modern act, anachronistic to antiquity.[18] This does not, of course, prove the existence of, for example, sculptural forgery in cases where intention is unrecoverable. But as Hallett, Howley and Collins all explain at length in their chapters (1, 2 and epilogue), the signs of a forgery culture are present in the ancient market of cherished luxury objects, including what some might circumscribe as art.

As a consequence of, on the one hand, the requirement of authorial intention and, on the other, the inability to pin down intentions in many cases, to deal with forgery is often to occupy a gray area of interpretation, in which the borders between it and phenomena like pseudepigrapha, fakes, sculptural copies, pseudo-forgery, textual imitations, and misleading restorations are provisional and permeable. Contributors to this volume recognize and work with these ambiguities. They understand forgery and related practices to have a family resemblance, as an assemblage of categories marked by both their correspondences and their distinctions.[19] This includes identifying how those categories change with different interpreters, and change as well over time and place: what some classify as a forgery, others classify as something else (e.g., copy, fake, homage). In examples in the book where it is unclear how to define a work, it is at least the case that the

[15] Arguing for the absence of forgery is Nagel 2004, 102–5.

[16] Based on the commonness of serial production, references to copies as the work of the putative original artist, and because of the widespread creation of stock sculpture on spec, of replicas, copies, adjusted works, all of which is, indeed, well documented. On this, see Lapatin in this volume, prologue, for references.

[17] See Hallett in this volume, chapter 1, as well as Keats 2013, 3–4 and Casement 2016. On collecting, looting and desire in some cases for what must have been autographic, unique, and original works, e.g., Miles 2008; Landwehr 2010; Rutledge 2012, and see Collins in this volume, chapter 13. As Romans conquered and controlled the Mediterranean and as Constantine lifted sculptures to a new capital, the emphasis on specific instances of famous works and even signatures of artists is evident.

[18] On the forgery of such works in antiquity, see Hallett, Howley, and Higbie in this volume (chapters 1, 2, 5), and Higbie 2017; On the artifice of the distinction, see, e.g., Dean 2006; Porter 2010; Sjöstrand 2017.

[19] Arnheim 1983. For another use of "family resemblance" in connection with forgery, see Grafton 1990, 49, on the transhistorical nature of the phenomenon, whose different examples across time exhibit such a resemblance.

text or object has been considered a forgery at some point in its reception; contributors then examine and complicate that definition, underscoring how time, context and later encounters can wrap authorial intention in new cloth. Thus Burek, Langenfeld, and Gurd posit the category of fictional forgery, or work that advertises itself as a fraud: this is not a forgery *in stricto sensu*, but forgery with a layer of irony, a performance in which the author adopts the role of a deceitful forger and aims to have that recognized.[20] The cases in question stand at an intersection between forgery and fiction—a variation on the larger truth that forgery on the whole, with its invented author and origin, is a branch of fiction that lies on a continuum with other fictional forms and practices.[21] In such works forgery can have an essential element of play: the forger in those instances is a trickster, a *fraudator ludens* whose deception is a kind of game.

Contributors to this volume, then, work cautiously to explore shared effects that often exist between forgery and other similar activities. Lapatin, Higbie, Clark, Di Manno, and Bartman, for example, investigate how false authorship and false provenances function in and through particular texts and objects, including the weight that they carry in shaping aesthetic responses; monetary values; the rhetorical work that they do; and the cultural and historical significance that they possess. To pursue inquiry in this manner is to advance past responses to forgery that center on the forger as an ethical agent. Such responses emphasize the element of authorial dishonesty and fraud in forgery (often with language that equates the practice with crime) and are intent on proving guilt.[22] Their purpose is to expose and stigmatize the forger and to excise the forgery from an authentic corpus and tradition. Reading is equated with policing, as Jeffrey Collins explores further in his epilogue, and the critic becomes a detective tasked with protecting readers and the tradition from imposture and its corrupting, distorting influence.

It cannot be denied that forgeries have distorted the historical record, to the extent that they have been accepted as the genuine article. Such fabrications continue to twist and even change the course of history when they remain unidentified. As Lapatin explains, these can be considered sleeper forgeries, which secretly trick audiences into assigning them a false authorial origin or false provenance; but they are not forgeries in the full sense, since they have not (yet) been found and ascribed fraudulent intentions. Until discovery they are, for their users and audience, as authentic as can be, and in this, their deceit and its effects are profoundly troubling. Their family resemblance is with accepted/believed fake news,

[20] On playfulness and forgery, see Ruthven 2001, 52–5. See also the Clark's chapter (7).

[21] Cf. Peirano 2012b, 29, on the connections between fakes and fiction.

[22] Ruthven 2001, 44–52 (with an emphasis on the trope of counterfeiting) and 55–9. See also Grafton 1990, who sees forgery as the "criminal sibling" of critical scholarship (127), and who explores the interrelations between forgers and the scholarly detectives who try to unmask them. If one has been duped by a forgery, a response that views it through an ethical lens can be tinged with shame; cf. Pasztory 2002, 159.

conspiracy theories, and so-called alternative facts. Such activities and ideas have generated and continue to create an insidious, false, and sometimes damaging worldview. The Donation of Constantine participates in history in this way: it was an intentionally fabricated document created willfully and promulgated to support an "alternative fact," to change religious and political eventualities. It succeeded as a sleeper forgery for centuries, and it became reality, empowering the Catholic Church and its imperial sociopolitical companions in very real ways. The Donation is an example of how piety can motivate a forgery[23]—although here, piety and secular power go hand in hand. Indeed, by the time of its unmasking, the effects of the Donation had been so far-reaching as to set up a global power that would not be undone by its exposure.

The unmasking of the Donation of Constantine is the story of modern humanism, philology, and forgery studies.[24] But in that case as in so many others, discovery is just the first step in understanding a forgery: how and why a person or an institution undertook and perpetuated their deception, and what that deception did in the world. Today, doctored video and deep fakes reveal (uncomfortable) things about our culture—our politics; our attitudes toward gender, sexuality, racialization; our willingness to believe in distortions; our social media; and our willful or idle support of technology without critical caution. Examining forgeries and fabrications of the past can unmask similar, broad and deep cultural practices and forces, and we see this work as crucial. Simply to tag exposed forgeries as the products of ethical malfeasance and as inauthentic works, and then to cut them away from cultural history, is itself a distortion of history, in the name of creating a purer version of it than actually existed. The curator's or academic's discovery of a forgery in a museum serves to remove its stain from the gallery. But frequently the work stops there; the market it participated in, the desires that set and kept the forgery in motion, and the dark fabric that weaves together fraud, looting, and elite reputation—all this remains unexplained and left without examination, distorting popular and scholarly understanding of the past. This is to miss, or at least to downplay, the fact that forgeries, while foreign to the author, oeuvre, or object record that they falsify, are native to the place and period in which they arose, and thus embody features of the culture that desired and promulgated them.

The contributors to this volume all situate the forgeries that they examine, as well as the extended family of connected activities, squarely within the periods in which they were produced. In the process, they move far beyond the search for prosecutorial evidence of misconduct and explore a wide range of purposes and functions of forgery that accompany deception, and that reveal different forms of value that forgeries in and of Roman antiquity possess, both before and after

[23] Cf. Di Manno's chapter (9).

[24] Well explored in Grafton 1990.

exposure. In its macro-historical approach, the volume seeks to ground inquiry in particular periods and traditions while at the same time transcending them, by exploring forgeries over a lengthy enough temporal sweep that no one age or frame of reference can prevail, and so that multiple potentials in forgery can find consideration. In the process, contributors avoid anachronism through their sensitivity to historically and culturally specific features of forgery, while also exploring the aspects of it that extend across time and location.

The *longue durée* arc of this book offers glimpses into what ancient Rome was and what it came to be in its afterlife, through its reception. Disapproving critics of forgery see it as a hindrance to inquiry, in that it deals in the false, the unreal, the manipulative, and, potentially, the injurious. Yet while the violence that forgery does to the cultural record cannot be dismissed, the practice should be seen as part of that record, and thus as part of history, rather than of a para-historical cabinet of curiosities and crimes. Forgeries produced in ancient Rome reflect real human actions; they belong to Roman culture. Historically-minded audiences will view them and references to them as they do other surviving material from antiquity—as precious evidence of both individual and cultural practices and values. Later forgeries of Roman materials, meanwhile, reveal that ancient Rome is a perennially changing and changeable thing. Forgers treat it as an open past, i.e., a past that lies open to their interventions, and one that continues to be made and remade through the projection of desires back onto it.[25] The past that the forgers' materials ostensibly recover is one that they, or their markets, want them to recover. In this, forgeries confirm the link between absence and desire, and they reveal what people need, expect, or long for a lost Rome to be. It is of course the case that such forgeries do not bring us back to the real Roman antiquity. But their deceptions do reveal a true and unending appetite for things that come from the shadow realm of that distant time, and so for things that keep the world of ancient Rome alive.

[25] This varies the "open work" of Eco 1989—the work that leaves elements open to the audience to complete. Cf., too, Martindale 2013, 174–5, on the active role desire plays in driving classical reception more broadly.

Prologue: Ideas of Forgery

Kenneth Lapatin

Understanding forgery, as the chapters in this volume demonstrate, extends far beyond the simple dichotomy of genuine and false. Although much discussion on the topic naturally revolves around exposing fraud through scientific or some other means,[1] and the offending art object, literary work, religious relic, coin, or book tends ultimately to be removed from prominent display or usage and relegated to a basement storeroom or trash heap, full study and appreciation of forgeries *as forgeries* afford much of significant value. As has been recognized for decades, forgeries provide a valuable index of taste and the larger history of reception, offering those willing to explore the motives and methods, successes and failures of forgers and dealers, collectors, curators, and connoisseurs insight into the diverse expectations related to specific objects, artists, genres, and cultures among a particular class at a particular period and/or place.[2] But despite commonalities, forgeries come in many forms, and in the pages that follow my principal aim is to consider different kinds of forgery, their varying motivations, attendant circumstances, and what can be learned from them. These include forgeries that might be described as accidental, partial, beneficial, or rehabilitated. This introductory chapter will also examine some tropes of the genre, such as forgers' and dealers' use of authenticatory devices (e.g., deliberate damage, concocted find spots, and false documentation) to give greater credibility to their wares; the forger cast as culture hero, who at times must prove to skeptics that her or his work is, in fact, forged and s/he possessed the skill to create it; the roles of the market, aggressive collecting, and competitive scholarship in both the creation and unmasking of forgeries; and fakes considered somehow to be superior to genuine works.

[1] See, e.g., Fleming 1975; Spencer 2004; Craddock 2009; Charney 2015, 271–4; Scott 2016; Robyn Sloggett 2019.

[2] See, e.g., Bloch et al. 1979; Dutton 1983; Türr 1984; Grafton 1990; Jones 1990 and 1992b; Gill and Chippendale 1993; Cohon 1996; Radnóti 1999; Lapatin 2002; Rowland 2004; Rollston and Davis Parker 2005; Sutton et al. 2007; Lenain 2011; Gopnik 2013; Keats 2013; Charney 2015. Cf., e.g., Friedländer 2004 [1942]: "After being unmasked every forgery is a useless, hybrid and miserable thing." See also the comments of Henri Matisse, quoted in the section "Superior fakes."

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Some definitions

Forgeries are described multifariously, and the lexicon of forgery, unsurprisingly, is frequently imprecise and often confusing. In English alone the word "forgery" has many synonyms. Distinctions between "forgery" and, say, "fake," "fraud," and "counterfeit" can be difficult to parse. In most definitions, intentionality, i.e., deliberate misrepresentation or, more bluntly, deceit, is a key factor, and this can separate forgeries from many fakes, as, for example, in the case of costume jewelry: fake yes, but not usually forged. My own place of work, the Getty Villa in Malibu (Fig. 0.1), provides another analogy: the modern building is modeled closely on the Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum on the Bay of Naples, with modern casts of ancient bronze statues in its gardens, but constructed with different materials and techniques and diverging in many other details from the Roman original buried by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in AD 79, along with nearby Pompeii.[3] It is not a forgery. Both the Villa and some costume jewelry might more accurately be called "copies" or "reproductions." These terms are often used pejoratively to connote some, but by no means a universally agreed upon, degree of fidelity to a putative original, whether or not the item in question is exactly identical to its prototype in form, material, or size. "Duplicate" and "facsimile"

Fig. 0.1 The Getty Villa. Los Angeles, California, view from Large Peristyle.
Photo credit: J. Paul Getty Museum

[3] Lapatin 2018; True and Silvetti 2006.

generally connote a closer resemblance to a pre-existing "original," while "imitation" and "emulation" are often used to describe new products with greater or lesser affinity to a model. "Counterfeit," frequently used of written documents and more specifically signatures, monetary currency, and, more recently, name-brand merchandise, is a specific subset of forgery. (In British jurisprudence, apparently, this definition applies more narrowly to the term "forgery" itself, denying legal application of the latter to works of art, our chief concern here.[4]) Some scholars have recently proffered the term "non-authentic art" to describe what is more commonly called art forgery,[5] a designation I consider to be inadequate, for it fails to connote the intention to deceive, which, although it cannot always be demonstrated unequivocally, in my view remains crucial to our understanding of the phenomenon, though I agree wholeheartedly with both the premise and title of this volume that much more is involved. Furthermore, while all forgeries are in a sense authentic, being creations of the forger, manufactured by an individual or team at a precise moment for a specific reason or purpose, some objects, over their long life, can and do wade in and out of what we might define as forgery.

"Forgery," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is derived from the Old French verb *forgier*, itself stemming from the Latin *fabricare*, "to make." The earliest recorded uses of the English verb *to forge* connote the fashioning, framing, or constructing of a material thing: "Of wexe he forged an ymage" wrote John Gower in 1390. Gower's contemporaries frequently used the verb to describe the fashioning of metals by smiths (in forges, of course), but from an early date both verb and cognate noun were also employed to denote invention and falsehood: Geoffrey Chaucer, who in the *Parliament of Foules* (1381) described Cupid forging his arrows, in the *Parson's Tale* (*c.*1386) emphasized the inventive aspect of the term, writing "In which delit they wol forge a long tale." By Shakespeare's time forging and forgery had come to denote "deception, lying; a fraudulent artifice, a deceit" particularly propagated verbally in speech or written text.[6] In ancient Greece, by contrast, there seems not to have been such a clear linguistic distinction regarding (re)production. Objects (or texts) might be made, fashioned, molded, or shaped: *poiein* and *plattein* are the key verbs, but with no independent pejorative valence. They could be either true (*alethos*), false (*pseudes*), illegitimate (*nothos* = bastard) as sometimes in the case of texts, or debased (*kibdylos*) in the case of counterfeit coins.[7] The Latin verb for shaping (*configare*) might have negative connotations, while terms for substituting (*supponere*), corrupting (*corrumpere*), polluting (*adultere; adulterinus* for documents and coins), and falsifying

[4] Polk and Chappell 2019, esp. 317. See also Lawall and van Alfen 2010, esp. 6–7, for an edificatory nuanced analysis of positive, negative, and more neutral valences of both terms and imitative objects.

[5] Polk and Chappell 2019, 301.

[6] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., (1989), s.v. "Forge," v. 1.6.

[7] See Higbie 2017, 11–12; Lawall and van Alfen 2010, 12–13; van Alfen 2005. See also Kim in this volume, chapter 3.

(*falsare*) are more clearly pejorative.[8] Greek and Roman literary sources also sometimes refer to duplicates or copies. The mid-second-century-AD traveler Pausanias uses *mimoumenos*, the past participle of the verb *mimeomai* ("to imitate"), to characterize Menodoros' replica of Praxiteles' renowned statue of *Eros* at Thespiae (9.27.5), and his contemporary, the satirist and rhetorician Lucian describes an ancient copy of a famous painting that had been lost at sea both as an *antigraphos* and as an image of an image (*eikona tes eikonos*; *Zeuxis* 3). The Roman encyclopedist Pliny the Elder, meanwhile, is more prescriptive in his treatment of copies. He also inveighs against the fraudulent production of precious stones through the chemical manipulation of color and other techniques, employing the terms *fraus* and *falsus* repeatedly in the thirty-seventh book of his *Natural History*; he also decried the production of fake pearls.[9]

Some contradictions

If the imprecise lexica of forgery might be represented by shifting Venn diagrams, there are also oxymorons—or are they just salesmen's techniques? The "authentic reproduction" and the "genuine copy" are the specialty of the Franklin Mint and other firms that also supply buyers needing reassurance with certificates of authenticity for their wares, whether reproductions of Jackie Kennedy's signature triple strand of pearls, Viking daggers, Fabergé-style eggs, or miniature models of vintage cars.[10] (A recent *New York Times* article on forged lithographs, incidentally, quotes a categorical statement from the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation that "If a buyer is offered a 'Certificate of Authenticity', it is false."[11]) The products of the Franklin Mint, however, are better classified as imitations, not forgeries, in that they usually differ from their prototypes in materials, craftsmanship, and/or scale. They are made without intention to deceive, but rather to provide a tangible, if arguably spurious, link to a storied past. Documents accompanying "Jackie's Pearls," for example, reference their being "an exciting connection to and memorable part of American history and culture…" More exact replicas from other vendors, sometimes made from other, even more precious materials, offer buyers the opportunity to partake in the otherwise impossible possession of a unique artifact. In the early 2000s, the head of the Virgin Mary from Michelangelo's *Pieta*

[8] *The Oxford Latin Dictionary, s.v.* 59, 400, 450, 673 1883–4.

[9] Scholarly literature on Roman copying of Greek sculpture is vast. See, e.g., Perry 2004; Hallett 2005; Marvin 2008. Phaedrus (*Prologue* 5.3–8) writes of contemporary craftsmen increasing the value of their works by inscribing their marbles, silver plate, and painted panels with false signatures of Praxiteles, Myron, and Zeuxis. Herodotus (1.51) discerned false inscriptions added to dedications at Delphi. Pliny the Elder, meanwhile, mentions the aptly named Dubius Avitus, who commissioned Zenodorus to make copies of silver cups, centuries old, by Calamis (*NH* 34.47). For Pliny's remarks on forgeries of semi-precious stones and how to detect them, see *NH* 37.197–200, and Lapatin 2015, 110–11, and 184 for the faking of pearls.

[10] For the Franklin Mint see website and many other resellers online.

[11] Esterow 2020.

was marketed in a "limited edition ... Produced under exclusive license of the Vatican's Treasury of St. Peter's Museum," cast from molds taken from the original, in bronze, silver, or—for a cool US$2 million—gold. The accompanying sales brochure (Fig. 0.2) opened with the bold statement: "*For the first time in 500 years* ... YOU CAN OWN A MICHELANGELO SCULPTURE."[12]

If "authentic reproduction" is an oxymoron, so too is "genuine fake," a term that might be applied to the works of now-famous forgers like Han van Meegeren, who in the first half of the twentieth century created a series of "Vermeers" and other Dutch masters, and the eighteenth-century Roman sculptor and restorer Bartolomeo Cavaceppi. These forgers and their works have gained renown and are now desirable in their own right. Van Meegeren's, in fact, have been forged by his son Jacques and others.[13] "Genuine Fake" was the title of an advertisement

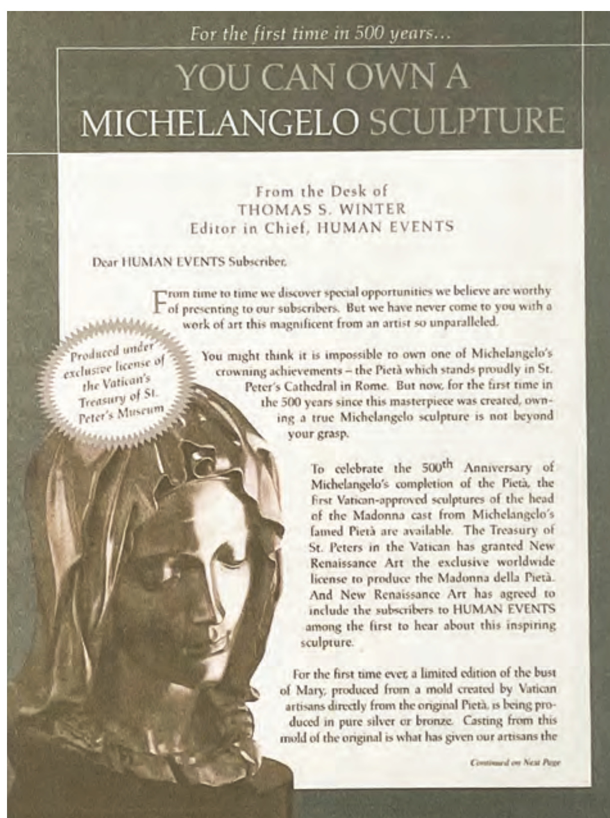


Fig. 0.2 Cover of a brochure from the 2002 sale of casts of the head of the Virgin Mary from Michelangelo's *Pieta*. Photo by Kenneth Lapatin

[12] Vatican Pieta replicas, see, e.g., Blank 2002; and now https://artedivine.com and http://newrenart.com/madonna-della-pieta/ accessed June 28, 2021.

[13] On Van Meegeren see, e.g., Werness 1983; Kreuger 2007; Dolnick 2008; Lopez 2008; Kreuger 2013; and below at n. 70; see also the Introduction to this volume. On Cavaceppi see Howard 1982 and 1992; and Bartman in this volume, chapter 11.

impoverished artist John Myatt placed in the British satirical periodical *Private Eye* in 1987, before he met John Drewe and began producing works "by" other artists with the intention to deceive; and since his release from jail in 2005 he has returned to exhibiting and selling "genuine fakes" in his own name.[14] And then there's the "real phony"—a term used by the fictive Hollywood agent O. J. Berman to describe his client Holly Golightly in conversation with aspiring writer Paul Varjak (played by Martin Balsam, Audrey Hepburn, and George Peppard respectively) in the 1961 screen adaptation of Truman Capote's novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's*:

O. J.: Is she or isn't she?
PAUL: Is she or isn't she what?
O. J.: A phony.
PAUL: I don't know. I don't think so.
O. J.: You don't think so, huh? Well, you're wrong. She is. But on the other hand, you're right, because she's a real phony. You know why? Because she honestly believes all this phony junk she believes.

This amusing exchange does more than highlight a verbal paradox. It introduces another concept crucial to understanding forgery: the importance of belief—and of mechanisms designed to shore it up.

Belief, authenticatory devices, and the erudition effect

Forgeries are successful, when they are successful, because they satisfy a need, or at least desire, to believe as well as to possess, and thus to ignore, or at least to discount, any doubts about authenticity. Successful forgeries rely on the complicity, usually but by no means always unwitting, of buyers/victims and—often—experts. Unscrupulous dealers, in fact, sometimes "play" buyers, leading them to false conclusions without definitive statements, reinforcing in the process their sense of belonging to—or joining—a privileged class: "Yes, you're right, it does appear to be in the style of…" And if there are any doubts, those are necessarily suppressed or overruled by other "evidence," whether internal to the object itself (its materials, style, subject, or apparent condition) or attendant (such as purported provenance or spurious documentation). Such authenticatory devices take many forms, such as appropriate "weathering" or reported place of "discovery," but ultimately play on expectations grounded in a particular genre in order to confirm the pre-existing notions of buyers and experts, who are sometimes one and the same. For example, Arthur Evans, the early twentieth-century excavator

[14] On Myatt and Drew see further in the next section with Gentleman 1999; Honigsbaum 2005; and Salisbury and Sujo 2009.

of the Bronze Age "Minoan" site of Knossos on Crete, was convinced by both the condition and reported histories of unexcavated "artifacts" presented to him. When he inquired, he was presented with "a tradition rife among his older workmen" that the gold and ivory Snake Goddess (Fig. 0.3) acquired by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 1914 had previously been "surreptitiously abstracted" from his own excavations; further stories were plausibly concocted of its having been transported to the United States by a female American archaeologist along shipping routes that seemed credible, but were never actually in use.

Additional "Minoan" chryselephantine statuettes subsequently appeared on the European art market and were provided with similar provenances. Some, like "Our Lady of the Sports" (Fig. 0.4), authenticated by Evans before it was purchased by the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, were badly damaged, but also somehow preserved their most beautiful and important iconographic features, in this case the face and prominent breasts, evidently the forgers' attempts to create an unequivocally female bull-leaper, a figure whose role in Minoan society had been

Fig. 0.3 "Snake Goddess," ivory and gold "Minoan" figurine, acquired in 1914 by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Early twentieth century. 16.1 cm. Inv. 14.863.

Photo credit: Museum purchase with funds donated by Mrs. Walter Scott Fitz, Museum of Fine Arts Boston

Fig. 0.4 "Our Lady of the Sports," ivory and gold "Minoan" figurine, acquired in 1931 by the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. Early twentieth century. 17.8 cm. Inv. 931.21.1.

Photo credit: Royal Ontario Museum

postulated by none other than Evans himself.[15] In this case, the forgers had insiders' knowledge as they had worked for Evans on Crete as restorers, and this and many other examples of forgery demonstrate well not only confirmation bias on the part of experts, but also what has been called "the erudition effect": seen when deep study and the application of the trappings of scholarship make forgeries more palatable.[16] As Evans' friend, the German archaeologist Georg Karo, remarked years later: "These skillfully produced works always had to fit excellently with the results of Evans' research regarding Minoan religion. And he had no doubts as to their genuineness because—as he wrote to me once—nobody yet had knowledge of the still unpublished results."[17]

Meeting expectations and salting the mines

Meeting expectations is crucial to the success of forgeries. Like the remains of Centaurs and Tritons produced by ancient Greek and Roman forgers—Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 7.35) records a baby *hippocentaurus* preserved in honey brought from Egypt to Rome and presented to the Emperor Claudius—forgeries are credible (for a time) because they fit so well into the existing mental landscape of those who see them. Although they had never actually been seen before, they nonetheless were expected. The logic of what was missing from the material record determined their form, and the perceptions of viewers were defined by the structure of preconceived expectations underpinning them.

Soon after the discovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum in the mid-eighteenth century excited the intelligentsia across Europe, the French antiquarian Anne Claude de Tubières-Grimoard de Pestels de Lévis, Count de Caylus, was pleased to acquire examples of "Pompeian" wall painting despite a general embargo on the export of excavated material from the Kingdom of Naples. The forgers evidently relied on limited knowledge of genuine ancient frescoes engendered by restricted supply, as well as the intense desire for new finds among northern European scholars and collectors.

The reclining female nude surrounded by Cupids on one "fragment" (Fig. 0.5) resembles a figure from baroque more than ancient Roman painting, but in this and other examples the forgers appear to have cleverly over-painted and broken the edges of actual pieces of ancient monochrome plaster, probably obtained in Rome.[18] More recently, the Metropolitan Museum of Art's infamous monumental statues of "Etruscan" warriors (Fig. 0.6)[19] seemed to fulfill the promise of the

[15] Lapatin 2002. Evans also purchased two "Minoan" ivory statuettes he identified as "Boy-Gods."

[16] See Grafton 1990; Higbie 2017, 223.

[17] Karo 1959, 41–2, translated in Lapatin 2002, 171.

[18] Lapatin 2012, 187–90. See Gaultier, Haumesser, and Trofimova 2018, 260 for another forged fresco, in the Campana collection, painted on ancient stucco, and Anton 2019.

[19] Richter and Binns 1937; von Bothmer and Noble 1961; Richter, 1970, 93; see also Fleming 1975; Craddock 2009, 197–9.

Fig. 0.5 Fragment of "Pompeiian" wall painting showing a reclining female nude surrounded by Cupids. Early nineteenth century. 12.2 × 13.5 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. MNC 879.
Photo credit: RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY/Stéphane Maréchalle

Elder Pliny (*Natural History* 35.157–8) and other ancient writers who described the renowned large-scale terracotta sculptures of Vulca of Veii as "more revered than gold." Met curator Gisela M. A. Richter and the museum's agent John Marshall rejoiced in the acquisition of objects that were thought to greatly enlarge knowledge of pre-Roman art and to provide "a new vision of Etruria in the late archaic period," to show "more forcibly than anything has heretofore her triumphant strength in her prime," and to reflect "the dauntless spirit of Etruria at the time of her greatest military strength."[20] Richter later recalled that "Mr. Marshall, who always tried when possible to investigate the circumstances of discovery, had been satisfied of the genuineness of the figures by the following incident: When he went to the place near Orvieto where the owners had told him that the

[20] Richter and Binns 1937, 6.

STATUE OF A WARRIOR OF HEROIC SIZE

Fig. 0.6 Monumental "Etruscan" terracotta warrior, one of three acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1916, 1917, and 1921. Early twentieth century.
Photo credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, after Richter and Binns 1937, pl. I

fragments of the statues had been found, he was confronted by a policeman who forbade him to go further. This he naturally interpreted as showing that the place was being guarded to prevent further private digging. Long afterward, when the modern origin of the statues was definitely established, it was discovered that the policeman had been a fake, dressed up for the part."[21] Even more recently, artist John Myatt's corrupt agent John Drewe surreptitiously inserted false notices of works fashioned by Myatt into the archives of the Tate Gallery and Britain's

[21] Richter 1970, 93.

National Art Library within the Victoria and Albert Museum and thus provided "historical" documentation for the hitherto "overlooked" works by famous artists that Myatt had, in fact, created and Drewe brought to market.[22]

Forged documents were also provided to the Getty Museum by the seller of a dubious Archaic Greek stone *kouros* (Fig. 0.7) in the 1980s, falsely suggesting that it had been seen by a respected scholar decades earlier.[23] Likewise, a French

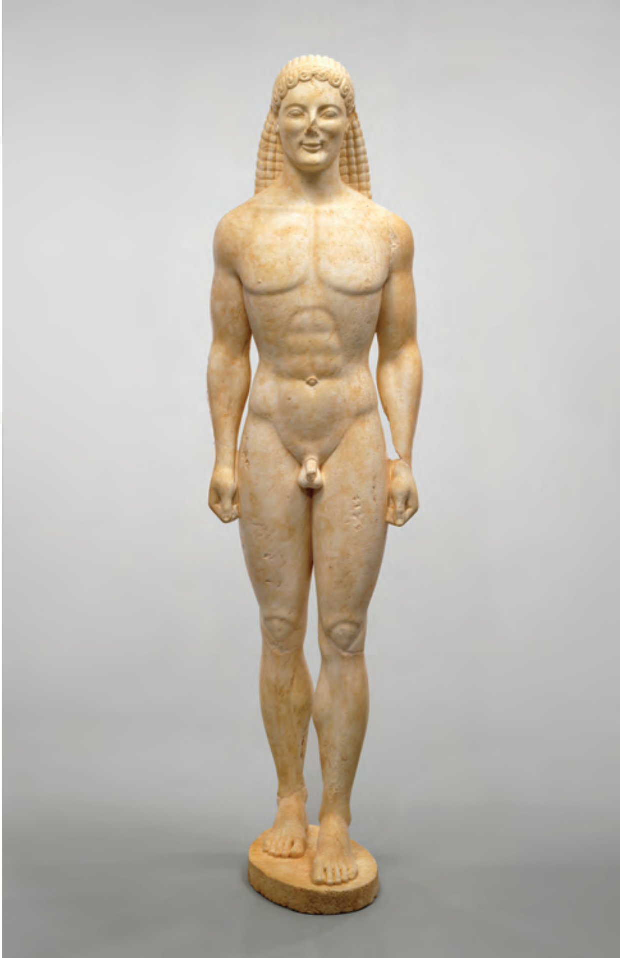
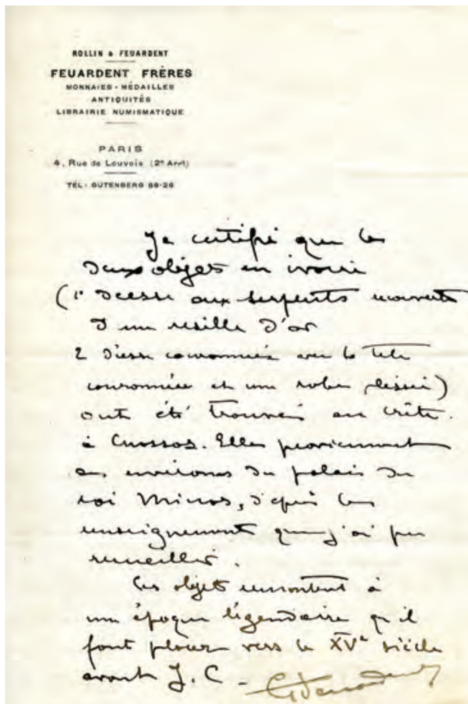


Fig. 0.7 "The Getty Kouros," an over-life-size marble statue of a standing male youth acquired in 1985 by the J. Paul Getty Museum. 530 BC or late twentieth century AD. 206.1 × 54.6 × 51 cm. 85.AA.40.
Photo credit: J. Paul Getty Museum

[22] Salisbury and Sujo 2009, with earlier bibliography, and below at n. 26.
[23] Lapatin 2000, with earlier bibliography; Lapatin and Wight 2010, 17.



ROLLIN & FEUARDENT
FEUARDENT FRÈRES
MONNAIES · MÉDAILLES
ANTIQUITÉS
LIBRAIRIE NUMISMATIQUE

PARIS
4, Rue de Louvois (2e Arrt)
TÉL : GUTENBERG 86-26

Je certifie que les
deux objets en ivoire
(1° Déesse aux serpents couverte
d'une résille d'or
2 Déesse couronnée avec la tête
couronnée et une robe plissée)
ont été trouvés en Crète
à Cnossos. Elles proviennent
des environs du palais du
roi Minos, d'après les
renseignements que j'ai pu
recueillir.
Ces objets remontent à
une époque légendaire qu'il
faut placer vers le XVe siècle
avant J. C. –

Fig. 0.8 Certificate of authenticity provided to Henry Walters for "Minoan" ivory statuettes purportedly found at Knossos.
Photo credit: Walters Art Museum

dealer provided Henry Walters with a bogus certificate of authenticity for yet other "Minoan" ivory statuettes, also said to be from the Palace of Minos at Knossos (Fig. 0.8).[24]

Most forgers and dishonest dealers appear to seek financial profit above all.[25] Myatt and Drewe were motivated by the desire for money, but also some degree of animus, at least in the case of the latter: British police suspect that he "was driven as much by a need to demonstrate his intellectual superiority as by greed. Prosecutor John Bevan QC told the court that the effort Drewe put into the deception suggested 'an intellectual delight in fooling people and a contempt for experts.'"[26] In the early twentieth century, the Dutch artist Han van Meegeren (Fig. 0.9), too, sought riches, but also later spun a popular narrative that cast him as a trickster who thumbed his nose at both the art establishment and the Nazi high command. Having been spurned by the contemporary art market, he produced several "lost" religious paintings of Vermeer whose existence had been postulated by

[24] Lapatin 2002, 92–3, fig. 4.1.
[25] The chapter headings of Charney 2015 list various motivations: Genius, Pride, Revenge, Fame, Crime, Opportunism, Money, Power.
[26] Gentleman 1999.

Fig. 0.9 Han Van Meegeren executing a painting in the style of Johannes Vermeer, 1945.
Photo credit: BNA Photographic/Alamy Stock Photo 2APTFFB

Abraham Bredius, the leading Vermeer scholar of the early twentieth century, who had hypothesized an otherwise undocumented early period of Vermeer's career, in which the painter had traveled to Italy, or at least fallen under the sway of the Utrecht Caravaggisti, and painted religious subjects. Van Meegeren did his homework, employed scholars' research against them, and produced just what was desired. It was only after he was arrested for having sold Dutch national patrimony to Hermann Göring during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands that he confessed to his forgeries, but was not believed by experts—another trope of forgery—and had to demonstrate in court that he had, in fact, painted them.[27]

Likewise, Piltdown Man, "discovered" in 1912, fulfilled the prediction of a "missing link" that bridged the evolutionary gap between man and ape. And why not? It was composed of the skull of a man and the jawbone of an orangutan. Piltdown Man was the perfect confirmation of a preexisting hypothesis. As paleontologist W. J. Sollas wrote in 1924 with unappreciated naiveté, it was "a combination which had indeed long been previously anticipated as an almost necessary

[27] For van Meegeren, see n. 14. See the next section on Woody Blackwell, a more recent forger whose work was considered too good to have been created by him.

stage in the course of human development."[28] As Gilbert Bagnani later observed in a different context: "if people create a demand, they can scarcely complain when a supply is forthcoming."[29] There were also significant political/nationalistic implications that contributed to the success of the fraud. The Germans had discovered Neanderthal Man in the mid-nineteenth century and the French Cro-Magnon Man shortly thereafter. Piltdown Man was presented as "the earliest Englishman," and the amateur British paleontologist Richard Dawson, now recognized as the instigator of the fraud, seems to have been motivated by the prospect of heightened social status, rather than of financial reward. Forgeries of Visigothic eagle brooches in mid-twentieth-century Europe, meanwhile, supplied eager enthusiasts of nationalistic, totalitarian regimes.[30]

Half a century later, the Japanese archaeologist Shinichi Fujimora, onetime senior director at the Tohoku Paleolithic Institute, salted numerous of his own excavation sites with "evidence" of early civilization that extended back to the Early Paleolithic, (temporarily) bringing him great fame—his colleagues called him "God's hands"—until he was exposed by journalists who captured him on video planting "artifacts." His discoveries had seemed to indicate that his country had been inhabited far longer than previously thought. Chairman of the Japanese Archaeological Association Ken Amakasu remarked that in Japan, where, prior to the end of World War II, people were taught that they were a unique race, archaeology served to reinforce a sense of national identity rather than to uncover human history. Fujimora played to that expectation by telling people precisely what they wanted to hear, and the town of Tsukidate, where he made his most spectacular "finds," adopted a new motto ("Come see the skies that were admired by the original man"), established a popular foot race, the "Original Man Marathon," and even marketed "Original Man" noodles. When asked why he perpetrated his frauds, Fujimora confessed that he wanted to be the one who made the earliest and most important discoveries. "The Devil made me do it," he said.[31]

A much more benign example of false provenance is the (deliberate?) misattribution of a genuine Roman marble portrait bust of the emperor Septimius Severus to Herculaneum. The site, of course, was deeply buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79—more than a century before the accession of the emperor, who ruled AD 193–211—and was not reoccupied in antiquity. The bust, obtained by the Louvre in 1863 from the collection of the disgraced Roman financier and collector Giampietro Campana, was evidently acquired at a time when

[28] Sollas 1924, quoted by Bagnani 1960, 242. The bibliography on Piltdown Man is vast, see, e.g., Russell 2003.

[29] Bagnani 1960, 232.

[30] Corrochano Labrador 2019.

[31] French 2000; Hazelton 2001; Hudson 2005.

such a prestigious provenance might add value. Remarkably, the clearly invented provenance was repeated in the museum's catalogs into the late twentieth century and remained on the label mounted on the bust's pedestal as recently as 2013, so well does it fit in with our reliance on strongly established preconceptions and general lack of independent critical thinking.[32]

Ambition

Fame is sometimes sought by the forgers themselves, albeit paradoxically, because success should require them to keep quiet. Recall the wounded pride of the young Michelangelo, who exposed his own forgery of an "ancient Roman" marble Sleeping Cupid because he felt he had been cheated by Baldassare del Milanese, who sold the statue for 200 ducats, but had paid its carver only thirty scudi.[33] Others, such as van Meegeren and Woody Blackwell, a late twentieth-century knapper of extraordinarily large and beautiful "paleolithic" stone spearpoints typical of the Clovis people of North America, have ultimately shamed "experts" whom they had previously fooled, responding publicly to charges that they could not possibly be skillful enough to have produced the works they did.[34]

The ambitions and desires of collectors and curators are closely linked to market conditions, scarcity in particular. Just as Gisela Richter and John Marshall purchased monumental "Etruscan" terracottas of great importance for the collections of the Metropolitan Museum in the mid-1920s, Winifred Lamb, Honorary Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities at Cambridge University's Fitzwilliam Museum, eagerly sought to acquire yet another forged "Minoan" goddess figurine (Fig. 0.10), despite its exorbitantly high price, for it was touted as "the oldest known statuette in marble". Lamb wrote to museum director Sidney Cockerell with a telling correction, "She'll make ~~my~~ our dept. world famous."[35] As Karl E. Meyer once wrote: "The prevalence of fakes is the venereal disease of the illicit art market, the punishment for excessive desire and bad judgement."[36]

[32] Paris, Louvre Ma 1120 (Cp 6414): Said to be "trouve dans les environs d'Herculanum" by D'Escamps 1862, 104; de Kersauson 1996, 356–7, no. 163 gives the provenance simply as "Herculanum"; the gallery label reads "Herculanum (?)" while all date the bust to the early third century AD. For Campana see, most recently, Gaultier, Haumesser, and Trofimova 2018.

[33] Different versions of the story are told by Ascanio Condivi and Giorgio Vasari in their *Vitae* (*Lives*) of Michelangelo.

[34] For van Meegeren, see n. 14. For Blackwell, see Preston 1999.

[35] Butcher and Gill 1993, 386, 387.

[36] Meyer 1973, 108.

Fig. 0.10 "Minoan" goddess figurine acquired by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, in 1926. Stone. Early twentieth century. 22.7 cm.
Photo credit: Fitzwilliam Museum

The period eye and the smoking gun

Today, of course, it seems outrageous that van Meegeren's "Vermeers" were once considered so exquisite that no modern forger could have produced them. The pendulum has now swung to the other side and we ask "How in the world could anyone ever have believed in the authenticity of *that*?" The desire to believe, market conditions that seem to require buyers to move swiftly, and the skillful employment of authenticatory devices are all part of the answer, but as Antony Grafton has observed,

> If any law holds for all forgery, it is quite simply that any forger, however deft, imprints the pattern and texture of his own period's life, thought and language on the past he hopes to make seem real and vivid. But the very details he deploys, however deeply they impress his immediate public, will eventually make his trickery stand out in bold relief, when they are observed by later readers who will recognize the forger's period superimposed on the forgery's. Nothing becomes obsolete like a period vision of an older period.[37]

[37] Grafton 1990, 67.

Or, as Max J. Friedländer put it: "Forgeries must be served hot, as they come out of the oven."[38]

But can we be so sure that *all* forgeries carry within them the seeds of their own destruction? Generally, we hope to be able point to a "tell," "smoking gun," or "give-away" that definitively *proves* a forgery to be a forgery. In *What's Bred in the Bone*, the second volume of the *Cornish Trilogy,* novelist Robertson Davies' protagonist, Francis Cornish, himself a budding forger, is able to expose *The Harrowing of Hell*, purportedly painted by Hubertus van Eyck, as modern after a fortuitous afternoon visit to the zoo allows him to identify a monkey hanging from its prehensile tail in the corner of the composition as a *Cebus capucinus*, a New World species—in a work alleged to have been created well before Columbus sailed.[39] In the case of the Metropolitan Museum's monumental terracotta "Etruscan" Warriors, sculptor Alfredo Fioravanti presented investigators with the missing left thumb of the figure, which he had broken off and kept as a souvenir.[40] Less conclusive, perhaps, is the high degree of finish often found on the back of "Roman" portraits carved in and after the Renaissance: while ancient sculptors were content to leave unfinished or roughly carved parts not intended to be seen, their Renaissance counterparts often strove to complete every detail. Also, quality, in general, is no proof of authenticity, just as poor workmanship is no evidence of forgery. Good and bad work is produced in every period. Still, errors of iconography, style, materials, technique, grammar, syntax, orthography, condition, documentation, purported history, and more can all expose fraudulent works. But lacking decisive evidence, what is the standard of proof?[41] And how many forgeries are, and might remain, unexposed, accepted as genuine masterpieces of their periods? How many of them might have been canonized, and, undetected, even helped to establish what we consider to be typical of the individual oeuvre or historical period they were intended to represent, and thus become part of a precedent class serving to validate other works, forgeries included?

This introduces yet another paradox. We can examine in detail numerous case studies of forgery, but these are all forgeries that ultimately failed. Successful forgeries are invisible, even if they remain in plain sight, because they are successful only so long as they remain unrecognized. Only unsuccessful forgeries, exposed or suspect, can be the subject of discussions such as this.

Some early forgeries

So when and how did a critical approach to art forgeries arise? When and why did people begin to care about, or question, authenticity? The answer, it seems, is less

[38] Friedländer 2004 [1942], 41.
[39] Davies 1985.
[40] von Bothmer and Noble, 1961, 16.
[41] Lapatin 2000.

chronological and more dependent on what was at stake. We have already noted the attention paid in ancient Greek temple inventories to counterfeit coins: they were deposited in treasuries to take them off the market.[42] And Pliny the Elder called the faking of gemstones the most profitable trickery (*fraus*) practiced against society (*Natural History* 37.198).

One of the earliest forgeries known is an inscribed cruciform tablet excavated in 1881 at Sippar, Iraq, now in the British Museum (Fig. 0.11), found in a Neo-Babylonian context of the eighth to sixth centuries BC, but purporting to date to the reign of King Maništušu of Akkad, who reigned *c.*2276–2261 BC. Although an archaeological artifact, this is really a literary forgery, a false document in which Babylonian temple priests, like many of their medieval successors, sought to establish the great antiquity of their shrine and thus their right to certain privileges and revenues. The 346-line text inscribed on twelve sides in deliberately archaizing script boldly asserts its veracity, perhaps protesting too much: "This is not a lie, it is indeed the truth... He who will damage this document, let Enki fill up his canals with slime."[43] I have no idea whether or not this *fraus pia* was

Fig. 0.11 Cuneiform tablet from Sippar, Iraq. Stone. Eighth–sixth century BC. 21.3 × 11.2 cm. British Museum BM WAA 91022.

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[42] See Higbie in this volume, chapter 5. On fake coins in ancient Greece see, e.g., n. 7 and Kurke 1999.
[43] London, British Museum, BM WAA 91022: Gelb 1949, 346–8; Sollberger 1968; Jones, 1990, 60, no. 34; Al-Rawi and George 1994; and especially Rollston 2014.