

Fabrication, Verification, Authentication: An Introduction¹

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Our session on *Fabrication, Verification, Authentication* grows out of a conversation among Carolyn Bynum, Christopher Jones, and myself after the conclusion of the scheduled business of the Class 4 Committee last year. In an impromptu seminar mode, each one of us could recall vivid examples of forgeries, fakes, and other examples of what Adrian Johns would term “piracy” in every area of life from science to snake oil—Piltdown Man and the Cardiff Giant in an earlier period when biological evolution applied to hominins was being absorbed by both professional and lay publics; the Praenestine fibula, a gold fastener that turned up mysteriously in 1887 with a purportedly 7th c. B.C. Old Latin inscription (once more rehabilitated as possibly genuine); the manuscript diaries of Adolph Hitler; a manuscript grammar of the supposed indigenous Taënsa language of north-eastern Louisiana, completely fabricated, as shown by APS Member Daniel G. Brinton; and innumerable works of European and other art. Indeed, when connoisseurship and rarefied collecting are involved, the verification and authentication of items—paintings, string instruments, significant manuscripts—evokes an almost visceral affect. And there is frequently a great deal of money at stake.

In 2013 on behalf of Lady Hambleden, the former wife of the fourth Viscount Hambleden, Christie’s sold what was understood to be a copy of a John Constable painting of Salisbury Cathedral. It fetched £3,500 (\$5,200). When its purchaser had it evaluated by Constable scholar Anne Lyles, she deemed it an early version of a more famous Constable, and it sold at Christie’s in New York, the *Times* reported, for \$5,200,000 in January 2015.

¹ Read on 24 April 2015 as part of the symposium *Fabrication, Verification, Authentication*.

Everyone has an interest in “the real thing,” “the genuine article,” “the real McCoy,” as it were. Our symposium, organized and arranged by Christopher Jones, presents examples from four different areas of scholarly, scientific, and everyday life that illustrate the particular ways that anxieties of authenticity are both heightened and assuaged by regimes of verification, where lines of evidence reinforce each other to yield a judgment that we know what it is we have put our trust in, or have withdrawn our trust from.

Some bio-bibliographical information will serve to introduce the four symposium papers that follow. Yve-Alain Bois studied with Roland Barthes and Hubert Damisch at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* in Paris, from which he received his doctoral degree in 1977. His academic career, begun in Paris, brought him to the United States to teach art history at the Johns Hopkins University from 1983 to 1991 and at Harvard University, where he taught from 1991 to 2005. He has since served as Professor of Art History in the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study, and he concurrently holds the Roland Barthes Chair at the European Graduate School (EGS) in Saas-Fee, Switzerland, where he conducts seminars during summer months.

A specialist in twentieth-century European and American art, he is recognized as an expert on a wide range of artists, from Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso to Piet Mondrian, Barnett Newman, and Ellsworth Kelly. Dr. Bois has curated and co-curated a number of influential and much-traveled exhibitions, including *Piet Mondrian, A Retrospective* (1994); *L'informe, mode d'emploi* (1996); *Matisse and Picasso: A Gentle Rivalry* (1999); and *Picasso Harlequin 1917–1937* (2008). His books include *Painting as Model* (1990); *Formless: A User's Guide* (with Rosalind Krauss, 1997); *Matisse and Picasso* (1998), which won the Albert H. Barr, Jr. Award; and *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Anti-modernism, Postmodernism* (with Benjamin Buchloh, Hal Foster, and Rosalind Krauss, 2004).

Importantly, his work is deeply informed by the major philosophical and theoretical currents of twentieth-century humanistic thought, the texts and ideas of which he puts into conversation with the works of plastic and graphic art with which he deals. Such works are, for him, also texts, human constructions deeply theoretical in their own media, and his critical accounts of them brilliantly engage them as contributions to a field of interdiscursivity—artwork “speaking” to artwork—in creative dialogue within and beyond what we might think of as “art” itself.

Dr. Bois is currently working on several long-term projects, including a study of Barnett Newman's paintings, the catalogue

raisonné of Ellsworth Kelly's paintings and sculptures, and the modern history of axonometric projection.

In his youth, he was a co-founder of the influential French journal *Macula*, and he serves as an editor of the lively MIT Press journal *October*. In trans-Atlantic mode, he is both a Chevalier in the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In spring 2016, Dr. Bois was elected a Member of the APS. His talk is entitled "Can a Genuine Picasso Be a Fake?"

A former APS sabbatical fellowship holder, Adrian D. S. Johns is currently the Allen Grant Maclear Professor of History and of the Social Sciences in The College at the University of Chicago, where he chairs the Committee on Conceptual and Historical Studies of Science. A Cambridge man, he got a first in Natural Sciences in 1987 followed by a Ph.D. in 1992; he taught at the University of Kent, Caltech, and UCSD before joining the Chicago faculty. Dr. Johns works in the history of science, British history, history of intellectual property, and history of the book and other media.

His first book, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (1998), documenting the interrelated emergence of empirical science and print capitalism as institutional forms, was awarded the Leo Gershoy Award of the American Historical Association; the John Ben Snow Prize of the North American Conference on British Studies; the Louis Gottschalk Prize of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies; and the SHARP Prize for the best work on the history of authorship, reading, and publishing. His second book, also from the University of Chicago Press, *Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates* (2009), won the Press's Gordon J. Laing Award and was as well designated Book of the Year of the American Society for Information Science and Technology. His third book, *Death of a Pirate: British Radio and the Making of the Information Age* (2011) for W. W. Norton, is an extraordinary "who dunnit?" It's a real page turner, in which the emergence of the BBC and its "pirate" broadcasting counterparts is framed in a political and intellectual terrain on which walk such luminaries as J. M. Keynes, Friedrich von Hayek, and other theoreticians of state-level economies as well, of course, as Winston Churchill, Clement Atlee, Harold Macmillan, and the various "pirates" of radio broadcasting who live—and violently die—for wealth derived from offshore operations.

Professor Johns has recently held both Guggenheim and American Council of Learned Societies fellowships. His presentation, perhaps emerging therefrom, is entitled "Lay Assaying and the Scientific Citizen."

Our second pair of speakers take up further realms of authentication in the exposure of forgery. Christopher P. Jones is currently the George Martin Lane Professor of Classics and History, Emeritus, at Harvard University, where he earlier (1965) received his Ph.D. working with distinguished APS Members Herbert Bloch and Glenn Bowersock. A classicist and social historian of the Roman imperial period, Professor Jones has published extensively on later Greek literature (especially as viewed in its historical and social setting), Roman history and Latin literature of the imperial period, social history of the Roman empire, Hellenistic history, early Christianity, and Late Antiquity, as well as in the field of Greek epigraphy. His prodigious output of publications includes both editions of important sources in the Loeb Classical Library and interpretative works anchoring the history of social institutions of the period in reconstruction of the biographies of important figures of the time.

Of books alone, Professor Jones is the author of *Philostratus: Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (1970); *Plutarch and Rome* (1971); *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom* (1978); *Culture and Society in Lucian* (1986); Louis Robert, *Le Martyre de Pionios, prêtre de Smyrne* (1994, co-edited with G. W. Bowersock); *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World* (1999); *Philostratus: The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (two volumes, Loeb Classical Library, 2005) and *Letters of Apollonius, Ancient Testimonia, Eusebius's Reply to Hierocles* (Loeb Classical Library, 2006); *New Heroes in Antiquity: Achilles to Antinoos* (2010); and, most recently, *Between Pagan and Christian*, just out from Harvard Press in 2014.

Characteristic of so much of Jones's work, *Between Pagan and Christian* is at once a fascinating philology of these very terms that came into distinctive use after Constantine's conversion, bespeaking contrasts of religious belief and practice that were, if anything, rather fluid and subtly at variance in the different regions and social strata of the empire. If I may, I offer my guild's term of deep appreciation, "ethnographic," for its portrayal of the thought worlds of the time.

Among numerous visiting professorships and fellowships, Christopher Jones has thrice been a Member in the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, Corresponding Member of the German Archaeological Institute, Fellow of the American Numismatic Society, Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Fellow of the Russian Society of Classicists, and *Correspondant étranger* of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, Paris. He was elected a Member of the

American Philosophical Society in 1996. His talk is entitled “Constantinos Simonidis and the Syntax of Forgery.”

Nick Wilding, Associate Professor of History at Georgia State University, received his B.A. in English from Oxford University, his M.A. in Renaissance Studies at Warwick, and his Ph.D. from the European University Institute, Florence, Italy. He has held postdoctoral positions at Stanford, Cambridge, Columbia, and the American Academy in Rome. Specializing in early modern history of science and communication, he has worked on two projects bringing archival resources to the Internet: the Athanasius Kircher Correspondence Project of Stanford University Libraries and the American-funded Medici Archive Project research center at the Florentine State Archives. His first book, *Galileo's Idol: Gianfrancesco Sagredo and the Politics of Knowledge*, has been recently published (2014) by the University of Chicago Press. A second book, *Faussaire de Lune* [Moon Forger], presumably on the topic on which he will speak today, is due out later this year. Wilding has also been commissioned by Penguin Classics to produce a new translation of Galileo's *Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems*, in which Galileo's deceased patrician friend and quasi-patron Sagredo is presented as a character in conversation with another deceased friend, Filippo Salviati.

Galileo's Idol, set in turbulent Seicento and Setticento Venice and Padua, documents the borderline piracies and other machinations by Sagredo and others surrounding Galileo's career and his Copernican tract, *Sidereus nuncius* [Starry Messenger] of 1610. It is conceived as an antidote to the many bloodless and universalizing history-of-ideas presumptions about scientific revolutions based on England and Western Europe. In a part of the world more attuned to Constantinople and Aleppo than to London and Paris, Wilding shows—to quote—“how knowledge fares when produced by rude, boisterous, scathing, or curmudgeonly practitioners.” Today's talk, about his pursuit of a fabulous fraud, is entitled “Forging the Moon.”