

# *The Art of Deception: Aesthetics at the Perimeter of Truth*

**HUM 598: Humanistic Perspectives on the Arts**

*Spring 2011; Thursdays, 10am-12:50pm*

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What is the relationship between art and falsehood? A significant tradition for conceptualizing the arts has long defined their sphere by reference to doubling, fantasy, and betrayal: when we are in the realm of art, we have left the kingdom of the real—and our capacity for proper engagement depends to a considerable degree on our ability to maintain (or at least *recover*) an awareness of this fact. By these lights, the arts function as something like a safe house for lying, an Elysium for those good deceptions willing to declare themselves. But is all this correct? There are excellent reasons to think not. This course takes up the problem of truth and falsehood in the arts in a sustained way: we will sift the genealogy of current theoretical positions on this issue by means of close reading of classical and recent texts; we will investigate works of art (painting, sculpture, poetry, etc.) that engage these matters, with particular attention to gaming at the margins of the seemingly stable categories; we will weigh the political and critical implications of different postures in this large arena; and we will experiment with new perspectives and practices.

## **WEEK 1: Introduction and Organizational Meeting (no reading)**

## **WEEK 2: Art and Truth: Confidence Games**

Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man; His Masquerade*, [1857] (There are various suitable editions; I use the Library of America volume, which lumps this novella together with *Pierre* and various other things, but feel free to read it in any decent copy).

Carrie Lambert-Beatty, “Make Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility,” *October* 129 (Summer 2009): 51-84.

Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, chapter 9 (“Mimesis: History of the Relation of Art to Reality”) and chapter 10 (“Mimesis: History of the Relation of Art to Nature and Truth”) in *A History of Six Ideas: An Essay in Aesthetics* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980).

Examine:

Bryan Bennett and Negley Harte, eds., *The Crabtree Orations, 1954-1994* (London: University College London, 1997).

## **WEEK 3: Eyes, Lies, and Illusions**

- Walter Pape and Frederick Burwick, "Aesthetic Illusion," in *Aesthetic Illusion: Theoretical and Historical Approaches* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990): 1-15.
- E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000 [1960]).  
Focus on chapters 1-4.
- E.H. Gombrich, "Meditations on a Hobby Horse, or the Roots of Artistic Form," in *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays* (New York: Phaedon, 1994 [1963]): 1-12.
- Kendall L. Walton, "Pictures and Hobby Horses," in *Marvelous Images: On Values and the Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 63-78.
- W.J.T. Mitchell, "Nature and Convention: Gombrich's Illusions," in *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996): 75-94.
- W.J.T. Mitchell, "Looking at Animals Looking: Art, Illusion, and Power," in *Aesthetic Illusion: Theoretical and Historical Approaches*, edited by Frederick Burwick and Walter Pape (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990): 65-78.
- Plato, *The Republic* (I know the Paul Shorey translation best; use whatever edition you are familiar with—I am assuming your general familiarity with the text): book 3, 414b-415e (the "noble lie"); book 7, 514a-518d and 532a-535e (the "allegory of the cave" and the idea of dialectic), and book 10, 595a-608b (the "quarrel with the poets").
- Pliny, *Natural History* (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, 2003 [1952]): book 35, sections 1-153.

Examine:

- Laurent Mannoni, Werner Nekes, and Marina Warner, eds., *Eyes, Lies, and Illusions: The Art of Deception* (London: Hayward Gallery, 2004).

## **WEEK 4: The Dialectics of Deceit**

- Anthony Grafton, *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
- P. R. Coleman-Norton, "An Amusing Agraphon," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 12 (1950): 439-449.
- Linda Hutcheon, "The Pastime of Past Time: Fiction, History, Historiographic Metafiction," in *Postmodern Genres*, edited by Marjorie Perloff (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989): 54-74.
- Alex Nagle, "The Copy and Its Evil Twin: Thirteen Notes on Forgery," *Cabinet* 14 (Summer, 2004): 102-105.

Examine / Be Aware of:

- Nancy Hall-Duncan, Abigail D. Newman, James Martin, and Peter C. Sutton, *Fakes and Forgeries: The Art of Deception* (Greenwich, CT: The Bruce Museum, 2007).
- Mark Jones, ed., *Fake? The Art of Deception* (London: The British Museum, 1990).
- Marjorie E. Wieseman, *A Closer Look: Deceptions and Discoveries* (London: The National Gallery, 2010).

## **WEEK 5:** ***Larvatus Prodeo: Craft, Craftiness, and the Self***

- Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).
- Toon Van Houdt, "Word Histories and Beyond: Toward a Conceptualization of Fraud and Deceit in Early Modern Times," in *On the Edge of Truth and Honesty: Principles and Strategies of Fraud and Deceit in the Early Modern Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2002): 1-32.
- Jacques Bos, "The Hidden Self of the Hypocrite," in *On the Edge of Truth and Honesty: Principles and Strategies of Fraud and Deceit in the Early Modern Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2002): 65-84.
- Michel de Montaigne, "On Liars," from *Essays* (various editions).
- Jorge Luis Borges, "The Lottery in Babylon" and "The Improbable Impostor Tom Castro," from *Collected Fictions* (New York: Penguin, 1998): 101-106, 13-18.

Examine / Be Aware of:

- Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).
- Anthony Grafton and D. Graham Burnett, "Deception as a Way of Knowing," *Cabinet* 33 (Spring 2009): 69-76. (And consider further correspondence on this essay, including Grafton's complete disavowal thereof, *Cabinet* 34 [Summer 2009]: 57).
- Rohan McWilliam, *The Tichborne Claimant* (London: Continuum, 2007).

## **WEEK 6:** **Mystification and Its Choreography**

- Julia Abramson, *Learning from Lying: Paradoxes of the Literary Mystification* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005).
- Margaret Russett, *Fictions and Fakes: Forging Romantic Authenticity, 1750-1845* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Read the introduction, chapter 1 ("From Fake to Fiction: Toward a Romantic Theory of Imposture"), and chapter 5 ("The 'Caraboo' Hoax: Romantic Woman as Mirror and Mirage").
- Reginald A. Foakes, "Making and Breaking Dramatic Illusion," in *Aesthetic Illusion: Theoretical and Historical Approaches*, edited by Frederick Burwick and Walter Pape (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990): 217-228.
- G rard Genette, "The Prefatorial Situation of Communication," and "Other Prefaces, Other Functions," in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 161-293.
- Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* [1843]. There are various editions. Read only Victor Eremita's editorial preface.

Examine / Be Aware of:

- Wolfgang Hildesheimer, *Marbot: A Biography*, translated from the German by Patricia Crampton (New York: George Braziller, 1983 [1981]). And consider J.P. Stern's review in the *LRB* (vol. 4, no. 14, 5 August 1982), together with subsequent correspondence.
- Jacques Finn , *Les mystifications litt raires* (Paris: Jos  Corti, 2010).

## WEEK 7: Falsification as Critique

- Sandor Radnoti, *The Fake: Forgery and its Place in Art* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999).
- K. K. Ruthven, *Faking Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Read chapter 7 (“Fake Literature as Critique”), and the epilogue.
- Patrick Herron, “Ruthven’s Faking Literature, Forging Literature, and Faking Forged Literature,” *Jacket* 17 (June 2002): online only.
- Ken Alder, “History’s Greatest Forger: Science, Fiction, and Fraud along the Seine,” *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Summer 2004): 702-716.
- Cheryl Bernstein, “The Fake as More,” and “Performance as News,” in Carol Duncan, *The Aesthetics of Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 211-225 (also read Duncan’s “Introduction”).
- Thomas Crow, “The Return of Hank Herron: Simulated Abstraction and the Service Economy of Art,” in *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996): 69-84.

Examine / Be Aware of:

- William Boyd, *Nat Tate: An American Artist, 1928-1960* (Cambridge, UK: 21 Publishing, 1998).
- Mark Jones, ed., *Why Fakes Matter: Essays on Problems of Authenticity* (London: The British Museum, 1993). Especially Campbell & Blair on Louis Marcy.

## WEEK 8: Pastiche, Parody, Performance, Palimpsest

- Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles* (New York: Zone, 1996). Read chapters 5 (“Seeing Double”), 6 (“Ditto”), and 7 (“Once More, With Feeling”).
- Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997 [1982]). Read chapters 1 (“Five Types of Transtextuality”) to 24 (“Fictitious Pastiche”).
- Leonard C. Lewin, ed., *Report from Iron Mountain: On the Possibility and Desirability of Peace* (New York: Dial Press, 1967). Ideally, you should read this original edition first. Then consider the 2008 [1996] Free Press edition, with its supplementary paratexts.
- Stanislaw Lem, *A Perfect Vacuum*. (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1999 [1971]). Read Lem’s reviews of Merrill’s *Sexplosion* and Zellerman’s *Gruppenführer Louis XVI*.

Examine / Be Aware of:

- Armand Schwerner and Donald Kaplan, *The Domesday Dictionary: Being an Inventory of the Artifacts and Conceits of a New Civilization* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965).
- Paul Aaron, *Histoire du pastiche: Le pastiche littéraire français, de la Renaissance à nos jours* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008).

## **WEEK 9: In-Class Presentations**

No new reading: Think, catch up, get ahead on next week, and work on final projects.

NB: This week Princeton will host a one-day symposium entitled “Curiosity and Method,” which will deal with issues related to this course. A slate of interdisciplinary scholars and critics will address “marginal” problems in aesthetics and contemporary art. Consider attending.

## **WEEK 10: Documenting Forgery and Forging the Documentary**

NB: This week I’ll screen Orson Wells’ *F for Fake* (1975); time TBD.

Clifford Irving, *Fake! The Story of Elmyr De Hory, the Greatest Art Forger of Our Time* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1969).

Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight, *Faking It: Mock-Documentary and the Subversion of Factuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001). Read chapter 4 (“Building a Mock-Documentary Schema”) and chapter 5 (“A Suggested Genealogy”).

Catherine L. Benamou, “The Artifice of Realism and the Lure of the Real in Orson Wells’s *F for Fake*,” in *F is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth’s Undoing*, edited by Alexandra Juhasz and Jesse Lerner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996). Read chapter 5 (“The Return of the Real”).

Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay; How Art Reprograms the World* (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2002). Read the introduction.

Hal Foster, “The Archival Impulse” *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 3-22.

Examine / Be Aware of:

Eric Hebborn, *Drawn to Trouble: Confessions of a Master Forger* (New York: Random House, 1991).

Eric Hebborn, *The Art Forger’s Handbook* (Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 1997).

Tom Keating et al., *The Fake’s Progress* (London: Hutchinson, 1977).

Geraldine Norman, *The Tom Keating Catalog* (London: Hutchinson, 1977).

Clifford Irving, *The Hoax* (New York, Miramax, 2007 [1981]).

Clifford Irving, *The Autobiography of Howard Hughes* (pirate editions only: [www.terrificbooks.com](http://www.terrificbooks.com), n.d.). Good luck getting access to it!

David King, *The Commissar Vanishes: The Falsification of Art and Photos in Stalin’s Russia* (New York: Metropolitan, 1997).

Warren Neidich, *American History Reinvented* (New York: Aperture, 1989).

## **WEEK 11:** ***Traduttore, Traditore: Delirious Translation***

- Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *Philosophy through the Looking Glass: Language, Nonsense, and Desire* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1985). Read the introduction and chapter 1 ("The Literature of *Délire*").
- Heriberto Yépez, "Text, Lies, and Role-Playing," *Chain* 9 (2002): 19?-37? (available online).
- Brian McHale, "Archaeologies of Knowledge: Hill's Middens, Heaney's Bogs, Schwerner's Tablets," *New Literary History* 30, no. 1 (winter 1999): 239-262.
- Raymond Federman, *Critifiction: Postmodern Essays* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993). Read chapter 4 ("Critifiction: Imagination as Plagiarism").
- Armand Schwerner, *The Tablets* (Orono, ME: National Poetry Foundation, 1999 [1989]). Read at least tablets I-IV.
- Justin Katko, "Regarding a Specimen of Paleobotanic Epigraphy: J.H. Prynne's Runic Fertility Prayer," *If A then B – Notes on Translation* 1 (August 2010): 40-59.
- Araki Yasusada, *Doubled Flowering* (New York: Roof Books, 1997).

Examine / Be Aware of:

- Alex Stein, *Made-Up Interviews w/ Imaginary Artists* (Brooklyn: Ugly Duckling, 2009).
- Kenneth Koch, "Some South American Poets." These can be found in *The Pleasures of Peace* (New York: Random House, 1969), or the 2007 *Collected*.
- David Solway, *Saracen Island: Poems of Andreas Karavis* (Montreal: Vehicule, 2001).
- J.H. Prynne, *Poems* (Tarsset, UK: Bloodaxe, 2006).

## **WEEK 12:** **Now Who's Laughing? Politics, Satire, Apocalypse**

- Immanuel Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives" (1797). This is widely available in several translations; we'll try to settle on one (Beck's 1949?).
- Hannah Arendt, "Lying in Politics," in *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1972): 1-48.
- Martin Jay, "Pseudology: Derrida on Arendt and Lying in Politics," in Pheng Cheah and Suzanne Guerlac, eds., *Derrida and the Time of the Political* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009): 235-255.
- Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Ethics of the Lie* (New York: Other Press, 2007). Read the Introduction and chapter one ("State Lies, Private Lies").
- The Editors of *Lingua Franca*, *The Sokal Hoax* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000). Read parts one and two.
- Ginny Kollak, "The Office of Parafictional Research Presents 'Headless: Work by Goldin + Senneby,'" MA thesis, Bard College, 2010.

Examine / Be Aware of:

- Hannah Arendt, "Truth in Politics," in *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking, 1968): 227-265.
- Alexandre Koyré, "The Political Function of the Modern Lie," *The Contemporary Jewish Record* 8, no. 3 (June, 1945): 290-291.
- John Vignaux Smyth, *The Habit of Lying: Sacrificial Studies in Literature, Philosophy, and Fashion Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).