

# In Lies Begin Responsibilities



# In Lies Begin Responsibilities

TEXT BY

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In the spring of 2010 I participated in a rip-roaring conference in Berlin on the history of rationality. The brief for our gathering? To sort out, if we could, how a capaciously Kantian conception of “reason” (think of that late Enlightenment confidence in the socially embedded powers of the human mind) wandered across to the peculiarly mechanistic, algorithmic notion of “rationality” familiar to any student of the social sciences in the second half of the twentieth century: the counting-house calculus of a monadic self-maximizer, that cruel little Machiavelli posited by game theory and evolutionary biology alike. How in the world did we all get from such a deliciously robust ideal of cognition to such a strangely calculating creature? How did so many of us come to think about so much of thinking as something like the navigation of infinite topologies of savage self-interest?<sup>1</sup>

Across three days we reviewed a lineup of plausible suspects: Darwinism, the Turing machine, psychoanalysis, exobiology, Cold War nuclear strategy, macroeconomic modeling, cybernetics, and so on. I was pretty jet-lagged, but I stayed with things and gradually persuaded myself that there was a logic to the emergence of such a depauperate logic across a century that saw so much scorched earth.

Scorched earth had been much on my mind that year, since I had been collaborating with the artist Lisa Young on a film project that dealt with the strategic bombing campaigns of World War II. *Free Fall: The Life and Times of Bud “Crosshairs” MacGinitie* was a somewhat unusual undertaking from the start. Presented as a video *éloge* for a fallen bombardier-veteran, the film wove together documentary footage and factual information about changing bombsights and aviation physiology in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. The armature of the story, however, lay in the obituary of an invented character, whose psycho-spiritual displacements in the aftermath of World War II were intended to represent an argument about the origins of the

characteristically sadomasochistic scientific research practices of the Cold War. In a number of ways the film—a false history, a braiding of truth and lies—was centrally concerned with changing ideas about rationality and self-interest across the very years at issue in the conference.

But sitting in the handsome seminar room of the Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, I grew increasingly uneasy about mentioning the project. After all, I was among scholars—my esteemed colleagues. Disciplined thinkers each. And



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honorably types. The very flower of the academy: professional inquirers, bound to demanding canons of proof, evidence, and transparency. How would they react to the discovery that I had taken to confecting history, playing on the border of the real, conjuring invented pasts? I had my misgivings. Perhaps better to feel out a few of them privately on this difficult matter of history and fiction, art and knowledge production.

The result was, in a number of ways, a watershed conversation for me. Over bowls of *raita* and *dal* in an Indian restaurant that evening, I found myself toe to toe with a pair of older scholars for whom I had the utmost regard: one an American-born historian of probability theory based in Germany, the other a Swiss historian of neuroscience. The subject: the increasing prevalence of research-based artistic practices that mobilized disorienting tactics of illusion and/or

deception, the rise of the very art world represented in *More Real? Art in the Age of Truthiness*. I mostly kept my own experimental appetites off the table, sketching instead the genealogy of artists and artworks familiar to readers of Carrie Lambert-Beatty’s stimulating essay “Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility.”<sup>2</sup> I talked about Walid Raad. I talked about Zoe Beloff. I talked about Michael Blum. I talked about work of this sort that we had published in *Cabinet* in recent years. Above all, I tried to emphasize the powerful way that, for me, the best of these works reimaged the historical imagination and teasingly tested the traditional distancing modes of critical inquiry. This was, I argued, a kind of Dionysian historicism—scholarship not afraid to mingle promiscuously with its subject matter, a fearlessly exuberant, postpositivist ethnography of our usable past. And I tested my claim that this work could be understood not merely as a brave new world of postmodern anything-goes-ism but rather as the reanimation of a number of significant premodern historical practices.<sup>3</sup>

Nothing doing. I met a bracingly cold and refreshingly serious “no.” Both my interlocutors voiced a clear and forceful concern about the tendencies that they perceived in this body of work, with which they were by no means unfamiliar. In a world weathering an unprecedented destabilization of traditional forms of textual authority and historical documentation, the aestheticization of disorientation by the intelligentsia could only be understood as a *trahison des clercs* of the worst sort. Sure, it was all fun and games when the Museum of Jurassic Technology parodically undermined the apodictic semiotics of the museum. But a decade or two later those lessons had been returned to us with interest in this or that “museum of creation science.” And the forging of historical documentation might offer a certain frisson on the biennial circuit, but what about George W. Bush’s military records? Didn’t we need to see them? And know that they were real? Could a free and democratic polity survive the proliferation of technologies (from Photoshop

to Dreamweaver) that allowed each of us to make and inhabit imagined histories?

I was not exactly persuaded by their jeremiads. But I was wobbled. These were not reactionary types. They were elastic and progressive thinkers, deeply learned individuals who were committed to the arts, to scholarship, and to politics. They knew their history, to be sure, but there was nothing fusty about their perspective. They were thinking about the present and the future—and they did not like what they saw in the swampy region lying at the anastomosing tributaries of the really real and the finely fictive.



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On the flight back to New York, I set to the task of putting my mental house back in order: No reason to get excessively concerned. Probably a generational thing. They were, after all, both of them, sixty-eighters, basically. No wonder they were uneasy. They remained moored in a world in which political progress

1. Michael Blum, *A Tribute to Safiye Behar*, 2005; house museum installation; courtesy the artist

2. Zoe Beloff, *Albert Grass' plan for Dreamland*, a theme park constructed according to Freudian principles, image from *Dreamland: The Coney Island Amateur Psychoanalytic Society and Their Circle, 1926–1972*, 2009–10; [medium, dimensions?]; courtesy the artist

3. “The Garden of Eden on Wheels,” installation view, Museum of Jurassic Technology, Los Angeles; courtesy Museum of Jurassic Technology

4. Goldin+Senneby, *Each thing seen is the parody of another or is the same thing in a deceptive form*, talk at London Zoo with Angus Cameron, spokesperson of Goldin+Senneby; produced for Gasworks, London, 2010

5. Goldin+Senneby, *Headless: Each thing seen is the parody of another or is the same thing in a deceptive form*; with Angus Cameron (economic geographer), K.D. (fictional author), Anna Heymowska (set designer), Johan Hjerpe (graphic designer), Kerwin Rolland (sound designer); installation view, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 2010

6. Still from Orson Welles’s film *F for Fake*, 1973

7. Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG, *Darko Maver*, 1999; courtesy the artists

meant speaking truth to power. But did it? Little reason to think so. I recalled with some discomfort the moving lecture given by a political philosopher friend in the immediate aftermath of 9/11: swelling to her theme, she told us that we were on the side of the truth tellers and that only a politics of democratic openness would permit us to survive the years ahead. The next day the newspapers revealed that the CIA had been disseminating doctored pictures of Bin Laden gussied up like one of the Bee Gees for a night of cruising discotheques. Ahem.

Indeed, for those of us right around forty—we who flipped shruggingly through Baudrillard and Deleuze with a sense of *déjà-vu*; we whose political lives took shape across the long decade from Reagan's Hollywood accession to the POV smart-bomb footage of the first Gulf war—it was hard to fall in behind the speaking-truth-to-power standard. It felt, somehow, a little nostalgic, a little tainted by the solemnities of “the Sixties.” That world (the political world of our parents—itsself, perhaps, a reaction against the slicker image world of the 1950s) was gone. Goodness was not gone. Virtue was not gone. But it

wasn't clear that sit-ins were going to solve anything. Or heartfelt folk music. And it wasn't so clear that the truth was going to make anyone free. Nothing less freeing than the truth, come to think of it. Imagination—now *there* was some freedom.

Still, something slightly worrisome about the specter of a collective retreat into fantasy and play, no? Hmmm. Well, perhaps. I stared at the game console/multimedia port on the back of the seat in front of me. The touch screen. The rocker buttons of the handset. The world was not Donkey Kong. Fair enough. And yet who said a generation wholly raised in the flow spaces and game worlds of the Internet—not my generation, exactly, but that of our younger sisters and brothers—needed stern tuition on how to sort the real from the simulacral? Least of all from mature sages steeped in the culture of the book—a culture that was, of course,

for all its charms and powers, most unlikely to survive the next few decades (except, perhaps, in some rump form, some exotic, pseudomonastic clique of future opt-outers). In fact, the whole thing might cut quite the other way: my senior colleagues worried that an intellectual culture committed to something like perpetually ludic postproduction on reality represented a frightening evacuation of the public sphere, a simulationist secession that put the very idea of participatory politics at risk; but if, increasingly, actual politics operated operatically (privileging everywhere image, performance, and spectacle), then wielding a little schizophrenic irony—indeed, mastering the veritable arts of collective deception—might well be the twenty-first-century equivalent of registering to vote.

Or so one might hope.

I settled back in my cramped seat. Onward and upward, as they say.

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Actually, though, the plane had to land. And by the time it began its descent, I had transmuted my lingering unease (for it did linger) into a pedagogical program. It was time to take up these problems in earnest. The result was a graduate seminar, “The Art of Deception: Aesthetics at the Perimeter of Truth,” which I taught at Princeton in the spring of 2011. The course aimed to make sense of the intersection of aesthetics and epistemology since the Renaissance. Which is to say, I set out with a dozen grad students (from art history, architecture, theater, English, comp lit) to try to understand how questions of truth and falsehood had functioned to



cabin and specify the domain of the arts—visual, plastic, textual, performative. At the heart of our inquiry lay the timeless problems of illusion, forgery, and deceit. Promiscuous rather than properly his-

Plato and Pliny (to set up the classic formulations of art as illusion). By the end we had wended our way from Reformation Nicodemites to Hannah Arendt and Jacques Derrida on the lie in politics, with



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torical, the course threaded its way back and forth between very current issues and telling texts from the past. We began, for instance, with the juxtaposition of contemporary trickster artists (the Yes Men, Aliza Shvarts, Goldin+Senneby) and Herman Melville's cosmological trickster novel *The Confidence-Man* (1857), before reaching all the way back to

whistle stops for early modern dissimulation, nineteenth-century counterfeiters, delirious Dada pseudotranslation, Clifford Irving, Cheryl Bernstein, P. R. Coleman-Norton, and the Crabtree Orations.<sup>4</sup> It was a smorgasbord of disorienting characters and the philosophical, legal, and artistic problems that they raised—and from which, at times, they fell.

I brought to the project the verve of a fresh convert. We were going to learn to *play*. And a workshop-style final assignment gave students the chance

chanics (and analytics) of artistic transgression had gradually resolved itself, at least for some of us, into a sickly miasma of genuine fear. I believe that this



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to experiment in a formal way with learned and gamesome falsification. By late April, however, there was—in the increasingly oppressive air of our high-ceilinged, wood-paneled seminar room—the vague feeling of a hangover. The anarchic exuberance of mutual tuition in the me-

ffective arc speaks in significant ways to the challenges presented by the work in the exhibition *More Real?*—the work presented and discussed in this catalogue. If I went into “The Art of Deception” intending to arm myself more effectively for a redux of my challenging

conversation in Berlin, I came out of the semester properly shaken. If you enter the exhibition with the jaunty step of the willing conspirator, I would argue that you should probably exit with a furrowed brow.

Why? I'll get there. For now,

suffice it to say that there is no wink that does not leave us, however fleetingly, blind in one eye.



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In book 35 of his relentless *Natural History*, the first-century Roman encyclopedist Pliny the Elder drops an offhand comment about the origin of the illusionistic space of two-dimensional representation.

Discussing the great gifts of the (presumably apocryphal) ur-painter Apelles, Pliny alludes to a portrait of King Antigonus, who had only one working eye. The painting represented a shocking innovation: Apelles, we are told, “devised an original method of concealing the [king’s] defect, for he did the like-

ness in an oblique perspective, so that the feature wanting in the subject might be thought instead merely wanting in the picture; thus he showed only the part of the face that he could show in its integrity.”<sup>5</sup>

We are left to understand that this move—twisting his sitter into a three-quarter view, rotating one side of his face “into” the canvas and away from the viewer—was unprecedent-



ed.<sup>6</sup> One thinks immediately of chapter 4 of E. H. Gombrich's classic *Art and Illusion* (1960). There, recall, we get a sweeping argument that the origin of illusionistic representation (the "Greek Revolution," the "conquest of space") is inextricable from the origins of the narrative arts (epic poetry, tragic theater) and, more generally, from a kind of upsurging emergence of an existentially exigent human person: you might even call it the birth of "man." How so? Well, instead of mere cookie-cutter iconography pasted flat on cave walls, we suddenly get individualized individuals strutting the stage-space of life. For Gombrich, the implicit action-worlds of illusionistic three-dimensionality enjoin reflection on something more than the conceptual/schematic/bean-counting "what" of *three* soldiers or *two* nymphs (picture stiff figures arrayed like hieroglyphs); rather, with the feinting into the picture plane, we are thrust irreversibly into the sinuous, philosophically vexing world of cause and effect, of "how" and "why," of veritable people and the decisions they make.

Of course, they aren't that veritable. On the contrary. This epochal Gombrichtian aesthetico-metaphysical ensoulment trades precisely on sleights of hand and eye: illusions of depth, tricks of foreshortening and shadow, the whole repertoire of painterly

mimesis. It was precisely this unstable superposition of deep truth and deep falsehood, Gombrich suspects, that made Plato so uneasy about the domain of artistic representation.

There can be little doubt that the formulations of *Art and Illusion* feel dated in certain ways: the grandiosity rankles, the implicit occidental exceptionalism looks provincial, the hunt-and-peck use of 1950s-era sciences is distracting (i.e., maybe better to skip the stuff about Australian Aborigines). And yet as demanding a contemporary critic as W. J. T. Mitchell has continued to find inspiration in wrestling with this material. Mitchell's felicitous notion of "illusionism"—which he defines

as any array of culturally specific techniques for gaming the problem of illusion—owes much to Gombrich and is intended to help parse what Mitchell takes to be a conflating confusion in *Art and Illusion*.<sup>7</sup> Illusion proper, Mitchell argues, is really just error—false belief, mere defect of our faculties. *Illusionism*, by contrast, is "playing with illusions, the self-conscious exploitation of illusion as a cultural practice for social ends."<sup>8</sup> It is here that things get interesting, since by these lights illusionism can function as a technology for revealing the bad conscience of ideology, which must forever cultivate illusion.

With this in mind we can return to that suggestive Apelles portrait. By twisting Antigonus into the canvas, Apelles pried open the illusionistic space of perspectival representation. How are we to interpret this moment? There

is, to be sure, something touching in the fact that this new illusion-space has been conjured, in this first instance, precisely to create a *hiding place* for a human weakness or defect. It is thus tempting to sense, in that slightest rotation of the sitter, a gesture of human sympathy—even a kind of secular redemption: We are *broken*. But perhaps art can make us whole. The cost? The artist must use the Archimedean lever of illusion to raise the real world off its foundations—creating, in the process, that little cache wherein to secrete all our blemishes and failures.

Sniffle. One senses that Mitchell would not be satisfied with this sort of tremblingly symbolic interpretation. After all, we are talking about a picture of the *king of Macedonia*, for heaven's sake. Can we bring the politics back in? How is Apelles's gesture anything other than a spin job on the Prince?

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Knowing the difference. It all hinges right there. But that is precisely what is at issue when we move into (or, indeed, back

out of) the domain of deception. The sharpest formulation of this central problem came in the sleeper book of the semester: Julia Abramson's *Learning from Lying*, a detailed study of the genre of "mystification" and particularly of the high Enlightenment origins of this very particular form of literary-artistic play.<sup>9</sup> As Abramson shows, the term itself, *mystifié*, was a novel coinage of mid-eighteenth-century Paris, and though it first came into use to describe the cruel practical jokes played by slightly wicked reactionaries in the period, it was soon appropriated by the philosophes, who expanded and transformed its meaning. In the hands of Diderot and Rousseau (and even Grimm and Goethe), *mystification* ceased to refer to the hazing rituals of aristocratic cliques and came to embody a distinctively didactic species of textual two-step. The paradigmatic case was a work set to "spring" (instructively) on its readers. So, for instance, you might think that Prosper Mérimée's *La Guzla* (1827) was a genuine collection of Dalmatian folk lyrics translated into French. You might think that *initially*. But Mérimée had no desire to be a forger of Illyrian ballads. His intent, ultimately, was, as Abramson can demonstrate, a subtle critique of the fashionable excesses of romanticism. Hence the idea was that *first* you swooned at the feral glory of a Balkan balladeer, but *then*, reading a little closer, you picked up the clues, caught on, and learned a lesson about the artifice of "primitive" authenticity. The text, we might hazard, *choreographed*

your insight; its author was pedagogically preoccupied with *managing* your experience of deception—your path in, and your path back out.

This, for Abramson, is the defining character of a true mystification. In place of the irreducible sadism of mere trickery, we have the gentle tease of the dedicated teacher. In place of the falsifying ambitions of the genuine forger, we discover the clarifying commitments of the critic. In this sense, the genre of mystification can be understood as nothing less than a liturgy of enlightenment itself: we start out in the dark, but we find our way to the light. This is no ludic irruption, no send-up of the will to truth. We are, rather, in the holy of holies of critical rationality: in the unfolding experience of a true mystification, we experience "the secular counterpart to revelation."<sup>10</sup>

Abramson hedges a bit on that analogy. Which is fair enough. Does the mystification convert to revelation without remainder? Perhaps not. Or perhaps not in all cases. But however urbane or playful or ironic or demanding the mystification becomes, if it is to remain a mystification (and not drift into simple fakery), the work must continue to serve as the "conscience" of fiction. To do so, it needs to keep close track of where we are as readers and take responsibility for moving us through its masquerade. In lies, we might hazard, begin responsibilities.

Lambert-Beatty closes her essay on contemporary parafiction with a meditation on a telling phrase used by one critic to describe the reactions of viewers who learned of the fictional nature of Michael Blum's Safiye Behar installation at the 2005 Istanbul Biennial: they went, we are told, "scurrying back" to see the show a second time. It is Lambert-Beatty's valediction that we need to "dignify" that rodent-like scurry—take our chastening time as we confront works



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that have wrong-footed us, and use the occasion to reflect on the aesthetics of doubt and the poetics of knowledge in a world (and an art world) of great complexity. It is a felicitous notion, to be sure—and surely right. And yet Abramson's framing of the dynamics of mystification presses us to fold the question of our affective and epistemic trajectories in relation to such works *back into the nature of the works themselves*. If we are willing to extend the analysis of *Learning from Lying*, it becomes possible to argue that parafictional works are, in the end, *answerable* for their handling of our path to, and from, and then back to their presence under the changing alethic modalities on which they trade. This trajectory is not merely our problem as viewers. It is a problem that can be understood to inhere in the artwork and the artist's process as well. And we might go one step further: this epistemological choreography is, I believe, something more than a "feature" of such works; it is also inextricable from the ethical status of these artistic practices.

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We come here to the crux of the matter, to the hard question from which we began—call it the Berlin question. Are the artistic practices that we might group under the rubric "strong-program aesthetic illusion"—the arts of deception proper—ethically (and politically) acceptable? Or to put it another way: where do we draw the lines?

Over the course of the term this issue became increasingly urgent in the workshop-collective of our seminar. We got there in different ways, but I have the clearest memory of my own moment of crisis. It was the tenth week of the term. We had not only watched Orson Welles's classic *F for Fake* (1975); we had also read both Irving's study of the forger Elmyr de Hory and Irving's

story of his own mad exploit forging the autobiography of the billionaire recluse Howard Hughes.<sup>11</sup> The *mise en abyme* of deception tessellated to the horizon line in all directions. But one could make of this receding crystalline lattice a *studium*, and there was a pleasure in this—the intersecting tales of falsification and conjuration, the rogue charm of the protagonists, the manifold indulgence of Welles's film (which for all its avowed evasiveness keeps returning to Welles himself, who cannot but repeatedly reassert solid center of solipsistic sovereignty). And yet there was, too, a *punctum* in all this, and for me it fell in a paratext: a little footage from the *Sixty Minutes* interview with Irving from 1972, at the height of the scandal surrounding his (not yet known to be fake) ghost-authored "autobiography" of Hughes. The camera tightens slightly on Irving as he is confronted directly with the question of whether he is telling the truth, and he lies—we know he is lying. And he lies well. And his eyes are clear and alive. And, yes, terrifying.

But it took a little more than that to break me. I went home that evening and picked up the *Economist* and found myself reading a creepy little story about cyber-stalking. The article detailed how a modestly successful female opera singer in New York had found herself tormented for years by a shadowy character somewhere in Asia who had maintained a sequence of web pages and blogs in her name, in which he played out a series of unseemly erotic and financial fantasies. This second life had cost the artist enormously, since she had no easy way of establishing that the imposter personae had nothing to do with her. Questions of legal jurisdiction were tricky, and it was hard to get the police in Hong Kong to follow up.

The unhappy tale intersected in enough ways with the class discussion around *F for Fake* that I felt something like an obligation to follow up, so I meandered over to the computer to Google the woman's name and see if I could make sense of what I found. Would I be able to sort out her real person from this penumbra of projections? What would it all look like?

And initially it was yet another navigable hall of mirrors. Yes, I could find her actual web page. And yes, I could find various unnerving doubles. But one could distinguish. It took work. But it was possible. And then I clicked through to a page that popped open the *Economist* article that I had just read. Or so it seemed. Skimming down the page, I suddenly felt a genuine shiver of horror: the article in question—though it looked like the *Economist* piece and reprised its general flow and tenor—actually reversed the whole

story, making the woman into the perpetrator of cyber-extortion against a mild-mannered gentleman whose life she had maliciously savaged with slander and blackmail.

I shut the computer. The sick thing was, this grotesque undertaking lay just a hop, a skip, and a jump from a few of the more radical and disturbing parafictional projects that we had sounded in the last weeks—Darko Maver, say, or the spookier edges of the Bataille-inspired Headless project.

I felt myself back-pedaling, slowly, from the desk. And I was back-pedaling in my head as well.

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So where does one come out? Not in opposition, exactly. That would be stupid. Over the course of the term my students and I, drawing on historical precedents, tested a variety of quite sympathetic accounts of the contemporary appetite for the arts of deception. Yes, there is something apotropaic about the project—a palpable desire to scare away the monstrosity of the big-screen lie with little fetish lies secreted in downtown galleries. And sure, there may be some sense in which parafictional tendencies reflect an effort to cultivate means of resistance against the simulacral character of the modern lie—the kind of lie that lies all the way down. Perhaps even more alluring is the notion that this sort of artwork represents the current instantiation of a more or less timeless Pygmalion complex at the heart of creative aspiration: art has always aspired to reality, to the dream of genuine creation; the matrix of such ambition has shifted over time (from the erotic sequestration of the studio to the Faust-meets-Frankenstein technologies of techno-science). Read in this context, parafictional art may amount to the latest effort to sculpt actual flesh, to paint with actual blood—call it the Pygmalionism of an age obsessed with information and its representation. Still more extravagant, one might be tempted to suggest that the striking convergence of historicizing research practices and artistic confection betrays the pending collapse of "humanistic" inquiry itself. Perhaps nonscientific *Wissenschaft*—always a sort of mash-up of pseudotheology and German positivism—is basically finished. Part of its traditional domain will be siphoned off into the sciences proper (chunks of philosophy are already neuroscience; parts of history become biology, etc.), and the rest will become art. Maybe this is what we are already seeing in pseudo-historical work—in the proliferation of archival and investigative and collatory undertakings that mobilize both the form and the content of scholarly disciplines but without fidelity to (or interest in) their traditionally truth-seeking character.

But in the end, that traditionally truth-seeking project is not in fact fungible, and it cannot be exported to the laboratories or subcontracted out to scientists. On the contrary. As the course drew to a close, I found myself (disorientingly) persuaded that the arts of deception, for all their Dionysian charm, return us with dialectical inevitability to the Apollonian posture of critique, to the fundamental problems of socially embedded reason and the ineluctable ethico-political cast of our lives. If Apelles's portrait of Antigonus twisted open the three-space of causality and human individuality, these contemporary forms of aesthetic illusion force us to navigate along another axis—that of duty and responsibility. If the first illusory turn brought us an ontology, the second rotates us into deontology.

There we are returned to the critical stance, to the necessity of doing the hard work of trying to know the difference—of trying to know the difference between salutary provocation and perilous threat, between the sort of teasing that helpfully tests our robustness and the genuine moves of malice, between the art that asks more of us and that which wants our undoing. If there are stakes, there are stakes, and the work of discerning those stakes—and protecting them—is critical work, and for it there is no substitute.

In this sense, the seminar room retains, for me, a very special—indeed, a quasi-sacred—status. It, along with the forms of discursive analysis from which it moves and to which it contributes, constitutes the perennial court of final appeal—precisely because the appeal of that expanded forum is never final. This is why we keep talking, why we keep writing. That is why we must scurry back to the exhibition and look again. And then turn to the person beside us in the gallery and ask: "Is this okay? Is it . . . good?"

Once that conversation starts, the games must begin to stop.

#### Notes

1. The event, co-organized by Michael Gordin and Lorraine Daston, was "The Strangelovean Sciences: Rationality versus Reason" at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science. My gratitude to them for a very stimulating occasion.
2. Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility," *October*, no. 129 (Summer 2009): 51–84; the essay is reprinted in this volume.
3. For a version of this last argument, see Anthony Grafton and D. Graham Burnett, "Deception as a Way of Knowing," *Cabinet*, no. 33 (Spring 2009): 69–76, and related correspondence in *Cabinet*, no. 34 (Summer 2009): 57.
4. The syllabus is open access: <http://www.princeton.edu/history/people/data/dl/dburnett/profile/teaching/index.xml>.
5. Pliny, *Natural History*, trans. H. Rackham (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 35:36.90. I have slightly modified Rackham's translation, and the emphasis is mine.
6. In fact, Pliny is here, as elsewhere, a little confusing. Earlier in book 35, he alludes passingly to a painter named Cimón as the inventor of the first "oblique" representations.
7. See W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), especially 75–94.
8. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Looking at Animals Looking: Art, Illusion, and Power," in *Aesthetic Illusion: Theoretical and Historical Approaches*, ed. Frederick Burwick and Walter Pape (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 77.
9. Julia Abramson, *Learning from Lying: The Paradoxes of Literary Mystification* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005).
10. *Ibid.*, 39.
11. Clifford Irving, *Fake! The Story of Elmyr de Hory, the Greatest Art Forger of Our Time* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969); Irving, *The Hoax* (New York: Hyperion, 2006).